

The First Conquest of the Grand Canyon by Automobile

compiled by Tom Peterson



The 1901 Toledo Model B Steamer, with the trailer used on the famous Grand Canyon Run. The passengers are: Thomas M. Chapman, Winfield C. Hagaboom and Al

Doyle. Photo made at Flagstaff, Arizona Territory on January 4, 1902. Courtesy of the Progressive Arizona Magazine, October 1925.

On a chilly October day in the year 1540, Captain Don Garcia Lopez de Cardenas, leading a party of twenty-five Spanish Conquistadors, stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon. These hardy explorers were the first "tourists" ever to view this fantastic spectacle of nature, but the look of awe and wonder on their faces could have been no greater than that of the millions of visitors who have followed them in the intervening four and a quarter centuries.

This year, the Grand Canyon celebrates the centennial of its first successful exploration. Late in May of 1869, Major John Wesley Powell, a one-armed Civil War hero, launched an expedition of four small boats from Green River Station, Wyoming Territory, through the ancient gorges of the mighty Colorado River.

Since its discovery by Cardenas, the Grand Canyon has never ceased to fascinate explorers and adventurers. It was this very challenge which in 1901 led a small party of men to attempt to reach the Canyon in a way which had never been done before — by automobile.

The world moves swiftly and memories are short. We are living in a day and age of super highways and 70 mile-per-hour speed limits. It is difficult for us to imagine that once the mere suggestion of a journey to the Grand Canyon by

automobile — not from some remote part of the country, but from the nearest and most accessible point — could stir up widespread interest, inspire columns in the newspapers, rouse heated debate, ridicule, enthusiasm and scorn. What follows is the story of just such a journey — the story, in fact, of the great grand-daddy of all Grand Canyon Tours. In light of conditions as we know them today, it was a picturesque and colorful adventure, entitled to an honored place in the great record of pioneer automotive achievement.

Late in December of 1901, Mr. Oliver Lippincott, a well-known Los Angeles artist, arrived with two companions at Flagstaff, Arizona Territory, to await the delivery there of an automobile he had ordered. The car had been shipped by rail from Toledo, Ohio, for the express purpose of attempting the run to the Canyon. If the machine succeeded in conquering the trail, there were businessmen waiting to invest in an automobile stage line between Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon. These entrepreneurs proposed to order three large steam coaches, costing from \$2,500 to \$3,000 each. These would be capable of making the round trip of 130 miles in one day, carrying a load of passengers and baggage.

The experiment had definite practical applications and



The 1901 Toledo Model B Steamer at Grand View Point,

was given wide publicity in the press. The machine to be used for the great test was a model "B" Toledo Steam Carriage, built by the American Bicycle Company of Toledo, Ohio. The well-built car sold for about \$1,000 and had proven itself in earlier endurance trials. It featured a horizontal two-cylinder double-acting engine, "copied after the United States torpedo boat type." Bore and stroke were 3 x 4 in. The tubular boiler operated at a normal pressure of 180 psi. The car's tanks were designed to hold 31 gallons of water and nine gallons of gasoline, which gave it a range of about 35 miles for water and 85 miles for the fuel. The machine which was to make the run to the Canyon apparently had been outfitted with additional tanks, as it had a "storage capacity" for 30 gallons of gasoline, and 57 gallons of water. This car was also fitted with a special trailer, "a part of the machine itself," which would accommodate two additional passengers, supplies and luggage. The weight of a stock Toledo steamer was a rather heavy 1500 pounds. With the trailer and other modifications, Mr. Lippincott's juggernaut weighed about 2200 pounds, ready to go. Both forward and reverse motion were controlled by a single lever at the side of the seat. It was boasted that the engine could be reversed "with absolute safety at high speed" and that a double friction bearing brake would bring the vehicle to a stop at once. Moreover, "neither mud, snow, nor ice could seriously impede its progress."

The car arrived in Flagstaff on the morning of January 3, 1902, and Lippincott immediately began testing it. In the small frontier town, which had never before witnessed the wonder of a horseless carriage, the automobile stirred great interest. The newspaper reported:

"From bell to whistle it is a perfect locomotive. Back of the dashboard is the air (steam) gauge and marine clock... Night has no terrors for the driver. He sits behind a headlight twelve inches in diameter, of 200 candle-power and lighted by acetylene gas. On the right driving wheel is a cyclometer, recording distances traveled, so arranged by an electrical contrivance as to register each mile and the time in which it is made. It registers time of all stops made for renewing fuel or water."

By the following morning, Saturday, January 4, all was ready for the departure. With Oliver Lippincott were three passengers, Thomas M. Chapman, a journalist, formerly editor of the *Tonawanda Herald* (New York) and now living in Los Angeles, and Winfield C. Hogaboom, also a journalist, editor of the Sunday edition of the *Los Angeles Herald*. Both had come to Flagstaff with Lippincott almost a week earlier. The third passenger was Al Doyle, a well-known local guide and pioneer resident, to whom Zane Grey is indebted for so much of the material in his famous western novels.

The occasion created a gala day for Flagstaff. The little town turned out *en masse* for the historic event. There were local officials and magnates, clerks, from stores, gamblers and drunkards from saloons, burly lumberjacks from logging camps, cowboys from the range and Navajo Indians from the reservation. Dogs barked, horses whinnied and snorted, men, women and children babbled excitedly in a variety of languages. As the steam carriage wheeled out onto the main street, there were expressions of amazement, amusement, skepticism, incredulity, confusion, enthusiasm and ridicule — everything, in fact, but indifference.

Wagers were freely made on the outcome of the foolhardy stunt, though the odds have not come down to us. Bettors gave the motorists anywhere from six days to six years to make the journey. Lippincott, however, had supreme confidence in his machine. In an earlier speed test, it had covered the distance from Toledo to Detroit without trouble, at an average of 42 miles-per-hour. He informed the assembled multitudes that he expected to reach the Grand View Hotel at the rim of the Canyon, a distance of 67 miles, in three and a half hours.

At exactly 2:10 in the afternoon, the four adventurers climbed aboard. The Toledo's whistle blew and her bell clanged, amid a roar of shouts and laughter. With a chuff and a cloud of steam, the car and her doughty crew departed. The steamer sped along splendidly — until they were out of sight of the assembled populace. But, before they had covered their first ten miles, the troubles began.

As the road commenced to climb, the "powerful machine" strained, then slowed, then stopped completely. Lippincott reasoned that the trailer was "bearing down too hard on the hind axle." All hands descended and unpacked the trailer. After considerable rearranging of the load, they managed to change the balance. By the time they had finished the job, though, the sut had set behind the mountains. The great forest surrounded them and made the moonless night seem even darker. The lamps were lit and on they ran, with Pilot Lippincott now pouring on the steam, while the crew "clung to the rigging and prayed soulfully against chance stumps and fallen trees." After two rather frightening hours Al Doyle, the guide, called the driver to a halt. He warned that they were coming to a particularly bad stretch, and knowing the country well, made it clear that he would certainly prefer to traverse it in daylight. This was indeed dismaying news, for Lippincott and his companions — even to Doyle who alone knew the country and the possibilities of the weather — had really expected to reach the Canyon within a few hours of their departure. In fact, so sure were they, that they had

The 1901 Toledo Model B Steamer at Grand View Point, Grand Canyon, Arizona on January 9, 1902. The passenger is probably Winfield C. Hogaboom. Photo Courtesy of Progressive Arizona, October 1925.



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June 1902

taken no precautions against accident or delay. The Californians were wearing their accustomed light clothing, which was inadequate for the cold. Furthermore, they were not prepared to stop at night, and had brought along no food. Their sole provision for survival consisted of a large supply of tobacco and matches.

But luck was with them. Doyle remembered that there was a cabin somewhere in the vicinity. Within a short time they found the trail leading to it. What's more, in the distance through the trees, they could see a light coming from the window, and smoke rising from the chimney. Abandoning the car, the four scrambled up the winding trail on foot. There were three cowboys staying in the cabin. They had recently killed a steer and hospitably invited the hungry motorists to join in a banquet of juicy steaks, honey, biscuits and coffee. After the dinner and the talk, they all bunked down on the floor of the cabin and enjoyed a warm, if not comfortable, night. Long before dawn, they were up and had eaten a hearty breakfast. As day was breaking, they returned to their automobile with new enthusiasm, to resume the journey. The Toledo was frozen stiff. It took time and much of their valuable supply of fuel to thaw it out. They were not worried, though, because they knew that they would reach the Canyon Rim and the Grand View Hotel shortly after noon — at the very latest. The cowboys mounted their horses; the motorists climbed into their machine. And again, amid shouts of encouragement, they departed in a cloud of steam and a cloud of dust from the flying hooves of the wild-eyed broncos.

It was a glorious morning and a glorious ride. Twice they passed herds of graceful antelope, held by curiosity until the car was almost upon them. Once they saw a band of wild horses, searching the hillsides for snow to eat, as they were far away from any water. Ten miles and all went well. Then it happened. They had just descended a hill where the trail was very rough with stones. As the car reached the level, the driver opened the throttle. There was a loud "pop" then a great hissing. The water gauge had burst and the valves failed. All hope of heaven went up in the cloud of steam that enveloped them.

They had now used all the good fuel brought from Los Angeles and it was necessary to fall back on a reserve supply of "oil which was alleged to be gasoline," purchased in Flagstaff. It soon became apparent that this fuel was not going to give the amount of heat required to keep up sufficient steam. Moreover, it produced a dense black smoke that "poured out of the ventilators, making car, driver and passengers sooty." Several hours of this sort of thing at about three miles per hour, decided them to abandon the trailer with its load of baggage, water, and alleged gasoline, and attempt to reach the canyon some-

time during the night. Accordingly, all but the barest essentials were cached and all four piled onto Toledo "in a heap." The car started and ran much better without the additional weight — for about a mile. Then; a sharp metallic "click" and a harsh, rasping sound. The drive chain had broken. Three hours later, they had succeeded in patching it together. Now it was midnight, and bitter cold swept over the open plain. "blowing right up under our coat-tails." Doyle knew of no cabins in this desolate area, and his best advice was to head for a bunch of cedars about four miles away. There, they would at least be sheltered from the wind. The headlamp had given out some time ago, and now the kerosene in the sidelamps was almost exhausted. They shed a "pale, sickly light only a few feet ahead." It took a good two hours to reach the cedar trees with half the crew walking ahead, feeling out a safe path. There, the tired, hungry and discouraged travelers built two huge campfires. "After a hearty supper of vain regrets some delicious thoughts of home," they lay down to sleep. But sleep they could not. The chill night was passed in stoking fires and pipes. "At daylight we were up and ready for breakfast," noted Hogaboom:

"For breakfast we each had a look at the automobile and a smoke. Not one of us said anything about being hungry or even thirsty. There was a little dirty ice in the bottom of the tank and we melted some of it, but it didn't taste good so soon after breakfast, so we took another smoke and let it go at that."

By now there was only a little water left in the boiler, and even less "gasoline" in the tanks. Doyle figured there were still about 18 miles to go. Their spirits were not very bright, but they lit the burner and finally got up a little steam. Lippincott worried the car along for another two miles, while the rest walked. Finally, they were obliged to abandon their conveyance.

Now there was no trail, and they were entirely dependent upon Doyle's knowledge of the country. Weak from hunger, thirst and lack of sleep, they plodded on, saying little. About noon, they stumbled upon an old log cabin. Here they rested and considered their plight. Chapman offered \$50 for a ham sandwich, and an earlier bid of \$5 for a drink of water had been raised by degrees. It now stood at \$500 with no takers.

Lippincott and Chapman were exhausted, and even though a weathered sign on the cabin proclaimed that there were only "6½ miles to Grand Canyon," they could walk no further. Doyle and Hogaboom agreed to go on and send back a relief party from the Grand View Hotel. They had hiked only a short way when Doyle was suddenly prostrated with violent stomach cramps, due to drinking gasoline-impregnated water from the boiler. Hogaboom went on alone — weary and suffering from delusions.

Toward evening, lost and exhausted, having covered



The old Grand View Hotel, Grand Canyon Arizona.

what he figured to be at least 18 miles of that "6 $\frac{3}{8}$ miles," he found himself without warning or preparation at the edge of the forest. Before him lay what he described as "the grandest most awe-inspiring sight in all the world," the Grand Canyon at Sunset.

"I stood there upon the rim of that tremendous chasm and forgot who I was and what I came there for. Before me lay the most sublime panorama in all the world. Nature never made anything like it anywhere else. It is the great masterpiece and as I viewed it and my eye drank in the grandeur of the scene I said to myself, 'You better stand back a little further; you might fall in.'"

Twenty minutes later, Hogaboom was at the Grand View Hotel. By eight that night, P. D. Berry, the proprietor, and a four horse team had returned bringing Chauffer Lippincott, Journalist Chapman and Guide Doyle, "the sole survivors." By ten o'clock, they were all warm, well fed, and asleep in comfortable beds.

The next day they drove (in a buggy) over to the Bright Angel Hotel some ten miles away, and telephoned Flagstaff for gasoline. The day after that, the gasoline arrived, and on Thursday, January 9, 1902, the first automobile reached the Grand Canyon — at the end of a rope! (One wonders if at this point they checked the reading of that wonderful "cyclometer" mounted on the rear driving wheel.) Finally the next day, under its own steam the car was navigated out onto Grand View Point and its picture

taken. On Saturday Doyle, Hogaboom and Chapman, gracefully declining offers of a return ride, boarded the train for home.

Several days later, Mr. Lippincott, apparently as enthusiastic and confident as he was at the outset, found a passenger. With P. D. Berry, he drove the sixty-seven miles from the Grand Canyon View Hotel back to Flagstaff in seven hours. The success of this return trip was no less remarkable than the vicissitudes and misfortunes of the first. Nature still smiled and held her breath. Then she veiled the tired mountains in a soft robe of snow and took the props out from under the mercury. The conquest of the Grand Canyon by automobile was an accomplished fact.

This article was compiled from stories written by Winfield C. Hogaboom in the Los Angeles Herald, February 2, 1902 and in the Flagstaff Cocoon Sun, February 8, 1902, and by Roger W. Bidwey in Motor Life, January, 1925, and Progressive Arizona, October 1925. Also see Flagstaff Cocoon Sun, January 4, 18 and 25, 1902. (Photographs are from the article in Progressive Arizona.)

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MYSTERY CAR IS A SANDUSKY



Dear Editor:

I saw DeWalt's request to identify a photo of an early runabout, page 28, Jan.-Feb. 69 GAZETTE. This I'm sure, is one I've been looking for parts and information for. It is a 1903-1904 Sandusky gasoline runabout (made by Hinde & Dauch) with fenders added. I've found that they made two types of this car, one as pictured and the other a *slanting*, curved dash. Which came first I don't know.

I would like to hear from any one with parts or more information on these cars.

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