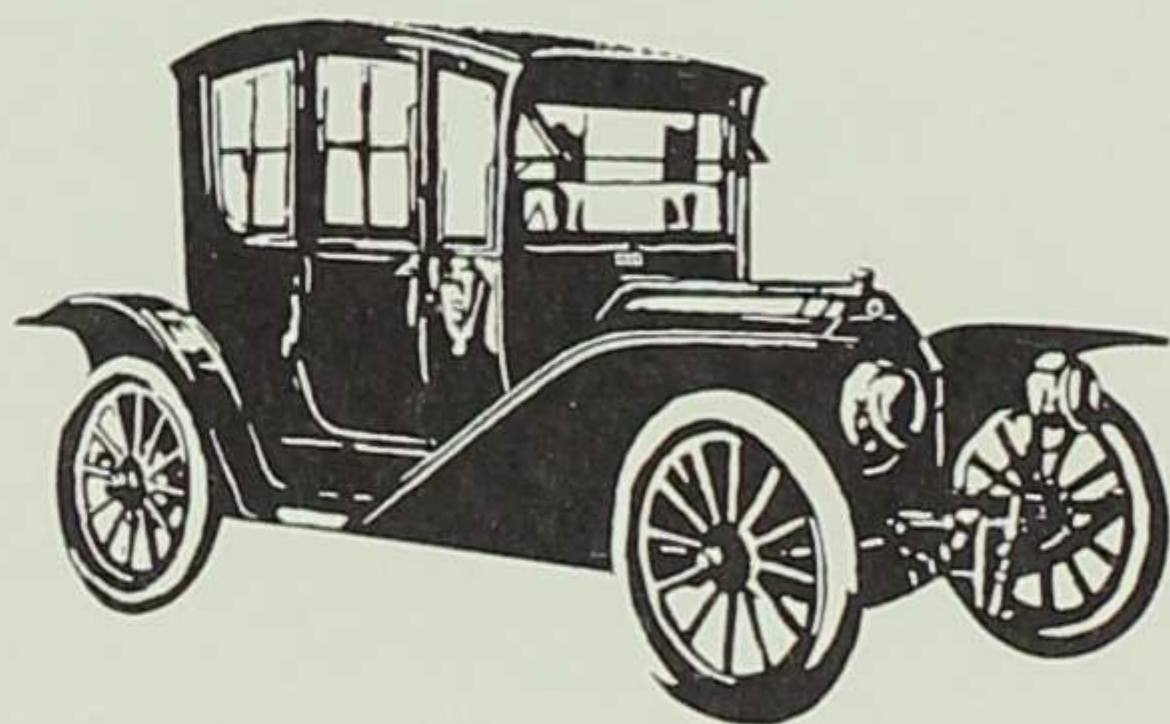


Motoring to a Wedding, 1910

By Floyd M. Knupp



Born in 1903 on a farm about six miles southeast of Dysart, in Benton County, Floyd M. Knupp attended Homer Township School #3 and graduated from the Dysart High School. After finishing coursework at Cedar Rapids Business College in 1924, Mr. Knupp worked as an underwriter for the Inter-Ocean Reinsurance Company — later called the American Reinsurance Company — until his retirement in 1968.

A long-time Iowan with many memories, Mr. Knupp recounts here for us a trip he took as a very young boy, when the experience of a long automobile ride was fresher for most Americans, but no less frustrating. — Ed.

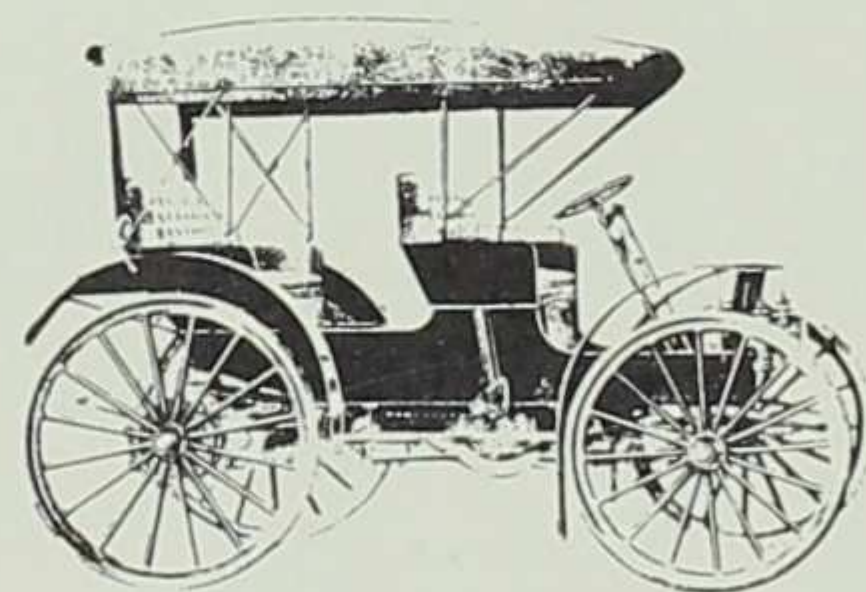
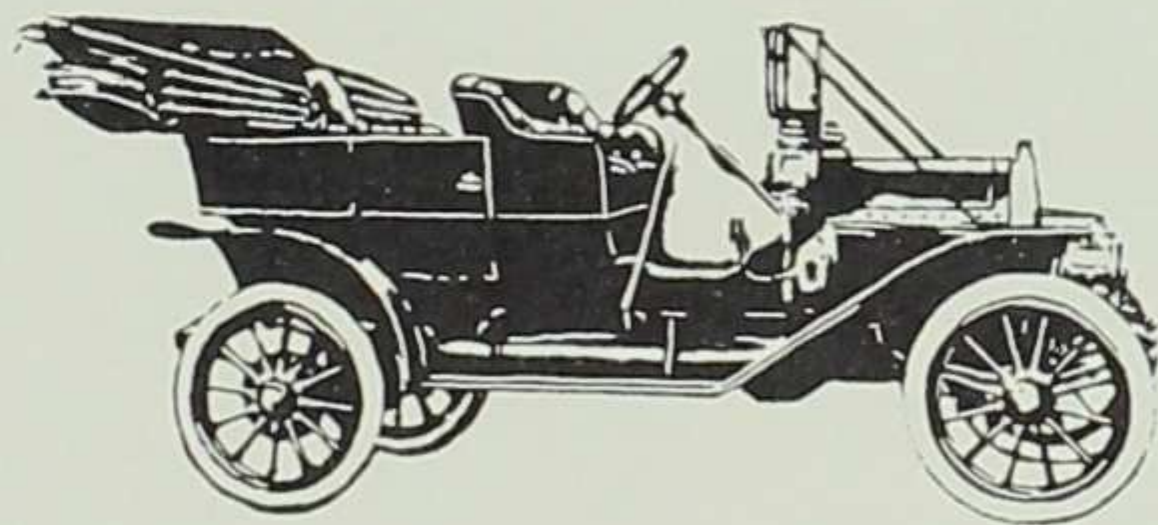
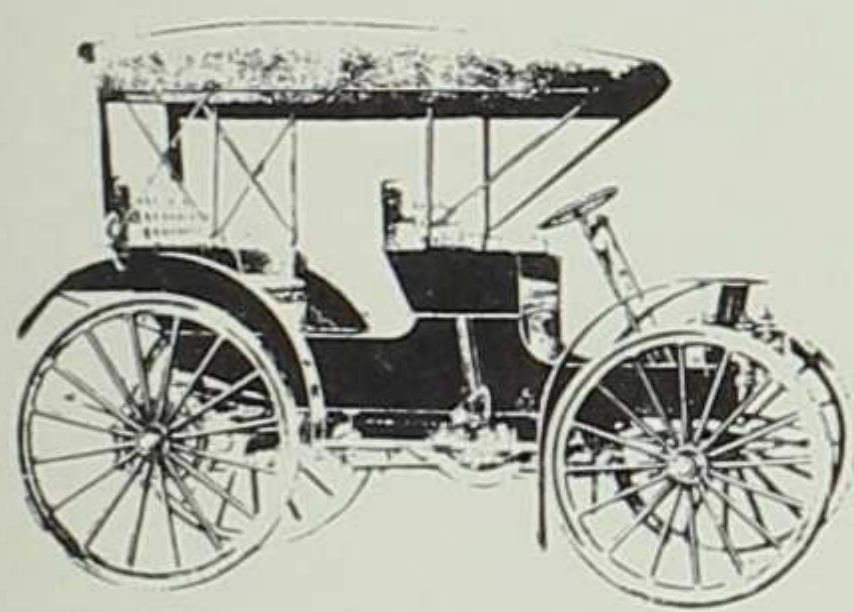
Uncle Noah Knupp was the last of the six brothers to be married. Except for Uncle Sam, who lived in the state of Washington, the brothers were determined to attend the wedding. Uncle Noah's marriage to Lily Bird was to take place at the bride's home in Moorland, Iowa — a small town a few miles southwest of Fort Dodge. The date was set for June, 1910.

My dad — Lemon Knupp — lived on a farm six miles southeast of Dysart; Uncle Dan had an abstract office in Vinton; and Uncle Joe and Uncle Adam were farmers living southeast of Vinton. The brothers decided to make the trip

to Moorland by automobile. We had a Regal, Uncle Dan had an EMF, and Joe and Adam had just purchased Internationals for the journey. These Internationals were nothing more than motorized buggies. They had buggy-size wheels with hard rubber on the rims, a dashboard in front with kerosene headlights, and a two-cylinder opposed engine under the seat with belt drive. Their top speed was probably 15 miles per hour on the level, and up to 20 miles per hour going down hill.

Uncle Dan agreed to be the navigator — keep in mind that there were no marked routes from town to town in those days, and all the roads were dirt and very dusty in the summertime. I imagine that Uncle Dan made up a list of the towns that we would go through, and would stop at each of them to find out how to get to the next town. His, of course, was the lead car, and at a corner where he thought we might be unsure which way to go, he would mark the correct turn by scattering confetti in the road. I remember getting out myself to help search for the telltale marks. The Internationals couldn't go as "fast" as the regular autos, so they brought up the rear.

I was about to turn seven years of age, and my brother Vernon was about 17. Uncle Dan had two sons in their teens, and the other uncles had one or maybe two children each, about



my age or younger. Since Joe and Adam had just bought their new Internationals, they asked a mechanic from Vinton, a Mr. Craig, to make the trip with them. My sister Amanda stayed at home to look after the farm.

As I recall, we left the farm about five o'clock in the morning. The first trouble developed in the hills northwest of Traer. The belts on the Internationals began to slip trying to negotiate the steep grades. However, this was easily taken care of by Mr. Craig, who picked up handfuls of dust from the road to throw on the belts.

Well, I suppose we stopped at every town we came to — for one reason or another. And probably we stopped a lot of times in between. Remember that there were no service stations in those days. Automobile repair centers were usually old livery barns, but cars didn't use much gasoline then. Of course, there were depots and cafes to stop at.

My mother agreed to change places with one of my aunts in the International. After we got back into our Regal I remember my mother saying that that would be the last switch, as the open International "buggies" were much more dusty and windy (no windshields), and the riding was rough. Shock absorbers hadn't been invented yet.

In the afternoon my brother had a small crisis

as he encountered a short curve just before approaching a bridge. Back in those days, the spark and gas levers were on the steering column beneath the steering wheel and you had to reach through the wheel to get at them. As the auto entered the curve, Vern found his hand and fingers caught between the spark and gas levers and the spokes of the steering wheel, but, evidently, flesh and bones bent just enough to get the car over the bridge without a mishap.

Well, the hours slipped by quite fast, but the miles passed at a much slower pace. By eleven o'clock that night, we had gotten as far as Webster City, where we decided to go to a hotel. In the morning, I found myself lying out in the hall. I was understandably puzzled and asked my mother what I was doing there. She said that she had put me out in the hall because of all the bedbugs in the beds. But they really hadn't disturbed my sound sleep.

The next morning we drove over to Fort Dodge. Here we stopped so the men could go to the barbershop to get shaved and dressed for the wedding. I remember going into the barbershop, but I don't know where the women went to get dolled up — unless it was to a millinery store. I must add here that the proper attire for riding in an automobile in those days was a linen duster and a cap with goggles for the



men, and hats tied down with veils for the women — hardly what one would wear to a wedding!

The ceremony was to take place at noon, and here we were, still in Fort Dodge. The clock in the bride's living room was stopped at 12, but we were still over an hour late. The wedding went off in good shape: of course, my dad and several others cried. The lunch was served and we enjoyed it very much.

Uncle Noah had engaged a man with a car to come and pick up the bride and groom after the wedding. We all gave the couple a hearty send-off as they climbed into the car. But alas, when they were only a block down the street, that car coughed. It stopped dead. (When the car had arrived at the house, Mr. Craig had raised the hood and shut off the gasoline in the line.) The men went over and pushed the car with the laughing newlyweds inside around the streets of Moorland. The brothers said that they had come a long way to see them get married, and they were not going to let them get away so soon.

Uncle Noah phoned for a team and surrey to come get them. Just as the surrey was driving away, Mr. Craig jumped over the picket fence and grabbed the horses' bridles.

Foiled for the second time, they spent the evening with us in hilarious visiting. Finally, the bride and groom were permitted to leave on a train about midnight.

The next day, the four automobiles headed back home. Evidently nothing of much interest happened, because I don't recall anything about the return trip. Of course, by that time we were "seasoned travelers." We were quite fortunate not to have had any rain during the trip.

Although the distance traveled one way was less than 150 miles, it was at that time a big undertaking — almost like blazing a trail through the wilderness. Some newspapers carried the story of our trip, and it was even rumored that the story of the caravan appeared in at least one Chicago paper. □