

# THE SPIRIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
R.E. OLDS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM

May June  
2021



## REO Speedwagon or Mack Jr

Some say they were Mack trucks build by REO with an agreement to rebadge some as REO Speedwagons. Others say that they were Speedwagons being sold as Mack Jr.

What is for sure is that there was an agreement between the two companies in 1935. As part of that agreement, REO was to build, at the Lansing plant, a small pick-up truck that would be sold by Mack Truck Co. as the Mack Jr. That same pick-up was also to be sold by REO as part of their Speedwagon lineup.

1936 production numbers, a total of 2,343, held promise for the smaller light-duty truck. Sales of the 1937 model fell off slightly to 2,226 as America continued to feel the effects of the Depression. Production ended after only 405 trucks were produced in 1938.

While the idea of a lighter duty truck was accepted by consumers, pricing of the Speedwagon/Jr was not. In 1937 you could buy a Ford pick-up for about \$470. Even the lowest end version of the REO/Mack truck would cost you over \$575 while more robust versions would spike the cost to \$1,200 or more.

240 Museum Drive  
Lansing, MI 48933  
(517)372-0529

**Mission Statement**

The purpose of the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is to collect, preserve, study, and exhibit those objects that will serve to illustrate the part Lansing played in the development of transportation with emphasis on the automobile and its effect on this community and its people.

**Museum Hours of Operation**

Tuesday through Saturday: 10 a.m. — 5 p.m.  
Sundays: 12 noon — 5 p.m. (April — Oct.)  
Closed major Holidays & Mondays

**Admission**

Adults: \$10, Seniors & Students: \$7

Members: Free  
Special group rates and tours available

The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is a 501(c)(3), non profit organization

**Email:**

[autos@reoldsmuseum.org](mailto:autos@reoldsmuseum.org)

**Website:**

[www.reoldsmuseum.org](http://www.reoldsmuseum.org)

**Executive Director**

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## Director's Corner

Happy Spring,

The last couple of months have been quite busy. I'll start with the latest on vehicle acquisitions and displays. We now have our 2021 Raffle Car, which is a beautiful red 1967 Cutlass Supreme with a 330 cu in engine, 4 bbl carb and 2 speed Jetaway transmission. The car is in excellent shape and was located with the help of Ray Mance, one of our many great volunteers. Tickets are now on sale! The Museum also acquired a 1960 Super 88 Flat Top which is a very unique car that has quite an elegant look to it. Both the Cutlass and Super 88 are parked in front of the canvas in the central part of the Museum and make a great display that needs to be seen to really appreciate them.

An Oldsmobile "Performance Section" has now been set up starting with the 1949 Rocket engine and our 1953 Olds 88 NASCAR and ending with the Aerotech. Yes, after many years of separation, the Oldsmobile Aerotech is back in the Museum....on loan from General Motors. We have a great display set up showcasing that A.J Foyt driven car, along with two prototype racing engines, a wind tunnel model and a production Quad 4 engine, which was the reason the Aerotech program was formed.

With lots of hard work from our volunteer staff we have detailed a number of cars and now have the following vehicles in running condition to support our events:

1906 Baby REO

1908 REO Model B Runabout

1909 REO Two-Cylinder Touring Car

1926 Olds Roadster

Cont. on page 11

# The Kedzie Loan

(Based on an e-mail exchange with Peter Stephens)

## **Question to Peter –**

I should know this story, but I don't...

I found a newspaper article that said Professor Robert Kedzie, in 1897 or so, had made a loan to Pliny Olds that saved him from financial trouble. I kind of knew this part as I believe it is why RE paid for the Engineering Building at MAC. What I didn't know was, according to the article, the money was needed because of a lawsuit against Olds. I had not heard of any real legal trouble except for much later with the Selden Patten issue.

Can you fill me in with more details?

## **Peter's response -**

Here is my typical long answer to a short question:

We know from Gorge May's book and family papers that PF Olds & Son had significant financial problems in the early 1880's, probably starting around 1883. May (page 25) says " they were beset by financial problems". We know they couldn't make the payroll and I'm guessing they couldn't pay certain suppliers as well. We are not aware of specific suits against the company, but it doesn't surprise us. Given how the courts were not pro-labor back then, I'm guessing any lawsuits were from suppliers as employees just didn't sue employers...they didn't really have legal standing back then.

By 1885, Olds operated out of a building that was 18' X 26" with seven employees. Net Income was \$7,000. The business was near collapse. It was during this period that Olds obtained the \$1,500 loan from Professor Robert Kedzie, who took a mortgage on everything in the business. We know the rest, by 1887, after R.E. essentially took over the business (due to Pliny and Wallace being too easy going). the business started to improve as a result of the Kedzie loan.

By 1887, they moved across the street to a 2-story building which was 25' X 100'. IN 1890, the building was expanded to 55" X 135". It was during this period, up to 1892, that the company sold nearly 2,000 small gas fired steam engine which made the company solvent and allowed RE to pursue horseless carriages.

The engineering building was in fact repayment for the Kedzie's kindness they had shown towards the Olds' when they were nearly down and out.

In looking up reference material, I came across an interesting book about the history of Michigan, specifically Ingham County. That book has the following story, which we didn't know about. Professor Robert Kedzie's son Dr. Frank Kedzie was also a professor at MAC. He went to the Olds shop to inquire about a repair on one of the Olds steam engines the college had purchased. Frank became interested in R.E.'s discussion about a horseless carriage but the fathers, Robert and Pliny, thought the idea was foolhardy and dangerous.

Frank had persuaded his father to buy one of these Olds engines for MAC and wanted to see if it could actuate a Gramme dynamo. Robert was against the experiment but Frank and R.E. persevered in their efforts. When they connected the belt from the steam engine to the dynamo (or generator) it produced the first electric light at MAC! The dynamo was meant for hand cranking only but R.E. and Frank ingeniously rigged up the belt system.

Hope this helps.



**R—STANDS FOR REO, THE ONLY REAL THING.**

**E—Stands for Everywhere, for everywhere they will be seen.**

**O—Stands for Olds, the man who makes the Reo.**

The only car having nothing but scientific principles involved. Pressed steel frame, long wheel base, powerful engine, very easily controlled, simple to operate, one of the most beautiful little cars ever constructed. \$1,250 for 16 h. p. tonneau touring car; \$650 for 7½ h. p. runabout. On exhibition at the Chicago show. Do not place your order until you have seen it. Remember this is no new experiment, but is the result of years of research and study, built by the man who has built more automobiles than any other man in the world.

Descriptive matter upon request.

**REO AUTOMOBILE CO.,**

**1323 Michigan-av. Phone South 1090.**

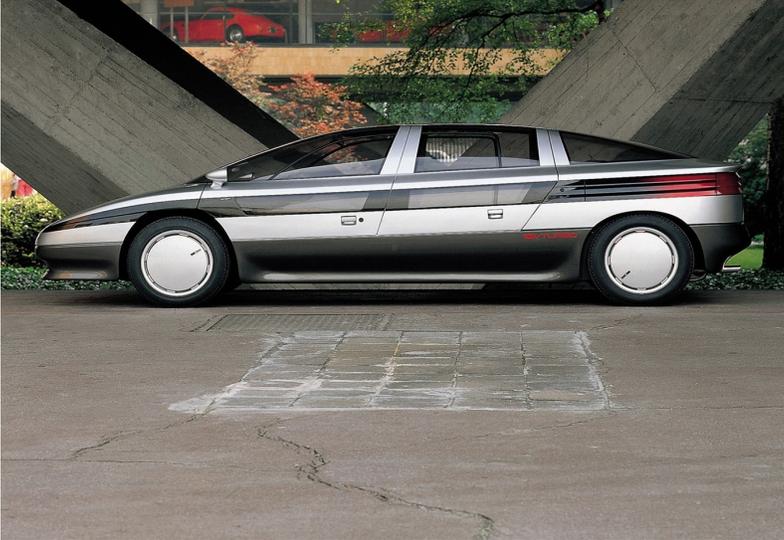


## First Quarter Donors

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The Fortman Family	Sharon Brehm	The Center of Psyhintry	Penny & Erik Sathers

Thank You For Your Support

# REOLDS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM



## If They Had Built It—Would You Have Bought It?

The 1986 Oldsmobile Italdesign Incas concept featured a mid-engine quad turbo inline-4 engine, and featured a displacement of 137.9 cubic inches. 175.2 inches in length, the Incas are 72.8 inches in width and 49.2 inches high. Featuring 4wd driven wheels, the '86 Incas had a 113.2 inch wheelbase. The Incas was capable of 230.0 bhp at 500 rpm . Never meant for production it was a design study only, but it does show how daring and innovative Oldsmobile tried to be.

Check out the dash— the only control not on the steering wheel is the turn signal. And what about foot pedals?



## 1986 Oldsmobile *INCAS*



Everyone known about the song “In My Merry Oldsmobile”  
But what about these other songs that feature  
Oldsmobile?

455 Rocket—Kathy Matter

Jesus Drives An Oldsmobile—Doug DeJoe

In My Brand New Oldsmobile—Autotowners

She Took My Oldsmobile—The Romancers

This Is Your Daddy’s Old—Ray Stevens

Rocket Action Oldsmobile—Larry Heagle

Unstoppable Oldsmobile—Mike Jackson

Tie A Yellow Ribbon ‘Round My Oldsmobile—Capitol Steps



## *Auto Adoption Benefactors*

*Don Barron—1950 Oldsmobile Coupe*

*Olds Club of Florida—1906 “Baby” R&O*

*Chuck and Judy Wooderson—1938 Firetruck*

*Ashley Jones—1985 Olds “Darth Vader”*

*Olds Club of Florida—1921 Olds 46J*

**TODAY**  
**IN BUSINESS**



# White Finally Buys Reo

BY KENNETH A THOMPSON  
Free Press Financial Writer

Reo Motors, Inc., of Lansing, is passing into its third new management in three years. Its long-negotiated sale to White Motor Co., of Cleveland, was announced by Robert Black, chairman of White Motor, and Simon D. Den Uyl, president of Bohn Aluminum & Brass Corp., which had owned and operated Reo as a division for two years under rough going.

The price on Reo assets, estimated at \$13,000,000, was not disclosed but was reported to be about \$4,000,000. The Reo truck-making operation was acquired in 1954 by Bohn Aluminum & Brass Corp. and several officers and directors. At the same time other Reo divisions were acquired by other firms and control of the Reo corporate shell was assimilated by a fourth group, Nuclear Corp.

The Black-Den Uyl announcement said Reo manufacturing, sales and general offices would remain at Lansing. From a level of \$142,000,000 in 1953, its sales fell to \$38,600,000 in 1956. Its earnings fell from \$1,856,000 to \$28,831. White Motors' 1956 volume topped \$207,000,000.

A White merger with Diamond T Motor Car Co., Chicago truck producer, is reported to be near. Bohn Aluminum, which holds 137,000 shares of Diamond T, or about a third of its stock, blocked White's attempt to get Diamond T in 1955. But its bloc and 90,000 shares recently acquired by C. Russell Feldmann, who was in the Reo picture in 1954, are reported to be near commitment in continuing negotiations. . . .

REO – Diamond T – White Motor

In 1955 White Motor Co. had announced that it intended to buy the Diamond T truck company. The owners of REO blocked that effort, being hopeful of their own plans to merger with Diamond T. By November of 1956 REO owners had changed their plans and they themselves had initiated talks with White to buy REO.

On May 26, 1957, White finalized the purchase of REO and on March 29, 1958 they acquired Diamond T. On May 1, 1967, the two truck divisions were merged into the new Diamond REO Division of the White Motor Company. The unified division produced both REO and Diamond T trucks until 1967 when the last REO truck rolled of the line.

In 1971 White sold the Diamond REO division to Cappert and the Diamond REO Truck Company was born. The ill managed company was forced into bankruptcy by 1974.

In 1975 Osterlund and Hoseal bought the rights to build Diamond REO trucks and continued building a version of them until about 2010.



Based on data released by the US Census Bureau in 1910, Michigan produced over half of all the US built automobiles in 1909. The net worth of the Michigan produced cars was \$80,370,000. The closest state was Ohio with a distant \$29,659,800. Indiana came in third with \$26,817,600. Michigan produced a reported 64,921 car with the total US production being 127,289. (51%)

Not only did Michigan out produce ever other state in numbers, it also did so at a lower cost to the buyers of them. The average cost of a US built car was \$1,297 whereas the Michigan built average cost was \$1,086.

While no exact number were reported for what Michigan city produced the most cars, it was the general feeling that Lansing led the way by having both REO and Oldsmobile building automobiles here.

It was also of note that Michigan produced over twice as many aftermarket and general automotive parts than any other state.



# Now On Display

**A Man A Miss  
A Car A Curve  
He Kissed the Miss  
And Missed  
The Curve**



From 20 to 35 percent is what the increase of 1906 production over that of 1905 will be, in the opinion of F L Smith, Vice President and General Manager of Olds Motor Works, which is his idea, also, that the medium and low priced cars will be the biggest sellers.

1906 REO Want Ads

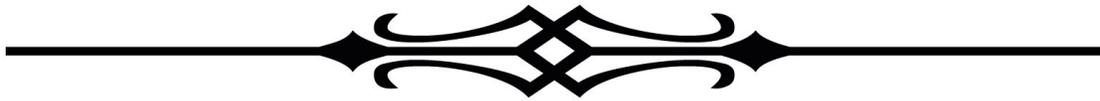
**WANTED—Painters, glaziers, and varnish rubbers.  
Address  
REO MOTOR CAR CO.,  
Lansing, Mich.**

**WANTED**  
Men with one or two years experience on lathe and vises, and assembling.  
Reo Motor Car Co.,  
Lansing, Mich.

**WANTED:—Fifty men for factory work, also a number of machinists. Reo Motor Car Co.,  
Lansing, Mich.**



The Official Carrier of the R E Olds Transportation Museum



Did you know that you can also help support the Museum when you make purchases on Amazon? Go to [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and select **Re Olds Museum Assoc Inc** as your charity of choice; .5% of every purchase you make on [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) will be donated back to the Museum! Don't worry! Item prices are exactly the same in [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) as on normal Amazon (but make sure to sign in through Amazon Smile)!



1937 Olds 5 Passenger Touring Sedan (Mz Lucy) – being used for a wedding June 5<sup>th</sup>

1953 Olds Deluxe 88 NASCAR

We continue to work on vehicles to put them back into running condition with a focus on preservation. Our 1903 Curved Dash Olds is getting close to running and, while Baby REO is back on display, Mama is out getting some much needed repairs before the planned July 16-17 event at the Gilmore Car Museum where the pair will make their first ever showing both running and driving. This event is a big deal for the HCCA and they really appreciate our bringing them out to the “Celebration of Brass” event.

Our 1953 NASCAR was accepted to participate at the Motor Muster in Greenfield Village in June, so I’m looking forward to getting out to that event and spreading the word about our Museum.

Jim Neal, Ted Graham and I drive out to New Jersey and picked up all of Jay Leonard’s REO parts and literature to help save it all from the landfill. Dave Pfaff and our Archives team have been doing a great job pouring through all that great literature and incorporating it into our collection.

We held our first ever Cars and Coffee event on May 1st and it was very successful. We had around 80 cars and a couple of hundred enthusiasts. The Museum opened its doors at 8:00 am for ½ price admission until 10 am and we made around \$900 between admissions, raffle ticket sales and gift shop sales in those two hours. What was more important though was we were able to meet a lot of local car enthusiasts and improved our community building with the help of the Lansing Cars and Coffee Group on Facebook. Our next Cars and Coffee is planned for June 5<sup>th</sup> 8-10am – I hope you can make it.

Our Car Capital Auto Show is coming together for July 24<sup>th</sup> and will be held at the Michigan Library and History Center Campus. It has been keeping Rick and I quite busy planning and updating the websites and literature. Gary Doty has been working on the judging plan. I really appreciate both of them supporting this huge task.

Three of the four planned grant applications have been submitted for our ADA compliant restroom project which has potential to really improve our ability to host persons with disabilities or those that just have a harder time getting around. We hope to start in the fall.

We have plenty of projects to keep us busy this year and welcome new volunteers to help us out. As always, we appreciate all the support and donations we have received to keep the Museum functioning and fulfilling its mission. Please continue to keep us in mind when estate planning and giving.

