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NEWSLETTER  
OF THE  
R.E. OLDS  
TRANSPORTATION  
MUSEUM

Sept Oct  
2022

# The Story Of **FISHER BODY**



## A Tradition Of Craftmanship

(Taken from a 1950's GM publication of the same name.)

### PART 1

The story of Fisher Body is a stirring chapter in the history of America's industrial progress.

It had its humble beginning in a blacksmith's shop in a small community where men worked with their hands to fashion a product to sell to their neighbors. Within a generation it had become the largest industry of its kind in the world.

It is the story of six Fisher brothers who faithfully followed the precept that quality of product is the first essential to success.

It is the story of the large group of master craftsmen and men with forward-looking vision who joined them along the way, implementing and continuing this precept.

Together, these men build an organization that leads the motor industry in improving the comfort and safety of the motoring public, an organization that has made Fisher Body known throughout the world for its integrity, its foresight, and its ingenuity.

Fisher Body Division

General Motors Corporation

Cont. on page 5

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: (call for hours)  
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 and all donations may be tax deductible.

**Email:**

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

**Website:**

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

**Executive Director**

Scott Mrdeza

**Board of Trustees**

Donald Baron, Gary Doty, Ron Horowitz,  
Dick Roth, Lori Lanspeary, Henry Green,  
Scot Lyon, Michael Rodriguez,  
Debbie Stephens, Peter Stephens,

Randy Thayer

## Director's Corner

The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Car Capital Auto Show was held on Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup> at the Museum and surrounding properties and was a great success. It turned out to be a beautiful day and we received a lot of positive feedback about how it felt like more of a "family" event. We had over a thousand people through the Museum that day, many of which never knew we existed. I want to thank all those that volunteered to help put the show on. It is a big undertaking and would be impossible to hold without all your effort.

The 1984 Cutlass Brougham and 1954 Super 88 convertible recently donated are both now on display. We continue to rotate the cars and trucks we have on display to ensure that the Museum has something different to see with repeat visits. We just recently added to our gas station display but you'll have to stop in to see that.

On August 6<sup>th</sup>, the Museum was invited to the General Motors Lansing Delta Township Assembly Plant Employee's Open House where we showcased our 1899 Olds Electric, 1996 GM EV1 Electric, 1959 Super 88 Convertible and our 1974 Cutlass Raffle Car, which garnered over 150 ticket sales that day. It was a great event to introduce the Museum to the 3000 or so attendees that are employed at or retired from that plant. The GM Lansing Grand River Plant will be hosting their Employee Open House in October, and we will also be supporting that event with a 1903 Curved Dash Olds and our 1937 Olds Touring Sedan which were both built on that site. Interestingly, the 1937 car was one of the first GM cars built by the newly formed UAW at that time. We will be taking our Raffle Car to that event also. The Museum looks forward to more interaction with these two very active automotive assembly plants in the future as we continue to promote the legacy of Ransom Olds.

Continued on next page



Speaking of events, the Museum will be participating in the Old Car Festival at Greenfield Village (Dearborn, MI) on the weekend of September 10-11 with our 1909 REO Touring Car. This is a great family event and features cars from 1896 – 1932 which can be seen driving around the village during the entire event. If you've never been there before, I encourage you to come check it out and feel free to thumb a ride, as most participants are happy to provide the service. Please check out our calendar for future events.

You may have seen that the Museum is looking for a new Executive Director. Well.....we are. I am stepping down as the current Executive Director to allow me more time to help some family members. It has been a privilege to lead the Museum for close to two years now and I'm very proud of all that has been accomplished in that time, but I'm not a one-man show. The way I see it, I'm just the conductor of a great orchestra of staff, volunteers, board members and supporters. With the thousands of hours of help, they are the ones that get the work done. Moving forward, I will continue to be a presence at the Museum and will be helping the newly selected Executive Director get up to speed once one is selected.

As a reminder, please consider the Museum when preparing for estate planning and gifting. Your donations continue to keep the Museum moving forward, allow us to preserve our vehicles, improve our displays and help with community outreach .

Best Regards

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This will be the last issue of the Spirit Newsletter that I will have the honor of being the Editor of. As of the 21st of September I will be leaving my position as Operations Manager. The hours I have spent working and volunteering here have been wonderful and I will miss coming to the Museum. I am sure that I will be making visits back here in the future to see how the Museum is growing.

Rick Kaiser

## R.E. Olds Transportation Museum announces retirement of its Executive Director – Search for replacement to commence immediately.

The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum (REOTM) announces today that Executive Director Scott Mrdeza will retire from his full-time position effective October 1, 2022 but will stay on at the Museum in another role. A Search Committee comprised of current museum board members, community leaders and members of the Olds family has been established. “While we are sorry to see Scott step down, we are happy he will be able to spend more time with his family and stay involved with the REOTM”, said Gary Doty, President of the Board of Directors of the REOTM.

Mrdeza originally joined the REOTM in January 2021 as Executive Director of the Museum. “It has been my privilege to act as the Executive Director of the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum and I have been honored to work with such a talented team of staff and volunteers.” says Mrdeza. “This has been a wonderful and rewarding adventure that has allowed me to add my touch to an already incredible place. I love the sense of accomplishment I get working here as I can see ideas quickly become reality. Life dictates a need for me to focus on family right now, but I look forward to helping the new Executive Director get settled in and be successful.”

“Scott made significant contributions in just about every aspect of the museum. He upgraded the facilities and displays. His engineering knowledge was of great help to the volunteers who maintain the many cars we have in the museum’s collection.” said Debbie Stephens, Board member and great granddaughter of R.E. Olds. “Scott’s impact was to bring the REOTM to be one of the best small car museums in the United States. We are so happy to know that Scott will continue with the museum and will be available to support the incoming new director. We very much appreciate his many contributions.” added Stephens.

The Search Committee will be focused on finding an experienced leader who will be able to continue to grow the legacy of R.E. Olds and his impact upon Lansing and the United States. The new director will work closely with its many volunteers who play a key role in the daily success of its operations.

### **About the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum:**

The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is the only museum in the world displaying a significant collection of Oldsmobile and REO automobiles, trucks, and memorabilia. Equally important, the Museum tells the story of Ransom E. Olds contributions to the transportation industry in Lansing, and across the country. Connect with the museum at [reoldsmuseum.org](http://reoldsmuseum.org). Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

For additional information, please contact Peter Stephens, R.E. Olds Transportation Museum Board member, at [pjstephens@gmail.com](mailto:pjstephens@gmail.com)

# THE STORY OF FISHER BODY

It was inevitable that the Fisher brothers would leave their home village of Norwalk, O., to make their living in a larger community where opportunity beckoned. Fred, the eldest, was the first to leave, coming to Detroit in 1901 to work for the C. R. Wilson Body Company, then the largest firm in the automobile body business. Within a few years he had worked his way up to superintendent's position. Soon his brother, Charles, followed him to Detroit to work for the Wilson Company.

## FISHER BODY IS BORN

It was on July 22, 1908, that Fred and Charles took the step that brought the name FISHER BODY into being by organizing the Fisher Body Company. Of historical interest is the fact that two months later – September 16, 1908 – General Motors was organized. Thus in 1908 began one of the most important chapters in automotive history.

The Fisher Body venture looked hopeless to many. The country was still shaken from the effects of the 1907 panic. Money was tight; general business was slow. But the men who founded Fisher Body were men of vision and courage and they knew how to build automobile bodies superlatively well.

There was plenty of room for improvement in body building. The older concerns had been builders of carriage bodies and they had brought the simple arts and machinery suitable for carriage bodies into the automobile business with as few changes as possible. Hence, they were a little slow to realize that far greater strength and resilience were required for powered vehicles than for horse-drawn vehicles. As a result, early automobile bodies quickly became loose and noisy under road shocks.

The Fisher brothers had their eyes on closed car possibilities from the start. They foresaw that motoring would remain a summer sport until motorist could ride comfortably in the winter months; that women would never be really pleased with the automobile so long as their gowns and hats were at the mercy of wind and weather. They had the vision to realize that the public demand would be for closed cars.

One of the company's greatest difficulties was trying to convince the automobile manufacturers that the price of the closed car – which was about three times that of the open car – could be brought within the reach of the general public.

It was Fred Fisher who declared: "If you strive to build what the public wants, you'll find the way to build it. The public wants the closed car, and we're going to find the way to give it to them."

## ADVENT OF THE CLOSED BODY

Convinced that volume production was the answer, the Fishers preached the gospel of the closed car to automobile manufacturers for two years before they were rewarded in 1910 by an order from Cadillac for 150 closed bodies, the first "big" order for closed bodies ever placed in America. The reaction was far-reaching. Almost immediately there was a public demand for this type of automobile.

Seeing the first part of their prophecy on the way to fulfillment and realizing what was to come, the Fishers organized the Fisher Closed Body Company in December, 1910. Two years later they entered production in Canada with the Fisher Body Company of Canada, Ltd., and in August 1916 Merged the three companies into the Fisher Body Corporation.

During this period the company had originated many important developments. One of the first improvements was the adoption of the rubber weather strip to keep out rain, snow and cold. Another was the use of steel-faced dies to draw out sheet metal evenly and smoothly. The company also started development of the first steel body presses toward their present high state of efficiency. Another advance was the use of solid steel panels, with Fisher engineers and steel mill experts collaborating to develop steel flexible enough and strong enough to stand tremendous strain.

In 1919, Three years after the merger of the original Fisher Body Company, the Fisher Closed Body Company and the Fisher Body Company of Canada, the Fishers sold to General Motors Corporation a three-fifths interest in Fisher Body and agreed to furnish bodies for the entire General Motors line of cars. Five years later production had leaped from 135,000 units to 575,000, and in another year had passed the million mark.

## TERNSTEDT IS ACQUIRED

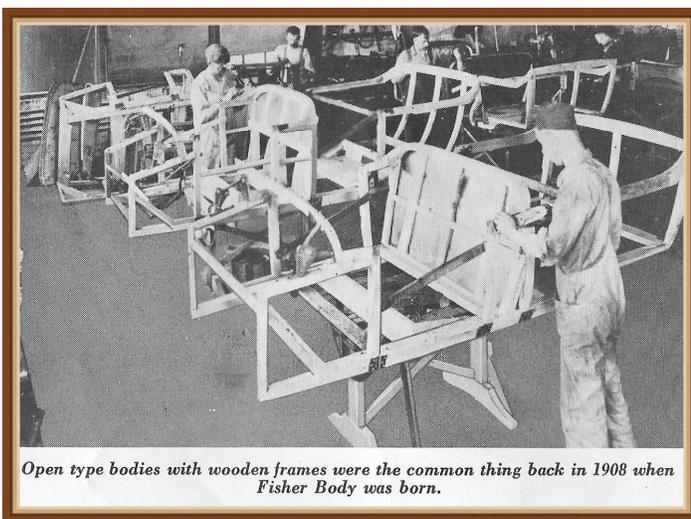
On May 1, 1920, Fisher Body acquired the Ternstedt Manufacturing Company, into which was consolidated several manufacturing activities then engaged in the production of various types of body hardware and other small body parts. Within the next three years the England Manufacturing Company, International Metal Stamping Company and Shepard Art Metal Company became a part of Ternstedt. In the Ternstedt organization, now a separate division of General Motors, Fisher Body gathered for the first time in the history of industry a complete staff of engineers, designers, artists, and modelers prepared to fill the modern demand for artistic harmony of design in body hardware, interior fittings and similar appointments.

Constant improvements were necessary to maintain leadership. In 1920, Fisher became the first to use scientific insulation in an automobile body to reduce noise and keep out heat and cold. A year later came the narrow windshield pillar, which provided greatly increased vision.

Fisher bodies were the first to have a dependable build-in window regulator for closed cars. Fisher Body likewise was the first to adopt flash welding to produce a continuous seam, providing greater strength and resistance to weather.

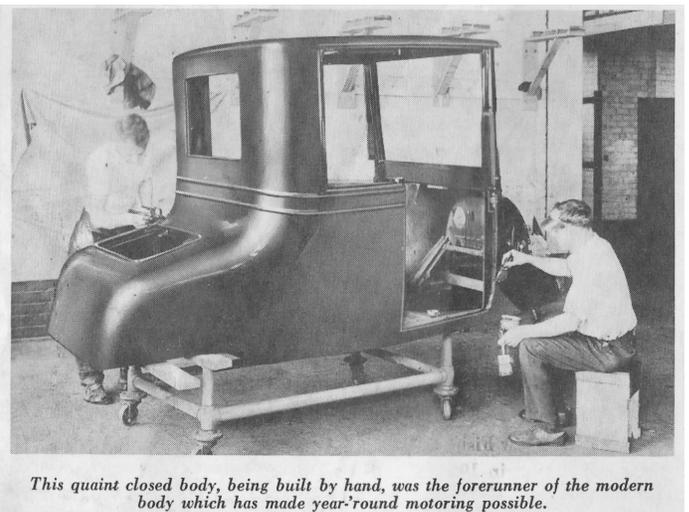
## A NEW AND BETTER FINISH

In 1923, Fisher Body made one of its most important contributions to the automobile world when it pioneered the use of lacquer instead of paint and varnish for bodies. This proved to be one of the greatest advances toward attaining volume production, thereby helping to bring the closed car within reach of the average buyer. What it meant can be seen by the fact that it required four weeks to paint and trim a body finished in varnish. This time was reduced to six hours by the use of lacquer. Another important result was that the use of lacquer made it possible to meet a public demand for color, and within two years color began to play an important part in automobile styling.

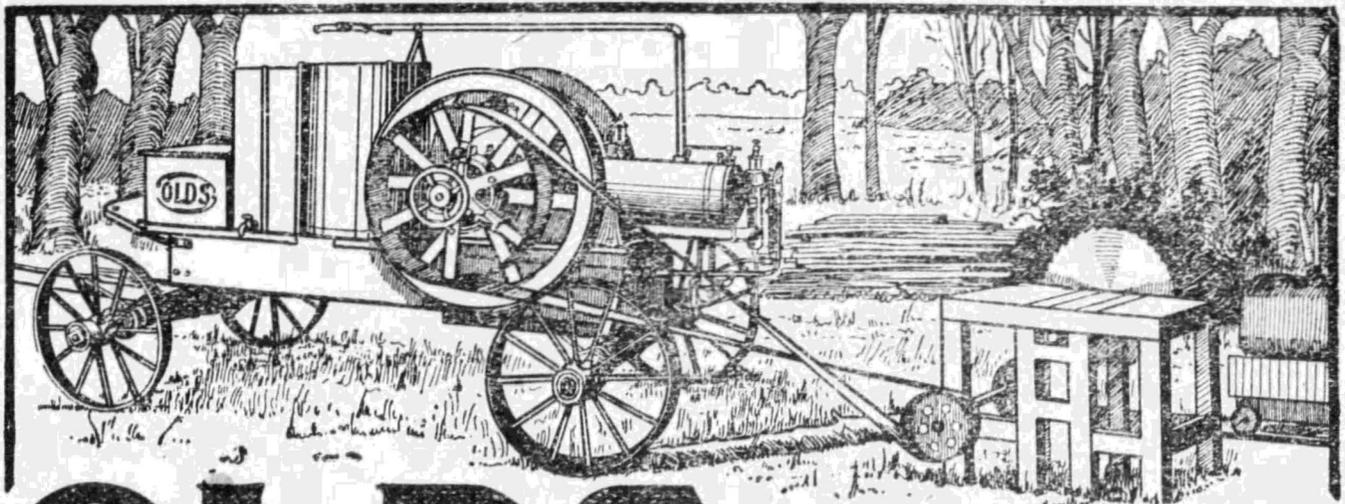


*Open type bodies with wooden frames were the common thing back in 1908 when Fisher Body was born.*

***The Story will continue in the next issue of this Newsletter***



*This quaint closed body, being built by hand, was the forerunner of the modern body which has made year-round motoring possible.*



# OLDS ENGINES

There is no gas engine as simple as an Olds—compare it with others and this statement is proved. The repairs cost practically nothing. Every adjustment is very simple to make. Exact duplicates of any part can be furnished at once, perfectly machined and ready to put on. This is important in case of accident.

## The Most Economical Engine

For sawing wood, pumping, feed grinding, churning, running cream separator and all farm work.

Our reference—The User—The Man with an Olds.

The reason why is interestingly told in our catalog mailed on request. Tell us your requirements and we will help you figure out what you need. Send for our catalog showing Type A (2-8 h. p.), Type G (8-50 h. p.), Types K and N (12-1200 h. p. used with our Gas Producer. It will reduce fuel cost 75 per cent.)

### Celebrated Picture Free.

For 4c in stamps to pay cost of mailing we will also send you Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair," the most celebrated animal picture in the world, size 16 x 20 beautifully colored, suitable for framing.

**OLDS GASOLINE ENGINE WORKS, Lansing, Mich.**

935 Chestnut Street.

For 4 cents in stamps you got this picture—suitable for framing. What it had to do with Olds is unclear but they must have thought it would be good for sales to give it away.



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**No lady likes  
To dance  
Or dine  
Accompanied by  
A porcupine**

**Burma-Shave**

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Clark Carriage Company — Lansing Michigan

1868

**If They Had Build It—Would  
You Have Bought It?**

# 1968-69 TORONADO



Designed by Roger Hughet in 1968. It appears that it never made it beyond a clay model.



**The new "BELT LINE" (Lansing Manufacturer's Railroad) which was built by the Olds Motor works, the American Suction Gas Producer Co. and the Olds Gas Engine works, now connects all these plants with the Grand Trunk, Michigan Central, Lake Shore and Pere Marquette railroads, making the best shipping combination obtainable.**

Detroit Free Press 7/2/1905

**LANSING MANUFACTURERS'  
RAILROAD**

LAKE SHORE & MICHIGAN SOUTHERN AND MICHIGAN  
CENTRAL RAILROADS, LESSEES.

*First Mortgage, Serial, Five Per Cent.,  
Gold Bonds.*

ISSUE, - - \$75,000

UNION TRUST COMPANY, TRUSTEE

The UNION TRUST COMPANY offers, subject to prior sale, any portion of an issue of \$75,000 First Mortgage, Serial, Five per cent. Gold Bonds of the LANSING MANUFACTURERS' RAILROAD.

Dated July 1, 1905. Interest payable January 1 and July 1, at the Union Trust Company, Detroit.

**MATURITIES:**

July 1, 1915	- - - -	\$18,000
July 1, 1920	- - - -	19,000
July 1, 1925	- - - -	19,000
July 1, 1930	- - - -	19,000

The Manufacturers' Railroad, a terminal railway, connects the manufacturing section of Lansing, Michigan, with the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern, the Michigan Central, the Pere Marquette, and the Grand Trunk Railroads. The length of the road is five miles. The Railroad is leased to the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and the Michigan Central Railroads for twenty-five years, with the privilege of releasing or purchasing. These railroads, under their lease, pay semi-annually to the Union Trust Company, Trustee under the trust mortgage, a sum sufficient to pay 5 per cent interest on the entire bond issue, for twenty-five years; and they also pay a rental to the Railroad Company, equal to 4 per cent on the capital stock. The actual cost of constructing the road exceeds the bond issue. All the bonds mature within the period covered by the lease.

Taxes, renewals, additional sidings to accommodate new business, and all other expenses whatsoever, are payable by the operating railroads. All betterments revert to the Lansing Manufacturers' Railroad at the termination of the lease.

The President of the Lansing Manufacturers' Railroad is James H. Seager; and the road is owned by the Olds Motor Works, the Olds Gasoline Engine Works, and the American Suction Gas Producer Company.

The Union Trust Company recommends these bonds:  
Price to net 4½ per cent.

**Union Trust Company**

Union Trust Building, Detroit, Mich.

# 2022 Car Capital Car Show

## Winners

### Group 1 – Stock

Best of Show - Geoffrey Weller 1929 Cadillac Dual Cowl Phaeton

Runner Up – Jim Cashen 1964 Pontiac GTO

Third Place – Pamela and Mark Bartig 1969 Ford Mustang Mach 1

### Group 2 – Modified

Best of Show - Janice Cusmano 1964 Ford Falcon

Runner Up – Peter Dunbar 2006 Ford Mustang

Third Place – Everett Mero 1971 Ford F100 Custom Pickup

### Group 3 – Oldsmobile

Best of Show - Eric Daly 1936 Olds Business Coupe

Runner Up – Jack Tokie 1946 Olds Station Wagon

Third Place – William Cochran 1966 Olds 442

### Mayor's Choice

Jim Wheeler 1965 Olds 442

### Hedlund's Choice

Chris Engemann 1972 Chevy Nova



Photos provided by Capitol City Old Car Club



**THANK YOU TO THE GENEROUS SPONSORS  
OF THE CAR CAPITAL AUTO SHOW**

**TITLE SPONSOR**

**PLATINUM AND GOLD SPONSORS**

**SILVER SPONSORS**

**BRONZE SPONSOR**

**Lansing City Council**  
John Truscott

**AMBASSADORS**  
DBI  
UAW 652 and 1753

**MEDIA S SUPPORT**  
THE MATTRESS SOURCE  
WJLA 53  
WLNS 3TV  
LANSING CW5



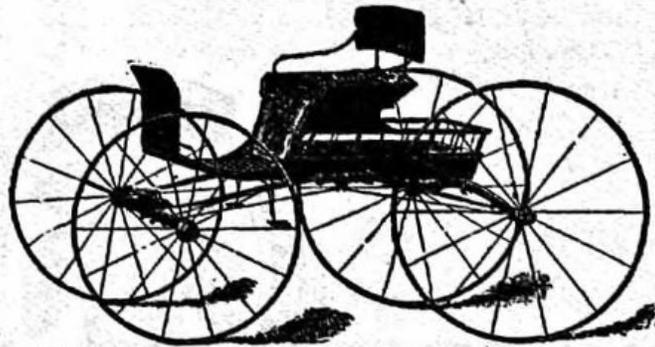
# POWERS ...BROTHERS

MANUFACTURERS OF

## BUSINESS WAGONS, FINE GARRIAGES, ETC.

REPAIRING OF ALL KINDS DONE PROMPTLY. • COR. MICHIGAN AVE. AND LARCH ST.

Cir. 1894



Did you know that you can also help support the Museum when you make purchases on Amazon? Go to [Smile.Amazon.com](https://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://Smile.Amazon.com) will be donated back to the Museum! Don't worry! Item prices are exactly the same in [Smile.Amazon.com](https://Smile.Amazon.com) as on normal Amazon (but make sure to sign in through Amazon Smile)!



# AUTO ADOPTION PROGRAM

We have several vintage automobiles that need help with providing for their care. You can help by taking part in our **Auto Adoption Program**. Your tax-deductible support will aid the Museum in its mission to preserve examples of automotive history for future generations.

The Program offer three levels of support, each with its own set of rewards.

## Become a Foster Parent –

For a \$60 gift you can meet the needs of an automobile of your choice for six months. In return a small sign will be placed in the window of the car announcing your “Foster Parent” status. You will also receive two FREE passes that will allow you and a friend to visit your fostered vehicle. Foster care is renewable at a rate of \$50 for a six-month period.

## Adopt a Car of Your Own –

For a one-time \$100 donation you can select a car to become part of you extended family for a period of one year. A sign will be placed near the car that will explain how you have taken it in and are providing for its care. Your chosen vehicle and its adoption will get special coverage in the Museum newsletter as well as on our website. You will receive 4 FREE passes so you can spend time together. A 10% off coupon will allow you to pick up a memento of your visit from our gift shop. Yearly extensions are only \$90.

## Be a Long Term Benefactor –

\$300 will allow you to provide for a favorite automobile for 4 years. When you become a Benefactor your gift will be commemorated with a plaque. Additionally, 4 FREE passes will be issued to you. A list of all Benefactors will be published in every newsletter and on the website. Your long term generosity will also be recognized at the Annual Membership meeting. You can use your 10% gift shop discount whenever you visit. Renewals and longer term support options can be arranged.

For more information or to sign up to be part of our **Auto Adoption Program** contact the Museum office at 517-372-0529 or email [autos@reoldsmuseum.org](mailto:autos@reoldsmuseum.org)

## Current Auto Adoption Benefactors

Don Barron—1950 Oldsmobile Coupe

Olds Club of Florida— 1906 “Baby” REO

Olds Club of Florida—1921 Olds 46T

Chuck and Judy Wooderson—1938 Firetruck —1999 Alero Pace Car

And 1950 Woody Wagon

Aaron & Nichole Toth —1966 Toronado

John and Jan Boyle—1951 Olds Super 88 2dr.

Jerry Garfield— 2004 Final 500 Alero

Randy & Leigh Ann Thayer—1925 REO Dumptruck

# 1974 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS



License# R63758

**Tickets: \$20 each or 3 for \$50**

MAXIMUM OF 2500/ MINIMUM OF 1500 or this will be a 60/40 raffle

Drawing Date: November 14, 2022 7-7:30 \* Need **NOT** be present to win

Raffle proceeds to benefit the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum

For more information: please visit [www.reoldsmuseum.org](http://www.reoldsmuseum.org) or call 517-372-0529



(For Office Use Only)  
Ticket Number(s):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Select payment method: CASH \_\_\_ CHECK \_\_\_ CHARGE \_\_\_ Check #: \_\_\_\_\_

Visa/ M.C./ Discover Charge #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Sorry but the Museum cannot accept money orders or foreign checks (including Canadian)**