

WHEN THE SEARS MOTOR BUGGY WAS PRODUCED from 1909 through 1913, it didn't exist in a vacuum. A number of other automotive manufacturers had ties to the Sears—before, during and after its brief life.

Colonel William H. McCurdy persuaded his good friend Robert Wood, president of Sears, that the retail giant should enter the automotive field. The first Sears Motor Buggies were built by McCurdy's Hercules Corporation in Evansville, Indiana, a major producer

of buggies and gasoline engines as well as truck and automobile bodies.

In 1922, McCurdy and Hercules branched out into the manufacture of complete automobiles with the introduction of the McCurdy. However, the colonel discovered that a love of autos does not always translate into a successful business, and the McCurdy was defunct within a year. (100 other Auto Cos. died in 1922)

Excerpts from an article in 'Automobile Quarterly' on 'mail order cars'; sent by Bob Woodburn, owns 2082

While Sears, Roebuck and Company was exploring the possibility of selling a line of cars, D.W. Cook of Galesburg, Illinois, was hard at work experimenting with his own prototype cars. His work drew the attention of a Sears executive named F. Rosenthal. A mutual acquaintance took Rosenthal for a ride in Cook's machine. Impressed, Rosenthal visited Cook the next day and, before Cook could proudly show off his work, asked, "For how much under two hundred dollars can you supply these for us?" Cook took offense at what he considered this disrespect for his life work and chased Rosenthal out of the building with a wrench. Needless to say, no agreement was ever reached between Sears and Cook, who went on to produce the Gale automotive models between 1905 and 1907.

The Lincoln Motor Car Works of Chicago was the primary supplier of components for the Sears Auto Buggy during its lifetime. After Sears ceased production of the high-wheeler in 1912,* Lincoln purchased much of Sears' tooling and continued to build virtually the same car under the name "Lincoln"—no relation to the Ford Motor Company division—through the end of the 1913 model year. * but not the sales

Brothers F.A. and J.D. Meidinger of Chicago began to build their Kenmore cars early in 1910. The line of small two- and four-cylinder roadsters, runabouts and touring cars did not enjoy much success, and the company was out of business in the summer of 1912. Sears, Roebuck and Company purchased the assets of the Kenmore Manufacturing Company, giving it the rights to the name which is still used today for a well-known line of household appliances.

James V. Martin and Miles H. Carpenter of Garden City, New York, came up with a revolutionary automotive idea. Their tiny "Martin Dart" car sat on a 60-inch wheelbase and came in a special packing crate which could be converted into a garage for the vehicle. Three prototypes were built in March 1928, and the two inventors sought investors in the project. Washington, D.C., promoter James Bryan offered to assist them and spoke to Sears on behalf of Martin and Carpenter. Bryan soon announced that Sears would begin distribution of the Martin Dart. Unfortunately, either Bryan jumped the gun in announcing the agreement or nothing had ever been agreed upon in the first place. Whatever the case, Sears denied everything, and the Martin Dart never reached regular production.

MODOC: 1912-1914

In the quest for mail-order customers, Sears' main rival was Montgomery Ward & Company, also based in Chicago. The first move into the automotive field was actually made by Montgomery Ward in 1896 when the company bought two four-passenger electric cars from the American Electric Vehicle Company. The cars were not offered for sale, but instead toured a number of cities as mobile advertisements. Photo on last page

Montgomery Ward began to produce and sell its own mail-order cars in 1912. The "Modoc," named after a local Indian tribe, was built at the company's factory on the corner of Tenth and Washington Streets in Chicago Heights, Illinois. The car was available only as a five-passenger touring car with a 117-inch wheelbase. It was equipped with a 30/40hp four-cylinder Continental engine, three-speed transmission, Rayfield carburetor, windshield, acetylene headlights and folding top. A self starter was optional. Montgomery Ward advertised its vehicle as "the car without a weakness."

The price yo-yoed up and down, as the company tried to find the best pricing strategy. The cars originally sold for \$1,250. Montgomery Ward claimed that it could offer a vehicle valued at \$2,500 for this low price "by doing away with the expensive agency system." However, the price was raised to \$1,800 by the end of 1912. The spring of 1914 found the Modoc discounted to \$800 in an effort to move the merchandise out of the catalog. The lack of service facilities and the accompanying difficulty in repairing the cars limited sales dramatically. The Modoc was withdrawn from the market at the end of the 1914 model year. In the Thirties, Montgomery Ward considered producing another mail-order car, to be called the Wardway, but the idea died aborning.

KIBLINGER: 1907-1909

No one could ever accuse the W.H. Kiblinger Company of Auburn, Indiana, of being overly modest about the merits of its line of high-wheeled autos. In a catalog detailing the features of its cars, the company declared:

It is with much pleasure, and after years of careful study that we are now prepared to offer to all who want an Automobile, one at \$250.00. We are certain from the way orders have been coming in that it will only be a short time until one or more "Kiblinger Automobiles" will be found running in every city and town in the world. Nothing in this line has ever attracted so much attention as "The Kiblinger." It is admired by everybody, and is surely indispensable.

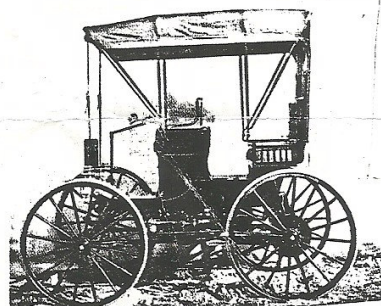
"The Kiblinger" is a plain, neat and very simple machine, and there is absolutely nothing about it to get out of order. Should anything by mere chance or unavoidable accident get out of order, the machine is so simple that anyone can repair it. You are less liable to [have an] accident when using a "Kiblinger" than you are when using a horse. "The Kiblinger" is the only gasoline Automobile that any woman or even a boy can feel safe to drive.

Hyperbole aside, the Kiblinger was actually a very well-built affordable automobile. Produced from 1907 through 1909, the Kiblinger boasted a complete line of six different models. The low-priced (\$250) Model A featured a 4hp single-cylinder engine mounted on a standard two-passenger "piano-box" type body. The Model B had a slightly larger 6hp engine and sold for \$300. The \$320 Model C, while mechanically

identical to the Model B, sported fancier trim and plusher upholstery. A two-cylinder 10hp engine distinguished the Model D, selling for \$375. A better-equipped version of the Model D, the Model E, was priced at \$395, while the four-passenger Model F, complete with folding tonneau, sold for \$450. In 1908, the Kiblinger Company expanded and improved the line. The Model C was offered with an optional surrey top, as well as a "storm top" which made the high-wheeler look rather bizarre. Three new Kiblinger models were offered as well—the two-seater Model G, the elaborate Model H and the Model I, another version of the Model H which featured a removable "limousine top."

To market its impressive lineup, the Kiblinger Company placed ads in a number of trade papers and magazines. The firm's catalog was also mailed to homes around the country. A letter enclosed with the catalog stated:

Under this cover we mail you our catalogue of Kiblinger motor vehicles.



Please look it over carefully and we believe you will find our construction along the most approved and up-to-date lines of all automobiles. Write us fully for any information that may seem necessary.

Building the complete vehicle and its parts in our factories and furnishing them in lots of thousands enables us to sell on a close margin and "live and let live."

In working out this motor buggy we have made use of several new and valuable features which we have protected in patent and copyright applications.

The company also used the mails to solicit dealers in an effort to establish a traditional sales network. Prospective dealers were offered special prices on sample cars which they could demonstrate to the public. The terms of the deal were outlined in a company letter:

If you wish an agency for our motor vehicles, send \$50.00 to \$100.00 with your order for [a] sample machine; balance to be paid on delivery of [the] machine at your Railroad Station or Express Office.

The first machine will cost you full price, as given in the catalogue; on the second, we will give you a discount of 10 per cent; on the third, we will give you the same discount . . . and we also rebate you 10 per cent on your first order. Or if you order three machines at once, we will give you the discount of 10 per cent on each. When your orders reach five machines, you will be rebated an extra 5 per cent on the full amount, making 15 per cent on all.

If you have not fully made up your mind as to what Model you want, you can place your deposit with us and forward specifications and shipping instructions later. By following this suggestion it places you in line and you get your machine sooner than if you put off ordering until later. We are running our factory both day and night, and in this way we are able to make very prompt shipments.

Do not delay ordering if you want the agency for the best-selling proposition on the market.

The Kiblinger Company was especially proud of the fact that its cars were not assembled vehicles—every car was designed in-house and every part was built at the factory.

Kiblinger vehicles, including the basic model (top left) and the top-of-the-line Model F (bottom left), were advertised in automotive magazines (above).

CYCLE AND AUTOMOBILE TRADE JOURNAL.

THE WINTER KING
365-DAY KING

The Kiblinger Motor Buggy

is air cooled and consequently no pipes to freeze and burst. It has solid rubber tires, therefore no punctures. The machine will run through mud and snow where a touring car with pneumatic tires and low clearance would not attempt to venture.

This car appeals to everybody who has use for a runabout. It is the car for service—yet it affords all the pleasure there is in accommodating at a price that all can afford. It is simple in construction—durable and reliable under all road conditions.

You should send at once for complete catalogue, prices and terms to Dealers. There will be thousands of these wonderful little machines next year and you ought to get the agency at once in your locality. Our facilities for turning out these machines in large quantities are excellent, and we can make prompt shipments.

See our sumptuous exhibit of our full line of motor buggies, auto delivery wagons and chassis at 381 Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Nov. 20th to Dec. 7th. We will have two demonstration cars.

Write us today. We have a proposition that will appeal to you.

Price \$250—\$500

W. H. KIBLINGER COMPANY
460-468 W. 7th Street :: AUBURN, INDIANA
"Ride With Us"

The catalog declared, "Do not confound us with people who assemble a lot of purchased parts and call it an automobile. Every part of this automobile is built in our factory and under our personal supervision." Unfortunately, this vaunted aspect of the cars proved to be the company's undoing. The manufacturers of the Success high-wheeler in St. Louis sued the company and its founder, W.H. Kiblinger, for patent infringement. To circumvent the lawsuit, the factory manager, W.H. McIntyre, bought out the board of directors. The vehicles, which were essentially unchanged, were renamed McIntyres. The new W.H. McIntyre Company built its cars through 1915. The company also produced the Imp Cyclecar in 1913 and 1914. Both brands were sold through the dealership network that had been established by the old Kiblinger Company.

McIntyre
High Wheel
MOTOR VEHICLES
Ten New 1909 Models

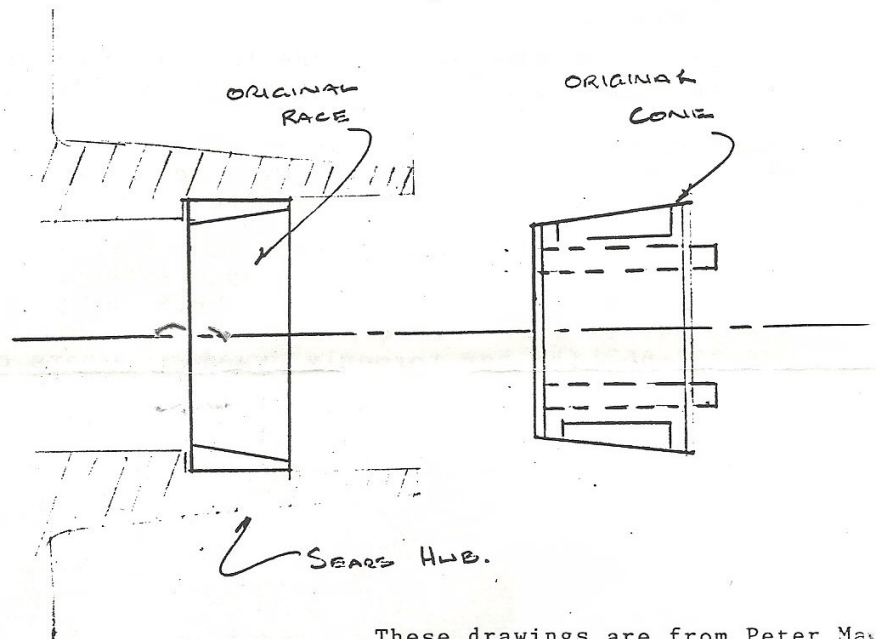
Air cooled, 4 cycle, planetary transmission, two speeds forward, one reverse. Solid rubber tires. Wheel steer. Mechanical oiler.
2 cyl. double opposed offset type chain drive, 12-14 H. P., 16-18 H. P.
4 cyl. shaft drive, 28-32 H. P.
One, two, three seated Pleasure Vehicles and full line of commercial cars. Write for Catalog.

Visit Our Exhibit New York and Chicago Shows
W. H. McIntyre Co., Standard Mfrs. **Auburn, Ind.**
256-257 Broadway New York 1730 Grand Ave. Kansas City, Mo. Tudhope-McIntyre Co. Orillia, Canada.
H. H. Woodrough, Mgr.

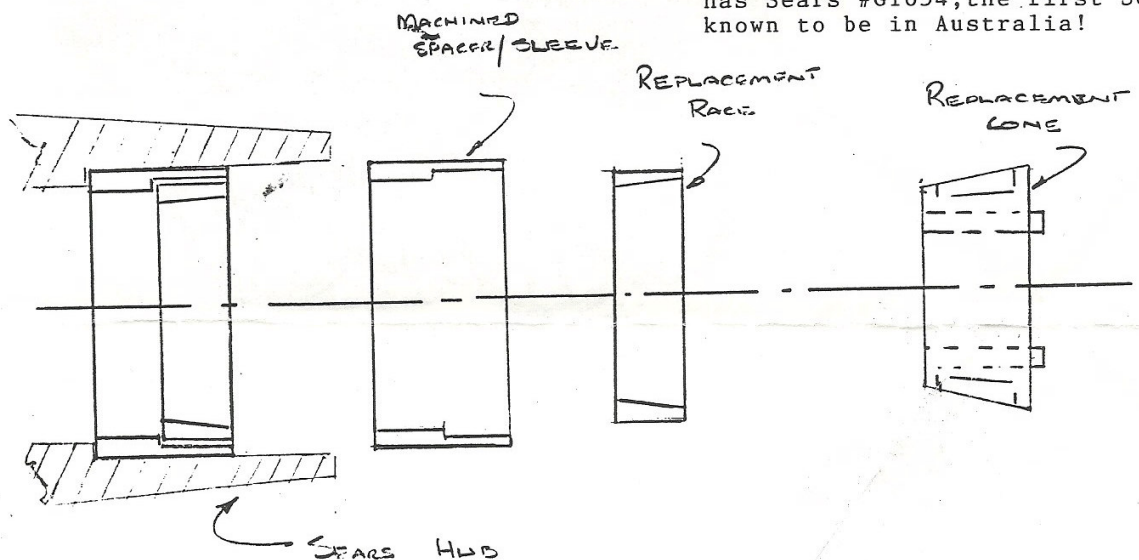
Model H. H.

Model G. G.

Kiblingers were renamed McIntyres after the company's reorganization.



These drawings are from Peter May as mentioned in the Nov. issue. He has Sears #G1654, the first Sears known to be in Australia!



outside, so I machined a spacer/sleeve, as in the diagram, and they fitted perfectly. These bearings are very common and cost about \$5.00 each, they are used in many applications and can be bought at the nearest drug store!, well not quite, but they are easy to get hold of. They are a NSK Bearing # LM11949R 910RNES4CO2 this will replace the small outer wheel bearing, when fitted with a spacer/sleeve. Usually with this type of bearing it is the race inside the wheel hub that splits, and it is a good idea to check this out each time the bearings are regreased. The machine work can be completed on a small hobby lathe, and using a common easy to get bearing will save a lot of trouble trying to track down the original type.

REPLACEMENT BEARING #

N.S.K. LM11949R/910RNES4

6-01

VOL 3 NO 2

SEARSHEET

2/97

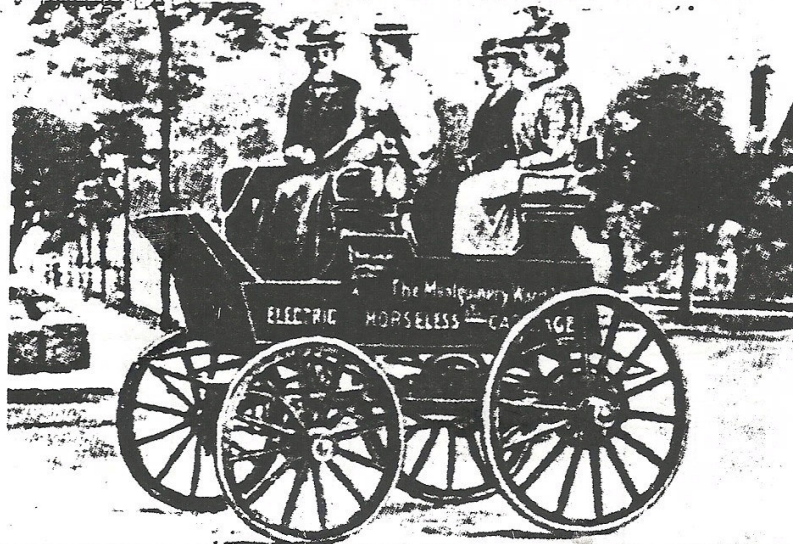
P A R T S F O R S A L E

New cast iron muffler'ends'.He talked to me at Hershey;has Sears #J2092
Leslie Flautt 606 West Woodlawn,Jerseyville,IL 62052

Sears engine'with strings attached'.As soon as this man finds an engine for
his one cylinder Cadillac,he will sell his Sears engine! James P. Miller
(partner in a law firm) at 6842 Pacific St.,Omaha,NB 68106.402-558-0902

One rear chain sprocket(off wheel),Jack shaft;N O S crank shaft;flywheel,
and cylinder head for an early engine.Rusty 2 cylinder engine with rods,
pistons,timing gear,and cam followers,but no crank shaft.It looks like a
Sears but is smaller.Jerry Nielson 2394 Whittier Ave.,Westfield,NJ 07090
908-232-6671 (he has formerly owned two Sears cars.)

One of two electric vehicles built for
Montgomery Ward,for pulicity purposes.



1896

Mr. Hayden R. Shepley
5467 Taylor Ave.
Port Orange, FL 32127-5585



John M. Daley
P O Box 641
Millington TN 380537