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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Car Speed Limit In '20 Recalled

By NEIL A. MATHESON

IT'S A LONG way back to 1920 and the time when the speed limit for automobiles in the town of Summerside was seven and one-half miles per hour.

I had heard Dr. Leo Frank, my next door neighbor for some years, tell of the time he had been hauled into court for exceeding the limit. He was found guilty, though he stoutly maintained his innocence, and was fined \$20 and costs or 30 days in jail.

The Frank car was a 1920 Oldsmobile which was driven by his chauffeur, Eddie Hartinger.

Having been assessed the above penalty Dr. Frank appealed the case, but this was denied as the Motor Vehicle Act at that time did not allow any appeals from magistrate's decisions.

In a page-long story in the Island Patriot on February 7, 1921, Frank went into a long dissertation on the manner in which evidence had been presented and the unjustness of no appeal being available.

Finally, he offered to put his case before 10 persons, five from Summerside and five from Charlottetown and donate \$500 to charity if the 10 people did not find him blameless.

I remember once seeing a large photograph of Leo Frank and some others whose names now escape me. They were in the Frank Oldsmobile – it was a touring car – and a farm horse was pulling it through the streets of Summerside.

No Engine Trouble

ON THE SIDE of the automobile was a large sign saying "No we are not out of gasoline, our engine is working perfectly, we are just trying to stay inside the speed limit of the town of Summerside."

Dr. Frank never did get his case submitted to the 10 citizens – the law doesn't work that way – but he did have some personal satisfaction, I imagine, even though he spent much more money on the incident than the \$20 and costs he was assessed when found guilty of breaking the speed limit in the summer of 1920.

One unusual facet of the argument was that there was another Oldsmobile on the streets of Summerside the same day, as Dr. Frank was alleged to have exceeded the speed limit.

It was driven, this old newspaper piece says, by Mrs. C.H. Benoit of Charlottetown. Several veiled references were made to this car, and to the possibility that it might have been this car that had exceeded the speed limit. But that idea never got anywhere either.

The fact there was no appeal from a decision under the Motor Vehicle Act in 1920 is a reflection of the feeling of the public against those vehicles at that time. Some of the leading public men of that day objected strenuously to automobiles – I believe there was

an anti-automobile league formed at one time – even though nearly all of the objectors owned and operated automobiles when they later learned of their worth.

Cars Had Their Troubles

I REFERRED previously to actions taken to stopping cars on the highways. In some districts farmers met them with pitchforks, and other assorted weapons in an effort to stop them, and turn them back. Cars were open in those days, and, a pitchfork properly directed, could be a fearsome instrument.

There were days when cars were not allowed to run, there were also roads on which cars were not allowed. Cars were not allowed to run on Sundays, for example, during the hours of worship.

It may be of some interest to note that the number of Dr Frank's Oldsmobile was 1087 – the Benoit car had the number 1545.

Some indication of the condition of roads available almost 50 years ago is given in this reference:

"We went slow at the crossing – apparently the railway crossing at the Eastern approach to the town of Summerside – "because the crossing is bad and the car is heavy.

Roads Were Bad, Muddy

"THE ROADS were bad, and muddy, as it had been raining. We had to go slow so as not to endanger the car, which was a new one.

"The car was driven up to Holman's gasoline tank at a speed not exceeding five miles per hour."

It was five years ago, I think that I spent most of a day looking through old newspapers in the Portland, Maine library. I was looking for some dope on the Patrick Peters of West Prince who reportedly flew a heavier than air machine, and offered to fly a demonstration in Portland, if someone would make it worth his while.

I found the Peters story about five o'clock in the afternoon, but prior to that I had been reading interesting short items into my portable tape recorder.

Beautiful Hair

THIS ONE concerns the way to keep a woman's hair looking nice. It appeared in the Portland Daily Press on May 20, 1890, and here it is:

"No woman can expect to have her hair looking beautiful who goes to bed without taking it down and giving it its nightly dressing. A woman who has wonderfully beautiful hair says: 'I take out all the pins, brush the hair well, then plait it carefully but loosely, so that in the morning it is not in a snarl. I usually try to brush it 10 minutes, but when I can get somebody else to do it for me the sensation is so delicious that I almost wish it would never stop."

