

A 1918 Buick Celebrates a Big Birthday

Passed down from grandparents, an heirloom auto spanning three generations is in fine form for its centennial year



'My husband Scott is a pilot and he usually drives it,' Ms. Hein says of her outings in the Buick. 'I get nervous. If I screw up, where will I find the parts to fix it?' STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Carol and Scott Hein of Prescott Ariz., in period dress with their 1918 Buick E-35. The vehicle has been in Ms. Hein's family for three generations. Steve Craft for the Wall Street Journal

By
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March 27, 2018



'Every year we drive the car in our town's July Fourth parade, wearing period clothes,' Ms. Hein says.
PHOTO: STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Carol Hein, 72, a retired teacher from Prescott, Ariz. , in her 1918 Buick E-35, as told to A.J. Baime.

This year our family Buick turns 100 years old. I have an idea to call the folks at our local service station and tell them I am bringing in an '18 Buick for an oil change, then take it down there just to see the look on their faces.

The story of how this car came into the family was my mother's favorite story. My grandparents were homesteaders in Montana and my grandmother's brother-in-law got this 1918 Buick as a gift. He was not mechanically inclined (he was a real cattleman). One day he tried to drive the Buick into town but could not figure out how to make it stop. He got so upset he shouted to my grandparents, "Give me \$15 and you can have this thing!" It was practically brand new.

My mother grew up riding in and later driving this car with her sister around rural Montana, and her favorite memories were all about the Buick. When I grew up and moved away, I would visit her and every time, she would take me out to the shed and ooh and ahh over the thing. To me, it was just an old heap, in terrible condition. There was nothing attractive about it.

When my parents retired, they dedicated themselves to restoring the 1918 Buick. They had to go back to the old homestead to find some of the parts; the backseat they found in a field overgrown with wild rosebushes.

Every year, my husband, two kids, and I would visit Montana in the summer and every year the car would look a little better. My father was excited but my mother— she was ecstatic to see this car that had been such a part of her childhood come back to life.

My parents passed away and the car came into my possession, in 2003. My husband Scott is a pilot and he usually drives it. I get nervous. If I screw up where will I find the parts to fix it? When we are in it, I feel the presence of my grandparents and my parents. It truly is the family vehicle.

Every year we drive the car in our town's July Fourth parade, wearing period clothes. Since this year marks the Buick's 100th birthday, the parade will be extra special.



The Buick's hood ornament is original and also serves as the car's radiator cap and temperature gauge (a thermometer is built in).
STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



The year this vehicle was built, a Hartford Courant journalist wrote, 'This car, so well-known all over the United States—has shown by its record that its success is well-deserved.' STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



The 1918 Montana license plate is not original. 'This is a commemorative plate I found at a car show,' says Ms. Hein. 'I liked that it was blue, because Montana is called "Big Sky Country".' STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



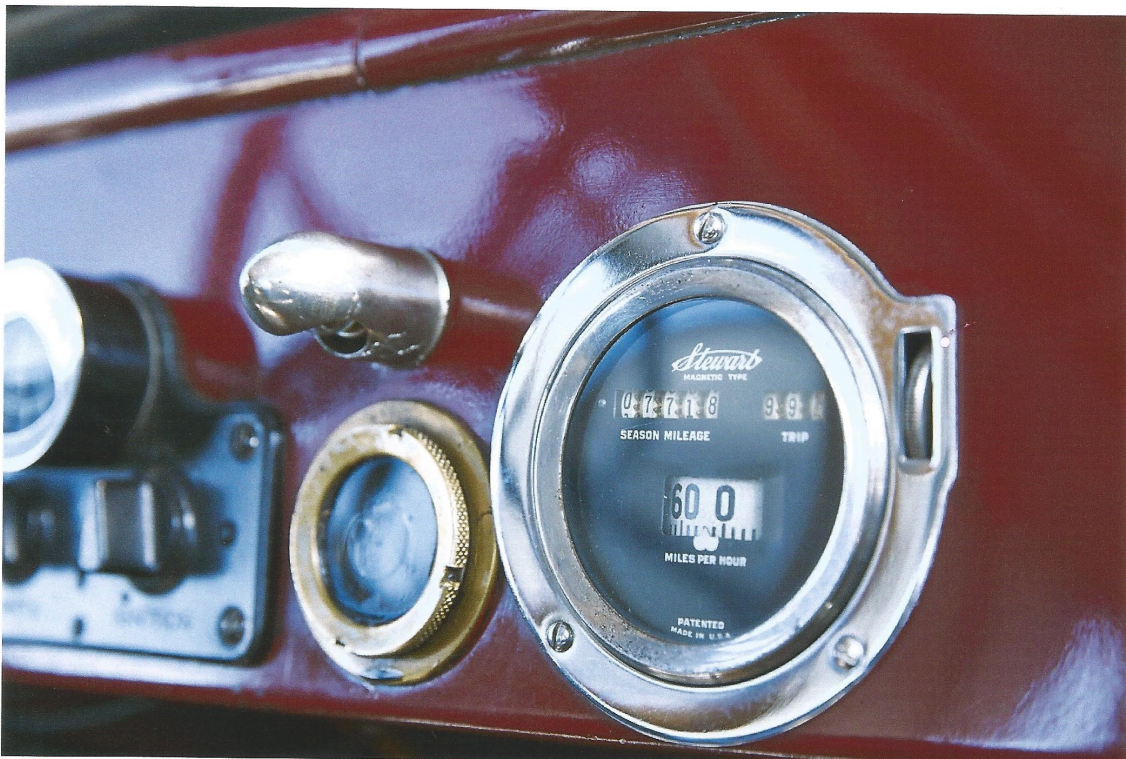
According to the brand's official website, Buick first incorporated in 1903, in Flint, Mich. Buick cars are still built today by General Motors. STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



The Heins have shown the Buick at many car shows. "It is racking up ribbons," says Ms. Hein. STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



Some detail of the car's restored interior. STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



A close-up of the speedometer and the odometer. The speedometer works, says Ms. Hein, but she doesn't know how accurate it is. 'Believe me,' she says, 'we don't have to worry about exceeding the speed limit.' STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



A shot of the car's inline four-cylinder engine.
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According to Ms. Hein, the wooden spoked wheels are original and were carefully restored.
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Carol and Scott Hein of Prescott, Ariz., with their 1918 Buick. According to Ms. Hein, this Buick spent 43 years in storage (from 1937 to 1980). 'But it was never forgotten,' she says. Her parents restored it. STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



The year this Buick was built, the company was also building aviation engines for America's war effort in World War I. STEVE CRAFT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

