

historically speaking

THE WAY IT WAS

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The Cass City Historical Society Bi-Monthly Open Meeting

On Wednesday evening, August 21, the Cass City Historical Society held its bi-monthly meeting at Rawson Memorial Library. A very informative program was presented by Mike Rule of C U TECH on cyber security. He stated that one of the most important things to do, but is often neglected, is to regularly backup your important files, even if they are only copied onto a thumb drive. Use longer passwords (they are harder to decipher) and keep them in a safe place. If you receive an e-mail with a referred friend's name, you should call your friend to see if it is legitimate, and if not, don't open it. These were just a few of the sound pieces of advice that Mike gave us.

The Horse Didn't Go Quietly



Before the arrival of motorized vehicles a good team of horses was a man's most prized possession. Horses earlier had been necessary in lumbering, and were very necessary for farming (plowing, cultivating, harvesting, hauling to market, as well as for personal transportation. Horses made it possible to build the roads and dig the drainage ditches. Except for the train (the iron horse) commerce was dependent on horses bringing in supplies as well as shipping goods out to other markets.

Some businesses were dedicated to the horse such as trainers, harness makers, farrier services (horse shoeing), wagon and carriage builders, black smithing, and livery stables.

It wasn't only the farming industry that was dependent on their horses but the general population as well. Even high society in towns had their fine carriages and horses.

In 1901 these two articles appeared in the Tri County Chronicle.

"Has Sold Out"

J.S. Dunham, the veteran livery man and stage driver, whose cheering face and accommodating ways have made him a host of friends here and at Caro has sold his stage business to Dwight Freeman. Mr. Dunham will now devote his entire time to the livery business and his customers will be assured of better service than ever.

CASS CITY AND CARO
STAGE LINE AND LIVERY.
J. S. DUNHAM, Prop.

GOING WEST: Leaves Cass City at 7:30 a. m. Arrives at Caro at 9 a. m.
GOING EAST: Leaves Caro at 1:30 p. m. Arrives at Cass City, 4:30 p. m.
FARE—One way, \$1.00; round trip, \$1.50. Good rigs always in readiness. Commercial men a specialty



A Standard Stage Coach
It's not known what the Dunham coach looked like

Dwight Freeman has assumed control of the stage route between here and Caro. He is a veteran horse man and without a doubt will give quick service to the patrons of the route. Mr. Freeman

thinks seriously of placing an automobile on the route for the benefit of commercial trade. He is quite sure with an auto he could make the run to Caro and back before breakfast.

In 1979 Meredith Auten in a Chronicle article recalled the first automobile that appeared in town was a 1901 Stanley Steamer owned by Dwight Freeman. He drove up and down Seeds Hill (North Seeger Street) to prove that it worked okay. In the mean time the stage went daily to Caro. There were two teams of horses with each going every other day,



1901 Stanley Steamer

and the last three miles had sand a foot deep.

In 1902 this article appeared in the Tri County Chronicle-

“It Might Have Been Serious”

Dwight Freeman having varied experiences with his auto. One of the most aggravating things is that it scared horses. Several reports of this nature have reached this office. Last Friday evening while I. B. Auten (the bank president) accompanied by his wife was driving north, just beyond Seed’s Hill he unfortunately met Freeman with his horseless carriage coming toward town, the road being narrow at this point, Mr. Auten could not turn aside and suddenly his horse made a lurch side-ways throwing himself and upsetting the buggy into the ditch. Mr. Freeman and Dr. Morris, who was with Freeman, came to Mr. Auten’s assistance. Fortunately no one was injured, which is largely do to Mr. Auten’s presence of mind, who managed to hold the frightened animal to the ground.

Mr. Freeman has a perfect right to use an automobile, but he certainly should use it with utmost care when approaching horses. The Chronicle has overheard several threats coming from people whose horses have been frightened, and for Mr. Freeman’s own safety we would advise him to be more careful in the future.

For the next ten years or so there were more conflicts between cars and horses as car dealers appeared in town and more people were driving cars instead of horses. Times were changing but there was still something elegant in riding in a fine carriage behind a spirited team of horses. In 1910 this article appeared in the Cass City Chronicle:

Wm. Beardsley Injured

When Wm. Ware and Wm. Beardsley and their families were driving home from Cass City Sunday where they attended morning church service, they were met a few miles west of town by an automobile. The horses driven by both gentlemen became frightened. Mr. Ware’s horse broke the harness, but Mr. Beardsley had greater trouble with his steed. In the mix-up every wheel on the carriage was broken, the vehicle was ditched and Mr. Beardsley was thrown and had his nose fractured, his cheek cut open and his face skinned.

Much indignation is expressed over the action of the automobilists. It was said that they came down the road at a good speed and even if they were not signaled to

slacken speed they should have had better judgement in passing a line of vehicles in which it is easy to cause an accident. After the accident the occupants of the machine did not stop to ascertain if they could be of any assistance, but proceeded on their journey. The number of the auto was secured and an investigation may follow.

Times were changing along with the attitudes about change. Evidently our auto pioneer, Dwight Freeman left town shortly after he introduced the town to the automobile and hadn’t been heard of until in 1919 when Samuel Champion of Champion Advertising happened to see him living in Capac. He was running a shoe repair shop and he still had his Stanley Steamer sitting behind his shop. The editor of the Chronicle responded with, “Dwight Freeman was a pioneer in automobiling and many a man who cussed Dwight and his machine when they frightened his horses in those days is now driving a “Tin Lizzie” or a big “Touring Car”, and is impatient when a horse travelling rig is slow in getting out of his way.”

The next week the editor added to his earlier comments with, “The item in the Chronicle of Dwight Freeman being a pioneer automan invites some retrospect. We recall when Dwight came this way with his “buzzer” and our aged equines jumped sidewise and how we planned to send him into close confinement for at least 99 years. Now all have changed their views along that line. The writer is willing to go to Capac with a bunch of penitents and ask Dwight’s forgiveness and well, of course, we can’t get juice worth mentioning (during prohibition), but can do the next best thing—take a sip of lemonade and smoke.

Times change and we have to change with time no matter how difficult it may be. A high rate of speed back in 1910 may have been 20 miles per hour. Today people are impatient with you if you only drive the speed limit of 55 miles per hour. Once in a while you might meet or pass a horse and buggy on the road but the roads are wider and in much better shape, and by and large the horses are trained and accustomed to it.

If you have never ridden in a fine horse pulled carriage or sleigh you’ve missed an

enjoyable experience even if you’re not in the parade. This carriage once belonged to



one of Cass City’s pioneer farm equipment dealers and auctioneer, Jacob Striffler. It was donated to the Cass City Historical Society years ago by his granddaughter, Eleanor Nique Dillman.

Another story could be told about the introduction of automobiles into society irrespective of the horses. Early automobiles were not without a host of new problems. Flat tires were commonplace. The earlier cars didn’t have electric starters so you had to crank them by hand to get them started. Sometimes the engine would back-fire kicking the crank backwards and causing not a few broken arms.

Change continues to happen, and it is always difficult, especially for some of us, like the horses, that are steeped in our older ways.