



THE HISTORY AND RE-BIRTH OF A 1931 TELEPHONE TRUCK

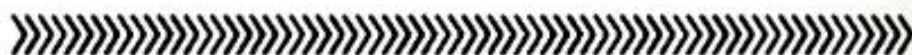
Told in Words and Pictures by: Bill O'Hagan
(Written in 1982)



Edited by: Heather Marshall Resnick

*** DEDICATED TO JIM HENDERSON ***

For his go-ahead and support of this project.



With added thanks to the following for their contributions and expertise:

RTC

Don Pearson
Kevin Sheedy
Bob Moorehead
Steve Lyttle
Ted Hapiak
Mike Carson
Bill Horne
Ted Tedesco

OTHERS

John Van De Wall
Bud Van De Wall
Arnie Holliday

Also to Doris for
patience and
understanding

TELEPHONE TRUCK TIMELINE

1931

The vehicle was originally purchased by the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company and served its entire tenure with that company as an installer's truck in the St. Louis, Missouri area.

1940

It was retired from telephone service on April 18, when it was purchased by John E. Leirmann, who was the installer that had driven it throughout its entire service period with Southwestern Bell.

1957

Mr. Leirmann drove the truck for several additional years and on October 15, it was sold to Henry W. Schmidt, also of St. Louis. The truck was put in storage shortly thereafter.


1972

The truck was purchased by Terry Oberer, an employee of Western Electric in St. Louis, on January 31.

1978

With Jim Henderson's concurrence, Bill O'Hagan placed an ad in the January, February and March issues of Hemmings Motor News in search of a telephone installer's truck.

Mr. Oberer responded to the ad with a descriptive letter on January 20. After correspondence via letter and telephone, an agreement to purchase was reached.



On March 4, Rochester Telephone Corporation officially purchased the 1931 Model 'A' Ford Installer-Repairman's Truck. Kevin Sheedy and Bill O'Hagan transported the unit to Rochester, New York via Rochester Telephone truck and trailer.

State of Missouri
Certificate of Title
7350501753 ORIGINAL

OWNEE
OBERER TERRY
6890 CHRISTOPHER
ST LOUIS
MO 63129

MAIL TO
OBERER TERRY
6890 CHRISTOPHER
ST LOUIS
MO 63129

TITLE NUMBER: T352130 DATE ISSUED: 12/16/75
TAX: .75 MANUFACTURER'S IDENT. NO.: A4738634
MAKE: FORD BODY STYLE: PICKUP 31 YE: CIL: N.P.

VEHICLE SUBJECT TO LIEN
DATE CREATED

FIRST - LIEN
SECOND - LIEN

THIS WILL CERTIFY THAT REASONABLE DILIGENCE HAS BEEN USED IN ASCERTAINING WHETHER OR NOT THE STATEMENTS IN THIS APPLICATION FOR THE CERTIFICATE OF TITLE ARE TRUE. THEREFORE, I CERTIFY THAT THE APPLICANT HEREBY NAMED HAS BEEN DULY REGISTERED AS THE OWNER, SUBJECT ONLY TO THE LIEN RECORDED AT THE DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THIS CERTIFICATE.
ANY ALTERATION OR ERASURE WILL VOID THIS TITLE

Jack Spaulding
DIRECTOR OF REVENUE



No. 9163931

This certificate is transferable only when recorded and filed with the Director of Revenue and is valid only while the motor vehicle or trailer described on the reverse side is owned by the person named on the face of this certificate.

ASSIGNMENT OF TITLE

For value received I/We hereby assign, transfer, and convey unto _____

Address: _____ Street _____ City or Town _____ State _____

the motor vehicle or trailer described on the reverse side of this certificate and I/We hereby warrant the title to said motor vehicle or trailer and certify the sale price is \$ _____ and subject to the following lien:

Amount: _____ Date: _____ Favor of: _____ Address: _____
Signature of Seller: _____ If joint ownership all must sign _____ Signature of Seller: _____
Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____ 19____
Notary Public _____

My Commission Expires _____ County of _____ Missouri (SEAL)

RE-ASSIGNMENT BY REGISTERED DEALER ONLY

Dealer No. _____

For value received I/We hereby assign, transfer, and convey unto _____

Address: _____ Street _____ City or Town _____ State _____

the motor vehicle or trailer described on the reverse side of this certificate and I/We hereby warrant the title to said motor vehicle or trailer and certify the sale price is \$ _____ and subject to the following lien:

Amount: _____ Date: _____ Favor of: _____ Address: _____
Signature of Seller: _____ If joint ownership all must sign _____ Signature of Seller: _____
Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____ 19____
Notary Public _____

My Commission Expires _____ County of _____ Missouri (SEAL)

Release of Lien: The undersigned, holder of the lien described on the certificate of title hereby releases said lien.

Lender: _____ Signature of Authorized Agent _____ Date: _____
Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____ 19____
Notary Public _____

My Commission Expires _____ County of _____ Missouri (SEAL)

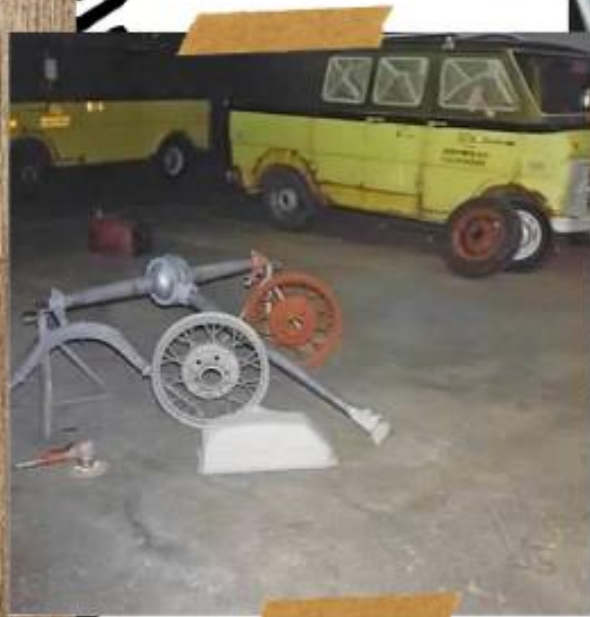
THE RESTORATION

The restoration process was started on March 13, 1978 by dismantling various components. The truck was completely dismantled by removing every nut, bolt and component. Reusable heavy metal parts, other than internal components of the engine, transmission and differential were individually restored. They were first sandblasted to remove old paint and rust, revealing the bare metal on the entire surface.

The parts were then metal-prepped to kill any remaining rust before priming. After drying, the pieces were sanded down again to bare metal, except for any primer which dried into rust pits or scratches. This process was repeated several times until the primer in the scratched or pitted areas were built up enough to equal the level of the bare metal surface. In extremely pitted areas, a lacquer filler was used to conserve paint and sanding labor.

Once a smooth surface was achieved, a final coat of primer was applied. After drying, each piece received a fine, light sanding before the finish coats were applied. Finished parts were stored, pending the reassembly process.





Sheet metal parts, mainly the cab, splash aprons and fenders were restored in a similar manner, except some of these required patches of sheet metal or panels to fill in the holes. Once the patch or panel was fitted, it was spot welded into its permanent place. The spot welds were later ground down to a smooth surface before the patch areas were filled in with molten lead and in some cases, fiberglass, to further level and smooth the repaired locations.

Metal prepping and priming would then begin and be followed by sanding. The same "repeat" process mentioned earlier for other parts ensued until the desired finish was reached.



The rear body restoration proved to be more of a job than originally estimated. Typically, the body metal was stretched and severely dented due to the fact that it had evidently been damaged during its lifetime. This type of truck was not equipped with rear bumpers and as a result, each corner (particularly in the rear) was not in good condition due to accidents.

Several attempts were made to pound out dents or heat shrink the stretched metal. All efforts failed, so it became necessary to take the body apart. From the damaged pieces we could hopefully develop patterns. This meant new sides, front and rear corners and part of the bottom floor.



When the body was originally built, it was put together with heavy iron rivets. To disassemble the body, each rivet had to be drilled out. Although I helped, Bob Morehead did an excellent job in making the new body sections. Once the new sections were completed, the body was reassembled by first bolting it together to make certain the new and remaining old sections would fit together properly. With this accomplished it was now necessary to replace the bolts with rivets. The bolts were removed one at a time and each was replaced by a red-hot iron rivet which had to be "peaned" to form the original type round heads both inside and outside the body. Bob Morehead and I accomplished this by using an air hammer and molds to clinch the rivets and form the heads.

New "skins" were fabricated for the four body doors by Spring Sheet Metal Company. The original small parts drawers (4) were among the items missing when the truck was purchased. New drawers were made to our specifications, also by Spring Sheet Metal Company. I was able to make the other internal shelf parts. With reassembly completed, the body was given paint restoration.





As the picture indicates, the entire roof of the truck was rotted out. I was fortunate in being able to buy a roof kit to replace all the wood framing to replace the headers, sides and ribs. With minor trimming the parts fit perfectly. Through research, duplicate cloth header material and top covering was located and purchased.

Top moldings were also missing and duplicates could not be found. Oversized moldings had to be ground down to replicate the original type. The rolled roof area at each side of the top was formed by using a special metal panel. Each of these panels were rusted to a point that they could not be reused. Replacements were not available from any supplier because reproductions of this part had not been done. Advertising did not produce results in finding used ones. After a two-year search, I came upon a pair at the Hershey Flea Market. These too were badly rusted, to the point of holes in some places. I made the purchase anyway, and luckily I was able to reconstruct two out of four and they are now on the truck.



Engines can also bring a few headaches. Because of a rear main oil leak experienced after rebuilding the engine of my own Model "A," I decided it best to have the truck engine professionally rebuilt to standard specifications by B&G Machine Shop. I had to do this with mine after identifying the problem alluded to above.

When the truck engine was completed I borrowed a special engine stand from Arnie Holliday to test run the engine before painting it, in advance of placing it on the truck. It ran beautifully for several hours and there appeared to be no problems. Having satisfied myself in this way, I finished the engine and installed it. When the truck was finished I took it for a test run and soon found that this engine had an oil leak also....

We deduced that the leak appeared because the engine was now picking up the torque of the drive train which was not produced when the engine was run in the test stand. To correct the situation it was now necessary to once again remove the engine.

The machine shop assured us that the main bearings had been redone and that any reworking would have to go to the Babbit Shop in Fort George, NY who they claimed had done the job. I took the short-block to the Babbit Shop where the owner took out the crankshaft to expose the main bearings. It was easy to see that bearings had not been done and the Babbit Shop said they had not previously completed work for B&G. Nevertheless, the Babbit Shop agreed to do the work and after working with B&G to obtain a check to cover the installation cost, returned to Fort George two-weeks later to pay the Babbit Shop and pick up the finished block.

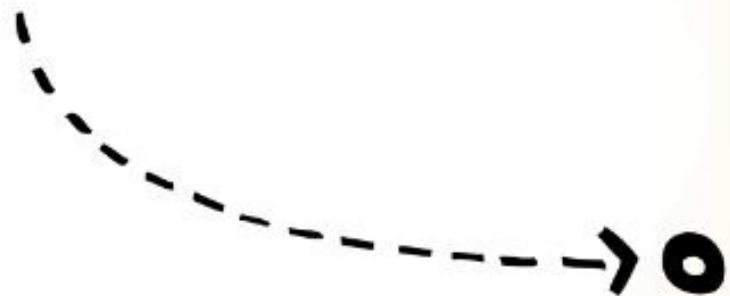
I had to reassemble the engine, paint it over again and install it back in the truck.



For all sense and purpose the truck was now finished. This was just in time for its first showing at the Rochester Telephone Corporation Annual Stockholders Meeting at the Mapledale Party House on April 21, 1982. You will note that this was a four year project, but if I do say so myself, a fifty year old vehicle has been brought back to life and it is in better shape than the day it was born.



BEFORE & AFTER



BEFORE →



AFTER

BEFORE



AFTER {



ARTIFACTS

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20560

December 13, 1978

Mr. William J. O'Hagan
60 Dartford Road
Rochester, New York 14618

Dear Mr. O'Hagan:

This museum's collections do contain a Model A Ford telephone repairman's truck, but it is not complete in the details you inquire about. It no longer has drawers inside, nor does it have a ladder, nor any bracket for a ladder.

We can furnish an 8 x 10" black and white photo for \$3.50 from negative #74,489-A. An order form is enclosed for your convenience.

This truck is not on exhibit and it is not stored in this building so it would not be possible for you to see the truck. I am sorry we cannot be of more help to you. Our truck went through several owners, and it was not restored in every detail before being presented to us.

Sincerely,

Don H. Berkebile
Associate Curator
Division of Transportation

Room 5010 NMHT

Enclosure



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Antique Automobile Club of America

January 9, 1981

501 West Governor Road
Hershey, Pennsylvania 17033
Phone: (717) 534-1910

Mr. William J. O'Hagan
60 Dartford Road
Rochester, NY 14618

Dear Mr. O'Hagan:

Thank you very much for your letter received December 29, 1980. Congratulations on winning a First Junior award at Hershey this past October with your Model A Ford Roadster.

Regarding the 1931 Model A Ford pick up equipped with a telephone installer's body, I am sure this would be a very nice vehicle. However, it would not be able to be entered under the name of the Rochester Telephone Corporation. Only members of AACA can enter vehicles for judging under their own individual memberships.

Since the president of the corporation is interested, perhaps he should become an Active member of AACA by completing the enclosed membership application form and paying the dues of \$13.00. He could then enter the truck in his name. You could even enter the truck in your name if you so wished but it would not be able to be entered under the name of the company.

Hops this information will be of help. Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

William H. Rosgardner
Manager

WEB:paf

Enc.

ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE

LIGHT INSTALLATION UNIT (LI-29 Body, FA Cab)

A very light body and a suitable cab have been devised for use on light cars in one or two-man installation work. Every detail of this outfit is planned to carry the various materials and tools required, in a manner which is most convenient for the workmen. The unit is supplied complete with racks for ladders, tree trimmers and ground rods; also provision is made for carrying a drop wire reel. Particular attention has been given to the appearance of the outfit.

Capacity:

One LI-29 unit will serve one or two installers, or can be used by one or two combination installer-repairmen, or by one or two repairmen.

Weight, pounds:

Cab, 375. Body without ladder irons or reel, 350. Ladder irons, 47. Drop wire reel, 18.

Price, at factory:

Cab, \$115. Body and ladder irons \$96. Drop wire reel, \$5.50.

This unique truck was spotted in a Massachusetts FOR SALE ad in Spring 2022, and was purchased by the Model A Ford Foundation Inc. for display here at the Model A Museum.

