

## ATV "Chariot" Great Family Fun

Gerold Brunken, Tower Hill, Ill., really didn't start out to build a two-wheeled, Roman-style chariot. He just happened to have some good used parts lying around, and one day he saw them as the makings for the project. He pulled the chariot behind his Honda 4-wheeler.

"I use it to give rides to my grand kids and anyone else who wants to go for a spin. It's fun to ride in," says Brunken.

He used an axle and springs from a 2,000-lb. utility trailer and sheet metal welded to a

home-built frame. The seat is from a school bus and has a tractor umbrella over it that mounts on a pair of armrests. The rider is protected from any rocks thrown by the ATV's tires by a 2-ft. high metal kickboard. Sheet metal was used to make the fenders and an old pipe was used to form the tongue, which has a ball hitch on it.

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A few spare parts and an idea led to a fun "chariot" ride for Gerold Brunken's grand kids.

## A Walking Encyclopedia On Pocket Watches

When it comes to pocket watches, Merlin M. Meyer of Orcutt, Calif. is an expert. He doesn't consider himself a collector, yet he owns in the neighborhood of 300 pocket watches.

That's because he specializes in fixing and appraising American pocket watches, working for collectors and a number of jewelry stores around the country. The ones he possesses vary vastly in condition and quality, and he keeps most of them for parts.

Meyer is more than just a watch repairman. As a "watchmaker," he operates M&M Repair, and is both trained and skilled at such things as actually making certain parts like gears or stems.

"I don't know why people collect the things they do, but I know that watch collectors seem to specialize in one certain make or type of watch. Of course, they want the rarest ones in the best condition for whatever particular category they have chosen to focus on," Meyer says. "There are some pocket watches out there worth over \$2,000, but they are few and far between. The average old farmer's

common type jeweled pocket watch is worth anywhere between \$100 and \$200, depending on condition and age. The pin-lever type of pocket watch, commonly referred to as the dollar pocket watch, only ranges between \$20 and \$100."

Meyer says he probably has more American pocket watch parts than anyone in the U.S., given that two walls of his 8 by 14-ft. repair room are completely covered from top to bottom with cabinets full of parts.

"Very few people know the history of pocket watches as well as I do," he says.

According to Meyer, there have been about 15 different American pocket watch manufacturers, and each has made multitudes of types and styles. Some of the most prolific companies were: Elgins (April 1867-1956), Waltham (1851-1957), Hamilton (1892 – now, last American made one was in 1969), Illinois (1869–1927 when bought out by Hamilton), Robert H. Ingersoll & Bros. (1892-1922 – bought out by Waterbury but continued to use Ingersoll name until 1944), New Haven Clock and Watch Co. (1853 –

1956), E. Ingraham Co. (1912 – 1968), and Westclox (1899 – now but last pocket watch made around 1990).

"I do a lot of research for people – all I need from them to go on is the make, and serial number off of the movement. The movement is the gears, etc. that make up the watch itself. The serial number off the case is useless since manufacturers sometimes interchanged cases," he explains. "With the serial number, I can find out what the model number and grade is, when the watch was made, how many were made and where they were made. I've drawn up a pocket watch collector's data sheet to provide people with a record of all the intricate detailed descriptions of their watches. Sometimes collectors offer me some of their surplus watches as partial payment of their bill, and occasionally, I accept."

Meyer says he probably owns more watches than most collectors, but most of his are average, run of the mill, common watches. He has a couple that are rare. One of those is a Grade 948 Hamilton, worth around \$500.



Merlin Meyer poses with two of the 300 antique watches in his collection.

There were only 1,500 of them made.

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## Looking For The World's First Car

By C.F. Marley, Contributing Editor



I recently noticed a 4 cent U.S. postage stamp that carries the inscription "Steam Carriage 1866." I didn't know there were cars back that far so I decided to do some re-

search. What I found might surprise you.

Richard Dudgeon, of New York, ran his steam carriage many hundreds of miles and once covered a mile in under two minutes. Although the inventor claimed the carriage could carry 10 people at 14 mph on one barrel of anthracite coal, it was too far ahead of its time and failed to gain popular favor.

This machine was called "Dudgeon's Steam Carriage" and it had automotive steering, rear wheel drive, and headlights. The driver sat at the rear.

Surprisingly, I found out that the Dudgeon "car" was not even close to being the first ever. Most people think the first was a "road locomotive" built in 1803 by Richard Trevithick in Britain.

Trevithick built his prototype at Camborne, Cornwall and ran it for several hundred yards up a hill with several people hanging onto it. Unfortunately, while they were in a pub celebrating the event, the steam-powered vehicle set fire to the shed it was in and destroyed itself.

Undaunted, the following year Trevithick took out a patent for his road carriage and

started putting one together in London. The machine's 8-ft. dia. wheels were intended to smooth out the road surfaces of the time so as to avoid the fire being shaken out. The forked piston reduced the distance between the single cylinder and the crankshaft and was considered a particular novelty. A spring-operated valve gear was used to minimize the weight of the flywheel which overcame one of the drawbacks of other industrial engines at the time.

On completion, the London Steam Carriage was driven about 10 miles through the streets of London with seven or eight guest passengers. This was the first official trip of a self-powered passenger-carrying vehicle in the world.

While the experiment was considered successful technically and the vehicle could have been developed, it proved unpopular mainly because it terrified horses. It was for this reason that the media and public largely ignored its significance.

During a trip on a subsequent evening, Trevithick and his colleague crashed the carriage. As a result of this and lack of sales, the vehicle was scrapped.

Not all the details of the machine are known but the patent drawings have survived, as have drawings made at the time by a naval engineer who was sent to examine it.

A replica of Trevithick's 1803 steam carriage was recently constructed and displayed throughout Europe.



Richard Dudgeon, of New York, built this steam carriage in 1866 (see U.S. postage stamp at left). The driver sat at the rear.



The 8-ft. dia. wheels on Trevithick's 1803 steam-powered vehicle were designed to smooth out bumps on the road to avoid shaking, which might put out the fire.