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Niles Gotfredson spent his summers farming, and his winters harvesting timber, assisted in both activities by Lawrence and Benjamin, who attended the New Denmark rural school when in session. Lawrence spent two winters in Green Bay, attending the Green Bay Business College, after which he returned to the family's farm, engaging in the sales of farm implements on a small scale with his younger brother Benjamin.

The pair engaged in business under the style of Gotfredson Brothers, opening a hardware and implement store in Cooperstown, Wisconsin during 1878 which was followed by a satellite in Seymour, two year later. Buggies were added to the mix of agricultural implements and hardware and in the spring of 1888 they opened up a Green Bay branch in a 42' x 60' two-story wooden storefront located at 1155 Main St.

Their listing in the Patron's Directory of Foote & Brown's Plat book of Brown County, Wisconsin, pub. 1889, follows:

"Gotfredson Bros. (Benjamin & Lawrence) Dealers in Hardware, Farm Machinery, Wagons, Buggies, Cutters, Sleighs, etc. Store and Warehouses on Main Street, opposite Reis's Hotel, Green Bay, and in Cooperstown, Wis. - Green Bay W. & St. P. Railway."

Each year brought increased trade to the firm and the market for their goods grew constantly. In 1896 the brothers erected a new Green Bay wareroom on Washington Street which was replaced in 1900 by a massive one-story 48' x 198' wooden facility. In the meantime they also established a wholesale division for which they erected a spacious 60' x 175' warehouse adjacent to the Fox River alongside the Green Bay & Western (formerly Green Bay, Winona & St. Paul) Railway.

Gotfredson Brothers' wholesale operations were eventually sold off to the Wisconsin Hardware Company, as reported in the September 15, 1904 issue of Iron Age:

"The Wisconsin Hardware Company has been organized, with a capital stock of \$200,000, at Green Bay, Wis., with Mitchell Joannes and Frank E. Murphy of Green Bay and A. E. Winter of Oshkosh as incorporators. The company will purchase the wholesale business and establishment of Gotfredson Brothers Hardware Company of Green Bay. Morley Brothers, Saginaw, Mich., are the largest stockholders."

Shortly thereafter the name was changed to the Morley-Murphy Hardware Company as indicated in the November 3, 1904 issue of Iron Age:

"MORLEY-MURPHY HARDWARE COMPANY.

"THE Morley-Murphy Hardware Company has purchased the buildings and entire stock of Gotfredson Brothers Hardware Company at Green Bay, Wis. The deal was consummated September 21 and the Morley-Murphy Hardware Company was incorporated and capitalized at \$200,000, starting in business October 1. The officers are R. C. Morley, president; Frank E. Murphy, vice-president; A. E. Winter, secretary, and H. H. Heinrichs, treasurer. The company will do an exclusively wholesale business. Its buildings are admirably adapted for this purpose. Lake boats can land at the dock in the rear of the warehouse, and between the warehouse and the main building are railroad tracks."

The Gotfredson brothers retained all of their Wisconsin retail operations which for many years involved the buying and selling horses, Benjamin having charge of the retail department of the store and the horse business. In the course of the latter enterprise he became enamored with the daughter of a Detroit, Michigan stable and livery operator named Jacob Kolb, marrying her in 1904 and becoming a partner in his new father-in-law's livery and stables (Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co.) a few months later.

During that same year (1905) the Gotfredsons constructed a 5,390 sq. ft. brick flagship hardware store in downtown Green Bay that included all of the latest conveniences; elevators, central heating, electric lights and telephone.

Benjamin's marriage to Mary Clara Kolb, who was 20 years his junior, was not his first. His first wife was Augusta Emilia (aka Amelia) Graner (b. Jan 27, 1871 in Green Bay, Wisconsin), daughter of Robert, (b. May 1835 in Germany- d. 1880) and Johanna Ernestine (Jachmann) (b. Apr 1843 (or 1848) in Germany—d.1885) - Robert Graner being a well-known Green Bay livestock dealer and former butcher. Benjamin and Amelia's union was blessed with the birth of a son, Robert Benjamin Gotfredson (b. Sep. 6, 1896-d. Mar. 1, 1966), who was born on Sep. 6, 1896 in Green Bay, Brown County Wisconsin.

Gotfredson separated from and divorced his first wife sometime prior to his June 20, 1904 marriage to Mary Clara Kolb (b. Feb. 17, 1883 in Michigan - d. Jul. 25, 1964 in Los Angeles, CA) the daughter of his future business partner Jacob and Mary (Lawrence) Kolb. The marriage yielded no children, the 1917

"OUR MICHIGAN FRIENDS AS WE SEE 'EM."



JACOB KOLB
PRESIDENT
KOLB-GOTFREDSON HORSE CO.

JACOB KOLB, SR., PRES. W. D. FOX, VICE-PRES. BENJ. GOTFREDSON, SEC. and TREAS.

Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Company

1093 Gratiot Ave.

The Largest Dealers and Commission Salesmen
of Horses in Michigan.

New Carriage and
Harness Department.
Everything for the
Stable from a Tie
Rope to a Complete
Outfit.



NEW HORSE
PALACE

Draft, Driving, Saddle
and Farm Horses.

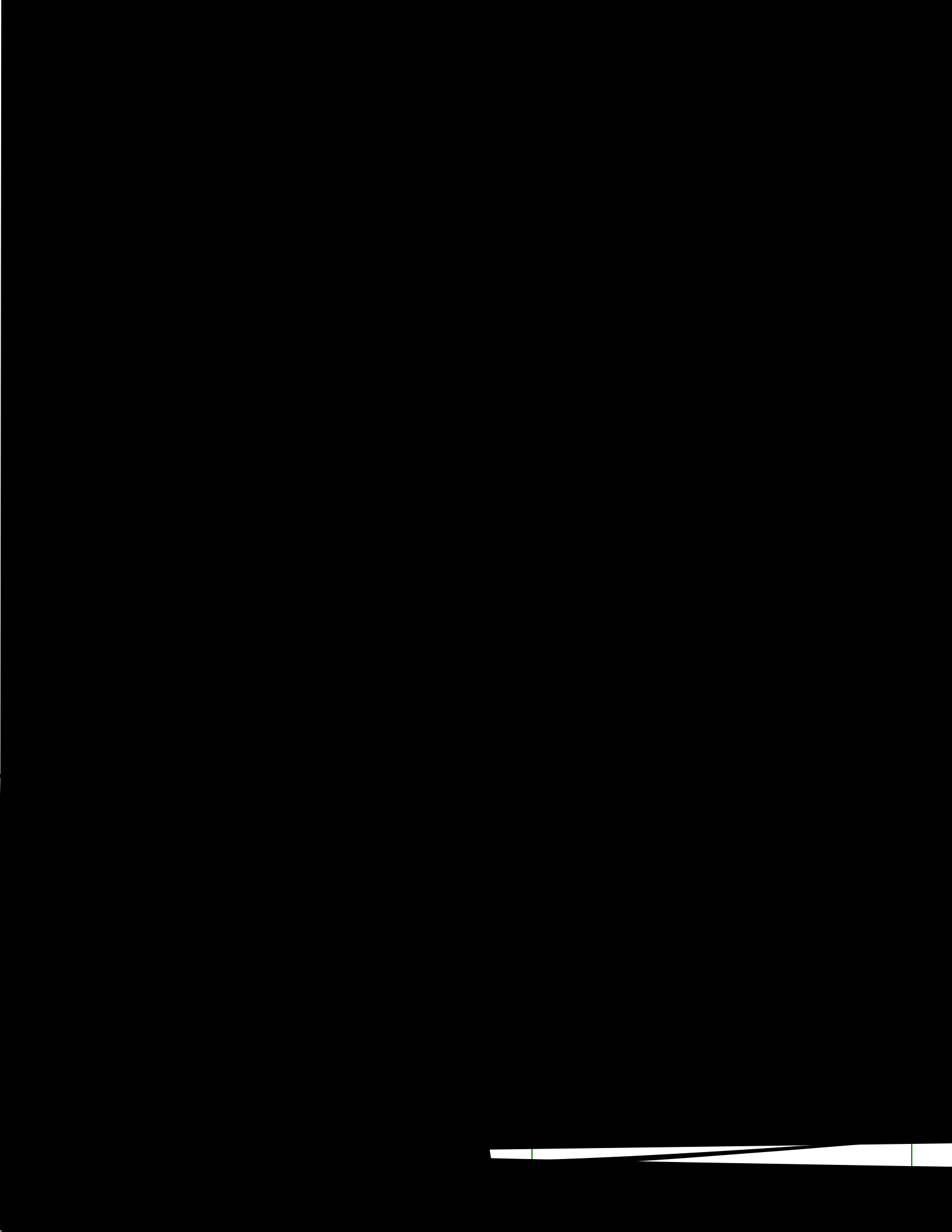
Phone, Ridge 131
Phone, Ridge 500

Auction Sales Every Thursday and Saturday 10 a. m.
Private Sales Daily.



DETROIT PLANT

TOURING BODY NO. 148429		TORPEDO BODY NO.	
Left	✓	Right	
Maker		Finisher	Top
Pontiac		Pontiac	Am. Auto Trim
Fisher	✓	Briggs	Apple
Wilson		American	Detroit, M. C. ✓
Herbert		Herbert	Iroquois
Monroe			
		Ford	Taylor
Ford		Det.	Warner
			Am. J.



partnership in the same line. He subsequently bought out his partner, and for a short time was associated with George Cox, as Kolb & Cox, after which he established the Kolb Horse Co. at 1113 Gratiot av., Detroit.

On January 11, 1881, its proprietor, Jacob Kolb (II), was united in marriage to Mary Lorent, the daughter of Nicholas Lorent, of Detroit, and to the blessed union was born three children; Jacob A. (aka Jacob Kolb jr. or Jacob Kolb III - b. Nov. 26, 1881-d. Jul. 11, 1907) Mary Clara (b. Feb. 17, 1883-d. Jul. 25, 1964), and Matilda Catherine (b. Nov. 9, 1884-d. Nov. 18, 1971 - m. William J. Karp) Kolb. Jacob A. Kolb was a graduate of Assumption College, at Sandwich, Ontario, and was associated with his father in business at the time of his death.

In August of 1905, Jacob Kolb's son-in-law, Benjamin Gotfredson, made a sizeable investment in Kolb's Detroit operations, prompting its reorganization as the Kolb, Gotfredson Horse Co., which was capitalized at \$60,000. In January of 1908, the business was incorporated with an increase in capital stock to \$150,000 and the following officers: Jacob Kolb, Sr. (Jacob Kolb II), president; William D. Fox, vice-president; and Benjamin Gotfredson, secretary and treasurer.

A period description of the Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co. included in Albert Nelson Marquis's Book of Detroiters, (pub. 1914) follows:

"The Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co.

"With Detroit headquarters at 1093 to 1113 Gratiot avenue, this concern transacts a large and important business as dealers in and commission salesmen of horses and also as dealers in carriages, buggies, wagons, harness, etc. At the establishment of the company auction sales of draft, driving, saddle and farm horses are held every Thursday and Saturday, at ten o'clock A. M., and private sales are held daily. In the carriage and harness department are handled all kinds of carriages and buggies of the light driving order, and a specialty is made of harness equipment of all kinds, saddlery, and turf supplies, as well as delivery wagons and lumber and dump wagons... In 1907 twelve thousand horses were sold through its agency, and an average of fully thirty-six thousand dollars is paid out annually in wages to employees. In the carriage and harness department an extensive trade also is controlled. The company owns the building occupied, and the same is substantially constructed of brick, is eighty-four by two hundred and twenty feet in dimensions, three stores in height and represents the expenditure of thirty thousand dollars. This fine, modern building, which has the best of equipment throughout, was erected in 1905. The company has an accumulated surplus of forty thousand dollars, and this reserve is being used with due care and conservatism in the expansion of the business."

An existing color postcard provides a detailed scene of 'Auction Day at the Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co., Detroit, Michigan. Carriages, Buggies and Wagons. Auction Sales Thursdays & Saturdays.'

The pair were also involved in real estate and in late 1914 formed a realty company with Edward Bushor. Capitalized at \$25,000 the Kolb-Gotfredson Realty Co. was formally organized on December 26, 1914.

As owners of a Maxwell automobile distributorship the Gotfredson brothers realized the days of the horse and carriage were numbered.

In the course of business Benjamin Gotfredson had become acquainted with Frank H. Joyce (b. 1872 - d.1956), a well-known distributor and manufacturer of Saddlery and Harness Goods located at 128-132 Jefferson Ave., Detroit. Joyce was like-minded and together with Mark H. Coleman, cashier of the Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co., the three men embarked upon a new business venture.

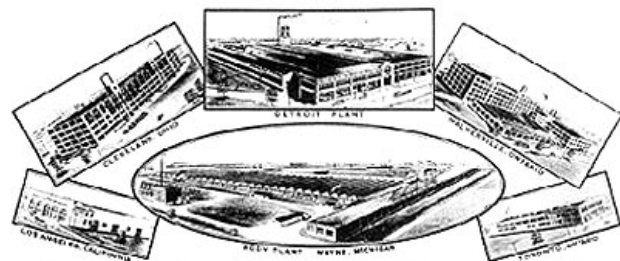
Joyce was well-connected within Detroit's fledgling automobile industry and saw an opportunity in providing local manufacturers with automobile body trimming and finishing services. A vacant manufacturing facility at 742 Meldrum Ave., Detroit, was located, employees hired, and contracts procured amongst his contacts. The three men formed the American Auto Trimming Company in November of 1909, with Benjamin Gotfredson as president, Frank H. Joyce as vice president and Mark H. Coleman (b. Mar. 24, 1883-d.Aug. 10, 1953) as secretary.

Frank Henderson Joyce was born in Windsor, Essex County, Ontario, Canada in May of 1872 to Alfred W. (b.1847) and Cynthia A. (b.1848) Joyce. The 1881 Canadian Census indicates Frank's father was a cabinetmaker and also lists two siblings, Frederic W. (b.1870) and William M. (b.1875) Joyce. After a public education in the Windsor schools he joined the firm of Armstrong & Graham, 128-132 Jefferson Ave., Detroit, a leading harness manufacturer founded in 1880 by Edwin E. and Henry I. Armstrong and Burke M. Graham, rising to the position of sales manager.

Soon after his 18th birthday he went into business for himself at 441 Michigan Ave. The 1893 edition of Knight, Leonard & Co.'s 'Detroit of Today, the City of



The GRAHAM BODY PLANT at Wayne, Michigan, which carries on the Graham reputation for high quality and distinctive style



MAIN PLANT, DETROIT

the Strait' describing his business operations in great detail:

"FRANK JOYCE. One of the most popular manufacturers of harness, collars and saddlery in Detroit, is Mr. Frank Joyce, whose establishment is located at No. 441 Michigan avenue. He has been in business about four years and has met with pronounced success. He has a fine showroom with a workshop in the rear, the premises being twenty by eighty feet in dimensions. Here he carries a full line of the goods he manufactures, and also handles the products of the leading factories turning out horse and turf requisites. The stock includes hand-made harness for buggy, track, coupe, double teams, etc. Also harness oils, carriage dressing, axle grease, washers, whips, pads, curry combs, nets, robes, blankets, and every article necessary for the horse, stable or carriage. A fully equipped repair department is operated, and a speciality is made of fine order work. Mr. Frank Joyce is a native of this city, and is a young man who has had large experience in his chosen line. He is popular in both social and business circles, and justly merits the large success he has achieved."

Joyce married Calla Noble (b.Sep. 1873 in Colorado) in 1895 and to the blessed union was born five sons: Nobel (b. Jul. 1897), Frank H., Jr. (b.1898), William N. (b. Jan. 1899), Philip A. and Herbert. Both William N. and Frank H. jr. served with the British Royal Air Force during the First World War. In 1922, Joyce partnered with Hugh Chalmers of Chalmers Motor Cars to form the Joyce Manufacturing Company in Detroit. He headed this firm while retaining an interest in the Windsor branch of Gotfredson Ltd.

Today Joyce is well-known in Windsor as the original owner of a brick and half-timbered Tudor Revival style house located at 3975 Riverside Dr. East in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The English beam and stucco structure is set on a massive lot fronting Riverside Dr. and the Detroit River and was constructed for Joyce in 1926 by George Masson of the firm of Sheppard and Masson and is currently the home of the Academie Ste. Cecile International School.

American Auto Trimming's third incorporator, Mark H. Coleman, was placed in charge of the finances and accounting. Mark Hiram Coleman was born in Barry County, Michigan on March 24, 1883 to Frank E. and Augusta (Moon) Coleman. After a public education in the Battle Creek schools he attended the Battle Creek Business and Kalamazoo Colleges, entering into business as a cashier with the Schneider Tent & Awning Co. of Detroit. In 1909 he took a similar position with the Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co. and later that year helped organize the American Auto Trimming Co. On October, 4, 1904 he married Olive M. Riley, of Battle Creek, and to the blessed union was born two children, Reed Mark and Genevieve R. Coleman.

Lawrence Gotfredson became connected with American Auto Trimming shortly after the firm's organization, prompting a 1910 reorganization with Lawrence replacing Frank H. Joyce as vice-president, and Joyce assuming Coleman's former duties as Secretary-Treasurer.

Although personally unfamiliar with the automobile body and trimming business, the Gotfredsons hired experienced men to oversee American Auto Trimming's operations. B. M. Diver, a former body engineer and designer with the New Haven Carriage Co., Sievers & Erdman, the Columbus Buggy Co. and Woods Motor Vehicle Co., served as superintendent of its Meldrum Ave. facility.

The firm's first customers included Ford and Studebaker and Michigan factory inspections between 1909 and 1912 reveal the size of its operations in its early days. Four different facilities were listed in the report, one for auto body finishing, one for auto top manufacturing, and two for auto trimming. What follows is the contents of reports included in 'Annual Report #31, State of Michigan Dept. of Labor', which was published in 1914:

"Plant #1 Inspection on Aug 11, 1909 product: auto trimming – 128 male employees, 33 female employees, total 161

"Plant #2 Inspection on Aug 12, 1912 product: auto body finishing – 297 male employees, 27 female employees, total 324 (1 under age 16)

"Plant #3 Inspection on Nov 14, 1909 product: auto trimming – 53 male employees, 0 female employees, total 53

"Plant #4 Inspection on Aug 1, 1909 product: auto tops – 23 male employees, 20 female employees, total 43"

The 1916 edition of the same publication 'Annual Report #33 State of Michigan Dept of Labor, pub. 1916' provides additional data, although plant numbers are not included:

"Inspection on Oct 12, 1909 - American Auto Trimming Co., product: auto tops – 123 male employees, 6 female employees, total 129.



THE G. & J. IS MADE IN WALKERVILLE

THE factory of Gotfredson-Joyce Corporation, Ltd. is located in Walkerville, Ontario. G. & J. Trucks are built and sold in Canada, and every effort is bent exclusively to caring for Canadian trade.

Every person connected with the motor truck industry in the Dominion will readily grasp the advantage in dealing with a concern whose entire activities are centered in the Dominion.

The G. & J. factory has an annual capacity of 2,500 motor trucks and has every facility for future expansion. And the Canadian trade will have first call upon the entire output of the factory. Dealers who have been discriminated against will be quick to appreciate the more satisfactory arrangement of dealing with a concern whose interests are their own.

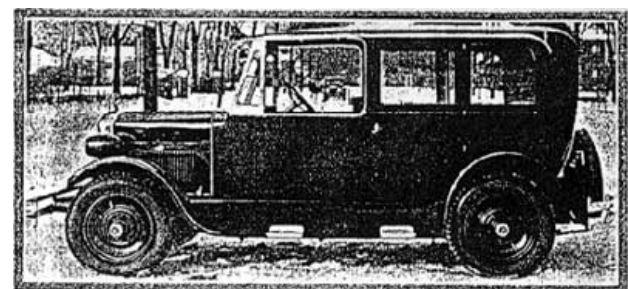
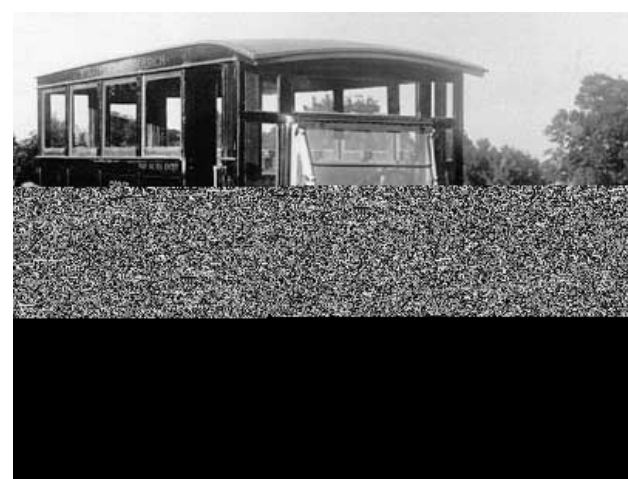
Not only is this truck built in Canada, but it is built for Canada. Read the specifications—study them. You will find every detail has been carefully considered and selected for its ability to give the best performance under all conditions.

The thorough tests which this truck underwent before it was put into production were all made under actual working conditions and on every variety of Canadian roads and weather conditions.

Serviced and sold for Windsor and surrounding territory from our Walkerville factories.

REPRESENTATIVE dealers who have facilities for selling motor trucks should lose no time in getting in touch with us, as there is some excellent territory still open.

Gotfredson-Joyce Corporation, Limited
WALKER ROAD, WALKERVILLE, ONTARIO, CANADA
PHONE 503



Complete taxicab now manufactured at Gotfredson Canadian plant. Five disc wheels and tires are standard equipment

"Inspection on July 8, 1911 - American Auto Trimming Co., product: auto tops - 34 male employees, 39 female employees, total 73."

The Oct 31, 1912 issue of American Machinist announced an addition to the firm's Meldrum Ave factory:

"Mildner & Eisen, archs., 1018 Hammond Bldg., Detroit, Mich., has let for the American Auto Trimming Co. additional contracts for its large brick factory building on Meldrum and Berlin Aves."

The November 9, 1912 issue of Construction News was more specific, stating that the \$8,000 contract was for the construction of an office building:

"Detroit Michigan - Office Bldg., \$8,000, Meldrum & Berlin. Archt. Mildner & Eisen, 1018 Hammond Bldg, completing plans. Owner, American Auto Trimming Co., Frank H. Joyce, , secty., 607 Mack Ave. Brk. & Stone, 1 stys., 40 x 50."

American Auto Trimming's operations were not limited to Detroit, and by 1911 a Gotfredson-owned Canadian subsidiary, American Auto Trimming Company Ltd., was painting and trimming bodies for the Ford Motor Co. of Canada's assembly plants in Walkerville, and Toronto, Ontario.

Located in the former factory of the Ontario Basket Co., the firm's Walkerville plant was enlarged into surrounding property as demand for the Model T increased.

Walkerville was named after Hiram Walker (1816-1899), the celebrated Canadian distiller of Walker Club whiskey which was renamed Canadian Club in 1880. Starting in 1856 Walker built homes and factories for his employees and suppliers adjacent to the Walker factory, incorporating it as Walkerville in 1890 to avoid annexation with Windsor. Not only did Walker own all of the land and homes within the city's boundaries, he held controlling interests in most of its business as well, most of which shared his surname, Ontario Basket Co. being an exception.

In 1904 Gordon MacGregor, then proprietor of the Walkerville Wagon Works, acquired a license to build Fords in Canada, creating the Ford Motor Co. of Canada in which its American partner held 51% interest. The rapid success of the Model T quickly outstripped the Walkerville factory's capacity which was expanded in 1911 and again in 1913. Ford's Detroit suppliers were encouraged to set up satellites on the Canadian side of the Detroit River, with American Auto Trimming being one of the first.

During American Auto Trimming's early days the eventual president of Nash-Kelvinator, George W. Mason, worked for the firm as a purchasing agent, the September 17, 1922 issue of the Oakland Tribune reporting:

"Works Manager Is Chosen by Company

"W. Ledyard Mitchell, vice-president in charge of manufacturing of the Maxwell Motor Corporation, announces the appointment of George W. Mason as works manager of the Maxwell Motor Corporation. Prior to the last year spent in the Maxwell organization, Mason had been associated with both Studebaker and Dodge Brothers and with the American Auto Trimming Company in an executive capacity."

As Ford expanded across the country, so did American Auto Trimming, the 'Recent Incorporations' column of the August 19, 1916 issue of Automobile Topics reported on the firm's move into Ohio:

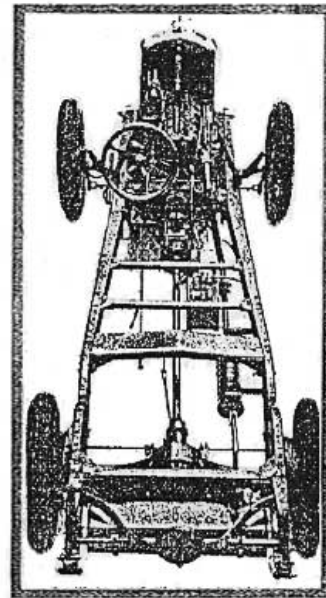
"The American Auto Trimming Co., Cleveland, O. Capital \$100,000. Incorporators: Benjamin Gotfredson, Frank Joyce, G. A. Coulton, F. W. Treadway and William H. Mariatt."

The September 1916 issue of the Hub reported on the acquisition of a East 79th Street plant in Cleveland, which was controlled by a recently organized Ohio Corporation:

"The American Auto Trimming Co., Cleveland, has been incorporated with a capital stock of \$100,000 and will establish a plant in the factory building of the Properties Co. on East 79th street for the manufacture of automobile accessories. Among those interested are Benjamin Gotfredson and Frank Joyce, both at present engaged in a similar business in Detroit."

A biography of Lawrence Gotfredson included the following description of American Auto Trimmings operations just prior to the start of the First World War:

"The American Auto Trimming Company is a strong corporation and has plants in Cleveland, Ohio, and Walkerville, Ontario, besides the extensive plant in Detroit. The company is very successful and has grown greatly since its inception. In the last



Every One a Gotfredson Car Every One a Diamond Taxi Every One Firestone Tire Equipped

AGAIN--A Distinct Advance in Winnipeg's Local Travel Service!

The Diamond Taxicab Co. Ltd., Purchases the Newest Type of Gotfredson Machines--Equipped With the World Famous Firestone Balloon Tires

The largest single shipment of Taxicabs ever brought into Winnipeg has arrived from the Canadian factory of the Gotfredson Corporation Ltd. These new machines are new in construction and are at the highest service of police and DIAMOND TAXICAB. Every one is of the most modern design, equipped with the latest devices for the safety and comfort of passengers, including Firestone Balloon Tires.

The Gotfredson Corporation Ltd.
 The Gotfredson Corporation Ltd. is a Canadian corporation, incorporated in the Province of Ontario, Canada. Its principal office is at 100 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It has branches in various parts of Canada and the United States of America.

Diamond Taxis
 The addition of FIRESTONE TIRES to the new Diamond Taxicabs is a further advance in their equipment. These new machines are new in construction and are at the highest service of police and DIAMOND TAXICAB. Every one is of the most modern design, equipped with the latest devices for the safety and comfort of passengers, including Firestone Balloon Tires.

Firestone
 The addition of FIRESTONE TIRES to the new Diamond Taxicabs is a further advance in their equipment. These new machines are new in construction and are at the highest service of police and DIAMOND TAXICAB. Every one is of the most modern design, equipped with the latest devices for the safety and comfort of passengers, including Firestone Balloon Tires.

Gotfredson

THE DIAMOND TAXICAB COMPANY, LTD.
 Phone 23 331



few years. The dimensions of its plants by eight hundred thousand square feet of space; five hundred thousand of this increase has been added to the Detroit plant, one hundred and seventy-five thousand in Walkerville and one hundred and fifty thousand in Cleveland. The firm makes auto trimmings and tops and supplies all the big companies in the middle west with its products."

With American Auto Trimming doing well, Benjamin Gotfredson found time for other business opportunities, the January 10, 1918 issue of Automotive Industries reporting on his election as President of the Saxon Motor Car Co.:

"Gotfredson Heads Saxon

"DETROIT, Jan. 10—Benjamin Gotfredson was elected president of the Saxon Motor Corp. at a meeting of the board of directors held in New York this week. Mr. Gotfredson will take the place formerly occupied by Harry W. Ford. He has been a stockholder in the Saxon organization for some time and has been more or less identified with the activities of the company. Mr. Gotfredson is president and organizer of the American Auto Trimming Co., Detroit."

Saxon was reorganized at the end of 1919 as reported in the 1921 edition of Poor's Manuals of Industrials:

"SAXON MOTOR CAR CORPORATION (I)

"History: Incorporated Nov. 23, 1915, in New York. Acquired the Saxon Motor Co. of Michigan. Plant at Detroit. Management: Officers: "Benjamin Gotfredson, Pres.; Lee Counselman, Vice-Pres.; Benjamin Gotfredson, Sec. and Treas. Directors: H. W. Ford, Lee Counselman, Benjamin Gotfredson, Percy Owen, E. C. Lynch and L. R. Scafe, Bernard Straus, H. F. Harper. Office: Detroit, Mich.

"SAXON MOTOR CAR CORPORATION (II)

"Incorporated in New York, December, 1919, as a reorganization of a corporation of the same name, which had acquired the Saxon Motor Car Co., a Delaware company. Before reorganization, the company could not meet its current obligations, a condition produced by the destruction of its main plant, mismanagement and a large plant expansion to meet war conditions. A committee was formed and a plan was submitted and accepted by the stockholders, by which the capitalization was increased from 60,000 shares, \$100 par common, to 200,000 shares common, no par, and \$1,500,000 8 per cent, preferred stock; creditors to accept in payment of balance indebtedness, 20 per cent, cash and 80 per cent, preferred stock; stockholders are to receive one share common of no par value, in exchange for one share common, \$ 100 par; and an underwriter's purchase of all of 1 20,000 shares common of no par value, which were not taken by stockholders, the proceeds of this sale to be used for the continuance of the company's business. Company operates a plant at Detroit, Mich., capable of producing 30,000 cars per annum.

"OFFICERS— Benjamin Gotfredson, President; C. A. Pfeffer, Vice-President and Treasurer; D. C. Boyne, Secretary, Detroit, Mich.

"DIRECTORS— Benjamin Gotfredson, C. A. Pfeffer, D. C. Boyne, C. W. Dickerson, W. R. Angell, M. H. Coleman, Detroit, Mich.; W. G. Souders. New York.

"MAIN OFFICE, Detroit. Mich. NEW YORK OFFICE, 1744 Broadway. ANNUAL MEETING, second Tuesday in February. LISTED, New York Stock Exchange."

Although Saxon was experiencing difficulties, American Auto Trimming continued to expand as evidenced by the following item in the August 23, 1919 issue of American Contractor:

"Highland Park, Mich.—Factory: 5 sty. 328x14. Cor. Taft av. & Arbor rd., Cleveland, O. Archt. Louis W. Kiel. 249 Rhode Island av.. Highland Park. Owner American Auto Trimming Co., B. Gotfredson. pres.. 864 E. 72nd St., Cleveland & Detroit, Mich. Brk., re. cone, flat slab flr. & roof constr. Archt. taking bids."

The firm's name was so-well known at the time that newspaper advertisements for the 1919-1920 Columbia Six included the following ad copy: 'Painting and Trimming by the American Auto Trimming Co.'

The December 11, 1919 'Men of the Industry' column of The Automobile (Automobile industries) announced Gotfredson's resignation as president of Saxon:



Parlor Car Type Body—Mounted on 50-B-29 Chassis

"DETROIT, Dec. 9—Benjamin Gotfredson, president of the Saxon Motor Car Co., tendered his resignation and will devote all of his time to the interests of the American Auto Trimming Co., of which he also is president.

"News of the resignation of President Gotfredson caused much surprised comment in automobile circles for his successful operation of the company as the representative of the creditors and stockholders had made him loom as a factor in the industry. It was announced at the plant today that Gotfredson's decision to tender his resignation was reached despite strong opposition of the Creditors' Committee and the directors of the company.

"Gotfredson was called to the presidency when the life of the company was threatened as the result of a series of misfortunes a few years ago. In the two years in which he has been at the head of the company he has brought it to a point where it now is safely on its way. Gotfredson began an energetic campaign for reorganization immediately upon being inducted into office, despite the generally pessimistic view of the trade. The company not only gained strength as a going concern but about 60 per cent of its indebtedness was liquidated and there now is in hand sufficient to protect all of the company's obligations, and provide incentive for the reorganization now under way.

"The constantly increasing business of Gotfredson's other company with plants in Detroit, Cleveland and Canada, he says, compelled him to devote all of his energy in that direction."

The success of American Auto Trimming created logistical problems for the firm due to their having to collect and deliver thousands of automobile bodies on a weekly basis. Increasingly larger numbers of trucks became involved in collecting the bodies 'in-the-white' from the bodybuilders, transporting them to American Auto Trimming's plant, then returning them for mounting on finished chassis at the automobile manufacturers' assembly plant.

At this point in our story we turn to a first-hand witness, Nelson R. Brownier (b.Jul. 10, 1900-d.Feb. 4, 1995), who will describe the various activities taking place at the American Auto Trimming Company at that time.

In 1977 Toronto-based transport historian Rolland Lewis Jerry (b.1924-d.2002) interviewed the former Gotfredson engineer (Brownier) for a two-part article on Gotfredson Trucks in Old Cars magazine. Brownier provided much insight on Gotfredson's numerous business enterprises and for the next few paragraphs will be quoted repeatedly in regards to American Auto Trimming's operations during his tenure with the firm, which stretched from 1921 until 1925.

Brownier recalled to Jerry that the whole operation depended on trucks:

"There was a constant stream of vehicles to and from these plants for the transport of bodies, either unfinished and in need of paint and trim, or finished and ready for the chassis. The traffic was heavy most of the time."

The firm's success resulted in a need for a substantial number of new trucks for its Canadian operations. According to Brownier:

"New trucks were very expensive in Canada with the high import duty, since they came from the United States. American Auto Trimming employed a very good master mechanic at the Walkerville plant, and he said there would be no problems in assembling half a dozen or so trucks to meet the company's needs. He just went across the river to Detroit and picked up his engines from Hinkley, a few axles from Timken, and whatever else he needed. McCord had a radiator plant nearby at Walkerville, Ontario; and the frames came from the Canadian Bridge Company."

The firm trucks were assembled in a disused portion of American Auto Trimming's plant in Walkerville. Brownier recalled:

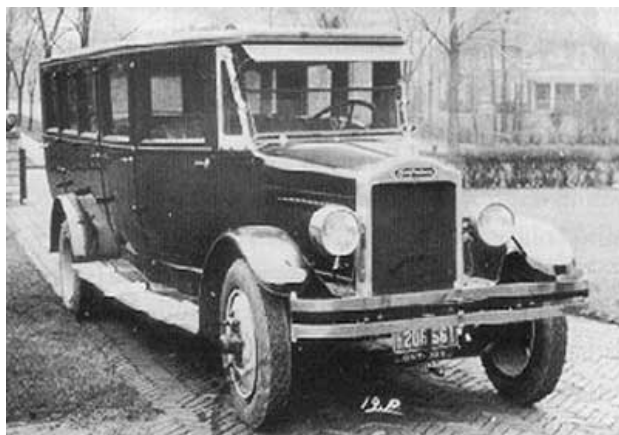
"They worked out as well as any trucks the company could have bought on the open market. So, it was decided to build a few commercially for Canadian customers."

American Auto Trimming was not a name that rolled off the tongue easily, so the firm top two executives decided to organize a separate firm named after themselves for the purpose, the April 29, 1920 issue of The Automobile (Automotive Industries) reporting on the firm's organization:

"FORM NEW TRUCK COMPANY WALKERVILLE, ONT., April 24—Benjamin Gotfredson, president, and Frank J. Joyce, secretary and treasurer of the American Auto Trimming Co., have formed the Gotfredson-Joyce Corp., Ltd., to manufacture trucks. They have



De Luxe Parlor Car Type Body—Mounted on 50-B-29 Six Wheel Chassis



Gotfredson
1 Ton Speed Truck
Delivers from Fresno to Mexico

A. Johnson, distributor of Gelfand's Mayonnaise, covers a lot of distance in a day. Especially gratifying to him in the use of his Gotfredson Speed truck is its ease of handling—no more difficult to drive through traffic than a five passenger car. Quick acceleration is another Gotfredson feature that makes possible maximum daily distance. Averages 15 miles to the gallon of gasoline. Speed is 35 miles per hour. Gotfredson lighter models have many new features that put money in your pocket.

6 Gotfredson Truck Corporation
1235-48 EAST NINTH ST. TUCKER 2753
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Models-1-1½-2-3-4-5 Tons

taken over the plant at Walkerville and are at present remodeling it, with the expectation of starting operations by about the end of April or the first week in May. The products of the factory for the present will be confined to 2 1/2 -ton trucks, of an approved model which has been in service and tested for the past six or eight months. The company expects to produce at least one thousand during the coming year."

A concurrent issue of Industry Week revealed that Gotfredson's son, Robert B. Gotfredson, would serve as vice-president:

"The Gotfredson-Joyce Corp., Ltd., Walkerville, Ont., has been incorporated with a paid-up capital of \$100,000 to build trucks for Canadian domestic and export trade. A building located in Walkerville, has been leased and operations are expected to commence at once. Officers follow: President, Benjamin Gotfredson; vice president, Robert B. Gotfredson, secretary and treasurer, Frank H. Joyce."

Born in Green Bay, Brown County, Wisconsin, on September 6, 1896 to Benjamin and Augusta Emilia (aka Amelia) Graner (Benjamin's 1st wife) Gotfredson, Robert Benjamin Gotfredson received his early education in the public schools of Green Bay, graduating from Notre Dame High School in Indiana, when the University of Notre Dame maintained schools for boys of all age levels. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1918 with an AB degree in business administration, giving up the last weeks of his senior year to enlist in the Army as an infantry private.

Just after graduation from the University of Michigan he married Charlotte (?) and to the blessed union was born three children: Mary Cecilia (b.1924); Benjamin J. (b.1925); and Robert L. (b. 1928) Gotfredson.

(Gotfredson remarried Charlotte Barlum in 1932 – what happened to his first wife is a point of conjecture)

Following a short tour of Camp Custer Gotfredson attended officer training school at Camp Lee, Va., emerging as a Second Lieutenant just as World War I drew to a close. Discharged in 1919, Gotfredson got a job at Ford Motor Co.'s Dearborn Tractor Plant spending time in its machine shop, motor assembly dept., service dept. and assembly lines.

He took a position as branch service manager at Ford's Charlotte, N.C. division after which he served in the same capacity at a couple of the firm's plants in New England. His was offered a managerial position at Ford Motor Co.'s plant in Russia, but he declined accepting instead an offer to join the recently-formed Gotfredson-Joyce Corp. Ltd. as salesman.

Incorporated on January 30, 1920, the Gotfredson-Joyce Corporation, Limited was capitalized at \$100,000, its officers and corporate members being; Benjamin Gotfredson and Mark Hiram Coleman, manufacturers; Robert Benjamin Gotfredson, salesman, (all of Detroit, Michigan); Frank Henderson Joyce, manufacturer, (Ford City, Ontario*); and Walter George Bartlet, barrister-at-law (Windsor, Ontario).

*Just as Walkerville was associated with Hiram Walker, Ford City was another suburb of Windsor connected with an industrialist. Founded by the Ford Motor Company Ltd. in the early 1900s, Ford City encompassed the neighborhood immediately surrounding the growing Ford assembly plant located at the corner of Riverside Dr. and Drouillard Rd.

Located within the municipal boundaries of Windsor, Ford City's boundaries east to west were Pillette Ave. to Walker Rd., and north to south Riverside Dr. to Grand Marais Blvd., with Drouillard Ave. serving as its main drag. A 1935 reorganization merged Ford City, Sandwich and Walkerville into the City of Windsor, and the three neighborhoods ceased to be separate municipal entities.

The first batch of trucks were constructed in the early summer of 1920, Brownier reflecting that the idea was that Joyce's son would direct the truck venture, but for various reasons, this plan was abandoned. A short time afterward, Benjamin's son Robert B. Gotfredson was placed in charge and Brownier entered the picture soon afterward:

"I was hired to help get truck production underway as I'd worked on them before for various outfits in Detroit."

The May 14, 1921 issue of Michigan Manufacturer & Financial Record recorded the expansion of the Gotfredson-Joyce truck line:

"ADDING THREE TRUCK MODELS The Gotfredson-Joyce Corporation, Ltd., Walkerville, Ont., which has been making a two-ton truck, called the G & J, has placed on the market a 3 1/2-ton model. This model has a four-cylinder Hinkley engine, worm-drive Timken-Detroit axle, Brown-Lipe sliding gear, Timken roller bearings and nickel steel gears throughout, Spicer propeller shafts and other standard fittings. The price of the chassis is \$5,175, or



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\$1,375 more than the price of the 2-ton chassis. The concern expects to place on the market shortly a 5-ton model as well as a 1-ton light truck. The officers and directors of the Gotfredson-Joyce Corporation are: Benjamin Gotfredson, president; Robert B. Gotfredson, vice-president, and Frank H. Joyce, secretary and treasurer. Benjamin Gotfredson and Mr. Joyce are both officers of the American Auto Trimming Company, with plants located in Walkerville, Detroit and Cleveland."

The 'Financial Notes' column of the June 16, 1921 issue of The Automobile (Automotive Industries) announced the recapitalization of the firm:

"Gotfredson-Joyce Corp., Ltd., Walkerville, Ont., truck maker will increase its capital stock from \$100,000 to \$500,000. The company has been building 2-ton and 3½-ton models and will bring out 1-ton and 5-ton models."

The 'New and Enlarged Shops' column of the November 24, 1921 issue of American Machinist announced the establishment of a Toronto sales and service depot:

"Ont., Toronto — The Gotfredson-Joyce Corp., Ltd., Walkerville, plans to build a 2-story garage and service station, etc., on Spadina Ave. here. Estimated cost, \$100,000. W. H. Leishman, 106 Jarvis St, Toronto. mgr."

In the Fall of 1922 Frank H. Joyce parted ways with the Gotfredson Brothers, simultaneously 'retiring' from the American and Canadian branches of American Auto Trimming and the Gotfredson-Joyce Corp. Ltd.

In collaboration with his son William A. Joyce and Hugh Chalmers* (b.1873-d.1932), the founder of the Chalmers Motor Co., Joyce formed an auto finishing firm positioned to compete directly against his former partners.

(*Interestingly Chalmers and Benjamin Gotfredson were both major investors in the original Saxon Motor Co.)

Christened the Joyce Manufacturing Co. after its president, the new enterprise acquired space in a disused Fisher Body plant located at 2970 Jefferson Ave. (E. Jefferson, corner of McDougall St.) and production commenced in late November, the September 30, 1922 issue of Automobile Topics reporting:

"JOYCE AND CHALMERS JOIN FORCES IN NEW COMPANY

"Organize to Paint and Trim Bodies and Manufacture Automobile Tops

"With Frank H. Joyce as president and treasurer, Hugh Chalmers as chairman of the board, and William M. Joyce as secretary, the Joyce Manufacturing Co. has been launched in Detroit. The Company will paint and trim automobile bodies and make tops. Fisher body plant No. 17, located at Jefferson and McDougall avenues, has been taken over as headquarters. The Company is incorporated under the laws of Michigan with \$500,000 capital.

"Joyce was one of the original incorporators of the American Auto Trimming Co., acting in the capacity of general manager and treasurer for twelve years until his retirement a short time ago. Chalmers is not alone lending financial connections, but is going to give the new concern part of his personal attention. Joyce and Chalmers have been close friends for a number of years, and have the best wishes of the trade for big and continued success. It is expected that the Company will get into production in about five or six weeks."

During the buildup to the First World War, Fisher Body Corp's Aeroplane Division refitted Fisher Body's Plant No. 17, (located at the southwest corner of McDougall and Jefferson Aves.) and manufactured components for the Curtiss J-1 trainers and deHavilland DH-4 fighters produced by the firm from 1917-1918 at its newly constructed Clark St. facility which later housed its Fleetwood Body division.

The October 5, 1922 issue of Automotive Industries reported that the firm's initial capacity would be 150 bodies per day:

"Chalmers Joins Joyce in Body and Top Concern

DETROIT, Oct. 4 - Hugh Chalmers has identified himself with Frank H. Joyce in the formation of the Joyce Manufacturing Co., which will begin operations in November as a body paint and trim company and manufacturer of tops. Chalmers is to be chairman of the board of directors and will make his executive headquarters at the plant. The active management falls to Joyce, who is president and treasurer. William M. Joyce is secretary. The company is incorporated for \$500,000 and will have capacity for 150 bodies daily.



"Chalmers since his retirement from the automobile company bearing his name, has maintained private offices in Detroit where he continued his personal business. He is giving up these quarters to be closely in touch with the new venture.

"Joyce was an original incorporator of the American Auto Trimming Co., acting as general manager and treasurer for 12 years until his recent retirement."

The November 1922 issue of the Automotive Manufacturer confirmed the lease of the Fisher Body plant:

"Joyce Mfg. Co., 2970 Jefferson avenue, Detroit, recently organized with a capital of \$500,000, has leased a building for the establishment of a plant to manufacture automobile equipment."

Little information can be found concerning Joyce Manufacturing's operations after its formation although the evidence suggest it remained in business into 1924 when Automotive Industries reported the firm's principals went on holiday:

"Joyce Executives Sail - Frank H. Joyce and William N. Joyce of the Joyce Manufacturing Co., Detroit, sailed on the S.S. 'Paris' this week for France on a short vacation trip."

I expect the firm remained in business about as long as the American Auto Trimming Co. (1925-1926) and by 1927 Frank H. and William N. Joyce had partnered with William M. Lee in the Joyce-Lee Real Estate Co.

Joyce's 'retirement' prompted an early 1923 reorganization of Gotfredson-Joyce as the Gotfredson Truck Corp. Ltd. with Benjamin Gotfredson, president, Robert B. Gotfredson: vice-president - general manager, and M. H. Coleman, secretary.

The firm's chief engineer, N.S. Reed, left at about the same time, and Nelson R. Brownier replaced him:

"I was called into the front Office where young Gotfredson told me that as of now I was the new chief engineer. While I'd worked at the Paige-Detroit Motor Car Company before joining Gotfredson, and I had some familiarity with trucks, I didn't know much about designing them. Not only was I told that I was chief engineer, but I was also told that I had to design a new 5-ton Gotfredson in a matter of weeks so it could be shipped to England."

Brownier delivered the vehicle just in time for its passage to Great Britain aboard the USS George Washington which sailed from Montreal with Gotfredson's very first RHD Gotfredson export model.

At the time the Gotfredson Truck Corp. Ltd. offered a truck for everyone with 9 distinct models with capacities ranging between ¾- to 6-tons, priced between \$1,700 and \$5,000.

Two factors distinguished Gotfredson trucks from the competition, the most obvious being its distinctive cast aluminum radiator. Cast in four parts, Gotfredson's signature logo appeared at the top over a red surround. Brownier explained that it was an expensive radiator to produce:

"... but I know it helped sell a lot of trucks for us as customers liked it."

Gotfredson frame rails were constructed using nickel steel ship channel (structural steel used in ship-building) instead of the pressed-steel units found on the competition. Brownier relates:

"Ship channel was a rolled section and it differed from other structural shapes in that the flanges were much wider and there was more meat in this area. It made an extremely rugged frame, though there was considerable expense as it was premium construction. We had to order so many tons at a time before the rolling mills would produce it for us as special dies were needed."

Canadian production proved so successful that the firm decided to produce trucks in the United States as well, the April 12, 1923 issue of The Automobile (Automotive Industries) reporting:

"Gotfredson Will Build Truck Line in Detroit

"Detroit, April 9, 1923 -- The Gotfredson Truck Corp. has been organized in Detroit as an offspring of the Gotfredson Truck Corporation Ltd. of Canada, to manufacture a specialized unit vehicle for general distribution in the United States. The officers of the American company are Benjamin Gotfredson: president; M. H. Coleman: secretary; and Robert B. Gotfredson: vice-president and general manager. The company will make a full line of trucks ranging from one to five ton capacity. The American truck will differ somewhat in specifications from the Canadian vehicle to



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autolife.umd.umich.edu/Design/Buehrig_interview.htm

Gotfredson.org

meet different conditions, but on the whole will be similar to the Vehicle which has been made in Canada for a number of years. The models are 1, 1 1/2, 2 1/2, 4, 5 tons.

"Branches of the Canadian company are located at Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal and London, England, with the factory at Walkerville. The Detroit factory is at 3601 Gratiot Avenue. This has just been taken over, and the company is now getting into production. As production is increased, it is planned to extend distribution to all parts of the country."

Magazine advertisements from this period also listed factory branches in London, England and Sydney, Australia. In the United States Gotfredson established factory branches in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and Los Angeles.

As American Auto Trimming's Meldrum Ave. plant was working at capacity, Gotfredson installed his American truck-building operations in a disused portion of the Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co. at 3601 Gratiot Ave. The horse company had remained in operation through the end of the First World War and portions of the massive structure were being used by American Auto Trimming.

With the establishment of the Detroit satellite Brownier was now in charge of the engineering at both factories recalling:

"The business boomed and we were selling as many trucks as the Detroit and Walkerville plants could produce. The 1920's were very, very good for the truck business."

To which historian Rolland L. Jerry added:

"Canadians bought many more Gotfredsons during the 1920s than U.S. customers, yet the Detroit plant outlasted the firm's Canadian operation at Walkerville by several decades. Canadians considered the Gotfredson as "their" truck, yet Americans never doubted that it was American-built."

One of Brownier's contributions to the Gotfredson truck was the introduction of an external contracting drum brake placed directly on the final drive worm-shaft at the rear axle in lieu of the traditional transmission brake commonly used at the time.

At that time air brakes had yet to be adapted for motor trucks, Brownier recalling that:

"Without air or vacuum assistance, the only braking effort you got was what the driver could develop with his foot, so applying the brakes took a lot of effort and it was tiring for drivers... I got a tremendous mechanical advantage by braking through the worm gear and it worked out very well."

The Timken-Detroit Axle Co., Gotfredson's supplier, was not initially happy with Brownier's system, fearing the increased demand and fatigue it placed on its components. However its displeasure was short-lived and Brownier recalled that:

"this setup worked so well that customers began to specify it on other makes of trucks."

By 1924 most of the country's production automobile manufacturers and production body builders had begun to paint and trim their vehicles in-house and Gotfredson's painting and trimming business began to suffer. The demand for production bodies remained strong however, so Gotfredson searched for a suitable metro Detroit property that could be used for body production.

The former Harroun Motors Corporation factory, located 20 miles west of Detroit, was available. Located on Sophia St. in Wayne, Michigan, the plant was erected in 1888 for the Prouty & Glass Carriage Co., a continuation of the Detroit Carriage Woodwork Co., which was organized in 1882 and located at 38-40 Randolph St., Detroit, Michigan.

The October 12, 1916 issue of the Automobile announced Harroun's acquisition of the Prouty & Glass factory:

"Harroun To Build 24,000 Cars; Company Will Make Its Own Motors and Trim Its Upholstery

"DETROIT, Mich., Oct. 6 - Directors of the Harroun Motor Co. entertained citizens of Wayne at the Detroit Athletic club Monday evening. The dinner was attended by nearly fifty in all, including a number of Detroit newspaper men. John Guy Monihan, president of the Harroun Company, acted as toastmaster at the dinner.

"The Wayne officials told of their plans to house the workmen and to accommodate the company in every manner possible, and

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Ken Voyles - 'Go Gotfredson': Family Trucking Legacy Winds Down Many Roads, DAC News, October 2003

Beverly Rae Kimes & Henry Austin Clark - Standard Catalog of American Cars: 1805-1942

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Original sources of information are given when available. Additional pictures, information and

officials of the Harroun company outlined the progress made in the formation of the company and its financing. It became known that the entire capital covering an output of 24,000 cars for the first year is in hand, the stock of the company being underwritten in New York. Plans for the building of a large addition to the Prouty & Glass Carriage Co. plant, which the Harroun company has purchased, were revealed. It was also made known that the company will build its own motors and trim its own bodies.

"Bernhardt and Hacquebart Join Harroun

"DETROIT, Mich., Oct. 9 - H. O. Bernhardt, for 2 years production manager of the Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Co., Buffalo, has become production manager of the Harroun Motors Corp. Peter Hacquebart has re

Jan 1, 1921) with its original address of 742 Meldrum Ave. becoming 3100 Meldrum, which is an address sometimes associated with the Briggs Mfg. Co.'s Mack Ave. plant (which burned to the ground in 2010) for reasons that will become clear very shortly.

R.L. Polk's Detroit City Directory 1925-26 (prepared during late 1924) provided the following information for Gotfredson's Detroit operations:

"American Auto Trimming Co.; Benjamin Gotfredson pres., Robert B. Gotfredson v-pres., Mark H. Coleman sec-treas.; 3100 Meldrum Ave.

"Gotfredson Body Corp.; Benjamin Gotfredson pres., Robert B. Gotfredson v-pres., Mark H. Coleman sec-treas., Mfrs. of Automobile Bodies and Tops, Automobile Painting and Trimming; 3100 Meldrum Av. Phone Melrose 6400.

"Gotfredson Land Co.; Benjamin Gotfredson pres., Robert B. Gotfredson v-pres., Mark H. Coleman sec-treas., 3100 Meldrum Av.

"Gotfredson Truck Corp.; Benjamin Gotfredson pres., Robert B. Gotfredson v-pres., Mark H. Coleman sec-treas. Mfrs. of Motor Trucks and Motor Busses; 3579-3601 Gratiot Av. Phone Melrose 6412."

A 1931 US Federal Court Case provides the sequence of events that resulted in American Auto Trimming becoming the Wayne Body Corporation. Although Benjamin Gotfredson was the principal shareholder of all of the firm's listed in the 1925 Detroit directory, the Gotfredson Truck Corp. and Gotfredson Land Co. were not involved in the process.

In *Wayne Body Corporation, Petitioner, v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, Respondent*. Docket No. 35896. Promulgated October 28, 1931:

"The petitioner (Wayne Body Corporation) is a corporation organized under the laws of the State of Michigan in 1924 as the Gotfredson Corporation. Its name was subsequently changed to Wayne Body Corporation. The American Auto Trimming Company of Detroit, Mich., was a Michigan corporation organized in 1909 and engaged in the business of building, trimming and painting automobile bodies. It will hereafter be referred to as the Detroit Company. The American Auto Trimming Company of Cleveland, Ohio, was a similar company affiliated for a period of time with the Detroit Company. It will hereafter be referred to as the Ohio Company.

"By proper corporate action at meetings held February 24, 1925, and March 2, 1925, the petitioner purchased all of the assets as of January 1, 1925, of the American Auto Trimming Company of Detroit, Michigan, subject to its liabilities, which were assumed by petitioner. In consideration therefor the petitioner issued and paid direct to the stockholders of the Detroit Company 135,536 shares of its no-par-value stock according to their respective holdings."

As I understand the sequence of events, in 1924 Gotfredson formed a shell corporation, Gotfredson Body Corp. with the goal of using it to purchase the Wayne, Michigan factory of the bankrupt Harroun Motor Corp. enabling the firm to enter the lucrative production automobile body manufacturing field. Shortly after the March 2, 1925 board meeting the Gotfredson Body Corp. purchased the assets and real estate of the American Auto Trimming Co. in exchange for an equal amount of stock in the recently organized (1924) Gotfredson Body Corp., at which point in time American Auto Trimming Co. ceased to be.

The Gotfredson Truck Corp., an entirely separate corporation (although it shared the same directors, officers and shareholders), was not involved in any of the Gotfredson Body Corporation's dealings.

Soon after the reorganization took place it was announced that Gotfredson's Meldrum Ave plant was being sold to the Briggs Mfg. Co., their chief competitor. I imagine the Tuesday, May 12th 1925, announcement must have come as a great surprise to many of the firm's customers and smaller investors. A statement issued at that time, attributed to Benjamin Gotfredson, inferred that:

"The sale was made after the Gotfredson (Body) Corporation had completed plans for expansion beyond the limits of the Meldrum Avenue factory. Increased demand for all the Gotfredson products had forced the centralization of its various lines of activities at Wayne. The new location also was chosen because of the advantages it offered as a shipping point and because it permitted even further expansion additions when necessary. The facilities for a battery of dry kilns which will enable the company to double its original production, was another reason for transferring the main factory to the new site."

He maintained the sale ultimately benefitted the firm's body building operations in Wayne, Mich.; Cleveland, Ohio; and Walkerville, Ontario –

although in fact the three firms were not corporately related.

Details of the sale were provided in the May 14, 1925 Issue of Automotive Industries:

"American Auto Trim sold to Briggs Co.

"Makes Purchase to Increase Facilities for Closed Body Building

"Detroit, May 13 – Sale of the main plant of the American Auto Trimming Co. to Briggs Manufacturing Co. for a price reported as between \$1,250,000 and \$1,150,000 was made here today, according to an announcement made by Benjamin Gotfredson, president of the American Auto Trimming Co.

"The sale is one of the most important transactions the industry has witnessed in recent years, especially as affecting the body building section. Through the purchase the Briggs company obtains one of the largest body building plants in the city. Negotiations for the sale have been under way for some days. The Briggs company was led to acquire the property because of its operations, made necessary by increasing demand for closed bodies from Hudson and Ford, for whom it has long been manufacturing, and from Packard, with whom it closed a contract for closed bodies recently.

"American Auto Trimming Co. will transfer its operations to its Wayne plant, built originally by Harroun, which was bought last year, and will also use the body plant of Kelsey Wheel Co. until it has completed its Wayne facilities. In addition to its body trimming and painting work, principally on open model cars, The American Auto Trimming is also entering the closed body building field, already building bodies at the Wayne plant for several companies in the industry.

"Reflects Open Car Decline

"The sale of this main auto trim plant marks more definitely than any event in recent years the decline of the open car and the ascendancy of the closed car in the automotive industry. For years the American Auto Trimming plant was the most important in the industry in upholstering, finishing and painting of open cars. From it several companies of a similar nature have sprung. With the growing popularity of closed cars, and also with many car companies taking over the work of upholstering and finishing their own open output, the amount of work available for body finishing plants was greatly reduced. Passing from the former plant, the American Auto Trimming company will concentrate on closed body building, though also continuing to handle trimming and finishing work for other body companies and car companies. It has immense facilities at the Wayne plant for large production.

"The plant now obtained will be used by the Briggs company for building Packard bodies exclusively, it is understood. The plant is within short hauling distance of the Packard plant. This purchase by the Briggs company follows within two years the purchase of the Michigan Stamping Co. and within four years the purchase of the former Harper plant of Everitt Brothers Co."

The sale of its main factory to Briggs prompted a temporary relocation of the former American Auto Trimming Co.'s painting and trimming operations into a disused body plant owned by the Kelsey Wheel Corporation at 570-576 Kirby Ave., West, Detroit, Michigan.

Soon after Briggs 1927 purchase of LeBaron, the 4th and 5th floors of Briggs' Mack Avenue (American Auto Trimming's Meldrum Ave.) plant was used by LeBaron Studios, which was headed by Ralph Roberts and his staff of hand-picked designers. The plant supplied coachwork for Packard into the mid-1950s, despite the fact that it was considered an official Chrysler body plant following the Chrysler Corp.'s 1953 purchase of Briggs.

One of LeBaron's first jobs for Briggs was the design of the 1928 Graham-Paige. Flush with cash from the sale of Dodge to Dillon-Read, the Graham Brothers – Ray A., Joseph B. and Robert C. - purchased the Paige-Detroit Motor Co. during 1927, and asked Briggs to design them a new automobile. Hugo Pfau and Roland Stickney of LeBaron's New York office were assigned the project and they came up with a very attractive car with a rounded-off Hispano-Suiza-inspired grill and front end. In place of their standard renderings, Briggs/LeBaron supplied the Grahams with a clay replica of the car to better visualize its unique styling features. Hugo Pfau believes that this was the first use of a clay model to sell a client on a new design.

Initial bodies were built by Briggs, however as sales took off, the Grahams purchased the Wayne Body Corp. (old Harroun Motor Car) factory in Wayne, Michigan and turned it into the Graham-Paige Body Corp. which eventually supplied 90% of the firms coachwork. However, LeBaron got the contracts for

most of Graham-Paige's custom bodies including the attractive dual-cowl phaetons and town cars seen in the late twenties.

So in a cruel twist of fate a former Gotfredson Body Corp. / Wayne Body Corp. plant produced bodies (for the 1928 Graham-Paige) that were designed and engineered in another former Gotfredson Body Corp. (Meldrum Ave.) plant.

In 1924 20-year-old Gordon Buehrig, one of the Classic-era's best-known automobile designers, began his automotive career as a body draftsman at the Gotfredson Body Corp.'s Wayne, Michigan plant, serving under Walter L. Jones, Gotfredson's chief body engineer. During his 2 years with the firm he assisted Jones with shoring up closed body designs for Wills Ste. Claire, Jewett, Paige-Detroit and Peerless.

It's known that Gotfredson supplied the coachwork for the 1926 Wills Sainte Claire Gray Goose Traveler and 1924-25 Jewett 6 Brougham. According to Doug Thamert, a leading Jewett historian:

"Gotfredson Body Company, Wayne, Michigan, did stamping of metal body parts and wooden millwork. (It is not clear which body style this company provided, but it is thought to have been the Brougham). Research suggests that Gotfredson constructed the Brougham framework and applied their stamped body panels to them, and then sent those units to the Jewett assembly plant for completion."

Although the production of Gotfredson's truck chassis is beyond the scope of this biography, the firm's buses and taxicabs are of interest, with the production of both types of vehicles commencing at its Walkerville, Ontario plant starting in late 1924.

As the firm had yet to begin the manufacture of automobile bodies, the coachwork was supplied by the Canadian Top & Body Co. Ltd., of Tilbury, Ontario (a suburb of Windsor), the same firm that supplied it with truck cabs. According to Nelson R. Brownier:

"The outfit was headed by a chap named Odette, and he later built many bus and coach bodies for the Walkerville plant."

Brownier was placed in charge of the vehicle's engineering, adding the Detroit plant was involved in its own, unrelated, taxicab project:

"In 1925, a cab operator in New York City wanted us to produce cabs for him."

Brownier recalls the Detroit-built cab featured a Minerva-style radiator instead of the distinctive cast aluminum units found on the firm's Canadian-built taxicabs.

"We used hydraulic brakes and they proved so satisfactory that we started thinking about four-wheel brakes for the trucks,"

Brownier adds. Unfortunately only the pilot model was constructed and no contract was forthcoming.

However a fair number of Canadian-produced taxicabs were constructed at the Walkerville plant. The March 12, 1925 issue of Automotive Industries included articles on the Gotfredson taxicab and Gotfredson 21-29 passenger bus chassis, the taxicab article follows:

"Gotfredson Now Building Taxicab in Canada Designed primarily for sale in Canadian and export fields. Bell-Back body on 111 in. wheelbase seats five passengers.

"A completely equipped taxicab is under production now at the Walkerville, Canada plant of the Gotfredson Truck, Ltd., being intended primarily for sale and use in that county and in the export field. Bodies are designed to carry five passengers in addition to the driver, the enclosed portion having the usual three-passenger seat across the rear and two folding seats in the forward partition.

"Although the wheelbase of the chassis is 111 in. an unusual amount of room is afforded as the body design includes a sloping front and bell back. Total weight of the complete vehicle is 4400 lbs. and the chassis alone weights 3200 lbs. These figures indicate that the strenuous demands of taxicab service have dictated unusually heavy construction at every point. Fenders and running boards are heavy, stamped steel.

"The distinctive appearance which is characteristic of Gotfredson vehicles is maintained by the cast aluminum radiator shell and windshield frame, which includes the glass corner panes. Half doors are hung at each side of the driver's compartment and all edges here are bound by heavy aluminum molding. Edmunds and Jones type-20 headlamps, which are standard on the new Gotfredson buses are regular equipment on the taxicabs. The

color schemes of the bodies are made to suit the demands of the individual customer, although Duco is the standard finish of the body proper. Baked black enamel is the regular finish for the visible portions of the understructure.

"Bodies are equipped with a fare register, electrically lighted 'vacant' sign and exhaust heating system. The lower pane of the plate glass windshield is stationary while the upper is mounted on a piano hinge at the top. Scuff plates are placed at the bottoms of the doors. All seats are trimmed in hand buffed leather. A tool box is located under the driver's seat. A Stewart Warner speedometer, electric horn, and spare wheel, rim and tire also are included in the regular equipment. In addition to the usual tools, an Alemite gun is included, as connections for this system are installed on the chassis. The price of the complete vehicle in Canada is \$3,500.

"Liberal use of tubular cross members insures rigidity of the frame structure. Tubes join the spring horns at each end and two tubes of 2 in. diameter and ¼ in. wall thickness are used amidships. In addition to these, three heavy pressed steel channels with liberal gussets at both ends tie the side rails together. Quarter inch stock is used for the side members and the depth at the center is 6 in. These members are parallel for a considerable length at the rear end but at a point just ahead of the kick-up over the rear axle they begin to taper and are again parallel with a much smaller over all width at the front end.

"Half elliptical springs are used all around, the front springs being 2 ¼ in. wide and 39 in. long while those at the rear are 56 in. long and of the same width. The leaves are used at the front and eleven at the rear. All spring bolts are interchangeable and are fitted with Timken roller bearings at the wheels. Service brakes are installed at the rear wheels, being internal expanding shoes which engage with drums of 15 ½ in. dia. And 3 in. face. Steering at the front end is accomplished by a Gemmer semi-irreversible worm and sector gear.

"Light alloy pistons are used in the otherwise standard Buda 4 cylinder engine of 3 ¾ in. bore and 5 1/8 in. stroke. With a piston displacement of 226.4 cu. in. this engine develops 37 hp. at 1800 rpm. Ignition is by Robert Bosch magneto equipped with automatic advance at the distributor. Remy equipment is installed for starting and lighting, in conjunction with an Exide storage battery which has 13 plates. A United air cleaner is fitted to the intake of the Zenith carburetor. The gasoline tank is mounted between the rear spring horns and fuel is fed by a Stewart Warner vacuum tank on the dash. Titeflex hose connections are used at both sides of the vacuum tank and for the oil gage line, eliminating the possibility of crystallization and leakage.

"In a unit power plant construction, a Brown-Lipe three-speed and reverse gearbox is mounted on the back of the bell housing. All gears are hardened and have a face of ¾ in. and the main shaft is 1 ½ in. in diameter. A Borg & Beck 10 in. single plate clutch is mounted in the flywheel. The control set is mounted centrally and the hand lever controls the emergency brake, which is mounted on the rear end of the shaft of the gearbox. The drum is 8 in. in diameter and the width of the contracting band is 2 ¼ in. As a Hotchkiss drive is used, Spicer joints are installed at both ends of the tubular propeller shaft.

"Disteel wheels are standard all around and the spare is carried on a T bracket which is mounted on their rear cross tube. Tires are 30 x 5."

The Gotfredson bus chassis came about in response to the conversion of the Detroit Street Railway's rolling stock from streetcars into buses. Gotfredson hoped to gain a contract and set Brownier on designing two purpose-built drop-framed chassis, a tandem axle for high-capacity double-decker coachwork, and a single axle for conventional use. The March 19, 1925 issue of Motor Age included the following article on the Gotfredson 21-29 passenger bus chassis:

"Gotfredson Bus Has Offset Power Plant and Differential Housing

"Low floor and overall height are combines with a clear level aisle and made possible by the offset power plant arrangement of the new Gotfredson 21-29 passenger bus chassis. The differential pot of the cast steel worm-driven rear axle is located next to the left spring pad so that no obstruction is raised at the center aisle position. Therefore a symmetrical seating arrangement and an aisle with no obstructions are possible. Due to this arrangement of the rear end, the entire power plant is located well to the left of the center of the chassis, bringing about the advantage of greater room at the front door for the usual type of pay-enter urban buses.

"Equipped With Buda Engine

"In addition to this novel feature, the new chassis is equipped with a six-cylinder Buda engine. Brown-Lipe four-speed transmission, Ross cam and lever steering gear, Westinghouse air brakes at all four wheels and Edmonds and Jones type 20 headlamps. The special rear axle is manufactured by Gotfredson. For the 21-29 passenger bodies of the coach or pay-enter types, the wheelbase is 208 in. and a six cylinder 4 in. bore x 6 ½ in. stroke engine are specified.

"An unusual feature is the mounting of the Westinghouse brake diaphragm chambers on the brake carriers at the front axle. This arrangement eliminates the usual linkage which is required to apply the brakes through the knuckle centers. A rubber hose connects the diaphragm chamber with the air line on the chassis. Front brakes are internal expanding shoes, the diameter of the drum being 17 ½ in. and the width 3 in. Control of the front wheels is by a Ross cam and lever steering gear which is connected to both wheels by large dia. tubing and improved ball ends."

Although the Detroit Street Railway ended up purchasing bus chassis from Philadelphia's Safeway Six-Wheel Co., Gotfredson bus chassis proved popular in Canada and were manufactured in small numbers at Gotfredson Corp. Ltd.'s Walkerville assembly plant. Most attractive were the parlor coaches built for a handful of Canadian and American operators.

Gotfredson built fire engine chassis were supplied to Woodstock, Ontario's Bickle Fire Engines Ltd. who offered them as a low-cost alternative to their premium Ahrens-Fox sourced chassis from 1925-1929. In 1927 the city of Toronto's Fire Dept. purchased 5 Gotfredson-Bickle triple combination pumpers, the largest single order of Gotfredson-Bickle apparatus known to have been delivered.

According to automotive historian Brooks T. Brierley, the short-lived Canadian-built Brooks steam car (Brooks Steam Motors, Ltd. 1923-1926, Stratford, Ontario) utilized an American Auto Trimming Ltd. -built Meritas-cloaked composite fabric body:

"Brooks styled its fabric bodies as though they were metal, using a conventional three-window sedan shape with a Detroitish quantity of brightwork. The banding about the sedan's rear quarter was probably a bit conspicuous for the time; suggesting an elegant coachbuilt berline."

Brooks also produced small numbers of taxicabs and a prototype 29-passenger parlor-style bus whose aluminum coachwork was built by the Buffalo Body Co. of Buffalo, New York.

In March of 1925, Gotfredson's Canadian operations (American Auto Trimming Co. Ltd. and Gotfredson Truck Corp. Ltd.) were merged and reorganized as Gotfredson Corp. Ltd., the April 1925 issue of Iron Trade Review reporting:

"Walkerville, Ont. - Gotfredson Corp., Ltd., has been incorporated to take over the business of the Gotfredson Truck Corp. and the American Auto Trimming Co., Ltd. It will manufacture automobiles and trucks. It is capitalized at 100,000 shares of no par value by Benjamin Gotfredson, Mark H. Coleman and Charles S. Porter."

In an April 1925 interview with the Windsor Star, Gotfredson Ltd.'s general manager, Charles S. Porter, stated:

"We've doubled our capacity every year since we've been in business here. We're now employing 403 men and women in the factory and they're kept mighty busy trying to keep pace with orders. In fact, we've been operating the plant at full capacity ever since early in the winter, and now we're running night and day to catch up with the public demand for our product."

Although auto trimming was no longer a viable business, the former American Auto Trimming Ltd. Plants embarked upon the construction of composite automobile bodies for Studebaker Ltd. of Canada, producing coachwork for the firm's Studebaker and Erskine automobiles.

Although everything was copacetic at the firm's Canadian facilities, things at Gotfredson Body Corp.'s Wayne, Michigan plant had been shaky from the start and things really began to go south in early 1926. Walter H. Jones, Gotfredson Body Corp.'s chief engineer, and Gordon Buehrig, his talented assistant, abandoned ship early in the year, the Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record reporting:

"Walter H. Jones, formerly chief engineer of the Gotfredson Corporation, Detroit, has joined the staff of the Auto Body Company of Lansing as Chief Engineer."

Buehrig would spend the better part of the next three years wandering from one drafting job to the other; his first position with Dietrich Inc. (1926), his second at Packard (1927), his third with General Motors Art and Colour (1927) and his fourth with Stutz (1928). In 1929 he took a more permanent position with E.L. Cord for whom he designed some of the most famous cars of the 1930s.

In July of 1984 Buehrig described his tenure at the Gotfredson Body Corp. (1924-1926) to David R. Crippen, an archivist at the Henry Ford Museum:

"My career started sixty years ago in Wayne, Michigan, at the Gotfredson Body Plant which was building bodies at that time for Wills Saint Claire, Peerless and Jewett, and at that time all automobile bodies were wood frame with either steel or aluminum paneling.

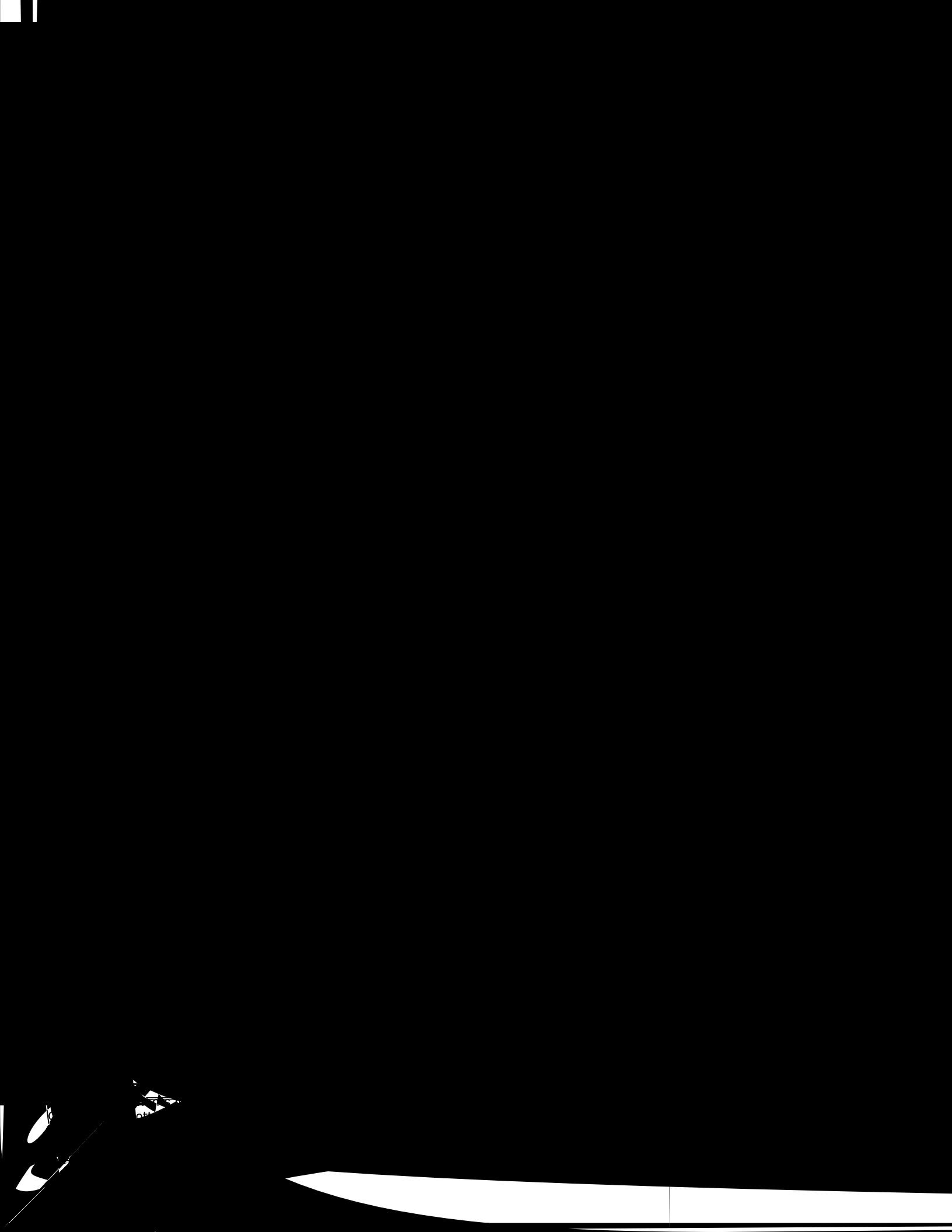
"The automobile industry - the body business - which, of course, is the only part I know about is the body end of it. The tooling was a very inexpensive process--very straightforward, and it was a process inherited from the carriage business, and we're indebted to the foreigners from Europe, mainly from Germany and England and Russia and so on where they were building - where the carriage industry had flourished, and then the carriage industry got pretty well going in America, and Cincinnati was at one time sort of the carriage industry headquarters of America. But when the automobile started, the automobile pioneers were primarily engineers - chassis men, and so they turned to the custom body or to the carriage builders to come up with bodies for them.

"So, the process at Gotfredson, which I'll describe very briefly. There are still Gotfredsons living in Grosse Pointe. They were in the truck business, and then they opened up this body shop in Wayne, Michigan, and I went in as an apprentice. I was twenty years old at the time, and I won't go into the details of body drafting, but body surface development is an old art which is somewhat similar to the lofting of boat hulls or aircraft work, but it was a direct descendent from the carriage business.

"So, they would design--the designer would come up with certain empirical lines, and from that the surfaces would be developed. Well, from the body surface, after that has been described, then the body engineer would lay in the woodwork, and the body draftsmen included every joint and every screw and everything was all shown there. So, these pieces of wood had to be milled so that they would fit exactly under the skin. That was what we would do in the body shop - in the sample body shop - we would actually build a sample body framework directly off the body draft. And when that was finished, it would be put together just the way a finished body would be put together except that we would not use any glue. We'd put the screws in and screw the whole thing together, and then that was a final checkout for the body framework. After that was done, the body framework parts were all given names and part numbers. The body then was disassembled, and each part was marked with its part number and was shellacked and put in the tool room. That was our tooling, so they would build at Gotfredson, maybe a run of three or four hundred bodies at a time.

"The problem would be one of space, of putting the parts, because they would set up a machine to mill a certain one of the body components, and they would run off, say 400 parts, and those would be stacked on dollies and set aside, and then that same machine would be set up to run another part, so you had to run all the parts on the body - say for a run of 400 units - and then as soon as the part was set up, then the master part was put back in the tool room. Though, when you got enough - 400 parts of every part of the body - then they would move those over and put them into the assembly jig and frame up that many bodies.

"Well, obviously, this was pretty inexpensive, and I think that maybe \$30,000 or \$40,000 was enough money to tool up the framework, and body panels were reasonably simple in those days, and the body was usually designed with belt mouldings to cover the joints between the panels, and these mouldings were - here was where a designer had a little bit of leeway. He could put the moulding where he thought it looked the best, and the exterior panels would be so designed, and then they would be drilled and nailed right on to the wood framework, and then the moulding, which was usually about 1/8 of an inch thick-aluminum - that would be drilled with a special kind of bit that brought up a burr around the hole, and so then that would be nailed down and that would cover the joints between the sheet metal panels. The nail would be driven in pretty well, and then you would hammer the burr down over the top of it, and then file it off, and that gave you the smooth finish which would hide where the nail was.



"Drop in Profits Caused Deficit on Year's Operations – Liquid Position Good

"New profits of the Gotfredson Corporation for the year ended Dec. 31, 1927, showed a sharp reduction at \$88,200, contrasted with \$251,013 in 1926. After payment of interest of \$44,037 and dividends of \$75,000 and allowing \$83,161 for depreciation and bond discount, there remained a deficit for the year of \$113,998.

"Surplus forward from 1926 amounted to \$2,456,121 and to this has been added \$600,204 net adjustment, arising through the acquisition of 95 per cent of the capital stock of Gotfredson Truck Corporation, the purchase of the physical properties of Wayne Body Corporation and the writing down of inventories, receivables and intangibles to sound values. After deduction of the year's deficit a sum of \$2,942,326 was carried in to the new year.

"Writing Down Trucks

"In their report to the shareholders the directors say it was decided it would be in the interest of the company to follow a conservative policy in regards to used trucks on hand an accounts and notes receivable and these have been written down to a figure at which they are considered a sound value.

"President Gotfredson reports that operations for the first four months off the current year show net sales of \$1,496,000 and a net profit of over \$24,000 after all charges for depreciation, bond interest and taxes for the period. Unfilled orders as at May 15 amounted to over \$500,000. Consequently the results from the last two months of the second quarter should increase the profits materially. Indications are that business should be good for the balance of the year.

"The liquid position was improved during the year. Current assets were \$3,104,615 against current liabilities of \$1,123,357, a ratio of 2.76 to 1. This compares with current assets of \$2,676,668 and liabilities of \$987,129, a ratio of 2.71 to 1 at the end of 1926."

Although the firm entered 1928 with a surplus on the books, the actual situation was far worse than the rosy scenario depicted above would indicate. To make it appear that the US Gotfredson Corp. was still a going concern Benjamin Gotfredson, (the president and chief shareholder of both companies) merged the marginally profitable US Gotfredson Truck Corp. with the unprofitable US Gotfredson Corporation.

Things were so bad that back in July of 1927, property owned by Gotfredson's Canadian Corporations were put up as collateral for loans and/or credit that was extended to the U.S. Corporation. To make matters worse profits from Gotfredson's Canadian operations were being funneled into the bank accounts of his US-based operations to keep it afloat.

As president and chief shareholder of all the affected firms Benjamin Gotfredson suffered the greatest losses, and despite the influx of cash and credit his meager Detroit-based truck manufacturing operations failed to turn a profit and within the year, his house of cards came crashing around him. Gotfredson's Canadian operations were declared bankrupt, the February 21, 1929 issue of the Winnipeg Free Press announced the appointment of a receiver for the firm's Canadian operations:

"Receiver Appointed For Gotfredson Corp.

"(Special dispatch to the Free Press)

"Toronto, Ont., Feb. 20.—Justice Kelly at Osgoode Hall today granted an order appointing the National Trust Company, limited, receiver and manager of the assets of the Gotfredson Corporation limited. The National Trust company is trustee for the holders of bonds of the Gotfredson Corporation issued in July, 1927.

"Frederick H. Mackelcan of the Trust company, states in an affidavit that the bond Issue was one of \$1,000,000 6½ per cent, first mortgage convertible sinking fund gold bonds. The Gotfredson Corporation also pledged to the trustees 14,500 shares of the capital stock of the Gotfredson Truck Corporation of Detroit, out of on authorized issue on 15,000 shares

"Mr. Mackelcan says that he believes the Canadian company has advanced to its subsidiary In Detroit, an open account without security which amounts approximately to \$448,000 and had also guaranteed payment to its subsidiary all obligations of the company amounting approximately to \$1,200,000. The Canada company had also leased to its subsidiary part of the mortgage premises in Detroit, Cleveland and Los Angeles for an annual rental of \$115,000 which is now in arrears."

The receivership didn't end at the border and despite a hastily-organized meeting with its creditors, bankruptcy proceedings were initiated against the US Gotfredson Corporation by Motor Products Corp. and Timken-Detroit Axle Co. within the month.

However, the bankruptcy proceedings didn't prevent Gotfredson's son from forming a new truck manufacturing outfit whose organization was announced in the April 23, 1929 issue of Automotive Industries:

"Gotfredson Announces new Firm in Detroit:

Detroit, April 23 – Formation of the Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp., with headquarters at 3599 Gratiot Avenue, has been announced by Robert Gotfredson, former vice-president of the Gotfredson Truck Corp. Mr. Gotfredson states that engineering details of a new truck will be made shortly. It will embody six-cylinder high speed performance, he says, and will include models from one ton upward. Several well-known truck men and bankers will be interested in the new company, Mr. Gotfredson states. Among them are John J. Barium, chairman of the board of the American State Bank; Robert M. Allan, president of the American State Bank; Arthur C. Grambo, and L. R. Richards, formerly with the Gotfredson Truck Corporation; Henry Vroom, president of Henry Vroom & Son of Detroit."

The building that housed the Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp., was owned by the Kolb-Gotfredson Realty Co., and had no corporate connection with the bankrupt Gotfredson Company, and consequently remained available.

The relationship between Benjamin Gotfredson and his various holdings was briefly described in a 1929 Court of Appeals Case (AMERICAN AUTO TRIMMING CO., v. LUCAS, Commissioner of Internal Revenue) where it was decided that 'the Detroit and Cleveland companies were affiliated in one group, and the Horse Company, the Realty Company, and the Land Company in another group':

"Appellant companies had the same officers, and one office in Detroit served all. Mr. Benjamin Gotfredson was president and M. H. Coleman was secretary and treasurer of each. No regularly called stockholders' meetings were held. Minutes were written up at the Detroit office at the direction of Mr. Gotfredson and signed by the officers. None of the stock of any of the companies was ever actually voted. The president personally directed the business policies of all the companies. No officer or employee attempted to oppose his will and decision in the management of the companies. Mr. Gotfredson controlled substantially all the stock of the Horse Company, the Realty Company, and the Land Company, but only 75 per cent of the stock of the American Auto Trimming Company of Detroit, Mich., and between 82½ and 87½ per cent of the American Auto Trimming Company of Cleveland, Ohio. Frank H. Joyce owned 25 per cent of the stock of the Detroit company and 12½ per cent of the stock of the Cleveland company, but none of the stock of the other three companies."

POST BANKRUPTCY

Cleveland, Ohio:

A portion of American Auto Trimming's vacant Cleveland plant was subsequently leased out to the Facto Auto Body Company, a firm formed by William Chester Colburn to manufacture automobile bodies for its Cleveland neighbor, the Jordan Motor Car Co. The firm was organized on February 20, 1929 and took over a portion of the former American Auto Trimming Co. plant which was located in northeast Cleveland at 12910 Taft Ave., a little over a mile away from Jordan, who was located at 1070 East 152nd St.

Detroit, Michigan:

Detroit Truck Plant:

Owned by the Kolb-Gotfredson Realty Co., a firm unaffected by the bankruptcy, the former Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co. facility served as the home of the Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp. which was founded shortly after his father's firm entered into bankruptcy, the April 23, 1929 issue of Automotive Industries reporting:

"Gotfredson Announces new Firm in Detroit:

Detroit, April 23 – Formation of the Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp., with headquarters at 3599 Gratiot Avenue, has been announced by Robert Gotfredson, former vice-president of the Gotfredson Truck Corp. Mr. Gotfredson states that engineering details of a new truck will be made shortly. It will embody six-cylinder high speed performance, he says, and will include models from one ton upward. Several well-known truck men and bankers will be interested in the new company, Mr. Gotfredson states. Among them are John J. Barium, chairman of the board of the

American State Bank; Robert M. Allan, president of the American State Bank; Arthur C. Grambo, and L. R. Richards, formerly with the Gotfredson Truck Corporation; Henry Vroom, president of Henry Vroom & Son of Detroit.

The Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp. has the distinction of being one of the first American truck manufacturers to offer a Cummins Diesel engine as standard equipment. According to Cummins its first Diesel truck customers were the Indiana Truck Corp. of Marion, Indiana (August 1932), then the Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp. (October 1932) and finally the Sterling Motor Truck Co. of West Allis, Wisconsin (November 1932).

Robert B. Godfredson specialized in the manufacture of custom-built heavy-duty diesel-engined trucks, whose powerplants were supplied by Diesel Sales of Michigan Inc., a related firm he established in 1933.

The firm abandoned the manufacture of their own truck cabs in 1936, turning to ready-made Yellow Truck & Coach (GMC) units which were utilized until production ceased in 1946.

By that time the firm was one of the nation's largest distributors of Cummins Diesel engines, remaining so until 1955 when it was purchased by a group of Canadians and reorganized as Cummins Diesel Michigan, Inc., a 1955 issue of Canadian Transportation reporting:

"Cummins Engine Co., Columbia, Indiana, has announced the formation of a new Cummins distributor for Michigan and the seven counties surrounding Lucas County (Toledo) in northern Ohio. Name of the new firm is Cummins Diesel Michigan, Inc., and its headquarters is at 3601 Gratiot Ave., Detroit. Heading the new firm are L. W. Childs, President, and J. S. L. Shales, Vice President. Mr. Childs was formerly associated with the Cummins Distributor for Eastern Canada, Russell-Hipwell Engines. Ltd., at Owen Sound, in an executive capacity for 14 years. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto. Mr. Shales is also a graduate of the University of Toronto, and was previously a sales engineer for Canadian Fairbanks-Morse Co., Ltd., in Toronto. In addition to the facilities at Detroit, the new Cummins distributorship also operates branches at 212-216 Illinois Avenue, Maumee (Toledo) Ohio and 3590 Plainfield Avenue, N.E., Grand Rapids. Mr. Childs and Mr. Shales have announced that plans are under way for a new, modern service and headquarters building in Detroit."

Cummins Diesel Michigan's new headquarters was relocated to a new structure at 3760 Wyoming Ave, Dearborn and in 2003 the firm merged with Cummins Interstate Power Inc. forming Cummins Bridgeway LLC with headquarters in Hudson, Michigan. It remains the exclusive Cummins distributor in Michigan, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and some adjacent counties in Kentucky, Indiana, and West Virginia, and maintains thirteen branch locations throughout their territory.

The 100 year old Kolb-Gotfredson Horse Co. building on Gratiot remains standing today (2012) as a Faygo bottling plant (re-numbered to 3579 Gratiot Avenue in the 20s - all addresses in Detroit were re-numbered starting Jan 1, 1921).

Shortly after he organized his truck manufacturing concern Robert B. Gotfredson purchased the assets of a small Toledo, Ohio freight carrier named Triangle Freight Forwarding Co. Triangle had purchased two Gotfredsons on credit and when the firm's business tanked during the early Depression it filed for bankruptcy with the Robert Gotfredson Truck Corp. being one of its largest creditors.

At the firm's bankruptcy auction Robert Gotfredson personally purchased its assets in a bid to protect his investment, and in the process became the owner of its rolling stock and its Chicago, Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit and Toledo terminals. According to Gotfredson:

"The Depression years were difficult. Efforts to sell Triangle or even give it away met with no takers. There was but one thing to do – we'll run it ourselves."

He relocated its main office from Toledo to Detroit and reorganized the firm as Transamerican Freight Lines Inc., slowly building up the firm until it became the 11th largest freight operator in the country, with divisions devoted to hauling steel, perishable goods and LTL (less-than-truckload) freight.

The firm had its own trailer shop in Detroit (Waterman) where it built and modified trailers to suit the needs of its various divisions – a former employee recalls stretching closed trailers by 8' to create longer rag-top units.

It had a large Chicago-East Coast intermodal operation with freight moving from Chicago to Cleveland over the road and from Cleveland to New-Jersey via piggy-back trailers on the Pennsylvania Railroad. At the time of Robert B. Gotfredson's passing in 1966, the firm's 3,000 employees operated 4,299

and the firm's two service centers located in Toronto and Montreal. Their advertisements stated that while the firm continued to produce Gotfredson-branded trucks, it was unaffiliated with any other firms bearing the same name. Trucks & Parts fulfilled whatever orders remained on the books and after which orders were taken for new vehicles.

Although 133 Gotfredsons were turned out by the firm during 1929, that fall's stock market crash put a damper on new orders and only 37 trucks were produced in 1930. Trucks & Parts was soon given control of the plants producing Studebaker and Erskine bodies and bid on whatever contracts were available, receiving an order in 1931 for 850 bodies to be produced in batches of 100 as demand warranted.

Truck & Parts Ltd. became Gotfredson Trucks Ltd. In 1932 to better reflect its core business. Sales for the year only numbered 30 trucks, but considering the times, Gotfredson suffered less than some larger manufacturers.

In 1933 the firm became the official distributor of Diamond T trucks in Eastern Canada, although sales were less than spectacular with only 20 units reported sold by the end of the year. Sale of Gotfredson trucks were significantly down from the previous year with only 13 units reported as sold midway through the year.

In 1934 Gotfredson's 924 Walker Rd. body plant received a large order from Ford of Canada for truck cabs and an assortment of stake and rack bodies. The firm was also entrusted to produce shipping crates for Ford of Canada's overseas shipments and is recorded as having assembled station wagons bodies and having trimmed other low production vehicles such as the Ford convertible coup.

In 1938 Gotfredson Trucks Ltd. was reorganized once again, this time to Gotfredson Ltd. However, the Ford contracts kept coming with Gotfredson supplying truck cabs and bodies for Ford military vehicles, contracts that were extended after the official start of the War.

The 1943 Windsor City Directory lists the firm's headquarters at 2489 Seminole, its officers being; F.H. Anderson, president; T.H. Anderson, vice president; J. H. Barth, secretary-treasurer; and G. A. Hope as assistant secretary. Also listed were the firm's 3 main plants, the commercial motor bodies (plant 1) at 924 Walker Rd; Plant 2 at 1030 Walker Rd. and plant 3 at 2489 Wyandotte.

At the end of hostilities business picked up and manufacture of Ford truck cabs, station wagons and convertible resumed, with the firm expanding into a portion of Windsor's old Studebaker assembly plant. The firm operated under the "Ford Free Issue" supply stream, meaning the automaker supplied the firm with whatever parts and supplies were needed – Gotfredson supplying manufacturing facilities and labor only.

The firm continued to manufacture limited production bodies and subassemblies until Ford's Oakville, Ontario plant came on line after which much of Gotfredson's property was purchased by Ford Motor Co of Canada. A few remaining Gotfredson Ltd properties were acquired by American Motors Canada Ltd. for use as a trim and upholstery plant. Some of the firm's facilities remain standing today although the main body plant located at 985 Walker Rd., Windsor, succumbed to fire on June 30, 1985.

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Appendix One – Alma Trailer Co., Alma Michigan

After a decade in real estate Frank H. Joyce returned to the automobile business (actually the auto trailer business) in late 1936 when he accepted a position as president of the Alma Trailer Company, of Alma, Michigan. The December 1937 issue of Automobile and Trailer Travel provides the details:

"PERSONALITY TRAILERDOM: A Chrysler and Not a Fields

"One disadvantage of looking and talking like W. C. Fields, movieland's number one humorous star, is that many people expect you to be funny-funny in a dry way with a nasal twang.

"Frank H. Joyce, the new president of the Trailer Coach Manufacturers' Association and president of the Alma Trailer Company, makers of Silvermoon coaches, looks and talks like W. C. Fields, is an ardent admirer of that celebrated comedian and enjoys taking him off. But to call him the W. C. Fields of trailerdom, as some have, is to make a mistake in true identity, because behind the scenes or under the skin, as you prefer, one discovers that he is more truly the Walter Chrysler of the trailer industry than anyone who has loomed on the horizon to date.

"Essentially and inherently, Joyce is a natural-born production man of the type that drives relentlessly toward his goal, who also inspires the loyalty and cooperation of his fellow-workers and subordinates in attaining that goal — often conflicting qualities but not in his case.

"He has already proved this in his brief career as the head of the Alma company. A year ago, Mr. Joyce was practically unknown in the trailer world when he was called to take over the reins at Alma. A little over six months before that company had suddenly leaped from comparative obscurity of limited production to the limelight of mass production by partially acquiring the mammoth plant and extensive facilities formerly used in making Republic trucks at Alma, Michigan. Motor driven chain conveyors were installed for line production with an objective of ten trailers an hour.

"But trailerdom and the country at large was not ready for mass production on such a scale, and the Alma company certainly was not either, although the Silvermoon coach definitely had very distinctive and appealing features and was very popular with owners. Early this year it encountered financial difficulties and stockholders called on Mr. Joyce, who had retired from business, to get into the driver's seat and take over the reins. They knew him in former connections and knew what he could do, but trailerdom did not – yet. Gradually under his direction the tangle began to unwind and the structure to strengthen until today, in a comparatively few months, it is one of the strongest in the industry. Step by step with that progress, notable improvements have been made in the product itself without sacrificing its original distinctive features.

"'Who is this man Joyce?' the industry began asking. Trailer manufacturers had never heard of him before. A couple of months later they elected him president of their association. Like all good industrial leaders. Mr. Joyce believes in surrounding himself with the best executives he can secure. His first announcement in that respect was that of the appointment of J. E. Roberts as vice-president in charge of sales. Mr. Roberts had been sales manager of the Covered Wagon Company. He also went to the top in selecting a designer by appointing Adolph H. Lichter, famous throughout the automobile industry, formerly of Chrysler Corporation and later with Citroen of Paris, known as the "Ford of Europe," to redesign the Silvermoon coaches.

"Mr. Joyce began his business career as a manufacturer of harness, rising from the bookkeeping desk to general manager's office. With the advent of the automobile and the wane of horse equipment, he launched the American Auto Trimming Company, Detroit, Michigan which, starting with a capacity of 100 bodies a day, grew rapidly and acquired a Canadian company of the same name which took care of the Ford requirements in Canada. Later he also formed another company, also of the same name, in Ohio, serving the Chalmers and Jordan Motor Car Companies at the peak of their production. Then he and Hugh Chalmers, as equal stockholders organized the Joyce Manufacturing Company.

"Mr. Joyce's background of experience has been continuously one of an executive nature, the latter part of it identified with the automobile industry. He is typically what is called "a great family man," generous with his family and with his friends."

(Adolph H. Lichter, who gained his early years of training in the Launer Carriage Works, in Vienna, Austria, and was later employed by Brewster & Co., makers of custom built bodies.)

Appendix Two - General Auto Trimming, Detroit, Michigan

According to a 'Life In Detroit' column penned by the AP's William H. Beatty on October 3, 1930, Gotfredson was also involved in Detroit's parking lot business:

"Away back when automobiles were mostly painted red and wound up on the side, a pair of gentlemen rented a barn on Lafayette street, between what is now the Elks club and the Cadillac Athletic club.

"In this barn the two men opened an automobile top trimming shop. In front of the barn was a good-sized vacant lot. With an eye to a few extra nickels, the two men cleared off the lot and put up a sign saying that automobiles could park there for 15 cents.

"The first day there was one automobile in the lot. The second day there was four. In a week the lot was filled.

"Today these two gentlemen live in luxury. For, out of that small parking lot grew one of Detroit's big business—the parking lot concession. The two auto top trimmers now hold practically all the parking concessions in the city—and there are hundreds. And the corporation which they formed to handle the parking business still bears the name of the business which they started in that little Lafayette street barn, but which they gave up when the parking business boomed—the American Auto Trimming Co."

Unfortunately, Beatty got one important fact wrong, the name of the firm. The auto trimming firm on Lafayette Street was General Auto Trimming, not American Auto Trimming, and its owner was Max Golberg, not Benjamin Gotfredson. Goldberg's Service Parking Grounds went on to become not only Detroit's largest operation (36 lots in 1936) but also one of the nation's first large-scale parking operator with lots in Toledo, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C.

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