

# In 1922, only cars built in South were Andersons from Rock Hill

Four Anderson cars were on display at the "Made-In Carolinas Exposition" in Charlotte in 1922.

John Gary Anderson of Rock Hill had the only automobile manufacturing plant in the South, which helped attract people to the exhibit. The cars displayed in Charlotte were the coach, the five-passenger touring car, the ultrasport model and the 30-series speedster, also called the big six.

The coach model on display was painted Packard blue and featured a "tent-folding" front seat, a real novelty at that time. The interior was of blue velvet corduroy. With a steel running board, extra large doors and a luggage trunk added, the price was \$1,950.

The five-passenger touring car with leather upholstery and a 6-volt 50 horsepower engine was priced at \$1,495.

The 30-series speedster, displayed on a revolving table, was painted Naples yellow. Six wire wheels, leather upholstery, natural wood doors and nicked top trim were special features of the "natty" 66½ horsepower. The price was \$1,785.

The ultrasport model was similar to the speedster except that it had front and rear bumpers. It also had the newly patented foot dimmer invented by Anderson Motor Co.'s chief design engineer, C.A. Deas. The price of the ultrasport model with moleskin upholstery was \$1,495.

Once a manufacturer of fine buggies, John Gary Anderson had the process of manufacturing assembly line cars down pat by 1923.

Anderson's own sawmill crews cut the trees, mostly oak, for the "Coachbilt" body. Anderson owned a small logging railroad that he used to bring the wood into



## Nearby history

LOUISE PETTUS

Rock Hill, where skilled workmen followed patterns to cut various parts of the car's body. The pieces were joined with screws. After a rigorous inspection, the wooden frames moved down the assembly line.

Next, aluminum panels were cut by a special machine and carefully hammered into shape by an electric hammer. The metal was 22-thousandths of an inch thick.

The panels were then bent to follow the wooden framework. The seams were hand-welded and the metal hand-rubbed with pumice stone until smooth.

The next step was the paint shop. Six coats of paint went on the chassis, two coats on the engine, and 16 coats on the body. The paint was baked in a kiln with the temperature set at 115 degrees. When dry, the auto body was pulled along the chassis assembly aisle way to the "trimming room."

In the trimming room, seats, upholstery, curtains and tops were added. The upholstery varied. For some models the upholstery was cowhide purchased from a factory

in the West; in other models velvet corduroy or moleskin was used.

The building in which the automobile was assembled was the same building that Anderson had originally used to make buggies. The Rock Hill Buggy Co. had a large and profitable market, and had furnished most of the capital for the Anderson Motor Co., which

incorporated in 1916. The company went under in 1924 during a business depression.

The building, located beside the railroad tracks on West White Street, was sold in 1928 to Lowenstein & Sons and became known as the Rock Hill Finishing Plant, or "the bleachery." The huge buggy shop-auto assembly plant-bleachery building, much altered, but still a Rock Hill landmark, is now owned by Springs Industries Inc.

□ □ □

*Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Sundays. The column was originally printed April 17, 1987.*