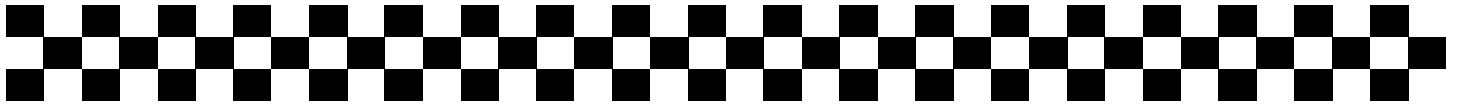


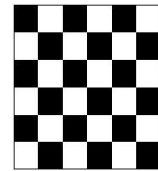
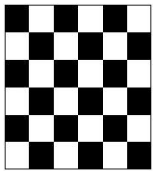
THE CHECKERBOARD

# NEWS



**“A Checker Owner Is Never Alone”**

**Fall 2012**



## Checkers at Macungie



## Checker Car Club of America, Inc.

(A Not-For-Profit Corporation, incorporated in the State of Indiana)

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#### "Cab Driver"

Words and Music by C. Carson Parks  
Official theme song of the  
Checker Car Club of America, Inc.

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Submissions can be emailed to [jweinhoft@checkercarclub.org](mailto:jweinhoft@checkercarclub.org) or mailed to the editor's address listed above.

# GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

October, 2012

Again, this issue is late because I was requested to include planning information for the 2013 convention. Those details were not finalized until almost the end of September, and then a snag developed with the chosen hotel, so we're going to press without that detail. You can find that information on page 4. But it's not all Jim's fault; it's also late because I am still in the process of moving. Please note my new mailing address.

Along with the various short photo articles and owner profiles, I have a long second installment of a multi-issue article detailing the history of Checker Motors; it will probably span up to a year to print all of it. I want to thank Mark Theobald for giving me reprint / reuse permission. The continued article starts on page 6.

I want to thank each and every one of you who send me articles and photos. You make my job of putting out a newsletter a lot easier. In some cases I may not use a particular article. It is not because I didn't like the article; most of the time it is because it was an article previously published in a magazine and I was unable to obtain reprint permission in a timely manner.

I know you get tired of reading this, but we can always use articles. I really need some for the January issue. This is your newsletter about your experiences. You help by contributing stories and personal photographs. Don't worry about the structure; just get the content down and we will edit it for you.

Ideally, submissions will be in electronic format, although we also accept hard copy by mail. Photos should be original. All electronic submissions should be sent to: [jweinhoft@checkercarclub.org](mailto:jweinhoft@checkercarclub.org)

We improve by comments from our readers. If you like what you see, tell us. If you don't like what you see, tell us also. I can be reached at the address on the left or by phone: (Home) 217-744-2986, (Verizon Cell) 217-494-2986  
John Weinhoft

**About the cover ...** a bit different perspective at the annual Das Awkscht Fescht in Macungie, PA Photo by Bruce Uhrich's son David Uhrich

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Jim Garrison

October, 2012

Occasionally I'm asked, "What's going on at the old Checker Motors plant." The answer, in a nut shell, is -- nothing. Except for the empty Cab Service and Personnel buildings, a gutted storage building, and the demolished remains of the old Plant 2, where the cabs, press room, and assembly areas were, there are only piles of debris, empty pavement, and weeds. When I was on the premises last spring, I noticed five vultures circling overhead (possibly catching an up-draft from the warm pavement), and I thought, "How appropriate."

Most of us are well aware that Checker Motors closed in June of 2009. There were a number of reasons that can be cited, though I believe the greatest factor was simply the failed economy at that time. Credit was tight (no car loans), General Motors (Checker's primary customer) declared bankruptcy, and uncertainty in the job market prevented many people from buying cars. A business bases its financial projections on a given volume of sales, and when that is cut to less than half, the outlook is not good. Checker had been losing money for years. Those of us who worked through those last challenging years were not surprised when Checker declared bankruptcy. The contracts and the Checker facility were sold, the equipment was auctioned, salvageable items were stripped, and buildings demolished. The grounds are up for sale.

Though the factory is gone, the legacy lives on. The story of a man, Morris Markin, who created a niche in the automotive industry by building taxicabs and taxi franchises, and the company that survived for three decades after the last car was produced, is now part of our great American history. We, who own those remarkable Checker cars, preserve that history for ourselves and others. Now, as a club, we appreciate that legacy in a different way. We drive our Checkers, and we gather for our annual conventions.

Next year we will meet in Atlanta, Georgia. The host committee is planning a fine event and we hope that many Checker Car Club members, especially those who live in the region, will be ready to make the pilgrimage to Atlanta next June. It will be something special to look forward to and enjoy.

The other thing we can do is take care of our

Checker cars. They are reasonably easy to work on, many parts are commonly available, and what you can't get from the auto parts store is mostly available from Checker Car Club sources. Besides, people seem to like them no matter what their condition. If they move forward and don't blow up, that's cool.

So, get those cars running the best you can. Start planning for a trip to Atlanta in June 2013. And, be part of something fun and interesting in the automotive world. We'd love to see you there.

Actually, there has been a little something going on at the old Checker plant. Earlier this year there was a film crew there. They needed a burned out ghetto scene for a screenplay entitled "Chance of Rain". I visited the site, but the crew hardly even knew I was there. Well, I was there for thirty-two years, and it was, for the most part, a good experience.

Anyone wishing to contact the Club President can email Jim at [checkerjimkazoo@chartermi.net](mailto:checkerjimkazoo@chartermi.net), or USPS mail at 1415 Climax Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI, 49006-2411 or by phone at (home) 269-345-6029 or (cell) 269-501-5208

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## UPS CHECKERS

Joe Pollard recently sent the editor a copy of the Summer 2012 issue of *Compass*, a UPS publication. In it was a short item about UPS use of Checker automobiles.

Here is what they had to say:

**"Going Global** The first UPS drivers outside the United States were in Toronto, Canada in 1975. They used former taxis, painted brown, to deliver packages because UPS hadn't yet been granted a license to drive delivery trucks on Canadian highways."

From a previous story, the editor remembers the UPS Checkers only had a bucket seat for the driver and the rest of the interior was supposed to be finished in a diamond-plate floor. For a period of time, the UPS Checker's also had matching small brown trailers.

# 2013 CONVENTION PLANS

Is it a bird? A plane? Hey, y'all, it's a magnolia blossom, and you've made it to the 2013 Checker Car Club of America annual meeting. The 2013 meeting will be the first one to be held in the South, and the members of the convention committee say WELCOME! Mark your calendar for Thursday, June 13 - Sunday, June 16. We've chosen Kennesaw, a suburb northwest of Atlanta - a little out of the traffic but close enough for members to venture to the downtown attractions if they wish. Atlanta has the world's largest aquarium, the World of Coke, the Braves, the High Museum of Art and many other wonderful attractions.

Our hotel will be situated near several historic and scenic sites and in keeping with southern hospitality, the committee will provide detailed maps and addresses for your GPS. (Ed note: the hotel arrangements are not yet finalized.) We'll have two group displays of the cars, one on Friday and one on Saturday, and lots of time to relax and visit, too. Be ready to answer the question, "Whattayahave?" when we visit the Varsity Drive-In. Forget the diet and try the onion rings.

Checker convoys to area sites of interest will be posted in our hospitality room at the hotel. This area is rich in Civil War history and if you haven't heard about the Great Locomotive Chase - you will at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History. Smith-Gilbert Gardens is a premier metro Atlanta botanical garden and learning center located nearby. Smith-Gilbert is a collector's garden with a wide variety of plant material including different outdoor contemporary sculptures and the historic Hiram Butler House. The quaint Marietta square features the Marietta Museum of History and the *Gone With The Wind* museum along with nifty shops and restaurants and a Brumby Rocker shop. Also in Marietta is a National Cemetery, which was established in 1866 as a resting place for the 10,000 Union soldiers who were killed in the Atlanta Campaign. There are approximately 20,000 graves in this historic cemetery.

Checkers have never been a common site in these parts, so bring your Checker history with you and be ready to share. We're hoping that some folks will be able to come to the 2013 meeting who have never been to one before and will be sold on the fun that happens wherever we meet.

# CHECKER DEALER / CUSTOMIZER MARVIN WINKOFF DIES

Marvin, 87, died on July 19, 2012. Our sincere condolences go to his family.

For those that don't know, Marvin would import Checkers to Florida where he would customize them with items such as opera lights, oval quarter windows, vinyl roofs, etc.

He had a long association with Checker including Sales Manager in New York and then Executive Vice President and General Manager for Checker Motors Sales Corporation, New York, where he was responsible for East Coast sales and administration of all Checker vehicles, including the Checker Taxicab, the Checker Aerobus limousine and the Marathon line of family passenger cars."

From automotive author Jim Hinckley:

"Inspired by the companies' niche market creations Marvin Winkoff, a former regional sales manager for Checker, relocated to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in the mid 1970s and founded Checker Southeast Corporation. Under his direction new Checker sedans



received dramatic face lifting that

included stylish rear quarter windows, vinyl roofs, two tone paint, chrome trim accents and richly appointed interiors. The Winkoff custom Checkers are a prized commodity among enthusiasts of the Kalamazoo built cars."



After Checker stopped production, Marvin went on to have a long sales career in various Florida companies, including a number of real estate ventures.

Photos of Jim Garrison's 1980 A-11 Winkoff by Bryan Weinhoeft.

# 2012 Checkers at Macungie, PA

by Bruce Uhrich

Das Awkscht Fescht (The August Festival) was held in Macungie, PA and the club day was Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup>. Again, we had a late storm on Saturday and only a brief shower on Sunday cut down on the turnout. This year the Checker Club showed 4 member cars.

I had my 1956 A8 Standard Taxi there with the help of my wife Marge, son David and his wife Kara. Doug and Carolyn Klauck drove up from West Virginia in his blue/gray 1972 Marathon. Doug's car was showing his AACA Senior badge. The other Marathon was George and Estana Lukacs' 1970 from Virginia. Jim Rodgers brought his original 1976 A11 taxi. That taxi is still a work in progress.

Other club members who were there without their Checker included Chris Hutter (still finishing his A11 taxi), Victor Coiro from NY, and Bill and Elaine Hosfield from New Jersey who were working with the featured display car, the Crosley. We talked with Bill about the idea of having the Checker as the featured car at sometime in the next 4 or 5 years. The commitment from a club includes having at least 30 cars registered and to find a sponsor/support for a display tent. I think the Lehigh Valley location is great for the cars in the Northeast and Midwest, and Checker is one of the icons that define NYC. Please let me know if we can begin talking about a national show in 2016 or 2017 and perhaps again gather the older cars we had in Kalamazoo in 2002. Chevy just celebrated their centennial and Checker is on their way to their centennial.



The next show will be held on Sunday, August 4, 2013. Remember, any year Checker is welcome at the show. We have room for more cars! Registration before January 1, 2012 is \$12. Registration by July 1, 2013 is \$15. There is no day of show registration. If you want a copy of the registration form, please contact me at Bruce Uhrich 420 Roberts Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038-3605.



# THE HISTORY OF CHECKER MOTORS

by Mark  
Theobald, Reprinted from [www.coachbuilt.com](http://www.coachbuilt.com),  
used by permission

The editor has wanted to reprint this article for a long time. A lot of club members have contributed to various portions of it. In the editor's opinion, it is the best write-up on Checker Motors. We will be publishing it in quite a few installments.

## PART 2

Hertz and McCullough were longtime friends and business partners. Both were early investors in the Chicago-based Balaban and Katz movie theater chain and in 1929 had helped form the Manhattan-Dearborn Corp., a real estate investment firm. McCulloch was also an early Yellow Cab investor and John D. Hertz had similarly invested in Parmelee stock.

At the time of the acquisition, McCulloch was vice-president of Chicago Yellow Cab and both men owned approximately 30% of each other's shares. McCulloch was also friends with Markin and had been investing in shares of Parmelee's preferred stock since the mid-twenties.

L'Amoreaux presided over lengthy private negotiations amongst Miller (representing Hertz), McCulloch, Markin, and J.A. Sisto & Co. and it was decided that the first transaction would involve the sale of Hertz' share of Yellow Cab to McCulloch, whereby McCulloch would become Yellow's chief stockholder. That transaction didn't take place until April 12, 1929 but was publicly announced on January 7, 1929 in the hopes of ending the violence that had recently been directed towards Hertz:

"TAXICAB KING TO PLAY FOR  
AWHILE

"JOHN HERTZ SELLS INTEREST IN  
YELLOW TAXICAB

"Organized Business In Chicago in 1915  
Which Has Brought Him Immense  
Wealth

"Chicago, Jan. 8, 1929 (AP) — John  
Hertz, who was peddling papers not so  
many years ago, has retired from business,  
his wealth rated in millions. His retire-

ment from the chairmanship of the Yellow Cab company board yesterday was accompanied by announcement that his control of that organization had been sold to another one time newsboy — Charles A. McCullough, president of the Parmelee Transfer company.

"Hertz disposed of his entire holdings in the cab company. Those that did not go to McCullough were either given to about 60 employees who started in business with him or sold to them under an arrangement of deferred payments.

"Plans Few Years of Play.

"Still under 50, Hertz plans to cap years of work with play. A few months in Florida then a summer in Europe are among his immediate plans. In England Mr. and Mrs. Hertz will watch their horse, Reigh Count, winner of the Kentucky derby, in competition with the best thoroughbreds of the old world. Hertz, who was born in Ruttka, Austria (now Czechoslovakia), founded the Yellow Cab company of Chicago in 1915. The Chicago Motor Coach company and the People's Motorbus company of St. Louis followed in the next seven years. Later he effected the merger of the Yellow Cab Manufacturing company and the truck division of General Motors.

"Started with Old Cars.

"It is related that after a varied career selling papers, driving a delivery wagon, promoting events and writing of sports for newspapers. Hertz became an automobile salesman. During his first year Hertz made \$15,000 in commissions. Only about \$800 of this was in cash, however, the remainder being taken out on old limousines. These automobiles, his friends said today, were the nucleus of the company which for the year just closed had net earnings of approximately \$1,825,000, equivalent to \$4.56 a share of the capital stock.

"Stables House Famous Horses.

“Many famous runners are housed in the Hertz racing stables near Cary, Ill. Several months ago the stables were swept by fire which destroyed horses valued at \$200,000. The fire, presumably of incendiary origin, was blamed upon a ‘taxicab war’ in Chicago.”

Checker Cab Mfg. also acquired control of Checker Cab Sales Corp. in New York in January of 1929. This company handled all the Checker business in and around the New York City area. By the end of January, 1929 there were 21,000 taxis in New York City, and, of this total, over 8,000 were Checkers.

By April J.A. Sisto & Co. had finished arranging for the financing of the Yellow-Parmelee deal and in conjunction with L’Amoreaux had finalized the financial and operating structure of Parmelee.

One of the subscribers to Checker’s 1928 stock offering was John J. Raskob, the current head of the Democratic National Committee and the financial chairman of DuPont and General Motors. Raskob had been an early investor in General Motors and had engineered DuPont’s ownership of 43% of GM, purchased from the financially troubled William C. Durant.

Raskob had supported Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith in the 1928 election, and Smith invited him to become chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Sloan, a supporter of Herbert Hoover, insisted Raskob resign either from GM or the DNC. He left GM after the board supported Sloan, sold his GM stock, and used the proceeds to build the Empire State Building.

Raskob began acquiring stock in Checker Cab Mfg. in 1928 and by 1930 he held a reported 200,000 shares. Although he claims he acquired Checker stock as an innocent personal investment, as early as 1930 Business Week reported that skeptics believed that he was trying to force Markin out.

Raskob sold DuPont 8,000 shares of Checker Cab Manufacturing Co. stock on December 12, 1929. DuPont confirmed the sale in a letter to Raskob on January 6, 1930 (8000 shares Checker Cab at 31 = \$248,000). Dupont had recently purchased other shares of Checker stock on November 15, 1929 through a broker.

Ernest H. Miller was elected president of the newly organized Parmelee Transportation Co. (aka

Parmelee System) in April of 1929, serving as President for the next two years. He retained his interest in Newark’s Yellow Cab Co. until February 20, 1930, when he sold his majority share of the firm to the Public Service Coordinated Transport Co.

Miller passed away on December 24, 1932, and was succeeded as Parmelee president by attorney Paul C. L’Amoreaux, the architect of Markin’s take-over of Parmelee and Yellow Taxi. Unfortunately L’Amoreaux served less than a year in office, passing away the following September (September 2, 1933). Levin Rank, Parmelee Transportation’s secretary and treasurer, became its next president.

Three weeks before the upcoming Parmelee - Checker Cab Mfg. merger was publicly announced the AP reported:

#### “Taxi Cab Merger Seen

“Chicago, March 13, 1929—(AP)—A merger of the Chicago Yellow Cab Co., the Parmelee Transfer company of Chicago and the Yellow Taxi corporation of New York, possibly involving a working agreement with the Checker Cab Manufacturing of negotiations under way and likely to be completed shortly.”

According to published accounts, of the estimated 21,000 cabs operating in Metropolitan New York during 1929, 8,000 of them were built by Checker, and in January of that year, Markin acquired a controlling interest in the Checker Cab Sales Corp. of New York, the firm’s largest retail outlet. A large order from Philadelphia’s largest operator later that year helped to make 1929, Checker Cab Manufacturing Company’s most profitable year to date.

The second phase of L’Amoreaux’ plan was publicly announced on April 5, 1929, although the Checker Cab Manufacturing’s involvement was significantly overstated:

#### “EASTERN BANKERS PLAN CAB MERGER

“Checker Cab to Take in Yellow Cab and Parmelee Transfer Company.

“New York, April 5, 1929—(INS) - Taxicab operating interests of Chicago and New York are to join with the Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation In the

largest merger in the history of the business. An official announcement of the deal probably will be made within the next few weeks.

“According to the plans as revealed today, New York banking interests, representing Checker Cab, have arranged to acquire the Chicago Yellow Cab company, the largest operator in that city, and the Parmelee Transfer company, which has the concession for handling baggage between the many railroad terminals there. The purpose of the merger is said to transfer replacement business to Checker Cab.”

The Parmelee Transportation Company, a Delaware corporation, was organized in 1929 to acquire a controlling interest in the shares of the Parmelee Company, similarly a Delaware corporation doing business in Chicago.

On April 12, 1929, a new corporation was organized under the name of Parmelee Transportation Company and its common stock and debenture bonds which were later listed on the New York Stock Exchange were sold to the public. All of its preferred stock was sold to Checker Cab Manufacturing Corporation. With the funds provided by the sale of these securities the Parmelee Company, then operating, was purchased as a nucleus of an integrated transportation system to furnish taxicab and limousine service in some of the larger cities. In 1934, Chicago's Parmelee Company was liquidated into the Parmelee Transportation Company.

The Parmelee Transportation Company was formed April 12, 1929, with a capitalization of \$10,600,000, consisting of \$5,000,000 of debentures, \$1,000,000 of preferred shares and 250,000 common shares of the value of \$4,600,000. Only the common shares possessed voting power. The \$5,000,000 of debentures and the 250,000 common shares were publicly issued through J. A. Sisto & Co. and White Weld & Co. as underwriters. The \$1,000,000 of preferred shares were purchased by the Checker Cab Manufacturing Co.

In purchasing the \$1,000,000 of Parmelee preferred shares, Checker Cab Manufacturing hoped to receive, in addition to a profitable investment, the continuing good will of Parmelee as a potential customer for cabs. Checker Cab declined, however, an offer to

purchase common voting stock rather than the non-voting preferred shares because they desired a safer investment.

The formal announcement was made in a short press release on April 18, 1929:

"The financing of the new Parmelee Transportation company, holding company for a corporation which will operate some of the principal motor transport and cab companies of the United States, was announced last night."

Since Parmelee's first incorporation in 1919, McCulloch had been investing his profits into a large number of transportation businesses outside of Chicago. He owned the Motor Cab Transportation Co. of New York, which operated about 2,000 in an around Manhattan. He also held a controlling interest in the Transportation Management Corp., a holding company whose subsidiaries included the Deluxe Cab Co. of Cleveland, the Yellow Cab Co. of Pittsburgh, the Yellow Taxi Co. of Minneapolis, and the Pittsburgh Transportation Co., a transit bus operator. McCulloch also supplied his own fuel through the Parmelee Motor Fuel Co., and self-insured all of his vehicles through the Transportation Adjustment Co.

Shortly after its formation, Parmelee acquired 26 per cent of the stock of Chicago Yellow, 68 per cent of the stock of Yellow Taxi Corporation, New York, and 96 per cent of the stock of the Parmelee Company. In connection with Parmelee's formation and the preceding negotiations, Markin, aside from discussions concerning Checker Cab Mfg. Co.'s purchase of Parmelee's preferred shares, acted in his personal capacity. Markin personally bought for himself and an associate 6 per cent of Parmelee's common shares. He also entered into an employment contract with Transportation Management Corporation, a newly formed and wholly owned subsidiary of Parmelee, to act as an advisor to Miller, president of Transportation Management Corporation. Markin's salary as such adviser was \$25,000 per year and Miller's salary as such president was \$50,000 per year.

Subsequent to Parmelee's acquisition of stock of Yellow Taxi Corporation, New York, and Chicago Yellow, Parmelee acquired the stock of two Pittsburgh taxicab operating companies, and later organized as a wholly owned subsidiary a Minneapolis taxicab operating company. These Pittsburgh acquisitions oc-



curred in 1929 and neither Markin nor Checker Cab Mfg. Co. participated in them. The organization of the Minneapolis taxicab operating company occurred in 1931 and followed the receivership of a prior Minneapolis taxicab operating company owned by a local street railway company. Parmelee supplied \$16,305 to purchase the receivership assets which subsequently were transferred to the Minneapolis corporation organized by Parmelee.

Parmelee held control of Chicago Cab Company, the Parmelee Company and the Yellow Taxi Corporation of New York. It later acquired interests in the Yellow Cab Company of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Transportation Company. In 1930 the New York law firm of Cravath deGersdorff, Swaine & Wood represented it in a transaction under which control of its stock was acquired by the Checker Cab Manufacturing Company, which in turn transferred to Parmelee Transportation control of companies operating taxicabs in numerous cities, including Motor Cab Transportation Company, operating more than 2,000 cabs in New York City.

“Yellow Cab of Chicago has placed an initial cash order for 1000 taxis with Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation.”

#### “CHECKER CAB SPENDS MILLION IN KALAMAZOO

“KALAMAZOO, April 24, 1929 (AP)—The Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation has announced a million dollar expansion program in this city. A new structure containing 260,000 square feet of floor space is to be erected immediately adjoining a present main assembly building. The new structure will be devoted to body manufacture and will permit of sale of the old body unit.”

Parmelee’s ambitious plans for expansion were announced two weeks later:

#### “New Taxicab Fleets Result of Merger

“Chicago. April 30, 1929 (AP)—New fleets of taxicabs for Chicago, New York and other cities will result from the recent merger of the Chicago Yellow Cab Company, Inc., the Yellow Taxi Corporation of New York, and the Parmelee Company of Chicago, officials of the Chicago Yel-

low Cab Company have announced.

“Montreal, Pittsburg, Washington and Cleveland are among the cities in which the Parmelee Company plans to establish taxicab concerns in the near future. Thomas B. Hogan, vice president and general manager of the Chicago Taxi company, said.

“One thousand new taxicabs for Chicago and 1,300 for New York are planned immediately. After that Montreal probably will be the first city entered by the Parmelee Company, it was said.”

#### “CHECKER CAB CORP. REPORTS RECORD YEAR

“New York, June 7, 1929 (AP)- The Checker Cab Manufacturing Corporation reports 1928 the most profitable year in its history, with net profits of \$816,809, or \$2.18 a share on the outstanding common stock. Morris Martin, president, said that earnings for the first 1929 quarter were at the rate of \$4.18 a share, compared with 54 cents a share for the same period last year.”

“New York, June 14, 1929 - Checker Cab Manufacturing company has sufficient unfilled orders to take care of entire production until about September 30, says Morris Markin, president. Orders now on hand will force the company to increase by 30 per cent its original program for the year, which called for 7500 units.”

“New York, July 20, 1929 - Morris Markin, president of the Checker Cab Manufacturing company said at the annual stockholders meeting today that the directors were studying a dividend policy, He reported earnings for the first six months of 1929 at \$2,270,067.”

“New York, Aug. 1, 1929 - The Philadelphia Rapid Transit company has ordered 500 taxi cabs from the Checker Cab Manufacturing company.”

“New York, Feb. 14, 1930 - Checker Cab Manufacturing Corp. has obtained a five year contract from Checker Taxi com-

pany of Chicago for the latter's cab requirements."

Although the third and final step of L'Amoreaux' plan was slated to take place in the fall of 1929, the stock market crash postponed the merger until the following September.

Between October, 1929, and June, 1930, Parmelee acquired all the taxicab companies operating in Pittsburgh; it now operates the cabs through two wholly owned subsidiaries. Early in 1931, Parmelee formed a company to operate cabs in Minneapolis; a wholly owned subsidiary now operates 125 of the 214 cabs licensed in that city. Beginning early in 1929, Parmelee acquired certain companies operating cabs in New York City; it later consolidated them in a wholly owned subsidiary now holding 2,000 of the 13,000 licenses outstanding in that city.

Formed in 1929, the Black Beauty Cab Corporation was a short-lived Parmelee System subsidiary headed by Samuel Katz (unrelated to John D. Hertz' Chicago business associate, Samuel Katz, president of Paramount Publix Corp.) Their fleet of 250 jet-black taxis featured a red speed stripe down the side and Black Beauty Cab Co. lettered in red on the door. Black Beauty's Manhattan garage was located at 613 East Thirteenth Street, New York, NY.

Another little mentioned Parmelee subsidiary was the Hamilton-Peters Operating Company, Inc., a New York City-based firm that operated approximately 250 cabs in and around Harlem. The firm catered to well-to-do African-Americans and was staffed by 750 African American employees.

Hamilton-Peters dates back to 1916 when William H. Peters and Samuel Hamilton started a taxicab and car rental company, beginning with two Packard automobiles, one for rental and one for taxi service. By the mid twenties Hamilton-Peters was credited as being "the largest Negro taxi-cab operators in the United States" and employed "a working force of more than 550 persons" who operated "around 150 specially built taxi-cabs".

The entire operation was purchased by Parmelee in 1930 and reorganized as the Hamilton-Peters Operating Company, Inc. At that time it was reported that "Their business is said to represent a half million dollars investment. The firm has 250 special built taxi cabs and a working force of more than 750 persons.'

A period account describing the dinner given by Parmelee in honor of the event follows:

"The business acumen and energy of two young colored men of Harlem, W.H. Peters and Samuel Hamilton has been rewarded by the incorporation of the taxi cab company which they founded into the great nationwide Parmelee System. At a dinner in honor of the event great figures in America's taxi cab industry were present, including; E.S. Higgins, vice-president and general manager of the Parmelee System and A.W. Moore, president, Chicago Yellow Cab Company. The Hamilton-Peters Taxi Cab Company employs 1000 men, all of whom are Negroes. The new company announces there will be no change in the personnel."

Hamilton-Peters survived the early stages of the Depression but was forced into bankruptcy in March of 1937. Black Beauty had been long out of business by that time.

"New York, Feb. 14, 1930 - Checker Cab Manufacturing Corp. has obtained a five year contract from Checker Taxi company of Chicago for the latter's cab requirements."

"Checker Cab and Parmelee May Merge  
"NEW YORK, March 14, 1930 — Asked concerning reports that negotiations for a merger were under way between Checker Cab Mfg. Co. and Parmelee Transportation Co., Francis L. Haveron, a director in both companies and treasurer of Parmelee, said the question of merging the two companies has never been officially considered. There has been some informal consideration of possible benefits of such a merger but not official action has been taken."

Haveron, a trained accountant was also a director of J.A. Sisto & Co.

In 1930, Checker's pedestrian-looking Model K was replaced by the outrageous-looking Model M Checker. Although it was based on a shortened (by 5") Model K chassis, it looked totally different and was easily identifiable from a distance due to its rectangular Woodlite headlamps and unusual scooped

front fenders which had been designed to reduce the incidence of dented front fenders. The awkward-looking front fenders immediately became a Checker trademark, and weren't abandoned until 1948 when the firm's first post-war design, the A2, debuted. Other novel features included checkerboard lensed parking lights and foreshortened running boards that started at the B-pillar, serving only those paying customers riding in the rear tonneau.

Two little known Checker commercial vehicles also debuted in early 1930. The first was a 1-ton cab and chassis that came with a stake body, the second, a station wagon-style utility vehicle that could serve double duty as a passenger vehicle or delivery van. Early versions were built using leftover Model K bodies and chassis, but midway through the year, production shifted over to the new Model M chassis and bodywork.

Designed by S.H. Hunter Kuenzel, the Checker MU6 Utility Vehicle retailed for \$1,795 and was available in two wheelbases. The innovative vehicle could be modified for a great number of purposes and preceded the similar Checker A8 Station Wagon and Aerobus by almost 30 years. The stock-appearing limousine body featured four side doors and a clamshell rear tailgate, just like a station wagon. The MU6 had a listed capacity of one ton and could be used as a closed delivery vehicle by simply removing the rear seats and pulling up included window shades over the rear windows. The short wheelbase version included seating for six passengers, the long wheelbase edition could seat nine.

A 1931 issue of *Automotive Industries* included a Checker ad that advertised the Utility Car's versatility, "All the fine appearance and riding qualities of a nine-passenger car - quickly convertible into a spacious ton-plus station wagon." The advertisement stated that a number of the vehicles had been sold to funeral homes for use as combination hearse and ambulance.

The Checker Truck was also available in two wheelbases, but proved less popular than the Utility vehicle and was discontinued in 1933 after selling only 550 examples. The Utility Vehicle was available through 1934 and records indicate that at least 1,000 examples were built between 1930 and 1934.

Although Checker began to build production bodies for Hudson and others starting in 1939, they were never regarded as a custom body builder, despite

the fact they occasionally produced custom-built vehicles for special customers. One limousine built for Chicago utility magnate Samuel Insull certainly qualifies as custom. Insull ordered a bullet-proof seven-passenger limousine with a landau top on a 1931 Checker Model M chassis. Early on, the British-born Insull had been an assistant to Thomas Edison, and when he relocated to Chicago in the twenties, he started building an electric utility empire that was eventually valued at \$3 Billion. His rapid expansion had been funded by mostly middle class stockholders, and Insull's once valuable utility network became worthless following the crash of 1929. By 1930, Insull rightly feared for his life and despite a much publicized 1934 trial and subsequent acquittal on fraud charges, he immediately left the county and moved to France.

Checker/Commonwealth's Mogul taxicabs were forever immortalized in the 1931 12-chapter Mascot Pictures serial called *The Galloping Ghost* which starred pro-football star Harold 'Red' Grange. The typical crime drama concerned the Mogul Taxi Company, which was in reality a front for a criminal gambling ring that specialized in fixing football games. Grange was unwilling to cooperate, and their numerous fisticuffs were documented in the series' twelve chapters. At the time, the former University of Illinois football star was as popular as 'Babe' Ruth and Jack Dempsey, and the serial was made to cash in on his fame.

The Checker Model M continued unchanged into 1932, but in 1933 a new 8-cylinder Lycoming-powered cab, the Model T, was introduced. Based on the Model M, it featured full-length running boards, traditional headlights and unusual circular inserts over its otherwise traditional hood louvers. The stake and suburban utility bodies introduced in 1930 were also available on the stout Model T chassis and proved popular with small businesses. Lycoming was one of E.L. Cord's companies, and beginning in 1933 Markin began to convert the Checker line over to engines produced by the Williamsport, Pennsylvania manufacturer.

"Parmelee-Checker Cab Merger Rumored in N. Y.

"NEW YORK, Sep. 7, 1930—(UP)—Acquisition of Parmelee Transportation company by the Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation, to form the world's largest maker and operator of taxicabs

with assets of \$30,000,000 was rumored here today. Reports that the companies would merge have been current since March when officials of both companies intimated that informal discussion concerning the proposed merger had taken place.”

#### “Checker-Parmelee Merger Discussed

“CHICAGO. Sept. 8, 1930—A proposed plan by which Raskob interests, who control a majority of the 375,000 shares of Checker Cab Manufacturing Corp. Stock, proposed to acquire control of the Parmelee Transportation Co., may meet opposition from Parmelee bondholders as well as from minority stockholders of Checker Cab according to a report in local circles.”

9-8-1930 NY Times:

CHECKER CAB SEEKS PARMELEE CONTROL; Raskob Concern Plans to Get 60% Interest in Transportation Company. ACTION LIKELY TOMORROW. Corporation to Be Acquired Has Subsidiaries Operating 7,500 Taxicabs, Buses and Trucks.

“The Checker Cab Manufacturing Corporation, in which John J. Raskob owns about 200,000 out of 375,000 shares outstanding, is planning to acquire a controlling interest in the Parmelee Transportation Company, in which it already owns an important interest, it was learned yesterday.”

#### “Control of Parmelee To be Taken Over by Checker Cab Company

“NEW YORK. Sept. 10, 1930—(AP)—Directors of both companies have agreed upon a plan for acquisition of control of Parmelee Transportation Co. by the Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation, in which John J. Raskob is one of the largest single stockholders.

“The transaction also contemplates acqui-

sition of the capital stock of Motor Cab Transportation Co. operating 2,050 cabs in New York City in exchange for 58,447 shares of Checker Cab Manufacturing common stock.

“Checker Cab already owns 1,442,000 of outstanding debentures of Parmelee Transportation, all of the \$1,000,000 of preferred stock, 23,000 shares of common stock and warrants for the purchase of 93,425 additional shares of common,

“It is planned to transfer the stock of Motor Cab Transportation, as well as debentures, preferred stock and warrants of Parmelee which Checker Cab now owns, to Parmelee in return for 422,787 shares of common stock of Parmelee.

“Such a transfer would reduce Parmelee's outstanding debentures of \$3,389,000, with a consequent reduction in annual interest and sinking fund charges; retire all its preferred stock and increase the common to 721,905 shares.”

9-11-1930 NY Times

“CHECKER-PARMELEE MERGER APPROVED; Directors of Both Companies Endorse Plan Involving Exchange of Securities. MUTUAL BENEFITS SEEN Transportation Unit Will Have 10,000 Taxicabs--Larger Outlet for Manufacturing Concern.

“The directors of the Parmelee Transportation Company and the Checker Cab Manufacturing Company have approved the plan under which Checker will obtain control of the majority of the stock of Parmelee, while the latter company will...”

#### “TAXI FIRMS IN AGREEMENT ON HUGE COMBINE

“NEW YORK, Sept. 11, 1930—(AP) —Directors of both companies have agreed upon a plan for acquisition of control of Parmelee Transportation Co. by the Checker Cab Manufacturing Corp. in

which John J. Raskob is one of the largest single stockholders. The transaction also contemplates acquisition of the capital stock of Motor Cab Transportation Co., operating 2,050 cars in New York City, in exchange for 58,447 shares of Checker Cab Manufacturing common stock. Checker Cab already owns 1,442,000 of outstanding debentures of Parmelee Transportation, all of the \$1,000,000 of preferred stock, 23,000,000 shares of common stock and warrants for the purchase of 93,425 additional shares of common.”

The September 22, 1930 issue of Time Magazine reported:

“In Parmelee, Checker has long had a large investment through debentures and preferred stock. Last week it was arranged to return these holdings to Parmelee in return for sufficient common stock to give Checker control. Likewise, Parmelee will be given control of New York's Motor Cab Transportation, operating 2,050 taxis. Altogether, the fleet under Checker's control will now come to 10,000 taxis (operated by Parmelee), one-tenth of the total in the U. S., enough to insure the company of a large replacement business.”

In the latter part of 1930 Markin's ownership of Parmelee shares declined to less than 1 per cent and his ownership of Checker Cab Mfg. Co. shares to 5 per cent, which contrast with an ownership of Checker Cab Mfg. Co. shares of more than 34 per cent by the Raskob-duPont group.

The Checker-Parmelee acquisition was one of the last offerings underwritten by J.A. Sisto & Co. before they declared bankruptcy on September 30, 1930. Emil C. Walzer, financial reporter for United Press reported:

“Failure of the firm of J.A. Sisto and Co. announced from the rostrum in the afternoon caused an avalanche of unloading just at a time when the list had steadied from an early bear drive. This is the first major failure since the market crashed a year ago, and it brought excited trading into the market.

“Traders throw their shares overboard.

“Prices crashed 1 to 10 points. Sisto sponsored shares gave way first and then the whole list on the Curb and Stock exchange followed. Tickers were hard pressed to keep pace.

“The Sisto company

“The Sisto company did a banking and brokerage business in New York city. Among the issues which the company has been connected in the past five years are Parmelee Transportation, Checker Cab, Hygrade Food Products company, Sisto Financial Corporation, Cuneo Press, National Rubber Machinery. These shares broke sharply.

“In connection with the Checker Cab sponsorship, Morris Markin, president of Checker Cab Manufacturing company, stated that J.A. Sisto & Co., have not been bankers for the company for several months.”

As a direct result of the depression that followed the October 1929 stock market crash, J.A. Sisto & Co. was in serious financial difficulties and was left holding \$1,442,000 of Parmelee debentures plus some Parmelee common shares and warrants. As the sale of the securities to an outside investor was unlikely, it sold them at a discount to the Checker Cab Mfg. Co.

Parmelee was also incurring substantial losses relative to the Depression as well as a lengthy strike in Pittsburgh where its National Transportation Co. subsidiary dominated the surface transportation business.

Markin personally owned substantially all the stock of the Motor Cab Transportation Corp. whose New York City subsidiaries operated a large fleet of taxicabs that were manufactured by Checker Cab Mfg. Co.

The Raskob-duPont group requested that Markin dispose of his Motor Cab stock so that he would not be, through this corporation, in competition with other New York City customers of Checker Cab Mfg. Co.

Parmelee suggested that its financial strain would be eased if the \$1,442,000 of debentures and the \$1,000,000 of preferred shares of Parmelee then owned

by Checker Cab Mfg. Co., carrying a current burden of interest charges, sinking fund requirements and cumulative preferred dividends aggregating over \$330,000 yearly were exchanged for Parmelee common shares.

As a result of ensuing negotiations Markin, on the insistence of the Raskob-duPont group, transferred his Motor Cab stock to Checker Cab Mfg. Co. in exchange for shares of Checker Cab Mfg. Co., and Checker Cab Mfg. Co. transferred this Motor Cab stock plus all Checker Cab Mfg. Co.'s holdings of Parmelee debentures and preferred stock plus some incidental securities, to Parmelee in exchange for 422,787 Parmelee common stock.

In consequence of this transaction, Checker Cab Mfg. Co. in the later part of 1930 became the owner of a majority of Parmelee's common stock. Checker Cab Mfg. Co. owned 61.75 per cent of the stock of Parmelee, and Parmelee owned 29½ per cent of the stock of Chicago Yellow and all the stock of three subsidiaries which respectively operate cabs in New York City, Pittsburgh and Minneapolis.

Following Parmelee's acquisition of Yellow Cab, they stopped buying cabs from Yellow Truck and Coach and began buying its cabs from Checker. With its cab business gone sour, General Motors tried to make a deal with Markin, and event that was discussed in an article in the October 29, 1930 issue of Business Week entitled 'Once Lowly Taxi Now Wooed by Great Motor Companies':

"Shrewd as he is, Mr. Markin is credited with one mistake. Taxi tradition says that General Motors soured on taxi building after they acquired Yellow Cab Manufacturing from John Hertz. Overtures were begun with a view to selling Mr. Markin the G. M. business. The price was low - so low it suggested weakness. Mr. Markin is said to have refused, observing that he would let his rival die a natural death. He overlooked the fact that deaths are not natural in the General Motors family."

General Motors had earlier made a much larger mistake when they failed to act on the advice of John J. Raskob, a shareholder in both General Motors and Checker Cab Mfg. In the late 20s Raskob had tried to convince Alfred J. Sloan Jr. and the GM board to purchase Checker outright, but was rebuked by the Fisher brothers, who believed GM's taxi building business

would improve.

As a direct result a group of GM directors headed by Fred J. Fisher spearheaded the formation of the Terminal Cab Corp. of New York. They hoped to take control of the New York City operating market from Parmelee, thereby creating a new captive market for GM's taxicabs. Although Terminal controlled close to 4,000 New York City taxicabs for a short period, the ensuing collapse of the stock market resulted in Terminal's November 1933 bankruptcy and the subsequent end of General Motors bespoke taxicab manufacturing business.

Additional problems arose because of the harsh economic conditions and the resumption of brutal taxi wars that swept many major cities during the 1920s. Simply put, more cabs were on the streets of most cities than could be operated profitably which meant fierce competition. As the industry was largely unregulated, many independent operators used their personal cars decked out with homemade signs and, in some instances, fought violently to protect their zones of operation.

Although Markin's Checker Cab Manufacturing Co. had been supplying taxicabs to Chicago's Checker Cab Company, he had not been involved in the firm's operations since he had moved his taxicab building operations to Kalamazoo in 1923.

At that time his suburban Chicago home had been bombed by persons unknown, and since 1926 it had been common knowledge that Chicago Yellow Cab's management had been controlled by persons closely affiliated with Chicago's mobsters.

Shortly after Checker Cab Mfg Co. purchased a controlling interest in Parmelee, the Yellow and Checker cab companies held 77% of the taxicab licenses in the City of Chicago.

In 1929 there were 5,289 taxicab licenses outstanding in the City of Chicago. Yellow Cab Co. had 2,335 medallions and the Checker Cab association had 1,750. As the economy worsened, the City implemented a moratorium on new licenses and eventually requested that Yellow and Checker reduce their outstanding medallions to a combined total of 3,000, after which Yellow held 1,500 licenses and Checker 1,000.

At that time Markin was president, general manager, and controlling shareholder of Checker Cab Mfg Co. as well as the active manager and sole share-

holder of Cab Sales and Parts Corp., an independent taxicab operator who was an associated member of the Checker Cab Co.

Checker Cab Mfg. Co. owned 62% of the capital stock of the Parmelee Transportation Co. which in turn held a controlling interest in the Chicago Yellow Cab Co. a holding company which owned all of the capital stock of Yellow Cab Co.

At the time Markin and his associates controlled 15% of the New York City market, 58% of the Minneapolis market, 86% of the Chicago market, and 100% of the Pittsburgh Market.

Checker originally was a cooperative company, the stockholders of which were the various owners of 'Checker' cabs. In February, 1930, as part of a settlement of litigation between it and Checker Cab Mfg. Co., Checker agreed that its drivers would purchase all of their taxicabs from Cab Sales for a period of five years at \$2,350 per cab. At the same time, Checker Cab Mfg. Co. appointed Cab Sales as exclusive agent for these sales and agreed to sell its cabs to Cab Sales at \$1,906 per cab. During the five-year life of this agreement, Checker drivers bought a large number of cabs from Cab Sales at prices about \$400 above those at which Cab Sales bought them from Checker Cab Mfg. Co. As these drivers defaulted in their payments from time to time, Cab Sales would foreclose and take over the ownership and operation of the cabs. Since 1941, it has owned and operated all of these cabs.

By 1932, Cab Sales had acquired over 97% of the stock of Checker. Markin caused this stock to be sold to certain of his associates in 1942.

For many years Checker Cab Manufacturing and its sales division, Checker Cab Sales Co. had been financing taxicabs to the Chicago association, which in turn had been receiving time payments from their members for the taxicabs.

The association's payments to Markin had always been on time, however the association started falling behind soon after the stock market crash. Some of their members were significantly behind on their cab payments, not to mention the monthly dues that were collected for insurance, dispatching and main-tenance.

Coincidentally, for the past year or so, Morris Markin, Ralph E. Oakland, and two associates, Paul L'Amoreaux and Ernest H. Miller had been surreptitiously operating their own fleet of taxis within the As-

sociation. The partners started with an initial group of thirty-five repossessed cabs and slowly started buying up the association's larger owner-operators and within a number of years held a controlling interest in the association.

As the economy got worse, the partner's fleet enlarged and it was ultimately absorbed by the Cab Sales and Parts Co., a Paul C. L'Amoreaux -owned firm that eventually held 500 Chicago operator licenses. Cab Sales was formed in 1930 as a method of compensating L'Amoreaux, Checker Cab Mfg. Co.'s attorney in the Checker Cab Mfg. Co.- Checker litigation. Michael Sokoll, the longtime secretary of the association was given the job of running it and the violence of years past soon faded from memory.

Markin also obtained a substantial interest in the DeLuxe Motor Cab Company, which was the third largest cab operating company in Chicago in 1929 with 400 licenses. He caused all of its stock to be sold to Parmelee. It was then consolidated into a new company; in 1932 Cab Sales bought a controlling interest in this consolidated concern and caused it to suspend operations. Thus, by the end of 1932, Markin had gained control of the the three largest taxicab companies operating in Chicago and, through Parmelee, had substantial footholds in the taxicab business in New York City, Pittsburgh and Minneapolis.

In 1931 Checker's president desired to withdraw from Checker and suggested the sale to Cab Sales of the majority of Checker's stock. Cab Sales thought this a good purchase and obtained for this purpose a substantial sum from Markin personally and loans from subsidiaries of Yellow.

Parmelee president Ernest H. Miller passed away on December 24, 1932, and was succeeded L'Amoreaux. Following Paul C. L'Amoreaux' untimely passing on September 2, 1933, Levin Rank, Parmelee Transportation's secretary and treasurer, became its next president. Upon L'Amoreaux' passing, Markin assumed control of Cab Sales and Parts, and with it control of Chicago Checker Cab.

Markin's New York City taxi operations which were operated by a holding company, the Motor Cab Transportation Company, was not immune to labor disputes. On May 6, 1930 one of its subsidiaries, the Black Beauty Cab Corp., experienced a mass walk-out after management at its Brooklyn garage fired two dispatchers, resulting in the walkout of 700-800 Black

Beauty drivers. The affiliated cabbies of Brooklyn's Checker Cab Service joined in the walkout and by May 10, 1,800 of Motor Cab Transportation's drivers had walked out.

The drivers demanded the dispatchers' reinstatement as well as the recognition of a cab drivers' union. On May 11, 300 Black Beauty drivers working out of its East Thirteenth Street garage followed suit bring the totally number of Motor Cab Transportation Co. drivers on strike to 2,100. On May 17 Motor Cab's Bronx cabbies had joined the strike, bringing the total number of strikers to 4,000.

The strike was ended on May 19 after the company agreed to the strikers demands, which included the organization of an independent association by the drivers: installation of a weekly wage system; installation of shop stewards; increase in the number of mechanics in the garages; and group insurance at the expense of the company.

Another group, the Empire Cab Association, was formed on February 9, 1931 by the Checker Sales Corp. with the goal of safeguarding struggling independent Checker cab operators by giving them access to affordable group insurance and other benefits.

1931 - "The rate (insurance) for the Black Beauty Cab Company, Motor Cab Transportation Company, Yellow Taxi Company and other subsidiary or affiliated operating companies of the Parmelee Transportation Company is \$8.50 per cab per month."

On March 4, 1931 Checker released their 1930 earnings reports:

"Checker Cab Manufacturing Co. and subsidiaries for 1930 reported net profit of \$504,690 equal to \$1.16 a share on the common stock, against \$4,280,416, or \$11.41 a share, in 1929."

Earnings fell off during 1931 which Checker Cab Manufacturing reporting a net profit of only \$70,000 for the second quarter. Earnings were flat for the rest of the year, although 1932 started off on a high note with the following good news issued in a short press release dated February 5, 1932:

"Chicago Yellow Cab Company purchased 1000 cabs, costing some \$2,000,000 from the Checker Cab Manufacturing

Company, Kalamazoo, Mich."

On May 13, 1932 New York's Mayor, Jimmie Walker became involved in a scandal directly related to the formation of the Board of Taxicab Control, an industry sponsored regulatory body that sought to decrease the number of taxicab licenses in the metro New York City market:

"CLAIMS WALKER GOT HIS SLICE IN TAXI MATTER

"Witness Says Mayor of New York Accepted \$26,535 in Bonds from Admirer.

"New York, May 13, 1932 (AP)—Mayor James J. Walker accepted \$26,335.51 worth of bonds from J. A. Sisto, financier of the Parmelee Transportation Company, just before creation of a board of taxicab control, the taxicab promoter, testified before the Hofstadter committee, adjourned until next Wednesday.

"Sisto identified himself as a partner in the brokerage firm of J. A. Sisto & Co. He said Morris Markin, president of the Checker company, suggested a board of taxicab regulation for New York city. McKeon, a close friend of both Mayor Walker and Sisto, introduced Sisto to the mayor.

"Sisto felt so much admiration for his new friend, he said, that he determined to buy heavily in the-stock market and 'split' his profits with the mayor. After accumulating about \$87,960 of profits on Cosden oil, Sisto closed the account.

"He asked McKeon, he testified, to deliver an envelope to the mayor. Shortly after, the mayor's bill creating the taxicab board was passed."

General Motor's Terminal Cab Company was implicated in a similar scheme involving John Hastings, a Walker ally, and the resulting scandal forced Walker's resignation and the disbanding of the Board of Taxicab Control.

Abe Lomborg, Markin's former business partner, kept a low profile following the failure of his body company, and remained in Joliet, eventually establishing his own car dealership. However his quiet life



changed forever in 1933 when his daughter Diane became involved with a small-time Russian bootlegger and gangster named Sammy Taran who was active in an around St Paul, Minnesota during Prohibition. Taran came to the attention of the public following a daring April 4, 1933 holdup of the First National Bank of Fairbury, Nebraska which netted him \$150,000 in cash and securities. Taran and his henchmen exited the bank shielded by six hostages and escaped behind with their Tommy guns blazing.

While Taran was hiding out in Chicago, he met Abraham Lomberg's daughter Diane, and the two were married on June 4th 1933, and Taran was apprehended the very next day. Joseph Simon, the husband of Diane's sister Kate, had been followed after cashing one of the stolen \$1,000 Liberty Bonds, which led police to a Chicago hotel where the two men were staying with the Lomberg girls.

Taran was extradited to Nebraska and eventually convicted of the \$150,000 robbery, as well as kidnapping the six hostages and firing upon officers of the law. Following his release from prison, Taran relocated to Florida where he formed Taran Distributing Co., the firm that fronted for the mobs 'juke box' rackets in the late 40s and early 50s.

A three day strike that occurred earlier in the month resulted in a February 11, 1934 New York Times article called, 'Taxi War a Result of Lower Profits'. The author, Margaret Hess, surveyed the reason for the walk-out and included a recent history of the city's taxicab business.

At that time an estimated 22,000 taxicabs operated within the five boroughs of New York City, the three largest fleet operators being Parmelee (Motor Cab Transportation), General Motors (Terminal Cab Co.) and Keystone Transportation Co., Inc. who operated from 3,000 to 4,000 cabs a piece. Approximately 8,000 cabs were owned by independent owner-operators and the remaining 2,000 were operated by small fleets who owned from between 5 and 200 taxis a piece.

Founded in 1929, Keystone declared bankruptcy in 1933, Yellow Cab in 1935. Mayor LaGuardia finally acted on New York City's overabundant taxicab population in 1937 with the introduction of the Haas act, which put into place a medallion system that severely limited the number of taxicabs operating within the five boroughs. 13,595 licenses or medallions were allowed under the law, which prohibited the issue of

new medallions, and also required that existing medallions be turned in to the city when their owner withdrew from business and by the end of the decade, only 11,787 medallions were extant.

1931 Business Week:

"In the Parmelee system a taxi is as old as its mileage. Parmelee amortizes the \$2000 cost of a cab at 50000 miles a year, charging it off in 3 years."

At the beginning of the decade almost 95 per cent of all New York City cabs were owned by small fleets and individual owner-operators. Of the 27 fleets that owned 50 or more taxicabs, only 5 owned more than 250. The six largest operators were Yellow, Checker, Black Beauty (all controlled by Parmelee) Terminal (controlled by General Motors), Paramount/Five Boroughs (controlled by Allie S. Freed), and Keystone.

Although John J. Raskob and Pierre S. duPont had both been investing in Checker since the late 20s, newspaper reports hinted that the pair were seeking a substantially larger stake in the firm. Coincidentally the pair also sat on the board of General Motors and were two of its largest investors. On July 21, 1932 the Associated Press reported:

"DUPONT, RASKOB BUY CHECKER CAB FIRM

"NEW YORK, July 20, 1932(AP)— Reports were current today that interests closely identified with the DuPont-Raskob group had acquired an interest in the Checker Cab Manufacturing Company. The election of three new directors was announced today. Recent operations of the company have been unsatisfactory, Morris Markin, president, stating that it had earned no profit in the first six months of this year."

DuPont and Raskob spearheaded a recapitalization of Checker's stock that was announced on August 11, 1932:

"A reduction of capital stock from 500,000 to 250,000 common shares has been approved by a special stockholders' meeting of the Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation. Under the recapitalization plan one new share of \$5 par com-

mon stock will be exchanged for each four shares of old no par stock outstanding.”

Ernest H. Miller, a friend of Markin’s as well as a large stockholder in and former president of both Parmelee and Yellow Taxi, passed away unexpectedly on December 24, 1932 of a massive stroke.

The Checker Cab boardroom must have been an uncomfortable place for Markin as Miller was now dead and the board of directors was controlled by Raskob and duPont. The firm’s Kalamazoo factory was idle for much of 1932 as none of the firm’s affiliated drivers or owners were in any position to purchase new taxicabs.

Checker employees returned to work in early 1933 after the factory received a number of new orders:

#### “500 TO GET JOBS

“NEW YORK, Jan. 17, 1933 (AP)—The Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation, makers of taxicabs, announced today that it was immediately resuming work at its factory at Kalamazoo, Mich., and that by the end of the month 500 men will be employed there.”

“New York, Mar. 20, 1933 – (AP)—Checker Cab Manufacturing Corporation — Obtained, order for 1,000 taxicabs from Parmelee Transportation Company.”

Checker Cab’s 1932 earnings, or lack thereof, were issued on April 13, 1933:

#### “CORPORATION EARNINGS

“NEW YORK, April 13, (AP)— Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation and subsidiaries report 1932 net loss of \$821,105, after charges, compared with net profit of \$431,168 in 1931.”

Markin made a bold move midway through 1933 by purchasing options to buy 60% (58,837 shares of 108,362 issued) of Checker Cab’s stock from the estate of R. W. Ellis and Pierre S. DuPont and John J. Raskob at a price significantly below its current market value.

The sale was made with the almost certain knowledge that Markin was unable to come up with the cash. Checker was trading at just under \$17 per share at the time, and Markin was unable to raise the approximate \$1 million needed for the transaction.

At Checker Cab’s June 1933 board meeting the directors voted to reduce their numbers from eleven to seven directors. Immediately after four of the remaining seven directors; Pierre S. du Pont, J.A. Sisto, Matthew Robinson and John J. Raskob, forced Markin out as president, replacing him with C.A. Weymouth, a Cornell-educated manager.

Unbeknownst to Checker’s directors was the fact that Markin and the newly wealthy E.L. Cord were friends, having met during the early twenties when Cord was a Chicago car salesman. It was no coincidence that Checker Cabs were equipped with Lycoming engines, and Markin hoped Cord would return the favor by backing him in his bid to return to power at Checker Cab Manufacturing.

At that time Cord was flush with cash, and he agreed to help out his old friend. Markin signed over duPont and Raskob’s options to Cord and within two weeks Cord had exercised the options, duPont and Raskob were gone, and Morris Markin was back in charge of Checker Cab. Cord was represented on the Checker board by trusted associates Lucius B. Manning and Raymond S. Pruitt.

The acquisition was announced to the press on August 15, 1933 by Manning:

#### “Checker Cab Firm Absorbed by Cord

“CHICAGO Aug. 15, 1933 (AP) —The Cord corporation headed by the dynamic E.L. Cord has announced addition of the Checker Cab Manufacturing corporation to its growing transportation empire. Acquisition of the Checker concern, largest exclusive taxicab manufacturing firm in the world, was announced by L.B. Manning executive vice president of the Cord corporation. Reconstruction of the board of directors of the Checker company was also announced Cord has been elected chairman of the board and with Manning, W.H. Boal and Morris Markin will constitute the executive committee. Markin has been retained as president.

“This is the second major company acquired by the Cord corporation within two weeks. On August 3 the company took over control of the New York Shipbuilding company, one of the dominant companies in the shipbuilding industry.

Late in 1932 the Cord corporation also obtained management of the Aviation corporation with its operating company American Airlines.

“Other companies under its management are: Auburn Automobile company, Auburn, Ind.; Duesenberg Inc., Indianapolis; Stimson Aircraft corporation, Wayne, Mich.; Columbia Axle company, Cleveland; Lycoming Manufacturing company, Williamsport, Pa., and L.G.S. Devices corporation, Indianapolis.

“Cord, who is only 33 years old, started his business career as a dish washer in a restaurant. In 1918 he obtained a position as an automobile salesman and within six months was taken into partnership. From there his rise to control of the Cord corporation, with its administration of more than a billion dollars in assets, has been meteoric.”

Paul C. L'Amoreaux, the architect of Markin's acquisition of the Checker and Yellow Cab fleets passed away in September of 1933 after which his 97% share in Cab Sales reverted to Markin.

Checker Cab Manufacturing's next quarterly statement was released on August 17, 1933:

“Checker Cab Mfg. Cuts Quarter Loss

“The Checker Cab Manufacturing company for the quarter ended June 30 reports a net loss of \$74,583 after taxes and charges. This compares with a net loss of \$173,654 in the same period of 1932. For the six months ended June 30 the company showed a net loss of \$151,857, against a net loss of \$360,081 in the first half of last year.”

An article on the Cord takeover in the August 19, 1933 issue of Automobile Topics revealed that there were more than 200 Checker-built cabs operating in Minneapolis, Minnesota; 325 in Cleveland, Ohio; 500 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; 3,000 in Chicago, Illinois; and 8,000 in the five boroughs of New York City.

Cord's Auburn Automobile Company had been building taxis for Cleveland's Saf-T-Cab Corporation, since 1926. The firm's founder, B.D. DeWeese, aggressively marketed the vehicles to metropolitan fleet opera-

tors, some of whom operated firms with Saf-T-Cab, or Safe-T-Cab in their titles. The firm's products were popular in the Midwest, and could regularly be seen in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Minneapolis and St Paul.

As was the Checker, the Saf-T-Cab was purpose-built using heavy duty components and the firm advertised that many of their vehicles had exceeded the 100,000 mile mark. Soon after Cord took control of Checker, production of the Saf-T-Cab was transferred to Checker. Auburn was in the process of relocating all manufacturing operations to Connersville, Indiana and the move benefited all parties involved.

Cord's takeover of Checker coincided with the preparation of the Checker Model Y, which not only looked like the current-model year Auburns, but was also powered by the same 115hp Lycoming eight when it was introduced in 1935. The trademark scooped fenders continued and a new stretched six and eight door version of the Model Y debuted which was specifically designed for transporting passengers to and from airports and train depots.

E.L. Cord was noticeably absent from his automotive and aviation empire during 1934 and 1935 as he and his family fled to Great Britain in March of 1934 following a kidnap scare at their Beverly Hills home. He returned to the county early in 1936 to face charges of charges of stock manipulation which were triggered when he sold back his controlling interest in Checker Cab Co. to Morris Markin, which attracted the interest of the Securities & Exchange Commission.

In April of 1937 Cord was admitted to a Chicago, hospital for exhaustion and a few months later Cord sold 342,000 of his 500,000 shares in the Cord Corporation to Victor Emanuel & Co. and Schroder, Rockefeller & Co. Inc two New York investment houses. The remaining 148,000 shares were sold to his friend, Lucius B. Manning, the president of Aviation Corp.

Time Magazine reported on Cord's SEC difficulties and the breakup of the Cord Corporation in an article called “Cord Out of Cord” which appeared in the Aug. 16, 1937 issue.

“Last week in Chicago E. L. Cord, just turned 43, consented to a Federal court order enjoining him and Checker Cab Mfg. Corp.'s President Morris Markin from the "further violation" of SEC anti-

manipulation provisions in their dealings in Cord company securities (an SEC charge which both men, however, denied) and simultaneously announced the sale of his entire holdings in Cord Corp. to a Manhattan banking group for \$2,000,000.

“Whether or not this was the end of Cord, it was definitely stated by the new owners that it meant the end of that name in the business he had founded.”

The bankers subsequently liquidated all of Cord Corp’s automotive assets and reorganized its aviation subsidiaries as the Aviation and Transportation Corp. (ATCO). In the next few years Victor Emanuel & Co. rebuilt ATCO and AVCO into a money-making organization which delivered its first dividends in 1941.

Although a few Auburn subsidiaries such as Central Manufacturing and Columbia Axle, were still profitable, its parent company suffered major losses during 1935, 1936 and 1937 and Auburn Automobile Co. filed for bankruptcy protection on December, 11, 1937 in U.S. District Court in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Luckily, Checker fared much better than Auburn, and under Markin’s leadership the firm returned to profitability.

During 1934 most of the Parmelee System’s 2,200 New York City taxicabs were equipped with radios and in the following year automatic buzzers were installed that alerted pedestrians that the taxicab was put in reverse.

By 1935 fleets of 100 or more cabs accounted for approximately one third of the city’s 12,578 taxicabs. Parmelee-controlled firms, Checker and Yellow, now dominated the city’s landscape, even more so now that Terminal Cab and Keystone were bankrupt. The only firm that would make a noticeable dent in Checker and Yellow’s domination was the Sunshine Radio System, whose popular Desoto Skyliner Taxicabs were introduced in 1937.

In 1934 Parmelee Corporation’s board of directors shut down its 79-year-old Chicago subsidiary, the Parmelee Company, liquidated its assets, and assumed all of its contracts with the Chicago railways.

Between 1931 and 1935 Checker continued its previous form of individual owner-driver operation. During this period, however, large arrearages accumulated in the service charges owing by the drivers and the

drivers also defaulted on purchase installments of their cabs with the result that cabs were abandoned or Cab Sales was required to repossess them.

By 1935 Cab Sales and Parts operated a fleet of 500 cabs within Chicago’s Checker Cab association. This was a minority of the total number of cabs operated within Checker but Cab Sales operated these 500 cabs as a fleet while the individual drivers of Checker operated their cabs individually.

Between 1935 and 1941 the individual drivers gradually dropped out as a result of their difficulties of operation and their inability or unwillingness to pay their service charges and purchase installments on their cabs, so that by 1941 all Checker cabs in Chicago were operated as a fleet by Cab Sales, which was owned almost exclusively by Markin.

“Drivers’ Strike Cripples Cab Service in Chicago

“HOPE TO CLEAR STREETS TODAY OF ALL TAXICABS

“Demand Half of Receipts, Vacations With Pay and Free Gas, Oil.

“Chicago, March 6, 1937—(AP)—Taxi cab service in Chicago was crippled severely today as striking cab drivers met with their attorney to draft a formal agreement to end their strike. Nine formal demands were prepared for presentation to Checker and Yellow Cab company officials as the strike went into its second day.

“Company officials estimated there were less than 1,000 of the usual 2,700 day shift drivers at work. ‘Flying squadrons’ patrolled the streets, urging non-striking drivers to join their fight for collective bargaining, higher pay, and vacations with pay.

“No Violence Reported

“No violence was reported but 11 drivers were arrested for ‘intimidation.’ Railroad stations, hotels, and cab stands in the busy loop reported a shortage of cabs.

“Joseph M. Jacobs, attorney for the drivers, said he would ask M. M. Sokol, president of the Checker Taxi company,

and T. B. Hogan, Yellow Cab president, for conferences tonight to end the strike.

“Strike leaders said they hoped to clear the streets of cabs by 2 p. m. when Checker Cab strikers meet to form a union. Yellow Cab strikers meet at 4 p.m. Although Arthur Nole, temporary treasurer for strikers’ committees, emphasized ‘we do not want any violence’ and Victor Hirsch, strike organizer, warned mass meeters ‘don’t damage any cars,’ police prepared for violence.

“Acting Police Commissioner John Pendergrast ordered special details at the 16 Yellow and Checker Cab garages. At request of company officials he organized reserve squadrons for emergency duty. Eleven cab company employees were arrested in disorders resulting from organization efforts.

“Hope to Cripple Service

“Strikers’ immediate objectives were to clear Chicago streets of taxicabs by 2 p. m. today, to present their demands to company officials, and organize a union. Yellow Cab employs 2,800 men in 2,160 cabs. Checker has 1,500 drivers - with 500 cars of its own and 1,500 owned by the drivers. Yellow Cab drivers retain 37 per cent of their receipts, pay for one half of their gasoline and oil. Checker drivers keep half their receipts but have to buy all their gas and oil.

“Strikers demanded collective bargaining, closed shop, half their receipts, vacations with pay. They demanded that companies furnish all gasoline and oil, provide repairs, reduce assessments against independent drivers for use of company names and telephones.”

In the late 30s Parmelee’s chief competitors in the New York City market were the Bell Transportation Co. (aka Bell System) and the GM-controlled Terminal Cab Corp. Founded by Nathan Levine, by 1937 the Bell System was New York City’s second largest operator, employing a reported 1,000 drivers and mechanics. It is estimated that the Bell and Parmelee systems operated 17 per cent of all the cabs in New York City before the Second World War. Although the Sun-

shine Radio system was much smaller, their distinctive sunroof-equipped Desoto Skyliner taxicabs are fondly remembered today.

July 30, 1937 - The Transport Workers Union, C. I. O. affiliate, announced yesterday that it had signed contracts with forty-nine operators of taxicab fleets employing a total of about 10,000 drivers and mechanics. The agreements include all of the large fleets except the Parmelee Transportation System, which has 3,200 employees.

“Charge Checker Cab and Auto Heads Manipulated Stock

“WASHINGTON, Aug. 7, 1937—(UP)—The Securities Exchange Commission announced today it had filed a bill against E. L. Cord, chairman of the board of Cord Corp., and Morris Markin, former president of Checker Cab Manufacturing Corp., to enjoin them permanently from allegedly violating the anti manipulative sections of the Securities Exchange Act.

“The proceedings was started in the U. S. District Court at Chicago. The bill alleged Cord and Markin manipulated securities of Checker Cab, Parmelee Transportation Co., and Chicago Yellow Cab Co., Inc. In addition, the bill charged that Cord also manipulated the stock of Auburn Automobile Co.

“Shortly after the SEC made the announcement, the Commission received word that the defendants consented to the entry of a decree granting the demands of the commission. In consenting, however, Cord and Markin denied the charges contained in the bill.”

Yellow and Checker subsequently made agreements to reduce the number of cabs in operation and to induce the city to lower the number of licenses outstanding to 3,000, of which Yellow would hold 1,500 and Checker 1,000. On December 22, 1937, the City of Chicago passed an ordinance providing for a method of voluntary surrender by licensees of a sufficient number of the licenses to reduce the number outstanding to 3,000.

It also provided that if the number of authorized licenses should later be increased above the 3,000

figure, such additional licenses should first be issued to the original licensees in proportion to and up to the number which they had surrendered. Yellow and Checker then made an agreement to implement this ordinance; Yellow agreed to surrender 571 licenses (leaving it with 1,595) and Checker agree to surrender 500 (leaving it with 1,000); both parties promised to attempt to secure for Yellow 60% and for Checker 40% of any licenses in excess of 3,000 which the city might later issue. As a result 3,000 licenses were left outstanding.

“New York Official Is Held in Bribery

“Commissioner of Motor Vehicles Arrested In Dewey Probe

“New York, Nov. 16. 1938 —(AP)—  
Charles A. Harnett, state commissioner

of motor vehicles, was arrested today in the office of Dist. Atty. Thomas E. Dewey on a long-secret indictment charging him with accepting \$67,000 in cash bribes for official favors granted four taxicab concerns.

“Harnett, a veteran Democratic jobholder who has held his post since 1924, surrendered when told of the accusations against him, pleaded innocent, and was released on bail of \$5,000.

“The indictments, charging extortion and bribery, were ready in late September, Dewey said, but were deliberately held up until the close of the recent political campaign, in which Dewey was the unsuccessful Republican candidate for governor.

“Harnett was the eleventh person to be indicted in the district attorney's long investigation of the taxicab industry, another having been former State Assemblyman Edward S. Moran, Jr.

“The accusations against the commissioner centered about his administration of state laws requiring that each operating taxicab be bonded. Harnett, Dewey said, permitted the Parmelee Transportation company to act as surety on the personal bonds of its subsidiaries — Yellow Taxi corporation. National Transportation company. Inc., and the Hamilton Peters

Operating company, Inc.

“He was permitted, under discretionary authority granted in the state statutes, to make such an arrangement, but, Dewey said, he refused to exercise his discretion similarly for competing companies, requiring them to provide a more costly method of insurance.”

Markin responded to the insurance requirements by creating his own insurance company, the General Transportation Casualty and Surety Company.

On June 24, 1938, Edward S. Moran Jr., the former Democratic Assemblyman from the Park Slope section of Brooklyn was indicted on charges that between 1935 and 1937 he took \$36,000 in bribes from officials of the Terminal and Parmelee Transportation Systems who suggested he introduce legislation in the State Senate favorable to the operations of the two New York City fleet operators. His trial took place the following June and on June 9, 1939 Moran was found guilty on two bribery counts and sentenced to two and a half to five years in prison.

Also implicated, but not charged were the presidents of the two taxicab companies, Burge M. Seymour, president of the Terminal System, Inc., and Levin Rank, president of Parmelee Transportation Co. At Moran's sentencing Judge James Garrett Wallace issued a scathing denouncement of the two businessmen, and by the end of the year both men had been forced to resign their posts. Levin Rank was succeeded as Parmelee president by Lewis W. Landman, the former traffic manager of the New York Central Railroad.

Levin Rank's new position was president of Markin's insurance company, the General Transportation Casualty Company, organized on March 16, 1938 under the laws of New York State. Paid in capital \$300,000; surplus \$200,000. Original capitalization was increased to \$550,000 on July 26, 1939. Its name was to General Transportation Casualty and Surety Company on Oct. 13, 1939. A further name change, to the General Fire and Casualty Company, took place on March 10, 1952. Its entry in the 1952 Cyclopedia of Insurance follows:

General Fire and Casualty Company,  
1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. President, Levin Rank; vice-president, S.I.

Preston; secretary, Joseph S. Catalano, treasurer, E.C. Lechner. Assets, \$11,844,274; capital, \$1,000,000; net surplus, \$2,021,588, Dec 31, 1951.

Levin Rank passed away on April 2, 1951 at the age of 60. After a reshuffling of the board, General Fire and Casualty's officers became: President, Edward C. Lechner; vice-president, (underwriting, producing and advertising) Clarence A Cole; secretary, Joseph S. Catalano; treasurer, Milton H. Cassidy; assistant treasurer, Robert H. Wilson, assistant secretary, Donald Sheldon.

On January 1, 1939 New York City's 26 largest taxicab fleet operators (with fleet of more than 25 drivers) were as follows: Ark (155); Atlantic (171); Bell (650); Better (47); Cornell (167); Crystal (114); Dynamic (174); Elmhurst (73); Embassy (94); Hub (17); Laurel (155); Level/Nera (67); Lowell (32); Lyric (126); Marlin (158); Mural (161); New Yorker (162); Pacific (94); Parmelee (2,990); Peerless (179); Phoenix (33); Ruart (88); Sunshine & Radio (171); Sun Ray (149); Terminal (836); Town (450); Tudor (71).

The four largest firms were Parmelee, Terminal, Bell, and Town.

A handful of unusual-looking snouts appeared on American vehicles during the late thirties but none matched the monstrosity that premiered on the 1939 Checker Model A. The equally bizarre Sharknose Graham is the only other vehicle that could hold a candle to the Model A.

Checker designer John H. Tuttle is credited with designing the Model A's bodywork from the cowl back, but the identity of the person who designed the front end is the subject of much debate. Ray Dietrich served as a consultant to the firm starting in the late 30s, however he emphatically denied any involvement with the firm's taxi designs rig up until his death.

Tuttle's name also appears on the patents for the cars optional rear landaulet roof, and it's probable that he also worked on the front end, however it's entirely possible a third designer, perhaps even Morris Markin himself, designed the front end, whose main claim to fame was that it so ugly, you could see it coming from up to half-a-mile away.

The headlights were modern oval units mounted to the front fenders in the typical fashion, however those beams were surrounded by massive

chrome-plated art-moderne shields unlike any seen on any other vehicle. Body colored louvered valances provided cooling to the radiator which was hidden behind the solid beak that extended downwards from the center of the hood.

The short wheelbase Model A included a pur-



pose-built 124-inch wheelbase chassis with a traditional solid front and live rear axles supported by longitudinal leaf springs. The independent front suspensions found on other manufacturer's vehicles were easily knocked out of alignment and were far too fragile for taxicab use.

The Model A included a number of more practical innovations such as an automatic signal that alerted pedestrians when the cab was put into reverse, padded finger guards on the rear door edges and rear seats that were stuffed with synthetic rubber cushions.

The Model A was introduced mid-year and was powered by a Continental Red Seal Six, an engine that would become standard equipment until 1965 when the firm adopted a General Motors power plant. The John H. Tuttle-designed sunroof and landaulet rear top were optionally available on either of the two available wheelbases.

A period review called the Model A:

"...the most radical innovation of the entire taxicab industry this year. Checker's disappearing top is attracting widespread attention in the larger cities where its Parmelee system fleets operate.... The all-metal landaulet can be opened or closed by the driver in 40 seconds, without moving from his seat...the cab is equipped with a glass roof that can be readily

opened or closed by the driver at the will of his fare."

The model A was the last prewar Checker taxicab, and only a single survivor, a long-wheelbase model equipped with the landaulet roof, exists. At the start of the war Markin donated the Model A's body dies to melted down for the war effort, necessitating a redesign of the body when hostilities ceased in 1945.

In the late thirties Checker began manufacturing utility trailers for Sears and body stampings for other automakers. They supplied box van bodies to both Dodge and Ford and also built the streamlined commercial delivery bodies used by Hudson.

When famed automotive designer Ray Dietrich left Chrysler in May of 1938, he was hired by Markin as an engineering consultant to Checker at \$100 per day. His first commission involved the redesign of Checker's welding jigs, later ones included redesigning the Kalamazoo plant's assembly lines and overhead conveyors.

At the start of the war, Checker created a Special Projects Division that produced specialized truck bodies, ¼-ton T-1 / CCM-12 Bantam Jeep trailers and K-35 communications trailers for the US Army Signal Corps. Dietrich helped the division design Checker's famous tank retriever, a huge 16-wheel heavy-duty trailer designed to remove disabled tanks from the battlefield.

Checker also contemplated producing Jeeps for the war effort, and went so far as purchasing three Bantam BRC40 prototypes to review in early 1941. For many years it was thought that Checker had produced the vehicles on their own, but further investigation by Bantam historian William Spear and others has uncovered that the two remaining 'Checker' Jeeps, one in the Classic Car Club of America Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan, the other, purchased from the estate of Checker engineer Jim Stout and now in California, are actually Bantams with some Checker badging and ID plates.

A surviving contract between Checker and Bantam dated February 11, 1941 indicates that the two firms planned on placing bids for production of the BRC40 and would share in its production if either party was awarded the contract. A review of the bids reveals that although Checker had the lowest bid, the Army felt that they would take too long to gear up for production and awarded the contracts to Ford and Willys. Checker did receive contracts to build the Bantam-

designed ¼ ton trailer and truck cabs for Ford.

Checker commissioned former Auburn chief engineer Herbert J. Snow to come up with designs for the post-war Checker. Snow used a clean sheet and came up with a rear-engined, rear-wheel-drive taxi. Known as the Model B, the car's basic design had been used year earlier on the Czech-built Tatra and Tjaarda-designed Sterkenberg, and after extensive testing of two prototypes, the configuration was nixed due to its inherent instability during cornering caused by its rear weight bias.

Snow's second design, which was called the Model C, didn't make it to the prototype stage, however his third, the Model D, was a transverse-engined, front-wheel-drive design that resulted in the creation and testing of two prototypes, a 5-passenger sedan and a 7-passenger taxi. Herb Snow had worked on the Cord 810/812 and was well aware of the potential drive train problems that resulted from the configuration, and set about to fix them. The Model D's were tested into 1946, but the tooling required to produce it in quantity proved to be too costly and it was abandoned in favor of a conventionally laid-out drive train based on the pre-war Model M chassis.

Ray Dietrich assisted Checker's Herb Snow and Jim Stout on the design of the firm's prototypes and had a hand in the design of the Checker A2, their first post-war production model. Dietrich's body design for the front-wheel-drive Model D prototype was slightly modified for use on a front-engine, rear-wheel-drive chassis which was introduced in the December 15th, 1946 issue of Automotive Industries.

Production of the \$2370 vehicle commenced in early 1947 and surprisingly it did not include a trunk although a rear-mounted luggage rack was available. The rear end was reminiscent of GM's torpedo fast-backs, and car's front end was clearly influenced by the 1941 Cadillac and even included a rectangular version of its egg-crate grill.

... to be continued in the January issue with the post war taxi license disputes and new cab designs.



## CLUB MEMORABILIA:

Club logo belt buckles \$8.00, Logo patches \$2.50, Window decals \$1.50. All shipped First Class, Postpaid. Contact Don McHenry, 469 Tremaine Ave., Kenmore, NY, 14217-2537

**Literature** - Checker Cab Photo History book by J. Hinkley \$15, 63 Sales Brochure #B101, 12 pgs, \$10, "New Power Comes To Checker", 64 brochure, \$10, Parts Catalog Nov. 1963 Models A11, A11L, A12, A12L, A12W, photocopy in binder, 336 pgs, \$65, Parts Catalog Supplement 1 Models A9, A9L, A10, A10L, photocopy in binder, \$20, Checkerboard News Spring 2006 through Summer 2009, 10 issues, \$25. All plus postage. Contact Andrew Harvey 814-226-6956 evenings

**Checker Keychain & lapel pin** - I had a few of these made by the company that made the beautiful hood emblems for me. They are exact reproductions in miniature of the winged Checker hood ornament. Expensive because I didn't have that many made and the quality is just as fantastic as the full size emblems. I will sell as a set for 25.75 free ship U.S., \$5.00 extra foreign. Phone Gerry at 508-690-1022 or 508-631-8196 or email chiguadilla@comcast.net

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## NOTICE TO NEW CLUB MEMBERS

As some of you know, I have been (and still am) in the process of moving while also trying to keep up on the newsletter and other club duties. Tony Matern has taken over part of the web site sign up and other duties, which has been a big help. However, it is possible that I may have missed mailing a new member their back newsletter(s) for the year.

When you have joined or rejoined the club since February of this year, you should have received all the newsletters to date for the year. Those issues would have been the April / Spring issue and the July / Summer issue. If you did not receive your newsletters for this year, please let the editor know which issue(s) you are missing and I will get them in the mail to you. You can reach me by email at jwein-hoeft@checkercarclub.org or by phone at 217-494-2986.

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## DID YOU REALIZE IT'S BEEN 30 YEARS SINCE THE LAST CHECKER CAME OFF THE ASSEMBLY LINE ?

## CARS FOR SALE:

**1982 Checker Model A-11**—6 passenger, very good Virginia body, has good running 1976 Chevy 250 straight six and 1976 front suspension, wind up Rockwell meter, vent shades, non functioning NYC roof light. \$8500. Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben Merkel at 440-821-1284 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

**1973 Checker Model A11** - 8 passenger, straight six, GM trans, 2:72 rear axle, working 2 way radio, rare roof mounted AC unit-not working, decent body and frame, runs well. Asking \$5850 Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben Merkel at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

**1971 Checker Street Rod - Restored** - Beautiful Checker Hot Rod Never raced. Frame up restoration 2 years ago. VIN A12-9451-29931A Has clear title. 502 Ram Jet /630 HP with 700 R-4 Overdrive transmission (with overdrive, mileage is actually very good), Ford 9" rear, billet custom wheels, Vintage cold air conditioning, custom paint and ultra soft black leather interior, 3 flat screens, DVD and CD player with wireless headsets and 3000 watt stereo - West Coast Customs, tail lights are from a 1959 Cadillac and backup lights from Harley Davidson, black plexi-glass dash insert, Trunk mounted battery and All new weather stripping (except vent windows - still can't locate new ones!), Car painted Corvette Victory Red and fades to Wheaton Yellow, Flowmaster mufflers - REALLY Rumbles! Heavy duty radiator with dual electric fans - stays cool even in heavy traffic, quartz headlights, custom heavy duty driveshaft, 11 new chrome - really shines! Heavy duty (extra light) driveshaft and New front end (ball joint, etc.), Rear suspension reworked (bushings, springs, re-leveled). Let me know if you have other questions. Very cool car. Located in central Virginia. \$23,000 Phone 540-972-0829 or cell 540-903-3710 or email warren@controltechnologies.com

**1971 Checker Sedan** - VIN A12-3891-1201A. Jump seats, 350 CID engine, new battery, new tires, body in great condition, good paint - some small rust spots. Interior is black and in good shape. Located in Denver, Colorado metro area. Phone number: 303-422-2865, please leave message or email mikenemily@comcast.net

**1982 Checker A11 Ex-Police Car** from Key West FL, documented, 6 passenger, no rust ever, 267 V8, tilt wheel, dual spotlights, air conditioning (blows warm), 4 bumper guards, runs and drives very well, good overall condition. Asking \$8800. Located in Middlefield, OH. Contact Ben Merkel at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

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## INFORMATION WANTED

Tom Roebuck has owned John McEnroe's A12-E the past 7 years. He is looking for additional information on it. You can reach Tom by email at troebuck@hotmail.com or by phone at 312-316-5553

## RENTALS :

**Worldwide Checker Rentals** - Worldwide Checker rentals for the movie industry, television industry, and promotional projects. 30 years experience. References available. Email Joe at sales@checkerparts.com, visit www.checkerparts.com or phone 818-999-1485

**THECHECKERGUY.COM** - NYC area Checker Taxi and vintage car rentals for film, TV, events, weddings, etc. Check our site: www.checkerguy.com or call 646-284-1939 or email checkguy78@yahoo.com

**Film Cars and Vintage Checker Taxicabs** - Commercial Rentals and Weddings a specialty in the general NYC region. Visit www.filmcars.com for photos. Classic Checker taxicabs as well as vintage automobiles from the 1920's thru the 1970's. Phone Peter at 718-748-6707 or email at peter@filmcars.com

## CARS FOR SALE:

**1969 Marathon** - Saginaw full syncro 3 speed manual, 3.50:1 Dana positrac, car has 172,000 miles, 350 small block built for torque & regular gas has 21,500 miles, Vintage-Aire heat & defrost in 2002, brake system rebuild 2003, fresh rockers, newer rubber seals, repainted 2003 PPG base-clear paint, battleship gray upper / steel blue lower. Chrysler power driver's seat. Not much rust, always been in OK & TX. Located in Abilene, TX. \$4,750 Contact Charles Williams at 325-698-8058 or email c.l.williams@suddenlink.net

**1973 A-12 & 1978 A-11 For Sale** - I have two Checkers that I don't have the time to give their full attention: a 73 A-12 350ci engine TH400 trans. & a 78 A-11 250ci straight six engine with 350 trans. If you have an interest in them, let me know I will tell you more about them & send pictures. Located in Ellabell, GA. Phone John at 706-830-3479 or email jpmahoney2010@hotmail.com

**1976 Checker Marathon Restored** - Beautiful Checker Restored with new paint job, custom interior - with new upholstery, headliner, door panel skins, and rug. Hidden Stereo system in glove box with custom speaker also hidden. Engine was painted and detailed. Trunk has new rug and speaker box. This car has photos over 100 photos documenting the process. Video of the car at: www.craigslistadbuilder.com/id52.html \$15,000 Phone 718-442-2245 or 917-337-7771 or email artsela@aol.com

**1978 Checker Marathon** - V-8 305 engine, AC and radio. 120 wheel base. Wasn't a cab. Was in movie made in Minneapolis, MN. Located in Duluth. Best offer. Contact Bill Drake Phone 218-343-8703

**1976 Checker Marathon** - totally restored. Located in NYC. \$10,500.00 Phone 718-442-2245 or 917-337-7771

**1982 Checker Chicago Checker and Yellow factory propane units** - restorable and fairly original with partitions. Both will yard run and come with some parts to fix, \$1,500 each or both for \$2,500. Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

## CARS FOR SALE:

**1980 Checker Marathon** - new black paint, new vinyl roof, new fenders, new velour trim, new chrome, V-6, auto. Asking \$12,500. Contact John at 269-744-0854 or email sfinch0644@yahoo.com

**1975 Checker 73,000 Original Miles** - VIN A12-7104-52273A, V8 engine, some rust along fins and under front doors but bottom was re-done. Sorling/Dietz/Hoffmann Checker from Springfield, IL., currently in Chicago. Lots of maintenance paperwork that I can send if you are seriously interested. Prefer a buyer with mechanical skills who will give her a good home. \$2500 Eric Hoffmann Phone 312-813-0915 or email eric71911@comcast.net

**1979 A-11** - 6 passenger, good frame, black interior, straight six runs very well but lower pulley has come off. Will yard drive as is and is almost roadworthy. Originally a Virginia cab but some rust issues include the left rocker panel, an area behind the rear seat and some near the driver's floor edge. Comes with another LF used outer fender. Have too many projects. \$1500. Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

**1981 Model A-11** - chopped Checker 6 passenger ex-taxi, overall good shape, 454 Chevrolet motor out of a 1970 Impala SS, 4 bbl Holley carb, Lexan front & rear windshield, louvered hood with psuedo NYC medallion, electric cooling fan with dash switch and temp gauge, stock 2.72 rear end, twin cat converters- no mufflers, radio no good, needs headliner. Runs great. Not perfect but a very fun cab. Asking \$14,500. Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben Merkel at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

**1982 Checker Model A-11** - 6 passenger, very good Virginia body, has good running 1976 Chevy 250 straight six and 1976 front suspension, wind up Rockwell meter, vent shades, non functioning NYC roof light. \$8,500. Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

**1965 Checker** - Selling my first Checker, stored inside 25 years, resto started, NOS rockers welded on, frame sandblasted, have decent fenders, hood fair to poor, Chevy 283 V8, newer style DANA rear axle, good glass, have title. Located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Asking \$1,500. call Larry at 416-762-4562 or email p.priorities@gmail.com

**1961 Checker Marathon for Sale**....My dad was the original owner of this vehicle I got it when he passed.... My husband started doing some repairs (sanding etc.) He has lost interest in the project so I would like to sell it..... The car has all the original parts (jump seats, spot light etc...) Located in DeLand, FL. Accepting all offers please call.... Kathryn Densmore 321-277-0280 or cell 386-216-1313 or email KATHRYN536@aol.com

**1981 Checker Model A-11** - 6 passenger, V6, very good Virginia body and frame, tilt wheel, A/C present but not working, needs paint and wiring work, runs and drives but all the lights don't work. (A twin to Pete Talanca's Norfolk Taxi), \$6500 Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben at 440-812-3508 or email bhm1254@gmail.com

## PARTS FOR SALE:

**CHECKER PARTS** New weather strip, windshields, gauges, front end parts, fenders, decals, lenses, gas tanks, more. We have a Checker only wrecking yard. Visit us at [www.checkerparts.com](http://www.checkerparts.com)  
Or phone Joe at: **818-477-4386 or 818- 999-1485**

**Checker Roof Decal Set** - Newest improved design, fully tested. Fits 1956 thru 1982 A-9, A-10, A-11, A-12 and all "E" Models. \$125 shipping included to US Address. Phone **818-999-1485** or email [sales@checkerparts.com](mailto:sales@checkerparts.com)

**New Hood Emblem** - New Hood emblem- beautiful chrome, deep enameling- will look great on your Checker. \$125 See my other ad for matching Checker hood emblem key chain and lapel pin set. Phone Gerry at **508-690-1022** or email [chiguadilla@comcast.net](mailto:chiguadilla@comcast.net)

**30 Year Collection of Checker Parts** - Am selling 30 year collection of Checker parts, consisting of MANY NOS, used, and reconditioned parts, like fenders ,body panels, doors, boxes of NOS small body parts and mechanical parts, engine parts, also have used and reconditioned frame parts, chassis parts, brake drums, chrome trim, seats, too much to list. All parts \$4,000. I must sell my 1965 car first (\$1,500) before I sell these parts, or buy car and all parts for \$5,000. Everything would fit in a 20' shipping container. Located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada Phone Larry at **416-762-4562** or email [p.priorities@gmail.com](mailto:p.priorities@gmail.com)

**Round jump seats** - Used, restorable, round jump seats, completely cut out of the floor with everything attached. Both come with better bottom cushions , one hinge moves freely while the other is soaking . \$300 plus shipping. Phone Ben at **440-812-3508** or email [bhm1254@gmail.com](mailto:bhm1254@gmail.com)

**1967 Aerobus Parts** - Complete set of front brake drums, spindles, "A" arms, springs, tie rods, center link, steering box, and sway bar. The vehicle had 80K miles. Removed these items to install disc brakes. Also six 6.5 x 15 wheels with 5.5 bolt pattern. E-mail Ray Ford at [ray.ford@comcast.net](mailto:ray.ford@comcast.net) or call **412-276-0384**.

**Roof** - 1968+ Checker Model A11/A12 roof in good shape. Too big to ship- must be picked up. Asking \$950 Located in Middlefield, OH. Phone Ben Merkel at **440-812-3508** or email [bhm1254@gmail.com](mailto:bhm1254@gmail.com)

**70's Checker Parts** - Wwindshield wiper motor and dash cluster. E-mail Ray Ford at [ray.ford@comcast.net](mailto:ray.ford@comcast.net) or call **412-276-0384**.

**Various Checker Parts** Formerly Bob Welsh's collection of Checker parts. Some fenders, doors, windshield glass, door glass, and other parts. Located in Waynesville, OH. Call Pete or Nina anytime **937-478-0037** or email [petesoldparts@aol.com](mailto:petesoldparts@aol.com)

**Hubcaps** - 4 late model Checker Marathon hub caps. Phone **602-793-1763** or email [con2010ny@yahoo.com](mailto:con2010ny@yahoo.com)

## PARTS FOR SALE:

**1982 NOS Frame** - built as an extra after the line went down. I picked it up from Checker Motors in 2009 and it's been in my basement ever since. It did set out in the weather prior to my getting it and has some minor pinholes, but a very easy fix. There are only a couple of these new and unused frames around. I will listen to all cash offers. Where will you ever find a new unused frame for your Checker? Pickup only, no shipping! I might be interested in a trade for a rust free Checker 77 and up. If someone makes the right cash offer or trade. It will go. Located in Kalamazoo, MI Contact Rick Burgen at [burgyblu@mei.net](mailto:burgyblu@mei.net)

**81 Checker Marathon A-12E Parts Car** - VIN # 1CMME4225BK001452 Mechanically in good shape, frame & interior in good shape. Excellent engine and drive train. Approximately 80,000 miles. Outer body and roof has a lot of rust; pretty much a parts car. Make best offer. Located in Cresant City, FL. Contact Danny Youngess at **386-467-9330** or cell **386-559-4046** or email [chkrl1@bellsouth.net](mailto:chkrl1@bellsouth.net)

**Checker NOS Body Parts** - All brand new NOS parts: Right front and rear door skins \$150.00 each, Hood \$500.00, Left front outer fender \$450.00, Right inner fender \$350.00, Left rear outer fender \$750.00, Right rear outer fender \$750.00, or buy it all \$2800 Located in Massachusetts. Phone Steve at **978-423-3770** or email [scon-tarino@adamsonindustries.com](mailto:scon-tarino@adamsonindustries.com)

## PARTS WANTED:

**Front Bumper Valance for a '76 A-11** - I'm looking for a front valance (the piece that fills in between the body and the bumper) for my '76 A-11. E-mail Chris at [c\\_hutter@msn.com](mailto:c_hutter@msn.com)

**Sway Bar Bushings Wanted** - we are restoring a 1978 Checker Marathon in the UK and need Sway Bar Bushings. Contact Richard at [richard@thecourtjester.co.uk](mailto:richard@thecourtjester.co.uk)

## RENTAL WANTED:

**Want to Rent NYC Taxis for New Year's Eve** - They must be yellow New York style cabs. Checker top hats, checker stripe along the sides. Decals that say New York taxi with rates is a plus. The event is a corporate New Year's party. The cars will be parked at a casino and serve as background decor. I am assuming it is an indoor event, or maybe outdoor with tents. The cars must arrive in Lake Charles Louisiana by noon on the 30th and will be released at 2:00 am on the 1st. I would like for the owners to quote me a price to transport to and from the event and one day rental. I can make arrangements for hotels for two nights for each owner/driver. Contact Gabriel Davila at [gabedavila@mac.com](mailto:gabedavila@mac.com)

## CARS WANTED:

**WANTED - Very good condition yellow Checker cab.** Preferably late model or quality restoration. Willing to pay good fair price. Call Joe at **949-272-6404** or email [j.richelieu@att.net](mailto:j.richelieu@att.net)

## OWNER PROFILE: MACIEK RYSZKA

Just got the recent issue of The Checkerboard News. Thank you. While looking at Checker family photo set from Convention, I felt a little lonely here on edge of Checker world. So I am sending you greetings from Poland with a photo of my Checker and myself taken this year on the main street of my city, Piotrkowska Street in Lodz, Poland. If you want, his email is [mryszka@filmschool.lodz.pl](mailto:mryszka@filmschool.lodz.pl)



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## OWNER PROFILE: GEORGE GRUNDHOFF

I just (1/2012) got this running 1975 Marathon. It has the round jump seats, 6 cyl., solid, nice frame, some trunk repair needed. It is a solid running car.



## OWNER PROFILE: BEN MERKEL

Most club members know Ben. They also know of his long involvement with the club and his passion for collecting taxis. Long before the rest of us appreciated them, Ben was doing what he could to preserve a lot of Checker history. For quite a few years, Ben operated Twilight Taxi where you could find anything from a small part to a complete car.

Regular convention goers have had an opportunity to see some of Ben's various Checkers, but very few of them realized just how extensive Ben's collection is. Over the years, Ben has had Checkers anywhere from 1950 to 1982. The editor recently acquired a few photos of a couple of Ben's cars, so I thought I would run them here.



Above is a 1982 A-11 police package from Key West, FL and below is a 1981 A-11 Norfolk (VA) Taxi, which is basically a twin to Pete Talanca's.

