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News Release

Ark City Fire-EMS Department's historic 1932 Buick is featured

Local enthusiast: Only 289 model 96-C convertible coupes were ever made

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (June 28, 2019) — The Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department's historic 1932 Buick fire engine is featured in this month's issue of *Buick Bugle*, a Buick Club of America publication.

The *Buick Bugle* is used by many individuals as a guide for the proper restoration or maintenance of their cars. The article was submitted by club member Stephen W. Smith, who lives in Arkansas City.

Smith was able to determine from production figures that the fire truck originally was a Buick 96-C two-door, four-passenger convertible coupe with a 134-inch wheel base. Only 289 of these rare cars were ever manufactured. The 90-series was Buick's largest and most expensive car, according to Smith.

He estimated possibly fewer than 10 Buick 90-C coupes may remain in existence, including ACFD's.

The article includes historic photos provided by ACFD Capt. Chet Ranzau and is accompanied by local historian Foss Farrar's article last year about the Hallmark ornament that was based on the Buick.

In two of the old photos, the ACFD fleet of fire trucks can be seen arrayed along North First Street, to the west of the current City Hall. The Elmo Hotel, since torn down, can be seen in the background.

Smith's submissions to the *Buick Bugle* even prompted the magazine to research and include an additional feature story, which provides an overview of all of the 1932 and 1933 Buick vehicle models.

His other observations, made during an inspection of the engine earlier this year, included:

- The model number is on the car's body tag in the engine compartment on the passenger side of the firewall. The total weight of the 96-C car was 4,460 pounds.
- The frame number of the vehicle is located on the frame rail on the right side of the car, behind the front right wheel.
- The original wire wheels have been replaced with truck wheels and tires, and the side-mounted spare tire has been removed, probably for easier access to the engine.

For immediate release

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- The dashboard, steering column and steering wheel all are makeshift, the originals probably having been destroyed when the car was set afire following the robbery in which it was used.
- The serial number appears to match the car. However, the serial-numbered tag on the car frame has lived a hard life and it was difficult to read all of the numbers.
- In 1932, Buick cars were available in 26 different models. Of those models, eight had a canvas-type roof, which is what the original Buick rag top had before it was set on fire.

Learn more about *Buick Bugle* and the Buick Club of America (BCA) at www.buickclub.org. "You do not need to own a Buick to become a BCA member — an interest in Buicks is all you need," BCA states.

From getaway car to fire truck

The Buick rag top was stolen and used in a bank robbery in 1932. Afterward, the robbers set the car on fire. The City of Arkansas City purchased the burned-out car from the insurance company in 1932.

The restoration work of the burned vehicle was completed by local firefighters. The back section of the car was replaced with the bed of a 1909 Kissel, the first motorized fire truck in Arkansas City. (Prior to the Kissel, horse-drawn wagons were used to fight fires in Ark City.) The truck was fitted with a 500-gallon-per-minute pump and 100-gallon water tank, and equipped to carry 900 feet of hose and ladders.

The 1932 Buick fire truck served the City of Arkansas City for 16 years before it was sold in the early 1950s. But a telephone call to the Ark City fire chief in 1991 informed the department not only of the location of the old truck, but also that it was for sale.

The old truck was purchased through donations from area businesses and citizens for \$2,250. It was returned to Arkansas City on a flatbed trailer in very poor condition and in several pieces.

Once again, the 1932 Buick was lovingly restored by the firefighters of the Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department, a process that took several years, with the help of passionate citizens such as Jean Snell.

The 1932 Buick was featured last year as the 16th installment in Hallmark Keepsake Ornaments' collectible Fire Brigade series. The ornaments are available for purchase online at www.hallmark.com.

ACFD Capt. Jeff Sampson noted that the ornament captures nearly all of the details of the truck, including lights, siren, bell, nozzles, fire extinguisher, fire hose and carrier, hose outlets, ladders, wheels and tires, truck bed, undercarriage, and cab features such as the steering wheel, seat, pedals for acceleration and stopping, and gear shift levers. The model includes battery-operated headlights.

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