

Viola's 1923 Ford MODEL T, aka *Lizzie*

By Romana 11/02/2016 romana@dcrrmail.com

Lizzie resides at Scarff Ford in Auburn, Washington. Lizzie was once owned by a woman named Viola Grant, a long-time Auburn resident. I discovered this antique car when I took my Ford C-Max Hybrid in for servicing. I was allowed to explore Lizzie inside and out many times, but the staff was not interested in researching any facts for me. Here is a fantasy window price sticker I generated. It might have looked like this, if there had been such a thing in 1923:



1923 Ford Model T Coupe

Engine 6461111 Manufactured August 1922
Exterior: Black Interior: Ribbed Tan
Standard: 20 horsepower, starter, battery, headlights, magneto, 10 gallon tank, two-speed transmission, wiper, hand brake, foot brake, generator, 21 inch wheels, 4.40/4.50-21 tires.
Optional: Ruckstell two-speed rear axle, water pump, speedometer.

Gasoline consumption: 18 to 25 MPG, 11 MPG in double low-gear
Cost of gasoline per year (est.) \$46
Driving range (est.) 210 miles
Warranty 90 days, subject to dealer inspection.

\$575.00
FOB Detroit, Michigan

Model T's were quite common when I was a kid in the late 1940's. When we lived in Hazelwood, Washington, there was a steep hill down to Lake Washington Boulevard. Old man Jenkins lived at the bottom of the hill, and he still drove a Model T. I remember my dad saying that Jenkins would drive his car until he or it died, which is what I assume happened. I tried to crank one once as a kid, but I could barely make the crank turn, let alone start the car. Cranking only works in magneto-mode. The magneto is a stationary plate of coils, situated opposite a flywheel ringed with magnets. See the diagram in the appendix.



Here I am in Lizzie, an old lady thinking about terrorizing the streets of Auburn, at about forty-five miles-per-hour, in a 93-year-old car without a working speedometer. Lizzie has an electric starter, which had been introduced in 1919. 1923 was also the first year for models without suicide doors. Suicide doors opened front to back, allowing them to catch a breeze and fly fully-open.

I have become very knowledgeable about Lizzie. There was no clutch, nor were there any hydraulic brakes. To the far left on the floor, is the handbrake, which operates on the rear wheels and the transmission. It set the rear brakes, or selected the base high gear. Second is the gear pedal, with settings high-neutral-low, the first band in the transmission. Third is reverse pedal, operating on the second band in the transmission. I assume the white switch on the floor is a replacement for the headlight switch. The fourth pedal is the foot brake, operating on the third band in the planetary-gear transmission.



The tall lever sticking from the floor was the high-low shift lever for the rear axle. One can see the pavement through the slits on the floor, which can make a drive even more scenic. In the back, on the floor, is the starter foot-switch, which was pressed to start the car in battery-mode. Lizzie needed dual low-gears for steep hills. Otherwise, Viola would have had to go up steep hills in reverse, since reverse gear was lower than

the low forward gear. That would have been an adventurous, difficult feat, due to all the needed coordination.

Here are Lizzie's ignition selector and the ammeter. Ignition is battery-off-magneto, clockwise. I think there is a missing lock cylinder. The ammeter is for the battery. The current is DC for battery-mode and AC for magneto-mode. The magneto likely needs to be recharged because it is so old.



Lizzie's steering wheel has two levers. The left one is for retarding (up) or advancing the spark (down.)

The right lever is the throttle. Slower is up, while faster is down.

To start Lizzie in magneto-mode, the spark would have to be retarded all the way, or else the crank lever might kick back.



There is also choke pull lever in the dash for starting Lizzie with a rich fuel mixture, but it appears to be broken.

Lizzie's cylindrical speedometer was driven off a large gear on the right-front wheel. The speedometer froze a while back, and the broken drive cable was removed.



Look at Lizzie's puny front springs. The rear suspension was a large cross-body leaf spring. While Lizzie now has steel-belted radials pressurized at 35 PSI, the original tires were 50 PSI, which resulted in a jarring ride.



This picture shows the original Scarff Ford location at 222 E. Main Street. It opened in 1922, when it bought the dealership from Fairchild Motors.



The White River Valley Museum is located next to the Auburn Senior Center and the Auburn Library.

There is a paper in the window that says Lizzie's original owner, Miss Viola Grant (1878-1967), bought the Model T new from Wayland Scarff Sr. (pictured, 1894-1942.) She had married Hanes Grant (1872-1944) in 1918. They might have been distant cousins, since her maiden name was also Grant. Though it was unusual, the couple apparently divorced in 1923, and Viola got a sizeable settlement, with which she used to buy Lizzie.



Hanes and Viola initially lived in the hilly town of Christopher, which was eventually annexed by Auburn. Both Hanes Grant and Wayland Scarff were successful business men and civic leaders. I could not find any photographs of Viola or Hanes. Hanes later married a woman named Edna Grant, also apparently a distant cousin. Hanes' tombstone only says *Husband*, without any mention of any children, so I assume that neither Viola nor Edna gave birth to any children with Hanes. Wayland had two

wives, and the unions resulted in as many as four surviving children. I find it interesting that Wayland and I shared the same birthday, July 11th.

Lizzie's last license plate was dated 1963, and the last registration sticker was for 1964. Viola did not have a social security number until 1963, when she probably began to experience health issues. She had quit school after the fourth grade, and she apparently never held a job. She did show up as a head-of-household for the 1930 and 1940 censuses, but where she was and what she was doing in later years is a total mystery. She owned Lizzie, and drove her until 1964, so she must have had an active life.

I can imagine that, as an independent mobile woman, Viola was probably involved in church and other groups in the Puget Sound area. I picture her driving Lizzie, while wearing elegant dresses and a straw hat. She may have shown disdain for wearing pants, except when she was brave enough to service Lizzie. She probably drove Lizzie for distant sight-seeing, on picnics, on dates, and even those likely visits to Scarff Ford to get Lizzie serviced. The lives of liberated women were not news worthy in those days, scandalous though they might have been. While I sense there were grittier things happening in Viola's life, written speculation could get me into trouble. If she had kept a journal or a diary, it did not end up in the White River Museum. People's lives were not documented like today; it was, after all, the *Roaring Twenties*, and Auburn was essentially the *Wild Frontier*. It boomed in the 1920's, but desolated by the Great Depression, like most other towns.

When Viola died, Lizzie came full-circle, since she had willed Lizzie to Way Scarff, Jr. Lizzie now sits just outside the newer Scarff Ford showroom, in downtown Auburn. She is a neglected work of art from a bygone age. Her fair market value is \$6,000 to \$8,000, and restoration would cost an equal amount. Only hobbyists know how to do this these days.

The original 1908 Model T's were mostly painted brown. Black became the only color in the 1920's, when Henry Ford's paint contractor created a solution of fast-drying black paint. The gas tank was under the passenger seat, and the level was measured using a measuring stick. There were no gas gauges yet. Filling up with gas emitted unpleasant

fumes, so a car deodorant might have been a necessity. There was also no baffle between the gas tank and the road.

The transmission had three bands, but the reverse band got the least wear. To make up for this lopsided wear, it was acceptable to press the reverse pedal just like a brake, when going down steep hills. Don't try this in a modern car.

Kerosene was used as engine and transmission fluid. It is the same as modern jet fuel. Kerosene is far more flammable than modern engine-transmission lubricants, but I could not find any references to fires breaking out, because of this danger.

Some dash instruments were not in front of the driver. For example, the speedometer was located on the passenger-side of the dash. It was apparently the responsibility of the front passenger to report how fast Lizzie was going!

I have read an owner's manual, but it is nothing like one for a modern car. It contains a lot of instructions for maintenance. Just lubricating the frame was a major task. There is even a page warning about the danger running the engine with too rich a fuel mixture, which could create carbon build-up on the cylinder head. The solution was to remove the cylinder head and scrape it with a chisel. While Model T's offered a 90-day warranty, there were many reports that any warranty work was difficult to come by.

More pictures of Lizzie will be found in the appendix, as well as technical information and diagrams showing how everything worked.

Appendix

Photographs of Lizzie



Lizzie's passenger seat gas tank.



Lizzie's lost wooden gas gauge.



Lizzie's front view.



Lizzie's right side view.



Lizzie's left side view.



Lizzie's rear view.



Lizzie's engine right side view.



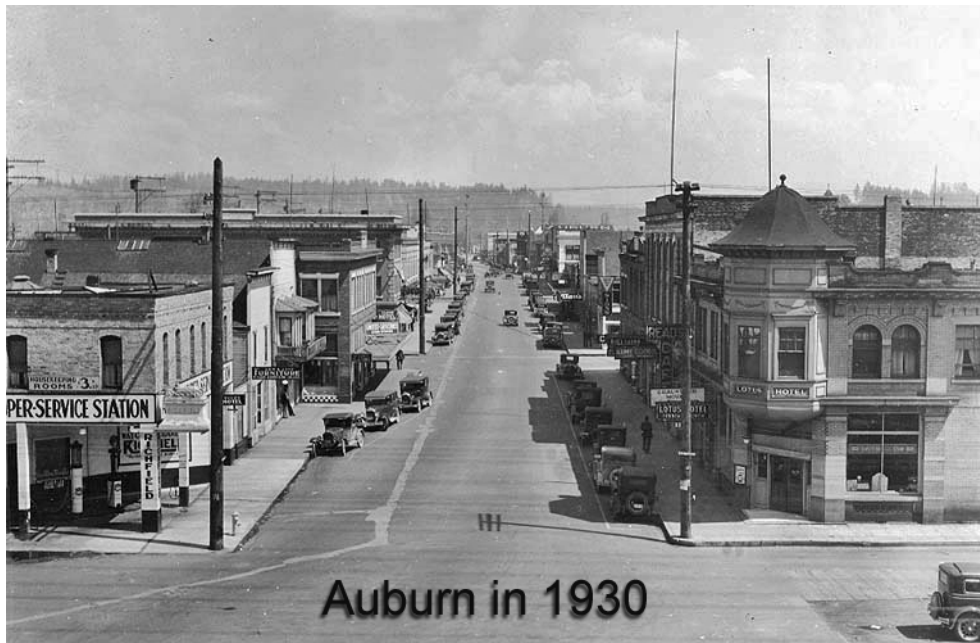
Lizzie's engine left side view.



Lizzie's spark control.



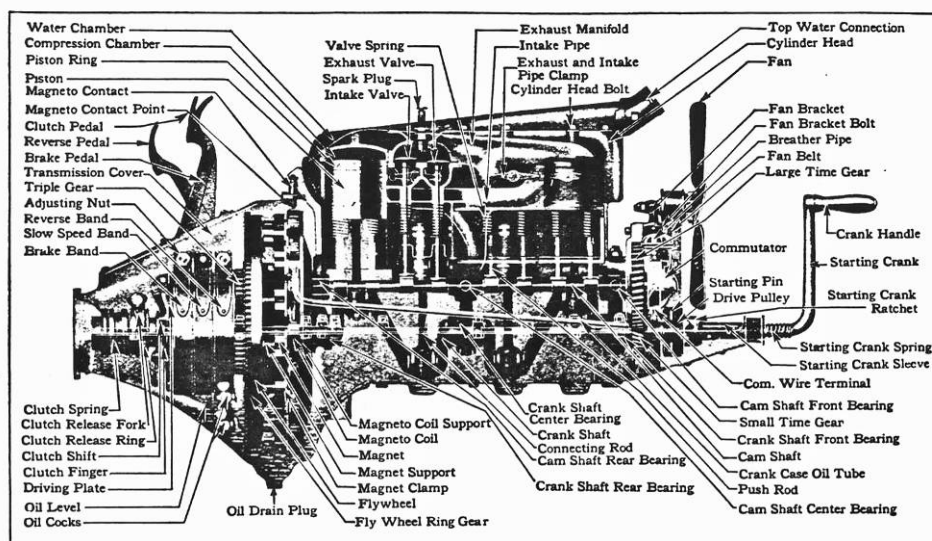
Lizzie's water pump option.



Auburn in 1930

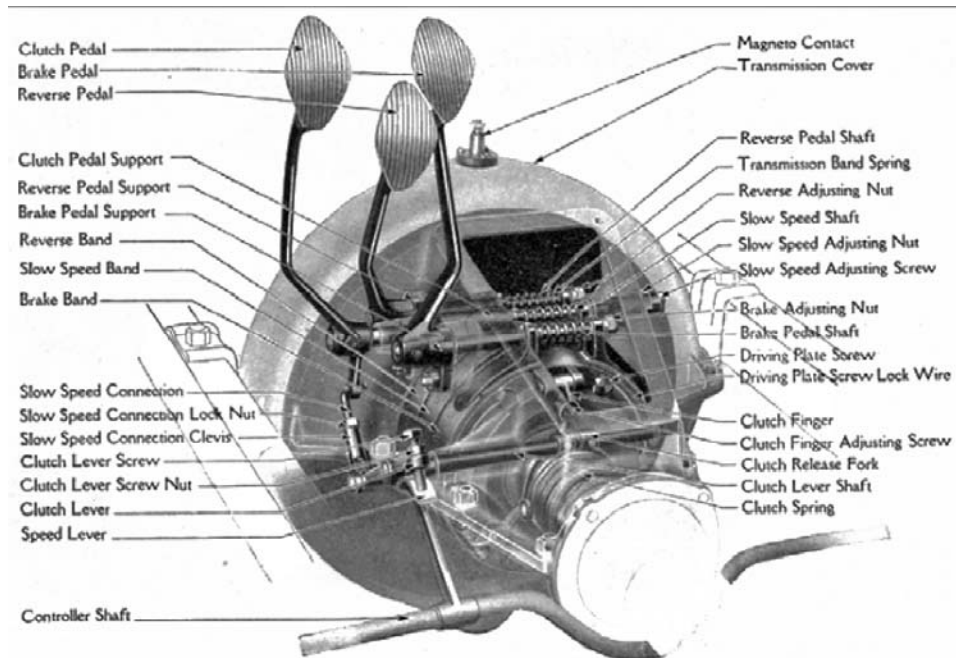
Modern car owner's manuals are usually more about operational than technical details. Drivers are no longer interested in schematics about all the components of their vehicles. Things seemed to have been different in 1923, when owners were often expected to do most of their own servicing and repairs.

Lizzie's engine had a displacement of 2.89 liters, but it had low compression. The planetary-gearred transmissions looks more like an automatic transmission, than a modern stick-shift with sliding gears.

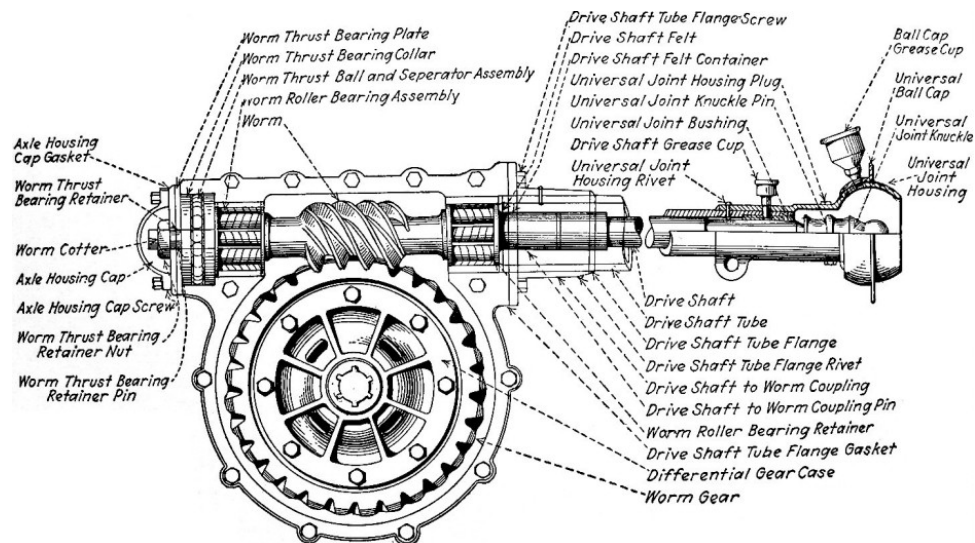


Sectional View of the Model T Motor. (Cut No. 2)

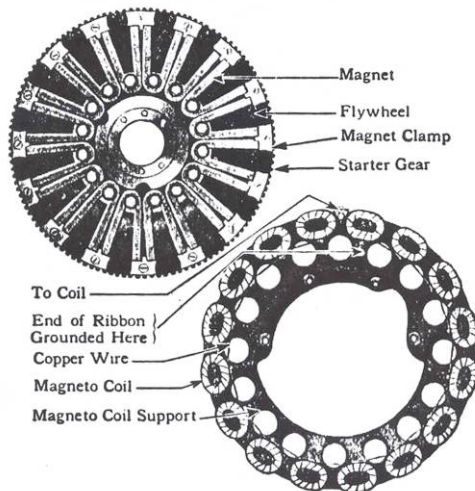
Here is a diagram for Lizzie's transmission, showing the bands and all the components. Some labels are misleading, because the first pedal was really the forward gear pedal, not a modern clutch pedal.



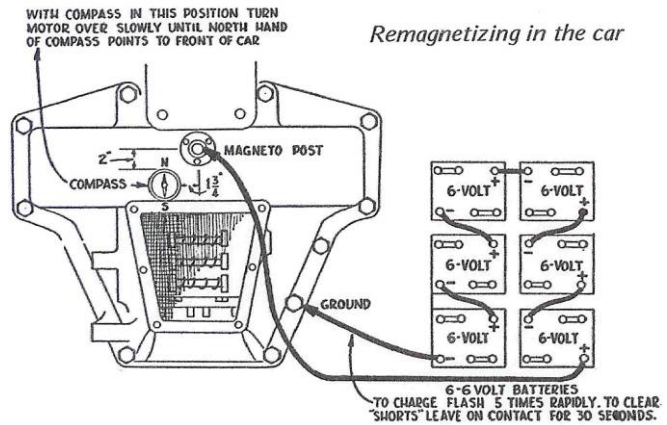
Lizzie's rear axle had a drive worm gear, rather than a modern hypoid gear. Lizzie's Ruckstell rear axle could be shifted without putting the car in neutral.



Lizzie's Magneto

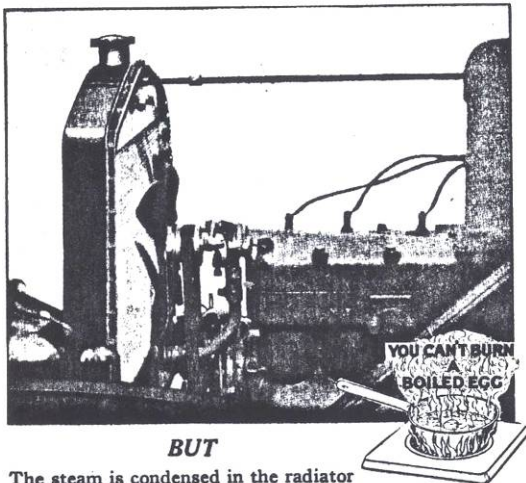


The Ford Magneto. The flywheel with magnets revolves while magneto coils remain stationary. (Cut No. 10)



Was the Model T better with no water pump or with the *Henry* pump? Which ad is better?

THE MODERN STEAM COOLED FORD 1925



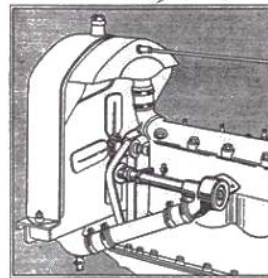
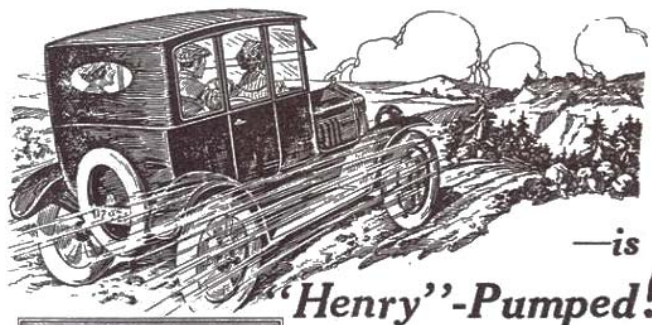
The steam is condensed in the radiator and no water is lost, therefore

OVERHEATING IS IMPOSSIBLE

Practical Advantages:

1. Crankcase dilution practically eliminated.
2. Starting from cold in winter the engine reaches maximum efficiency in less than one mile.
3. Twenty to forty per cent more miles per gallon.
4. No loss of alcohol in winter.
5. Considerable saving in weight and first cost.
6. Containing no water, radiator is practically immune from leaks.
7. Engine cannot possibly overheat.
"By-product"
8. Real steam heater in body.

The Never-Boil Ford



Henry Auto Parts Co.
649 Clinton St., Milwaukee, Wis.

Whiz over hills—through sand and mud—mile after mile at top speed under a blazing sun—with never a protest from your motor! Your "Henry" Pump keeps your engine cool and powerful.

Remember when your motor used to overheat? Radiator steaming—engine knocking, telling of lost power, warped pistons and scored valves. The inevitable repair bills cost more than the "Henry" which would have prevented it all.

"Henry" is sturdy—simple—easily installed. It begins pumping when the engine starts—regardless of water level. Increases gas and oil mileage—pays for itself. "Henry" never leaks or wears out. Oversize bronze bushings and self-lubrication make it outlast the engine.

Here are interesting pictures and ads:

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST May 2, 1925



*The Household's
Handiest Car*

Families, whose manifold activities call for several cars, generally are Ford owners. And in such households it is usually the most frequently used car in the garage.

Ford Cars are extremely easy to drive; they are rarely out of commission; their reliability has become traditional. In other words, they possess qualities—aside from economy in purchase and use—that commend them even where cost is not the chief consideration.

Among all classes, Ford Cars have won lasting respect and goodwill because they fulfill every need of the majority of people.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

RUNABOUT, \$205 TOURING, \$255 COUPE, \$325
TUDOR SEDAN, \$355 FORDOR SEDAN, \$405

All prices F. O. B. Detroit
On Open Car Starter and Disconnectable Hose \$55 Extra
Full Size Ballroom Tires Optional at an Extra Cost of \$25

Ford
THE UNIVERSAL CAR

MAKE SAFETY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Have Fun
with a

FORD

Pay While You Play

*Small Payment Down
Balance by the Month*

INQUIRE INSIDE FOR DETAILS



R & L Time Payment Plan
NATIONAL BOND & INVESTMENT CO.

