

# 1921 Automatic Electric Pleasure Vehicle



The automatic Electric Pleasure Vehicle was built by the Automatic transportation Company of Buffalo, New York and was announced to the public in 1921. At that time, it was marketed as the “practical electric automobile that would meet all requirements as a utility and pleasure car – and at a reasonable price.”

**Lewis Chipman**, King’s Council and senior partner in the law firm of Chipman and Sanderson, purchased the vehicle in Florida in the 1920s. It was shipped to Yarmouth in a wooden crate to be picked up by Lewis’ son, Alvin. A crowd soon gathered at the wharf, and Alvin had to endure such remarks as “Get a horse” and “Put a nickel in it!” Lewis Chipman preferred driving the vehicle along smooth wooden sidewalks rather than the rough streets. By 1924, Lewis’ grandson, Don, was taking nine-year old Tom Rogers for a ride along the paved driveway between the homes of his grandfather and Henry K. Lewis. Its top speed was **15 to 18 miles per hour**, and it had a radius of 50 to 60 miles.

Around the time of Lewis Chipman’s death in December 1939, the Automatic Electric was sold to a local garage. The battery was removed from its wooden box and sold to a lighting plant. **John R. (Jack) Baker** saved the vehicle from the scrap heap by offering \$25.00 for it. During the war years, the car was often featured in parades and Victory Loan Drives.

After the war, it sat in a storage shed for the next twenty years. In 1964, Baker decided to look it over to see what was needed to make the Automatic Electric roadworthy again. Surette Battery Ltd. of Springhill, NS supplied a new battery, which was fitted into the original wooden battery box. New tubes and tires were ordered, but were never used. The car reupholstered, repainted in its original colours and back on the road for the following year.

In 1967, the Automatic Electric was displayed inside the bank of Montreal building, and later took part in the Canadian Tire Centennial Tour of Classic and Antique Cars. The following year, Baker drove the car aboard the M/V Bluenose ferry to attend the MOALS International Rally Parade at Bar Harbour, Maine.

Baker attached a “990” license plate to the front of the car. However, the vehicle never had this registration. Plate 990 had already been issued in 1912 (or 1913) to Minnie L. Lovitt of Yarmouth for her Rambler automobile. She was the first woman in Yarmouth County to hold a motor permit.

During those early years, the province did not issue plates, rather they had to be made-to-order by the local sign-maker or blacksmith. These plates remained valid until 1917 and were replaced by provincially made plates from 1918 onwards.

This 1921 Automatic Electric was a bequest to the museum from the estate of Mr. John R. Baker.

### **SPECIFICATIONS**

**Body:** Aluminum reinforced with wood frame

**Length (overall):** 95 inches (or 237.5cm)

**Width (overall):** 42½ inches (or 106.25cm)

**Height of body:** 41½ inches (or 103.75cm)

**Wheel base:** 65 inches (or 162.5cm)

**Wheel tread:** 35 inches (or 87.5cm)

**Turning radius (outside wheels):** 144 inches (or 360cm)

**Turning radius (outside body clearance):** 152 inches (380cm)

**Tires:** 26 x 3 non-skid cord (whitewall)

**Motor:** 24 volts, 35 ampere, series wound

**Drive:** By means of silent and roller chain to rear left wheel. Entire motor and gear reduction assembled as a unit and arranged to shift by means of a jack screw for adjustment. (Reduction of 10 to 1 to rear wheels)

**Controller:** Drum type, 3 speeds, forward and reverse by means of controller handle and small reverse lever. Controller fitted with lock and key that handle may be locked in neutral position. Controller handle also operates service brake, which may be locked in off-position by means of foot latch.

**Emergency Brake:** Operated by foot pedal direct to rear right wheel

**Weight Complete:** 900 pounds (or 509.09 kilograms)

**Battery:** 14 cells Exide – MVG – 11 plate, 123 ampere hours (originally fitted)

**Battery:** 14 cells Surette – GTNS- 9 plate, 116 ampere hours (replacement)

**Standard Equipment:** 2 Electric headlights, 1 tail lamp, electric horn, Ampere Hour Meter, Charging Plug and Cable, Complete kit of tools, Tungar Rectifier for 60 or 25 cycle, 110 volt alternating current, or Rheostat for 110 or 20 volts direct current.

**Price:** Complete with charging equipment, \$1,200

Our maroon model originally had black headlights and no pin striping. As far as we know, only two of these vehicles exist today. The Buffalo Transportation Museum in Buffalo, NY has a green model with the serial number 102.