

## ***Lamar No. 1 1907-2007***

The year is 1907. Oklahoma has just been admitted as the 46th state. Theodore Roosevelt presides over a nation deeply immersed in the industrial age. Neiman Marcus opened its first store in Dallas, Texas and the Hershey Chocolate Company invented the now famous Hershey Kiss. 1907 is also the year that Lamar's first motorized fire truck was built.

In 1902 brothers Max and Morris Grabowsky began building motorized trucks in Detroit, Michigan. They named their business the Grabowsky Motor Vehicle Company. In 1904 the brothers changed their company name to the Rapid Motor Vehicle Company. The company continued to manufacture trucks in their Detroit factory until 1906 when it was moved to a new facility in Pontiac, Michigan. This is the factory where our fire truck was built. In early 1909 a Rapid truck was the first truck to successfully climb the 15,110 foot tall Pike's Peak in Colorado.

A new era started in 1909 when General Motors purchased the Rapid Motor Vehicle Company from the Grabowsky brothers and combined it with another recently acquired company, the Reliance Motor Car Company. These two companies merged under the General Motors flag and created the beginnings of the GMC truck line. General Motors continued to use the same manufacturing plant until 1994.

Lamar's 1907 Rapid fire truck is reputed to be one of the oldest internal combustion powered fire trucks on the planet. It was purchased from the Anderson Coupling and Fire Supply Company of Kansas City, Kansas. The truck was loaded into a box car and delivered to Lamar by the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad on November 10, 1908. The combination chemical and



hose wagon has a water cooled horizontally opposed two cylinder engine and is operated by a chain drive system. The solid rubber tires are mounted on wooden spoke wheels similar to those on covered wagons. This truck has no pump but utilized a soda acid tank and hose to aid in extinguishing fires. The truck also carried fire hose which could be connected to a hydrant for firefighting purposes. The truck was very sophisticated and ornate for the time. The City of Lamar paid \$3,500.00 for the truck in 1908. It is still considered a "one-owner" truck.

In 2007 (the 100 year birthday of the truck) the members of the Lamar-Prowers County Volunteer Fire Department and the City of Lamar Fire Department began an extensive restoration process. The engine, which had not actually run in fifty plus years, had already been rebuilt. The truck has been restored from the ground up including new hard rubber tires. The Lamar-Prowers County Volunteer Fire Department has also purchased a fully enclosed car trailer to house our prized vehicle. For the first time in half a century this little truck is operating under its own power. Watch for it in area parades and car shows.

