



Loren Hodge had a truly amazing career. He was a member of the Buick Racing Team, and was Louis Chevrolet's riding mechanic when they drove to victory in the 1909 Cobe Cup race. Later that year Loren rode shotgun with Louis Chevrolet at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. In 1910 he worked for the Wright Brothers, and was part of their barnstorming crew. The following year, he participated in the inaugural Indianapolis 500 Mile Race, serving as riding mechanic for Hughie Hughes' 12th place effort.

In 1977 noted Buick historian Terry Dunham contacted Mr. Hodge, and they exchanged a number of fascinating letters. Below are copies of the correspondence, and the wonderful first-hand accounts of Loren Hodge.

LOREN HODGE
1024 KYLE COURT
DECATUR, ILL.
62522



July 9, 1977.

Mr. Jerry Dunham
1439 W. Paul
Fresno California 93711.

Dear Jerry:

yes - Mike Moore has talked, via phone and corresponded in regard to the "Old Cars". I enjoyed hearing from Mike. You might be interested in knowing over the years people from Germany, New Zealand and many of the States have been in touch with me in regard to my time, 1906 thru 1915 with Buick 4 years Merced 4 years and Fr. R. P. cars, one year. I started working in Flint Michigan early in 1906 - was asked to be a member of the race team. Mr. E. C. Richard and Mr. A. E. deWalters were team managers - both were engineers for Buick. Bob Burman, Louis Strang and George DeWitt were the first drive Otto Snyder, Harry Parish and I were the mechanics. When Mr. William (Billy) Duron came to Buick later; he brought Louis and Arthur Chevrolet and Charles Schmidt as

drivers, also mechanics David Carroll, Tony
 Ganette and Charles Miller - two complete race
 teams. Bob Burman asked Louis Chevrolet
 to drive his Buick in 1906 - June at Detroit
 Michigan and I rode my first race Saturday
 16, 1906 a five mile with Louis Chevrolet - we
 won. I rode with Louis Stang in August 1907
 opening of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway -
 three day racing - before the Speedway was
 paved with Buick in 1910. We set a World
 record for 100 miles in that race in a Buick.
 I rode with Louis Chevrolet in the Cobe Cup
 Road Race in a Buick - Crown Point Indiana
 June 19, 1909. We won 395.65 miles long, course
 was 23.27 miles in length - our time was
 49.3 M.P.H. I met Mr. Durank also knew
 his son Cliff who drove race cars later.
 I would like to write more later on - as my
 health keeps me in bed most of the time.
 An old racing injury has left my spine
 in a very bad shape.

You may write to the Indianapolis Motor
 Speedway Chevrolet Museum care of Mr.
 Robert Laycock, Executive Secretary of the
 Indianapolis "500" Oldtimers Club. They

3.

Have all the racing, Elidden Tours, Hill Climbs etc. that the Three A use to have when they were the governing body of Racing along with the present U. S. A. C. records. Many, many pictures. Also the Buick that Louis Chevrolet and I rode in at the Cobe Cup Race and in the three day racing in August 1909 Indianapolis Motor Speedway. My telephone number is 1-217-4284908. Have you any relation in Illinois? The Dunham family in Decatur are friends of ours for many years. In fact Dunham Street is 1/2 block from our home. Amos Dunham was the first Decatur boy killed in the Civil War 1861-1864. Therefore Dunham Post #141 of the Grand Army of the Republic is named after him.

Best wishes

Sincerely

Tom W. Hodge.

ps.

Just returned from the hospital after a severe setback in my health - reason for not answering sooner.

L. W. H.

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LOREN N. HODGE
PRESIDENT
1024 KYLE COURT
DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62522

August 19, 1977.

Dear Jerry:

In answer to your letter of July 25/77. Sorry for the delay. For health reasons which have prevented me from writing. But am some better at present. This is the stationery I mentioned in regard to the Merc Model One F-Buick, Engine # 3880 - Chassis # 3866 is one of the original ten Buick race cars. This car was used in the Lowell Cup Race, also in the Brackton, Forecaster - Dead Horse Hill tracks until 1913 when it was retired as near as I can find out.

In the Alfred P. Sloan Museum of Transportation in Flint Michigan has a lot of early Buick displays etc. I am sure they could help you on early General Motors Buicks. Mr. Jerry Rideout - Director of Public Relations, Buick Division General Motors Corporation, Flint Michigan 48550 is his address.

In the Louis Chevrolet Museum Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the Buick that L. Chevrolet and I used in the Cobe Cup Road Race 1909 Crown Point Indiana and in the August Races, opening of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway 1909 is on display.

Hope this information will help you - am available in the future - just write.

Sincerely
Loren N. Hodge.

Reply
9-5-77



TRENTON, NEW JERSEY.

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LOREN N. HODGE
PRESIDENT
1024 KYLE COURT
DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62522

September 15 /77.

Dear Jerry:

In answer to your letter of August 5, 1977, and in regard to the 1913 Buick you mentioned in your letter. The 1911-500 mile race at Indianapolis - a McFarlan car driven by a man named Marquette - also Buicks driven by C. Basle and A. Chevrolet. In 1912 a Marquette Buick was driven by Liesaw and again the McFarlan car driven by Marquette. The driver Marquette was French; no connection to the name Marquette Buick cars. There is a city named Marquette in Michigan near Lake Superior, noted for its iron mines.

as to Buick building race cars in 1913. I would say, I am not able to give you an answer to that question. The Buick and Marquette Buicks were raced from 1906 thru 1912 that I know about - hill climbs, mile dirt tracks, road races and speedways - also in the Glidden Tour. Hope this will help you on Buick. Nice to hear from you.

Sincerely

Loren N. Hodge.



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LOREN N. HODGE
PRESIDENT
1024 KYLE COURT
DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62522

October 12-1977.

Dear Jerry:

In answer to your letter of September 25, 1977. Sorry for the delay. We were in Litchfield Illinois for several days - account of Effie's sister passing on - her husband is in the hospital with a severe heart attack; so we are very much concerned about him.

Your questions; #1 many of the events; races, etc. I do remember very well - but I have several books given to us in regard to the early automobile industry - so that I refreshed my memory. #2 question; Peter Heletz is right in many cases about the Buick race drivers. The Chevrolet brothers, Bob Burman and Louis Stang would drive with a heavy foot - most of the time. All were very good mechanics and realized that at times the cars would not hold up - but they drove to win.

Here is an example - The Ira M. Cobe Trophy Road Race Crown Point Indiana, June 19, 1909. 395.65 miles long 23.27 miles to the lap - 17 laps. Narrow, rough roads. Louis Chevrolet in Buick #10 won - average speed 49.3 MPH. Broken Valve - speed reduced to 10 MPH on final lap. Won by one minute, Bourque in Knox 2nd Robertson in Locomobile 3rd. Hearne in Fial 4th. Lap #10 when valve broke.

#2.
First week in August 1909, Ford Erie mile dirt track
across the river from Buffalo New York, 100 mile race we
won. To Indianapolis Motor Speedway, opening dates -
August 19, 20+21-1909. - before the track was paved with
brick. 250 mile race - Presto-tight Trophy, a Chevrolet
and I were leading - rock thrown up by another car hit
Chevrolet in the face - breaking his goggles - to hospital to have
glass removed from his eyes. The track was paved
with crushed rock and oil - also the goggles did not
have shatter proof glass in those days.

I was fortunate to be a member of the Buick racing
team 1906 thru 1909. Those were the years of the
"Roaring Road Races".

Sincerely

Loren N. Hodge.

P.S.

These books may help you -
Ken Purdy's Book of Automobiles - Great Auto Races and
The Checkered Flag by Peter Helck. - Those Wonderful
Old Automobiles by Floyd Clymer. - Great American
Automobiles by John Bentley. - Saga of the Roaring
Road by Fred G. Wagner. (Wagner was the Dean of all
starters for Automobile Contests in North America 1900 thru
1916.) Famous Auto Races and Ballies by Erwin
Lessner. - Sport Cars 1907-1927 by V. R. Nicholson.

L. N. H.

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MERCER AUTOMOBILE COMPANY

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY.

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December 27/77.

LOREN N. HODGE
PRESIDENT
1024 KYLE COURT
DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62522

Dear Jerry:

We wish you the best of 77 and in 1978 a year of much happiness with success on your Buick project. Yes - my years with Buick were very wonderful. It was an experience I'll never forget. Our team was like a large family; we were very close to each other in our living at all times. It was hard work - long hours but in the end - success only comes the hard way. As I look back to those days in Flint Michigan factory - then our team touring the country; racing - sometimes Victory - other times defeat and tragedy, - but that is life and we as a team were the ones to try and make Buick cars better by "Tire + Error".

The Buick Racing Team members 1906 thru 1909 were - team managers E. E. Richards + A. E. de Waltes. The drivers were - George de Witt, Arthur Chevrolet, Louis Stang, Robert Durrman, Louis Chevrolet and Charles Schmidt. - Mechanics were Otto Snyder, Charles Miller, Henry Parish, Tony Janette, Loren N. Hodge and David Carroll.

as time moves on if I may be of help to you, write - All try.

Sincerely

Loren N. Hodge.

Reply w/ questions
1-2-77