

# HORSELESS CARRIAGE GAZETTE

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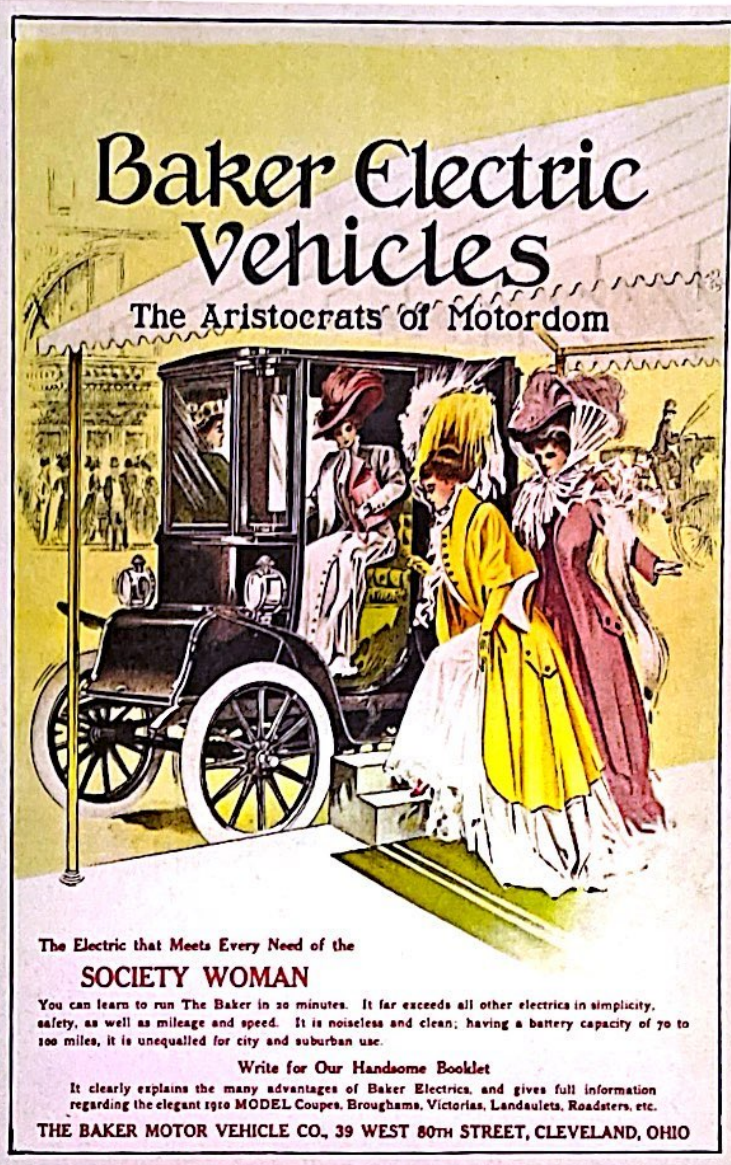
# The Front Cover Car Story: The Lovely Linda

By Bill Lillie

I have had a passion for and fascination with Brass Era and Vintage Era electric cars for several years. They are beautiful works of art and transition vehicles from horse-drawn carriages. Preserving and sharing history is important to me. I am a researcher and enjoy establishing the provenance of my cars; sometimes, it comes easily, and sometimes, not so much. Brass Era and Vintage Era electric automobiles have always been newsworthy. They were unique early in the last century and are still unique today. Because of that, their history and early photographs can often be found by searching newspaper records.

About five years ago, I started sharing my passions on Facebook by starting a Vintage Electric Cars Group and Page with 7,000 followers and members. Through my Facebook presence, the previous owner of this 1911 Baker reached out to me to assist him in putting the car up for sale. Once I saw it in early 2024, I knew my wife Linda and I were to become the next custodians. As we got to know the seller, we discovered that his wife Linda, who drove the car for almost 20 years, passed away in 2020 from COVID-19. Sadly, she never got to see the restoration completed. Since my wife was also a Linda, it was clear that we should be the next car caretakers and name the car "Linda!"

This "Special Extension Front Coupe" was a top-of-the-line model offered by Baker Electric in 1911, and it sold for \$2,700.



**Baker Electric Vehicles**  
The Aristocrats of Motordom

The Electric that Meets Every Need of the  
**SOCIETY WOMAN**

You can learn to run The Baker in 20 minutes. It far exceeds all other electrics in simplicity, safety, as well as mileage and speed. It is noiseless and clean, having a battery capacity of 70 to 100 miles, it is unequalled for city and suburban use.

Write for Our Handsome Booklet  
It clearly explains the many advantages of Baker Electrics, and gives full information regarding the elegant 1910 MODEL Coupes, Broughams, Victorias, Landaulets, Roadsters, etc.

THE BAKER MOTOR VEHICLE CO., 39 WEST 80TH STREET, CLEVELAND, OHIO

*This page: A Baker Electric Vehicle ad from 1911 aims for lady drivers.*

*Opposite page: Bill and Linda Lillie stand next to their 1911 Baker Special Extension Coupe at the Radnor Hunt Concours.*

It is quite rare today. Ours is the only 1911 Baker "Special Extension Front Coupe" model known in existence.

1911 Baker Special Extension Front Coupe specs:

- GE Motor—4 hp direct current
- Five forward speeds and three reverse speeds electrically shifted (no transmission)
- Shaft Drive (not chain drive)
- Baker marketed to women—"The Baker is pre-eminently a car for refined social uses. Its beauty of design and silent running appeal to women of taste."
- Model V (tiller steering)
- Details from the 1911 Baker Sales Brochure: "Extra Large body. The most luxurious and commodious car of its type."
- Paint: black body; blue, green, or maroon panels
- Upholstery: broadcloth or leather
- Our Baker is body Number 6141 and chassis number 121,381









*The reproduction Washington State Vehicle Safety Inspection sticker.*

The most notable thing about this car is its provenance. A 1941 Washington State windshield inspection sticker stayed on the car for over 80 years. That sticker was clearly evident in a 1943 newspaper photograph that pictured the original owner's daughter. That connection was a "goose bump moment" for me. Once I had the family name, I discovered the 1936 obituary of the mother, Mrs. Olds, the original owner, which mentioned how she had been seen driving her electric car around town since 1911.

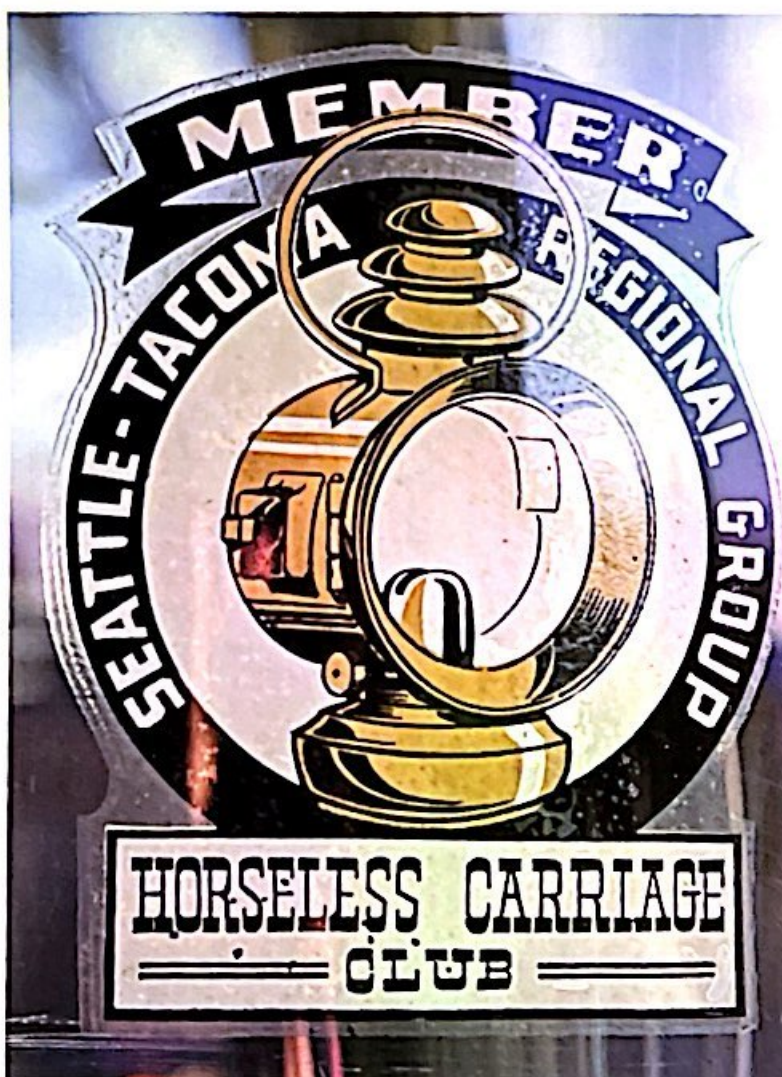
Mrs. Olds was born on August 22, 1863, and had been a resident of Tacoma, Washington, with her husband Fredrick since September 1888. Mr. Olds was one of the early founders of Tacoma, and both husband and wife were active in civic and philanthropic activities over the years. In 1911 Mrs. Olds purchased a new, distinctive, top-of-the-line, 1911 Baker Electric.

Her obituary from May 1936 states, "Mrs. Olds is remembered by many as she drove about town in the little electric car which has been in her own personal use for 25 years." I often think about that cub reporter who, in 1936, put a bit of flair into the obituary and how important that was to history. Little did he or she know how that small gesture preserved history a century later!

*A vintage HCC Seattle-Tacoma Regional Group's sticker.*

After Mrs. Olds' death the Baker Electric was not idle for long as her daughter, Mave Olds, drove the car for at least the next 15 years. Mave was pictured with the car in a newspaper article during WWII, on June 20, 1943. Mave and the vehicle were mentioned again in a newspaper story on June 7, 1946. An important artifact was saved by Eric Edwards in 2018 when he began the restoration of the Baker. Mr. Edwards replaced the glass with safety glass and saved a 1941 Washington State Inspection sticker that is like the one evident on the left lower windshield of the picture mentioned above, taken on June 20, 1943.

According to the Horseless Carriage Club of America, Mr. Wallrich of Tacoma was the car's second owner for a short time, around 1950. The next documented owner, Ben Shandrow, owned the car from 1953 (or a few years prior) to the late 1990s. Ben and the car were front page news in the *Tacoma News Tribune* on Friday, August 28, 1953, as they prepared for the Washington Territory Centennial parade. On June 15, 1955, the *Kitsap Sun* reported that the state of Washington awarded the Baker Electric one of the state's first Horseless Carriage license plates. Another picture appeared in the November 15, 1964, issue of the *Tacoma News Tribune* showing owner Ben Shandrow with his distinctive 1911 Baker Special Extension Coupe Electric.





# 1911 Model Is Wonder Car; No Gas, Fenders Won't Crumple

By VIRGINIA CROWE

Sugar, meat, coffee or shoe stamps may be a headache to Miss Mave Olds of 55 Broadway, along with the rest of the nation . . . but when it comes to gas rationing, she really has an ace in the hole. If you are ever stranded with a gas tank so vacant that it is dusty, and you see what looks like a telephone booth on wheels coming down the road at a brisk 20 mile an hour clip . . . that's the time to stick your thumb out. It would probably be Miss Olds in her Baker electric, 1911 model.

Weighing about 3,000 pounds, the car defies the laws of streamlining and stands about eight feet high. It is run completely by batteries, two sets, one in front and one in back, which are not the original, but are 1936 models and are about the only part of the car that has been replaced. On the old Edison batteries the car would run up to 100 miles without having to be recharged, but now it will probably run between 30 and 50 miles.

It sports leather non-dentable fenders . . . the garage attendant's dream, and the quilted upholstery on the seats and on the ceiling is chic enough for a ladies' powder room.

The "Electric" is steered by a rod which stretches over the driver's lap, and the speed is regulated by what resembles a gear shift. The only pedals are for the emergency and regular brakes.

According to Chris Keffler, who keeps the car in shape, it has about the fastest get up and go as any car he has driven . . . that is, you get up and go to about 20 miles an hour, and no faster. But it's nice to know that the long rear view mirror will never reflect the face of a mad speed cop hot on your trail.

According to Miss Olds, the car has been in the family for 32 years, and it was driven by her mother long before she used it. She plans on using it steadily as soon as her gas coupons run out and she gets a license for it.

THE TACOMA SUNDAY LEDGER-NEWS TRIBUNE



**Get Up and Go**—It'll run, gas or no gas, says Garageman Crist Keffler about this gas ration defying 1911 Baker Electric, owned by Miss Mave Olds of 55 Broadway. Run by batteries at a safe, sane and law abiding 20 miles an hour, it may be no thing of streamlined beauty but will get you there—if not too far away, when your A coupons are gone.

*Left and above: Carrying on the family tradition, Mave Olds drives her late mother's Baker. Both pieces appeared in the same edition of the News-Tribune, June 20, 1943.*



*The exquisite wicker basket trunk on the rear of the Lillie's Baker.*



Eric Edwards of Ontario, Canada, the next custodian of the car, took ownership in 2000 and owned it until 2024. Eric's wife Linda was in love with the automobile and was its principal user for most of those years. In 2018 Mr. Edwards and his son Chris began the car's restoration as a tribute to their wife and mother. In 2024 the car joined our car collection in Gales Ferry, Connecticut.

This vehicle is a unique driving experience. The car has "Instant torque" and moves right along silently with good power. I can actually spin the wheels! It has a high center of gravity and gives you the feeling that you are driving a phone booth. Tiller steering, which virtually all vintage electrics have, is easy to learn and use. However, it can be a handful at speeds above 25 mph, especially if you hit a bump in the road. People who see us on the road seem stunned and can't process what they are seeing! It is a show-stopper wherever it goes! My wife and I are passionate about showing our cars and teaching people about the history of this vehicle. We give lectures to middle and high school students and visit retirement communities. We also provide rides in it.

Today, it is increasingly uncommon to see cars like this outside museum settings, let alone driving around on the street. My wife Linda and I enjoy dressing up in vintage costumes, sharing our cars with the public, and teaching people about vintage cars and what it was like living over 110 years ago. It was featured in a South Bend, Indiana, *Tribune* story in July 2024. Shows are fun, and people are thrilled to see the car; their reactions are priceless! It doesn't get any better than that! We plan to have our 1911 Baker participate in the 50-mile Audrain Veteran Car Tour in April 2025.

Linda and I are proud to say that it has won several awards at the following events:

- 2024 Best in Class—Copshaholm Concours d'Elegance, South Bend, Indiana
- 2024 Misselwood Award Brass and Nickel Class: It placed second to an exquisite 1909 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost! Misselwood Concours d'Elegance, Beverly, Massachusetts
- 2024 Best in Class 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Belltown Vintage Motorcar Meet, East Hadam, Connecticut
- 2024 Master of Ceremonies Award 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Belltown Vintage Motorcar Meet, East Hadam, Connecticut
- 2024 Best in Class Lyme/Old Lyme Lions Club Show, Old Lyme, Connecticut
- 2024 Best in Class and 2<sup>nd</sup> Best in Show by Junior Judges at the Radnor Hunt Concours

*(Images and photos courtesy Tracy Leshner and Bill Lillie)*

*Top to bottom: Linda answers questions from two school-age sisters about the Baker. Bill accepts one of two awards during the Radnor Hunt Concours.*

