



Contact: Megan van Frank, 801.359.9670 ext. 110  
[vanfrank@utahhumanities.org](mailto:vanfrank@utahhumanities.org)

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### **Beehive Archive**

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah’s past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on [KCPW](#) and [Utah Public Radio](#).

### **Adventures of an Early Hot Rodder**

**In the early days of motoring, traveling by automobile was all about adventure.**

America’s love affair with the automobile began with young men like Alva Matheson.

Born in Cedar City in 1903, Alva Matheson began hankering for a car at age 15. He had no money, but was clever and knew how an engine worked. He built a car of his own from discarded parts collected at the dump. “When it was finished,” he recalled, “I had eight different [models] represented, such as a Ford motor, a Buick ignition, a Chevrolet oil pump, a Star radiator, Franklin front springs, a Brisco rear end, Dort clutch, and Studebaker driveshaft.” Matheson’s creation was apparently a sight to behold, a terror on the road, and marked only the beginning of his automotive adventures.

When Matheson later owned a Model-T Ford, he set off one day with his friend Jeff on an old wagon road toward the Nevada border. Washouts, high centers, and deep dust were the hallmarks of such back county roads. Of course, the car threw a rod and began to leak oil. Hoping for a rescue, the pair pulled out their lunch of salt pork, eggs, beans, and bread. As Matheson cut the pork, he noticed how tough the rind was. So he set to work with his wrenches and made a connecting rod bearing from the bacon rind – a wrangled repair that held all the way home.

Matheson's vehicle had a tendency to lose oil on remote roads. The next time he and Jeff were stranded thirty miles from nowhere, they replaced the oil with castile soap dissolved in hot water. Matheson reported that, “By coasting whenever possible and blowing bubbles for miles, we made it back to [town] with the cleanest motor on record...”

Alva Matheson was not the only adventurer on Utah's dirt roads in the early years of motoring, but he and his pals were certainly ever inventive.

*Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at [www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm](http://www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm). Utah Division of State History © 2014.*

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