

Newsletter337

Keith's Corner/McGill News

October 10, 2025

Car Changes-windshields, wipers

The first cars or ‘horseless carriages’ had no windshield and the drivers and passengers wore goggles. It was fashionable to wear a white hat and coat and a large scarf. In 1904 the first glass windshield appeared and was simply two panes of window glass. These got dirty fast and were very unsafe as they shattered into a million pieces.

In 1915, Oldsmobile introduced laminated windshields. Many years later the ‘safety’ glass was introduced.

Most of the early cars had a solid one-piece windshield. My parent’s 29 Ford had a one piece, but their late 1920s DeSoto had a two-piece setup. My 41 Chevy had two separate windshields. My 1959 Buick Special had a wrap around windshield.

The biggest problem with windshields was keeping them clear. In 1903, a Mary Anderson from Alabama was visiting in Chicago and was riding on a trolley, when she noticed that during a snowstorm the driver had to stop and get out and clear the windshield. She came up with the first windshield wiper.

It was worked by hand from inside by the driver. In 1919, William Folberth invented a vacuum powered wiper. It was in the 1926 Star that we had. My 41 Chevy had one. They were OK, but during a heavy snowfall, you had to take your foot off the gas and create more vacuum to power the wiper.

This happened to me and my buddy John Ririe on our way home from college in Salt Lake. We stopped at the Holy Cross Nursing school and picked up two McGill girls that were nursing students. It was a few days before Christmas. It

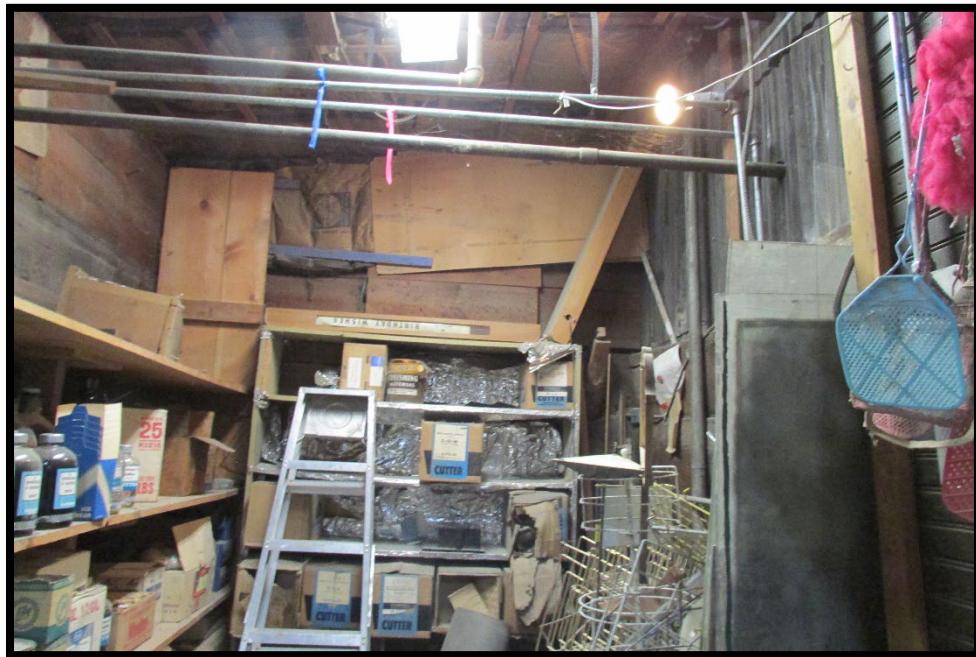
was just starting to get dark as we left Salt Lake. The stars were out in full force as we drove across the salt flats. We stopped in Wendover and got gas. It was not very cold and the stars were all out. When we got over the first hill out of Wendover it started to snow. Just like that, from stars to large and numerous snowflakes. Sonn, it was hard to see the road due to a ‘whiteout’. The wipers were having a hard time. John and I had to reach out our windows and wipe some of the snow as it piled up from the wipers. The ‘white out’ got so bad that I drove in low gear. I knew if we stopped, we would be stuck. John and I would drag out feet out the door to feel for the pavement or the dirt. We simply could not tell where we were. Finally, the storm broke as we got to Lages and could see better. It had taken us almost 3 hours to get to Lages. The road was clear and when we took the girls to their homes we could see the stars out again. The girls were a little sluggish and we assumed they were tired and had been sleeping as they were very quiet during the trip from Wendover. Later Joh and I drove to Ely to meet some friends and try to relax a bit. We didn’t know that our troubles were not over yet.

We got home late and went to bed. Early the next morning my Dad and John’s Dad woke us very early and demanded to know just what we had done to those poor girls. It seems that after John and I left for Ely, the mothers came by and told our parents that we had brought their daughters home drunk. The gals had gone in their houses and went to bed.

John and I told our parents the same story. We did not stop at any bars and the girls were too young anyway. We were too busy fighting the snow. They didn’t believe our story. Then about 10 am the mothers came by and told our parents that they had gotten the true story from the girls. The mothers told our parents that they were so thankful that we did what we did and got their daughters home safely.

I quickly checked out the back seat in my Chevy and found an half empty Jim Beam bottle. I had bought that in Salt Lake and brought it home for Christmas. So, John and I were vilified for bringing the girls home drunk and then praised for getting them home safely. What a start for a Christmas holiday.

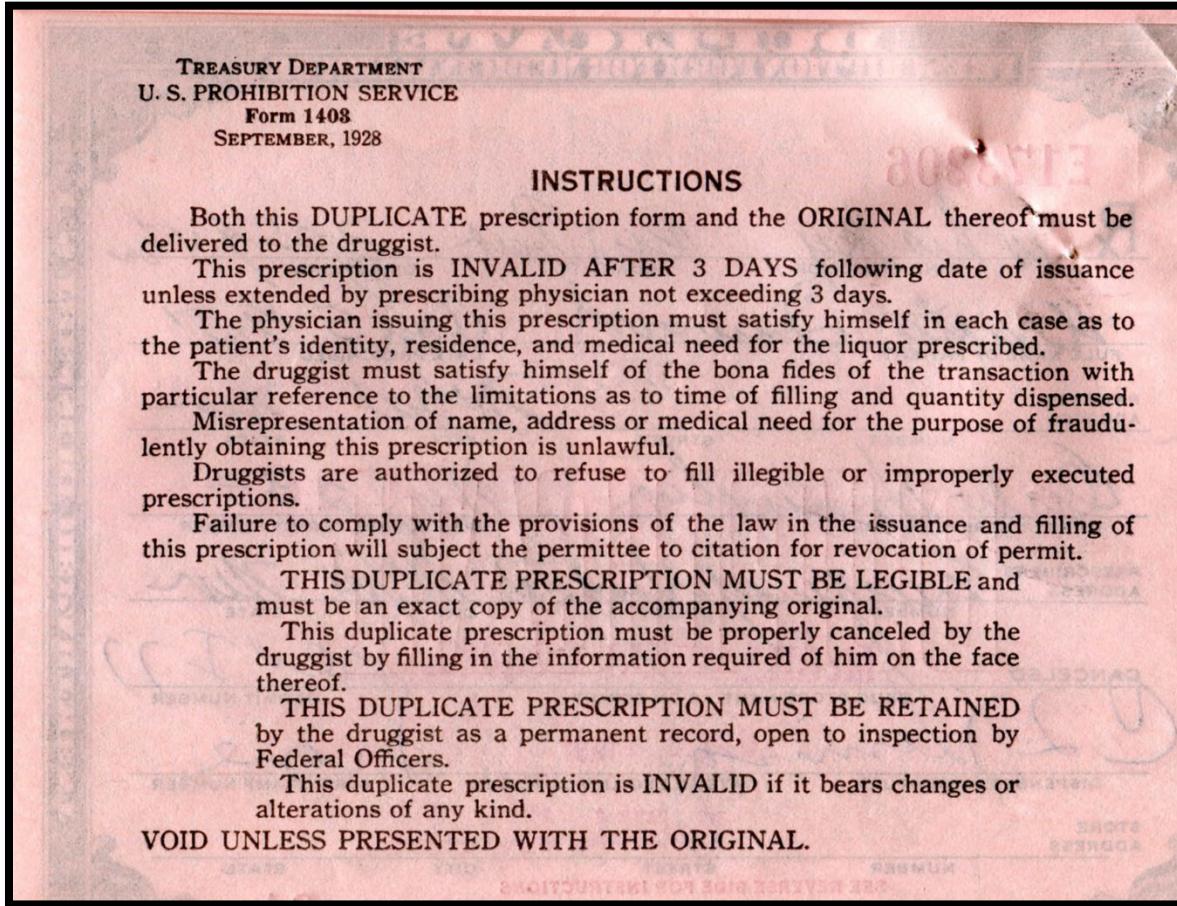
McGill News



A few changes. A Holiday Room.



Old Photo



This is the back side of a 1931 Doctor's prescription for whiskey filled at the McGill Drugstore. It was during prohibition. The Drugstore was allowed to stock a certain amount of whiskey, vodka, gin and wine for dispensing via prescription.