

## History

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The White Motor Company was an American automobile, truck, bus and agricultural tractor manufacturer from 1900 until 1980. The company also produced bicycles, roller skates, automatic lathes, and sewing machines. Before World War II, the company was based in Cleveland, Ohio.

About 1898, Thomas H. White purchased a Locomobile steam car and found its boiler unreliable. His son, Rollin, set out to improve its design. Rollin White developed a form of water tube steam generator which consisted of a series of stacked coils with two novel features: the first was that the coils were all joined at the top of the unit, which allowed water to flow only when pumped, allowing control of the steam generation; the second was pulling steam from the lowest coil, closest to the fire, which allowed control of steam temperature. This second point was critical because the White steamer operated with superheated steam to take advantage of steam's properties at higher temperatures. Rollin White patented his steam generator, US patent 659,837 of 1900.

### **White steamer**

Rollin H. White patented his new design and offered it to, among others, Locomobile. Finally, he persuaded his father, founder of the White Sewing Machine Company, to allow the use of a corner in one of his buildings to build an automobile.

White's brother Windsor, who was a management talent, joined the business venture, followed by their brother Walter, who became instrumental in the sales, promotion and distribution of the product. The first group of fifty cars were completed in October 1900, but none were offered to the public until April 1901 so the design could be thoroughly tested. Since the cars were being offered by the automobile department of the sewing machine company, White could not afford to diminish the reputation of the parent company by the introduction of an untested product.

It became necessary in 1905 to separate the automobile department from its parent company to accommodate the growth of the business and to physically separate them, as a fire in one could ruin both operations. On July 4, 1905, a racing steam car named "Whistling Billy" and driven by Webb Jay set a record of 73.75 mph (118.69 km/h) on the Morris Park Racecourse.

A 1907 White steamer was one of the early vehicles in the White House when Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States, allowed the Secret Service to use the car behind his horse-drawn carriage. In 1909, president William Howard Taft converted the White House stables into a garage and purchased four automobiles: two Pierce-Arrows, a Baker Electric, and a 1911 White. This \$4,000 car was one of the last steam cars produced and proved a favorite of the President who used bursts of steam against "pesky" press photographers. The 40 hp (30 kW) White Model M 7-seat tourer generated favorable press for the newly formed White Motor Company.

The last steam car was built in January 1911 as the company made a transition to gasoline-powered vehicles. The company continued to show them in their catalogues as late as 1912. About 10,000 White steam-powered cars were built, more than the better known Stanley.

### **Gasoline models**

White companies' manufacturing facility expanded. The White steamer used unique technology, and it was vulnerable in a market that was accepting the internal combustion engine as the standard. White canvassed

existing gas manufacturers and licensed the rights to the Delahaye design for the "gas car", showing a chassis at an English auto show in December 1908.

## **White tractors**

Rollin became more interested in agricultural tractors, and developed designs for tractors derived from standard White truck parts. When the White Company was not interested in producing tractors, Rollin set out to develop his own designs and, with brother Clarence, eventually founded Cleveland Motor Plow, which later became Cletrac tractor. In the early 1920s, Rollin briefly produced the Rollin car to diversify the tractor company, but found it could not compete in cost versus price against much larger manufacturers.

White was successful with their heavy machines, which saw service around the world during World War I. White remained in the truck industry for decades.

## **Truck manufacturing**

White Motor Company ended car production after World War I and began producing trucks. The company soon sold 10 percent of all trucks made in the US. Although White produced all sizes of trucks from light delivery to semi, the decision was made after WWII to produce only large trucks. White acquired several truck companies during this time: Sterling, Autocar, Diamond T, and REO. White also agreed to sell Consolidated Freightways trucks through its own dealers. White produced trucks under the Autocar nameplate following its acquisition. Diamond T and REO Motor Car Company became the Diamond REO division, which was discontinued in the 1970s.

A White semi performed a role in the 1949 James Cagney film *White Heat*. This era was probably the peak of White Motor market penetration, with the substantial gasoline engined tractors moving a large part of the tractor trailer fleet.

White designed and (with other companies) produced the M3 Scout Car, the standard United States Army reconnaissance vehicle at the start of World War II. White also built the later M2, M3, M13, and M16 half-tracks.

In 1967, White started the Western Star division to sell trucks on the west coast.

## **White buses**

In the 1930s, White produced 500 of their small Model 706 buses specifically designed to carry passengers through the major National Parks of the western US. The distinctive vehicles, with roll-back canvas convertible tops, were the product of noted industrial designer Alexis de Sakhnoffsky, and originally operated in seven National Parks. Today, Glacier National Park operates 33 of their original 35 buses, where they are referred to as "Red Jammers", and 8 (of an original 98) have been restored for renewed service in Yellowstone National Park. Glacier National Park's 33 buses were refurbished by Ford Motor Company and TransGlobal in 2000-2002, while Yellowstone National Park's eight buses were refurbished by TransGlobal in 2007. Glacier has kept one bus in original condition. Yellowstone has five White buses in original condition, two model 706s and three older units as well. In addition, Gettysburg National Battlefield operates two of Yellowstone's original buses.

## **Company culture**

During the time brothers Walter and Windsor White ran the company, it offered a library branch, a store which sold necessities at low cost, sports teams, and concerts by orchestras and jazz bands, as well as musical performances by the workers, many of whom were immigrants from Slovenia and Poland. The company also had picnics at Euclid Beach Park.

After Walter White died from a traffic accident, management changed and so did the firm's culture. Employees started one of the country's first automobile unions. The Great Depression caused a drop in sales, forcing White to merge with Studebaker. However, White soon became independent again.

In 1935, Robert Fager Black became president, but workers were still unhappy, and they went on strike. Black tried talking to the workers who were striking, and he even got baseball equipment for them and let them play while on strike, so they would have something to do. Black learned people's names, visited the plant frequently, and asked customers if they were happy with what they purchased. Anyone could visit his office.

Black brought the company back to where it had once been by World War II, during which the company supplied the military with much of its equipment. White ranked 54th among US corporations in the value of WWII military production contracts. When husbands went to serve, wives took their jobs, and the work force totaled over 4000. Black provided the services the company had at one time, and helped employees get to work with carpools.

Black retired in 1956, still beloved by employees.

## **Demise**

In 1953, White purchased the Autocar Company. From 1951 until 1977, White Motors also distributed Freightliner trucks. This took place under an agreement with Freightliner's parent, Consolidated Freightways. White manufactured trucks under its own brands—White, Autocar, and Western Star—as well, leading to the company becoming known as the "Big Four" through to the mid-1970s. The Sterling nameplate, unused by White as long as the company owned it, went to Freightliner after the companies' split; it was used from 1997 to 2008, by Daimler Trucks.

Sales dropped during the 1960s, and White tried merging with White Consolidated Industries, the company that once made sewing machines; the federal government blocked this deal. The company opened plants in Virginia and Utah, since they did not have unions, but this did not help. Semon E. "Bunkie" Knudsen, former president of Ford Motor Company, made the company successful for a time, but the decline continued. Later, the federal government approved a merger with White Consolidated, which feared being hurt by White Motor's troubles. Mergers with Daimler and Renault were also considered. Production was somewhat limited as White did not have a lighter range (13,330 units built in 1978), leading to several attempts at linking up with various European manufacturers.

By 1980, White was insolvent. Volvo AB acquired the US assets of the company in 1981, while two energy-related companies based in Calgary, Alberta, Bow Valley Resource Services, and NovaCorp, an Alberta corporation, purchased the Canadian assets, including the Kelowna, British Columbia, plant, and the Western Star nameplate and product range.

Volvo produced trucks as White and Autocar through the 1980s, while Western Star continued independently in Canada and the United States, although Volvo-White-produced high cab over engine models were purchased and rebadged Western Star for sale in the Canadian market through the early 1990s.

In 1988, Volvo and General Motors merged their heavy truck divisions in North America, creating Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corporation and a new brand of trucks, White-GMC. Western Star was sold to Australian entrepreneur Terry Peabody in 1990. In 1995, Volvo purchased the stake of General Motors in their joint venture and rebadged White-GMC vehicles under the Volvo and Autocar nameplates. Subsequently, Western Star was resold by Peabody to DaimlerChrysler AG and merged with its Freightliner subsidiary. Volvo dropped any reference to White, and is now Volvo Trucks North America. Autocar remained a part of Volvo until 2000, when the trademark was withdrawn from the market, and was subsequently sold to Grand Vehicle Works

together with the Xpeditor low cab forward heavy duty product, which remains in production under the Autocar badge, the last vestige of what was once America's leading commercial vehicle producer.

A former White subsidiary, White Farm Equipment, produced farm tractors until 2001. As of 2006, the only products made under the White name is a series of corn planters (made by AGCO) and garden tractors (made by MTD Products).

Images

**THE WHITE COMPANY**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Price, Chassis . . . . . \$2300  
Standard Express . . . . . 2500

**WHITE THREE-QUARTER-TON TRUCK—GBBE**

COLOR . . . . . Body, dark green; eng, red	BORN AND STROKE . . . 3 1/2 x 5 1/4 inches
CARRYING CAPACITY . . . 1500 pounds	LUBRICATION . . . . . Four feed and splash
POSITION OF DRIVER . . . Left side	RADIATOR . . . . . Cellular
WHEELBASE . . . . . 133 1/2 inches	COOLING . . . . . Water pump
GAUGE . . . . . 36 inches	IGNITION . . . . . High tension magneto
WHEELS . . . . . Wood	LIGHTING SYSTEM . . . Gas
FRONT TIRES . . . . . 34 x 4 1/2 inches, pneumatic	GASOLINE SYSTEM . . Gravity
REAR TIRES . . . . . 34 x 4 1/2 inches, pneumatic	CLUTCH . . . . . Single plate in oil
SERVICE BRAKE . . . . . Contracting on rear wheels	TRANSMISSION . . . . . Selective sliding
EMERGENCY BRAKE . . . Expanding on rear wheels	GEAR CHANGES . . . Four forward, one reverse
CYLINDERS . . . . . Four	DRIVE . . . . . Plain bevel
HOW ARRANGED . . . . . Vertically	REAR AXLE . . . . . Semi-floating
CASE . . . . . 26 bloc	STEERING GEAR . . . . . Worm and sector
HORSEPOWER . . . . . 22.5 (N.A.C.C. Rating)	

In addition to above specifications, price includes the pump and demountable rims.

**White GBBE Three-Quarter-Ton Truck**  
[Hand Book of Automobiles, 1919 Edition](#)  
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**THE WHITE  
COMPANY**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Price, Chassis . . . . . \$1300  
Standard Express . . . . . 1550  
Standard Platform . . . . . 1500



**WHITE ONE-AND-ONE-HALF-TWO-TON TRUCK—TBC**

COLOR . . . . . Red	CASE . . . . . En bloc
CARRYING CAPACITY 3000-4000 pounds	HORSEPOWER . . . . . 22.5
POSITION OF DRIVER Left side	(N.A.C.C. Rating)
WHEELBASE . . . . . 137½ inches	BORE AND STROKE . . . . . 3¼ x 3¼ inches
GAUGE . . . . . 36 inches	LUBRICATION . . . . . Force feed and splash
WHEELS . . . . . Wood	RADIATOR . . . . . Cellular
FRONT TIRES . . . . . 36 x 4 inches, single solid or 35 x 5 inches, single pneumatic	COOLING . . . . . Water pump
REAR TIRES . . . . . 36 x 7 inches, single solid or 36 x 4 inches, dual solid	IGNITION . . . . . High tension magnets
SERVICE BRAKE . . . . . Contracting on rear wheels	LIGHTING SYSTEM . . . . . Gas
EMERGENCY BRAKE . . . . . Expanding on rear wheels	GASOLINE SYSTEM . . . . . Gravity
CYLINDERS . . . . . Four	CLUTCH . . . . . Single plate in oil
HOW ARRANGED . . . . . Vertically	TRANSMISSION . . . . . Selective sliding
	GEAR CHANGES . . . . . Four forward, one reverse
	DRIVE . . . . . Plain bevel, double reduction
	REAR AXLE . . . . . Semi-floating
	STEERING GEAR . . . . . Worm and sector

In addition to above specifications, price includes tire pump and demountable rims.

**White TBC One-and-One-Half/Two-Ton Truck**  
[Hand Book of Automobiles, 1919 Edition](#)

[View White TBC One-and-One-Half/Two-Ton Truck page of Hand Book of Automobiles, 1919 Edition - 557KB](#)

**THE WHITE  
COMPANY**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Price, Chassis \$4100



**WHITE THREE-TON TRUCK—TJ**

COLOR . . . . . Leaf	GASOLINE SYSTEM . . . . . Vacuum
CARRYING CAPACITY 3000 pounds	CLUTCH . . . . . Plain in oil
POSITION OF DRIVER Left side	TRANSMISSION . . . . . Selective sliding
WHEELBASE . . . . . 124 inches	GEAR CHANGES . . . . . Four forward, one reverse
GAUGE . . . . . Front, 6½ inches; rear, 52 inches	DRIVE . . . . . Double reduction gear drive. By shaft, to housing type of rear axle. Power is applied to wheels by means of gears enclosed in the hub case and running in oil.
WHEELS . . . . . Metal	Each axle shaft carries on its outer end a center-driving gear which, through an intermediate gear, applies power to a ring gear in the wheel hub case.
FRONT TIRES . . . . . 36 x 5 inches, solid	REAR AXLE . . . . . Full floating
REAR TIRES . . . . . 48 x 5 inches, dual solid	STEERING GEAR . . . . . Worm and sector
SERVICE BRAKE . . . . . Contracting on drive shaft	
EMERGENCY BRAKE . . . . . Expanding on rear wheels	
CYLINDERS . . . . . Four	
HOW ARRANGED . . . . . Vertically	
CASE . . . . . En bloc	
HORSEPOWER . . . . . 22.5	
(N.A.C.C. Rating)	
BORE AND STROKE . . . . . 3¼ x 3¼ inches	
LUBRICATION . . . . . Force feed	
RADIATOR . . . . . Tubular	
COOLING . . . . . Water pump	
IGNITION . . . . . High tension magnets	

In addition to above specifications, price includes seat and cushion, front fenders, oil dash lamp and tail lamp, signal horn and complete set of tools, including jack.

**White TJ Three-Ton Truck**

[Hand Book of Automobiles, 1919 Edition](#)

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**THE WHITE  
COMPANY**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Price, Chassis, \$5000



**WHITE FIVE-TON TRUCK—TG**

COLOR . . . . .	Lead	GLANDS SYSTEM . . . . .	Vacuum
CARRYING CAPACITY . . . . .	10,000 pounds	CLUTCH . . . . .	Plate in oil
POSITION OF DRIVER . . . . .	Left side	TRANSMISSION . . . . .	Selective sliding
WHEELBASE . . . . .	174 inches	GEAR CHANGES . . . . .	Four forward, one reverse
GAUGE . . . . .	Front, 54½ inches; rear, 55½ inches	DRIVE . . . . .	Double reduction gear drive. By shaft to floating type of rear axle.
WHEELS . . . . .	Metal		Power is applied to wheels by means of gears enclosed in both case and run- ning in oil. Each axle shall carry on its outer end a center driving gear which, through an intermediate gear, applies power to a ring gear in the wheel hub case.
FRONT TIRES . . . . .	36 x 6 in. single solid		
REAR TIRES . . . . .	40 x 6 in. dual solid		
SERVICE BRAKE . . . . .	Contracting on drive shaft		
EMERGENCY BRAKE . . . . .	Expanding on rear wheels		
CYLINDERS . . . . .	Four		
HOW ARRANGED . . . . .	Vertically		
CAST . . . . .	En Mac		
HORSEPOWER . . . . .	25.3 (N.A.C.C. Rating)		
BORE AND STROKE . . . . .	4½ x 5¼ inches		
LUBRICATION . . . . .	Forced		
VALVES . . . . .	Tubular		
COOLING . . . . .	Water pump		
IGNITION . . . . .	High tension magneto	REAR AXLE . . . . .	Full floating
		STEERING GEAR . . . . .	Worm and sector

In addition to above specifications, price includes seat and cushion, front fenders, all dash lamps and tail lamp, signal horn and complete set of tools, including jack.

**White TG Five-Ton Truck**

[Hand Book of Automobiles](#), 1919 Edition

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Article Index

Date	Article	Author/Source
4 April 1909	<a href="#">Auto News from Many Centres: White's Record Hill Climb.</a>	The New York Times



The *Crittenden Automotive Library*

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he story's foundation was laid in 1838, when Thomas H. White was born in Phillipston, Massachusetts. His own father had operated a chair factory, where he learned basic tool skills. He grew to adulthood as New England grew into the textile hub of the United States, and created a simple hand-operated sewing machine, which buyers raced to purchase as the demand for clothing boomed during the Civil War. Just after the war, White relocated his business and family to Cleveland, where many of his suppliers were now based.

Walter C. White, born in 1876 in Cleveland, was the last of three sons sired by Thomas H. White who would become powerful figures in the future automobile industry. By the time Walter was born, the White Sewing Machine Company was second only to Singer as the world's biggest. The company expanded further, to include products ranging from roller skates to kerosene lamps, the last adaptable to both wagons and horseless carriages. Walter, along with two of his brothers, Rollin and Windsor, was energized about automobiles very early on.

Thomas, who died in 1914, was content to let his sons expand into building cars. Rollin was hugely responsible for the formation of a White motor-car subsidiary in 1900 by inventing a workable flash boiler that allowed a steam-powered car to be quickly set into motion. Windsor focused on the new company's administration and finance; Walter was appointed as the company's president and chief executive officer. White steam car production jumped from four units in 1900 to 193 the following year, and to more than 1,000 in 1905, the enterprise's growth aided by the early addition of a condenser to help rapidly recycle exhaust steam.

In terms of its passenger cars, White has two enduring distinctions: As the auto industry's second-ranked producer of steam automobiles (behind only Stanley), and for the impeccably attentive and careful construction that made Whites internationally acclaimed. A White-designed racing car briefly held the world land-speed record in the flying mile. Thanks in large part to Walter's ministrations, White steamers attained White House peering when one became the first motor vehicle used in an inaugural parade. The following year, Teddy Roosevelt grabbed the tiller of a White in Puerto Rico, the first U.S. president to drive an automobile. In 1909, the White Motor Corporation was formed as a freestanding manufacturer. At that point, the automobiles were made specifically under the White nameplate with no references to sewing machines.

Rollin White left the family business in 1914 to build farm tractors in Cleveland; his firm later became an Oliver holding. Before that happened, however, Walter White authorized a massively far-reaching product change, White's expansion into gasoline-powered vehicles. While only a few fingers' full of them survive today, gas-burning cars instantly accounted for half of White's overall automotive production. That's the main reason that White survived as a company and Stanley didn't.

The final White steam car was assembled in 1911, and a year later, White introduced a premium, robust line of six-cylinder cars producing 60hp, all with shaft drive and four-speed transmissions. By this time, White was also moving into the world of trucks, which it had dabbled with since the early steam days. Walter White is credited today with turning White into an enduring force in truck manufacturing. White's huge straight-six cars were way too expensive for big volume, but their engines started reaching under White truck hoods with dispatch.

One such rig went to the Army Corps of Engineers and was successfully driven across Alaska. Walter White took the family business exclusively into truck production beginning in 1916, reorganizing it again as the White Motor Company. He also convinced the Army to buy Whites during World War I. Although its contemporary, the Mack Bulldog, was the truck that passed into American folklore, these early White one- and three-ton trucks were the ones adopted as standard Army designs, with the War Department buying about 18,000 of them in all. Their success under fire bred more business, including White's score in motorizing San Francisco city transit just after the war ended. White rang up more highly visible sales by designing and building the first sightseeing buses used in Yellowstone National Park.

As with other producers, White devoted engineering resources to designing heavier, higher-capacity trucks as an intercity road network emerged during the 1920s. A five-ton design was a sales leader for much of the decade, and in 1928, White introduced the Model 58, a 10-ton truck whose rollout coincided with relaxed weight restrictions. Although White suffered badly during the Depression, recovering following a brief merger with Studebaker, Walter White wasn't around to see it. He died in a traffic accident on September 29, 1929.

# Thomas H. White

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Thomas H. White



1885 lithograph of White

Thomas Howard White

**Born** April 26, 1836  
[Phillipston, Massachusetts](#)

**Died** June 22, 1914 (aged 78)  
[Cleveland, Ohio](#)



**Resting place** [Lake View Cemetery](#)

**Nationality** American

**Known for** Founding the  
[White Sewing Machine Co.](#)  
Almira Louisa Greenleaf

**Spouse**

(m. 1858; died 1900)

**Children** 8

**Thomas H. White** (April 26, 1836 – June 22, 1914), was an American industrialist and philanthropist. In 1876 he founded the White Sewing Machine Company in Cleveland, Ohio, predecessor of White Consolidated Industries. He was also an automotive pioneer through the White Motor Company, which went on to produce cars, trucks, buses and tractors. In 1913 he established the Thomas H. White Charitable Trust, which is still active as the Thomas H. White Foundation.

## Biography

Thomas Howard White was born in [Phillipston, Massachusetts](#), the oldest of eight children, to Windsor and Betsey Pierce White. He only had a basic education, however he also had a strong mechanical aptitude. He invented a small hand-operated single-thread sewing machine, and marketed it as "The New England Sewing Machine" through a company formed in Templeton, Massachusetts with partner William Groth

In 1866 he moved to [Cleveland, Ohio](#) and founded the White Manufacturing Co., which was followed in 1876 by the formation with [William L. Grout](#) of the [White Sewing Machine Company](#), with White as president and treasurer. His company helped make a Cleveland a center for sewing machine manufacture, and set up branch dealers throughout the United States and in England. White also served on Cleveland City Council from 1875-1876.<sup>[2]</sup> He married Almira L. Greenleaf of Boston on November 2, 1858 and they had eight children.<sup>[3]</sup>

From the beginnings in sewing machines, White extended his operations into a number of different areas. A sideline department making roller skates was expanded into The Cleveland Machine Screw Co. which in turn became the Cleveland Automatic Machine Co. A bicycle department was created that was eventually sold to The American Bicycle Company. He also was involved in manufacturing motor vehicles beginning in 1906 through the [White Motor Company](#), although operations were primarily overseen by three of his sons, Windsor, Rollin and Walter.<sup>[4]</sup> White was acquired by [Volvo](#) in 1980 during bankruptcy proceedings. In 1988, Volvo-White merged with GMC to create a line of trucks called WhiteGMC. The WhiteGMC brand continued to be used up until 1996.

In the early 1900s [Mary McLeod Bethune](#) founded, in Daytona Beach, Florida, the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, a pre-collegiate school. While vacationing nearby, White learned about the financially struggling institution, and became, in Bethune's words, her "first friend". White provided financial assistance and also arranged for his employees to make a series of structural and infrastructure improvements. He later became a trustee, and upon his death bequeathed a \$79,000 endowment.<sup>[5]</sup> In 1915 Mrs. Bethune dedicated a large administrative building as [White Hall](#) in his honor. This school evolved into [Bethune–Cookman College](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

The Thomas H. White Foundation was founded as the Thomas H. White Charitable Trust in 1913.<sup>[7]</sup> Following his death in 1914, White was buried at Lake View Cemetery.<sup>[2]</sup>

## References

1.

- [Thomas H. White](#), *Clevelanders "As We See 'Em"* by the Newspaper Cartoonists' Association of Cleveland, August 1904, page 268.
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  - • ["Biography of the Thomas H. White Family"](#) (ead.ohiolink.edu)
  - • ["The White Family"](#), *Automobile Trade Journal*, December 1, 1924, pages 83-84.
  - • "Daughter of Slaves, Founder of College" by Grace Goulder, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 1, 1964, page 30-E.
  - • ["Our History"](#), The Thomas H. White Foundation (thomaswhitefoundation.org)
7. • ["Thomas H. White Foundation"](#) *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (case.edu)

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- [1836 births](#)
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- This page was last edited on 30 June 2023, at 0

## • **The White Motor Company Trucks Photographs 1912-1965**

### • **WHITE MOTOR CORPORATION**

- [Other works by WHITE MOTOR CORPORATION](#)

- **Publication:** Various photographers, 1912 - 1965, NP

- A marvelous factory photo album for White Company Trucks with original silver gelatin images depicting assorted company models from before World War I until the mid-20th century, including a number of representative trucks from acquired subsidiaries including Sterling, Autocar, Indiana, and Reo. Cleveland, OH, Cincinnati, OH: White Company; Foto Arts, Inc., White Motor Company Advertising Dept., Manning Bros. Commercial Photographers, [1912-1965]. 96 silver gelatin photographs preserved in archival Mylar sleeves,(90 separate photos plus 6 duplicates) most printed on glossy photo stock, nearly all 8 x 10 in., some with pencil or ink annotations in lower fore-edge of the image, or on verso, the majority of the White Co. photos w/ commercial photographer's stamp, and/or White Co. stamp on verso, Autocar factory photos w/ typed caption in lower blank margin, some w/ company stamps or annotations in lower margin. Recent cloth post-binder, gilt lettering stamped on front cover & spine, a few photos w/ holes from having been previously mounted in company sales binders, nearly all the images having strong sharp contrast. Very good. This remarkable photo album for the White Motor Co. in Cleveland, OH provides an excellent photographic resource of many different White Company Trucks and Tractors produced from before World War I until the mid-20th century. These images incorporate the various Company logos, and advertising promotional material for the firms which had purchased them, and used them for hauling. The White company originally built White Steamers, and White Motorcars, but by 1911, they had largely moved to producing heavy trucks,

tractors, and commercial vehicles. These images include a 1913 White 5 ton hauler in the City of Binghamton, NY, pulling ashes; a 1934 White Ohio Bell Telephone Truck showing the installation of telephone polls; a 1933 White lumber hauler; a 1935 White Factory Sleeper; a 1950 White cab-over maintenance truck; a 1940s passenger bus for Panagra Airlines in Lima, Peru, along with dump trucks, cement mixers, road-building trucks, logging trucks and many others. Of special interest are the numerous factory images of White Company half-tracks including an M-16 AA Half-Trac in 1942, and an armored vehicle truck chassis produced for the U.S. Army during World War II. The White Motor Company also owned the truck manufacturing names of Sterling, Autocar, Diamond T, Indiana Trucks, and REO which continued up through the 1970s. This archive also includes many images of Sterling Trucks pulling semi-trailers, covered freight trailers, inside the factory, dump trucks, service tractors, a heavy equipment hauler parked in front of the White Truck Factory with clock sign in background. The Autocar factory photos include a 1952 Autocar Diesel owned by Riverside Cement Co. in Los Angeles, CA; the 1953 Autocar Driver Cab owned by Wagman Transfer in Boston, MA; and many others. REO trucks are represented in this group by a 1912 Reo H Truck fitted with awning, and a 1950s Reo Gold Comet. The Indiana Truck Company include different styles of stave trucks from the 1930s. The White Company buses became especially well known in the 1930s when their Model 706 buses carried passengers throughout the major National Parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Glacier in the west, and were called Red Jammers. Gettysburg National Battlefield still operates two of the White buses.

## • White Motor Company

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- **White Motor Company** was an American [automobile](#) and [truck](#) manufacturer, in existence from 1902 to 1981.

- **Automobile manufacturing**

- In 1876, Thomas H. White incorporated his business in Cleveland, Ohio, as the White Sewing Machine Co. His three sons eventually became involved in their father's very successful sewing machine manufacturing business and in 1901 they set up operations to build automobiles.

- Their first automobile was chain-drive, tiller-steered, and run by a two-cylinder, steam-powered engine mounted under the floorboards. The following year, the White family created the White Motor Company as a separate entity from the rest of their business. White Motor Company continued to make passenger cars until 1918.

- Today, only about 150 White [steam cars](#) are known to remain from the 10,000 that were made.
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- Advertisement

- **Truck manufacturing**

- White Motor Co. began producing trucks and was a large semi truck manufacturer following the 1920s. White acquired several truck companies during this time: Sterling, [Autocar](#), Diamond T, and [REO](#). White produced trucks under the Autocar nameplate following its acquisition. Diamond T and [REO Motor Car Company](#) became the Diamond REO division, which was discontinued in the 1960s.
- White designed and (with other companies) produced the M3 Scout Car, the standard United States Army reconnaissance vehicle at the start of World War II, and the basis for the later M2 and M3 semi-tracked fighting and tractor vehicles.
- In the 1970s, White started the [Western Star](#) division to sell trucks on the west coast.

- **Demise**

- From the 1950 until 1975, White Motors distributed [Freightliner](#) trucks under an agreement with Freightliner's parent, Consolidated Freightways Inc., by Volvo Trucks. White manufactured, under its

own brands—White, Autocar and Western Star—as well, leading to the company becoming known as the "Big Four" through to the mid-1970s.

- By 1980, White was insolvent, despite importing Semon E. "Bunkie" Knudsen, son of [General Motors](#) legend Semon Knudsen, and President of [Ford Motor Company](#) in 1969–70. AB Volvo acquired the U.S. assets of the company, while two, energy-related companies based in Calgary, Alberta, Bow Valley Resource Services and Nova, an Alberta Corp., purchased the Canadian assets, including the Kelowna, British Columbia, plant, and the Western Star nameplate and product range.
- Volvo produced trucks as White and Autocar through the 1980s, while Western Star continued independently in Canada and the U.S., although Volvo-White–produced high cab over engine models were purchased and re-badged Western Star for sale in the Canadian market through the early 1990s.
- Volvo-White was merged with [GMC](#)'s heavy truck business in 1987, while Western Star was sold to Australian entrepreneur Terry Peabody in 1990. Subsequently, Western Star was resold by Peabody to [DaimlerChrysler AG](#) and merged with its Freightliner subsidiary. Volvo dropped any reference to White, and is now Volvo Trucks North America. Autocar remained a part of Volvo until 2000, when the trademark was withdrawn from the market, and was subsequently sold to Grand Vehicle Works together with the Xpeditor low cab forward heavy duty product, which remains in production to this day under the Autocar badge, the last vestige of what was once America's leading commercial vehicle producer.
- A former White subsidiary, White Farm Equipment, produced farm tractors until 2001. As of 2006, the only products made under the White name is a series of corn planters (made by AGCO) and garden tractors (made by MTD Products).

## • People

### • Notable People

- Windsor White- President White Motor Company
- 9432 and 8907 Lake Shore Boulevard



- Delia Holden White
- Delia Holden White possessed a great sense of civic responsibility. She was deeply interested in Babies' and Children's' Hospital.
- She possessed boundless energy and was never happier than when she was doing actual physical work on one of her pet projects.
- She was a member of the Cleveland Museum of Art's advisory council from 1929 to 1947. Delia belonged to the Holden family, which had been interested in the museum since its inception. She had a vital and lasting concern for the institution and its service to the community. Her part in the Fine Arts

Garden's design and development, expressed in the Holden Terrace, added to the permanent setting of the museum.

- Mrs. White was one of four Cleveland women honored by the Cleveland Garden Center when she received one of the first Frances McIntosh Sherwin awards. Delia was a member of the board and founder of the West Side branch. She gave her time, energy, and resources from the center for seventeen years so that everyone in Cleveland might have help in gardening, a privilege formerly reserved for the few.
- During World War II, Delia was busy in countless ways, helping the war effort and the United Service Organizations, to which she made large anonymous contributions. When the war ended, Mrs. White sent 21,083 thank you notes to donors who had contributed other than money.
- Delia Bulkley Holden was born on January 31, 1871, the fourth of eight children born to [Liberty and Delia Holden](#). She first lived in the Holden home, the present site of Case Western Reserve University. While still a young girl, she lived in the Bratenahl home for twenty-five years. In her youth, she spent several years in Salt Lake City, where her father had interests in the mining business.
- She attended Miss Mittleberger's School and spent one year as a student at Wellesley College.
- Delia and Windsor Thomas White were married in the Holden home on September 14, 1892. They had three children: [Delia Bulkley \(Vail\)](#), born on November 9, 1898, Thomas H., born on August 4, 1894, and Windsor Thomas, born on July 18, 1905.



- Windsor Thomas White
- Windsor White greatly influenced the development of the automobile industry in the United States, creating in Cleveland a notable business organization that attained national supremacy in the manufacture of motor trucks and buses under his direction.
- Windsor Thomas White was born on August 28, 1866, in Orange, Massachusetts, and is one of eight children born to Thomas and Almira White.
- He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1890. Following graduation, he went to Florida, where he followed a civil engineering profession for several months. He returned home to work in the production department of White Sewing Machine Company, of which his father was president.
- Windsor's father, Thomas H. White, had invented a small, hand-operated sewing machine in 1857. The White Sewing Machine Corporation was incorporated in 1876 to manufacture sewing machines under Thomas White's patent. From 1876 to 1877, the company manufactured from 150 to 200 machines daily.
- From 1893 to 1895, Windsor was treasurer of the Cleveland Machine Screw Company, which his father had founded, to gain financial management and production experience. In 1895, he returned to White Sewing Machine as vice-president.
- In 1900, the White Sewing Machine Company began to design automobiles under patents granted in 1898 to Rollin White, Windsor's brother. Production started in 1901, and the company manufactured an average of three passenger automobiles per week. The White cars were driven by steam engines, with a "flash" boiler invented by Rollin. The first steam cars made their appearance in 1902, winning perfect reliability runs between New York and Boston.



- The demand for White “steamers” increased. Thomas dismissed the importance of the automobile, and in 1906, the sewing machine and automobile departments separated, with the automobiles establishing in an extensive new plant in Cleveland. Windsor was president; his brother Rollin was first vice-president, and his brother Walter was vice-president and sales manager.
- In 1907, company engineers began experimenting with the gasoline engine, resulting in the conclusion that the gasoline engine offered the most significant advantages. The company produced the first gasoline-driven passenger car in 1909, and gradually, steam car manufacturing was discontinued.
- Simultaneously, the company began to concentrate on producing motor trucks, with the first truck making its appearance in 1910.
- Upon the death of Thomas White in 1914, Windsor and Walter continued, and Rollin severed his connection. When World War I broke out, the French Government promptly ordered 600 White trucks, and many orders for the Allies followed. The United States Army adopted the two-ton White truck as standard, and the French Government awarded Croix de Guerre to the White-truck fleet for its service. There were 18,000 of these trucks in the United States and allied powers' armies, and in 1918, the United States Government took the entire production.
- Toward the end of World War I, the company discontinued the construction of passenger cars and devoted its manufacturing facilities to trucks and buses. Following the war, White became the number one truck manufacturer.
- The White brothers added to their father’s philosophy on how to operate the company. They encouraged employee musicians to perform at lunchtime. Even the second and third shifts had their bands. Company sports teams, baseball, in particular, were used to build company pride. The company operated a small hospital and a night school, offering a variety of classes. Employees could pay utility bills and even their taxes through the company cashier. Their industrial service department helped employees fill out forms when needed.
- The Whites valued and respected their workforce. All three brothers spent several hours per day in the plant, getting to know all employees' names. Lunch, on many occasions, found the Whites in the employee cafeteria, not the executive dining room.
- Should an employee become sick and no longer able to work in the plant, Walter White transferred the employee to a healthier environment at his Circle W. Farm. It just seemed like common sense to achieve great results and limited turnover from contented workers.
- In addition to being president of White Motor Company, Windsor became president of White Sewing Machine Company in 1921, serving until 1923. He was also president of Park Drop Forge Company, a director of the First National Bank.
- After his resignation in 1927 as chairman of White Motor, he indulged in one of his favorite hobbies, big-game-hunting, by engaging in three safaris to Africa starting in 1928. Two years later, he headed the White-Fuller African Expedition for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and spent six months in British East Africa with Arthur Fuller, chief preparator.
- The expedition returned with 700 specimens, including many species of birds, and 300-feet of motion picture film with close-ups of lions, zebra, hippopotamuses, giraffes, and other animals.
- Social memberships included Country, Kirtland, Mid-Day, Roadside, Tavern, and Union Clubs plus the Engineer Club of New York and the Metropolitan Club of Washington D.C. He was instrumental in developing the Chagrin Valley Hunt Club and rode the hounds until he was 76 years old.
- Delia died of a cerebral hemorrhage at Lakeside Hospital on May 15, 1947. She had been ill for about a week. Windsor suffered a stroke in late February 1958 and died on April 9, 1958, while visiting his brother, Rollin, in Hobe Sound, Florida. Both he and Delia were buried in Lakeview Cemetery.

## • **White Motors Heavy Duty Trucks -Baselines**

- [Baselines](#)
- [Bill Senefsky](#) Writer
- Jun 1, 2007

- One of the oldest, largest, and most respected nameplates in the trucking industry during the last century was White Motors of Cleveland. Regarded as one of the big-10 producers, the famous marquee was actually started as a subsidiary of the world-renowned White Sewing Machine Co.
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- In 1859, Thomas White, an excellent self-taught machinist, began production of his hand-operated sewing machine in Massachusetts. Following the trend of others moving to the Midwest, his tiny company settled on the banks of the Great Lakes in Cleveland in 1876. The new central location made product distribution and exposure to new markets much easier. Fourteen years later, his successful market share made it possible for him to expand into the wildly popular bicycle market. The 1890s also marked the beginning of another fad: the automobile.
- White's sons, already involved in the family business, persuaded their father to allow them to investigate and produce a self-propelled automobile prototype. Both brothers traveled to Europe to explore the established steam-powered miracle machines in the French automotive market. Rollin White, a seasoned engineer, returned to develop his flash-boiler, a unit that was safer and faster in steam production than competitive makes.
- As the tiny American automotive market began to flourish, the brothers set up an automotive department at White. With White machine-component engineers assisting, 1899 saw its first product: the White steam-powered automobile. This first unit was a two-cylinder, undercarriage-mounted affair, utilizing tiller steering and chaindrive. A small delivery truck, dubbed the Pie Wagon, followed, and with superior craftsmanship, product awareness, and sales success, the new subsidiary-White Motor Car Co.-emerged.
- Rollin, Windsor, and Walter White quickly expanded the brand image of their steam-powered platforms. The brothers soon realized, however, that gasoline-powered units were becoming more popular, and in 1910, they dropped the boiler-along with the rest of the field. The company continued its reputation for expensive, high-quality, and rugged cars and light trucks. A 3-ton truck model, the GTA, appeared with a 30hp engine and chaindrive. In 1912, the 5-ton TC was added.
- When hostilities broke out in Europe at the start of World War I, the company rapidly became involved in the production of converted civilian vehicles for military use; 18,000 of these platforms were produced. Though White produced large numbers of converted civilian vehicles for the U.S. Army, it was Czar Nicholas of Russia who ordered a vast fleet of trucks, which generated much positive publicity for the company. At the war's conclusion in 1918, White found itself in the enviable position of capturing 10 percent of the U.S. truck market and focusing entirely on its truck operations.
- The roaring '20s continued profitable growth for White, with many employees considering the company a family affair. White's first six-cylinder platform, the 3-ton Model 59, appeared in 1928; 10-ton, three-axle versions followed in 1930. By 1929, however, the company faced several problems. Walter White died in a car accident, and the family engineer, Rollin, left to start the Cleveland Tractor Co. The employees, unhappy with the sudden changes, unionized in 1933. Several missteps included a brief merger with Studebaker-Pierce Arrow and the purchase of the Indiana Truck Co. from Brockway Trucks.
- The White Custom Cab featured bridge-type construction and cab mounts that were sprung by torsion bars.
- Following a board decision to return to independence, Robert Fager Black was appointed company head in 1935. Excellent with workers and the union alike, Black slowly began to return White to profitability. 1935 also marked the introduction of the heavy-duty 730, the company's first cabover. This novel platform was powered by a 7.6L (464ci) opposed-piston, horizontal, 12-cylinder engine. The powerplant was a smaller version of an 8.3L version utilized in buses in 1932; tilt-cab, 800-series versions of the truck appeared in 1937. The 700/800 replacements were branded the WA-series and appeared in 1940. With hostilities in Europe on the horizon again, the company began designing and building the Army's famous M3 scout car. Half-track derivatives along with heavy-duty, Deuce-series trucks for the Allies were added. When World War II ended, the company again looked at its market and concluded that its

future would be in the heavy-duty truck market. White's WB-series truck was marketed until its WC replacement appeared in 1949.

- The company's next platform, the futuristic 3000-series, featured a cabover design that was equipped with a motorized tilting system. The novel platform featured a set-back powerplant and a flat-cab floor. Although diesel versions were offered, gasoline engines were the most popular because the diesel engines had cooling problems.
- In 1951, the company began another purchasing program when it picked up Sterling. Several platforms were marketed as Sterling-Whites until 1953, and the Autocar brand was purchased that same year. In addition, the company had an agreement with Freightliner Corp. to sell and service its line under the White Freightliner brand. This agreement ended in 1977.
- White bought Lansing, Michigan's REO brand in 1957. When the Diamond-T line was purchased in 1958, both marquees were combined to form a new subsidiary called Diamond-REO. White also entered into a private-label agreement with Consolidated Freightways of Oregon to sell the CF brand to its dealer organization, with CF renaming these units White-Consolidated Freightways trucks.
- White upgraded its own brand with a new forward-control, 5000-series in 1959. Diesel powerplants became standard with this series.
- The frames were built out of 3/8-inch steel C-channel and featured smooth framerail surfaces to make mounting body options easier.
- The company experienced a string of negatives in the '60s, and its debt ratio increased. Management attempted to merge with its old parent, White Consolidated Industries, a descendent of White Sewing Machine, but the move was blocked by the government. New management seemed to be the answer, so the company turned to Semon "Bunkie" Knudson, former executive of General Motors and then-current president of Ford. White, for a short time, returned to profitability with the introduction of a new truck line and the establishment of new nonunion factories in Virginia and Utah.
- A new 4000-series conventional truck made its appearance in 1966. Two years later, the White Western Star brand of conventional trucks also appeared. This line was produced in British Columbia exclusively for the western market. In the early '70s, the company began experimenting with gasoline-converted diesel engines based on a Cummins design. Dubbed the White Giesels, these novel powerplants were considered a failure. Over the next several years, the company (like its competition) purchased standard diesel engines from Cummins, Cat, and Detroit Diesel.
- Sales continued to slide, and the company again looked for immediate suitors for survival. White Consolidated was again approached with the blessing of the federal government, but its stockholders voted against the deal. The company sought out partners for mergers and began selling off its subsidiary operations. White was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1980, with its manufacturing plants sold off to the Swedish company, Volvo.
- In August 1981, the Volvo White Truck Corp. emerged. The new company continued to market the White label and added new models. 1983 found the introduction of the White Conventional, and the new platform featured a longer hood design. It replaced the earlier Road Boss-series; a White High Cabover replaced the Road Commander 2. Both series now carried the Volvo stripe in their grille designs-the radical new droop-snoot Aero-along with an extended sleeper cab that was spec'd for the conventional trucks. As expected, Volvo's own powerplants and drivelines were also added. The Autocar brand was also included, although this label was later sold to American investors. Though the White nameplate lived on for another 10 years, it disappeared into history in 1995 when Volvo dropped it from the brand.