

## Auto-biography

*It's easy to see from this car why Gordon Spratt became an engineer later in life.*

When I was about 12 and living in Regina, I decided to put a motor on my bicycle. I purchased a broken one-third-horsepower engine and repaired it. I then managed to attach it to my bicycle, behind the seat, on a hinged platform, which allowed a friction wheel to be lowered on to the rear tire, giving me forward motion.

This was very successful, and I used the bike a lot, particularly when delivering my newspapers on the far east side of Regina. However, in the winter this did not work so

well, as the bike was top-heavy (what with the engine being behind me above the wheel) and I fell several times. I therefore decided to build something that would be more stable.

I designed and constructed the car shown in the photograph. I utilized scrap water pipe for the frame; the engine was a Christmas gift, a 1.5-horse-powered Clinton, four-cycle engine. The clutch system utilized the engine slipping between guide rails, which allowed the drive belt to tighten and loosen depending upon the force applied to a cable, which travelled by pulley up to a ratchet lever near the seating position.

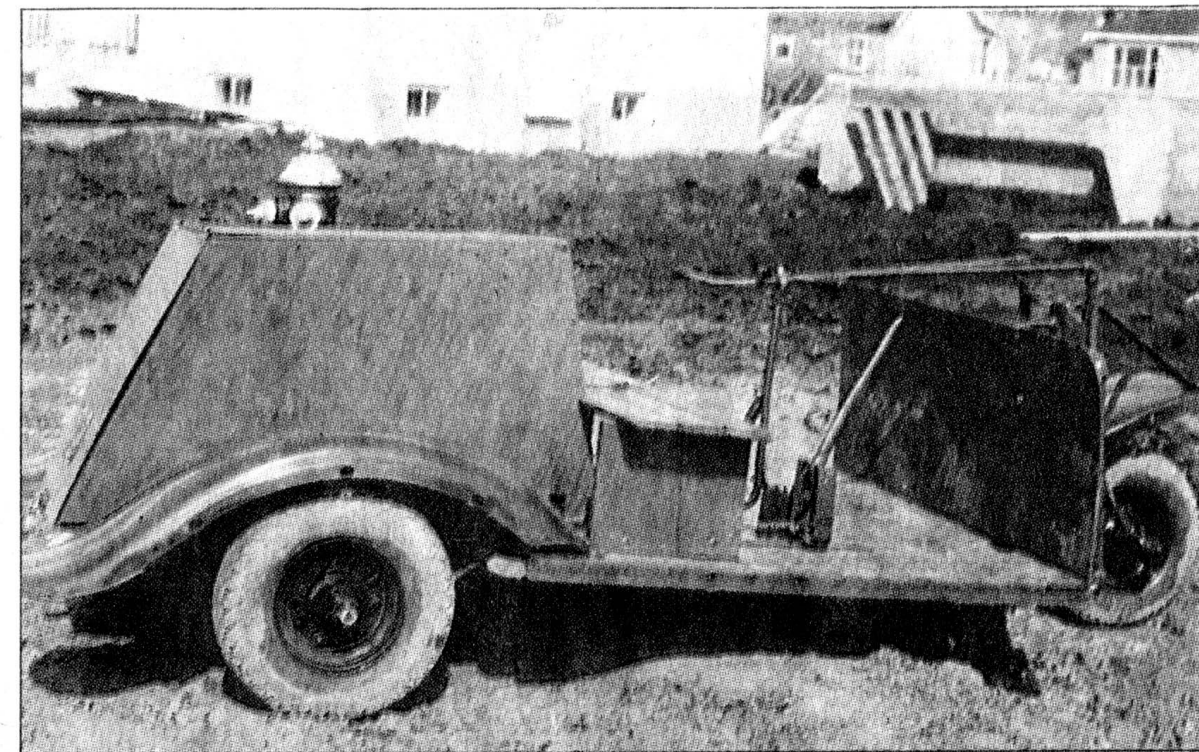
I installed a motorcycle brake on one of the wheelbarrow wheels at the rear, while the other wheel was the drive wheel. This vehicle achieved 100 miles per gallon regularly and had a top speed of 38 mph. Three people could ride in it.

I had a hard time getting the vehicle licensed because the authorities said there was no such thing as a three-wheeled car. Finally, they agreed to call it a motorcycle plus sidecar and gave me a licence. I used it for about a year and a half, at which time I decided I needed something more substantial and with better protection from the weather. My next car was a 1929 Oldsmobile. I sold the three-wheeler for \$200 in

1948, a lot of money at the time.

The joys of open-air driving were wonderful in the summer, but terrible in the winter. Unfortunately, even the three-wheel configuration could be flipped over by cornering too fast. Once it flipped when I had a date in the "car." Fortunately we were in front of the fire hall, because the engine caught fire when we turned upside down. The firemen quickly put out the flames. I was actually able to start it and carry on — but my girlfriend had a lot of explaining to do. She had torn the backside off her bloomers as we flew out of the car and slid along the pavement.

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**All my own work: Gordon Spratt's home-made car got him around.**