

THE

FOUR DRIVE

A Genealogy Newsletter

Volume III, No 1

April 12, 1999

Whole Number 16

The Four Drive Tractor Company

Still a Mystery

by Christopher Dixon¹

The story of the Four Drive Tractor Company of Big Rapids, MI is still a mystery even after 60 years. This article will attempt to piece together what little is known regarding the company after John Fitch died in November 1916. Most of the following is from two articles that appeared in "The Pioneer" newspaper of Big Rapids. James Bruskotter, currently the managing editor of the Pioneer Group's weeklies, authored the article entitled "Four Drive Co. - Historical Society finds information on former Big Rapids firm" (published Dec 2, 1992) which paraphrases Robert Harvey's article "Robert Harvey remembers Four Drive Tractor Company" (July 1, 1992). Robert's article was published after he had passed on.

The issue was brought to light in the Big Rapids area on Sept 4, 1991 when the Pioneer published a reproduction of a stock certificate issued in 1918 by the firm, with a request for anyone with more information to contact Keith Schuberg and his sons, Randy and Terry, who had recently purchased a 1929 model

of the Four Drive Tractor and was looking for information on the company.

Ten months later, the Pioneer published a response from Robert Harvey, the son of former Pioneer editor and publisher, Wells F. Harvey. In his response, Robert Harvey claimed that his father took the company to task over what he had considered to be unethical practices when he questioned why the company neither made money nor lost money over a period of years.



The Fitch Four Drive Tractor, Ca. 1929. photo by C. Dixon.

What Wells Harvey learned, his son claimed, that "the promoters, the men who had been at the point in securing community finance backing and were members of the Board of Directors of the Four Drive Tractor Co., also were the sole owners, stock holders and directors of The Four Drive Tractor Sales Co.," which, to make a long story short, reaped a rather substantial profit.

As the younger Harvey explained in his response, "the boards of directors were

¹ Christopher Dixon is a great-great grandson of John Henry Fitch, the inventor of The Four Drive Tractor

the same people for both companies. The tractor company of its entire output to the sales company. The board of directors of the tractor company, in 'negotiating' with its own members, set the price the sales company would pay for each tractor. The directors, being one and the same for both companies, merely had to satisfy themselves. They arranged it so that the tractor company made tractors and sold them - at cost; the sales company bought tractors at manufacturing cost and sold them at a profit." Therefore, the tractor company made just enough money to stay operational, the stock holders received small dividends while the sales company and its directors made a huge profit and large dividends.



Despite threats from the board of directors of the tractor company and investors in the firm to withdraw their advertising from his newspaper, Wells Harvey published a story of the duplicity in tractor manufacturing and tractor sales directorships that, according to Robert Harvey, eventually led to the sale of the Four Wheel Drive Company to a firm that he believed was located in Wisconsin.

Mecosta County Historical Society members have been hindered in researching Robert Harvey's claims by the unavailability of microfilm

negotiated and executed a contract for the sale copies or originals of the Pioneer - both at the local library and the Pioneer's own files - during the tenure of Wells Harvey as publisher, 1914-1928.

Early Photo of Factory, Ca. 1920's.



Robert Harvey had charged that the Pioneer's own copies of the papers of that era may have been destroyed by families involved in the tractor firm to avoid any further embarrassment.

Building as it existed in 1998



The building, located at 3105 East Maple Street, where the Four Drive Tractor Company was based is now owned by Mecosta County and used by Ferris State University as a storage and recycling center.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The material and photographs presented in this article were obtained by Chris during a visit to Central Michigan in 1998. This trip was reported in The Four Drive, Volume II, #5 August 1998.

The Four Drive Tractor

EDITOR NOTE: The following information taken from promotional literature issued by the company. It excerpts material taken from September 1917 Magazine of the Timken Roller Bearing Company.

"During Pershing's punitive push into Mexico, motor trucks, built on the four-drive principle, proved their merit for travel over rough country in a remarkably emphatic way. So when the Government placed its recent order for military trucks the specifications required sixty percent of them to be the four-drive type. Now the farm tractor must meet these same severe conditions of service over rough ground, so why shouldn't four-drive construction prove ideal for the tractor? If you have ever seen a Four-Drive Tractor work you know the answer. Pull, pull and more pull - over stumps, rocks, this way or that - front wheels or rear wheels may be off the ground, it makes no difference - up hill or down - it will even climb up the side of a building as far as it can go without tipping over. Out at Fremont this year whenever a motor car, truck or other vehicle got stuck in the mud, Four-Drive was called on to pull them out and never once did it fail to do the job quickly. The Four-Drive Tractor is so called because its power is delivered to all four wheels. It is constructed with a Timken-David Brown worm and worm gear on the rear axle and Brown-Lipe-Chapin chrome nickel-steel bevel gears on the front axle. Because the front wheels have power delivered to them direct they do not have to be pushed ahead as dead weight, but exert an active tractive power just the same as rear wheels. The highest standards of construction are of course followed out in the bearing equipment of the Four-Drive Tractor, each model having eleven Timken Bearings."²

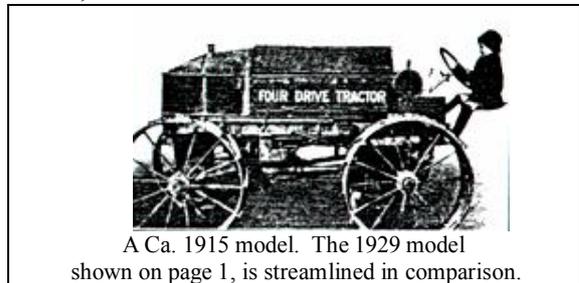
This sales brochure goes on to provide detail specifications, pictures of construction, and applications.

² A copy of this brochure was obtained by Chris Dixon from the Rose Hawley Museum at White Pine, near Ludington, Michigan.

Power on All Four Wheels

EDITOR NOTE: Another brochure has as its "forward" a letter written by John Henry Fitch that we think is appropriate for inclusion.

My original object in building the Four Drive Tractor was to construct a machine for farm use on my fruit farm in Summit Township, Mason County, Michigan, and knowing from practical experience that a rear drive only tractor was out of the question on my farm, as it was hilly and sandy, after many months of tireless work and study I worked out the Front Axle principle which now is an exclusive patented feature of the Four Drive Tractor. Next I was confronted by the fact that no suitable steering gear was used whereby the front axle, with power on it gave that freedom that should be, so I worked out a device, which is also one of the features.



A Ca. 1915 model. The 1929 model shown on page 1, is streamlined in comparison.

With eight basic patents on those parts of our tractor, different from other makes, made practical for general farm field work, also for hauling products from farm to town, "buzzing" wood, running shredder, ensilage cutter, or anything any other tractor will do, and more, I now offer for your consideration a One-Man Tractor which will prepare seed bed, sow the seed, harvest a grain crop, ready at the turn of the crank to plow, drag, disc, drill, roll, attach to mower, tedder, side-delivery or self dump hay rake or self binder, from start to finish without horses. When you hitch the Four Drive Tractor to your various tools it is just like hitching up five to six horses - except that it will not tire out, and various tools when attached are or become a part of the tractor itself, and can be so attached in 15 minutes, and is ready for a steady gait all day and all night if you wish, and when every minute counts, you have no sick or tired horses - no change of teams, just a steady and even pull all the time. Consumption per hour of 1 1/2 gallons of gasoline. In size too, our Four Drive Tractor follows the idea of thousands of farmers, a close coupled, self contained machine, built light in weight, yet stronger in traction power than most tractors at three times its weight. Weighing about 2,800 pounds, having by actual

test pulled over ten times its weight on wheels, this machine eliminates extra weight, by ability to have each wheel pull, instead of having the rear wheels only working and pushing the front ones along.

Simplicity extends even into its operation as well as throughout construction of the power plant. Any man who has operated a gas engine, and most farmers of today have, will understand this gas engine on wheels, and also a strip of a boy even who can drive an auto, can handle this tractor. Every control feature is within the driver's reach - both as to driving the tractor and if handling our special featured gang plows,

which is something new in tractor plows, these can be operated from the driver's seat.

In the construction of the Four Drive Tractor no expense has been spared to perfect every detail. Nothing but the highest grade of material has been used, or is to be used. The experimental stage has passed with the Four Drive Tractor. It has passed through severest tests - It is now ready to begin work in earnest on your farm. Our new factory is being completed and in a short time this tractor will be placed on the market.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Fitch

President, The Four Drive Tractor Co.
Big Rapids, Michigan

SURFING the INTERNET

Where have you been surfing? Have you found any exciting sites?

Here's a some web sites for you to try:

BY NORMA HEIMAN

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/1757/>

BY DANIEL CHINNERY

<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Corner/4528>

6 Steps to Writing a Successful Genealogy Query

<http://www.firstct.com/fv/query.html>

A Barrel of Genealogy Links

<http://cpcug.org/user/jlacombe/mark.html>

Fuller Family Genealogy

<http://www.genforum.com/fuller/page2.html>

Origin of Name

CHINNERY

We continue "origin of the CHINNERY Name" from the last issue of The Four Drive.

After a while, when you've had time to think about all this, let your mind wander back along a trail from Essex through France and Belgium to Rome. Travel further back along the trade and caravan routes of the East, you will come eventually to Chinnereth, a fortified city on the north west shore of a harp shaped lake which gave it's name also to the surrounding plain. The lake was known until about 500 BC as the Sea of Chinnereth, then by the Greek name Gennersaret, then as the Sea of Galiles. The name Chinnereth or Chinneroth is believed to derive from "kinnor" the Hebrew name for lute or harp, furthermore the district Chinneroth in Old Testament times, was noted for its oak trees.

Chinneroth had a chequered history: It is mentioned in Egyptian lists of the XVIIIth Dynasty when Thutmosis III expanded his

empire and overthrew Palastine, Syria, and Babylon (1490-1436 BC). Before this time, Canaan as it was called at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, was occupied by tribal Canaanites, Philistines from across the sea, Phoenicians, a great seafaring people, and other: The district of Chinneroth had many walled cities and small kingdoms. When the nation of Israel returned to Canaan about 1120BC, Joshua gave "all Chinneroth and its 19 cities" to the tribe of Napahtali as their inheritance (Jos 19:32-39) It is not too hard to believe that over the centuries many citizens of Chinneroth were cut off from their home town, or else preferred to move to Europe to escape the ravages of war. And perhaps they took with them the name of their city with its oak trees on the shore of the harped shape lake. ***

VITAL RECORDS

MARRIAGES

Carol Lee Ellis nee Haynes & Carliton Finch were married 26 September 1998 in Palm Harbor, Pinellas Co., FL.

INTRODUCING A NEW COUSINS.

Carol Haynes Finch

The marriage of Carol is noted above. Carol is a first cousin to Rosaline Preston nee Waldner, sharing the same grandfather. If I have counted the greats correctly both are 6 x g-grand daughters of Jonathan Haynes while your editor is a 7 x g-grandson. Carliton Finch is the author of Haynes Genealogy dedicated to his first wife Lillian Jean Haynes - also a cousin to us all. Carliton indicated he became acquainted with Carol, when she contacted Carliton to purchase one of the Haynes Genealogy Books. Quoting Carliton - "Genealogy can also make nice things happen".

Norma Heiman

During the summer of 1998 I left a query posted in Clare Michigan looking for my first cousin Arlene Lockhart (daughter of Ethel Chinnery, my aunt). This past winter I received an e-mail from Norma Heiman also looking for Lockharts. We exchanged several messages and have concluded that we did not have any family link through the Lockhart name.

Norma included with one of her messages the URL for her web site. Now that we are back to my good computer and telephone connection I have been able to catch up on some of my surfing. I connected to Norma's web site and found that we have a family link through descendants of Edward Fuller.³

Norma Heiman - (----Nelson Fuller Samuel, Edward)
Don Chinnery (Alice Fitch,, Ethel Vivian Rose, Mary Melissa Heath, A.J. Heath, Jacob Heath, Thomas Heath & Waitsill Fuller, Samuel, Samuel, Mathew, Edward)

This makes us cousins, a little distant maybe but cousins never the less.

Norma currently lives in Cottonwood AZ but has roots in Michigan. She is active in genealogy. Maintains her own web site dedicated to genealogy as well as the web site

of the Fuller Society. The URL's for these two sites are listed elsewhere in this issue.

Charlie and Marie Rumfola

While Charlie and Marie are really not new to our readership, I thought I would take this column as a way to tell you about a wonderful visit we had with the two of them while in Florida. Charlie and Marie usually spend their winters near Spring Hill, FL. We were able to get our schedules together and they came to Wauchula for a visit with us at the Escapee RV park in Zolfo Springs. We enjoyed their visit immensely. It was nice to finally get to meet them after exchanging information and several phone conversations with Marie since we first made connection in the fall of 1997 during our visit to Western New York State. It is always nice to have visits with our newly found cousins.

Recent Acquisitions.

Your recent acquisitions of family history should be recorded here. Let us know what important piece of information you have recently found and or received from someone.

RECEIVED FROM

Carliton and Carol Finch

Family group sheets and registers depicting Carol Finch nee Haynes ancestry through our common ancestors.

Marie and Charlie Runfola

Copies of family photographs ...

Family group sheets for Joseph Heath & Anna Williamson; and Isaac Heath and Mary - parents of Joseph Heath. Descendency Record from William Heath (Roxbury). Isaac is of that line. Most of our readership are descended from Bartholmew Heath of Haverhill, while Valerie Gorge is of the William Heath line.

Don Chinnery

Recently obtained the following information.

- 1) Vital Records information - Heath for Sharon CT.
- 2) A listing of Heaths who were Massachusetts soldiers and sailors during revolutionary war era.
- 3) Vital Records information- Heath for Mansfield, CT.
- 4) Birth dates for children of Joseph Heath and Mercy born in Litchfield, CT.
- 5) Genealogy information for Mayflower families as related "Fuller" from "Genealogies of Mayflower Families.
- 6) Mayflower Births and deaths as related to the "Fuller" name.

³ Additional information regarding Edward Fuller and descendants see The Four Drive, Volume II, No. 3, May 31, 1999.

THACHER/THATCHER

The Thacher descendants may have spellings as Thacher and Thatcher, with many of the earlier English variant spellings being Thecher, Theccher, Thetcher, Thacker, Thackery, Thackary, le Thacer, le Thecher and Thaxter as typical examples.⁴ This article will standardize on "Thacher" as this was generally the spelling used by our ancestors with the exception of Elizabeth Thatcher at the time of her marriage to Samuel Fuller.

The largest group of the Thacher family in the United States is that composed of the descendants of Antonie of Yarmouth, MA and of his nephew, Rev. Thomas Tacher of Old South Church, Boston. Both of these gentlemen were descendants of the Rev. Peter Thacher of Queen Carmel, Sommersetshire⁵. This Rev. Peter Thacher is currently the most remote ancestor we have of this line. He was for 50 years (1574-1624), vicar of the parish church at Queen Camel, where he died in 1624 while still vicar. His descendants included a long line of men of the cloth. Rev Thacher was a distinguished Minister of the Gospel, who resided in Sarum⁶, England in the 17th century. He was a man of talents, and possessed a liberal and independant mind; he dissented from the established church, and being in consequence harassed by the spiritual courts, he resolved to turn his back on royal ecclesiastical folly and persecution, emigrate to New England, but the death of his wife altered his determination.⁷

Peter Thacher¹ I

- 2.1 Peter II** - b. 1587/8 d. 2 Feb 1640
- 2.2 Antonie - b. 1588/9 d. 1667 MA
- 2.3 John - b. 1590/1 d. 25 Feb 1653
- 2.4 Giles - b. 1591 d. 1602

⁴ THE FOUR DRIVE VOL I, NO. 9, PAGE 4

⁵ "Shire" an entity similar to our counties. Pronounced 'shear'. Accordingly in our genealogy records for England localities we tend to use "shire" and or county interchangeably.

⁶ Sarum is the ancient name for what we now know as Salisbury, England.

⁷ Information taken from *Genealogy and Biographical, Sketches of the descendants of Thomas and Anthony Tacher*, D.W. Allen. Pub 1872

- 2.5 Thomas - b. abt 1593 d. ENG
- 2.6 Clement
- 2.7 Dorothy

Peter Thacher² II and Anne Allwood

- 3.1 John - b. 12 Apr 1615 d. 23 Nov 1623
- 3.2 Rev. Thomas** - b. 1 May 1620
- 3.3 Anne - bap. 15 Feb 1622
- 3.4 Martha - bap. 23 Nov 1623
- 3.5 Elizabeth - b. 1625
- 3.6 Peter
- 3.7 John II - b. 1627, died 1673

Ann Allwood died 23 March 1634 and Rev. Peter remarried 14 April 1635 to Alice Batt.

CHILDREN OF Peter and Alice

- 3.8 Samuel - b. 1635-1365 d. 22 Mar 1646
- 3.9 Paul - b. July 1638 d. Sep. 1678
- 3.10 Barnabas - b. 1640 d. abt 9 May 1691

Rev. Thomas Thacher & Elizabeth Partridge.

- 4.1 Rev. Peter - b. 18 Jul 1651 d. 1727
- 4.2 Rev. Rhodolphus (Ralph)**
- 4.3 Thomas - b. abt 1655 d. 2 Apr 1686
- 4.4 Patience - b. abt 1657
- 4.5 Elizabeth - b. abt 1657

Rev. Rhodolphus Thacker & Ruth Partridge m. 1 Jan 1669/70

- 5.1 Thomas - b. 9 Oct 1670
- 5.2 Elizabeth Thatcher⁸**
- 5.3 Ann - b. 26 Nov 1673
- 5.4 Ruth - b. 1 Nov 1675
- 5.5 Rodolphus - b. 1 Nov 1678
- 5.6 Lydia - b. 24 Jan 1680

Elizabeth Thatcher & Samuel Fuller

Elizabeth b. 1 Mar 1672, Duxbury MA
 Samuel Fuller b. 13 August 1676
 m. 3 Oct 1700 - Mansfield CT.

The marriage of Elizabeth to Samuel Fuller ties our lineage into the Fuller line and descendants of Edward Fuller of the Mayflower. Elizabeth and Samuel had seven children one of whom was Waitstill Fuller, b. 8 Apr 1711; d. 23 Dec 1754. Waitstill married 21 Feb 1733/4) Thomas Heath b. 25 Jul 1712, Haverhill, Essex Co., MA and d. 12 Dec 1754. This now makes the link to those of us that are descendants of Bartholomew Heath.

⁸ Note the addition of the letter "t" in the spelling of her last name.

As you study this article we suggest you review the ahnentafel created for Jacob Heath and published in The Four Drive Volume II, No 3.. The ahnentafel numbers as related to Jacob Heath that are of interest in this article are:

Rev. Peter Thacher I - #176
 Rev Peter Thacher II - #88
 Rev Thomas Thacher - #44
 Rev Rodolphus (Ralph) Thacher - # 22
 Elizabeth Thatcher - #11

Make notice of how the numbers are divided by two as we step back each generation. father = 2 x n; mother = 2 x n + 1.

These men of the gospel were well known and over the years served many well known churches. One of the siblings was a well known pastor of a Boston Church.

FITCH FAMILY REUNION

Saturday July 24, 1999

The annual family reunion for descendants of Charles Wesley Fitch and Ethel Vivian Rose will be held on Saturday, July 24, 1999 at Memorial Tree Park, Ludington, Michigan. Children and grandchildren of Alice Fitch Chinnery are this years hosts. For information you may contact:

Lucille - handlebarg@aol.com
 Don - dongeni@aol.com
 Pamela - pmileskln@aol.com

Friends and relatives not descendants of Charles and Ethel are also welcome. dgc

PROJECT HELP -REQUEST

JOHN HENRY FITCH PATENTS: Looking for a volunteer to surf the net or do what ever necessary to locate copies of the original patents issued for the Four Drive Tractor.

CHARLES WESLEY FITCH DIARY PROJECT: Looking for typing volunteers to assist in typing of these diaries. Required would be a computer and any word processor.

THE FOUR DRIVE - 1999 SPONSORS

The cost of reproduction and postage for mailing The Four Drive in 1999 has been sponsored by Lucille Rogers, Carliton and Carol Finch, Marie and Charles Rumfola and an anonymous⁹ donor. Thank you very much.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

ANNUALLY I request subscribers to The Four drive to reaffirm their interest in continuing to receive the newsletter. The last issue for 1998 (Volume II, #6) included a colored sheet for you to return for extension of your subscription.

RENEWALS RECEIVED

Christopher Dixon
 Lucille Rogers
 Elaine Stevens
 Carroll and Nellie Nelson
 Ann Faulkner (Macomb Library)
 Daniel Chinnery
 Hiram Herrick
 Laura Lagana
 Rosaline Preston
 Carol and Carliton Finch
 Charles and Marie Rumfola
 Marilyn Bannister
 Judith Stock
 Kathy Lawrence
 Valerie DiGeorgi

DELINQUENT

THE FOLLOWING SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE BEING DROPPED. If you are in contact with any of the persons listed believe you might ask them if this is really their wish.

Timothy Chinnery
 Linda Blake
 Mrs Morris Brown (Nita Herrick)
 Helen Burmeister
 Betty DeCicco (Betty Herrick)
 Joyce Burchett (Joyce Herrick)
 Judy Jett (Judy Dixon)
 Arlene Brandt
 Kevin Motyka
 Robert Rotman
 Nancy Lanni
 Ethel Cassan
 Hazel McDonald
 Claribel Chinnery
 Lois Winsemius (Lois Herrick)

⁹ My apologies to this donor. We were in Florida when this arrived and I lost my note on this donor. Please tell me who you are.

The FOUR DRIVE, a genealogy newsletter brought to you for promoting genealogy of our ancestors and their descendants.

Need copies of any of the information referenced? Contact the editor or the individual shown.

What about Family Group Sheets? Editor is most happy to provide what we have available upon request. GEDCOM files can also be provided. Your editor also accumulates as much information as he can concerning siblings. Family group sheets and information in many cases are also available.

Photocopying cost and postage appreciated.

PUBLISHERS STATEMENT

The F O U R D R I V E, a genealogy newsletter is published on irregular schedule by Donald Chinnery. Please let your family genealogists know about this newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

to this newsletter are free. If you wish to continue receiving this newsletter please acknowledge receipt of this newsletter with your comments and request to continue to the editor . [phone 828 665 7853]

Donald Chinnery,
3606 Florham Place
Asheville, NC 28806
dongeni@aol.com

DONALD CHINNERY
3606 Florham Place
ASHEVILLE, NC 28806

FIRST CLASS