

Register of Old Buildings  
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 307 W. William St., Decatur, Illinois 62522.

Date of original construction: Land purchased in September, 1864.  
House started in 1866. Construction finished in 1867.

Name of original owner: Virgil H. Parke.

History: "Built in 1866 or 1867 when all the ground around it was an apple orchard owned by T. O. Smith; the V. H. Parke home at 307 W. William is one of the most substantially built houses in Decatur. At the same time it is a handsome place.

"Mr. Parke bought a lot with eighty feet of frontage from T. O. Smith in 1864, paying for it \$800, an enormous price in those days... Mr. Smith's house stood near the northeast corner of William and Edward Streets. All around him was his big apple orchard, which he platted and sold piecemeal as Decatur developed.....

"The Parke residence was started in 1866 and finished in the year following. One of the few brick houses in Decatur, it was then the best house. It was one of the largest too, having twelve rooms. Like other old residences, it was of course constructed of hard wood, much walnut being used. If the house were to be torn down, the wood used in the building would be found fresh as ever.

"Though few changes have been made on the exterior of the house, many have been made on the interior. The dining room, for instance, has been remodeled and decorated at a big expense. It is now one of the best, if not the best, dining rooms in Decatur.

"The lot still has a frontage of 80 ft., Mr. Parke never having sold any of it."

"The house has been occupied by the Parke family since it was constructed in 1864. V. H. Parke had lived previously in a small red brick house on the site of the Huston-Patterson Bldg., 330 N. Church Street."

From the Decatur Newspapers File of 4/22/1905.  
Decatur Herald & Review.

NOTE: On the envelope of clippings in the Decatur Herald & Review file on Homes in Decatur, "William Parke does not want a story on the house at 307 W. William St. for security reasons."

Present owner's name: William C. Parke.



Photo - Margaret M. Meyer - October, 1953

307 West Skidway

Garke Residence



From Progressive Decatur, published by Review  
Printing and Stationery Company, Decatur, Illinois  
No date given. Estimate, 1899-1902, page 17



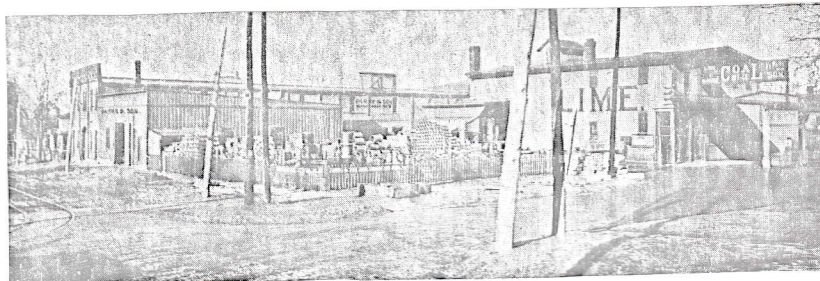
A GROUP OF DECATUR RESIDENCES

## **U. H. Parke & Son**

V. H. Parke of the firm of V. H. Parke & Son has possibly been in active business in Decatur longer than any other man, coming to this city in March 1852, and first engaging in the livery business, then in the implement trade until 1887, at which time he purchased the firm's present business property on North Main street.

The firm is composed of V. H. Parke and son G. J. Parke and is engaged in a more extensive business in their line than any other firm in Central Illinois. They handle limes, cements, sewer pipe, fire clay goods as well as operating a large hard wall plaster plant for the manufacture of this product. They recently purchased the transfer and storage business of another firm, and handle extensively in this way farm implements for distribution all over Central Illinois, being well equipped in having four large warehouses for the large and growing business.

From Progressive Decatur, Published by the Review Printing and Stationery Co., Decatur, Ill., no date given; estimate of date, 1899 to 1901, Page 99.



V. H. Parke & Son



# Society

## Parke-Firestone Wedding Brilliant Society Event

Twelve Cities Represented in Wedding Party at St. John's Episcopal Church

St. John's Episcopal church was the setting for a lovely wedding Saturday evening at 8:30 o'clock, when Miss Elizabeth Parke, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Guy J. Parke of this city, became the bride of Harvey S. Firestone, Jr., of Akron, Ohio, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey S. Firestone, Sr.

### BISHOP READS SERVICE

Bishop Frank Du-Moulin of Cleveland read the wedding service. Members of the bridal party represented twelve cities.

Preceding the ceremony Miss Edna Burn at the organ played several musical numbers. She first played "Benediction Nuptiale" and "Lena Deo" from Duboly's "Marriage Mass." Other numbers were "Orange Blossoms" by Frink, "Bridal Procession" and "Intermezzo" from "Wedding Suite" by Oliver King. As the bridal party entered she played the wedding march from "Lohengrin" and after the ceremony Mendelssohn's wedding march.

### BRIDESMAIDS

The bridesmaids, who entered two by two, were Miss Eleanor Bunnhead of Erie, Pa.; Miss Helen McLaughlin of Buffalo, N. Y.; Miss Mary Evans of Fort Wayne, Ind.; Miss Helen McLanahan of Washington, D. C.; Miss Louise Lines of Flushing, L. I.; and Miss Vesta Reed of St. Louis, Mo.

The ushers, also entering in couples, were Harold S. Bond (Princeton) of Toledo, O.; J. Logan Burke (Princeton) of Washington, D. C.; J. Russell Forgan (Princeton) of Chicago; Chris Franz (Yale) of Akron, Ohio; William C. Parke (Yale) of Decatur; Paul V. Robinson (Pennsylvania) of Akron; William E. Robinson (Princeton) of Akron; Robert T. Sherman (Princeton) of Chicago; Clifford D. Smith (Cornell) of Akron; and Rodolph E. Vogel (Princeton) of Milwaukee, Wis.

### MISTRESS MAID OF HONOR

Miss Gertrude Parke, sister of the bride, was maid of honor, and Mrs.

Donald L. Lambert (nee Lucy Ludington) of St. Louis was matron of honor. Russell A. Firestone, brother of the bridegroom, was best man.

Elizabeth Firestone, sister of the bridegroom, was flower girl, and Roger Firestone, brother, was ring bearer. The pages were Raymond and Leonard Firestone, brothers.

### BRIDE'S GOWN, WHITE SATIN

The bride, who was given away by her father, Guy J. Parke, was charming in her gown of white satin, heavily beaded in crystal, in rose design. Her court train was five yards long, and it was embroidered in roses and lilacs of the valley with dew drops of rhinestones. The neck and sleeves were of Duchess lace, which had been worn by her mother at her wedding.

Her veil was of tulle, edged with Duchess lace, and the crown was of white lace trimmed with orange blossoms. The lace on the veil was worn by Miss Parke's grandmother.

The bride's bouquet was of white orchids and lilacs of the valley. She also carried a rose point lace fan. Her only jewelry was the bridegroom's gift, a diamond and sapphire ear pin.

### BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES

The bridesmaids, matron of honor and maid of honor wore dresses of crystal net over white satin edged with crystal fringe, with soft loose blue chiffon sashes forming little trains. The large leghorn hats were faced with the same kind of blue chiffon as used in the sashes, and were trimmed with pink roses and blue feather. Their bouquets were of delicate pink roses and blue larkspur.

Mrs. Parke, mother of the bride, wore gray georgette beaded in crystal and a French blue hat covered with ostrich feathers of the same shade. Mrs. Firestone, mother of the bridegroom, wore a gown of orchid silk and lace, and a feathered hat in orchid shades.

### ATTENDANTS

Elizabeth Firestone, flower girl, was dressed in white organdy. The skirt had four ruffles edged with val lace. The dress was made with neck cut low to the extreme shoulder, and with puff sleeves and blue girdle. She wore a poke bonnet of organdy.

Roger Firestone, ring bearer, and Raymond and Leonard Firestone, train bearers, were dressed in Eton suits.

### ROSES AND DELPHINIUM

Huge vases of roses and of Delphinium, in two shades of blue, attractively arranged, were the only decorations in the church. A large number of guests attended the wedding.

Following the service at the church there was a reception and dance at the Country club for the old friends of the family and the young people.

Dinner was served immediately on arrival of the guests at the club. The bride's table was especially attractive with its huge basket of bridal roses. At one end of the table was the bride's cake and at the other the cake made for the bridegroom by a friend in Akron.

Twenty-five were seated at this table, and the other guests were at small tables, which also were gay with flowers. Before the fireplace in the living room was an embankment of ferns and palms, and baskets of roses, gladiolus and other flowers were everywhere about, making the room unusually attractive. Following the dinner there was dancing.

### BRIDE IS POPULAR

The bride is the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Guy J. Parke, and is one of the popular members of the younger social circles in Decatur. Following her graduation from Rosemary hall, she went to England where she completed her schooling.

Mr. Firestone, who is an alumnus of Princeton, is connected with the Firestone Tire and Rubber company, of which his father is president. It was while in Washington on a tour with the Triangle Club, of which he was business manager, that he met Miss Parke, who was at that time visiting Miss Helen McLanahan.

### TRIP TO NORTHWEST

The couple will take a wedding trip through the northwest. They go from here to Chicago, and then over the Canadian Pacific to Banff, Canada, and Lake Louise, and probably will go on to Vancouver and down to San Francisco, Cal.

### OUT OF TOWN GUESTS

Among the out of town guests at the wedding were:

Mr. and Mrs. Amos C. Miller of Chicago.  
John L. Kuser of Trenton, N. J.  
Malcolm Davis of Princeton.

Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Sizer, Akron, O.  
Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Myers, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Ake, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. S. G. Carkuff, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Fairbank, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Firestone, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Robertson, Akron.  
Mrs. E. B. Smith, Akron.  
John Allen, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford, Dearborn, Mich.  
Mr. and Mrs. Edsel Ford, Dearborn, Mich.  
Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Robinson, Akron.  
Paul Robinson, Akron.  
C. W. Franz, Akron.  
Mrs. B. W. Robinson, Akron.  
Mrs. Will Christy, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. Clements, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Hines, Akron.  
Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Thomas, Akron.





This stunning portrait of Mrs. Harvey S. Firestone, Jr., of Akron, O., the former Elizabeth Parke of Decatur, is on exhibit this month in the famous Knoedler Galleries in New York City. The portrait

was painted in 1927 by Philip A. DeLaszlo, well known portrait artist, and is in delicate pastel pinks and blues, and orchid tones. Last week Congress commissioned DeLaszlo to make a portrait of Calvin Coolidge, for the government.



Decatur Herald June 2, 1973.

# Firestone Had Personal Interest in Decatur

Harvey S. Firestone Jr., who died Friday in Akron, Ohio, had many ties to the city of Decatur.

He was married in Decatur, June 25, 1921, to a native of Decatur, Elizabeth Parke. She was a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Guy J. Parke, who lived at 307 W. William St.

Mr. Firestone met his wife in Washington, D.C.

The 1921 wedding was in St. John's Episcopal Church.

Among those attending the wedding were members of the Firestone family including Mr. Firestone's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Firestone Sr., and others like Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford and Mr. and Mrs. Edsel Ford.

St. John's Episcopal Church was to benefit later on the Firestone's 40th anniversary in 1961, when the couple donated money for the church to purchase a parking lot at the northwest corner of North Main and Cerro Gordo streets. The lot had been owned by Mrs. Firestone's father.

The couple's donation came



Harvey Firestone Jr.

after the church's pastor, Rev. Darwin B. Bowers, wrote them a letter telling of parking problems the congregation was having.

Since the 1921 wedding, which was a highlight in Decatur's social history, both Mr. and Mrs. Firestone returned to Decatur many times.

He was here in 1958 as the featured speaker of the United Fund kickoff dinner and in 1964, he was the featured speaker at the dedication of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. plant in Decatur.

During the latter speech, Firestone said he learned first hand of the spirit and friendliness and fellowship of Decatur "which was an impelling factor in our selection of this city for our new plant."

Mrs. Firestone's mother died in 1945 and her father, a well known Decatur businessman, died at the age of 98 in 1965.

Her brother, William C. Parke, still lives in Decatur.

George W. Aucott, Decatur Firestone plant manager, said Friday the plant will not be closed down because of Mr. Firestone's death.

Aucott said a five-minute period of silence may be observed Monday.

## Baltimore Ave. Strengthening Work Complete

Maintenance work aimed at strengthening the base of Baltimore Avenue south of County Highway 9 has been completed.

Macon County highway department crews spread asphalt over rough sections of the heavily-traveled road Thursday and Friday.

Charles Johnson, superintendent of highways, said Friday the work would strengthen the base of Baltimore Avenue.

Johnson said the road was probably "underdesigned" when it was built. He said the location of the PPG Industries plant in Mount Zion has increased traffic on the road over what was originally expected.

EXULTING OVER the dismissal of school Friday were these MacArthur High School students. Friday was the last attendance day for students in the public school system.

# Principal He Do

By Ron Ingr... How do elementary age youngsters see authority, such as a policeman?

The answer to this isn't always the one he, according to Le principal of Lincoln S... Last December decided to embark on project to try to image of "the authority."

"I wasn't thinkin myself, I wanted the to think of any person in authority, who is there to try ple," LaFauce said.

To accomplish LaFauce decided to the sixth grade down informal interviews pupil.

The idea isn't LaFauce said. He something... national jour... idea to suit his needs

A number of incidents brought to his attention for an understanding principal's role pupils.

"One day a teacher had a problem and brought his office," LaFauce said.

The principal's of color is a small cubical cond floor stairwell visited only by pupils for disciplinary reasons.

"The closer dergartener got to louder he cried, he scared," LaFauce said.

Another day a whether he had a p LaFauce said "you asked if it really it.

A tour of his office handling the drama convinced the girl that as bad as she'd believe by a class said.

Finding a time interviews when he the pupils...

## Two Injured In Accident

Two persons were injured, neither seriously, in a three-car accident on U.S. 36 east of Wyckles Road about 11:45 a.m. Friday.

Dennis L. Pfeifer, 17, of Route 8, driver of one of the cars, was treated and released at Decatur Memorial Hospital. Jim Smothers, 17, of Route 8, a passenger with him, was listed by police as slightly injured but the hospital said he was not treated.

Police said the accident occurred when an eastbound car driven by Gilbert C. Kettlekamp made a left turn just as it was being passed by a car driven by Waverly R. Smothers, 16, of Route 8.

The Kettlekamp car was then struck in the rear by the Pfeifer car, also eastbound.

Police charged Kettlekamp with making an illegal left turn and Pfeifer with failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident.

## Cornerstone Put in Place

A cornerstone containing memorabilia of the city was placed in Lincoln Square Friday by the Decatur and Macon County Heritage Committee.

A bronze replica of the first Macon County Court House will be placed near the site at 11 a.m. Tuesday by the Heritage Committee, Region Five Heartland Tourism Council, Stephen Decatur Chapter National Society of the Daughters of American Revolution and city representatives.

Included in the box were copies of the Decatur Herald and the Decatur Daily Review, pamphlets describing the city, brochures about Abraham Lincoln's life in the city, political bumper stickers and information about the Community College of Decatur.

A noon luncheon is scheduled Tuesday in the Ambassador...

# Farm to Publ

Phil Farrell

erty will be acquired by the city.

Beaman said as soon as the property is acquired demolition will begin.

The land then will be resold by the city to buyers, and the city expects to regain about \$500,000 from these sales.

Owners of property in the area will be given a check for the market value and they also will be eligible for federal and city funds to purchase a residence at a new location.

The city staff is obligated to help the displaced persons find a comparable house that meets city housing standards.

There are approximately 150 residences in the renewal project area.

The federal government is paying two-thirds of the cost of the project and the city is paying the balance.

## Guard Begins Environmental Lake Effort

Members of the Illinois National Guard unit in Decatur today will begin a year-long environmental effort on Lake Decatur.

The project is aimed at curbing pollution threats to fresh water supplies.

The guardsmen are participating in the water survey project with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Illinois EPA.

Survey teams from National Guard units throughout the state will be sampling water at 113 locations on tributaries leading to 31 lakes and reservoirs.

The purpose is to identify and analyze potential eutrophication threats.

Eutrophication occurs when nutrient enrichment, principally phosphates and nitrates, stimulates the growth of algae and causes shallows to be choked with masses of rooted plants.

The national guardsmen will collect water samples from the 113 locations, including Lake Decatur and its tributaries, once a month during the 12 months the project is going on.

Working on Lake Decatur are members of Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 66th Brigade, 47th Infantry Division in Decatur.

Today is the first day that work is being done statewide.

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# Firestone Wedding Linked City With Tire Manufacturing

Sun. Decatur  
Herald and  
Review

By Don Brilley

The marriage of Decatur native Elizabeth Parke and Harvey S. Firestone Jr. on June 25, 1921, was not only "the most brilliant and beautiful wedding held in Decatur" but also initiated a link between Decatur and the tire manufacturing industry.

The daughter of Guy and Gertrude Chambers Parke first met the son of the founder of Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. at a party in Washington, D.C.

Miss Parke was attending Miss Wheeler's School in Providence, R.I. at the time and had journeyed to the capital with a friend.

Firestone was a Princeton graduate.

But back to the wedding. Miss Parke walked down the aisle of St. John's Episcopal Church in Decatur on her father's arm while organist Edna Bunn played hymns.

Pronounced before Bishop Frank DuMoulin of Cleveland, Ohio, the vows were witnessed by maid of honor Miss Gertrude Parke and matron of honor, Mrs. Donald L. (Lucy Ludington) Lambert. Russell A. Firestone served as best man for his brother.

Among the famous and near-famous in attendance at this wedding, one of the biggest social events in Decatur history, were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford Sr. and Mr. and Mrs. Edsel Ford, all of Dearborn, Mich.

The tie between these two families was strengthened more with the 1947 marriage of Harvey and Elizabeth Firestone's daughter, Martha P., to William C. Ford, a grandson of the elder Fords.

Immediately after the church service a dinner was served for the 225 guests at the Country Club of Decatur.

A large basket of bridal roses adorned the newlyweds' table, which they shared with 25 members of the wedding party and friends.

At one end of the table was the bride's cake, while at the opposite end was a cake for the groom made by a friend in Akron, Ohio.

A dance followed the dinner and the traditional opening of

## Decatur

### Diary

April 4, 1974

with a chest of silver while the best man added a silver tea service to the collection.

The ushers gave a complete set of china.

#### Guests of the Hardings

The newlyweds quickly departed for a honeymoon trip to Lake Louise in Branff, Canada. Shortly after their return they were the guests of President and Mrs. Warren G. Harding at a camp near Hagerstown, Md.

The Henry Fords were also "roughing it" at the week-long camp, as were the Thomas Edisons.

Herald and Review files show that Harvey and Elizabeth Firestone visited Decatur many times after their marriage. Her family still resides here.

Firestone was the kickoff speaker for the \$498,996 United Fund Drive in 1958.

As chief executive officer and chairman of the board of Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. (posts he had held since 1948) Firestone commented on Decatur's expansion over the years.

Specifically Firestone cited the development of Lake Decatur, A. E. Staley Mfg. Co., Caterpillar Tractor Co. and Borg Warner Division of York.

Three years later, on the 40th anniversary of their marriage, the Firestones donated the money for a new parking lot for St. John's Episcopal Church at the corner of Main and Cerro Gordo Streets.

When Firestone next returned to Decatur—in May of 1964, he brought his family's enterprise with him. He was here for three days of dedication ceremonies at the new Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. plant on N. 22nd Street.

Firestone first showed interest in expanding to Decatur April 3, 1962, when he submitted the highest bid for the Decatur Signal Depot.

At the dedication services Firestone cited a strategic location and closeness to markets as prime reasons in the selection of Decatur.

#### Friendliness, Fellowship

In closing remarks Firestone

impelling factor in the selection of this city for our new plant."

Gov. Otto Kerner was likewise delighted with the company's return to Illinois, pointing out that Firestone's father had founded his empire at Chicago in 1896.

Firestone quickly retorted that the company had returned to the state only because a reduced unemployment tax encouraged expansion.

Gov. Kerner was presented with two tires that day: the first one manufactured at the plant, on Feb. 24, 1963, and the two-millionth one, which had just rolled off the production lines earlier that morning.

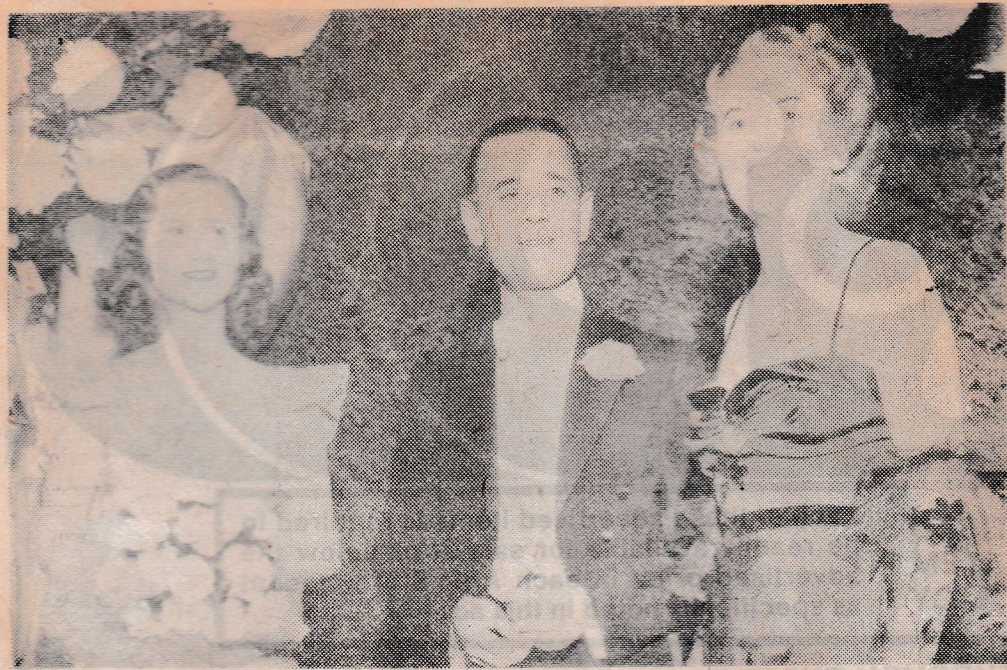
At the time only 600 persons worked at the Decatur Firestone plant, while today more than 2,200 are employed.

The leadership at Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. also has changed over the years. Firestone stepped down as chief executive officer in 1963, but remained chairman of the board until his death 10 years later.

Newspaper files indicate Mrs. Firestone is retired and living at the family home in Akron, Ohio.



Decatur, Illinois, Sunday, April 4, 1976



Harvey and Elizabeth Parke Firestone stand with daughter, Elizabeth, at her debut.

June 28, 1944

## About Town

AN UNEXPECTED event marked the honeymoon of Mr. and Mrs. Guy J. Parke. They had a front room in the Auditorium hotel in Chicago when an automobile, belonging to H. M. Mueller, won the first long distance automobile race through that city. It was on Thanksgiving Day in 1895. It is said that Henry Ford would have liked to have been in Chicago to see the race, but he didn't have money enough.

Mr. Mueller's automobile was known as the "Benz Motor Wagon." It was not known in those days just what to call the new machines. The Times-Herald of Chicago had offered \$500 for a suitable name to replace "horseless carriage."

The Benz Motor Wagon was imported from Germany. The original cost was about \$1,500, with transportation costs approaching the same figure. The Benz was "given many severe tests," according to The Decatur Review of September 1895. One of these was a trip to Springfield and return. The return trip in particular proved very favorable.

The distance of more than 40 miles was covered in about five hours. Stops, amounting to two hours along the way, were deducted from the running time, for as Mr. Mueller said, "the car was given to stopping entirely without reason." Four and one-half gallons of gasoline were used on the trip.

THE LONG DISTANCE race was between Hyde Park, Chicago and Waukegan and return, a distance of 92 miles. Mr. Parke says it didn't look much like a horse race. First one car would come along and then it might be an hour or more before the next one would show up. That didn't mean that the last car wouldn't have a show of winning. Anything could happen.

Mr. Mueller had made provision for having cakes of ice at certain points along the way, with which to cool down his heated engine. It was a wise provision. The race finally narrowed down to two automobiles. One was driven by Charles E. Duryea and the one owned by Mr. Mueller.

Many people who were there to see the start of the race, stayed throughout the day to see the finish. Most of them became discouraged in the cold and returned home, when it began to get dark. When the winning car came in late at night there were less than a hundred people there to see the finish.

MR. DURYEA had the advantage of having "pneumatic tires," while the Benz had solid rubber. The Duryea doubtless would have won the race but for the fact that one of the many teams that became frightened along the route got over onto the left side of the road and Mr. Duryea had to take to the ditch.

When the race was over, Mr. Duryea made this statement: "We made 70 miles in the morning. We had power to spare at all places and we had no occasion to 'get out and push.' Our motor did not stop in the last 20 miles. When the doors closed behind us there was no muddy unhitching, no cleaning, no feeding; it was our faithful servant."

According to records kept at the time, "The speed of the Mueller car ranged as high as 1,168 feet in a minute at times. For 52½ miles a speed of 7½ miles an hour was maintained." Previous to this the Mueller car had "dope a mile" in 4½ minutes, on a race track in Chicago.

L. C. T.



AUTO TRAILS

... TO ...

# MUELLER FACTORIES

AT

Decatur, Illinois  
Sarnia, Ontario  
Port Huron, Mich.



... PRESENTED BY ...

## MUELLER CO.

ESTABLISHED 1857

Decatur, Illinois

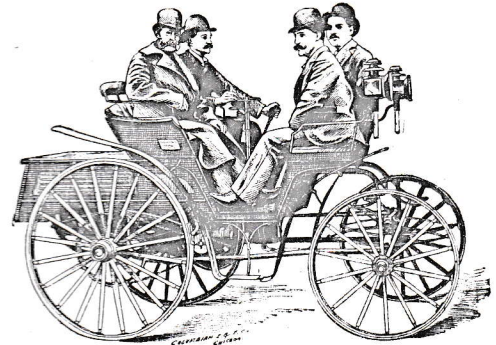
BRANCHES

New York City San Francisco

Los Angeles

## AN HISTORIC AUTOMOBILE

The Mueller Car Won the First Road  
Race Ever Run in America



Rear Seat: Hieronymus and O. B. Mueller  
Front Seat: Robert Mueller and Fred B. Mueller

THIS AUTOMOBILE won the first road race ever run in America in November 1895 at Chicago.

The race was promoted by H. H. Kohlsatt, editor and owner of the Chicago Times-Herald.

The distance was 92 miles covering a course from Jackson Park to Evanston and return, which was covered in 9 hours and 22 minutes actual running time. The judges said the "car stood the test in a magnificent manner".

An interesting incident in this connection was the police objection to the car on the city streets because it "ran so fast, and frightened horses".

At that period there were only 5 or 6 self-propelled vehicles in the United States and the possibility of a practical car of this character for road use was being seriously considered by engineers, scientific men and the public generally. Vehicles of this type were generally referred to as "horseless carriages", "benzine buggies", and "motorcycles".

The word "automobile" had not been included in our language and the adaptation of gasoline as a motive power for a road vehicle was in the early stage of experimentation. The principles involved in the cars of that day remain, but have been fully developed and refined.

Mr. Hieronymus Mueller, a keen student of mechanics and an investigator, attracted by the possibilities of gasoline as a substitute for steam, purchased the automobile from the Benz Co., of Mannheim, Germany. He practically rebuilt it before putting it in use. Crowds blocked the way or pursued it on bicycles when it appeared on the streets.

This automobile was exhibited at the State Fair at Springfield in October 1895, making the run from Decatur over dirt roads, a distance of 40 miles in 5 hours.

When William Jennings Bryan visited Decatur as a presidential candidate in 1896 he rode in the Mueller car—the first automobile ride he ever enjoyed—and one which he has never forgotten.



COUNTY, ILL.

LAKE CITY PUBLISHING CO., CHICAGO  
1893, pp. 294, 295

**V**IRGIL H. PARKE is the senior member of the firm of V. H. Parke & Son, dealers in feed, coal, lime, hair, cement and everything found in a first-class establishment of that kind, and he is located at No. 621 North Main Street, Decatur. He established business in 1886 and is now enjoying a good trade, his patronage having constantly increased from the beginning.

Mr. Parke is a Canadian by birth. He was born in Cobourg, Upper Canada, August 19, 1832, and is a son of Elisha and Abiah (Hickox) Parke. The parents were both natives of New York and were of Scotch descent. The grandfather, Daniel Parke, was born in Scotland, and having crossed the ocean located in Connecticut. Soon afterward, with a Mr. Tuttle, he located in what is now Camden, Oneida County, N. Y., of which place they were the first settlers. Mr. Parke was a farmer by occupation, and died at the age of ninety years, near Camden, N. Y. The maternal grandfather of our subject, David Heicox (for such was the original spelling of the name) was also born in Scotland, and on coming to America located in the Nutmeg State. He was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and also in the War of 1812. Removing to Jefferson County, N. Y., he there made his home until his death, which occurred in Springfield, Ill., while he was on a visit to his sons.

**Elisha Parke, father of our subject, was engaged in harbor building on Lake Ontario for many**

years, in the employ of the British Government. On Christmas Day of 1832, he came to Illinois, locating on a farm twenty-seven miles north of Springfield, in what is now Logan County. He built the first frame house and the first frame barn ever erected in Logan County, and was one of the honored pioneers of that locality. He was a soldier in the War of 1812, having enlisted in the service three times and being twice drafted. His death occurred in 1853, at the age of sixty-two years, and his wife died in 1888, at the age of eighty-eight years. They were members of the Universalist Church.

Our subject is one of a family of twelve children, nine of whom grew to mature years. It was during his infancy that his parents came to Illinois, and upon his father's farm in Logan County he was reared to manhood. His education was acquired in a log schoolhouse, with greased-paper windows and slab seats. As soon as old enough, he began work on the farm and did considerable duty in that direction in 1850, when his father went on a prospecting tour to California, and also while his father was engaged in the supervision of the construction of the locks of the Illinois & Michigan Canal. For that service, Mr. Parke, Sr.,

sum. He was also a great bridge-builder, and built a bridge across the River Trent in Canada, which created as much wonder as the Brooklyn Bridge of to-day. During his father's absence from home, Virgil Parke did much of the farm work. After attaining to man's estate, he entered the Illinois Liberal Institute, of Galesburg, now known as the Lombard University, and pursued a three-years course of study. On its completion he entered the employ of Haggard & Neeley, collection agents of Chicago, taking charge of their business for central Illinois, and was located at Decatur about 1853. After a short time, however, he gave up this work and embarked in the livery business, which he followed for seven years. Afterward he formed a partnership with A. A. Murray, under the firm name of Parke & Murray. They dealt in agricultural implements for a number of years, when his partner left the city, and he continued alone in business until 1886. He then sold out,

and, purchasing the property where he is now located, began business as a dealer in feed, coal, lime, cement, etc., handling twelve hundred to fourteen hundred carloads annually.

Oh the 25th of January, 1858, was celebrated the marriage of Mr. Parke and Ellen E. James, daughter of Dr. Lorenzo and Catherine (Blythe) James, of Atlanta, Ill. Their union was blessed with five children: Cora, Clare V., Jessie, Guy J. and Grace, but only Guy is living. He is now associated in business with his father, having been admitted to partnership in 1887.

During the late war, in company with Theodore Smith, then a dealer in jewelry, Mr. Parke raised a company in Decatur, but as the quota was already filled his troops were not accepted. However, he was later with the Army of the Tennessee for nine months, acting in the capacity of nurse. Socially, he is a member of the Odd Fellows' fraternity, and of Macon Lodge No. 8, A. F. & A. M. His wife is a member of the Episcopal Church. Mr. Parke was one of the original promoters of the Decatur electric street railway, and is still a stockholder in the present company. He has twice served as Alderman of Decatur from the Second Ward, the prompt and efficient manner in which he discharged his duties leading to his re-election. In politics, he was formerly a Republican, but is now a Prohibitionist. He is a man of firm convictions and unwavering in support of what he believes to be right. He resides at No. 307 West William Street, where he has lived for twenty-seven years.



TWENTY-SIX PAGES TODAY

# Guy Parke, 98, Active Business Leader, Dies

Guy James Parke, 98, Decatur businessman since 1887, died yesterday in Decatur and Macon County Hospital.

He had been active in his business up until the time of his death, having been at the Parke & Son office the day before.

The name Parke has been synonymous with Decatur business since 1854 when Virgil H. Parke, father of Guy, went into the livery business on March 6, 1854.

He sold it in 1863 and established a retail farm implement business located on the west side of Lincoln Square.

Guy Parke joined his father in business in 1887, when the firm moved to North Main Street and West Cerro Gordo Street. That location was considered in the "country" at the time.

Prior to joining his father in business he had worked in a Chicago office for a brief period and in Omaha, Neb. in a bank owned by the father of one of his Racine College classmates for one year.

### Storage Rooms

The Parke firm in 1887 sold coal, stock feed and wood. It also operated storage rooms for household goods. This was believed to be the first storage warehouse in Decatur.

Two years later lime, plaster and cement were added. After 1890 the company handled only building materials and remained in the storage business.

The father, Virgil H., retired in 1910 and Guy Parke continued the business under the name of Parke & Son.

In January 1947, Parke Warehouses and Parke & Son Inc. were merged and incorporated under Parke & Son, Inc. Officers were Guy J. Parke, president; Robert F. Watt, vice president; William C. Parke, treasurer and David Stoddard, secretary and assistant treasurer.

William Parke returned to Decatur from New York in June 1947 to join his father in management of the firm.



Guy James Parke

Parke Properties, Inc., which had been incorporated in December 1956, purchased the old Illinois Terminal Railroad Co. shop buildings on East Garfield Avenue in 1956.

At that time, it was announced by Guy Parke that the property would be remodeled into a warehouse development and operated in conjunction with his firm.

### Second Move

In 1958 the offices were moved from 621 N. Main St. to 1800 E. Garfield Ave. This was only the second time the firm had moved since it was started.

In 1961 the Parke parking lot at North Main Street and West Cerro Gordo Street was given to St. John's Episcopal Church.

For many years the company maintained a flower plot at this corner. It attracted citywide interest and was visited by many school children.

\* Many of the flowers in the plot were transplanted from the greenhouse Mr. Parke had at his home. Flowers provided a life-long interest for him.

Another of his interests was the compilation of the Parke family genealogy. This study took the better part of 50 years during which time he engaged researchers in Connecticut and Massachusetts as well as London and various parts of England.

The genealogy has been accepted and authenticated back to Robert Parke in 1400 by the College of Arms in London. This is the official body that passes on all matters of English genealogy.

### Traveled Extensively

Mr. Parke traveled extensively in North America and Europe. He had visited in every state in the union, most of the Canadian provinces, Mexico and the West Indies. The greatest part of the traveling was done after his 85th birthday.

For many years, he was a familiar figure on the streets of downtown Decatur. Each day he walked to his office from his home at 307 W. William St.

The house has been occupied by the Parke family since it was started in September 1864.

In 1963, though he was 90, he appeared at Gastman School to vote in the city primary. At the time he recalled he had gone to school on the same site.

As he left the polling place to accompany his son to the of-

fice, he proudly held up his bare hands though the temperature was below zero and said, "No gloves."

He became ill at his home yesterday morning and was taken to the hospital a few hours before his death at 8:53 p. m.

### Born in Atlanta

Mr. Parke was born in Atlanta on Aug. 19, 1866, a son of Virgil Hickox and Ellen Elizabeth James Parke. Mrs. Parke was visiting her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Lorenzo James, at the time.

On Nov. 27, 1895, he was married to Gertrude Chambers in Omaha, Neb. She died June 17, 1943 in her home.

He leaves two children: a son, William C. Decatur and a daughter, Mrs. Harvey S. (Elizabeth) Firestone Jr., Akron, Ohio.

Harvey S. Firestone Jr. is chairman of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.

Mr. Parke also leaves five grandchildren and seventeen great-grandchildren.

He was a member of St. John's Episcopal Church.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete at Dawson & Wikoff Funeral Home.

Friends may contribute to the Decatur and Macon County Hospital fund, the family said.

The greenhouse, which is at the rear of the lot, 307 W. William, continues in use. (1974).