

'Bubble Nose' Featured In Tow-Truck Museum

by Gerald Scott News Dept.

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. – Is there a motorist alive whose car has never broken down, and they've never been towed to a repair shop?

Being towed to a repair shop by a tow-truck, or wrecker, is a rite of passage for every motorist in the land, it seems.

Here in Southeast Tennessee, there is actually something called the International Towing & Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum.

That's right – a tow-truck museum.

And a fine one it is as this Tennessee-based nonprofit entity has gathered one of the finest such collections of antique tow-trucks in the land.

According to the video that introduces the collection to visitors, "The International Towing & Recovery Museum is a great way to learn about this unique and interesting industry that keeps our highways moving," says the narrator.

"It's located on Broad Street (in Chattanooga) at the foot of Lookout Mountain, on the way to Rock City and Ruby Falls (tourist attractions). It's a must-see for all automotive and mechanical enthusiasts."

A wide variety of 20th century tow-trucks are included in the static exhibit, including those made from heavy trucks manufactured by GM, Ford and Chrysler.

Visitors can enjoy restored antique wreckers and equipment, industry-related displays of collectible toys, tools, unique equipment, and pictorial histories of manufacturers who pioneered a worldwide industry.

Chattanooga, Tennessee, was chosen as the museum's home because the industry's first wrecker was fabricated approximately three-and-a-half miles away from the museum at the Ernest Holmes Company.

One such wrecker of note on display is a 1943 W-45 edition manufactured right there in Tennessee.

"This wrecker was manufactured in Chattanooga by the Ernest Holmes Co. from 1941 until 1949. A total of 7,238 units were built," the exhibit says.

"This wrecker was manufactured in early 1943 and has a rating of 15 tons. The truck was assigned on Feb. 12, 1943. The wrecker was used in France, after the invasion in conjunction with the Red Ball Express.

"The Red Ball Express was

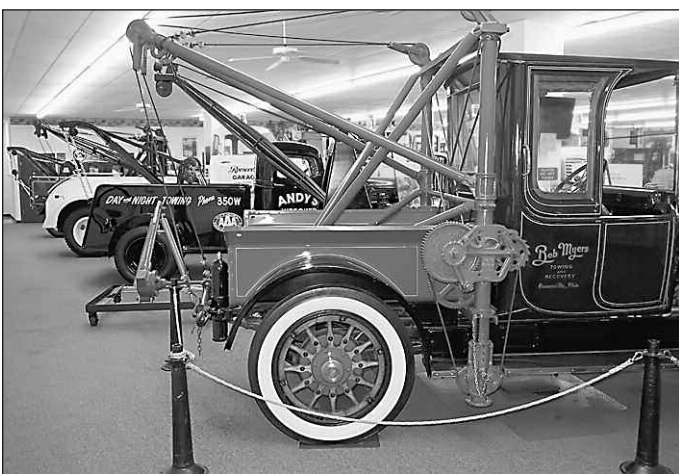


PHOTO: BILL SPRINGER

The International Towing & Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum in Chattanooga is the nation's foremost collection of classic early- to mid-20th century tow-trucks and wreckers.

the Army truck line that delivered critically needed supplies to the front lines during World War II.

"This wrecker was used by the U.S. Army until December, 1947, when it was given to the French Army. It was sold at an auction in 1973 to a garage near Metz, France, but was never used.

"It was purchased in 1980 by a Mr. Becker, a collector in Luxemburg. Due to a lack of storage space, he sold it to Nicolas Georges of Jige International (a manufacturer of towing and recovery equipment in France).

"This truck was returned to Chattanooga on Dec. 18, 1997, and has been on display at the museum since its return."

Automotive and history



PHOTO: BILL SPRINGER

The Towing Museum in Chattanooga has this neat diorama showcasing a "mountain crash" with wrecker support. The Museum has real-sized GM, Ford and Chrysler-based tow-trucks.

and used it for towing school buses.

"Later the tractor suffered from a failure in the water pump and the bus company was unable to locate a replacement so they discarded the truck.

"It took two years of diligent searching, but George did finally locate a water pump that could be machined to fit and continued to finish his project.

"Bubble Nose had been seen in many parades throughout its life with the Lanser family and now it proudly shines within the museum walls."

Wreckers and tow-trucks are more interesting than we give them credit for, as this thriving museum proves.

Although "wreckers" were long considered by the auto industry as a niche market ve-

hicle, the Museum helps establish just how important these vehicles were over the years.

Maybe best of all, from a Detroit point of view, is that they have wreckers based on GM, Ford and Chrysler heavy truck vehicles.

Perhaps unknown to the public is the fact that the base truck and the towing mechanism and hook almost never came from the same OEM.

Rather, industrial vendors like the Ernest Holmes Company in Tennessee made the peripheral equipment while Detroit tended to make the trucks, at least as far as the 20th century goes.

Most modern cars cannot be safely towed with a hook anymore, hence the growth of the flatbed truck, a far less glamorous commodity compared to what's on display.

Chrysler Hosts Supplier Week

Chrysler Group has opened registration for the first of its two annual Supplier Training weeks, which will be held April 30-May 4 at CTC headquarters in Auburn Hills.

The training provides each supplier or candidate a unique opportunity to add value to both sides of the supplier-OEM partnership.

It is designed to open the lines of communications between the two, improve efficiency and quality and help build a solid working relationship.

Supplier Training Week will offer 80 instructor-led training sessions in the areas of Purchasing, Risk Manage-

ment, Engineering, Quality, Supply Chain Management, Manufacturing, Mopar and Finance. To register for Supplier Training Week, visit <https://ChryslerPortal.Covisint.com> or <http://www.ChryslerTraining.com>.

Regular Registration (\$60) for the event will close on April 26. Walk-in registrations will be accepted during training week at a registration fee of \$100. As a new STW initiative, a \$25 Mopar service voucher will be included with each paid registration. This voucher can be used toward the purchase of a service or product at any participating Chrysler dealership.

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