



Amery Area Historical Society

Historical Sites



Fay Auto Building
1911

Fay Auto Building



1911 Studebaker E-M-F 30

The Fay Auto Company on Keller Avenue was one of the key businesses of Amery's developing retail sector during the last century. Its history parallels that of the automotive era. Emmett M Fay began selling automobiles in September 1911, continuing until 1943, with subsequent owners occupying the same space until May 1998 when the place of business moved to an expanded area in south Amery. Despite ownership changes, the name never changed until it was purchased by Larsen's in 2003. As of 2013, it became Amery Chevrolet.

Fay Auto opened for business in September 1911 and began selling Studebaker products which were advertised as "Flanders 20" and "E.M.F. 30" cars. The latter had the same initials as Emmett M Fay, agent for the cars. Ford car sales started later.

Amery car owners and prospective owners had already formed the Amery Automobile Club in July 1911. The primary object of the club was to "stimulate the building and maintenance of good roads, stop reckless driving and in general further the sport of motoring". The

officers included locals S.L. Pennington, Dr. H.B. Commett, George W. Miller, E..J.Schneider, J.G.Burman, and W.T. Kennedy.

The first car owner in Amery was C.O. Danielson, who purchased a Cadillac. In June 1913, the Amery Free Press published a list of forty one owners of automobiles in Amery and the immediate vicinity: 21 Ford Model T, 8 Studebaker '20' and '30' models, 2 Cadillac, 1 Stearns, 1 Overland, and 8 miscellaneous. Over 90 percent had been sold by Fay Auto.

Sales increased rapidly. The Amery Free Press reported regularly on the carloads of automobiles delivered to Fay. In 1914, a total of 140 Fords were sold by Fay besides about 25 Overlands and five or six Hudson 'Sixes'. In 1915, Fay contracted for 175 Fords plus 'baby' Overlands for the local market. They came directly from the factory and were shipped knocked down and assembled after arrival.

During the late 1920s, Fay shifted to selling Chevrolets and other General Motors Products. The Centennial Book of 1987 relates that Fay quit selling Fords and began selling Chevrolets because Ford wanted him to sell some coal they had shipped to him without his consent. The Ford dealership passed to other businesses in Amery in the late 1920s.

With the expansion of automobile ownership, the demand for better roads grew, especially to bring goods to market. An annual "Good Roads Day" was organized by Amery's local government beginning in 1917. A June 25, 1918 notice in the Amery Free Press asked "every man and boy of Amery and surrounding country is urged and expected to be on the job to help in the good work. Amery men are to meet in front of the Rest Rooms at 6:30 in the morning bringing with them some implements...Men from the surrounding country should gather at the John Young corner east of Amery or at the gravel pit on the Deronda road west of Amery just west of the Lund hill." Workers were admonished to bring their tools, preferably shovels.

Emmett Fay, Pioneer Resident, Dies

Another colorful chapter in the history of this community closed forever with the death Saturday evening of E. M. Fay, octogenarian pioneer businessman and resident of Amery.

Death resulted from a condition arising through the consumption of an anti-freeze, presumed to be a bottle of pop, Friday, July 1. While Mr. Fay continued to fight off the effects through the days that followed, his physical condition was not strong enough and he passed from this life at about 11 p. m. Saturday evening in Miller hospital, St. Paul.



EMMETT FAY
(1868-1949)

WE REPAIR

Steam Engines, Gasoline Engines
Spark Coils, Cream Separators, etc.,
All work promptly done. Prices right

FAY AUTO CO.

1913

Runabout Seating Two **\$750** With Extra Seat (Seating 4) as shown above \$48 Extra.
Price F. O. B. Dealer

1911 Studebaker Flanders 20

Fay Auto occupied four lots on the east side of Keller Avenue (lots 7,8,9 and 10 in block 6 of Amery's original plat) at its peak. The concrete building (lots 9 and 10) where car repair took place was built in 1911 and is now the Farm Table Restaurant. Fay purchased this land in 1904 when he and his brother Jean established a livery. Fred Paulson says there was evidence in a corner of the garage floor where the livery horses had been shod.

Lot 8 was acquired by Fay in September 1914 to accommodate his growing business. Lot 7 is adjacent to the Country Hearth restaurant. These two lots have brick buildings with the work done by local masons, Nels and son Melvin Framstad, in 1919 after the land had been purchased by Fay.

Lars Anderson was the first purchaser of lots 9 and 10 in 1892. W.W.Winchester wrote "it was customary, if you wished to take a trip into the country, to call on Lars Anderson at his livery stable where you could get a team and buggy or cutter and drive yourself, or have someone else drive for you."

Many individuals and businesses operated in these lots after the initial land transfers from the Sault Saint Marie Land and Improvement Company in the late 1880s. They included: a general store of Nils Benson and Solomon Anderson; a blacksmith shop of H.D. DeGolier; a grocery owned by James Jeffers and W.H. Holliday that later became a saloon. Another name associated with these properties was W.D. Thompson who farmed near Volga and in retirement operated a livery for 8 years in the 1890s.

From 1898 to 1911, the Amery Electric Company, forerunner of the Amery Telephone Company and Northwest Communications, was housed on the second floor of lot 7. One long time business in lot 7 was Art Sjobeck (and his son Les) who had a men's clothing business from the 1920s until 1962, after which Fay Auto used the space for its offices.

In 1943, Emmett Fay sold the auto business to Guy Aubrey, Joye L. Johnson, and Chuck Dean. Dean and A.A. (Tony) Paulson purchased the business in 1950. Tony Paulson became sole owner in 1952 and was dealer-operator until 1980 when his son, Fred Paulson, assumed ownership. Fred operated the dealership in its downtown location until 1998 when he constructed a new facility on the south edge of Amery. It was sold to Terry Larsen and Mark Schaefer in December 2002 and is now owned solely by Schaefer.

In 2014, Kari Wenger and Peter Henry purchased the four lots and renovated the structures with close attention to the original construction.

Their principal business involved bringing local food from farms to the community of Amery. The Farm Table restaurant was opened in 2014 on the south portion of the buildings. On the north lots, a non-profit, Hungry Turtle Institute, began holding classes and events emphasizing cooking and processing of local produce. Together the businesses formed the Amery Food Hub, with the intention of helping small local farms find markets and more closely integrate with the community of Amery.

AMERY FREE PRESS, THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 1917

THE FAY AUTO COMPANY - E. M. FAY, Prop.

The first garage in Amery was built by the Fay Auto Company in September, 1911. The size of the original structure was 50x80 feet; but the automobile business increased so rapidly that within two years more room was required and an addition of 40x50 feet was added. Yet even this soon proved to be inadequate and a year ago the company bought the building adjoining the garage on the north; this building is now chiefly used as a storeroom.

The Fay auto garage is one of the best equipped in the county, and in its storeroom, repair shop and wash room everything that can add to the pleasure and convenience of the automobile user is provided. The repair shop contains various power presses, a drill press, and a generator set for recharging any make of battery. The stock of extras constantly kept on hand for the various makes of cars is very large—the value of the extras for the Ford car alone is estimated to exceed fifteen hundred dollars. One of the things that is of great convenience to the patrons of the garage is the air press by means of which they are enabled, free of charge and without labor on their part, to have their automobile tires inflated whenever necessary.

The Ford, Buick, Dodge and Mitchell cars are sold by the Fay Auto Co. and the concern does a larger business than any other automobile dealer in the county, clearly indicating the popularity of the makes of cars handled as well as the kind of treatment given the customers.

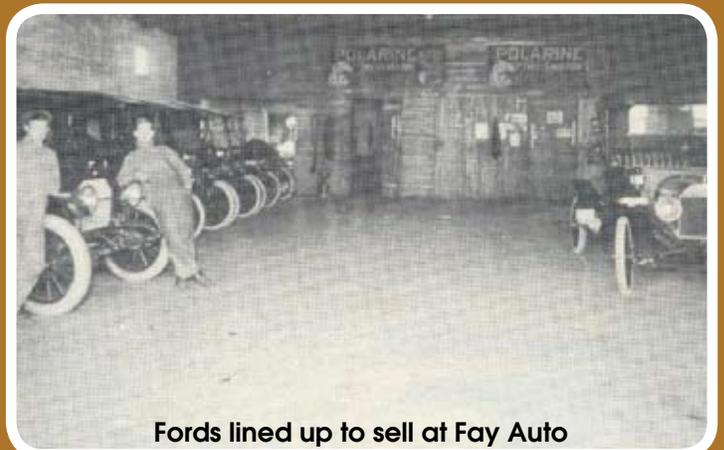
E. M. Fay, owner of the Fay Auto Company, has been a resident of Amery for more than twenty-four years. In 1895 he and his brother, J. J. Fay, engaged in the livery business under the name of Fay Bros. In 1902 J. J. Fay sold his interest to W. R. Taylor and during the next two years the firm name was Fay & Taylor. In 1904 Fay & Taylor sold the business to Edw. McHenry. However, the following year E. M. Fay again acquired possession of the livery barn and ran the business till 1912 when he sold to J. N. Josephson. Since then Mr. Fay has devoted all his time to the automobile business.

In connection with this it is interesting to note that E. M. Fay was the first person to ship a full carload of buggies and also the first carload of automobiles into Amery. He was also the first man to receive a full car of lubricating oil.

Research for brochure by JoAnn Hallquist.



1912 Ford Model T



Fords lined up to sell at Fay Auto

The Amery Area Historical Society (AAHS)
collects and preserves the heritage of the local area.



This historic site brochure is an activity of the
Cathy Haug Memorial Project of the AAHS.



The AAHS welcomes your participation
as donors and members.



Amery Area Historical Society
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(lower level of the Amery Area Public Library)