MONTEVALLO
Main Street
Memories

Carpenter Brothers Garage

by Clay Nordan
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Carpenter Brothers Garage opened on Middle Street in 1919 in a tin-sided building constructed specifically for auto repair and service. It was next door to the building that housed the original Montevallo Cleaners. The Carpenter brothers' father had been in the shoe repair business in Montevallo for many years and is mentioned in Eloise Meroney's "Montevallo: The First 100 Years" as at one time operating a Shoe Shop and Meat Market on the corner of Main Street where Smitherman's is today. When the garage opened on Middle Street, his sons provided old Mr. Carpenter space in their building for his shoe repair business. The door on the left led into the shoe shop. The door on the right led into the garage office.

For mechanical repair work, the garage had a front and side entrance, both wide enough to drive a truck through, so that multiple vehicles could be brought in and worked on at the same time. Compared to the spic-and-span auto dealer service departments and independent repair shops that we are accustomed to today, Carpenter's was grimy, bare-bones, and basic. The front entrance had a short concrete apron that led into the service area, but it quickly gave way to raw dirt for the rest of the interior. Over the years, the dirt floor soaked up enormous amounts of grease and oil which heavy cars and trucks packed down into something resembling a hard floor as they were driven in and out for repairs. The stench of petroleum mixed with soil permeated the entire operation year round.

In addition to doing standard auto repair work, the Carpenter brothers also sold gasoline and had a single pump for regular gas positioned near their entrance on the street. They didn't sell nearly as much gas as the Shell station across the street, but they would interrupt their repair work to pump a few dollars worth if a customer wanted it. They had a tow truck and offered 24 hour wrecker service. In the book "Time Has Made a Change in Me", Mike Mahan tells the story that when his father, the fire chief, would get a call telling him that there was a fire somewhere, he would sprint to the city hall from his house on Shelby Street and activate the fire siren, which would summon volunteer fire fighters to the little shed behind Montevallo Motors where the fire truck was kept.

When the siren started to wail, the Carpenter brothers' tow-truck became an integral piece of fire-fighting equipment for the city. Brewer Carpenter drove the truck home every night so it would be close at hand. When he heard the siren, he knew to make a dash to his truck and quickly drive it to the fire station. More often than not, the fire truck would not crank, so Brewer would hitch it up to his tow-truck and tow "Little Red" to the fire so that it's water pumps could be engaged to battle the blaze.

Carpenter Brothers Garage lasted into the early 1970's when age caught up with the brothers and the business closed for good. The old tin-sided building has since been replaced by a two story office and apartment building.

Brewer Carpenter was the youngest of the mechanically minded Carpenter Brothers. He and older brother Bill were the stereotypical self-taught auto mechanics, found in every small town in the decades following the invention of the automobile.

CARPENTER BROS. GARAGE
Cars Polished and Washed $1.25
All Work Guaranteed
Open Till Midnight
Woco Pep Gas
Phone 46-W
Wrecker Service

From AL College student newspaper, 1931.

Veterans Wreaths will be laid this year at Montevallo City Cemetery on December 19, 2026.
Order your wreaths now for $17 each at WWW.HISTORICMONTEVALLO.ORG

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MONTEVALLO MAIN STREET MEMORIES is adapted from the series, THROWBACK THURSDAY, a **Montevallo Historical Society** and **Montevallo Main Street** partnership started in 2018. Each installment revisits commercial and residential life on Main Street and in the downtown area in the early to mid-twentieth century. The series remains available online and may be viewed at **www.historicmontevallo.org** under "Local History".