

BY CHUB DE WOLFE

A COUSIN of Barney Oldfield, one of Toledo's gifts to the sports world along the racing line, verifies the statement made here



Chub DeWolfe

that the lad was born in a log cabin. "He happens to be a cousin of mine," says Mrs. Blanche Hull Moffatt, 1518 Addington Rd., a teacher in Gunckel School. "I know where that cabin stood. It was on the southeast corner of the Chicago Pike, two miles north of

Wauseon, at the crossing. I have heard my mother tell of pioneer days when the Chicago Pike was a plank road, made of planks cut from logs of the primeval forest."

Mrs. Moffatt divulges another most interesting fact concerning Barney. She says that his real name is Burnside rather than Barney and that he was named for General Burnside. Barney and Mrs. Moffatt's brother were the same age, the brother being Ed Hull, and the two spent a lot of time at the Hull home in Delta.

"Ed had some trained pigs that had been taught to go through hoops," Mrs. Moffatt says. "Dr. A. M. Wilkins helped to train the pigs and the boys gave shows for the children of the town. They also used Dr. Bishop's horse in their shows, the horse being too old for country driving. Dr. P. S. Bishop, Fred Longnecker and the crowd all grew up together. You should hear Dr. Wilkins tell of the stunts they performed on their circus horse."

"I sleep every night in Barney's great-grandmother's spindle bed, which has four posts and it has quite a history. Booth Tarkington's 'Penrod' has nothing on Barney and the boys in that small town of the midwest. Barney is with the new Fox Hills Cafe next door to the Century-Fox place in Los Angeles. A note here at Christmas says he has turned his Country Club Bar into a chicken ranch and has 200 chickens and three cows. His wife runs the ranch and he sells chicken dinners at the cafe. At one time he owned the largest bar on the coast—a mile long."

Blade

May 12, 1943

CYCLING.

The Madison county fair opened at Elwood, Ind., yesterday under favorable prospects and with full entries in every department. Yesterday was bicycle day and there were six races, winner and time as follows: One mile novice, Foust, Morris, Foland; time, 2:47½. Boys under 16, one-half mile race, Foust, Moose, Teeter; time, 1:19. Open half mile, Parrish, Wolfe, Gardy; time, 1:37½. 2.30 class, Parrish, Wolf, David; time, 2:56½. Open mile, Parrish, David, Heller; time, 2:37½.

Several thousand persons enjoyed the national circuit bicycle races yesterday afternoon at Woodlawn oval, at Saratoga. Summary:

Half mile open, professional; final heat won by A. D. Kennedy; Tom Butler, second; O. L. Stevens, third. Time, 1:04 1-5.

One mile open, professional; final heat won by Tom Butler; F. V. Rigby, second; A. D. Kennedy, third. Time, 2:13.

Two mile handicap, professional, won by W. S. Pecker; Floyd McFarland, second; J. B. Dowler, third. Time, 4:30.

The following special dispatch is from Wauseon, O.: "The circuit of bicycle races recently organized at Toledo under the management of E. H. Tellam, will open here on Saturday, August 29. The circuit includes the following towns: Wauseon, Bryan, Kendallville, Goshen, Warsaw, Columbus City, Fort Wayne, Defiance, Napoleon, Tiffin, Fostoria, Shelby, Marion, Mt. Vernon, Newark, Bucyrus, Adrian, Mont-

pellier, Ann Arbor and Flint, closing at the latter place on October 10. The professional riders who have formed the syndicate to conduct the circuit and who will follow are: Ernie and Lottie Johnson, and Dr. A. I. Brown, of Cleveland; Eddie McKeane; Dayton; Bernie Oldfield, Fred Schrein, Ollie Bernhart, Hall and Blouin, of Toledo; Clark Brown, Butler; Peltier and Black, Fort Wayne. Among the amateurs will be, Mike Hockstetter, Earle Farer, Claude Doty, Eddie Rainier, Wolfert, Ballantine, Ray Samberg and Harry Marsh. R. G. McDonald, the would-be Toledo race meet promoter, is not connected in any way whatever with the enterprise.

The professional prizes will be \$50, \$25 and \$10 gold, and the amateur prizes will be to the value of \$25, \$10 and \$5.

Following is the programme at Wauseon, Saturday, August 29: Four professional events, four amateur events, tandem race, exhibition mile by Bernie Oldfield, paced by two triplets, in an attempt to lower the state record of 1.57 2-5. Work was begun on the track this morning, and everything will be put in good shape. A rate of \$1 from Toledo has been obtained, and a large crowd is expected."

JEFFERSONIAN PARTY,

Gold Democrats of Pennsylvania
Adopt a Name.

Philadelphia, Aug. 26.—The gold standard Democrats of Pennsylvania met in this city yesterday, nominated national electors and delegates to the Indianapolis convention and adopted a vigorous platform responsive to their views on the money question, and denouncing, in unmeasured terms the nominees chosen and the principles declared at Chicago.

With this convention a new state party came into existence to be known henceforth as the "Jeffersonian party," singularly enough, its birthplace was Musical Fund Hall where, 40 years ago, was held the first national convention of the Republican party.

"Always Gives Entire Satisfaction," so say all who use The Blade's Tea Late to Classify Want Columns.

Great Racer Dies



BARNEY OLDFIELD

Blade 10-5-46

Barney Oldfield Taken By Death

Famous Daredevil Raced In Toledo

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Oct. 5 (AP) — Barney Oldfield, who courted sudden death hundreds of times on the racetracks, succumbed peacefully today to a heart attack. He was 68.

The cigar-chewing Oldfield, first and greatest of the daredevils who swung crude machines around sharp, unbanked dirt turns to give sports fans a new thrill early in the century, had in late years become a crusader for traffic safety. Early this year he made his last swing around the country, preaching careful driving.

His wife, Bessie, found him dead in bed. Earlier, when she went outside to get a newspaper, he was slumbering. Death apparently came without warning, although he had complained yesterday of neck pains.

Oldfield's name was synonymous with auto racing from 1902 to his retirement in 1918 and before that in bicycle circles around Toledo. Henry Ford once said of him "the man did not know what fear was." Oldfield first drove Ford's famous "999."

Berna Eli Oldfield, as he was christened, was born in Wauseon, O., Jan. 29, 1878. He went to Detroit originally as a bicycle rider and was a close friend of the late Tom Cooper, a champion of champions in the field of bicycle racing. Cooper became associated with Ford and this led to the Oldfield interest in old "999."

*Blade
10-5-46*

Oldfield Got Lust For Speed On Toledo Bike

Story of Mr. Oldfield's Death on
Blade Page 10 10-5-46

Barney Oldfield, who died yesterday in Beverly Hills, Calif., spent the early years of his life in Toledo and it was here that he developed the taste for speed which was to bring him international fame.

His family moved to Toledo from his Wauseon, O., birthplace while Mr. Oldfield was very young. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Oldfield, Barney, and a daughter, Bertha. All now are dead.

Father Caretaker

The father was employed as a caretaker at the Toledo State Hospital and lived near South and Spencer Sts., George H. Yarnell, 812 Wright Ave., cousin of Barney, recalled today.

Mr. Yarnell said he last saw his cousin five years ago when the latter was the star attraction at a rodeo in Detroit.

Bicycle Pilot

Barney Oldfield was associated with the Gendron Wheel Co. and the Yost Manufacturing Co. in Toledo in the hey-day of the bicycle's popularity. He began his racing career piloting the products of those firms.

Subsequent employment as a mechanic with the manufacturers of the old Pope-Toledo and other early automobiles drew Mr. Oldfield into his later activities as a driver of racing cars.



BARNEY OLDFIELD:

He Got A Fast Start In Toledo

By WILLIAM NOLAN

Barney Oldfield, as most everyone knows, is a legendary racing figure. The following story of Oldfield's early life in Wauseon and Toledo is taken from the new book, "Barney Oldfield," copyright 1961 by William F. Nolan, and is reprinted by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"During the war I made a promise to a bunkmate of mine, Berna Shoemaker," said Hank. "Told him if I ever had a son I'd name the boy after him. So that's what we'll do. We'll call him Berna."

Thus, on Jan. 29, 1878, in a modest log cabin two miles north of Wauseon, York Township, Fulton County, Ohio, Berna Eli Oldfield was born.

Berna attended elementary classes at the "little white school-house," at the corner of Elm and Clinton in Wauseon, while his parents struggled to eke out a bare living for Berna and his sister. In 1889, after a particularly severe winter, they came to a decision. They would leave the farm and head for Toledo. Henry was certain that he could find steady work there, and Sarah agreed. She knew that it would also mean better schooling for Berna, and she had long since lost her taste for the bitter, dawn-till-dark work on the farm.

Originally surrounded on three sides by vast swamps, Toledo had been developed by New Englanders who came down Lake Erie on their way to settle the West. Built on the banks of the Maumee River, the town was a center for the shipment of coal and iron ore. It was also a thriving rail center, with the great steam locomotives adding their strident bells and whistles to the deep bass moan of the lake freighters.

By 1892, the citizens of Toledo, along with the rest of America, had adopted cycling as a national pastime and the now familiar lyrics of "Daisy Bell" ("... you'll look sweet upon the seat of a bicycle built for two") attested to the immense popularity of this challenger to the horse and buggy.

BARNEY OLDFIELD'S father, Henry Clay Oldfield, was an Ohio farmer, whose father and grandfather before him had tilled the soil. A sun-bronzed, hard-muscled breed, they were outdoorsmen with a deep and instinctive love for the rich land which fed them. The family name derived from Aldfield—old field—in Yorkshire, and for several generations Oldfield's ancestors had lived in England.

When Henry returned to Ohio after the Civil War, he bought a quarter section of farmland near the small village of Wauseon in the northwest part of the state, then proceeded to pay court to Sarah, the young daughter of Eli Yarnell, the town's blacksmith.

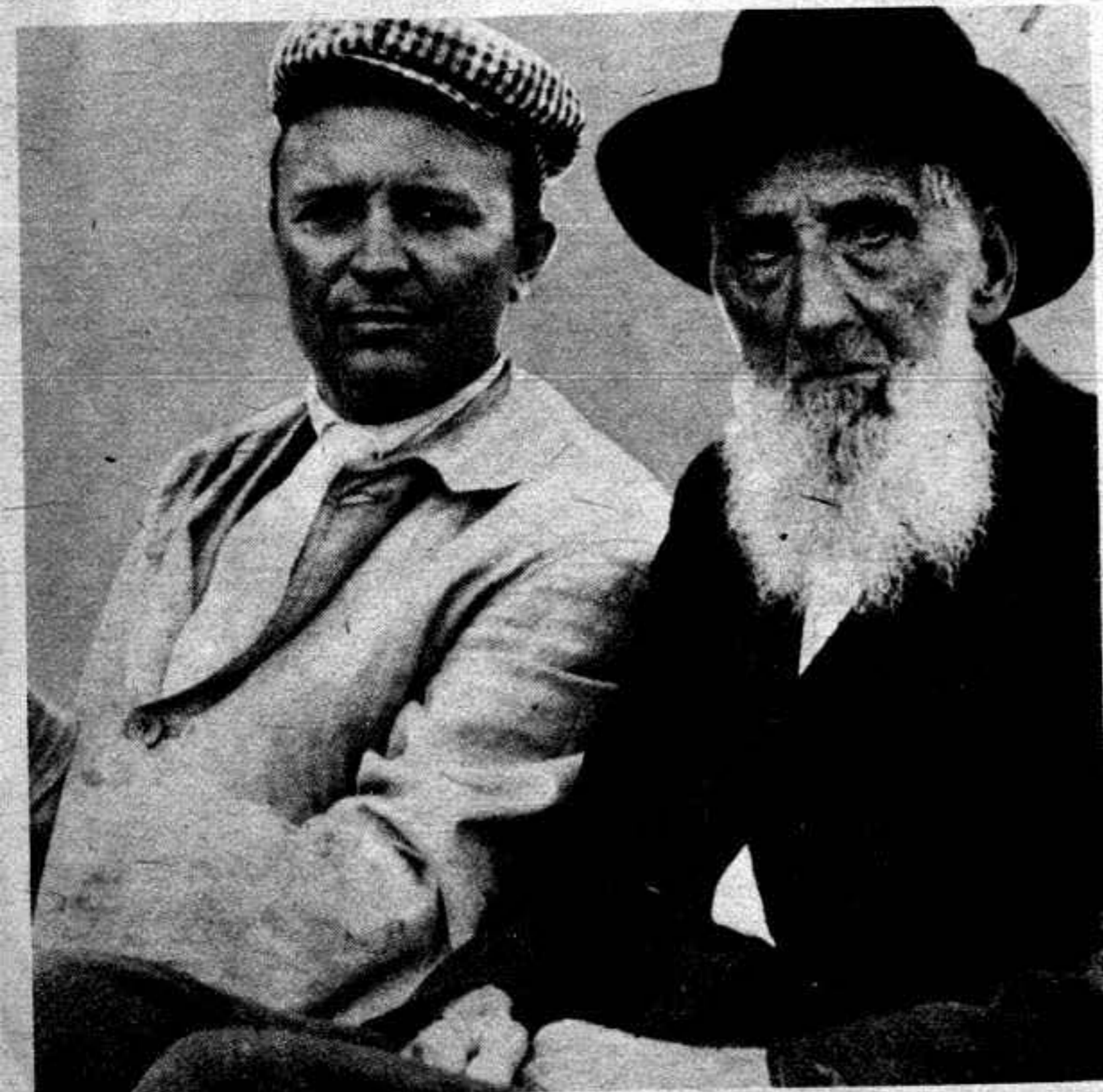
"Marry me, and I'll build you a fine log cabin," he promised her. "I've already got the land. Now I need a wife."

Sarah said yes. She had fallen deeply in love with Hank, and now they would work the land and raise a family.

A baby girl, Bertha, was their firstborn, followed two years later by a son.

◀ BARNEY and his grandfather pose in Wauseon. Barney was born near Wauseon, but moved to Toledo in 1889 when he was 11 years old.

THERE weren't too many pictures taken of Barney Oldfield when he wasn't on the move. This early portrait was made when he was interested in bicycle racing.



From Marilyn Gray, Delta, Ohio

Racing Great,
 Born Near Wauseon.
 Gained Fame
 As Bicycle Rider
 Before Turning
 To Automobiles



At 14, Berna Oldfield was also bitten by the cycling bug, and his primary aim in life was the acquisition of his own bicycle. He began saving pennies toward this goal. That summer, during his vacation from school, he talked himself into the job of water boy on a railroad section gang, earning a dollar a day for his efforts.

On Sundays he'd spend most of the afternoon at the local fire house, hoping for a sudden conflagration. As mascot he was allowed to ride the big red hose wagon, while a snorting pair of powerful horses pulled it, at full gallop, through Toledo streets. Since he could not as yet afford a bicycle, the fire wagon had to suffice. Speed had already become a strong intoxicant to young Berna.

"Some day I'll own the fastest cycle in the whole wide world," he told his parents. "People will come from a thousand miles away, just to watch me ride it!"

During the fall of 1893, Berna Oldfield (still dreaming of bicycles) permanently laid aside his school books to take a full-time job with his father at a Toledo mental institution. The money Berna brought home hawking both *The Blade* and *Bee* had not been sufficient to meet family needs, and so he joined Henry Oldfield as a kitchen helper at the asylum. The work was arduous and ill-paying, and Berna was in a continual state of unease around the patients. Therefore, when he was offered the chance to become a bellhop at Toledo's renowned hostelry, the Boody House, he readily accepted.

With his quick smile and gregarious nature Oldfield was popular member of the staff, garnering enough in tips to convince him that a winning personality paid off. Here, at the Boody, he began to develop his natural ability to deal with the public. It was here, also, that his famous nickname was born.

"Hey, Barney!" shouted the bell captain, on a busy afternoon. "The gent in 211 needs some ice water."

"The name's Berna," Oldfield corrected him.

"Nuts to Berna," snapped the older boy. "That's for sissies. You're no sissy, are ya?"

Oldfield reddened, fists doubling. He considered the question. Then

(Please Turn The Page)

◀ CONFIDENCE is one ingredient Barney Oldfield always had when he entered a bicycle race. This picture was taken when he was 18.

Barney Oldfield In Toledo (Continued)

he sighed. "Okay," he told the bell captain, "around here I'm Barney."

The nickname stuck. Even his family began using it—and when he again switched jobs, to become an elevator operator at the Monticello Hotel, the salary checks were made out to Barney Oldfield.

Bicycle racing had now become a universal sport, and the exploits of daring speed-cyclists provided exciting news copy. Young Barney religiously perused each new account, envisioning himself at the head of a frustrated pack of desperately pedaling champions, none of whom could catch him. His dreams began to assume a more solid shape when he was at last able to purchase a cycle of his own, a standard Dauntless with pneumatic tires. But the heavy Dauntless failed to give him the speed he required and he knew it would prove hopeless in competition.

Then Oldfield made a discovery. One of the Monticello's tenants, R. D. Merrill, owned a lightweight Cleveland cycle which he stored each night in the hotel basement. It was a simple matter for Barney to appropriate the bike each evening after Mr. Merrill had retired, returning it to its berth before the owner awakened. Thus, in numerous moonlit excursions over the deserted streets of Toledo, Barney practiced fast riding.

In the spring of the following year, at 16, Berna Eli Oldfield entered his first race.

Seventeen youthful cyclists lined up in East Toledo on May 30, 1894, for the demanding cross-country event which was routed through Perrysburg and Maumee, ending in Walbridge Park. The starting field included some of the town's best amateur riders, and scant attention was given to the entry of B. Oldfield, on a borrowed Royal Flush model. In such a rugged contest, covering some 18 miles of varied terrain, a beginner was not expected to finish among the first 10.

Barney had other ideas. In his mind's eye, the victory was already his, and he was coolly determined to demonstrate his basic superiority.

Once the race got under way, however, Oldfield's coolness vanished with the rush of passing cycles. He was already lagging sadly back, despite his best efforts. But the boy learned fast. He noted that the leaders hunched very low over the handle bars; he'd been sitting too erect. He began to move

up, and when the field swept through Perrysburg like a formation of low-flying geese he was closing rapidly on the leaders.

Pedaling furiously, breath burning like hot smoke in his lungs, Barney passed one competitor after another. As the cyclists dipped into Walbridge Park, Oldfield was riding a tight third, and in the finishing stretch, with a final burst of effort from his aching leg muscles, he sailed over the line to score a hard-won second place.

That evening, still tasting the near victory, he flourished his prize before the amused eyes of his parents.

"Look, Ma, I won a gen-u-ine guaranteed diamond ring!" He twisted the stone until it sparkled under the lamplight. "And do you know what the man told me it was worth?"

"I have no idea," smiled Sarah.

"Said it was worth a fortune! No foolin' he did. Said it was worth \$25!"

His self-confidence restored by this initial performance in competition, Barney grew more ambitious. He financed a trip to Detroit (with money he received by pawning the diamond ring) and boldly entered the Hilsendegen Bicycle Race, a punishing 25-miler on Belle Island. Outclassed and exhausted, he dropped from the contest a few miles short of the finish, complaining of a severe pain in his chest.

Here, as in Toledo, he had learned something important: victory called for more than skill and a fighting spirit; it involved a high degree of physical stamina, coupled with an ability to pace over the entire distance, to gauge one's strength, apportioning it out gradually and reserving just enough for the final sprint to the wire.

Other races followed, and Barney also discovered that serious competition among some of the cycle veterans often became a case of dangerous wheel-tangling, handle-bar-hooking tactics employed to eliminate stubborn novices.

When Oldfield returned to his elevator job at the Monticello that winter his collarbone had been broken twice in vicious spills.

Anxious for personal independence, Barney's parents had invested what they'd been able to put aside in a small ice-cream parlor on Main Street in Toledo. Alarmed by their son's intense participation in what Hank considered "a fool's game," they



WILLIAM NOLAN
Author of 'Barney Oldfield'

asked Barney to join them in the new venture.

"You're going to end up with every bone in your body broken at this rate," his father said. "You've got to settle down and make us proud of you."

"That's just what I figure to do," declared Barney. "Only—you've gotta let me do it my way. I've been contacted by the Dauntless factory. They want me to ride for them at Canton in the state championship meet." Barney hesitated. "And I said I would."

Hank drew a long breath. He turned to his wife. "He's almost a man, Sarah. And a man makes his own decisions." He grinned at Barney. "Go to Canton, son. And good luck!"

The Ohio State Championship Races, run in the spring of 1895, proved to be a turning point in Barney's life. He did well enough (finishing second in three events and winning a pair of silver medals and a gold watch) to attract the eye of a local representative for the Stearns Bicycle Co., and was subsequently hired as a parts salesman. He also met a girl in Canton, Beatrice Loretta Oatis, just under 20 and Irish to the blue of her eyes. Barney called her Bridget, enchanted by her soft, shy smile, by the graceful way she moved, by the big-city clothes she wore. The spell was complete.

Within a week he had asked her to marry him.

"Not until you're sure you want me," she replied firmly. "And not until I'm sure. Let's wait a year, then I'll come to Toledo and we'll see how we both feel about one another."

Dizzy with love, Barney returned home. He'd been unable to change Bridget's mind and he only hoped she'd keep her promise.

Oldfield soon discovered that selling bicycle parts was a haphazard occupation at best; a man could starve in an off week when the commissions were not coming in. If he expected to marry Bridget he'd have to make a substantial amount of money in order to impress her with his financial stability. It was obvious he could not remain a salesman.

Certainly there was money to be made in the boxing profession. John L. Sullivan, "The Boston Strong Boy," had demonstrated this; so had "Gentleman Jim" Corbett. Victory in the prize ring meant big money, and Barney saw no reason why he could not become an overnight success as a boxer. This bland assumption stemmed from his natural abiding confidence in his own ability, and from the opinion of local pug Dan Bailiff, who had offered assistance in coaching Oldfield. After one look at Barney's six-foot, 190-pound physique, Bailiff pronounced it "the body of a gladiator." Barney was delighted.

"I'm going up to Lima to get in shape," Dan said. "Come with me, kid, and I'll teach you all I know. We'll call you 'The Toledo Terror'! How does that sound?"

"Great!" Barney threw a roundhouse right at an invisible opponent. "Boy, just watch me wade in!"

The Toledo Terror never reached the ring.

In Lima, Oldfield contracted typhoid fever and was rushed to a hospital bed. (As he later admitted: "I got over the boxing fever about the time I got over typhoid.")

On Thanksgiving day, while Barney was recuperating, America's first automobile race was run in Chicago. This historic date was Nov. 28, 1895—and the winner of the affair was Frank Duryea in a slightly revamped version of the machine he'd tested in Springfield just two years before. Its one-cylinder, water-cooled gasoline engine only produced four horsepower. The 52.4-mile event (from Jackson Park to Evanston and back) was sponsored by a Chicago newspaper and the \$2,000 first prize attracted 11 vehicles, but only six of these actually reached the

starting line. Duryea's over-all average for the run: 5.1 mph.

The importance of that initial Chicago race cannot be overemphasized. Historian Rudolph Anderson pointed out: "All of the different types of motorized exhibitions were to grow out of this event — road races, speedway bowls, high-speed demonstrations, endurance tests, reliability runs, hill climbs, transcontinental tours, automobile shows and the mammoth displays at the World Fairs."

The country's automotive progress had little immediate effect upon Barney Oldfield. He was naturally somewhat interested in the new contraptions, but doubted that they were much more than a passing fad. When the Stearns factory invited him to ride one of their Yellow Flyers (at \$75 per month and expenses) he was certain that his future lay with the fleet two-wheelers. In 1896 he signed a contract with E. C. Stearns to compete on the team—but the League of American Wheelmen threatened him with blacklisting unless he turned professional. They would have nothing to do with "paid amateurs."

Billing himself "The Bicycle Champion of Ohio" (because he won second place in the state competition for Class A at Dayton that season on a Stearns), Barney hired a manager, Ed Tellum, and with rider Fred Titus formed the Racycle Racing Team.

"We circulated through the South and Midwest," Oldfield later remarked. "If Fred didn't win, I usually did. But it was rough. We pawned a whole bushel of medals, rings and trophies in order to pay our hotel bills."

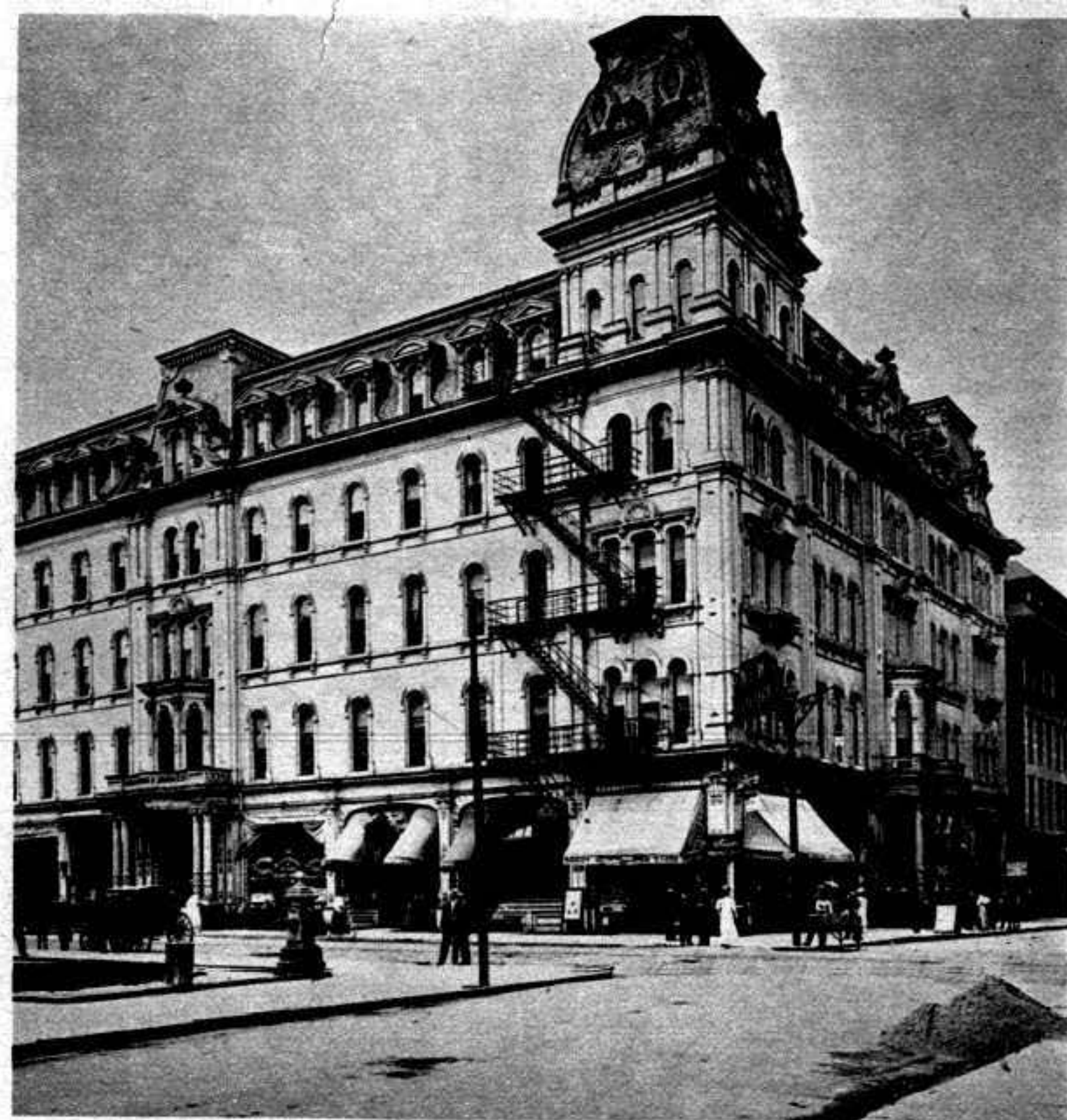
In August of '96 Beatrice Oatis kept her promise; she met Barney in Toledo and they were married in that city on the 25th of the month. Oldfield was not ready for marriage, and his affection for his new bride was little more than a youthful crush. The relationship was destined to be an unhappy one.

For the moment, however, Barney and Beatrice were content to be a vital part of the rollicking Gay Nineties.

Bicycle racing was in vogue; contests between the wild two-wheelers lured record crowds, and star riders were very much in demand.

Oldfield was maturing as a top competitor, but his aggressive style made him rather unpopular among several fellow riders. A variety of cycles were used in competition — from two-man tandems to seven-man septuplets — and whenever Barney became wheelman his intense desire to win often resulted in spectacular upsets. On the board saucers this meant that many a sharp wood splinter had to be painfully removed from Oldfield's hide.

During these years, when the Klondike Gold Rush and the Span-



THE BOODY HOUSE is where Barney Oldfield worked as a bellhop and picked up the name of Barney. Hotel stood where the Owens-Illinois Bldg. is now.

ish-American War occupied headlines, Oldfield barnstormed the Midwest, supplementing his seasonal income with factory work and the sale of cycle parts. In 1898, records show that Barney was competing on a four-man quadruplet at Indianapolis. (Recalled Oldfield: "We got a fourth in the race, but since three others guys were ahead of me on the same bike it's hard to say where I finished!")

During the spring of 1899 he was approached by a Nebraska promoter who wanted a "star" name to publicize an upcoming race from Blair to Omaha.

"I'm your little huckleberry," grinned Oldfield. "You bill me as 'The Bicycle Champion of Ohio,' and we're in business."

"One other thing," said the promoter. "Here in Nebraska each of our boys has a special formula for winning. You know, some of them chew salt, or wear a bag of onions at their belt, or munch on carrots. What we need is a real keen formula for you."

"Lemme think," said Barney, "and I'll come up with one."

On the evening before the race Oldfield purchased a bottle of bourbon at a local saloon. "Steam off the label," he told the bartender, flashing a silver dollar.

The next morning Barney ap-

peared on the starting line with the bottle tied around his neck. He was approached by curious spectators and asked what the bottle contained.

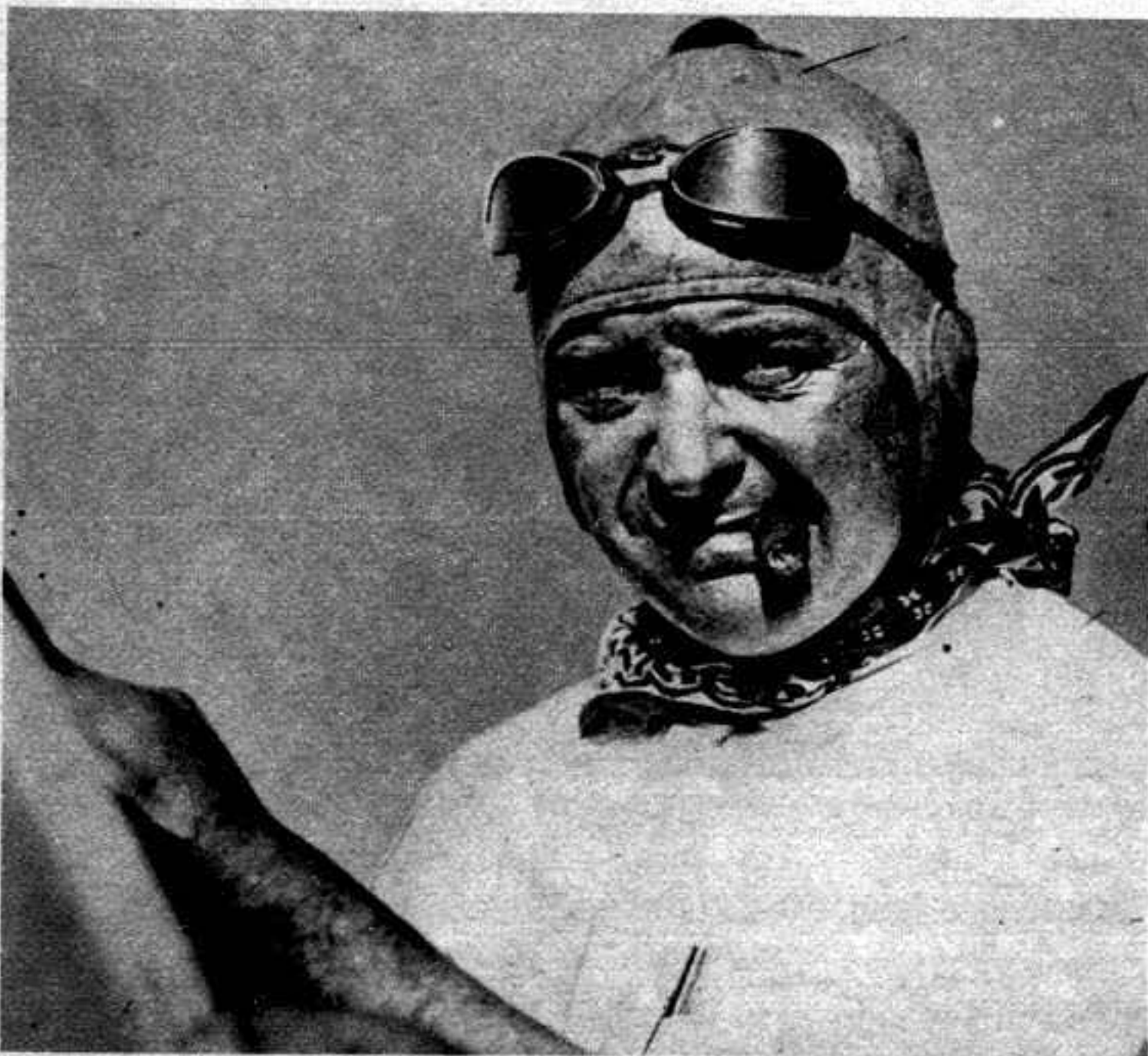
"Vinegar," confided the champ. "Couldn't win without it."

Actually, Oldfield did win this race, but the achievement had nothing to do with vinegar (or bourbon). As Barney trailed the leaders over the last miles into Omaha the clouds opened up, reducing the dirt roads to gumbo. Oldfield cannily hoisted his National Chainless to the railroad tracks and bumped to victory over the solid roadbed.

The occasion was saluted with proper headlines: "Ohio Champion, Trained on Vinegar, Wins 25-Mile Classic." (And Barney later swore that when next he passed through Omaha all the aspiring local cyclists, to a man, carried bottles of vinegar around their necks.)

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As Oldfield matured as a competitor, so did the automobile. Shortly after the turn of the century Oldfield turned his attention to automobile racing and his name became almost synonymous with speed and daring. He retired from competition in 1918.



A TYPICAL picture of Barney Oldfield during his prime as an auto racer shows him with a cigar and lucky kerchief. He was seldom without the cigar.