

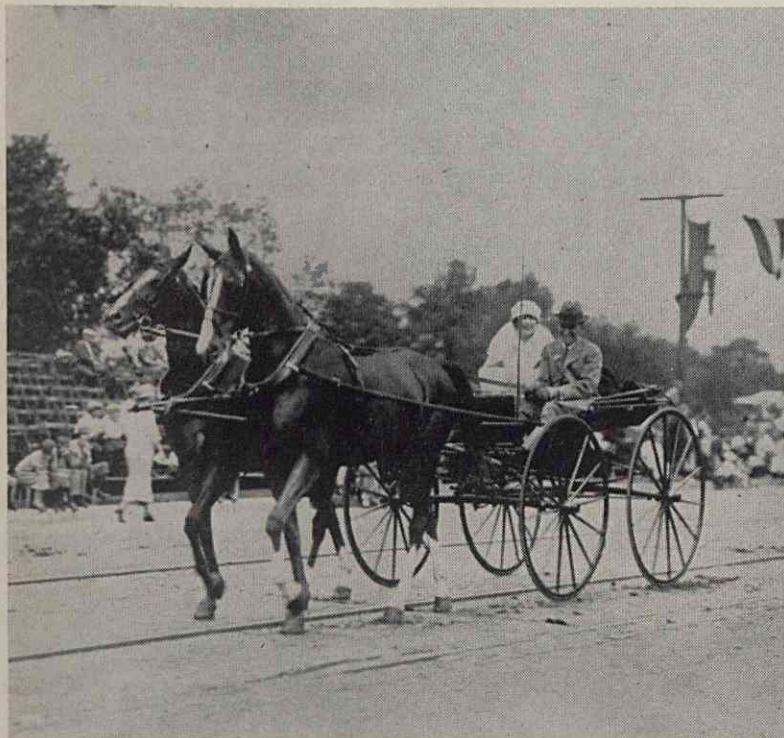
Life Of Mrs. Idabelle Firestone Family, Music And Chat



PHOTOGRAPHS ON these pages show memorable events in the life of Mrs. Firestone. Above she is shown as she appeared on her wedding day in 1895.



MR. AND MRS. Firestone are pictured in 1907 in a six-cylinder Ford car. With them are their sons Harvey S., Jr., and Russell A. in the rear seat and Leonard W. with his father at the wheel.



MR. AND MRS. Harvey S. Firestone appeared in the Akron Centennial parade, July 21, 1925, with a team of thoroughbred horses from his stables.

By Kenneth Nichols
Reprinted from Akron Beacon
Journal — July 7

A woman who, at 21, found herself wed to an unemployed ex-buggy salesman died shortly after noon on July 7 in the baronial mansion he built for her in later years at 1255 W. Market st.

She was Mrs. Idabelle Firestone, 79, widow of the founder of the billion-dollar-a-year Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.

The multi-roomed showplace — Harbel Manor—which was her last home was a far cry from the \$25-a-month rented dwelling where she first lived as the bride of Harvey S. Firestone, Sr.

BUT IN adversity or plenty the Firestone home was a place of serenity and grace, reflecting the characteristics of its gentle mistress.

At 75, Mrs. Firestone told an interviewer: "I think we should all make the best possible job of our life's work, whatever it may be. Mine has been that of a homemaker."

Those who knew her as a pretty brown-haired young mother or as a distinguished looking, gray-haired matron could say she had made a success of her life's work.

SHE AND Mr. Firestone had been married five years when they arrived in Akron by train during the height of a January snowstorm in 1900.

Mrs. Firestone was 26; her husband 31. They had an infant son, Harvey, Jr. They walked from the depot to the rambling, wooden Windsor Hotel — a remodeled church building—at Broadway and E. Mill sts.

From that time forward, Akron was her home.

Firestone was by no means broke then. He had received \$45,000 for his share of a rubber business in Chicago.

MORE THAN that he owned a patent for applying tires to carriage and buggy wheels—and he had a job—manager of tire sales for the Whitman & Barnes Co. on Buchtel ave.

Whitman and Barnes manufactured twist drills and drop forgings but, like many another Akron concern at that time, had a "tire department."

"Tires," in that time, meant solid rubber tires for horse-drawn vehicles. Firestone, like most men of that time, thought gasoline-powered autos were "ingenious rather than useful." Unlike most men then he thought the electric car might become "a commercial product."

The future seemed rosy enough then for the young Mrs. Firestone but soon she was to need all her tact and skill as a "good manager" of the home.

Firestone was to risk every penny of his own, and all he could borrow, in the great venture which, as the gasoline car became "useful," was to prove a fabulous success.

FOR TEN YEARS, the Firestones lived in a \$40-a-month rented house at S. Forge st. and Fir Hill and saved their money so he could buy stock in his own company.

It was there, in the Fir Hill house, that most of the other five children after Harvey, Jr., were born—Russell, Raymond, Leonard, Roger and Elizabeth.

She was there, proud of husband and son, when Harvey, Jr.—then five—turned on the steam in an old abandoned foundry building at Sweitzer and Miller aves.—the new Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.

TO GET the factory going, the elder Firestone had stalked and "sold" Will Christy, "the biggest man in Akron and probably the most influential man in Ohio."

Christy, a banker and builder of electric street railways, eventually bought \$60,000 worth of stock and became the company's president, lending the struggling company—as Firestone later said—"financial tone and respectability."

As the Firestone company grew from its original \$4,500 building and force of 12 employes, so did the social and family responsibilities of Mrs. Firestone.

Her husband, who had been general manager, became president of his own firm and safely in control—and, around 1910, they could build a home of their own on Medina rd.

IN THE TEENS, the Firestones built a house of dreams—Harbel Manor, the title made up of parts of their own first names.

Yet, Firestone in his book "Men of Rubber" held that the house was much bigger than he needed.

"... in most cases," he said, "and especially with men who have earned their own money, the house is just built, and when it is done, no one quite knows why it was ever started."

As the wife of a tremendously successful industrialist, one with friendship among great men, Mrs. Firestone found need of all her social tact and intuition.

Mrs. Firestone, however, could be as much at home with famous people—almost anywhere—as with her own family in the quiet of the Manor.

AS A GIRL, she studied music at Alma College in St. Thomas, Ont. When her children were young, many evenings in the Firestone home were spent around the organ or piano. Often, she would compose as she played.

In later years, her sons insisted that she put her songs on paper. Out of that insistence came the hauntingly beautiful "If I Could Tell You" and "In My Garden," heard as the theme music of the Firestone radio and television programs for years.

Other songs composed by Mrs. Firestone include "You Are The Song in My Heart," "Do You Recall?" "Melody of Love" and "Bluebirds." Mrs. Firestone's songs have been published, and many leading opera and concert stars, including Richard Crooks, Rise Stevens and Eleanor Steber, have recorded them. In 1948 Mrs. Firestone was elected a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).



ON HER 70th birthday, November 10, 1944, Mrs. Firestone is shown as she cut the cake. Singing "Happy Birthday" to her are her sons, from the left, Roger S., Russell A., Leonard K., Harvey S., Jr., and Raymond C.