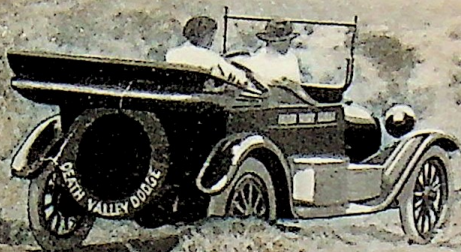


*Dodge Bros. Motor Car*



**THROUGH  
DEATH  
VALLEY**

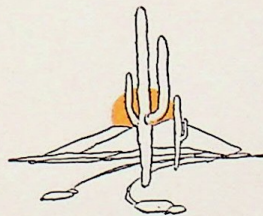
1916

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*Through Death Valley  
in a Dodge Brothers  
Motor Car*



A TRUE STORY OF  
O. K. PARKER'S  
MEMORABLE TRIP  
THROUGH THIS  
ARID DESERT LAND







TO win through the most dreaded region in the United States, overcoming with a motor car vast stretches of desert waste, miles of shifting sand dunes, mountain ranges over a mile high, then across Death Valley below sea level in a temperature of  $144^{\circ}$ , forms a tale so thrilling that every motorist will be interested in reading of the most strenuous trip ever recorded in the annals of motoring.

Away down in the southwest corner of the United States there are two regions so absolutely different in their physical make-up as to be a cause of wonderment even to those who are thoroughly familiar with both.

Everyone thinks of Southern California as the garden spot of America. Not a thought is ever given to that desert land lying just to the east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, which holds in its midst one of the most dreaded regions on earth. In fact, it is scarcely believable that within two hundred miles of Los Angeles there is in reality the valley of "Il Mort" that has been the cause of more deaths by thirst and starvation than any other equal area on the earth's surface.

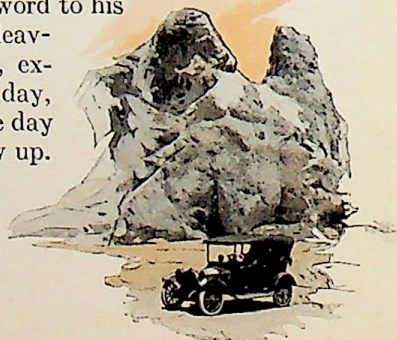
Such, however, is the irony of fate to which many a man has been subjected in striving, from inland empires, to reach that promised land between the mountains and the sea. Tales there are without number of those who have attempted to cross Death Valley in prospecting and exploring, who have suffered most horrible deaths, but rarely has the attempt been made to negotiate this arid region with a motor car.



Not long ago Harold L. Arnold, Dodge Brothers dealer at Los Angeles, decided to test out a Dodge Brothers motor car to determine, if possible, the maximum stamina and power incorporated in that make of car. To that end he selected an ordinary Dodge Brothers car from stock and authorized Engineer O. K. Parker, of Los Angeles, to take that car out into the desert and mountains for the avowed purpose of driving it to the limit of its endurance, if that could be done by man.

Fortunately, Engineer Parker had motored over practically every road in Western America and was thoroughly familiar with the topography of the great desert regions of the Southwest. He had been to the east, west, north and south of Death Valley and knew of the personal experiences of several prospectors and explorers who had visited the region of "Il Mort." In fact, only a short time before he had listened to the narrative of Judge A. A. Turner of Rhyolite, Nevada, who was one of the rescue party who went into Death Valley in May, 1914, to carry relief to one Pete Bush, who had attempted to drive a motor car from Los Angeles to his home at Rhyolite by way of the Stovepipe Wells crossing of Death Valley between the Panamint and Funeral Ranges of mountains. Bush had sent word to his family in Rhyolite that he was leaving Los Angeles in a new car, expecting to be home on a certain day, and to watch out for him. The day arrived, but Pete did not show up.

The next morning they started out with a rescue party and found his chauffeur in Boundary Canyon, on the



west side of the Funeral Range. It took the rescue party several hours to revive the poor fellow so that he could describe what had happened to the car.

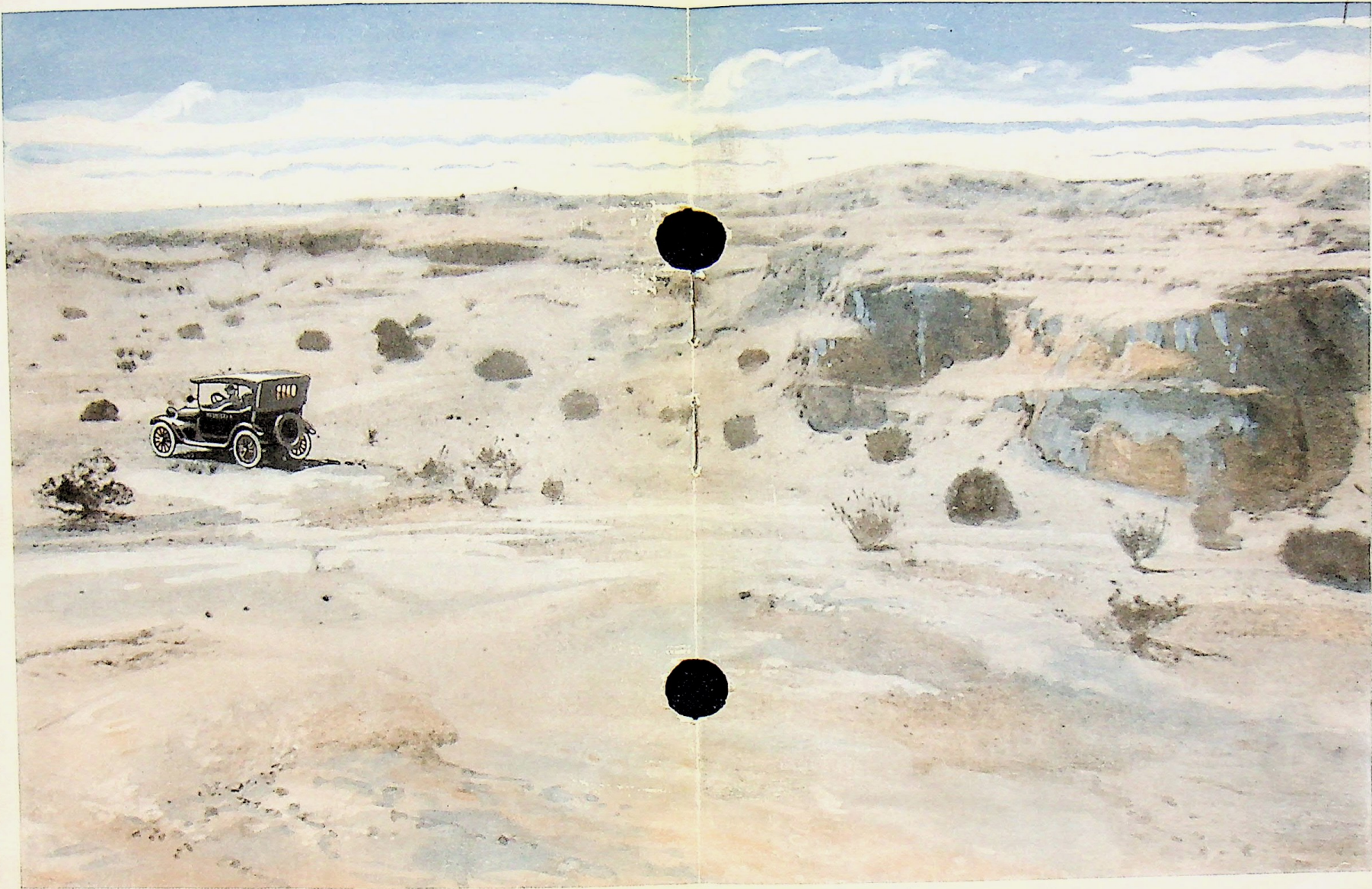
He told them that they had had a terrific fight with the fierce grades getting up to Skidoo Summit, 5,259 feet above sea level in the Panamint Mountains, which was only one of several mountain ranges that they had to cross before they could get to a point where they could start down through Emigrant Canyon to attempt the crossing of Death Valley.

Across the floor of the Valley, fourteen miles wide at that point, four miles consisted of a bottomless, flat waste of sand, then eight miles of sand dunes ten to fifty feet high, so soft and shifting that a mere breath would start the sand rolling down from the summit like receding waves on an ocean beach.

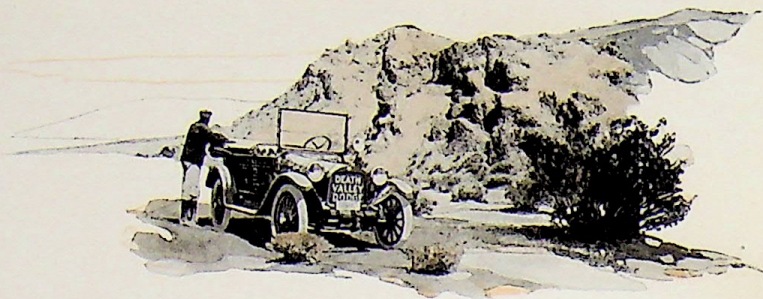
In spite of Bush's long experience in western driving his car was stuck repeatedly, its wheels buried to the hubs in the yellow powder sand of the great dunes, and finally as they were in the middle of the dunes something in the mechanism of the car gave way and the trip was off as far as the motor car was concerned. Bush was so exhausted that he could go no farther and it was up to the chauffeur to go for help. This he volunteered to do, though it was thirty-two miles to Rhyolite and no water for over half of that distance on the fierce climb from below sea level to 4,337 feet elevation at the head of Boundary Canyon in the Funeral Range of mountains. This terrific climb was through soft powder sand, over a man's shoe top, with occasional stretches of malapai boulders where





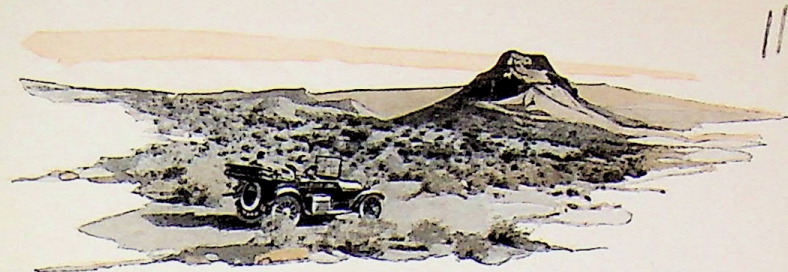






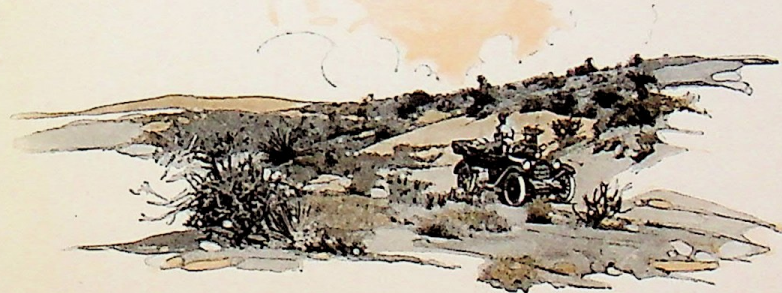
often he had to get down on his hands and knees and literally crawl. The chauffeur had no recollection of the last few miles of his fight toward Rhyolite. They found him near Hole-In-The-Rock, a little trickling spring making its way out of the side of the canyon within a thousand feet of where he dropped. When they had revived the chauffeur enough to learn his story he was determined, in spite of his badly swollen tongue and rising fever, resulting from his terrible experience, to go back to Pete. This the rescue party would not permit but leaving one of their members to care for the boy they hurried on down the canyon hoping against hope that they would find Bush alive. In the midst of the sand dunes they found the car nearly to the hubs in the sand, with the dead body of Pete under the car where he had crawled to find shelter from the fierce rays of the sun.

Having heard the story of Bush, Engineer Parker concluded that there was no rougher spot for his test. It



was Death Valley then for him in this demonstration, in spite of the fact that no one had had the temerity to attempt the crossing of Death Valley since Bush lost his life the year before.

"Death Valley, as you know," said Mr. Parker, "is a great trough in the earth's surface, the lowest point below sea level, and to be reached from the east or west only by crossing the Panamint Mountains or the Funeral Range. The Panamints tower to a height of over 11,000 feet and the lowest summit in this range is near the mining camp of Skidoo, 5,259 feet above sea level. From this nearly mile high climb the only way to get down into the Valley with a motor car is to force one's way over great masses of storm-tossed boulders that have accumulated in the torrential downpours that sweep that region, leaving these boulders in masses often piled fifty feet in height. The drop from a mile above sea level to 149 feet below is made in a distance of fourteen miles. In spite of this



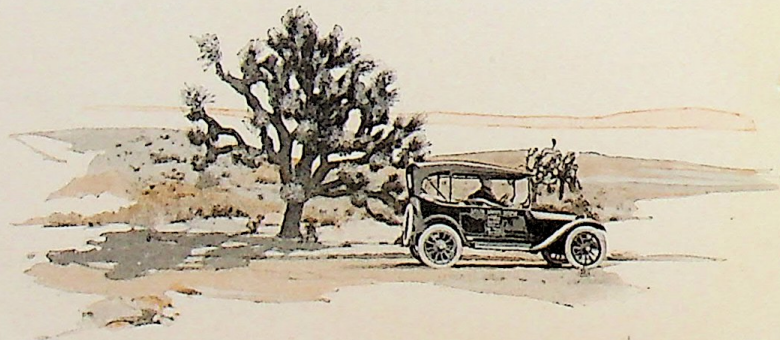




down grade it is a terrible strain on the car, for it is warped from end to end a thousand times in making the descent from the summit of the pass to the floor of the Valley.

"I found the conditions even worse than I had imagined from the story that Judge Turner had told me about Bush's experience. Just before we attempted the trip, that region had been swept with a

terrific wind-storm that piled the sand in great drifts even across the flat on the west side of the Valley, which was reported as being a level waste four miles in width. In the dunes the sand was as soft as though you had taken it in your hands and let it trickle along until it piled up like waves from ten to fifty feet in height. There was no way to cross the Valley except to force the car through and over these dunes. 'Death Valley Dodge' only stopped once in the sand and that at a windblown stretch where the sand was sufficiently compact so that we could start without difficulty. Here we took the sand dune picture that accompanies this article and which I believe is the only one that has ever been taken on the floor of Death Valley.



"After crossing the Valley, our car climbed Boundary Canyon to an elevation of 4,337 feet at the summit of the Funeral Range. There was no sign of a road in Boundary Canyon, the entire sixteen-mile climb being through fine sand interspersed with malapai boulders. We reached the summit without mishap and were welcomed at Rhyolite as being the most fortunate of men to win through the terrors of that dreaded region.

"From Rhyolite we continued on south to Las Vegas and Searchlight, Nevada, then to Needles, California, and back over the National Old Trails through the Mojave Desert to Barstow, then to San Bernardino and Los Angeles.





"The total distance of the trip was 957 miles, made in exactly seven days. We had no mechanical trouble of any kind and only had one puncture, and that while passing through the town of Searchlight. Our report to Mr. Arnold was that we did not believe any man could take a Dodge Brothers motor car and break it up so long as it remained on its wheels. If our Dodge Brothers motor car had not been dependable it would have been left as Bush's car was—a wreck in the dunes, soon to be covered with drifting sand, and some day perhaps to be again revealed to recall the fate of one daring motor car party that had attempted to make the terrific drive, but without the success accomplished with 'Death Valley Dodge'."

