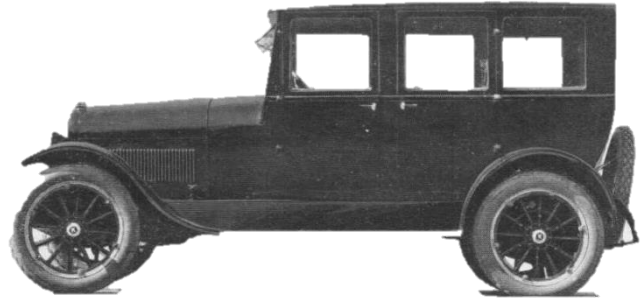


The

*Kleber*

MOTOR COMPANY  
of  
San Francisco



Manufacturing  
Trucks and Cars



A  
Story of One Man's  
Contribution To  
The History of  
San Francisco



Paul Kleiber

## Preface

This story is about the start of a city, an innovative product and a driven man.

The city, San Francisco. Today San Francisco is a favorite place to live, work, vacation and let's not forget play. But over 150 years ago people sacrificed everything to come here to seek their fortune in the gold fields.

The innovative product is the "Automobile". By today's standards it doesn't seem so innovative, but over 100 years ago the automobile and truck industry were just getting started. Hundreds of individuals would see the truck and automobile as a new industry waiting to be driven down the road to success.

The driven man, Paul Kleiber. During the growth of the City some men succeeded in making their mark and we are immediately intrigued by those "rags to riches" stories. For some it was plain luck, but for others such as Paul Kleiber it was hard work, determination and luck...both good and bad.

## **A CITY IS BORN**

In 1847 a quiet settlement known as Yerba Buena with a population of about 240 people was renamed San Francisco. Years later being influenced by song writers it became known as “The City by The Bay”. But everything changed on May 12, 1848 when a general store owner by the name of Samuel Brannan ran through the streets of San Francisco yelling “gold in the American River” and the rush to the California’s gold fields began.

The march to the gold fields came through San Francisco. People came by the thousands from all over the country and the world to seek their fortune. Many of these fortune seekers would arrive by ship. When the ships docked at San Francisco’s notorious Barbary Coast both passengers and crew would leave for the gold fields. In one year, 700 ships entered through the Golden Gate and hundreds would never leave. Without crews to operate these ships many became abandoned or converted into saloons, restaurants, hotels, or storage facilities. Due to the weather and lack of maintenance these ships decayed rapidly and the city decided to bury these ships where they lay. Today millions of people walk the streets of San Francisco not realizing that many of these ships are still resting quietly beneath their feet waiting to be rediscovered when dirt is moved for the next skyscraper.

The area that was known as the “Barbary Coast” today it is better known as “The Financial District”.

## **PEOPLE WITH VISION**

By 1860 the population of San Francisco had grown to over 56,000. The California gold rush as we knew it was over and most of the miners moved on. But what made people continue to come to San Francisco? If you ask 100 people you may get 100 different answers. From its beginning, San Francisco has been a workingman's city, a welcoming place for the average man that would embrace the independent thinker and encourage the dreamer with their visions that have in many cases changed lives and altered the path of the future. It started with the determination of the miners during the gold rush and continued with people of vision like Philo T. Farnsworth who in 1927 invented the television at 202 Green St. and the independent thinkers like Joseph B. Strauss who would build a bridge across the Golden Gate. There are thousands of stories about independent thinkers that had visions, dreams and determination. Some of these stories of people and companies are well known like Levi Strauss who saw the need for rugged jeans for the gold miners, while other such as Paul Kleiber of Kleiber Motor Company has faded into San Francisco's foggy mist, but not before leaving his finger prints on the pages of history.

## **IT'S A LONG WAY TO SAN FRANCISCO**

In Germany, Paul Kleiber was an apprentice blacksmith and wagon maker earning about 50 cent a day. In 1889 at the age of 25 he left his German homeland for the land of opportunity, "America". Leaving everything behind except his dreams and skills. Entering New York harbor he viewed the Statue of Liberty for the first time and like so many before him realized the opportunities and challenges that await him in this new land. He made his way to Chicago and settled in doing odd jobs and applying his blacksmith skills. It wasn't long before he heard about the extraordinary opportunities in California where rumors were "the streets are paved with gold". In a short time, he saved enough money for a one way train ticket to San Francisco. While at a stop in Omaha he was robbed of his ticket, luggage and what little money he had. Being a man of determination he was compelled to walk the rest of the journey. In the early 1890's Paul Kleiber arrived in San Francisco broke, but not broken.

It was around this time that a gardener introduced the fortune cookie to the Japanese tea garden in Golden Gate Park.

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

After Mr. Kleiber arrived in San Francisco he worked his trade as a blacksmith. His early struggles taught him how to manage money. Being a man of modest means he saved \$500 in three years to open his own blacksmith shop. It was a small shop on the ground floor of a three story building on Natoma street south of Market. He lived on the other two floors.

It was around this time he met and married Antonia Rickman a young girl of German descent that lived in San Mateo Calif. In those early years Mrs. Kleiber would take up to seven borders at a time to help subsidize their income.

Being a master craftsman, hard worker, and a careful financier, Paul Kleiber built up a very profitable business.



Paul Kleiber second from left at his blacksmith shop

## **A NEW CENTURY (1900)**

The turn of the century ushered in the technical revolution introducing the airplane, phonograph, X-ray machine and of course the automobile. Life was good for the people of San Francisco.

In the years surrounding the turn of the century San Francisco had become the fastest growing city in world history. Never before in history had a city grown so fast, so rich and so powerful in such a short period of time and showed no signs of slowing down. San Francisco was the nation's wealthiest city per capita and would boast of 17 cable car lines, 37 National Banks, 3 opera houses and their great appreciation of the Arts which gave San Francisco another nickname "The Paris of The Pacific".

1900 was also the year Kleiber & Company was formed to manufacture wagons and buggies of Paul Kleiber's own design. Mr. Kleiber's had such high standards that it wasn't long before the company gained a reputation for building high quality products, a standard that remained throughout his leadership.

In those early days Antonia Kleiber trained Shetland ponies to pull the wagons and buggies. She also went door-to-door by horse and buggy to make collections and deliveries while cooking and cleaning for up to seven borders. Business expanded rapidly and Kleiber & Company became one of the leading horse-drawn vehicle makers in San Francisco. A contributing factor to his success was that he provided his own financing. The wagons and buggies were made, sold, repaired and financed by Kleiber & Company.

## **50 YEARS / 50 SECONDS**

Yes, life was good for the people of San Francisco until April 18, 1906. The previous night Enrico Caruso performed before a packed San Francisco opera house, but the following morning just after 5 am a earthquake would remind San Franciscans that nothing should be taken for granted and what took man 50 years to create Mother Nature destroyed in about 50 seconds. What the earthquake didn't destroy the ensuing fire would.





People could only watch as their city burned



The Kleiber Family having to start over

### **A FEW GOOD MEN**

The people were still in shock from the earthquake when the fires started and began to engulf the city. Now they had to deal with the reality and possibility of not only losing personal belongings, but also their lives as well. During this terrible time Kleiber & Company would remain open to lend his wagons and buggies to the people of San Francisco so they could move their belongings and themselves out of the fires path to safety. Although it was several months before all of the vehicles were returned, Paul Kleiber refused any form of compensation for this gesture. It was this gesture of generosity that earned Mr. Kleiber the nickname “The Honest Blacksmith”.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

In those days people did not have maps or GPS to navigate around the city. They relied on street signs attached to corners of homes and buildings. After the fire destroyed these structures people were unable to find the remains of their homes and businesses due to absence of street signs. In the rebuilding of the city it was decided that if the city were to be destroyed again, the names of streets will be engraved in the sidewalks, since cement doesn't burn. The next time you are standing on a corner in San Francisco look down, and if you see the name of the street engraved in the cement, you will know that the city has prepared you for the next big one.

## COUNTING THE COST

In the end the earthquake and fire would claim 3,000 lives, 225,000 residents became homeless and 28,000 buildings were destroyed at an estimated cost of \$400 million. To put things in perspective, \$400 million at that time was the total annual budget for the United States.



The 1906 San Francisco earthquake is still one of the worst natural disasters in US History. It was the first time a natural disaster was recorded by photography.

## FROM WOODEN WHEELS TO RUBBER

In 1911 the first electric starter was installed in a Cadillac and the first Indianapolis 500 was raced where the winning car reached speeds up to 88 mph. These and other automotive events of the day gave Paul Kleiber a clear direction on the future of transportation. So in 1912 Kleiber & Company was sold for a modest \$175,000 and with this capital the Kleiber Motor Company was founded to make trucks at 1424 Folsom St. in San Francisco.

Due to the limited time remaining in 1912 only one truck was produced that year. It was again on a chassis of Paul Kleiber's own design and was sold in 1913 to the Milwaukee Brewing Company.

In the beginning he hired German craftsman and assigned a team to build all phases of the truck. The first Kleiber trucks had hard rubber tires and no shock absorbers. Although some people across the country would still believe our streets were paved with gold the fact is that most of the streets didn't even have pavement. In those days the surface of choice was cobblestone which made for some shaky rides. We have no records of anyone falling asleep while behind the wheel of a Kleiber truck.



Some of the first Kleiber trucks were sold to the military



# Kleiber Truck

Made in California

Prices No Higher than Any  
Eastern Truck

Compare the prices of KLEIBER Trucks with trucks of equal specifications.

The KLEIBER Truck is the biggest value ever offered by any reliable truck manufacturer.

Every unit incorporated in the KLEIBER Truck is Standardized—the best production of the ablest engineers in the world.

Every unit has been time-tested in actual use—has PROVED its superiority and established its reputation of being "Standard."

In the design of the KLEIBER Truck these standard units have been combined by expert engineers—who have carefully worked out proportions for load distribution, strains, shocks and stresses, and have produced the most thoroughly efficient and best balanced truck on the market today.

The KLEIBER Truck is simple in construction—easy of operation—and economical in upkeep. It is a strong, sturdy, dependable truck, built to give the most efficient service at the lowest cost of operation and maintenance.

## Bodies

We are equipped to build Special Bodies for any requirement or any type of body construction. We use only high class material and our body building is done by experts who have the experience, facilities and factory capacity to produce whatever special type of body construction may be required in any line of business.

### KLEIBER & CO., INC.

Motor Truck Factory

1424-1440 Folsom St.

San Francisco, Cal.

18 Years in Business



## Kleiber Truck Made in San Francisco, Cal. MODEL 3½ TON TRUCK—SPECIFICATIONS.

- MOTOR**—Continental, cast in pair, valves enclosed. 50 H. P.
- MAGNETO**—Bosch.
- CARBURETOR**—Schebler.
- STEERING GEAR**—Ross heavy truck type. All wearing parts hardened and ground.
- RADIATOR**—Heavy truck type, double spring suspension.
- TRANSMISSION**—60 H. P. Brown-Lipe. Three speeds forward and one reverse.
- JACKSHAFTS**—Timken, with large service brakes. All bearings Timken.
- AXLES**—Front, Timken dropped forged "1" beam section with Timken bearings. Rear, Timken rectangular section, 2¼ x 3½ inch, equipped with Timken roller bearings and emergency brakes, 3½ inches wide by 18 inches in diameter.
- BRAKES**—Two pressed steel brake drums, carried by independent brackets on jackshaft 12 inches in diameter, by 2 inches wide. (Emergency). Rear brake drums are pressed steel. These drums carry the rear sprockets and are machined inside for the 2½ x 18 inch expanding brakes.
- WHEELS**—(Front) 36 inches in diameter, fourteen 3-inch spokes. (Rear) 36 inches in diameter, fourteen 3-inch spokes.
- TIRES**—Front, 36x5 inches S. A. E. standard demountable truck tires. Rear, 36x5 inches dual S. A. E. standard demountable tires.
- FRAME**—Steel channel section, channel section 15 lbs. to foot, hot riveted.
- SPRINGS**—Front, 3x46 inches, semi-elliptic. Betts Chrome Vanadium, unbreakable. Rear, 3x54 inches, Betts Chrome Vanadium, unbreakable.
- WHEEL BASE**—160 inches.
- DRIVE**—Optional chain or worm-gear drive.  
Length of frame back of front seat, 13 feet.  
Length of standard body back of front seat 14 feet. Width 7 feet.
- GASOLINE CAPACITY**—23 gallons.  
Price \$3300.00 F. O. B. San Francisco, Cal.

The first Kleiber truck was sold to the Milwaukee Brewing Company In San Francisco.

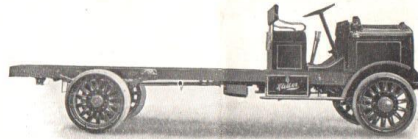
CABLE ADDRESS  
"KLEIBCO"

PHONE MARKET 1608

# Kleiber

MOTOR  
TRUCKS

MEMBERS OF  
THE  
NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE  
CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE  
OF NEW YORK



LICENSED UNDER PATENTS  
885,986 AND  
921,963  
PATENTED APRIL 28, 1908  
AND  
MAY 18, 1909

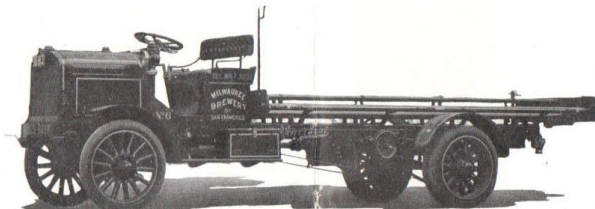
**KLEIBER & CO., INC.**  
MOTOR TRUCK MANUFACTURERS  
11TH AND FOLSOM STREETS  
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

Notice the telephone number in the upper right hand corner.





## "STILL RUNNING"



*The First Kleiber Truck, Bought by Milwaukee Brewing Co.*

THE Company has come rapidly to the fore, its trucks have given universal satisfaction and have established an enviable reputation for the corporation. To the excellence of our product has been added a spirit of co-operation with our customers that guarantees them the utmost service. Our policy of producing an article of the best materials obtainable, of using the highest grade units, of sparing no effort or skill in its production and of having the interests of our customers ever in mind has resulted in a splendid motor truck and rewarded its makers with the thorough whole hearted satisfaction of dealing in honest merchandise.



*Goodyear Rubber Co. operates 1-Ton and 3½-Ton Kleibers*



*3½-Ton Truck operated by Henry Levy Co., Wholesale Butchers*



*Westlake Dairy Co., of Seattle, Wash.  
Use 1½-Ton Kleiber*



*Associated Oil Co., use Kleibers*



*South San Francisco Packing and Provision Co. has a Fleet of Kleibers*

The first Kleiber trucks ranged in size and price from a 1 ton for \$2,400 to a 5 ton for \$5,100. The beds were made according to the customer's specifications and were priced separately.

## ONLY THE STRONGEST SURVIVE

Paul Kleiber did very little advertising. He believed that if you built a good solid and dependable product the word of mouth would be the best form of advertising. That philosophy must have worked because in the early 1920's fleets of Kleiber trucks were hard at work for Shell Oil, Standard Oil (Chevron), American Can Company, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), Overland Freight, Transfer Lines, Del Monte and many other large companies.

The steep and rugged terrain of San Francisco challenged any and all vehicles, but Kleiber trucks were strong, dependable and almost trouble free. The trucks were powered by Continental engines with low gear ratios that enabled the Kleiber trucks to follow those little cable cars climbing half way to the stars. Kleiber trucks were built so strong that one company used them to move large buildings. If you look at the Kleiber trucks in this photo you will notice the front bumpers are anchored to the ground by chains. On the back bed of each truck is a winch with a long cable attached to the large building. On the back of each truck is a man that would operate the winch to pull the building up the ramp.



I wonder if this voids the warranty





Paul Kleiber (far left) was proud of the fact that his company never lost a day's production due to a strike or any employee disputes. He had an open door policy and would personally stay in touch with his employees. All disputes were handled one on one and on a give and take basis. He understood people and hired them for their willingness and determination to work and not necessarily for their educational background. Mr. Kleiber once took a liking to a busboy at his favorite restaurant, hired him and he went on to become the plant general manager. With all of his success Paul Kleiber was a plain, modest and an unassuming man accessible to all.



Old facilities at 10<sup>th</sup> and Folsom San Francisco about 1918

### **TIME TO GROW**

By 1923 The Kleiber Motor company had employed 350 workers and was having a difficult time keeping up with production demands. The current facility had become too small and obsolete for his growing business and the aggressive plans for the future. His plans for a new factory would make Kleiber Motor Company the largest truck manufacture west of the Mississippi.



## BUILDING AROUND GREED

Mr. Kleiber made an attempt to purchase the entire block of Folsom Street between 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> and was almost successful except for one hold out. The owner of a three story apartment building at 1468 Folsom was aware of the expansion plans and in an effort to seize this financial opportunity the owner wanted twice the actual value of the property thinking he had Mr. Kleiber over the proverbial barrel. Mr. Kleiber had overcome many adversities in the past and refused to be robbed again, but this time legally, so he built the factory around the apartment building. After the factory was completed and in full production the noise and commotion made the apartments an undesirable place to live and the owner sold the property under market value. Today this apartment building still stands as a testimonial to greed sandwiched between two buildings formally built and occupied by The Kleiber Motor Company.



Sunny Jim (left) and Paul Kleiber (right)

## IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN SAN FRANCISCO

After the new factory was built Paul Kleiber became acquainted with the then Mayor of San Francisco "Sunny" Jim Rolph. Sunny Jim served as Mayor from 1912 to 1931 and to date remains the longest serving Mayor of San Francisco. The relationship was one of mutual design to advance each other's causes. For Mayor "Sunny" Jim it was to increase his popularity by being associated with Paul Kleiber (The Honest Blacksmith) and for Mr. Kleiber it was an opportunity to increase sales

In this photo Mayor Sunny Jim is attending the opening ceremonies at the new Kleiber Motor Factory at 10th and Folsom street in San Francisco.

**A NEW BUILDING WITH BIG PLANS** Great care was taken in building the new facilities with consideration given to the employee's needs and comfort. Large glass windows were installed that opened to give more natural light and better ventilation. After the new facilities were completed the labor force had risen to over 700.



The new factory at 10<sup>TH</sup> & Folsom. Notice the Kleiber cars parked outside and the showroom under Kleiber Automobile Factory sign

### **THINGS DO GO BETTER WITH COKE**

Paul Kleiber was close friends with the King of the soft drink world (Coca Cola) Asa Chandler. In 1925 Asa Chandler came to San Francisco to visit Paul Kleiber and purchased three Kleiber cars.

According to an article in the May 24, 1921 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle, plans were being made to build a plant in Atlanta Ga. that would be four times larger than the new San Francisco establishment. When plans were to be completed The Kleiber Motor truck division would be one of the largest in the world.

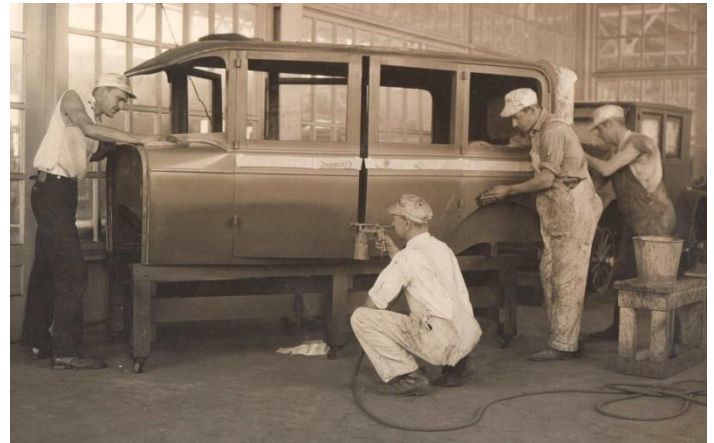
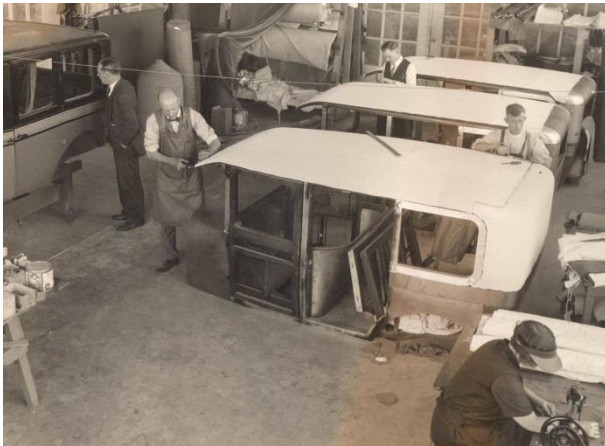
However, Asa Chandler had taken ill in 1926 and passed away in 1929. The factory in Atlanta was never completed.

## BUT MY CAR IS DIFFERENT

In 1924 Paul Kleiber wanted to enter an already over saturated auto industry. The following list of cars were displayed at the San Francisco Auto Show that year. How many names can you recognize and how many still exist today? Chevrolet, Packard, Kissel, Overland, Franklin, Chalmers, Case Cleveland, Jordan, Cole Cadillac, Flint, Lincoln, Dodge, Hupmobile, Hudson, Essex, Buick, Ford, Oldsmobile, Locomobile, Stearn Kight, Nash, Lafayette, Paige, Jewett, Pierce Arrow, Mercer, Reo, Richen Backer, Lexington, Stutz, Studebaker, Star, Willys-Kight, Stephens, Salient-Six, Marmon, Maxwell, Chandler, Velie, Durant and Wills-Sainte Claire. Where are the imports, Mercedes, BMW, Toyota etc.?

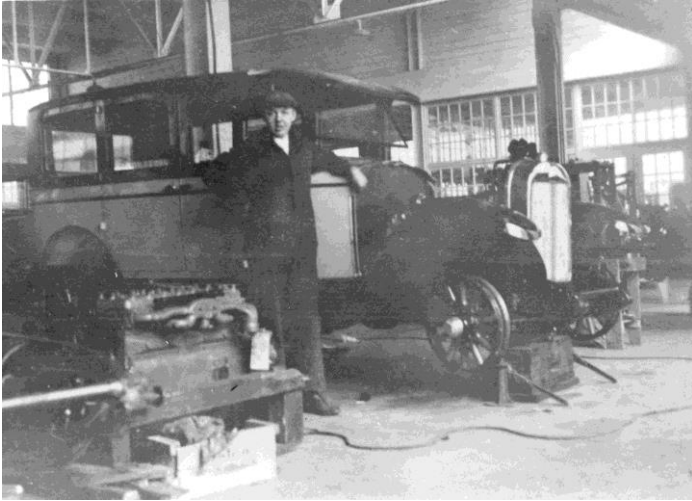
Paul Kleiber believed that an automobile manufactured in San Francisco would be more suitable for the west coast terrain and would also eliminate shipping costs from the East.

The transition from building trucks to cars was an easy decision. He already had the chassis, so all he needed was the body. In 1924 he helped form the Fischer-Gaffeny Body Company. With no advertising and little fanfare the first Kleiber car appeared in late 1924. The Kleiber car could get lost in the crowd because it was undistinguishable from other cars.





Even though this was a brand new state of the art building at 10<sup>th</sup> and Folsom the vehicles were still being assembled by hand. Mr. Kleiber believed that an assembly line vehicle could not match the quality of one being assembled by hand. A belief not shared by his competitors.



The Kleiber cars used Continental Red Seal motors, Delco electrical, Timkey Axles, Brown-Lipe three speed transmissions and bodies by Fischer-Gaffney.

The car was rather heavy at 4150 lbs. with only a 55 horsepower motor.

An article in the April 9, 1925 issue of Motor Age stated “No effort will be made to sell the car outside the pacific coast until such a time when service and maintenance can adequately be rendered in other states than the three on the coast”.

Here is something to consider, the Kleiber car had an auto body mounted on a truck frame which may have made it the world’s first SUV?



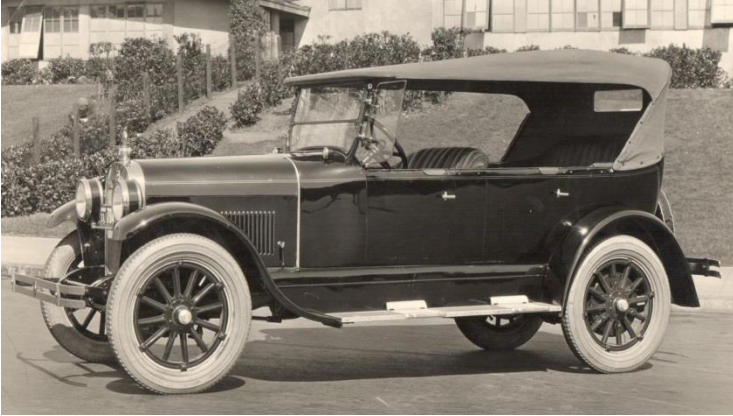
New Kleiber factory showroom at 10<sup>th</sup> St. and Folsom St. in San Francisco

## **FOLLOW THE LEADER?**

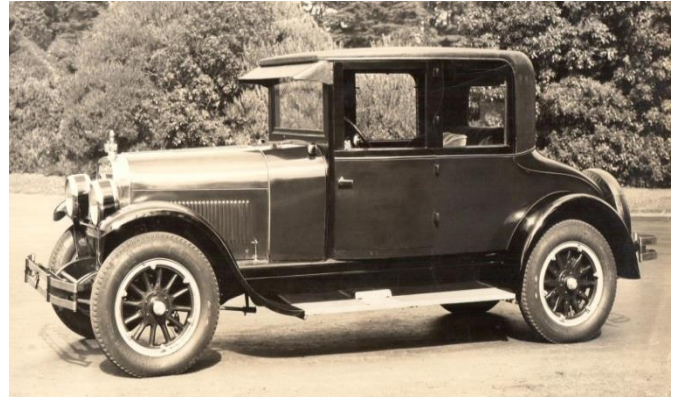
Paul Kleiber wanted to break away from the auto Cartel and the traditional way of selling vehicles through dealerships on San Francisco's famed "Auto Row" on Van Ness Avenue. When Kleiber Motors was only selling trucks they were sold direct to the end user, so when it came time to sell automobiles it was an easy decision to again sell to the end user. The new factory at 10th and Folsom is believed to be the first to have a showroom that was open to the public and go factory direct to the customer. He encouraged people to visit the new showroom to either purchase a car or truck off the showroom floor or to special order a Kleiber vehicle. One could walk through the factory and watch his or her Kleiber being made.



Some of the models offered by the Kleiber Motor Company.



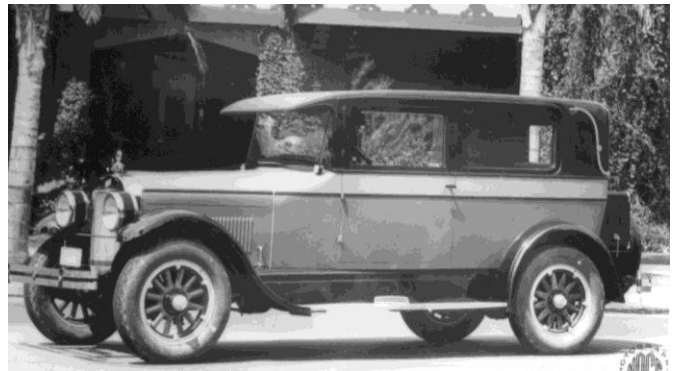
Four door five passenger convertible



Two door two passenger sports coupe



Four door 5 passenger with California top

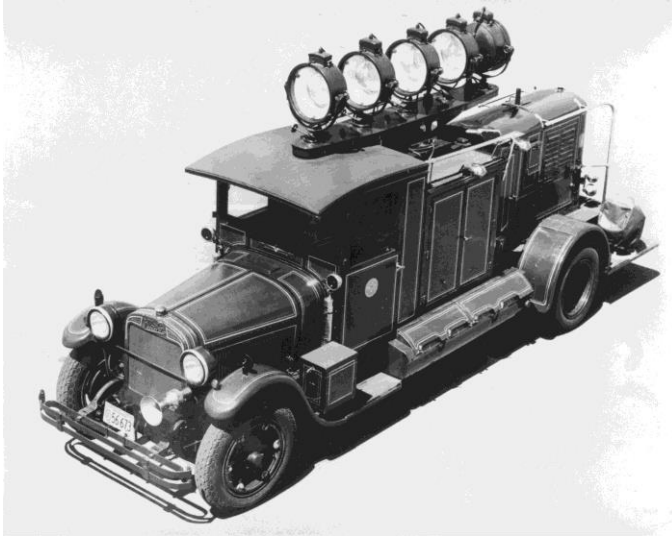


Two door 5 passenger

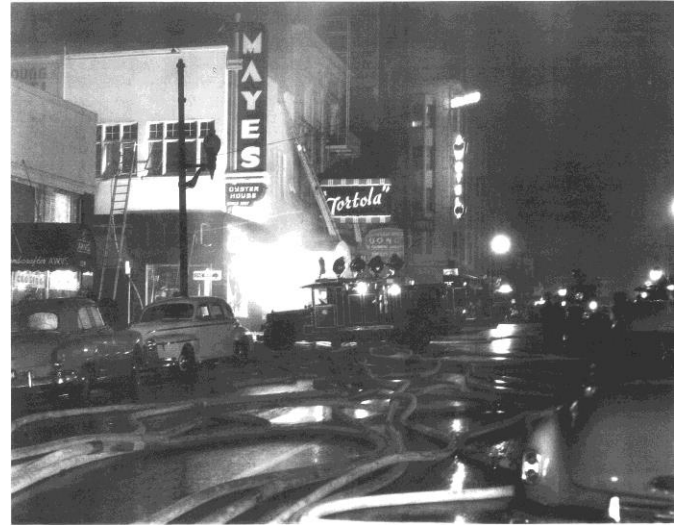
## LIGHTING THE WAY

In 1928 the City of San Francisco requested Kleiber Motor Company to custom build two searchlight trucks for the City's fire department at a cost of \$18,000 each. These two Fire Trucks were known as Light Wagon (LW) # 1 and # 2. LW 1 was destroyed in an accident on April 5, 1950 and LW 2 remained in service until 1968 and was eventually sold in 1973.

The five 1000watt floodlights mounted on a swivel bar on top of the body, one 2000watt floodlight, eight 400watt portable floodlights and four 500 foot reels of extension cables were all powered by a Kohler 10,000 watt generator supplied by a 4-cylinder gasoline engine .



One of two Light Wagons purchase by the S.F.F.D.



The Light Wagon response to a call at Mayes Oyster House on Polk St. San Francisco

## A TALL WATER FOUNTAIN?

In 1902 the San Francisco Fire Department purchased a Henry H. Gorter 75 foot Water Tower apparatus known as WT-3. Water towers were usually used in large warehouse fires, pier fires along the waterfront and downtowns high rise buildings. The WT-3 was originally pulled by a team of horses, but in 1921 a new kind of horse power was used to pull the water tower, a 1921 American La France tractor. In 1928 the responsibility was given to a 1926 Kleiber tractor. Today, over 85 years later the Kleiber tractor and water tower are being preserved by the SFFD Historical Society. The dynamic duo is still together and demonstrated at events in San Francisco.

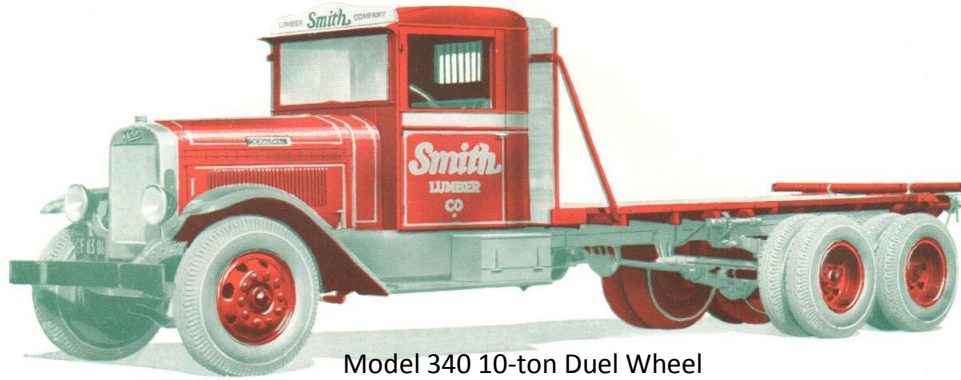


(above) The 1926 Kleiber tractor and the 1902 Gorter water tower

(right)The two being demonstrated  
by the Bay Bridge.



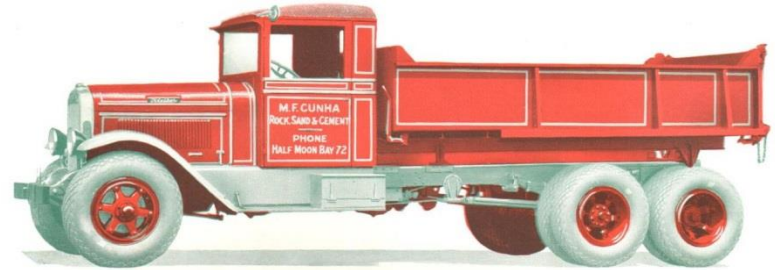
Mr. Kleiber would now boast to build any kind of truck for any kind of business. The truck line now ranged from  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton trucks to heavy duty thirty ton tractor trailer.



Model 340 10-ton Duel Wheel



Model 80 1 1/2 ton



Model 260 7-ton

## **EVERYTHING REACHES IT'S PEAK**

By 1927 the Kleiber Motor Company had reached its peak in popularity and production and now was as much a part of San Francisco as the Cable Car, Fisherman's Wharf, and Sour Dough French bread.

The Kleiber Motor Company was pushing 4 million dollars in assets. It was around this time Mr. Kleiber turned his attention to a different business direction. He believed that San Francisco real estate was the investment of the future and started Kleiber Investment Company of California. He purchased several prime pieces of real estate in San Francisco including 912 Powell St. and 2100 Pacific Ave San Francisco, in which the top floor was at one time occupied by William Randolph Hearst.

## **THE BEGINNING OF THE END**

Even though Paul Kleiber believed that his hand assembled cars were superior to ones made on an assembly line he couldn't escape the fact that the Kleiber car was not distinguishable from any other car of the day. A Kleiber car sold for around \$2,100 when a Ford was selling for around \$500 and at the time people did not want to pay four times more for a car that drove and handled like a truck and looked like any other car of the day. By early 1929 Paul Kleiber was faced with two realities; sales of cars had fallen and that cars assembled by hand had become too costly. So instead of embracing the industrial age by installing an assembly line and reducing the quality he decided to cease production.

Production numbers for Kleiber cars by year: 1924/69, 1925/186, 1926/212, 1927/178, 1928/133, 1929/37 totaling 815

According to my research, the Kleiber car was the only car to have been manufactured in San Francisco.



## BLACK TUESDAY

The Roaring 20's was a decade of prosperity and fun times for most people in this country despite prohibition that began in 1920. The good times came to an abrupt halt on October 25, 1929 when the stock market crashed (better known as "Black Tuesday") crippling the nation's economy. It would take 25 years before the stock market would regain its losses.

The Acme Beer Company of San Francisco used Kleiber trucks to make deliveries with signs to proclaim that "Happy Days Are Here Again".



Prohibition ended on December 5, 1933 and while most people in the country were chanting the phrase "Happy Days are here again" the Kleiber Motor Company lost sixty percent of its business between 1929 and 1934 and would never regain its losses or position in the industry. In 1937 while the first tires were rolling across the new Golden Gate Bridge the last tires would roll out of the Kleiber Motor company.

This story was told to the best of my ability.

It is with great pride that I have told this story and with even greater regret that I never had the opportunity to meet the man of such character. Paul Kleiber passed away on December 18, 1938, 11 years before I was born.

We have all seen those movies where they can instantly transport someone in time to the past. If I had that opportunity I would go back in time to meet the man who left his fingerprints on those pages of San Francisco history, my Grandfather.

Thank you for reading,  
Paul Kleiber III

This rare piece of San Francisco history is a 1925 *Kleber* coupe and is one of only two cars known to exist.







The 1925 Kleiber coupe was found in Oakland California and purchased in 1965 by Harrah's Automobile Collection of Reno Nevada.



The car was put on display for the next 12 years then in 1977 the restoration process began.



The restoration was completed in 1978 and was Harrah's Car of the Month for September 1978. And was billed as "the only Kleiber known to exist today". In 1984 most of Harrah's Automobile Collection was sold at auction including the 1925 Kleiber. When the gavel came down the successful bidder was the builders Grandson Paul Kleiber III.

*Made in California—*

A Home Product  
A Luxurious Automobile

Aristocratic in  
Appearance



*Kleiber*

Instantly Popular

See Us Before You Buy

Truly Handsome Model

Elegance and  
Performance

—  
Standard Parts



**KLEIBER MOTOR CO.**

11th and Folsom Sts.  
SAN FRANCISCO

1800 E. 12th St.  
OAKLAND

11th and San Pedro Sts.  
LOS ANGELES

## Restoring History



The surviving 1928 Kleiber Light Wagon #2 was purchased from the City of San Francisco in 1973 for \$2,511 by Herminia Kleiber (daughter of Paul Kleiber). It was put in storage for the next 27 years. Then in 2000 the restoration process began to give Light Wagon #2 it's new lease on life.





The restoration process was completed just in time to celebrate San Francisco's 100th anniversary of the 1906 earthquake. The restoration was painstakingly done by Wendell Joost of Guerneville CA.

## Restored *Kleiber* Trucks



(above left) Is a 1 ton 1928 Kleiber truck originally sold to Gaffney and Luce Wholesale Meat Jobbers of San Francisco. The truck at one time was sold for scrap and sat in a chicken shed for several years. George Stum purchased the truck in 1987 and completed restoration by 1990. In 2014 the truck was purchased by the Ryan family of Sonoma Calif.

(above right) This 2 ½ ton 1923 KLEIBER truck was donated to the AHS (American Truck Historical Society) by Robert Cole of Quincy Calif. It was then put on display at the Pacific Northwest Truck Museum in Brooks Oregon. In 2009 the Kleiber truck was sold to the Ryan family.



(above left) This 1927 Kleiber oil tanker was last owned by the Western States Oil Company of San Jose. It was donated to the History of San Jose Kelly Park in March of 2000. The truck was completely restored by mostly volunteers and is now on display at the trolley barn at Historic Kelly Park, San Jose.



(above right) Photo shows a Kleiber truck displayed at the Hayes - California Agricultural Museum in Woodland Calif. It is currently in storage and owned by the National Auto Museum in Reno Nevada.

Inside the KLEIBER Motor Company showing the different departments in the production of KLEIBER cars and trucks.



Kleyber trucks being assembled.



Kleyber truck cabs in the foreground and Fischer-Gaffeny auto bodies in the background.





Tires being mounted on Kleiber trucks



A fresh bunch of car bodies from the Fischer-Gaffeny Company are being prepared for assembly on the second floor of the Kleiber Motor Company at 10<sup>th</sup> and Folsom St.

## THEN AND NOW PHOTOS

Then:

The new Kleiber Motor Company at 10<sup>th</sup> and Folsom St.

Notice the new Kleiber truck ready to deliver two Kleiber cars.



Now:

The Kleiber building is still standing and is currently a self-storage facility





Then:

Outside the Kleiber truck building at 11<sup>th</sup> and Folsom St. with newly assembled trucks.



Now:

Houses Mercedes – Benz service center.



Then

Kleiber truck factory  
11<sup>th</sup> and Folsom



Now

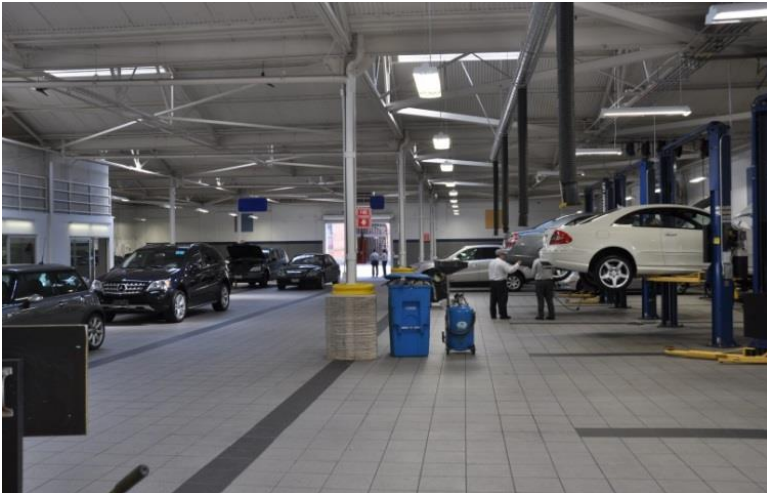
Mercedes – Benz service center





Then:

Inside the Kleiber truck assembly building at the corner of 11th and Folsom St. San Francisco. A team of workers are assigned to assemble each truck by hand.



Now:

The building is home to the Mercedes – Benz service center and continues the tradition of quality service.

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FOUNDED 1896



This is Paul Kleiber,  
the Honest Blacksmith



## Made in San Francisco



Heavy-Duty  
Trucks

Kleiber-Made  
Pleasure  
Cars

LOCAL  
PRODUCTS



### KLEIBER MOTOR TRUCK CO.

11TH AND FOLSOM  
SAN FRANCISCO

11TH AND SAN PEDRO  
LOS ANGELES

*Kleber*  
Motor Company

Second edition