

THERE MAY NEVER BE A MASS-TRANSIT monorail between Comstock and Burwell, friend. So you just may have to up and buy a car.

New automobiles are so ridiculously expensive many of us can consider only used cars. So here, in words and peculiar pictures, we present six that a sharp shopper can snatch for under a grand.

Our seamy selections are NOT recommendations. They were chosen to show the range of what is available in the low-buck category, from sedentary sedans to intense sporting machinery.

All used cars have one thing in common. That's when you buy them you must be very careful.

A copy of *Edmund's Used Car Prices* (available at Nebraska Book Store) will help you spot a fair deal, but selecting the right car is another thing.

First, decide what sort of car you really need for MOST of your driving. Don't pick something that will "let me move all my stuff," or you'll buy a semi. Consider size, operating economy, performance, safety and appearance.

Then start looking. Take a long look in good light from about 20 feet away. A car that looks ratty probably is. Now look closer. Note dents, patches of rust and anything else odd. Oil stains on the wheels mean leaky brake cylinders. Spots where the paint looks different mean wreck repairs. If the crack on the doors, hood or trunk isn't even all the way around, it may mean a bent frame. All of these can be fixed, but it is expensive. Other things being equal, give the nod to those without such symptoms.

In a really cheap car you may want to overlook a few dents. But note things that might keep it from passing safety inspection. Bent frames, rusty exhaust pipes (look under the car) and broken glass or lights are no-nos.

Check the interior. Little rips in the upholstery may grow, and these are expensive to fix. Again, if the interior looks ratty, it probably is.

Now it's time to drive. Before anything else, hold down the brake for about a minute. If it slowly sinks to the floor, don't even test the car. Then see if the engine starts easily. Try the lights, wipers, horn and other goodies. Drive the car around town, and listen for funny noises

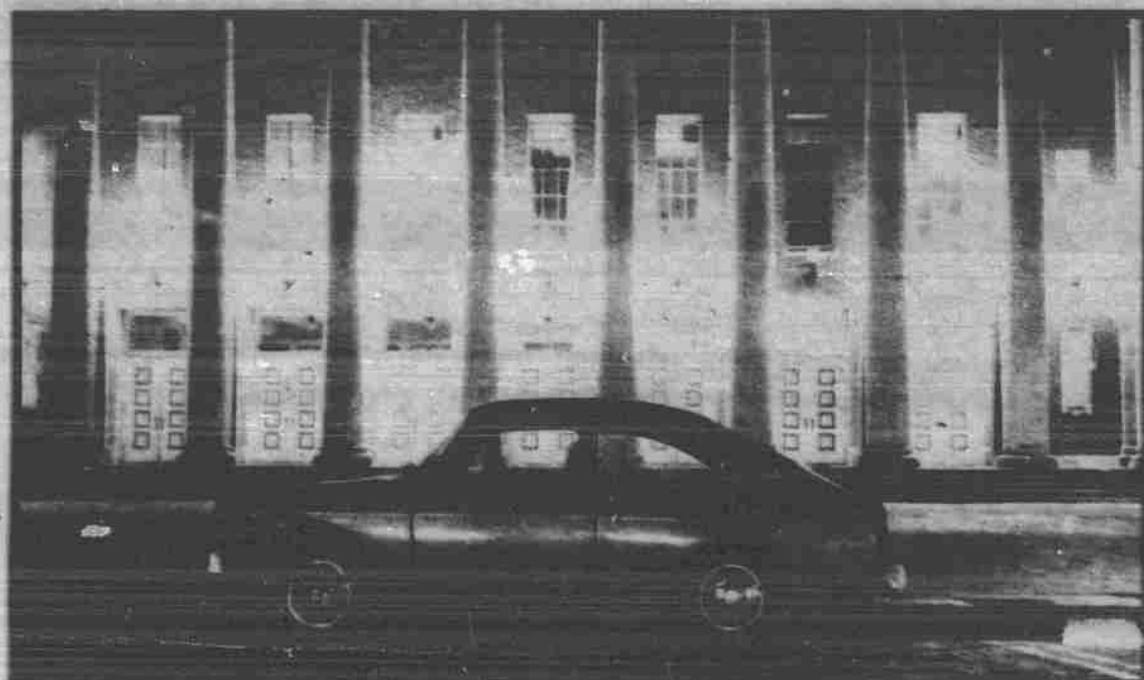
such as groans, grinds and clanks. See if the brakes stop the car in a fairly straight line.

On a highway, see if there's any "play" in the steering wheel—the less the better. Take your hands off the wheel briefly on a clear stretch and see if the car continues straight. Slant in the road may make it veer a little, but anything drastic is bad.

Once you've picked a promising candidate, spend the \$20 or so needed to have a mechanic or diagnostic center check it over. With a mechanic you'll probably need to arrange a checkup in advance. See that you get a compression test and plug reading on all cylinders (some diagnostic centers do only one unless you ask) and careful inspection of the underside on a hoist. If there's any major trouble, get an estimate on the cost to fix it so you can dicker with the seller.

If the mechanic gives the car a clean bill of health, it's still a gamble, but the odds are more on your side. Now ask yourself—Does this car please me? Will I enjoy it and be satisfied with it? Our survey proves there's plenty of choice in the used-car field, so there's no excuse for not buying one that makes you feel good.

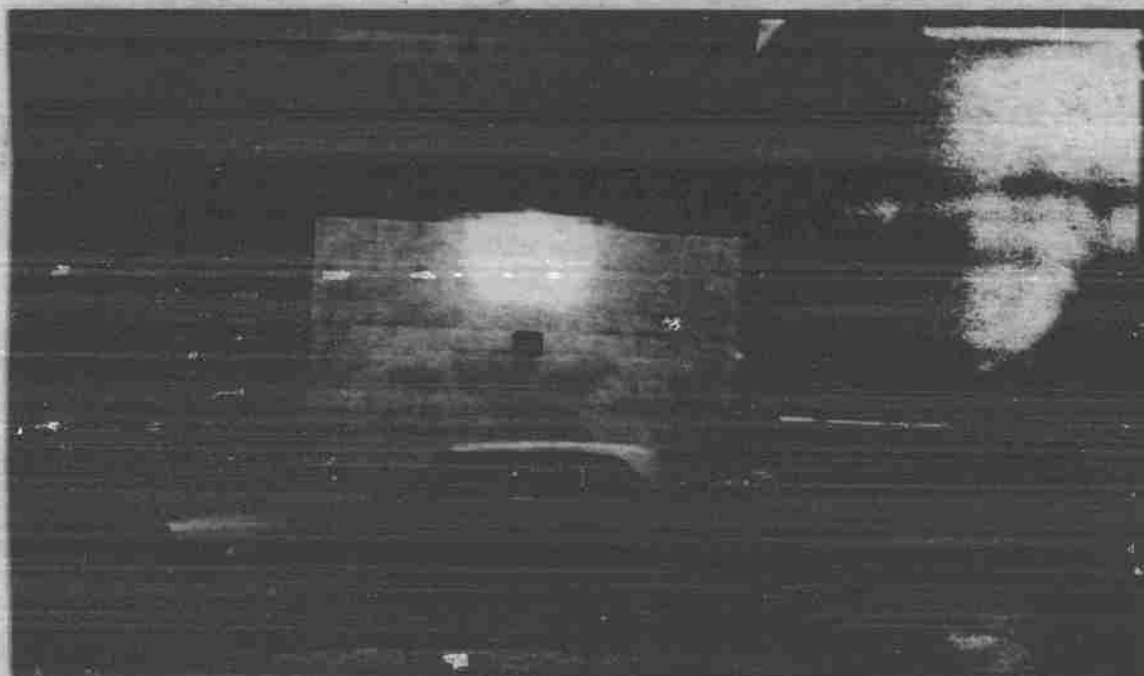
Only \$1,000? Consider these used cars



1970 Volkswagen Fastback

1

Driving a Volkswagen Fastback makes you feel so primly virtuous you want to fold your hands in your lap. The fastback is roomy for its size, well-made, durable and economical. It's also noisy, squirrely-handling and slow. It's probably better than a Beetle because it has a bigger trunk and better visibility, but being better than a Beetle isn't that hot a recommendation. This is a fine car for people who'd rather not be driving.



1966 Impala

2

Groups too big to be bored in a VW can be bored in a 1966 Chevrolet Impala. Kent Wolgamott, keeper of this voluptuous Middle American, says it's "an easy car to hate." Then again, the Impala waddles along without oil changes, tuneups or shock absorbers, repaying abuse by guzzling no more gas and wheezing out no more smog than it did when new. The vague handling makes it feel a lane wide and a block long in traffic, but there's enough room in the back seat for a Mazola party.



1960 Volvo 544

3

Lis Lewis' 1960 Volvo PV 544 (named Victor) isn't quite like today's stuffy, sensible Swedes. True, he's economical (20+ miles a gallon) and roomy. The back seat's bigger than some big sedans; and the trunk is like a cave, if there were ventilation you could open a bar in it. But when you floor the pedal his true personality emerges. The dual-carb, four-cylinder engine blows off VW Rabbits and roars like a Hemi-Cuba. Handling is agile, if tippy (Victor is five feet tall) and the 8" ground clearance. Lis does all of Victor's mechanical work herself, no problem with the simple engine. Body parts may be hard to find, but you'll never confuse your PV 544 with anything in the parking lot.



1970 Super Bee

4

A 1970 Dodge Super Bee is about as practical for transport as an F4 Phantom. But maybe you're the only driver in a family of siamese quintuplets and need room. Actually the Super Bee isn't that comfortable for more than four, but that's not the idea. The idea is the powerful rush of adrenalin you get when you hit the gas and the "Bchunk pipes" roar. The steering is heavy and the paint peels and the engine mounts break and so does your gas budget, but you feel like you're plugged into a 220v outlet when you goose a Super Bee. The classic American super car is extinct, and it deserves to be. It ate too much and breathed out bad stuff. But if a Civic's your daily wheels and you just want something formal for weekend wear, you might consider saving one of this breed.