

Sheldon's handmade auto will roll into Fountainhead museum

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FAIRBANKS - One of the most important cars in Alaska history, built out of odds and ends 105 years ago, is set to roll across town today in a heated van.

Bobby Sheldon's handmade 1905 car will be transported from the University of Alaska Museum of the North to the Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum, where it will be on loan for the next five years.

Sheldon built the car in Skagway using magazine drawings, as he had never seen a car. He used a two-cycle boat engine and other parts he scavenged.

Wily Vinton, a car expert who works at the Fountainhead museum, will restore the drive train and reinstall the original engine, which has been found in Skagway.

This is one of the most interesting artifacts owned by the University of Alaska Museum of the North, which has had it on display for more than 70 years, going back to when the museum was located in the Eielson Building. The car has been at the university since 1934. It was almost as popular in the museum's early days as the nearly albino moose.

UA President Charles Bunnell valued it as an example of the ingenuity of the Alaska pioneer.

The car will be on display Friday at the "Dancing with the Cars" event at 7 p.m. at the museum, which is on the Wedgewood Resort property in Lemeta.#