

F.A.H.P. News, January 23, 2012

More Operator Errors with Stanley Cars (continued from Jan. 16): In the spring of 1949, my “new” 1914 Model 607 was repainted in Bill Allaband’s shop in Kennett Square. I did much of the work, and it was ready for the road by late April. It was a beauty (I thought) with its light blue body and red wheels and undercarriage. On a Saturday less than a month later, I had been to some sort of gathering around Media in the car while my father was exhibiting his miniature 4-8-4 locomotive at a hobby show in the basement of the American Legion Building in Kennett. I stopped there on the way home and parked next to the exhibit room down a steep ramp from the street. Upon leaving with wet steam, I backed onto South Broad Street and started up the hill toward the traffic light at State Street. Something gave out in the engine with a bang, and I moved nowhere. Raymond Noznesky came with his tow truck from the Royal Garage and took the 607 there. One of the wrist pins, perhaps cracked from age for some time, broke off from the stress, and the cylinder head on one side of the block blew out.

In those days, my dad was collecting Stanley parts as fast as he was cars, and he gave me another engine (valued at \$100 or less) as a replacement. I was back in business, cocky as ever, and used the car heavily through the summer and then entered it on the 1949 Glidden Tour through Virginia. The tour started at Gettysburg in late September, and I invited Bill Carr, a former Air Transport Command pilot who lived with his wife on the third floor at Auburn Heights during World War II, to be my passenger. My father took the Mountain Wagon on this tour and had no trouble (he never did). As I built a head of steam in firing up to go to Gettysburg with the 607, the fusible plug in the boiler (we have these plugs in only two of our cars today) was leaking, so I thought I should repair it before starting the journey. In taking it out with pressure on the boiler, steam blew everywhere, but I paid little attention, replaced the faulty plug, fired up again, and we started our trip. The car did not steam well that day, and Bill Carr and I both had headaches when we reached Gettysburg. After the starting banquet for the tour, we dropped the burner and found most of the tiny holes in the grate choked with asbestos (removal of the plug under pressure at Yorklyn had blown the insulation all through the firebox). We poked out the holes and put the burner back up before we retired for the night. For the rest of the tour, the car steamed very well. The tour route took us to Luray, Richmond, and Williamsburg, and Annapolis, before it ended at the Hotel du Pont in Wilmington.

I liked to show off, and I passed several other tour cars while ascending the Blue Ridge between Elkton and Charlottesville. About three days later, then with Charlie Dougherty as my passenger, this chauvinism backfired while rolling along on level road at 35 m.p.h. south of Tappahannock. A wrist pin broke again, and the rapid bangs inside the engine case brought us to an unscheduled stop. I blocked the engine out of gear, and a truck towed us into Tappahannock, where I found a garage to leave the car for a few days. Ed Pamphilon, with his passenger Mervin Allatt, came along in Ed’s 1919 Model 735 Stanley, and we rode with them until we caught up with my father, waiting many miles ahead with his Mountain Wagon on the Potomac River Bridge. Charlie and I rode on the Mountain Wagon for the rest of the tour.

With two “ruined” cylinder blocks and other engine damage, my father made new wrist pins for my 10-H.P. engine, and we attempted to have the cylinders repaired by a welder near Village Green, Pennsylvania, who seemingly did a good job in gas-welding the blown heads back in without warping the blocks. Unfortunately, however, one of the welded blocks lasted only 300 miles, when the valve seat on one side scored badly, probably because the seat was softened in the welding process. Another good cylinder block lasted until the car was dismantled for a new restoration in 2008, probably because it was operated by someone who finally understood the value of preserving old things. These stories describe only a few of the mistakes I have made while operating Stanley cars. Undoubtedly, you will hear more in the near future.

Work Report: Work continued, mostly on the front of the car, on the Model 607 restoration. The sheet metal “1/4 moon” plates that cover the joint between the main frame and the curved frontal cross member have been fitted and wood screws modified to pull these screws down flush with the top of these plates. Some adjusting was done on the mounting of the steering gear box. Several more small parts were cleaned and painted. Art Wallace, Ted Kamen, Dave Leon, and Dennis Dragon led this effort, helped by several others. We missed Bob Jordan, coordinator of this project, for the second week, but he hopes to return with us soon.

The Rauch & Lang restoration is also moving along. Jerry Novak reports that the brakes have been installed, including all linkage, the stabilizer between the motor and differential has been painted and installed, and the front axle was removed, primed, painted and reinstalled. Both battery compartments have been cleaned and painted and are ready for the charging unit and the 15 batteries. The wheel spokes are being lightly sanded in preparation for epoxy sealer. Jerry, Lou Mandich, Jeff Pollock, and Emil Christofano have been working diligently, and Jim Personti has been a consistent advisor.

The generator was installed on the Model 87 by Tim Nolan and Bob Stransky, and the right wrist pin and pump drive carefully adjusted by Steve Bryce. Steve gave the Museum Studies interns a ride in the car on Wednesday. Thursday night Jim Personti, Bill Schwoebel, Ted Kamen, and Geoff Fallows removed the throttle prior to adjustment of location and reworking the innards. Jerry Lucas and helpers got all the newly striped wheels back on the Mountain Wagon, and it is back in its winter location in the museum.

Butch Cannard and Kermit Good took the popcorn machine apart and discovered a mouse hotel on top of the boiler, restricting over half of the tubes with chewed insulation. While it is apart, the boiler will be washed on a warm day, and some plumbing changed so future cleaning will be easier. Steve Bryce and Bob Young removed the hand kerosene pump from under the shed, where the underground tank is to be removed. Kelly Williams and Tom finished the burner for the Model 725, and it is now in place, plastered up, and ready for firing.

Butch took more digital photos for cataloging our spare parts. Mark Russell made progress in building the new Auburn Heights sign. The Maute brothers continued in the library, needing to rearrange somewhat after the scanning and cataloging of numerous photos by the Univ. of Delaware interns. Richard Bernard worked on repairing one of our floor jacks in the garage.