

Jay Leno Climbs Mount Washington: On what she called the “Last Day of Summer,” Flora Tileston Stanley accompanied her husband, Freelan O. Stanley, in climbing the rough gravel road to the top of Mount Washington in a tiny Locomobile steamer on August 31, 1899. Although not the first to try, this little car of Stanley design piloted by one of the Stanley twins himself was the first automobile ever to make the climb and reach the top. The time for the 8-mile ascent climbing 4,600 feet in elevation was just over two hours. The Weekly News of 8/31/09 and 9/1/14 covers this historic event.

Very soon after this historic date, the old carriage road to the summit of New England’s highest mountain became the greatest challenge of all hill climbs, and several successful climbs were achieved in the years immediately after 1900. Charles J. Glidden, Augustus Post, and a number of their well-to-do friends went up in high-powered cars in 1904. F. E. Stanley showed most of them up when he made the ascent in 28 minutes in a little Model C Stanley, similar to our Model CX. In the next year, 1905, F. E. made it in 22 minutes in a slightly larger Model D or Model E, when the first Glidden Tour was at nearby Bretton Woods.

Over the years, manufacturers tested their high-powered products on the old carriage road. As a 12-year-old in 1936, I first rode up the road in one of the big Pierce Arrow touring cars kept at the bottom for that purpose. When the Glidden Tour Revival visited Glen House at the base of the road in 1947, “Cannon Ball” Baker, working for Nash Motors at the time, was trying for a record but barely beat F. E. Stanley’s time from 1905. In 1949, to gain publicity for the “motor road,” as it was then called, the owners contacted Edwin A. Battison of Windsor, Vermont, and asked him if he could drive an early Stanley to the top on August 31, the 50th anniversary of the first climb. With his ’02 Stanley, similar to our Stick-Seat Runabout, he drove from his home in Vermont to the base of the mountain and, at the appropriate time, made a successful climb to the top. In 1961, he was asked to do it again and probably used the same car, this time to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the building of the original carriage road. For a second time, Battison had no trouble of significance.

By 1980 members of the steam car community were joking about driving a Stanley to the top. In 1984, and with no special preparation, Brent Campbell undertook it while returning on a tour from Kingfield, Maine, which was spending the night at nearby Gorham. Doug Philbrook, then owner of the motor road, encouraged Stanley owners to try, so, on the spur of the moment, and late on an August afternoon, Brent assembled three others to go along in his special Model 80. His passengers were Ole Vikre, Bob Reilly, and Wayne Coffman. It was a remarkable trip, and they returned safely before dark. The stage was set for more steam car attempts.

In early August, 1999, the largest Steam Car Tour ever assembled, sponsored by the Stanley Museum, was held at Gorham, and owners of the 80 cars in attendance were encouraged to climb the mountain. With unfavorable weather, several tried it, and about four cars, at least one of which was from Great Britain, made the climb to the top and back. 3 weeks later on the centennial date of August 31, 1999, either three or four Stanleys completed the round-trip on a perfect day, as it had been in 1899. Sue Davis became the first woman to drive a steam car to the top, when she did so in the Stanley Museum’s Model 725. Since that time, numerous successful climbs have been accomplished by Stanley owners. Brent Campbell has climbed in one of his Stanleys at least four times. He is responsible for the remainder of this story. The event took place on July 4, 2017, and I quote from Brent:

“Jay Leno drove my Stanley “Ray’s Car” up the mountain successfully without any trouble. Bill Barnes followed with his Vanderbilt Cup Racer and also had no problems. As expected, we did stop once to pump water into our boilers with a wheel jacked up. The production crew doing the filming consisted of 40 people, all very skilled and experienced. They had 12 cameras attached to my car and two of the film crew sat in the rear of a minivan facing rearward, so as to capture the event. Then there was the helicopter that flew directly above us capturing it all on film from above. It was an exciting day, and everyone enjoyed it, including Jay, who was very gracious and friendly in every way. The weather was perfect with the exception of the summit, where it

was cloudy, windy, and cold. Two ramp trucks took both cars down without incident, and more filming was done when they were unloaded at the bottom.

“Jay drove Bill’s Vanderbilt Cup Racer the day before and had to be impressed since it has a 30-H.P. engine, and his has only a 20. Bill’s car is easily the fastest Stanley I have ever had the privilege to drive! Jay also rode one of Bill’s steam motorcycles and must have liked it because he didn’t return for over 20 minutes. Unfortunately, the film crew was not on hand to capture Jay on Bill’s bike. All in all, it was an exciting day for everyone. The show, “Jay Leno’s Garage,” will air our climb to the clouds sometime in the fall. We will know exactly when beforehand.”

On the same day as Jay Leno’s climb, Lisa Cantor, accompanied by her husband Mark, drove their 10-H.P. Stanley to the top, becoming the second woman to pilot a steamer to the summit. Congratulations, ALL! Rest well, Flora and F.O., after 118 years on Thursday.

Work Report: On Tuesday, August 22, 15 volunteers turned out, as follows: Larry Tennity (in charge), Mark Bodenshtab, Steve Bryce, Anne Cleary, Rose Ann Hoover, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Bob Koury, Tom Marshall, Brent McDougall, Bill Scheper, John Schubel, Neal Sobocinski, Tim Ward, and Kelly Williams.

Many of the tools and supplies from the Vermont tour were put away. The Model 725 was cleaned, polished, and waxed, as it was used as a “photo car” for a charter event on August 24. The top was put down. The burner grate from this car was inspected, and two cracks in the grate were marked. Ten gallons of gasoline with no ethanol was brought from Lancaster County by Kelly Williams for use in our Models H-5 and K, as both cars are entered for the Hagley Show on September 17.

The vacuum wiper motor from the ’37 Packard was again taken apart and inspected, and, while it works somewhat, it is still not 100%. It was installed back in the car for the time being. The Lionel trains and the Auburn Valley Railroad were prepped for their use during the August 24 charter event. Possible sources for new car trucks are being investigated. We need one complete set to put Car #854 back in service. The Stanley Model 87 was brought to the upper garage, and the Model 76 was moved to replace it in the museum.

On Wednesday, August 23, 11 volunteers worked during the afternoon, viz: Richard Bernard (in charge), Mike Ciosek, Rose Ann Hoover, Mark Hopkins, Bob Koury, Dave Leon, Jerry Lucas, Lou Mandich, Ruth Marshall, Tom Marshall, Bill Schwoebel, Steve Bryce, and Jerry Novak.

On the Model 740, the valve rod packings were taken up. Work continued on digging the footings for the new A.V.R.R. train shed behind the museum. The flangeways and switches were cleaned for the railroad’s operation on August 24. The floor of the engine house was swept out and cleaned from the heavy rains of the night before. About 20 leaking tubes in the boiler of the Model 725 were swaged, but this project proved fruitless, and the boiler will have to be lifted from the car to do the job properly. The burner grate was cleaned for further inspection of its cracks. These will be patched with high-temperature epoxy.

A tent canopy and small tables were donated and delivered to us by Rose Ann Hoover with help from Jerry Novak. The Model T Ford was prepped for its use the next day during the charter event. The fuel automatic was removed and replaced on the Model H-5. The rose arbor was trimmed in preparation for the August 24 charter. The gift shop carts and the Cretors popper were brought to the upper garage to clear the museum of storage items (the popper will be used for the charter event). Bob Koury reported on a trip to Lancaster to visit the office of “Little Engines” in search of completed trucks for our AVRR passenger car #854. He made good progress and will make recommendations soon.

On Thursday, August 24, the Stanley Models 735 and 740 were cleaned, hopefully making the museum pristine for our guests during the charter later in the day. The 725 was placed in front of the porte-cochere for “photo ops,” which proved highly popular during the event. The Stanley Model 87, the Rauch & Lang electric, the Model T Ford, and our “Diesel” train provided rides, and the Lionel layout was operated. Steam-made popcorn and Woodside Farm Ice Cream supplemented the catered feast that took place under a large tent, in the museum, and around the rose arbor. Phung Lu of Conservation Connections entertained all with his collection of friendly birds, and Sin City Band added to the festive atmosphere. Tours of the Auburn Heights mansion were also provided. Perfect weather provided an outstanding evening

for about 100 guests. State Park personnel and about 20 F.A.H.P. volunteers are to be thanked and congratulated for providing a first-class experience. And, of course, “our Susan” managed it all.

On Saturday, August 26, John Hopkins and Tom removed the boiler from the Model 725 in preparation for expanding its tubes. It is expected that several years’ additional life can be obtained from this copper-tube boiler. On Sunday, Tom installed the damaged portion of the AVRR switch near the spillway, which had been repaired.