

July 11, 2005

Hello, Steam Team:

THE VERY FIRST STEAM CAR TOUR: At the end of World War II and liberation from gasoline rationing, antique auto enthusiasts thought it would be fun to tour in their early cars, even though very few antique tire sizes were available. My father with two friends drove the Model 76 to Connecticut and back in late 1945 or early 1946. James Melton, Jerry Duryea and others organized the first Glidden Tour Revival in late August, 1946, which started in New York and Boston, traveled to Detroit, and returned to the starting points. My father and I went on our first Glidden Tour the next year with our Models 71 and 735, drove to the starting point at Hartford, CT, toured northern New England and southeast to the finale at Newport, RI. Then we drove home. Stanley Ellis was on that tour with his '14 Model 607, Henry Wing, Jr., had his newly-restored Model 64 roadster, Earle Eckel drove his faithful '14 Model 712 roadster, and Murray Brown and John Miller had their White steamers, Model 0 and Model 00 respectively. Frank Gardner was on the tour with his '18 Franklin, his Model 74 Stanley not yet operable. The steam car people decided they must have a meet or tour of their own, just for steam cars.

The tour (it was really a "meet") was planned for mid-July, 1948, on the Mohawk Trail near Charlemont, MA, with Messrs. Ellis, Gardner, and Wing as the organizers and planners. It began with dinner Friday night, and ended Sunday afternoon. My father and I drove two cars from here, he the Model 76 with Homer Kratz as his passenger, and I the 607. We stayed at Kingston, NY, the first night, and were supposed to have a rendezvous with Kellogg-Clarke of Buffalo at Williamstown, MA, the next day, about 30 miles west of the Meet headquarters. The Buffalo man scorched his boiler in firing up, and sent word to Williamstown that he would not be there (he never tried to drive a steamer again, and sold his Model 65 to William Swigart of Huntingdon, PA, where it can still be seen in the Swigart Museum). Not knowing how steep the grades were on the Mohawk Trail, we made our way across, going down the east side toward Charlemont at about 10 m.p.h. to save brakes on a very warm afternoon. Some do-gooder went ahead and reported to the authorities at the Meet headquarters that two steamers had broken down on the Trail, so a search party was sent out. By the time they came across us, we were almost down, and all was well.

It was a great get-together, with all of the eleven cars that were there having been driven from their owners' homes. We had the greatest distance, but the Eckels came from Washington, NJ, Ed Battison from Windsor, VT, (in a 1903 Model C), Paul Bourdon from Woodstock, VT, John Miller from Connecticut, and several from Massachusetts. On Saturday, we played games with the cars (Butch's research says I won most of them), on Sunday we visited the home and shop of Henry Wing, Sr., at Brier, MA, and the Packard Brothers near Goshen, MA. We

started for home on Monday, arriving some time Tuesday. The trip home was uneventful, but we did not cross the Mohawk Trail again, choosing a more level route down the Connecticut River. (More on early Steam Car Tours in future News Letters).

Some meetings are taking place this week. Tomorrow night, Bill Schwoebel has arranged for those interested in publicizing our events to meet with Jean Toman, our director of publicity, in the Museum at 7:00 P.M. Bring your ideas to share. Through John McNamara and his Scouting connections, we have been offered free help in getting public service announcements on local radio stations. But please don't forget that our getting the word out through personal contact and distribution of our flyers is VERY IMPORTANT. Please take more flyers and distribute them, and don't forget to offer complimentary tickets where they will do the most good. Thursday morning at 9:30, also in the Museum, the staff people of the Division of Parks and Recreation, who will be involved with the operation and maintenance of Auburn Heights after the State takes over, are meeting, and 3 of us, Emil Christofano, Richard Bernard, and I will meet with them and share ideas.

3 Stanley cars, the 87, 76, and 735, and ten of us including family members will be leaving Sunday morning for the annual Eastern Steam Car Tour, this year at Lakeville, CT. Bill Rule plans to join us late Monday. So our work sessions will have something to do with getting these cars ready and supplies loaded. Work sessions will continue the week some of us are away, and will be held as usual on July 19 and 21. Other work projects include putting the burner back under the Model EX (Jerry Lucas), continuing track work (Steve Jensen), progress toward our R.R. signals (Ed Hoffmeister, Bob Wilhelm, and "Butch"), and mechanically restoring Jim Sank's beautiful little inch-and-a-half scale 4-4-0 (Jim Personti). The electrical pair of Emil Christofano and Jerry Novak continue wiring improvements indoors and out. Richard Bernard, with helpers Dave Sedar and Herman Feissner, have some more permanent ideas about lining the parking lot. Rose Ann reports we have 64 members, and we welcome Dale and Teddy Simpkins, Brent Campbell, and Charlie Johnson as the newest recruits.

We still need input on a Logo for the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve. As mentioned last week, sketches are here from Bob Bruce, a friend of Mike Jones, who is an expert at such things. His ideas included a composite of Auburn Heights and the Mountain Wagon. Give this some thought so we may move ahead after getting more ideas or drawings from you. Please remember the offer to buy the excellent Stanley book at a discount until August 1. This special discount is \$15 from the list of \$79.95, but if you want a very slightly damaged copy (two corners caved in from shipping), it is yours for \$53, our cost. Don't miss this special opportunity. Also until August 1, Alan Berry's Steam Car DVD's are available to members at \$15 (list price is \$20), and T-shirts, normally \$15, for \$12 each!

I'm happy to announce that Alan Berry plans to be married on July 22. We wish him and Terri, his bride, the very best. Finally, for those active at work sessions, I will post in the shop some procedures for various things we do that I hope will be helpful and more organized. Please look for this the next time you're here. Enjoy the hot weather. Tom