

F.A.H.P. New, September 26, 2011

Model A Fords: I am not an authority on Model A Fords, but there are thousands of antique car collectors who are, and my guess is that there are far more Model A's running today than any other car made before World War II. Although the model was made for only four years, no American car, with the possible exception of Ford's earlier Model T (1908-1927), endeared itself to those seeking "wheels" at a reasonable cost as did the Model A from 1928 to 1931. Here is my recollection of a few of them.

Although my first adventure behind the wheel was when I almost drove my father's big 1928 Packard through the back of our Rehoboth garage in 1931, I really learned to drive on a Model A. To use as a light pick-up around the grounds of Auburn Heights and to run local errands, my dad bought a slightly used 1929 station wagon, with removable rear seats and side curtains. The name "Woodie" was applied to this model and certain others in the early 1970s. At the age of 8 or 9, I would come home from school, and if Clifford Murray ("Cliffey") was not using the Model A, I would practice. I don't think my father liked it, but he didn't say much. I learned how to reverse through the porte cochere at some speed and to drive under the rose arbor. A little later, I even ventured down the back driveway and out into the meadow. The car had a side-mount spare on the left side only, and like many Model A's, it soon set low on the left as much of the weight was on that side. The Model A was easy to shift and to drive, but the steering had excessive lost motion. In 1936, my father sold it to Russell Draper of Middletown and bought a 1936 Chevrolet chassis for \$409 on which was added a station wagon body in York, Pennsylvania, for \$230. This new "wagon" was used in the same way as the Model A; we never had rear seats for it, but it did have glass windows instead of the side curtains.

Edgar Cleaver of Kennett Square drove a beat-up 1928 (or 1929) Model A brougham or club sedan right up until World War II. A short-coupled 4-door closed body made it somewhat unusual. My father and I rode with Edgar from Kennett to Chadds Ford and back at top speed (apparently the way he always drove); it was an experience if not a smooth ride. L. R. Beauchamp of Harrington was a sales representative for Winchester and then Remington and was very popular with trapshooters of the area. "Beech" brought his Model A, rusted and in very questionable mechanical condition, to the gun club at Yorklyn, but when he got ready to leave, he found the 4-cylinder engine on the ground under the car.

Mrs. E. Paul du Pont loved her 1929 Model A. It was a 4-door touring, painted dark blue with dual side-mounts and carried Delaware License #536. The 4.75 x 21 tires were so large the side-mounts almost restricted the opening of the front doors. She drove it everywhere, despite her easy access to DuPont cars built by her husband, and was often seen at Wilmington Friends School picking up her sons Jacques (Jack) and Alexis (Lex) who attended there. Although she later had a closed '37 Pontiac with License #537, she drove the Model A in good weather until the late 1940s. For a few years around 1960, my father owned a similar model.

Clifford Murray, mentioned above, came to work at Auburn Heights in September 1929 and stayed 50 years. Upon his new employment at \$22 per week, he was soon able to upgrade from

his Model T to a used 1929 Model A 2-door sedan, which Ford called a “coach.” More Model A coaches were built than any other body style, and two or three years later, Cliff traded again, this time to a used 1930 with 19-inch wheels, which he kept until he bought a new Chevy in 1937 for \$715, the only new car he ever owned. In good weather, his Model A’s would be parked in the apple orchard (site of the museum) and in the winter neatly under the shed at the carriage house.

Vintage Wine & Wheels

The Steam Team helped to host a benefit wine tasting at Deerfield Wines on Saturday. The weather was not as nice as they d hoped, but they enjoyed themselves and spread the word about Auburn Heights. Art Sybell coordinated the event, and Joyce Sybell, Art Wallace, Steve Bryce, Tom Marshall and Jerry Novak assisted, along with Lou Mandich and Rose Ann Hoover, who brought their own vintage vehicles to the party. Earlier in the morning, everyone stopped by Millcroft to share the cars with residents there.

Halloween Hauntings

We will be hosting a Steamin' Weekend October 22 & 23, 12 to 4 pm, celebrating "Goblins, Ghosts & Ghouls." We invite members to share their creativity by donating a decorated pumpkin (or gourd or scarecrow) for display at the event. Carve, paint, or adorn your contribution in any way you wish! Contact Susan at the F.A.H.P. office (srandolph@auburnheights.org) or just drop off your creation prior to the event.