

## **JULY 21, 2008 F.A.H.P. NEWS**

**Special Bodies on Expensive Cars:** By the late 1920's, most automobile manufacturers were building their own bodies, or owned a major body company. General Motors owned Fisher and Fleetwood, and Chrysler owned Briggs. On the most expensive cars in their lines, however, there was pressure to sell high-end chassis to special body builders for an exotic effect. In my minority opinion, these bodies were seldom well-coordinated with the lines of the chassis, and many very expensive end products were spoiled by an off-the-wall body. Some of the well-known American specialty body builders were Derham (Rosemont, PA), Darrin, LeBaron, and most notably Dietrich. In the past 25 years, more cars have shown up with Dietrich bodies than Dietrich ever built originally.

Exotic American makes like Duesenberg and duPont often had special bodies, although the chassis manufacturers seemed to have good control over the bodies that were used, so that they complimented the outstanding lines of the overall design. Less than 500 cars of each make were produced, but, like the Stanleys, their fame far outpaced their production numbers.

On the many Packard cars that passed through Auburn Heights when my father was a dealer (1922 to 1940), none had special bodies, and I don't recall seeing any around Wilmington. In the collecting years, however, Herb Norton of Talleyville had a 1940 Packard 120 LeBaron, that incorporated a much lower and sleeker hood, and a 2-passenger body. I have to admit it was a very attractive car. My father bought a 1934 Packard Twelve 7-passenger touring from John Russell, an orange grower in Orlando, FL, that came to us with a Dietrich body. The body was somewhat similar to a Packard body, but it had a wider front cowl with no ventilator, and the overhang of the back seat was so much that the trunk rack could not be folded up. This lack of coordination didn't seem to matter; a purchaser would pay a large premium to have a car with a Dietrich body. In 1970, I needed to sell either that car or our present 1932 Twin Six Dual Cowl Phaeton, and although the '34 was in better mechanical condition with lower mileage, I opted to keep the '32. I always liked Packard bodies, as the whole car was properly coordinated.

Many years earlier, the Stanley Motor Carriage Company shipped several chassis to its dealer in the British Isles, and English bodies were attached to make complete cars. I have a catalog from the dealer in London (or possibly Newcastle-on-Tyne), showing several body styles being offered about 1912. It's possible to detect that they are Stanleys from the round hood (coffin nose), but everything else looks very strange to those of us used to American Stanleys.

Today, a lot of time was spent in screening our E-mail list, and coordinating mine with the one in the FAHP office. I must apologize to several of you whose E-mail addresses "fell through the cracks", and you may be receiving the Weekly News for the first time. If this be the case, I will be happy to send you a listing of all the stories related each week over the past 3-1/2 years; just request it by return. From this list, if there are any that strike your fancy, it will be no trouble to send them to you electronically (please don't ask for more than 10; there are nearly 200 to choose from).

Our Strategic Plan is just about in its final form to be presented to the Board for approval on August 14. The sub-committees and the steering committee deserve a vote of thanks for the seemingly endless hours spent in getting the plan to its present stage.

Tomorrow, July 22, a small committee appointed by Mike May will meet with Chazz Salkin, Paul Nicholson, and others from the Park system to begin the discussion of transfer of the Auburn Heights property from Ruth and me to the State of Delaware. Time will also be spent to begin finalizing the legal agreement between the State of Delaware and the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve. Ruth and I plan to start moving about September 1, and should be out a few weeks thereafter.

Sarah Stanley plans to meet with Mike May and me on August 12 to get closer to a final LOGO, about which you have heard for two or three years. Our deposit on the "Diesel" locomotive in Florida has been refunded with no explanation. Another call to the estate of the builder will be in order, but it appears we will not get the unfinished locomotive, and should find out where we can order a similar one.

Rob Robison, Catherine and I are working on the August "Herald", and will try to get this out within two or three weeks.

We were successful in purchasing the late George Barczewski's 24-foot trailer just before he died, and Jerry Novak delivered it here early last week. It is in excellent condition, and is large enough to haul either of our Packards or the Mountain Wagon. Jim Personti made new side-rod bushings for our Locomotive 402, which he installed on the left side of the engine. He and Geoff Fallows also discovered the poor condition of the trailing truck, mostly from coal dust and ash that had fallen on the bearings from the firebox. They cleaned the bearings and lubricated them. Unfortunately, we must make a new superheater for the Model 76, but this has been started under the guidance of Steve Bryce.

With Bill Schwoebel's oversight, the driving classes over the past two weeks have been very successful. Six teachers and about 12 students have participated, and several are nearing the plateau of taking a car on the road, two students at a time without a teacher. The Models 607, 78, 725, 735, and 740 have been used for this drivers' training. The 87 is back together and ready to go back in the Museum.

This week we will be getting ready for our July 27 "Steamin' Sunday". We will be featuring our two 1908 Stanleys (we have a third but it is on loan to the America on Wheels Museum in Allentown) and helping them celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Models K and H-5 will be fired up and occasionally running around the grounds. Richard Bernard still needs volunteers to sign up to help in several categories, so please let him know if you are free and can help that day.

Tom