

F.A.H.P. News, June 17, 2013

The London-to-Brighton Run, 1960: In the 1830s, the British Parliament passed the “Red Flag Law,” which required a self-powered vehicle on the roads of the British Isles to follow a pedestrian carrying a red flag of warning. Prior to that, steam-powered stage coaches were operating with mixed success. The most ambitious schedule called for a coach to make the run from London to Bristol, 120 miles, in 10 hours. This was at the time when the very first railroads were starting to appear. The Red Flag Law set back motor vehicle development by 60 years.

Parliament finally repealed the law in 1896, and as early mechanical engineers were starting to put vehicles on the roads of France, Germany, and the United States, Britain rushed to catch up. To commemorate this historic event, the London-to-Brighton Run, just over 50 miles one way, attracted competitors from many countries each year on the first Sunday in November.

By the end of World War II, the event was under the control of the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain, and it was difficult for competitors outside the U.K. to gain permission to compete. All cars, then and now, had to be built in 1904 or earlier. To my knowledge, the first American car to compete was in 1960, when Dr. Scher of New York entered his 1903 Curved-Dash Oldsmobile, to be driven by F.A.H.P. member W. Jay Milligan.

The year 1960 was also the 25th anniversary of the Antique Automobile Club of America, and, as a Wilmington travel agent, I was asked to arrange an economy tour for members of the club. In order to obtain the best rates and to charter a brand new jet airplane (a Boeing 707 operated by Sabena Belgian Airlines), the tour was planned for October 19-November 7 and included Belgium, France, Switzerland, West Germany, the Netherlands, and finally England. The all-inclusive rate was \$514 per person, and 243 Americans signed up. It required seven motor coaches, each with a courier, to accommodate the group (and a second airplane as well).

The Brighton Run was scheduled for Sunday, November 6, and the tour arrived at Harwich on the North Sea on the previous Friday morning, after a rough ferry crossing from Hook-of-Holland, and everyone took the steam-powered boat train to London. Sightseeing in and around London consumed the rest of Friday and Saturday. Through the hierarchy of the British car club, permission was obtained for the Americans on our tour to be transported by motor coach along the tour route at the same time the early cars were making the trip and to be invited to attend the evening banquet at King George IV's recreation retreat constructed in 1820. For some, this day was the highlight of their tour.

Morris Kunkle and I, both owning steam cars in the United States, were invited to be passengers in a 1904 Gardner-Serpollet steamer owned and operated by a Mr. Milligan (no relation of Jay), who lived in a castle about 75 miles northeast of London, for the trip from Hyde Park to the beach along the English Channel at Brighton. Six steamers were entered among the 150 or so cars in competition that day, and we were instructed to meet Milligan in a garage near Marble Arch at 5 A.M., which we did. At daybreak, he drove his outstanding car into Hyde Park, where all the cars lined up in their respective positions. At 8 A.M., the competing cars began their 50-mile journey, being released at something like six cars every five minutes. In order to complete successfully, each car had to check in at the Brighton promenade within six hours from the time it started (or something like that). The cars in Hyde Park that morning were something to behold. Some had only three wheels, and many had the configuration of a passenger seat ahead of the driver's seat. Many women were passengers as well as men. The Gardner-Serpollet was a big car for 1904, however, and seated four very comfortably. It reminded me much of a

White steamer of about 1908, with engine under the hood, boiler and burner under the front seat, and a condenser to re-use the water. Mr. Milligan was a fine operator, and he understood his car well. We made one stop for coffee and a little water for the car and arrived at Brighton in fine style. Three of the six steamers entered completed the trip on time.

After the proper toast to the Queen, we enjoyed the Brighton banquet, following which we returned to London in our motor coaches. We flew back to the United States on Monday, and John F. Kennedy was elected president the following day. As the years progressed, more and more Americans were invited to enter their pre-1905 cars in the Brighton Run, and many have done so, including our members Brent Campbell and Joe Van Sciver.

Work Report: Tuesday, June 11, was the date of the first Ice Cream Run of the season, and four of our Stanleys made all or part of the trip. Bob Wilhelm joined us in his Model 735 with Rich and Sam Gregg as his passengers. With the possibility of missing someone, the following are listed as taking part: Tim Ward, Ted Kamen, Bob and Marilyn Stransky, Art Wallace, Susan Randolph (with Rembrandt and Pippin), Dave Leon, Jerry Lucas, Juliette (Dan's intern), Dan Citron, Steve and Ann Bryce, Gary Green, and Tom Marshall. Our Models 725, 735, and 820 (Mountain Wagon) along with Wilhelm's 735 made the 15-mile loop, and Dan Citron drove the Model EX to and from Hockessin, where concern about the efficiency of the water pumps prevented him from getting to the Woodside Farm Creamery. The weather was perfect for an ice cream run.

In the shop, others were busy. Bob Jordan, Jerry Koss, Dennis Dragon, Jerry Novak, Emil Christofano, Jeff Pollock, and Lou Mandich worked on the Model 607 and the '37 Packard. The fenders and splash aprons are being installed on the 607, the rear panel below the water tank was inserted, and many small adjustments were made. The wheels are on the Packard and the new brakes are ready to be tested on the road.

On Thursday, June 13, the following attended the monthly Events Committee meeting: Anne Cleary, Dan Citron, Steve Bryce, Richard Bernard and Susan Randolph. The July Ice Cream Run, originally scheduled for July 11, was postponed until July 25.

At the Work Session, the following 12 attended: Jim Personti, Geoff Fallows, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Art Wallace, Richard Bernard, Devon Hall, Mac Taylor, Jay Williams, Ken Ricketts, Steve Glazier, and Tom Marshall (in charge). A great improvement was made to the springing on our Locomotive #402, and all four sets of drivers are now carrying equal weight. The fenders and running board on the right side of the Model 607 are in place. The new mixing tubes for the three-venturi Model K burner are finished, and the burner is ready for fitting into its new outside pan. Several more stanchions were painted black. More insulation work was completed to silence the operation of the Lionel electric trains.