

FAHP News, December 29, 2014

Lake Placid in the Adirondacks: The town of Lake Placid in the eastern Adirondacks surrounded Mirror Lake, much smaller than the real Lake Placid in the country a few miles away. In the 19th century, Lake Placid was certainly second in importance to Saranac Lake, 10 miles to the west. The latter was known all over the world as a treatment center for the dreaded disease of Consumption, more properly called Tuberculosis. Small hotels, sanatoriums, and boarding houses flourished in Saranac, and famous people such as Robert Louis Stevenson spent time there.

Lake Placid, on the other hand, while also boasting a healthful summer climate, was established mostly for pleasure, and several frame hotels were built in the late 19th century. One large such hotel with an imposing view of Mirror Lake was headquarters for the progressive 1950 Glidden Tour, which started there (other stops on this tour were Montreal, the Thousand Islands, and Rochester, New York). The hotel's name escapes me. More famous for the carriage trade was the sprawling Lake Placid Club across Mirror Lake. In the 1930s, what a place this was to see new, shiny, and powerful sports cars made by Packard, Pierce Arrow, Cadillac, Stutz, Mercedes, Rolls Royce, and many others, as their owners enjoyed the luxury of the famous hotel!

With winter sports gaining in popularity worldwide, Lake Placid hosted the 1932 Winter Olympics (these games were held there again in 1980). A huge hydroelectric plant was built to provide electricity for the games' many requirements. In the early 1970s, this plant was dismantled, packed up, and shipped to the Hagley Museum near Wilmington, where predictions were that the water from the Brandywine could generate most of the electric power the museum required. Former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, Congressman Pete du Pont, and other dignitaries were on hand when the hydro plant at Hagley was dedicated, and Director Walter Heacock drove the former Interior Secretary to the site in the museum's 1912 Detroit electric car. Even with a beautiful new water wheel, however, the performance of the hydroelectric station was a disappointment.

My father had known Sam Packer, general manager of the Skytop Club in the Poconos, when it had been arranged to have trapshooting tournaments with temporary traps on the front lawn at Skytop (these occurred in 1935 and 1936). Packer was promoted to a similar job at the Lake Placid Club, so on our way to Nova Scotia and the Gaspé Peninsula in 1936, we stopped for two nights at his famed Adirondacks hostelry. With our 1934 Packard Twelve Limousine, we climbed 4,800-foot-high Whiteface Mountain nearby and drove over to Saranac Lake. The days were long, the weather was perfect, and we enjoyed our stay.

In September 1950, all of the Glidden Tour cars (probably 75 or more) were parked on the lawn of the older frame hotel, which name I can't remember, as Barney Pollard, president of the Veteran Motor Car Club of America, opened the tour at the initial banquet. We bought two new "Non-Skid" tires for the Model 78 from "George," the Firestone man who accompanied these early Glidden Tours. The next day we traveled in the rain all day as we made our way through

Plattsburgh and on to Montreal. We have a photo of my father and Homer Kratz in the Model 87 and Jack Hutton and I in the Model 78 crossing the Canadian border north of Champlain, New York.

In 1973, we liked to think that the Magic Age of Steam was one of Delaware's special attractions. The Delaware Tourism office, then headed by former WTUX announcer Don Mathewson, must have thought so, too, as I was invited to Lake Placid for a special convention. It seems that Delaware was one of about six states from New York to Virginia designated as the "George Washington Country," and a national award was given for the best tourist promotion in this region, selected from the region's comprising states. It was Delaware's turn, and Mathewson didn't have an attraction in mind or an exhibit prepared. He asked if it would be possible to take one of our Stanleys to Lake Placid, where I could accept the award for the George Washington Country. With an open trailer borrowed from Bob Parke or Irvin Klair and with my traveling companion, Kennett Square barber George Rudolph, I pulled the Model H-5 to Lake Placid and back with my '69 Chevy Longhorn pick-up truck. Although the convention was headquartered at the Lake Placid Club, George and I stayed at a new Holiday Inn, built on the location of the "1950 Glidden Tour hotel," which had been razed.

The weather was not conducive to giving rides in the Stanley, but one afternoon I took several dignitaries, one at a time, around Lake Placid. One was Governor Nelson Rockefeller's Secretary of Commerce, who told me what a great experience it was to work for the governor. He said Rockefeller seldom thought about the present; he was always thinking months or years ahead. Another passenger was the Director of Tourism from Virginia (I think his name was Marshall Murdaugh) who had invented the slogan "Virginia is for Lovers." I accepted the award and gave a short speech (not very good) at an awards luncheon at the Lake Placid Club. The club seemed like a vibrant place with the convention activities, but I think it had fallen on hard times. It closed a few years later, and it appears the golf course and some of the facilities are now connected with a Crowne Plaza Resort operation, but probably the original hotel buildings are no longer there. In 1996, Ruth and I passed through Lake Placid in the Model 87 on a progressive steam car tour operated by Brent Campbell and Don Bourdon, but we stopped only to take on water.

Work Report: Our mechanical volunteers will enjoy one more week of "vacation" before resuming the work sessions on January 6. There is no report from these sessions this week, nor will there be next week, but special work projects continue. Richard Bernard, an active volunteer and secretary of FAHP, is scheduled to undergo a surgical procedure on December 31, and I know everyone who knows Richard will want to wish him well.