

## F.A.H.P. News, March 25, 2013

**Servicing Packard Cars, 1930s:** As has been mentioned, my father was associated with Frank W. Diver in the Packard Motor Company of Wilmington from 1922 until 1940. In addition to about four salesmen, of whom Diver himself was the best, and Mrs. Mounts, who kept the records, the service department consisted of a service manager, about five mechanics, a body repair department, two “errand men,” and Ira John, who had a full-time job washing and polishing cars. Originally this was located in a building at 10<sup>th</sup> and French Streets that had several floors with limited space on each. About 1932, the agency moved to a one-story building on Pennsylvania Avenue, also with limited space and a very small showroom (this was later a Food Fair, one of the first supermarkets), but better things were planned.

In 1936, Albert Haddock, the son of W. D. Haddock, who founded a local construction company, was chosen to build a state-of-the-art dealership on a piece of ground facing Pennsylvania Avenue, one block from the 1932 location. This bordered a nice residential area, but with no zoning in those days, a business of this type was permitted. About the same time, Delaware Auto Sales (Cadillac) moved from 11<sup>th</sup> and King Streets to Pennsylvania Avenue and Clayton Street, also in a residential area. The new Packard building had a large showroom capable of holding five or six latest-model cars, a service department behind with at least eight “bays,” a body shop in the rear, and two or three small business offices, all on one floor (the present Diver Chevrolet utilizes this building with greatly expanded facilities to the rear).

Charlie Steele, an Englishman, was an excellent service manager, and he understood Packard cars. When he retired, a man named Buckley took his place. Mechanics I remember were Jimmy Lafferty, Spot Tyre, Harry Meck, and Eddie Cole. My father especially liked Lafferty and Cole. Packard owners of those days, in order to keep their cars in top operating condition, could expect some major work each 10,000 miles. This would include removing the cylinder heads, scraping carbon deposits from the heads and cylinder walls, grinding the valves, and probably buying a new set of tires. Depending on the driver, it could also include brake and clutch work.

My father would request that Jimmy Lafferty come to Auburn Heights with his tools and spend a day when this motor maintenance was required. Lafferty, who never owned a car, was nevertheless a very good driver and diagnostician. Upon arrival, he would first spread a drop cloth on the front fenders, remove the hood, and if there were side-mounts, remove the one on the side where he planned to work. With his tools, he would then go to work, perform his intended jobs, put everything back together and be ready to test the car with my father by mid-afternoon. They would probably adjust the spark advance, the carburetor jets and the idle speed and make sure the car would come up the front driveway at 5 m.p.h. in high gear without “bucking.” If it would, they would agree it was as good as new. This practice continued for many years, starting before I was old enough to remember and ending when my father withdrew from the partnership.

About 1938, Eddie Cole left to open his own garage just off Washington Street near Lea Boulevard, and soon after that Lafferty went to work for Bill Luke at Delaware Olds. Lafferty was a bachelor for much of his life, but when he went to the hospital for a brief stay, he ended up marrying his nurse. I don't know whether they ever owned a car.

**Work Report:** A total of 19 volunteers were on hand Tuesday night for the work session, viz: Jerry Novak (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Mark Russell, Jeff Pollock, Robert Hopkins, Mark Hopkins, Ed Paschall, Lou Mandich, Dennis Dragon, Bob Stransky, Mac Taylor, Chuck Erikson, Jerry Lucas, Jerry Koss, Jay Williams, Richard Bernard, and Tom Marshall.

On the Model 735, a layer of Diplag was applied to the front of the boiler to cover an unsightly area caused by the condenser leak, which is being repaired. On the Model 607, the boiler covering was completed with the final layers of Diplag. The water by-pass valve was repacked. The inside portion of the dash that is a part of the body was prepped for final painting.

On the '37 Packard's brake project, the backing plate on the passenger side was degreased and cleaned, the wheel cylinders were installed as were the brake shoes, springs, and front hoses. A much-needed First Aid cabinet was installed in the garage. The overhead heater was removed from the museum and put in the back building for storage.

Aluminum display stanchions were sanded, cleaned, and prepped for priming and final painting. The Lionel electric train display was cleaned, lubricated, and made ready for those attending the Easter Egg Hunt on March 30. A bracket was made for the switch-throw near the trestle on the Auburn Valley Railroad, and work was started on the three-nozzle burner grate that will eventually replace the burner now under our Model K.

On Thursday night, with Tim Ward in charge, Richard Bernard continued to prep the museum stanchions, Gene and Gerhard Maute worked upstairs in the library, Bob Jordan and Ted Kamen worked on the 607 to correct the front-end alignment and polished brass fittings and the engine cove. Jim Personti and Geoff Fallows delivered the star of the evening -- the engine for the 607; they also fashioned stays from piano wire to hold the valve packing nuts. Jerry Koss worked on the 607, adding a coat of paint to the dash area of the body. Steve Bryce, Paul Kratunis and Tim Ward cleaned up the top of the 735 condenser, reattached the gasket and bolted the top housing in place.

On Sunday, the AVRR team conducted additional work on the track to prep for the Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, giving a thumb's up to run trains for our eager Easter visitors!