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NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 9

The Society of Automotive Historians

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PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED...

By the time this issue is distributed, The S. A. H. will have one hundred members. This figure, attained within eight months of the organizational meeting, is most encouraging. It indicates that such a group is fulfilling a previously unrecognized need.

This is a good beginning, but there is much to be accomplished in the future in meeting the aims of The S. A. H.

AUTOMOBILES "DOWN UNDER"...

The recent account of the extant Stork-Kar in New Zealand and the discovery of a Marion Bob Cat in South Africa makes one wonder about these occurrences in the Southern Hemisphere. That intriguing feature "What Is It?" in *The Horseless Carriage Gazette* conducted by Al Lewerenz has recently dealt with cars of equal rarity in Australia and New Zealand. Is this merely an awakening to the attraction of antique automobiles, or is the U. S., by contrast, combed free of such finds?

ADDITIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP LIST:

Kenneth Condalle
1532 George Street
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515

G. H. Brooks
493 Magill Road
Tranmere, South Australia 5073

George Antia
25 Soundview Avenue
Locust Valley, New York 11560

Hans J. Mueller
3426 Charlevoix
Windsor 21, Ontario
Canada

Jeffery I. Godshall
406 Oakland - Apt. 5
Royal Oak, Michigan 48067

Maurice A. Harrison
30, Park View Road
Southall, Middlesex, England

LATEST REPORT FROM SECRETARY/TREASURER SEELEY...

Membership in the Society of Automotive Historians has now passed the one hundred mark and hardly a day goes by without an inquiry or member's letter arriving in the mail. This is gratifying, and especially so when inquiries have been received from such distant countries as Australia, Japan, and New Zealand.

The laborious work of record compilation has been going on for years by some people with whom most of us have had little or no correspondence, and it appears that interest in this field is wider than anticipated.

The treasury is holding its own and the future of the Society's undertakings seem bright. While we all agree that a roster, completely accurate in all respects is unlikely, definite progress has been and is being made in this direction.

THE MAIL BAG

Letters from Members

From Harlan E. Appelquist, 6328 Rolf Ave., So., Edina, Minnesota 55435:

In your last newsletter someone asked if Durant Motors got the Princeton and the Eagle into production. Here are a few facts and figures about the colorful Durant Motors.

William "Billy" Durant lost control of G. M. on December 1, 1920. In May of 1921 Durant purchased the Sheridan Division of General Motors at Muncie, Indiana, (the old Inter-State Plant). A few hundred four-cylinder Sheridan cars were produced in this plant from the fall of 1920. In July of 1921 the four cylinder Durant went on display in Durant's Long Island City showroom. This car was an offspring from the Sheridan which was phased out. In August Durant took over the Sheridan plant.

In January of 1922 Durant announced the all-new Durant Six featuring an Ansted motor. This Six was in production less than two years, 1922-1923. Why Durant dropped this Durant Six in late 1923, I don't know. It was a much better car than the Durant Four.

Durant Motors purchased the Locomobile Company of Bridgeport, Conn., during 1922. This gave Durant a car in the fine car field. In early 1923 trade journals told of Durant's new Flint and Princeton lines soon to come. The Flint got into production late in 1923, touring cars first, and by January, 1924, closed models were available. During 1923, 3000 Flints were built; 40,000 Flints in all (1923-1927).

In the May, 1923, issue of Vanity Fair the automotive writer stated, "The newest of the Durant cars is the Princeton, a splendid high class six cylinder machine with a powerful Ansted motor and a wheelbase of 128 inches...Pictured is the sport roadster model." This is a picture, not a drawing. The Princeton had good lines and appeared to be a face lifted Durant Six.

In December of 1923 Vanity Fair listed the Durant products as: Locomobile, Princeton, Flint, Eagle, Durant Four, and Star. The Durant Six was already dropped. In January of 1924 the Eagle Six, with an Ansted motor, went on display in Durant's Long Island City showroom. A picture of the Eagle Six is in the January, 1924 issue of Automotive Industries. Two months later, March, 1924, Durant Motors announced the Eagle line had been replaced by the new Flint 40 Series.

Durant never mentioned the Princeton after January of 1924. Some histories say that the Locomobile Junior which appeared in July of 1925 was actually the Princeton car. (The Locomobile featured a Lycoming Straight 8.) I'd say that half a handful of Princetons were built, and it is possible that several hundred Eagles were built. The first Durant Four was buried in early 1926.

During 1926 and 1927 Durant offered fours and sixes in the Star. In January of 1928 the Star Six was replaced by the new Durant Six and in April of 1928 the Star Four became the Durant Four. The Flint became a memory early in 1927. The Durant Six continued until early in 1932. The Locomobile was discontinued in April, 1929.

Durant Motors showed a profit only two years - 1923 and 1924.

From Hugh Durnford, 128 Percival Avenue, Montreal West, Quebec, Canada:

...We would certainly appreciate receiving any material on Canadian cars you are able to come up with.

I'm told the U. S. has an extremely high tariff on imported books, and that this would seriously hamper distribution of our effort in your country. If this is true, does anybody know of any loopholes?

ED.: What does anyone know about this, and what can we, as an organization, do about it?

From Karl E. Ludvigsen, 37 West 57th Street, New York, N. Y. 10019:

I'm extremely interested in the current discussion on the objectives of the Society, particularly the question of whether all makes should be listed, whether or not they are considered to be prototypes. Without attempting to go into this in depth in a letter, I'd merely like to say that I think some pretty strict guidelines would help avoid excessive time wasting on the part of the members of the Society.

Consider, for example, the tremendous complexity of the present production of dune buggies by hundreds of makers, some of whom put together completed, licensable automobiles. Are racing car manufacturers also to be considered, even if their products were not licensable for the street? In brief, there are several areas where strict guidelines will be required.

I think the Society could render a service that no other group could perform if it were to turn its attention to the question of automotive production by the world's nations from the earliest beginnings of the industry. Not long ago, for example, I had occasion to try to find out when production of cars in the United States first began to exceed the total production in the rest of the world's nations, this turning point occurring sometime before World War I. I can assure that it was not at all possible to find any solid information that would permit a firm judgment to be made. If the members were to pool their resources I think some excellent progress could be made in confirming early production volumes of all nations and, eventually, major manufacturing companies as well.

In short, I'm looking forward to participating in the affairs of the Society, to the extent that time permits.

From John H. Nicoll, 2475-A Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada:

Have received my first newsletter from "Automotive Historians" and must say I enjoyed it from cover to cover. On reading the "Classified Ads" I see you are accepting no ads for cars for sale, parts or restoration services. To me this is a big mistake, as I feel that these services are a must for the membership to deal with one another; also gives us all a good insight into what is taking place in different parts of the country. I am a member of the Jowett Car Club, the Pre-49 Club and subscribe to a few magazines. I just feel that you are leaving out a very important part of Club News.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This restriction has applied from the beginning because the membership was in general agreement that ads for cars, parts, services, etc., along with news of meets and social events, were well covered in a number of club and commercial publications. Our circulation is relatively small, and ads for such items would presumably be rather ineffective. On the other hand, all of our members are interested in the historical aspects of the automobile business, and most of us have files of material available for sale or trade. However, this need not be a hard and fast rule, and if the general membership wants to comment, all letters will be printed.

From G. H. Brooks, 493 Magill Road, Tranmere, South Australia, 5073:

In the February "Newsletter" there is mention of the problem of what constitutes a "make" of car, and the Baron de Zuylen's definition is offered as a good one. This seems rather unfair to some private individuals who made a car for their own use without any intention of selling it, and produced something which gave years of satisfactory service, but which is not classified as a "make", when somebody with financial backing and workmen in his workshop produced one "functioning" automobile which was nevertheless hopeless in conception and execution (e.g. the "Liquid Air") and yet passes into history as a "Make". My own view is that, if a car can be proved to have existed and actually functioned, and was more than just a hodge-podge of proprietary parts, containing some element of the maker's ingenuity, then it justifies classification as a "make" regardless of the circumstances surrounding its birth.

THE ROSTER - getting down to business

The last two issues of the Newsletter have included a beginning of a preliminary roster of American automobiles. These lists were not intended to be in final form, but were presented for the purpose of stimulating suggestions from our members as to better ways of presenting such information.

The Roster Committee, whose job it is to separate fact from fiction, presently consists of Marshall Naul, Ralph Dunwoodie, Dick Brigham and R. A. Wawrzyniak. Mr. Wawrzyniak has recently accepted the position of Chairman of this committee, and brings to the job a tremendous enthusiasm combined with many years of experience plus the time to devote to it.

Actually, every member of the Society is in a sense a member of the committee, for it will take the combined efforts of all of us to dig out the facts concerning so many makes of cars, built over a period of almost 80 years in widely scattered places. Some of us are specialists, concerned with one or a few makes, or with cars made in a certain country, state or city. Others have specialized in vehicles produced during a certain period of years, and some have amassed files of information about particular types of cars - steamers, electrics, cyclecars, high-wheelers, etc. A few of us are presently associated with existing automobile manufacturers, and can offer much data regarding the previous history of these companies.

Most of us have accumulated a substantial amount of reference material in the form of books, trade publications, magazines, plus the rosters compiled by others. A study of each entry in our roster, with a comparison of it to the information which each of us has, will weed out the errors now in print concerning who built what - and when and where.

As our lists are published, month by month, all members are urged to report the points of disagreement with the reference material they have - and there will be many. However, through a process of constant revision and correction, we will eventually come up with the most complete and accurate list of automotive products yet compiled.

INTRODUCING THE CHAIRMAN - R. A. Wawrzyniak, 589 Broadway, Berlin, Wisconsin 54923

This is my first column as chairman of the Automotive Roster Committee. Since joining the Society I have been in communication with its officers, and have mentioned that I might be of service as a member of this committee. So here I am as chairman, and I certainly consider it a privilege to direct this project.

My interest in automobiles can best be described as inborn. As a child, my parents subscribed to the Saturday Evening Post, in large measure that I might cut out the auto and truck pictures. My parents used to tell, and I recall to some degree, that I even took my auto pictures to church. I may well have been the only child in the country to hold an auto show every Sunday for God in His own auditorium!

Now, down to business: first, it is well to define the scope of the roster, and to say that these guidelines are offered for your consideration, and then crystallization into a working set of rules after the membership has a chance to amend them.

The first order of business should be cars of the U.S.A. and Canada, and the second a similar list of trucks and busses. The third should be the cars and trucks of other countries. The lists will include (1) passenger cars and trucks in the usual sense, for general highway use, self-propelled by any self-contained energy source; (2) vehicles made for sale, or probable (or possible?) sale; (3) prototypes, even if only one was ever made; (4) dual transport types (air-land, water-land, highway-rail, etc.); (5) public service vehicles (fire engines, motor busses, taxicabs, hearses, etc.); (6) vehicles built for owner's use, if they fit at least one of the foregoing categories.

Excluded should be bicycles (even if motorized), riding lawnmowers, street sweepers, industrial and agricultural trucks, tractors and allied machinery, road graders, vehicles for operation on rails only (locomotives, trolley cars, etc.), and perhaps trackless trolleys.

Publication of lists will be resumed in an early issue, and I urge each member to actively check the entries for additions and corrections. Send corrections, with references (or personal knowledge) to our editor, R. B. Brigham, P.O.Box 6465, Marietta, Georgia 30060, so that corrections may be included in the following issue.

JOSEPH FLOYD CLYMER - An Obituary

by Harry Pulfer

Floyd Clymer was born October 26, 1895, in Indianapolis, and passed away suddenly at his home in Los Angeles on January 23, 1970.

Most of his early years were spent in Berthoud, Colorado, where his father was a doctor who made use of the automobile in making his calls. At the age of seven, Floyd was driving his father's one-cylinder Oldsmobile.

He was soon selling cars, and was noticed by President Teddy Roosevelt who claimed he was the youngest auto salesman in the United States. In 1906, at the age of eleven, Floyd sold 26 Reos, Maxwells and Cadillacs in the Berthoud area.

In July, 1910, Floyd and his younger brother, Elmer (Bill) Clymer, attempted to drive a Flanders 20 touring car from Denver to Spokane, Washington. The sand and the mountains were too much for the delicate rear end of the Flanders, and the trip had to be abandoned in western Wyoming.

Clymer soon turned to riding and racing motorcycles, and kept his interest in the "go bikes" until the end. In 1920, at Dodge City, Kansas, he hung up a 100-mile record which stood for some years - 83 miles per hours for 100 miles on a circular dirt track! Always competitive, he drove cars for records and made several cross-country records in his time.

I met Floyd at San Juan Capistrano in 1923. For several years the motorcycle bunch had held a hill climb back of the town. They chose a bluff which had a grade of over 75%, and I could hardly climb it on my hands and knees. The greatest riders in the country would tackle this climb, and their runs would be measured in feet. My attempt petered out at 150 feet, when my bike did a "wheelie" and almost fell on me.

Floyd came out and looked us over, walked around and watched, then went back and did something to his Indian motorcycle. On the day of the race he bet Dud Perkins, a San Francisco Harley-Davidson dealer, that he would not only go over the top, but also make the fastest time of the day. The bet was for \$1000. That's putting your money where your mouth is! And he did both - he flew over that hill with an iron tractor band on his rear wheel.

Later he became a test driver, and travelled all over the world test-driving cars. He also published a motorcycle magazine, and was importing motorcycles to sell under the "Indian" name when he died.

He is best known as the publisher of over 300 books on cars. Time Magazine took notice of his series of eight Scrapbooks, saying that they were a trip into the past and reeked of nostalgia. Clymer revived the defunct Automobile Topics, which was a pioneer auto magazine, and put it on the news stands.

He was president of the "Trail Blazers", and past president of the Horseless Carriage Club of America. His influence was felt in all phases of the old car hobby. I am sure that many like myself will miss this fine man.

America's First Automobile Company?

by John Peckham

During the summer of 1888, William Steinway, son of the founder of Steinway and Sons piano manufactory, returned to his native Germany. Whether or not this trip was strictly a business affair we do not know. There was, however, some very important business conducted during Steinway's stay in his fatherland.

Our first hint of what was going on appears as part of an entry in Steinway's diary under the date of July 29, 1888 - "...writing a good deal also to William Maybach Koenigstr. 44 Canstatt about his new motor petroleum and gas...". Five days later he received, from Maybach, copies of six U.S. patents which had been granted to Gottlieb Daimler. These include engine and carburetor patents, and one dated January 17, 1888, with the number 376638, for an engine driven vehicle.

Steinway noted in his diary, on August 17, that he had gone to Canstatt and had seen models of the engines, taken a ride on the Nekar in a motor boat, and, last but not least, ridden on a "small street motor". Already it is obvious that Steinway was very much interested in the business possibilities of this new power source.

On August 22 he had a long talk with Daimler, and then returned to the United States. Before he left Germany, Steinway sent a post card to Daimler indicating his interest in setting up a company in this country to manufacture Daimler's inventions. This card no longer exists, but the letter from Gottlieb Daimler, quoted below, does mention it. The letter reads as follows:

Maulkronen
Sept. 3, 1888

Dear Mr. Steinway:

To your card of August 28 I must reply that, due to sudden illness in my family, I was compelled to remain here.

I am glad to know that your nephew, Mr. Candidus, shows an interest in my affair. Youth and strength is needed in this wonderful field of endeavor.

If you are convinced of its usefulness, and are willing to do so, we may work together in my business for America. In that case, please make out a contract according to American regulations, and in harmony with your suggestion that a Corporation issuing stock be created.

In this way my present and future patents would represent my share, the rest to be supplied by the Corporation. Also, Mr. Maybach would add his part.

All future inventions and improvements in the company should be exchanged free of charge. My blueprints, and working models made by me, as well as my trade experience, would be at your disposal.

Regarding your request for two motors and transmissions for street-cars, it will be necessary for me to have blueprints, weight specifications, and capacity of cars.

I will be at your disposal for terminating the contract, and am looking forward to receiving further news (at Canstatt).

Very truly yours,
G. Daimler

On October 6, 1888, a transfer of power of attorney was put into effect, and Steinway proceeded to organize the new company. Papers incorporating the Daimler Motor Company, Steinway, Long Island, New York, were filed on January 26, 1889. Quoting from the Certificate of Incorporation:

THAT the objects for which the company is to be formed are the manufacture and sale of Railroad, Marine, Vehicle, Industrial, and other Motors, Engines, and Machinery, under the United States Patents granted and to be granted to Gottlieb Daimler, and other various designs, origin, and patterns;

Since Steinway had ridden on Daimler's "Stahlradwagen", the steel-wheeled quadricycle, and, since he was not one who would not cover all eventualities, it is certain that the words "... and Machinery..." can safely be construed to include self-propelled road vehicles.

If this is the case, the intent of the company from the very beginning was, along with other products, to build automobiles. To back this up, the Daimler Motor Company issued its first catalog in 1891 which showed a full range of engines and vehicles, including the quadricycle. On page 14 of this brochure the following statements are made:

"The Motor Quadricycle, Motor Carriage and German 'Fahrrad' are a new departure which are destined to become very popular in America, as they are at present in Germany.

The Daimler Motor Company is at present very busily engaged both in our factory at 'Steinway' and at the shops of the inventor, Mr. Gottlieb Daimler, in Canstatt, Germany, perfecting these motor vehicles so as to be able to present these novel specialties to the American public in the near future.

For the present, however, we are not yet in position to give any definite information or figures on Motor Vehicles, but shall be pleased to make special mention of the fact as soon as we are ready to show them in actual operation."

There is no definite indication that the quadricycle was to be built in this country, but when it is considered that all the other products were made here, it seems logical to assume that if the market had wanted automobiles at that time the Daimler Motor Company would have built them. Again, they showed their intent to do so.

Needless to say, the DMC was not the only American company which was organized to build cars, and never even built a prototype. This being the case, the company has the dubious honor of being the first in two categories: The First Automobile Company in America, and the First Automobile Company in America Not To Build Automobiles.

I am presenting these facts to the members of the Society of Automotive Historians with the hope that they will accept the Daimler Motor Company, of Steinway, Long Island, as the first company in the United States which was formed with the intent to build automobiles, or that they will bring forth evidence of some other organization which can make this claim.

However, it should be remembered that this is not a question of who built the first car in the United States, or what automobile company first produced automobiles in this country. It is, simply, what was the first automobile company in America?

References:

1. Diary of William Steinway - Courtesy of John Steinway.
2. Letter from G. Daimler to William Steinway; Steinway papers - Courtesy of John Steinway.
3. Power of Attorney, Gottlieb Daimler of Canstatt, Germany, to William Steinway, New York, October 6, 1888. Courtesy of John Steinway.
4. Certificate of Incorporation of the Daimler Motor Company, January 26, 1889 - Office of the Secretary of State of New York State, Vol. 30, page 1442.
5. "The Daimler Gas and Petroleum Motors", a catalog of the Daimler Motor Company, Steinway, Long Island, New York, dated 1891. - Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.
6. "The American Mercedes - Pat I", John Peckhan & Arthur Lee Homan, in The Mercedes-Benz Star, May-June 1959.

Classified Ads

This classified ad column is open to all members of the Society of Automotive Historians, at no charge, for buying, selling or trading items of interest to automotive historians, such as catalogs, books, magazines, automobile ads, photographs, etc. No ads for cars, parts or restoration services will be accepted.

WANTED

Want Iron Age Magazine, July 30, 1931. Any DeVaux promotion material. Anything pertaining to automobiles built in Oregon.

RICHARD LARROWE, RT. 1, BOX 900, CORBETT, ORE., 97019

Want information or literature on imported Hillman from 1946 to 1951.

J. G. EYERMAN, 87-16 SUTTER AVE., OZONE PARK, N.Y. 11417

Wanted to buy or trade: Automobile Trade Journal, March, 1910; March, 1913; January, 1920; Spetember, 1921.

FRANK T. SNYDER, JR., BOX 551, HACKENSACK, N. J. 07602

Looking to purchase or borrow a copy of Cycle World for March, 1969.

G. M. NAUL, 5 QUEEN ANN DRIVE, NEWARK, DELAWARE 19711

TRADE

Will trade "The Oldtime Automobile" by John Bentley (Fawcett #134 Paperback), excellent condition, for "Oldtime Steam Cars" by John Bentley (Fawcett #196 Paperback) in like condition.

CHARLES F. MacLEOD, 503 NORMANDY, ROYAL OAK, MICH. 48073.

Will trade Automobile Trade Journals, complete review numbers in mint condition: December, 1913; June, 1914, cyclecar review; December, 1915; December, 1917.

Trade only for car review numbers for following years: 1904; 1905; 1906; 1907; 1909; 1910. Will not accept with missing pages or bad condition.

CHARLES F. MacLEOD, 503 NORMANDY, ROYAL OAK, MICH. 48073

To trade: Modern Aviation Engines, 1929 edition, by Page, 2 volumes. Wanted: Motorcycles and Sidecars, by Page, any edition.

CARL H. SCHAAF, 1403 CONFEDERATE AVE., RICHMOND, VA.23227

FOR SALE

Antique and Classic automobile advertisements, 1914 thru 1940. Everything from Apperson to Winton. Mint condition. send SASE for list.

TOM S. RANKINE, P.O. BOX 1246, TEMPE, ARIZONA 85281.

Wall Charts: 24 x 25 color "Antique Automobiles, 77 shown, 1899-1912. \$4.00.

38 x 48 color "34 Early American Cars" 1893-1914. \$4.00
38 x 48 Blue Print, Life lines of the cars. Automotive history in detail with all the various amalgamations, \$10.00.

19 x 25 color. Oldsmobile Limited racing the train, 1910 \$4.00. Even shows the fence post advertising Olds was famous for.

13 x 18 Reo racing car with two 2-cylinder engines. This car raced both Henry Ford and Barney Oldfield at Syracuse, N. Y., in sepia, \$3.00

1920 Reo Speed Wagon folder, makes a nice wall poster. \$10.00

1922 Fronty-Ford racing engine blue prints (2) \$5.00.

Art Prints for framing: 13 x 18 color. 6 classic cars, Duesenberg, Cord, Cadillac, etc. \$5.00.

9 x 11 black & white pen drawings of classic cars (6) like originals, \$10.00.

13 x 19 color, 1912 American LaFrance, 1911 Marmon Speedster, 1934 Alfa-Romeo, 1906 Locomobile (Old 16), 1927 DeLage, 1914 Mercedes race car, 1931 Bentley 8, 1907 Welch touring car, with data on back. \$3 each.

About 1930 the Saturday Evening Post published a huge wall chart listing 2726 cars either made or sold in U.S.A. I have the negatives and can make this up in six 20 x 20 sections, to order. \$25.00 in advance and \$1.00 for mailing in a tube.

Postage, mailing tube & insurance extra, all items. SSAE for more detail.

50 copies Automotive Industries, 1937, 38, 39. Some small clips, otherwise very nice condition. \$1 each.
HARRY PULFER, BOX 8526, LA CRESCENTA, CALIF. 91214.

AMONG OUR AUTHORS -

Our apologies to Keith Marvin, Karl Ludvigsen and G. H. Brooks for omitting the "Authors" page in this issue. Just plain ran out of space. Dreadful sorry. Issue #10 (June) is in the works, and will be a 12 page issue with plenty of room for everything. And, with a little bit of luck, it will actually be printed in June.