

SAH Journal

The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.
Issue 230
September–October 2007



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A History of U.S. License Plates

By Albert Mroz

When vehicles began chugging, whirring and clanging around America over a century ago, the need to have some kind of identification system became apparent almost immediately. The government had to get in on the goods; there were taxes and fees to be collected and proof of ownership to be established especially in case of theft or accident.

The very first vehicle license plates appeared as early as 1899 in the cities of Illinois. The first license plates were issued by local governments. New York State was the first to issue state registration, beginning in May of 1901. There the first system consisted only of the vehicle owner's initials. At a time when there were only a handful of vehicles perhaps this made sense, but it soon became impossible to continue with such oversimplification.

The first "plates" were actually made of leather with numbers that were cut out of light sheet metal and attached to the surface. This method soon became plagued with duplication, and in by 1903 it was superseded by a sequential numerical system. By 1910 there were 100,000 motor vehicles registered in New York State alone.

So called "porcelain" plates refer to porcelainized enamel that was fused to a steel base at high temperatures. Early "kit plates" consisted of a metal base with grooves at top and bottom where porcelain squares were attached. However, both porcelain and metal license plates were expensive to fabricate, so states eventually turned to prison labor for their manufacture. For further savings, metal squares were attached to the top rim of license plates before the advent of self-adhesive stickers bearing the year and month of registration. During World War II, shortages in metals prompted states to adopt paper windshield stickers for displaying new registrations.

Because so many license plates were being removed from circulation once vehicles were retired due to age or accident, the notion of collecting license plates finally took hold as a formal hobby. License plate collecting has similarities to stamp collecting; both are issued by the government to denote payment for an organized service. Both may have commemorative information such as state history or slogans and both vary widely in color while remaining closely defined in terms of size and application.

While stamp collecting began in the mid-1800s when stamps were first issued, it wasn't until a century later that license plate collecting caught on with people, not all of them necessarily automotive enthusiasts. In 1954 psychologist Dr. Cecil George of Massachusetts began to give the completely unorganized and informal hobby of license plate collecting serious consideration after reading an account of a man who had a display in New Hampshire. Dr. George contacted the man, who turned out to be postmaster Asa Colby of Rumney Depot. After starting a successful newsletter, the two of them founded the Automobile License

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Thomas S. Jakups, Editor

This summer at the not so tender age of 55 I traveled to Europe for the first time. My wife, Judy, actually dared me to spend two summer weeks away from a car show or a golf course. Well, I managed to do this and am richer for the experience.

The actual trip was a boat cruise on the Rhine River from Basel to Antwerp. There were of course majestic castles and beautifully preserved cities, but what really impressed me was the transportation system in Germany, The Netherlands and Belgium.

Up a Busy River

Boat traffic on the Rhine was constant with barges, cruise ships and even a couple of paddlewheelers. At one lock I had to laugh and wonder as two barges, each carrying identical loads of sand passed each other going in opposite directions. On both sides of the river trains, both passenger and freight, seemed to go by every few minutes. In the cities buses and trolleys were plentiful and full. Along the plazas hundreds of parked bikes could be found, and I saw couples and families, old and young, whizzing by on dedicated bike lanes. I even have a photo taken in Amsterdam of a drag queen, complete in black mini-dress and makeup, securely locking his bike to a light stanchion one Sunday afternoon.

While in Amsterdam, and in Cologne, I checked out the train stations. They were expansive, clean and well-lit. The police spoke excellent English and were happy to give directions and answer questions.

My first exposure to the Auto-

bahn was disappointing—there were actually speed limits on the section we were on and I didn't get to see a Porsche go ripping by. Yet here also I was amazed. The pavement here and on secondary roads was in excellent shape, which I assumed was a result of fewer and smaller trucks on the roads and the recycling of old tires into pavement material.

Sure there were still plenty of cars and our bus got stuck once in rush hour congestion, but the transportation system seemed to be in balance, much more efficient than ours in the United States.

Europe has an advantage in that its multimodal transportation infrastructure has been in place for centuries while in the U.S. we've dismantled much of ours. And now we are paying a high price in pollution, driver stress and lost productivity. We know what's broke; do we have the will to fix it?

—Tom Jakups

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Michael L. Berger, President

Remember the '69 Lacunas? Probably not, since Lacuna never was an automotive marque (at least to the best of my knowledge). Instead, it's the type of word employed by colleagues in my other profession. In simplest terms, a "lacuna" is a gap or missing part, often used in reference to a manuscript. So, in the context of this column, what are the '69 lacunas? They are the gaps or missing parts in the printed record of automotive history that existed in 1969, the year the Society of Automotive Historians was founded. There were considerable gaps back then. In the generation or so since, we have made considerable progress in filling in those lacunas.

In my first column, I discussed "the road less traveled." In this, my last column as SAH President, I would like to celebrate the distance that we have come. Given the limited space available to me, I have selected seven works from a vast number of works that could have been included. Each was the first book-length investigation in a specific area of automotive history. I have deliberately avoided books written by past and present SAH officers and Board members, so as to avoid cries of favoritism. I am not arguing that the books that follow are the best ones currently in their respective areas. Rather, in my opinion, each was the first significant work in that field, and the book that eliminated one of the lacunas in auto-

Remembering the '69 Lacunas

motive history. They are presented below alphabetically by title, with a brief explanation of the reason for their inclusion.

(1) *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*, by Warren James Belasco (MIT Press, 1979). During the first half of the 20th century, auto-related recreational pursuits mushroomed, creating industries of their own and significant coverage in the mass-circulation magazines of the day. Yet, it was not until Belasco's work that we had a scholarly, book-length study of a key element of vacation motoring.

(2) *Auto Mechanics: Technology and Expertise in Twentieth-Century America*, by Kevin L. Borg (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). While we have had numerous studies of automotive unions and workers "on the line," Borg's book is a pioneering one in that it looks at the changing role and historic experience of the repair shop mechanic, a person we have come to depend upon but cannot seem to trust.

(3) *Automobile Age Atlanta: The Making of a Southern Metropolis, 1900-1935*, by Howard L. Preston (University of Georgia Press, 1979). Although comprehensive histories had often noted differences regarding the car's impact on urban, rural and suburban life, Preston's book was the first to study its influence on metropolitan growth in a single city other than Detroit. As such, it provided direction for later studies on individual cities and broader geographic regions.

(4) *High Performance: The Culture and Technology of Drag Racing, 1950-1990*, by Robert C. Post (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). Despite the popularity of drag racing, both in its informal, street version and on organized tracks, the only available books on that topic up to the mid-'90s were those aimed at the enthusiast market. It was Post's oversized volume that raised this variation of the sport of motor racing to the level of serious inquiry.

(5) *In the Driver's Seat: The Automobile in American Literature and Popular Culture*, by Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach (Greenwood Press, 1976). While the early years of motoring produced countless short stories and novels written about automobiles, or in which cars play an integral role in the plot (like *The Great Gatsby*), it was not until Dettelbach's 1976 small volume that we had a scholarly, book-length, analytical study of the automobile in literature.

(6) *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age*, by Virginia Scharff (Free Press, 1991). At a time when even the best comprehensive automotive histories lumped men, women and children together in terms of the car's impact on everyday life, Scharff was the first to tease out the uniqueness of the feminine experience in the early years of motoring. We are still waiting for a similar volume examining children and teenagers.

(7) *The Automobile Revolution: The Impact of an Industry*, by Jean-Pierre Bardou et al. (University of North Carolina Press, 1982) Moving beyond the single-nation focus of most industrial histories, Bardou and his colleagues created the first multinational study of the automotive industry, one that was soon to become truly worldwide in its functioning. Thanks to an excellent translation by James M. Laux, one of the co-authors, this book was made widely available to English readers.

Again, these books represent just a sampling of the path-making works that have broadened our knowledge of automotive history during the last four decades. As SAH members, we should all feel pride in the progress we have made and be optimistic regarding what it signifies for the future.

That's all folks. Thanks for reading and responding to this column over the past two years.

—Mike Berger

License Plates continued from page 1

Plate Collectors Association. There are about 7,000 ALPCA members across the U.S. alone, and there are many more collectors abroad.

Several books have been written on the history and the hobby of collecting American license plates. Among them is *License Plates of the United States* by Jim Fox, better known for his success as the drummer for the band "James Gang." This definitive photo archive is excellent in terms of depicting passenger car plates

Plates of Copper

States have often used slogans on their license plates to commemorate events or to draw attention to a special feature of the area. In Arizona, for example, "1539 Marcos De Niza 1939" commemorated the Franciscan monk who arrived there looking for the legendary Seven Cities of Cibola. The Little Daisy Mine in Jerome produced so much copper that Arizona plates were made entirely of the reddish metal from 1932 to 1939.

Delaware has proudly used "The First State" since 1963, while the District of Columbia began using "Celebrate and Discover" in 1991. Georgia has adopted "On My Mind" from the old Hoagy Carmichael and Stuart Gorell song lyrics. Indiana adopted the slogan "Wander" in 1985, but in 1988 switched back to "Back Home Again." Missouri has been the "Show Me State" since 1980. New Hampshire has proclaimed "Live Free or Die" since 1971.

In the 1940s and 1950s Maryland and North Carolina implored respectively, "Drive Carefully" and "Drive Safely." Ohio asked everyone "Seat Belts Fastened?" from 1973 to 1975, once seatbelts were required by law.

But people still considered wearing them a luxury or nuisance. Ohio has now returned to "The Heart Of It All." South Carolina was "The Iodine State" in the early 1930s.

These are only a few of the slogans found on license plates across the country.

Separate Abbreviation Codes for Commercial Plates

At first all vehicles were assigned the same type of license plates, but beginning in the 'teens states began to differentiate between passenger plates and commercial plates in order to collect more revenues and to control commercial transport. Separate abbreviation codes appeared using small letters on the side of the license plates, such as COM for "Commercial," DLR for "Dealer" and E for "Exempt," (usually used for police cars and postal trucks and some other government vehicles). BE was used for "Board of Equalization" when this institution had separate identification. PS was also used for "Public Service." US was for "United States" (government vehicle) as was X for "commercial" pertaining to Rhode Island in 1912 and Minnesota beginning in 1921. The FBI had its own plates (FBI, U.S. Department of Justice), but this agency's vehicles were soon registered without these identifiers.

Further commercial delineations included PC for "Pneumatic Commercial," SC for "Solid Commercial," T for "Truck," TLR for "Trailer," PT for "Pneumatic Trailer" and ST for "Solid Trailer." The "solid" and "pneumatic" designations were adopted in the early 1930s when solid rubber tire clad vehicles were taxed at a higher rate due to higher wear and tear of the pavement. The system became very complicated, depending on how wide the solid tires were, how old the vehicle and whether the vehicle had pneumatic tires in front and solid in back, as some trucks were shod for purposes of carrying heavier cargo. Clearly, the intent was to get the slow moving, street surface hammering solid rubber tired vehicles off the streets and highways of America.

Historically, the word "commer-

cial" was first used on license plates in New York in 1913, Alabama in 1916 and New Jersey in 1918. The word "truck" was first used in Washington in 1916, Wisconsin and Michigan in 1918, Illinois, Indiana and Tennessee in 1920, Arkansas and Kentucky in 1921, Georgia and Virginia in 1922, Louisiana in 1923 and Mississippi in 1931.

The abbreviation "COM" was first used in Utah in 1917, California in 1920 and Nevada and Texas in 1925. The "T" letter prefix was used in Maine in 1913, North Carolina in 1917, Nebraska in 1919, South Dakota and Colorado in 1920, Kansas in 1921, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, West Virginia and Wyoming in 1922. Ohio and Oregon in 1923 and Idaho in 1924.

Using Prefixes and Colors

According to Roy G. Klotz, archivist for ALPCA, some states used their own systems, which were further different from those listed above. Massachusetts had a "B" prefix starting in 1911 while New Hampshire used an "O" prefix beginning in 1913. Starting in 1914 Pennsylvania used an aluminum band along the left side with stars indicating tonnage. Oklahoma's commercial plates were larger than those for passenger cars from 1923 while the same year New Mexico had a "COM" over "TK" prefix combination. Connecticut and North Dakota set up yet another system based on paint hue. Beginning in 1914 and 1925 respectively, commercial plates were a different color from passenger vehicle plates.

South Carolina had prefixes "H" through "O" from 1921. In 1923 Delaware reserved serial block numbers from 25001 to 30148 for truck and commercial use. That same year Florida began using a "G" prefix for their commercial plates. Hawaii reserved plate numbers from 87000 to 99999 for commercial use starting in 1938. Beginning in 1951, Maryland had the same plates as pas-

senger cars, but commercial plates had an embossed April expiration. Alaska began using a "C" prefix in 1960.

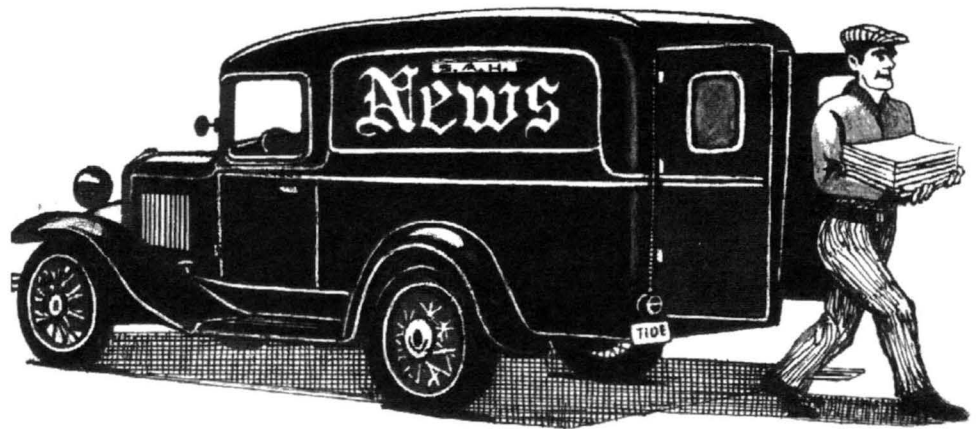
Alpha-numeric codes were created to correspond to vehicles which were designated as passenger cars or as commercial vehicles, including pickups used for such a purpose. For example, in California prior to World War II codes beginning with one or two letters were used as commercial plates, separate and in addition to the ones with the "COM" abbreviation. After 1956 and up to 1962 commercial plates began with a letter followed by five numbers. From 1963 to 1969 the letter was at the end of the code. Many states have used a similar system in more recent times.

"Front" and "Rear" Plates

For many years states such as Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, New Mexico, Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas and Louisiana stamped "front" and "rear" on their plates in an attempt to thwart the use of license plates on two vehicles.

For historians and collectors who are interested in preserving authenticity, especially in vehicle restorations, it is important to note that many states allow the use of old license plates that have "not been registered" or which have been decommissioned so long ago that they can be mounted on antique and classic vehicles for use today. It is important to have the correct YOM (year of manufacture) so that the plates match the year of the vehicle. The plates, if they are restored or repainted, must also have the correct original color combination. (Mint original pairs are the most sought after.)

In cases where a pickup or light truck did not have commercial plates but the current owner wishes to use vintage commercial plates, it should be noted that the respective Department of Motor Vehicles may charge a higher fee than that for the passenger car license plates. ■



SAH Election Results

The results of the SAH election of officers and Board members is in from Election Central in Goodrich, Michigan. The following officers were elected to serve until October 2009: President *Darwyn Lumley*, Vice President *Susan Davis*, Treasurer *Christopher Foster* and Secretary *Arthur Jones*.

Elected to the Board of Directors to serve through October 2010 were *Paul Lashbrook*, *Stanton Lyman* and *Judith Endelman*.

Annual Meeting and Banquet October 12th

The 39th SAH Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet will be held on the Friday evening of Hershey weekend, October 12th, 2007, at the Picard Grand Pavilion, Hershey Country Club, 1000 East Derry Road, Hershey.

Members and guests will gather for the FluidTorque social hour at 6:00 P.M. and dine at 7:00. The Society's annual publication and service awards will be presented after dinner.

Menu for the evening will be Crown Victoria Dinner Buffet, with steak, chicken and salmon entrées and all the fixings at the all-in-one price of \$50.00 per person. Late reservation Hotline is (860)464-6466 (until October 8th).

To reach the Hershey Country Club from the flea market area, take Hersheypark Drive east to the end. Turn right, go over the railroad overpass, turn left at the next stop sign. Hershey Country Club is the first

driveway on the right. The Picard Pavilion is a separate smaller building.

Meet and Greet at the SAH History Tent GBF 32-34

For many long time Hershey attendees it must have seemed strange not crossing Hersheypark Drive last October to get to the White Field and the SAH History Tent. In Hershey's latest reincarnation all the vendors were moved to the amusement park side of the street with only the car corral located on the former White Field. Unless you like mucking around in the mud or watching the water come in from above and below the History Tent after one of Hershey's rain storms you would probably agree that its relocation to the Green Field last year worked out well for SAH. Its location near the arena undoubtedly increased our exposure and the pavement will be most welcome come the next Hershey downpour.

Paul Lashbrook and *Stanton Lyman* will once again have the tent furnished to suit our mission. They need your help, however, to keep it staffed and serving members and visitors throughout the week.

While at Hershey, make it a point to stop by GBF 32-34, for your own respite and refreshment and to help the Society greet the public. Please contact Hospitality Chair *Paul Lashbrook* at lashbrook@mindspring.com or (954) 587-5785 to sign up for a two-hour shift.

Just Out

Ric A. Dias has written a history of the Hall-Scott company titled *Hall-Scott:*

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A Window on the World, The American Car Abroad

Philip C. Campbell

The impetus to write this article came, innocently enough, from a conversation with my wife, Claudia, regarding a Jeep model owned by a friend of hers, here in Germany, where we live. She said it was a Cherokee, an export model. After she described it I concluded it was the Jeep Liberty. However, the name Liberty was nowhere to be found on this Jeep. As it turned out, she was correct, it was the Jeep Liberty, in the U.S., but as an export model it is badged and marketed as a Jeep Cherokee.

A week or so later another discussion arose about a new Chrysler wagon, which when we saw it on a U.S. military base in Germany with U.S. military registration, was a Dodge Magnum. However, the export model was not a Dodge but a Chrysler 300C Touring. In this instance there proved to be more than just badge differences as there were some significant sheet metal differences as well. The export car had Chrysler 300 badges all around but also used nearly the entire front clip, interior set up and trim from the Chrysler 300 sedan.

These circumstances led me to delve into a long-standing interest I have had in the U.S. car abroad. Unfortunately the subject defies a simplistic treatment or discussion. For starters, there are several categories of cars built for sale abroad, as described below. And the broader subject includes used cars sold abroad, new and used cars taken by their owners (individual or corporate, U.S. personnel and others) abroad and then sold as well as vehicles within the military and diplomatic communities.

Large Export Market in Used Cars

An article in the December 2004–January 2005 issue of *The OECD Observer*, the journal of the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development, noted that, excluding trade with Canada, the U.S. exported one third as many used cars as they exported new cars. To explore that further I called Wards Communication in Southfield, Michigan, and learned that according to Department of Commerce data on the number of exported vehicles, 1,793,000 vehicles were exported from the U.S. in 2004, of which

1,421,000 were passenger cars. A more detailed breakdown was not available at that time, but a third of that number would indicate approximately 597,000 used vehicles exported that year.

My interest grew when I spotted an ad in the September 2005 issue of a Michigan auto trader magazine offering volume discounts for export buyers of used cars. Furthermore, in a recent copy of *Auto Mobiles*, a German new/used auto magazine I noted what seemed to be a very large number of used U.S. cars and trucks, many of them that appear to have been imported as used vehicles into Germany. (In many instances it is rather easy to tell the difference between vehicles exported to be sold as new from those exported as used vehicles). The magazine circulated beyond Germany into The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and other countries near the German border.

And not to be forgotten are the estimated 200,000, or more, cars and trucks stolen each year in the U.S. and exported as complete units or in parts (reported in the *International Herald Tribune* some years back and confirmed by a newspaper search, examining materials from several newspapers noting the same data.)

New American Cars Abroad

Other aspects of this topic to consider, (and here is the main focus of this article) involve new U.S.-based vehicles built or assembled abroad as well as those shipped abroad as assembled vehicles or in knocked down kits for reassembly outside the U.S. To look at these vehicles more specifically, I suggest several categories for consideration.

A. Cars built in the U.S. but sold overseas under different names (Chevrolet Alero, instead of Oldsmobile



2005 Jeep Cherokee Renegade photo courtesy Philip Campbell

Alero, and the already mentioned Dodge Magnum/Chrysler 300 touring). Some of the Dodge/Plymouth small cars of the 1960s were rebadged as Chryslers for overseas sales. For example, a Dodge Dart/Plymouth Valiant was labeled a Chrysler 4400 for international markets.

This works in reverse as well. The Volkswagen Jetta, first made in the 1980s, was the Jetta in the U.S. and Europe, but later the European version became the Vento, and subsequently the Bora, before reverting to the Jetta for 2006. The initial VW Golf was the Rabbit in the US; the Passat was the Dasher then the Quantum. Renault did this as well for several years in the 1980s as some U.S. versions of their European cars received different names; the Renault 9 was called the Alliance and the Renault 11, Encore, in North America, and a special version of the Renault 18 was called the American for English markets. There are many other examples of this reverse process as well.

B. Cars built under license from U.S. companies but using different names or styles, for example, Holden bodied GM cars in Australia or the Toyota Cavalier in Japan, though something tells me this may have been built in the U.S. and then sent to Japan. Ironically, some of these cars have found their way as used cars to New Zealand, the U.K. and Australia, among other places

There's also the Chrysler Voyager and Jeep Cherokee among other models that were built by Steyr in Austria, before the merger of Daimler Benz and Chrysler. It is unclear to me, as to whether or not this arrangement continued after the merger.

C. Cars built in the U.S. but exported and assembled in other nations. A lot of cars have fit this situation over the years, resulting in some interesting numbering patterns and variations, which the U.S. car fan is not likely to see. Over the years, U.S. automakers have had assembly plants



Chrysler 300C Touring photo courtesy Philip Campbell

in a myriad of other nations, such as France, Belgium, the U.K., Sweden, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Poland, China as well as many places in Latin America and Africa.

Remarkable twists occur here, as when taxes were increased sharply in Belgium on the larger high-powered cars some 25 or so years ago, a lot of U.S. cars in that country were exported. A few years ago my son Dave gave me a chance to see a Pontiac Firebird in Arizona that had been assembled in Belgium. In the 1980s it was sold into England, where it was purchased and restored only to be subsequently shipped to the U.S. when the owner married a U.S. citizen and moved there bringing the car along in the move.

D. Cars built for export only, that are without counterparts in the U.S. The 1934-39 Chevrolet Imperial was built in a long-wheel-base model only and came in limousine and convertible sedan versions as well as chassis only options. Another example is the Oldsmobile Commercial of the 1930s.

E. Canadian built cars that were built for local consumption in Canada but which were also exported to many other places in the world. Many times these were mistakenly considered as U.S. cars when, in some cases, they were in fact not U.S. made nor even available in the U.S.

F. And of course there are, or

have been, many cars built in the U.S. and shipped abroad for sale there that are not modified very much from their U.S. counterparts. In the past decade or so, this has included Jeep Wranglers and Grand Cherokees, Chevrolet Corvettes, Luminas, Berettas, Corsicas and Blazers, several Cadillac models, Buick Park Avenues (in the 1990s), Chrysler Sebring models, Ford Probes and Explorers, Pontiac Firebirds and Chevrolet Camaros, just to mention a few.

G. There have also been U.S. originated/designed cars that have been all or partially built outside the U.S. Some examples include Ford Model T and A models, built in England, Chrysler Voyager mini vans and Jeeps built in Austria, Buick Regal sedans and Jeep models (and now, as of 2006, Chrysler 300 sedans) built in China.

Other examples include Ford Falcons in Latin America and Australia (although the longer these were produced outside the U.S., the greater the differences between them and anything in production in the U.S.).

Car designs that left the U.S. after being produced in the U.S., form yet another part of this category. Kaiser, Willys and Rambler cars, for example, led long and colorful lives after leaving the U.S. to be built in South America for many years. Ford designs were exported to the USSR.

As a minor, but interesting side-light, export models or Canadian vari-

ations of U.S. cars could be found even among toy/model car makers such as the English/French Dinky Toys by Meccano. Dinky issued a 1939 Buick Viceroy saloon, a 1959 DeSoto Diplomat 4-door sedan and a 1968 Pontiac Parisienne sedan. Other examples are the small plastic DeSoto Diplomat made by EKO in Spain and the Micro Models from New Zealand, versions of the Australian Chrysler Royal and Ford Mainlines done in the late 1950s. It is most likely that other firms have also done similar types of models from time to time.

Modification of U.S. cars for export markets is not a new circumstance, as I have noted, and how far it goes back is not yet clear. At least from the 1930s onward some Australian models of American cars were frequently fitted with different bodies from those issued on comparable U.S. cars and light trucks. There is a whole history of that topic in itself, the “sloper” models, the “utes” and other variations making up an entire research topic by themselves. There was a Chrysler Valiant made in Australia. Then there are the Canadian Buicks, which varied from their U.S. counterparts, and the Buicks in Australia that had Holden bodies resulting in still more items to study. Added to this is the number of modifications made to convert left-hand-drive cars to right-hand drive, which has a history all in itself.

GM's Canadian Pontiacs used a number of different names and models such as Beaumont, Laurentian, Parisienne and Acadian. Canadian Ford Motor Company built the Meteor and Monarch cars (as well as selling Ford and Mercury cars in Canada at the same time) and Mercury trucks, just to make note of a few models. Where will the Chrysler 4400 cars be categorized in this process, in that it appears as if they were modifications and or combinations of the Dodge Dart/Plymouth Valiant cars of the 1960s?

Little has been said here about another very interesting category of



Chrysler Neon photo courtesy Philip Campbell

export cars, those often one off custom built cars from the finest auto body and coach builders in Europe crafted onto U.S. built chassis. There is a large list of builders and custom built automobiles to be considered here. Additionally there are also vehicles that were built outside the U.S. but which used U.S. engines and sometimes running gear. One thinks of the Hudson powered Railton vehicles in England during the 1930s and the Matford in France.

Contemporary Export Models

Living in Europe since 1988, I have noted with considerable interest some of the more contemporary export models that continue the patterns of previous years.

Below is a listing, partial though it is, of vehicles in this category since the late 1980s. For the most part, most of these vehicles would not be seen in the U.S. For reference purposes, I have noted the U.S. market counterpart as much as possible.

The Dodge Shadow/Plymouth Sundance was called the Chrysler ES in Europe (late 1980s-early 1990s), and a version of the Dodge Spirit/Plymouth Acclaim was sold as the Chrysler Saratoga (1990s). The export version of the cab forward model, Chrysler Concorde/Dodge Intrepid/ Eagle Vision, was labeled the Chrysler Vision (mid 1990s). For some time in the 1990s, the Dodge Stratus in export mufti became the Chrysler Stratus although in recent years this has been discontinued in favor of the Chrysler

Sebring itself.

During the first three versions of the best selling Chrysler Company's minivan, which was sold in the U.S. as the Plymouth Voyager/Dodge Caravan/Chrysler Town and Country, the minivan was marketed as the Chrysler Voyager until the demise of Plymouth, although the name is still currently used in Europe. (An interesting sidelight of this was the Chrysler Caravan, a U.S. made export model made in accordance with U.S. military purchasing rules for use in Europe in the late 1990s. Exact numbers for this rarity are not known exactly, but somewhere in the vicinity of 1,000 of these were built between 1996 and 1999 as far as I have been able to determine.)

The Dodge/Plymouth Neon export model (1990s onward) was the Chrysler Neon. At some point the Chrysler Neon was also added to the Canadian line-up (though I have only seen one example). There are some body and other differences between the Canadian model and the export one. For example, the shape of the rear bumper for the license plate and the locations of side marker lights are two model differences. However, when DaimlerChrysler began to export the Dodge Caliber to Europe in 2006 they did so without name change, bringing the Dodge name back to Europe in passenger car form for the first time in some years.

The name changes can be noted for GM models as well. During the first several years for the Pontiac Transport, export models appeared not to be Pontiac models but some crossover between the Olds Silhouette and the Chevrolet Lumina vans which were badged as Pontiac Transports. In a later reversal, the Pontiac Montana minivan was exported as the Chevrolet Montana. And as was mentioned above, the Oldsmobile Alero became the Chevrolet Alero when offered for sale in Europe although only the sedan version was exported, not the coupe model. The current Pontiac



Dodge Caliber export edition photo courtesy Philip Campbell

GTO was originally made in Australia and marketed there and in New Zealand as the Holden Monaro and in the U.K. as a Vauxhall model.

Ford added to this mystery by selling the U.S. Mercury Cougar (late 1990s) as the Ford Cougar and the Mercury Capri, built in Australia, as the Ford Capri, in Europe. This had its precedent in the 1960s, when the Ford Mustang was prohibited from sale in Germany because the name was already used by a motorbike, so Ford renamed the Mustang for Germany as the T-5. This subsequently became an interesting car to be re-imported back to the U.S., although, in very small numbers, just as many Opel GT's from the late 1960s and early 1970s have been exported back to Germany from the U.S. Yet, when Ford Taurus cars and Mercury Sable models were exported to some European countries the major outward modification was to redesign the rear bumper to accommodate the larger license plates. The Mercury Villager minivans came to Holland without much modification at all.

I have not included the many other variations that were built for South American/Latin American markets or from Africa and Asia. Nor have I even begun to consider in any depth, the reversal when Japanese cars are sold in the U.S. using different names from the names used in Japan or Europe or elsewhere in the world. Consider also European cars named differently depending on the market, as noted earlier with the VW Jetta/Vento/

Bora/then Jetta models, and the Passat/Dasher/Quantum cars. The Audi 100 in Europe was the 5000 in the U.S., the 80 was the 4000 in the U.S. And on and on it goes, this interesting ever changing auto mixing process.

No attempt has been made to enter into any lengthy discussion of the reasons for all these variations in this "short" article, and there are probably many to consider. I suggest they would prove to be another entire article in this topic. Perhaps this can become another research project for a later time. ■

Other articles or items of possible interest:

1. Peter Nunn, "Swimming to Japan," *AutoWeek*, August 21, 1995
2. Keith Martin, "A Global Trade in Collectible Cars," *International Herald Tribune*, August 17-18, 1996
3. Barry James, "Poland a Paradise for Car Thieves, Seeks Means to Fight Underworld," *International Herald Tribune*, December 3, 1996
4. Jane Perlez, "Albanians Devel-

op a Taste for Hot Cars," *International Herald Tribune*, August 18, 1997

5. True story, a 1996 Olds Aurora Stolen in 1995 from a Littleton, New Hampshire, turned up recently after it was involved in an accident, in Poland, *AutoWeek*, March 8 1999

6. German TV Station VOX, 30 October 1997, a TV short film report, dealing with the exportation of U.S. new and used cars bought off car lots in Florida, and already presold in Germany. Included: Ford Explorers and large U.S. vans. Other cars, including antique cars, Mercedes and others also use this channel.

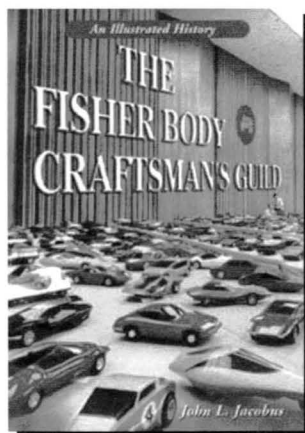
7. Observed October 24, 1997, on German Autobahn, two trucks carrying new/used Chrysler products. This included several Plymouths, Dodge minivans and a Toyota Supra, all bearing dealer labels from Elmhurst Illinois. Both trucks had Hungarian license plates.

Also there is a reverse trade;

continued on page 15

The Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild: An Illustrated History by John L. Jacobus.

only definitive work on this famous student automotive design competition held 1930 - 1968; 331 pages, 171 photos (41 color), charts, appendices, bibliography, index, endnotes, hardcover, 7"x10", \$49.95 + \$4 s/h from McFarland & Co., ISBN: 978-0-7864-1719-3. 2005 release.



Reviewed by Old Cars Weekly, Cars and Parts, Collectible Automobile, Choice, Car and Driver, CruZin', Wood Carving Illustrated, Road & Track, AUTO Aficionado, Hemming's Classic Car, The Auto Channel, the Automotive Chronicles, The Flying Lady, The Washington Times, GM Tech Center News, GM's Intranet, Minnesota Street Rod Assoc., Cruisin Chiefs: Manitoba Pontiac Assoc., etc.

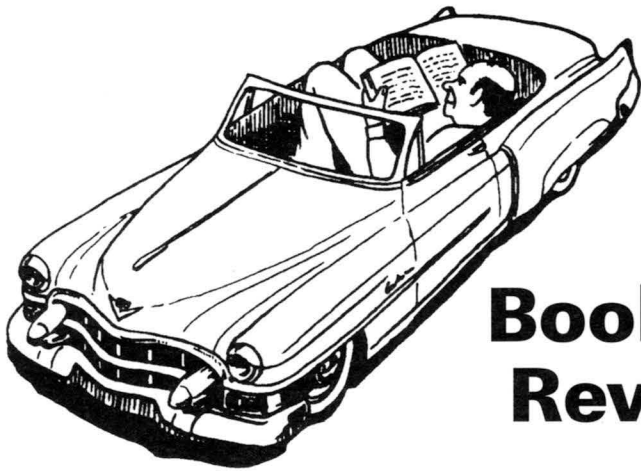


William A. Moore

1956 - 1st National Scholarship, Senior Division, \$5,000 university trust fund.

www.FisherGuild.com

- Contact the Author (SAH #2220) for 20% discount for SAH members at johnjacobus1@aol.com or write to: 10103 Gates Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20902. Check or money orders only.
- See the Guild's web site www.FisherGuild.com for posted reviews and further book ordering instructions.



Book Reviews

Audi Sportwagen, by H. Hofner, H.J. and V. Schneider, F.P. Wiedl. 2005, ISBN 3-7688-5781-6. Hardbound, 440 pages, text in German, 996 photographs (approx. 600 in color). Published by Schneider Text, France. Email: bookorder@schneider-text.com Price 39.90 Euro (approx US-\$53)

This impressive book was compiled after months of research and collecting information and data by the authors. It was published to commemorate 40 years of Audi in the post-war period and the 25th anniversary of the first Audi Quattro.

The first part of the book contains concise descriptions of the sporty automobiles produced by Audi, DKW, Horch and Wanderer (Auto-Union) as well as much more detailed and very well illustrated chapters on the various models built since WWII.

The second part describes the cars' often successful participation in motorsports events from 1911 until 2005 and includes a wealth of illustrations, many of which have not been published before. Reports on the early races and sports events are followed by technical descriptions of the famous "silver arrows," the Auto-Union GP-racing cars of the 1930s, the races in which they started and the record runs performed. More space is allotted to the description of the sports and racing models of Audi and their participation in events in Europe and overseas. The successes

of the first Audi Quattro are recalled, but attention is also given to the many national and international sportscar events with later models. The record drives up Pikes Peak as well as the circuit races on the West Coast are described and of course illustrated. Chapters on the National Championships in Germany are followed by the fabulous success story of Audi winning the world famous 24 hours of Le Mans race (1999–2005) and on the equally successful participation in the American ALMS series events.

At the end of the book there is a highly intriguing chapter on studies, idea cars and prototypes. A twenty-page annex contains detailed tables with the technical specifications of 160 different models (1911–2005) and the results in motorsports events (1980–2005). There is a good list of source material, literature and illustrations. An index is missing, but as the book is very neatly sectioned, this is not considered a great loss.

To all amateurs of automotive history and especially motorsport the very nicely printed and produced book will be a treasured reference work and a joy for many years to come. Highly recommended.

—Ferdinand Hediger

Practical Car Restoration: A Guidebook with Lessons from a 1930 Franklin Rebuild, by Charles L. Wilmarth III, 2006 ISBN 0-7864-

2511-3, Softbound, 211 pages, 80 illustrations, McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, 1-800-253-2187, www.mcfarlandpub.com. \$29.95

John Jerome once wrote that "service manuals are hymnals of conservative thought . . . they are not even pragmatic: there is never a hint of the 'try this, then try this, and if that fails, try this' that is the operative method of real-world attempts to make machines survive."

Charles Wilmarth's book *Practical Car Restoration* is a nice antidote to service-manual writing. Wilmarth uses his experience restoring two cars, a 1928 Dodge Brothers and a 1930 Franklin, to illustrate the practical techniques and some of the pitfalls of antique car restoration.

Wilmarth's book begins by first including a chapter on the initial choice of a vehicle to restore, using museums as a resource, and a brief history of the Franklin company. For those that have read *Sinclair Powell's The Franklin Automobile Company*, much of this material will be at best a cursory review of that story. Still, Wilmarth's approach of using accurate textual and visual material in the restoration of an automobile rings true with the ultimate goal of a restoration: to preserve the historical record of an automobile.

Further chapters outline the basic steps of rebuilding an antique car, with sections on wood and trim restoration, paint and body work and mechanical restoration. Each chapter contains a step-by-step explanation of Wilmarth's work on the Franklin, with advice drawn from years of experience with automobiles to leaven the work and make it more applicable to other makes, models and even eras.

Ending with Wilmarth's participation in a Franklin Trek and, finally, the sale of the car, the book contains much advice on both the restoration of an antique car and the sustained use of it.

A few words of caution: It is not

necessarily the best book for a beginning restorer—Wilmarth spends little time explaining mechanical systems or the theory of automobile operation, making some of the text difficult to comprehend for those unfamiliar with arcane automotive technology. And some of Wilmarth's methods—particularly his method of patching rust—are questionable. Still, Wilmarth works hard to illustrate his own mistakes and suggest methods that might be both more practical and more effective.

Practical Car Restoration contains a great deal of very good information, and for those interested in automotive history, it gives an explanation of many of the traditional skills used by both car builders and tradesmen. These skills are nearly lost today and little was written about them during their use. Wilmarth's book is an excellent addition to any restorer's library and is also a living document for those interested in the preservation of automotive skills.

—*Luke Chennell*

The V12 Engine: The Untold Inside Story of the Technology, Evolution, Performance and Impact of All V12-Engined Cars, by *Karl Ludvigsen*, 2005, ISBN 1-84425-004-0.

Hardbound, 424 pages, 667 black and white photographs and drawings, 58 color illustrations. Haynes Publishing, Somerset, U.K. www.haynes.co.uk. \$69.95/£40.00

In this broad and detailed study, the author has given us a readable historical account that can also serve as a reference work for its subject.

He begins with a brief review of the origins of the internal combustion engine, early experiments with multi-cylinder designs and the first V12s in marine and aviation applications. The V12 was seen as a natural evolution of the in-line six, avoiding the limitations of the straight-eight's long crankshaft and the troublesome vibrations of the V8. American engineers were

responsible for the flowering of twelves for passenger cars in the years before and during the First World War. In the '20s making use of technical solutions developed for aero engines, the Europeans responded with a series of racing V12s that set new standards on the track. Surplus wartime twelves found their way into land speed record cars, holding the title until displaced by a turbine-powered contender in 1964. Beginning with the sleeve-valve Daimler of 1926, a new generation of V12s from every producing country crowded the luxury marketplace until they were driven into extinction by the economics of the Depression.

With displacements from 1.1 to 11.3 liters and vee angles from 45 to 120 degrees, the V12 permitted maximum flexibility to designers for the intended use. It could be narrow to fit into engine bays and reduce frontal area or wide to minimize height and give clearance for manifolding and carburetors. Packard's Twin Six was more compact and 400 pounds lighter than the six-cylinder it replaced.

Proven suitable for a variety of applications, the V12 was restricted only by its complexity and cost. The surprise appearance of the twelve-cylinder Ferrari on the postwar scene was far from foreseen. In the industrial reconstruction of the 1950s few would have predicted the emergence of a new generation of V12 sports and luxury cars winning at the track and selling readily at astronomical prices. In today's world of diminished expectations and the ubiquitous balance shaft, how can we account for such irresponsible behavior?

Based on a lifetime of technical research and the author's personal acquaintance with many of the protagonists of V12 development in the postwar period, the text is filled with observations and quotations that bring history into focus. Business and technology are equally well served. We learn that the choice of twelve cylinders was in many cases influenced by

the prestige enjoyed by this type of engine even for racing cars for which, some of us had naively assumed, the design process was entirely rational. This is a book to which the automotive historian will frequently return to enjoy its intellectual and visual delights. It takes its place on our shelves next to the great works of Pomeroy and Borgeson.

—*Arthur Jones*

Thunder at Sunrise: A History of the Vanderbilt Cup, the Grand Prize and the Indianapolis 500, 1904–1916, by John M. Burns, 2006 ISBN 0-7864-2474-5. Hardcover 273 pages. McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, 1-800-253-2187, www.mcfarlandpub.com. \$55

If you're a racing historian who's been waiting for the long overdue definitive history of the Vanderbilt Cup and American Grand Prize races, this isn't it. On the other hand, if you just want the story and aren't too concerned with pictorial and tabular matter this book could be just the ticket.

The text is easy to read and quite entertaining if you don't mind "rakish blue racers" and "blood-red behemoths" and scattered social history. And there's no doubt the author did his homework because as near as I could tell without engaging in some diligent double checking, the race accounts are as accurate as one could expect in view of the fact that he had to reconstruct them from various newspaper and periodical sources of the time (verified by the bibliography). Anyone writing race recaps can easily get bogged down in lap-by-lap recitation, but his descriptions of crowd misbehavior and race accidents both calamitous and casual are engaging and even amusing. The only glaring error that popped out at me was Andrew Riker competing in the first Gordon Bennett race (he wasn't there) and driving a Winton no less.

As I said, this book is OK if

you're not concerned with pictorial and tabular matter, but the picture quality (poor) and selection (sparse) was a big disappointment to me. I can't imagine why the author (or the publisher) relied on just two picture sources, but I didn't find any that weren't attributed to either the Smithtown (New York) Library's Long Island Room or the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Many of the former were obviously copied from an old magazine (specifically *The Automobile* of 10/15/04), and except for three or four they're much too dark. The photos from the Speedway are a lot better, but many of these seem muddy, too. Including the first six Indianapolis 500-mile races makes sense because the scope of the book spans 1904 to 1916, but if that's so, one has to ask why the pre-500 races at the "brickyard" are ignored.

I can't criticize the tabular matter because there isn't any to criticize. I'm sure if the author had asked Jerry Helck for permission to include the Vanderbilt and Grand Prize charts from his dad's book, *The Checkered Flag*, that Jerry would have obliged. For \$55 I would expect charts, or at least a table of race dates, places and winners in the back of the book. If you're a racing historian you still need the Helck book (which has illustrations, of course, but no photos), and as a matter of fact I found you can buy used Helcks from Amazon.com for \$24.95 to \$125.00. For Indianapolis 500 statistics you would have to have one the three editions of Jack Fox's *Illustrated History of the Indianapolis 500* which can also be found on the internet for about the same money, so take your pick.

—Thomas F. Saal

BMW Sportwagen, by V. Schneider, H.J. Schneider and R. Simons, 2nd Edition 2003 ISBN 3-7688-1454-8. Hardcover, 409 pages, text in German, 815 illustrations mainly in color. Schneider Text, France/Ireland. Available in bookshops or from pub-

lisher. bookorder@schneider-text.com
Price 39.90 Euro (approx US-\$53.00)

This impressive book is a treat for every sports car lover and especially for the owners and admirers of BMW. When studying its contents more thoroughly it becomes obvious that this is far more than a beautiful picture book. There are plenty of hitherto unpublished illustrations, concise information, data and facts. The three authors have tackled the task with plenty of inside knowledge, love and care. They convey in a lively way a study of the very successful engagement of the BMW marque in motorsport over the years. The models available to the public, which are hardly ever entered in sports events, are also amply covered.

The sections of the book need a bit of getting accustomed to. In the first chapter the BMW production models, their development and their success in sports events are carefully presented. First there are the roadsters, convertibles and coupés from 1929 till 2003. From the early tiny Dixis to the types 315, 319, 327, 335 and the legendary 328; the models 503, 507, 3200 CS and the little BMW 700 the descriptions continue to the CS, CSL, M1 and the latest Z-range, produced in the United States. Then follow the sporty coupés and convertibles based on sedan models. Up first are the 501 and 502, nicknamed in Europe "Baroque Angels" due to their flowing lines. Then the famous 1600, 1800 and 2002 in their many versions and finally the late M3 and M5 models are well covered.

The next chapter covers the prototypes, special models and foreign marques which were based on BMW designs. Here the reader will find surprising information and illustrations, for example, Frazer Nash, Bristol, AC, Cooper, Talbot, Morgan, Bizzarrini, Sbarro, but also Alpina, Schnitzer, Hartge and Wiesmann.

Much space is then allotted to the BMW racing and competition sports touring models. Starting with the type 328 including the famous Mille Miglia

versions of 1940, Veritas, AFM ,etc. up to the tuned Alpinas and Schnitzers, the engagements at the 24-hour endurance race of Le Mans and the BMW works teams in the last years.

There are about 50 pages in which the BMW formula racing cars and idea cars are described and illustrated. The 2nd edition contains an annex with the latest developments up to 2003.

Also included as a special bonus are a list of more than 650 people connected with BMW sports events, a bibliography and the technical specifications of 193 different BMW models.

This great book is hard to put down. Whenever one is leafing through it, the eye is caught by a fascinating picture or a bit of information which animates the owner to start reading. Needless to say the book is nicely printed, quality bound and well produced. Warmly recommended to any BMW lover but also any historian interested in the history of one of the most successful European marques.

—Ferdinand Hediger

David Buick's Marvelous Motor Car: The Men and the Automobile That Launched General Motors,

by Lawrence R. Gustin 2006 ISBN 0-9786269-0-7. Hardbound, 232 pages illustrated. Buick Gallery and Research Center, Alfred P. Sloan Museum. \$24.95

David Dunbar Buick, the man who gave Buicks their name, is now an all-but-forgotten pioneer in the auto industry, but he is appropriately remembered in *David Buick's Marvelous Motor Car*.

Buick, a successful manufacturer of plumbing supplies, incorporated the Buick Motor Car Company in January 1904. But a scant nine months later, he had to cede control to William C. Durant. Only four years later, Durant had turned a failing enterprise into the leading manufacturer of automobiles in the United States and the Buick company became the cornerstone for

General Motors, which Durant founded in 1908.

David Buick quietly left the company in 1909. He lost his money in a series of speculative ventures and died 20 years later in relative poverty.

Together with Walter Marr and Eugene Richard, Buick developed the overhead-valve engine, which set his early autos apart from their competitors. These valve-in-head engines, as they were known, went on to be mainstays of Buick cars for much of the 20th century. That's why they were "marvelous."

Mr. Gustin, a former assistant public-relations director at Buick, has produced a good, succinct history of the early days of one of America's great mainstream automobiles and the men responsible for it.

Z. Taylor Vinson

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared in *The New York Times* and is used with permission.

News continued from page 5

The Untold Story of a Great American Engine Maker. Hall-Scott was once a highly regarded maker of aviation, marine and automotive engines. A history professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota, he coauthored the book with Francis H. Bradford, a former Hall-Scott engineer.

The book is now available through SAE International, 400 Commonwealth Avenue, Warrendale, Pennsylvania 15096-0001 or by e-mail at CustomerService@sae.org.

—*John Perala*

Mercedes Symposium

On July 24, 2007 the Heritage Information Center of DaimlerChrysler AG sponsored a symposium at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Fellbach to discuss an aspect of its motor racing heritage that recently has been given particular attention. The topic of the symposium was "Das Eifelrennen 1934—Neubauers Dilemma"/"The Eifel Race of 1934—Neubauer's Dilemma."

The centerpiece of the symposium

was the paper presented by Dr. Josef Ernst of the DCAG Heritage Information Center, "Das Eifelrennen 1934—Neubauers Dilemma: Eine Auswertung Vorhandenen Materials"/"The 1934 Eifel Race—Neubauer's Dilemma: Observations based upon Available Documentation."

The basis for this discussion was the story related in the book *Männer, Frauen un Motoren*, by Alfred Neubauer, whereby Neubauer, the manager of the Mercedes-Benz racing team, made the decision to strip the paint off the team's racing machines to enable them to meet the maximum weight limit of 750 kilograms as stipulated by the International Formula used for Grand Prix racing by the Association Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus (the AIACR, the forerunner of the current Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, or FIA) when the cars were found to be overweight. The import of this story is that it is the often-cited reason as to why the racing color of the German teams was changed from white to silver.

After opening remarks by Michael Bock, managing director of the Mercedes-Benz Museum, Dr. Ernst presented his findings from what could be found in the company

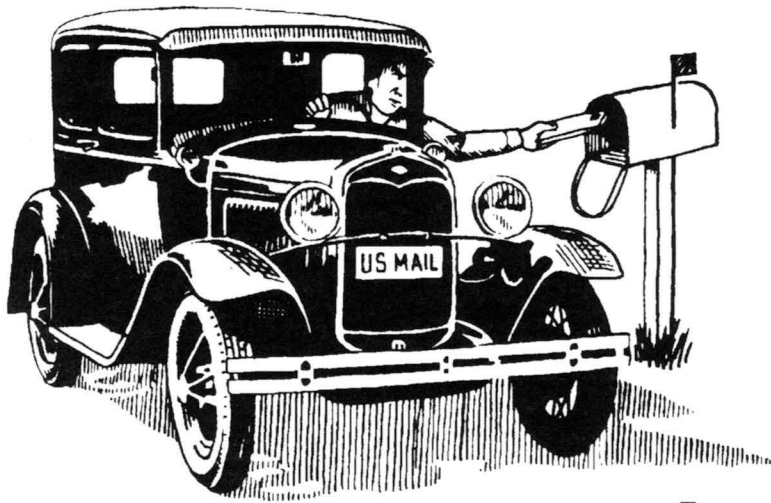
archives section (which contains the materials relating to motor sports) of the Heritage Information Center. He was followed by Dr. Harry Niemann, head of the Heritage Information Center as well as being a noted author. The discussion following was notable by the presence of Harvey Rowe, the co-author of the Neubauer book. The book was the result of a series of articles which appeared in *Quick* magazine in late 1958. Also present were representatives from *MotorKlassik*, *Mercedes Classic Magazin*, *Stern*, *Auto Bild*, and regional television (SWR). In addition, the former head of the Archives of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club (ADAC), Graf Hans-Christoph von Seherr-Thoss, was present along with noted authors *Karl Ludvigsen* and Doug Nye.

Although no firm conclusions were reached by those assembled in Fellbach, the discussion brought many materials to light from the DCAG archives which, along with other sources now being made available, now provide a better understanding of the events leading up to and surrounding the Eifelrennen. Additional research and further discussions in the wake of the symposium have provided yet more materials for review on this topic.

—*Don Capps*



Seminar participants pose with a 1935 Mercedes W25, which is owned by DCAG and similar to the cars at the 1934 Eifelrennen photo courtesy Don Capps



Letters

Cantrell Not the First

Regarding the “Can of Worms” article in *Journal* 229, I doubt that the 1915 Cantrell depot wagon should be considered the first vehicle of that type. The depot wagon, or depot hack or station wagon, came equipped with a removable back seat for times when room was needed for baggage or other equipment instead of passengers. I believe that the first such motor vehicles were made by International Harvester and Sears Roebuck prior to 1910. These vehicles had tall wheels with wagon type solid tires and were called “high-wheelers.”

Cantrell vehicles always had wood bodies. Its chief competitor, Babcock, of Watertown, New York, always had a steel body with steel doors and a steel tailgate, usually shown on a Dodge Brothers chassis. It was more expensive than the Cantrell but lasted a lot longer.

And speaking of *Journal* 229, I agree with *Michael Berger's* President's Perspective, “The Invisible Passenger.” He really hit the nail on the head about the unneeded distraction. It will be for a future generation to realize that all the noise is causing hearing problems; maybe then the noise and distraction will be turned down.

—Nelson Bolan

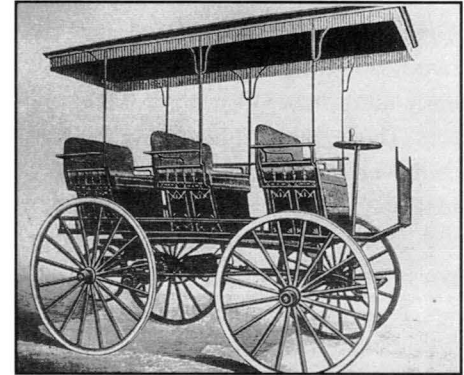
Earlier Iterations of Depot Hack

To answer the “Can of Worms” note, I have to say *Newsday's* claim that Joseph and Albert Cantrell built the first “depot wagon” in 1915 would be difficult to substantiate, and only on a semantic level. Unless someone were to quibble over the exact term “depot wagon” then there were numerous earlier iterations of the “depot hack,” which were available with rows of seats as a small “omnibus” or “jitney,” the latter another East Coast term referring to a nickel, the cost of the short ride usually from a hotel to a train station. (We won't include horse-drawn vehicles here, I assume).

The term “depot wagon” in 1915 would have been a kind of hybrid, I suppose, if only by name. If we can use the hybrid term, then in that case we can actually delve into battery power, and then I must cite my own book, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of American Trucks and Commercial Vehicles*, where one will find the picture and description of the 1891 Morrison. The Morrison had three rows of seats with elaborate wooden sides and a very elegant roof. Again, one might quibble that it was “merely” an electric vehicle, but it did carry passengers at the Chicago Columbia Exhibition in 1893, and it carried them from a train depot (new electric tram to be exact).

Another example would be the Chase, which was a highwheeler built beginning in 1907 that was available with multiple rows of seats to be used as a “depot hack.”

—Al Mroz



1891 Morrison illustration courtesy Al Mroz

“LeSabre” Buses

I received the following email and photos yesterday from Bernard Vermeylen in Belgium. I thought you might like to run them as a follow up in your “Letters” section. The Dodge/Van Hool bus is likely the one I saw in Switzerland in 1953.

—Mike Lamm

Dear Mr. Lamm,

My good friend, Pierre Wilhem, a friend of *Taylor Vinson* of the Society of Automotive Historians, spoke to me yesterday about a Belgian bus with a “LeSabre look,” a bus that you had photographed in 1953 in Switzerland.

I am presently working on a book about cars from Eastern Europe, and I just had a look at a good Belgian automotive publication, *Englebert Magazin*, dated Jan./Feb. 1952. It contains pictures from the Brussels Motor Show of January 1952, and among them were photos of two LeSabre-lookalike buses.

The first bus, on a Dodge chassis, was made by a Belgian coach-builder named Van Hool. It was built specifically for a tour company called Destrebecq Trips. The Dodge-based bus had a seating capacity of 22. Van Hool was, and remains, one of

Europe's leading makers of bus bodies. The company is headquartered in Antwerp.

The magazine also showed a second bus, this one on a 24-passenger Chevrolet chassis, which was built by a company called Carrosserie Vandavelde in Sint-Truiden, Belgium.



Bus on Dodge chassis made by a Belgian coachbuilder named Van Hool
photo courtesy Bernard Vermeylen



Bus on Chevrolet chassis, which was built by a company called Carrosserie Vandavelde
photo courtesy Bernard Vermeylen

A Childhood Encounter with George Eli Whitney

This is a minor anecdote about early automotive history, shared before it is too late and lost.

When I was four and five years old (1923–1924) my parents and I lived in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Next door lived George Whitney and his wife. He was fond of children and would entertain us with a cuckoo clock on the dining room wall which was connected mechanically or electrically to a floor-level control. The cookoo would determine by sound whether I or other children had been bad or good.

Mr. Whitney, I found, could easily be persuaded to fire up his live model steam engine which ran on a track at bench height around his two-car garage. His locomotive and tender was about four feet long and used wood for generating steam. It was designed by Mr. Whitney when he was an appren-

tice machinist. Originally from Boston he had moved to Bridgeport to become chief engineer after Locomobile bought out the Stanley brothers and began building steam-powered cars.

We moved from Bridgeport in 1924 and when Mr. Whitney learned we were leaving, he told me that if I returned when I was 12 he would give me the engine and tender. Of course I never returned to claim that choice model.

Many years later I found out that the Whitney locomotive with tender was in the museum at the Newcomen Society of America in Exton, Pennsylvania. It is in a glass case which is a fitting tribute to a kind old man whom I remember fondly.

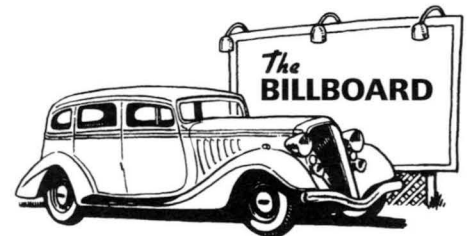
It was only when as an adult more seriously interested in automotive history that I realized that the same Mr. Whitney was an early builder of operating steam automobiles dating to 1893.

—G. Marshal Naul

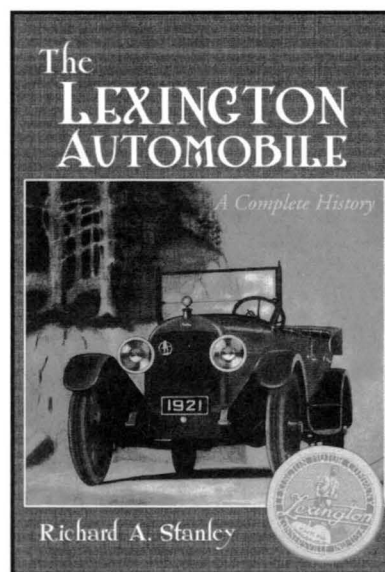
Window continued from page 9

many auto haulers have been observed in Germany carrying used European specification vehicles heading east toward Eastern Europe or northwest to Antwerp. Rotterdam or Bremerhaven with vehicles heading to Africa and the Middle East.

8. From the U.S. military community in Kaiserslautern, Germany, an auto hauler fully loaded with cars for Bulgaria, included on top, a '91 Chevrolet Caprice sedan, and another headed for Latvia with a 1990 Pontiac Grand Am two door included.



Photos Wanted Of American vehicles from World War I **Albert Mroz**
almroz@netzero.net



263 pages \$45 hardcover (7 × 10)
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bibliography, index
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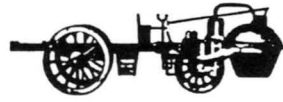
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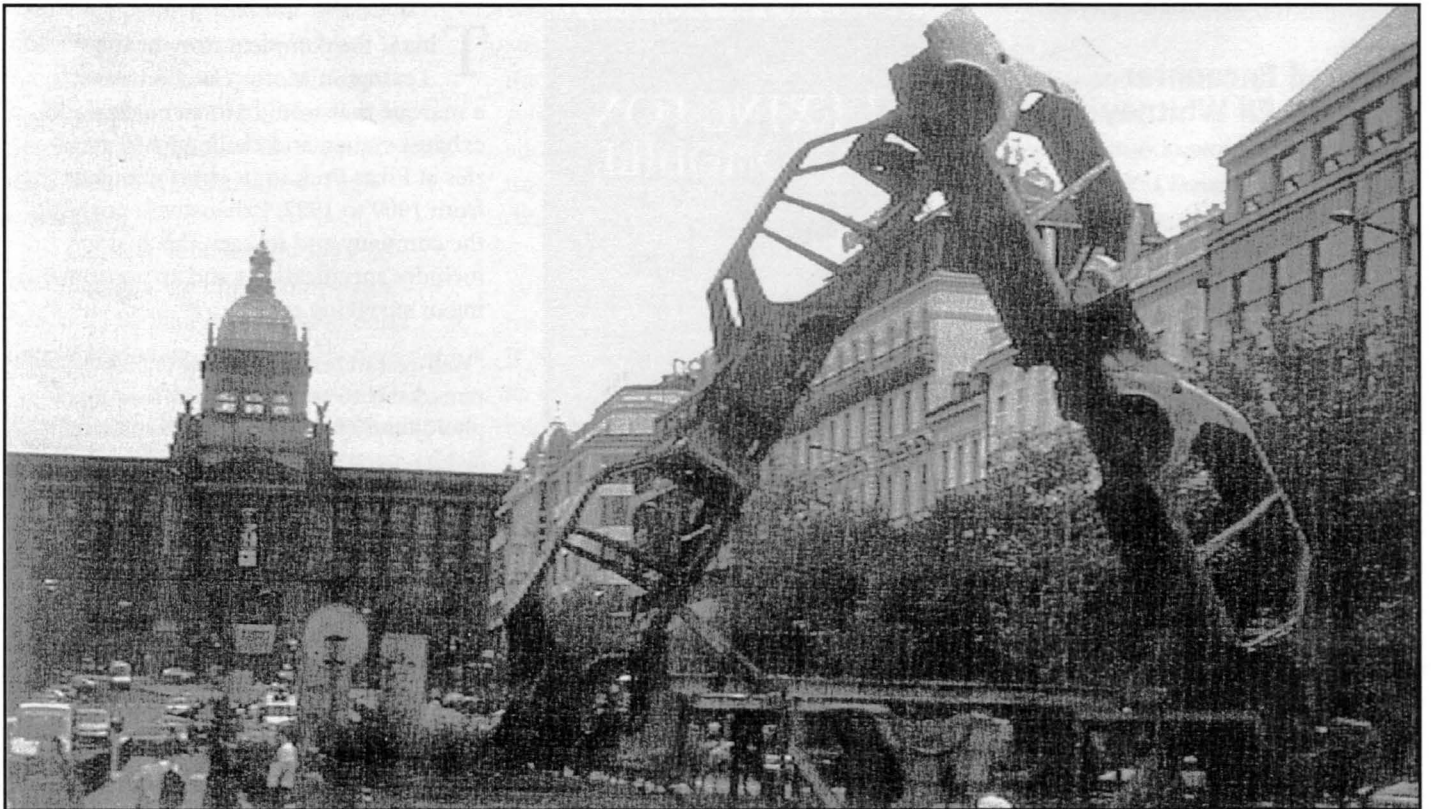
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BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER This auto sculpture graced Wenceslas Square in Prague, Czech Republic, in June 2005. *Photo courtesy of Matt Sonfield*