

SAH Journal



The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.

Issue 245 Electronic Edition

May-June 2010



When Three is Enough, page 11

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<i>André Lefebvre</i>	

Date Reminders

June 27, 2010

SAH Literature Faire is **cancelled**.
See page 5

July 31, 2010

Bradley Award Nominations to
Judith Endelman
endelman@thehenryford.org

September 30, 2010

SAH Banquet Reservations Due
Patrick Bisson
patrickdbisson@yahoo.com

October 8, 2010

SAH Banquet
Hershey Country Club, Hershey, PA



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SAH Annual Awards

Benz Award, magazine article

Bradley Award, research institution

Brigham Award, magazine

Cugnot Award, English language book

Cugnot Award, Non-English book

Friend of Automotive History

Ingersoll Award, non-print media

Scharchburg Award, student paper

SAH Journal

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The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.

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Copy Deadline for Journal 246

July 1, 2010

President's Message

Since Hershey, my SAH duties have concentrated on the bi-annual Fundraising Appeal, confirming committee chairs, and handling questions as they arose.

As of mid-March, our second fundraising campaign had raised \$8,485 from a total of 122 donors. This and our first campaign stemmed from the reality of paying for services that the Society has previously received for free, such as membership management. As fundraiser in my "day job," I encouraged both campaigns, feeling this gave members who so wished an opportunity to support SAH over and above the annual membership fee. This also allows the Society to remain affordable to potential members.

The leadership of three award committees transitioned smoothly. *Judy Endelman* took over the leadership of the Bradley Award for archives from *Jim Wagner*, who remains on the committee; *Darwyn Lumley* took over the leadership of the Friend of Automotive History Award, with *Bob Ewing* staying on to help; and *Bill Kreiner* stepped into *Taylor Vinson's* giant shoes for the Cugnot Award for Books written in languages other than English. The other five award committees are proceeding with the same leadership. I encourage those members interested in serving on a committee to contact me or the committee chairs about their interest. We are always looking for new blood.

SAH accomplishes most of its work through 11 regular committees: Academic, Archives, Conference, Hershey Banquet, Hershey Tent, Member Roster, Membership, Nominating, Paris Meeting, Publications and Silent Auction; three currently active Chapters: the Leland in Michigan, Southern California, Britain; and one Section: MotorSports History.

The Member Roster, more a task force than a committee, will cease to exist when its work is done. *Darwyn Lumley* has taken over the helm of the Nominating Committee from *Leroy Cole*, re-instituting a tradition of the IPP (Immediate Past President) assuming that committee head. *Kit Foster* stepped into *Taylor's* shoes to fulfill the responsibilities for the Paris Meeting.

Of the Chapter meetings, *Leroy Cole* is breathing new life into the Leland Chapter, Southern California is busy, and as ever, Britain "rules." Needless to say, the exciting new kid on the block

is *Pat Yongue's* MotorSports History Chapter. This got off to a great start with an enthusiastic group of charter members. Look for that report separately.

Taylor Vinson's passing has raised an interesting issue, brought to our attention by *Malcolm Jeal*, Chairman of SAH of Great Britain: should *Taylor's* role as unofficial international diplomat for SAH be formalized? SAH's budget does not allow reimbursement of expenses for such a role, but the Board is pondering the resolution of this issue for its Fall Hershey meeting. I would enjoy hearing from members on the subject.

At the operational level, *Leroy Cole* is looking for someone to take over his work on the auction. Of strategic interest are issues of membership retention and growth and whether growth alone will take care of the costs of membership service.

I remain impressed beyond words with the amount and quality of work done by the leadership of SAH at both the Board and Committee levels. The commitment to the Society's mission lives out in that work. My personal goal is to get this broadcast as far as possible in order to benefit the larger automotive community, from the automobile itself as celebrated by collectors and museums to the public interested in its history and its impact on our society.

—Susan S. Davis

HORSELESS CARRIAGE GAZETTE

As you might expect from a club publication, the *Horseless Carriage Gazette* is chock full of exciting four-color photographs showing brass-era automobiles in action. First-generation cars don't get out often but, when they do, it is a real privilege to be along for the ride.

History buffs will enjoy a feature or two in each *Horseless Carriage Gazette* about marques both popular and obscure. In addition, more than 240 black & white images from the pre-1916 era were used as illustrations in the six 2007 issues.

Membership is \$45 (\$55 outside of the USA).

There is no better place to connect with nearly 5,000 enthusiasts who appreciate pioneer vehicles than in the Horseless Carriage Club. We'll be honored if you decide to join.

Horseless Carriage Club
PO Box 62, Bakersfield CA 93302
888/832-2374 or office@hcca.org

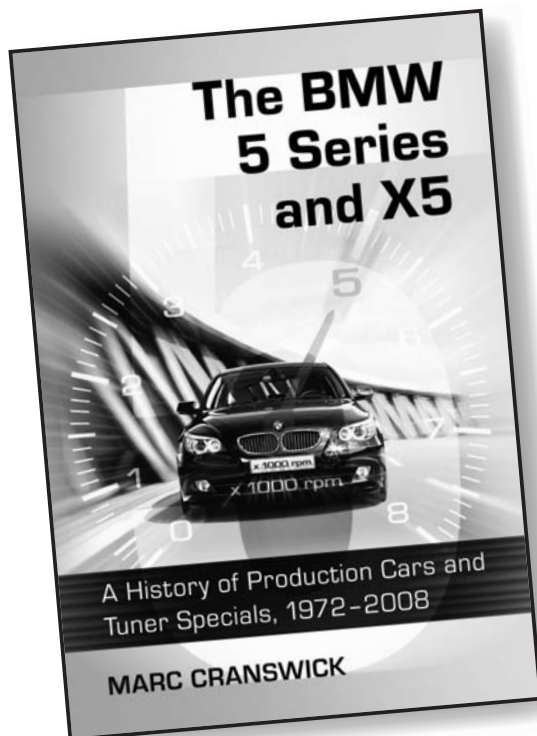
SAH Fundraising Appeal

The Society wishes to thank the following donors, who contributed approximately \$8500 in total.

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This history of BMW's 5 series midsize sedan and X5 SUV extends from September 1972 to the e60's major makeover for 2008 and the recent development of the e70 X5. Technically related models such as the 6-series are also described, as are aftermarket modifications by Alpina, Hartge, and other low volume specialist BMW tuners and speed shops. The book includes more than 200 photographs, along with a listing of all models variants by number ID, model "e" code, and production dates.

[280]pp. \$49.95 softcover (7 x 10)
Ca. 200 photos (ca. 30 in color),
appendix, bibliography, index
ISBN 978-0-7864-4351-2 2010



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SAH News

The Eighth Biennial Automotive History Conference in Tupelo, Mississippi, combined presentations of the theme “The Automobile in a Time of Crisis—Lessons of History” with a highly informative tour of the Tupelo area and a special viewing of the Tupelo Automobile Museum, our gracious hosts for the three-day event, which ran March 25th through 27th.

In his opening remarks Conference Chairman *Arthur Jones* remarked that the history of the automotive industry “is the story of meeting and overcoming obstacles of every kind—world wars, economic dislocations, materials shortages, both natural and contrived, labor strife, and trading constraints created through policies driven by economic nationalism.” He was impressed with the quality of the presentations and was happy to note that half the presenters were appearing for the first time at our conference.

General Motors received a lot of attention with such presentations as “Factors Contributing to the Failure of

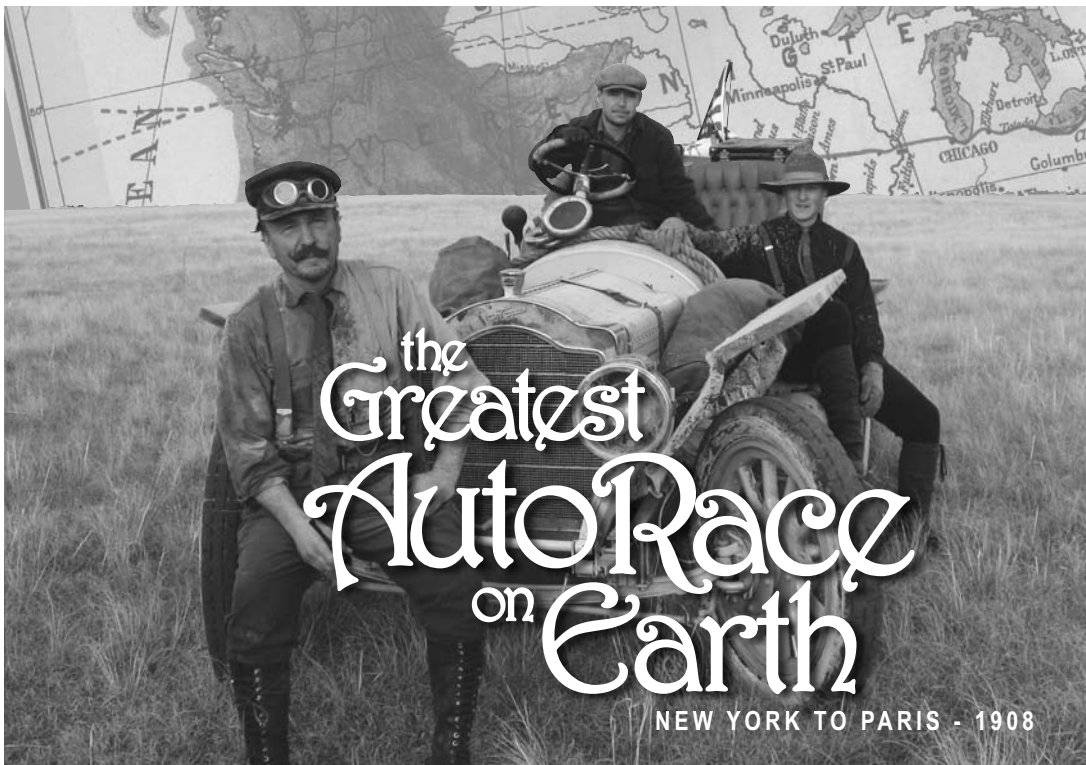
GM,” “Can GM Learn Anything from MG?” and “GM’s Fatal Bargain: The 1950s Origin of Legacy Costs.” Other presentations included “Innovation During Economic and Environmental Crises, 1961–1975,” “The U.S. Auto Industry and the Farm Depression of the 1920s,” “Ford in Inter-war Berlin—A Crunch for the German Automotive Industry” and “The American Automobile Industry and the Eisenhower Recession of 1957–58.”

All was not doom and gloom, however. There was “From Margin to Mainstream: American Women and the Automobile in Historical Perspective” and “Come See Quality Being Made: Touring America’s Auto Factories.”

Allen McDaniel, curator for the Tupelo Automobile Museum, was Thursday’s luncheon speaker. Allen described the remarkable life and career of museum founder and benefactor Frank Spain. With his folksy, down home manner Allen entertained the luncheon audience and those of us on his tour bus the next day.

Tupelo being Elvis Presley’s birthplace, it was only right that Friday’s tour include stops at the two-room house where he was born, a small country church where he and his family and neighbors attended services and the Tupelo Hardware Store, where he was given his first guitar. Since Elvis moved to Memphis as a teen, the focus in Tupelo is on his boyhood and particularly effective is a wall of plaques adjacent to the visitor center that contain remembrances of family and friends of Elvis before all the fame and exploitation of the singer.

After lunch we received a short history lesson of the area, starting with the Visitors Center at the Tupelo entrance to the famous Natchez Trace, which runs between Natchez, Mississippi and Nashville, Tennessee. This was followed by a visit to Brice’s Crossroads battlefield and a very informative talk by a couple of folks who participate in Civil War battle reenactments. Finally our busy day ended with food and



Eight years in the making, **The Greatest Auto Race on Earth** is now available on DVD, telling the story of the 1908 New York to Paris auto race.

Through never before seen photos and exact running replicas of the Thomas Flyer, German Protos, and Züst, the story of these brave men and their machines is told as they travelled 22,000 miles in 169 days.

With stunning cinematography and cutting edge computer graphics, we look at the hardships and accomplishments of such heroes as George Schuster, Lt. Hans Koeppen, and the popular Italian, Antonio Scarfoglio. Mastered to HD, this 95 minute program has already garnered numerous awards.

Use PayPal and order online at www.thegreatestautorace.com or send your name and address with a cheque or Money Order for \$35.44 (\$29.99 + \$5.45 S/H) to **The 1908 Great Auto Race Film Company Ltd.**, #202, 10816A-82 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. T6E 2B3

drink and a look at the cars in the Tupelo Auto Museum.

Both Thursday and Saturday featured joint sessions for SAH and NAAM members. *Sue Davis* and *Leslie Kendall* spoke of the relevance of auto history to a wide range of disciplines, including conservation, land management, politics, psychology, technology and art. *Kit Foster* led a discussion titled "Libraries and Archives for Museums and Historians."

The Tupelo conference was also the setting for the spring Board meeting and a meeting of the International MotorSports section.

A banquet Saturday evening featured David Rumbarger, president and CEO of Community Development Foundation for Tupelo, who gave an entertaining presentation of the museum's acquisition and ongoing restoration of a 1957 Toyopet, one of the first 277 to be exported to the United States. —*Tom Jakups*

SAH members are invited to join the **Classic Car Club of America (CCCA)**

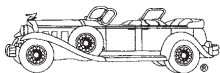
founded in 1952 to promote the preservation and restoration of distinctive motorcars built between 1925 and 1948.

The club publishes its *Bulletin* eight times a year and the quarterly *Classic Car* magazine.

The club maintains a museum and research library on the grounds of the Gilmore Car Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan.

For membership details contact the club at either of the addresses below.

CLASSIC CAR CLUB OF AMERICA



1645 Des Plaines River Road, Suite 7
Des Plaines, IL 60018-2206
(847) 390-0443
www.ClassicCarClub.org

Chapter News

Leland Chapter - Michigan

A gathering was held April 17, 2010, at Stonegate Farm in Hadley, Michigan. The farm has a collection of 80 restored orchard, vineyard, farm and grove tractors, antique trucks, cars and vignettes of a barber shop, gas station, ice cream parlor and more. Actually 25,000 square feet, in three buildings of history.

We had all officers present, *Top Hat John Jendza*, *Jim Petersen*, *Victoria Mobley* and 16 members. Our host was Diane Flis who is also a member of The Tin Can Tourists. Top Hat John is shown below presenting Diane with a book that members signed on behalf of the chapter. Photos by *Leroy Cole*.

A blog was announced for the Leland Chapter on:
www.lelandsah.blogspot.com
—*Victoria Mobley*, Secretary-Treasurer



SAH SoCal LitFaire Cancelled

After 27 years, the Southern California Chapter of the Society of Automotive Historians has cancelled their annual Literature Faire, scheduled to be held this year on June 27 at a new location, the Automobile Driving Museum in El Segundo, California.

The Faire, originally the idea of our long time membership chair, *Bobbie'dine Rodda*, had survived moves to such varied locations as the Briggs Cunningham Museum, Pasadena City College, Irwindale Speedway and the NHRA Museum in Pomona. As you read in issue 244 of the *SAH Journal*, the Faire was to move to the El Segundo site in search of cooler temperatures, but what one could not have foreseen was the effects on the planning and implementation of the Faire caused by the illnesses which brought down several of the key leaders of the chapter.

The chapter will reevaluate the Faire at a general membership meeting in late November of this year, at which time new leaders will be selected, and there is a good possibility that the Literature Faire will be back on the calendar for 2011. —*Bob Ewing*



Letters

Dear SAH Members,

My colleague *Lee Stobr* and I have gathered much information on J. Walter Christie and his front-wheel-drive race cars, as shown below. Nevertheless, we always wonder if there isn't more to be found.

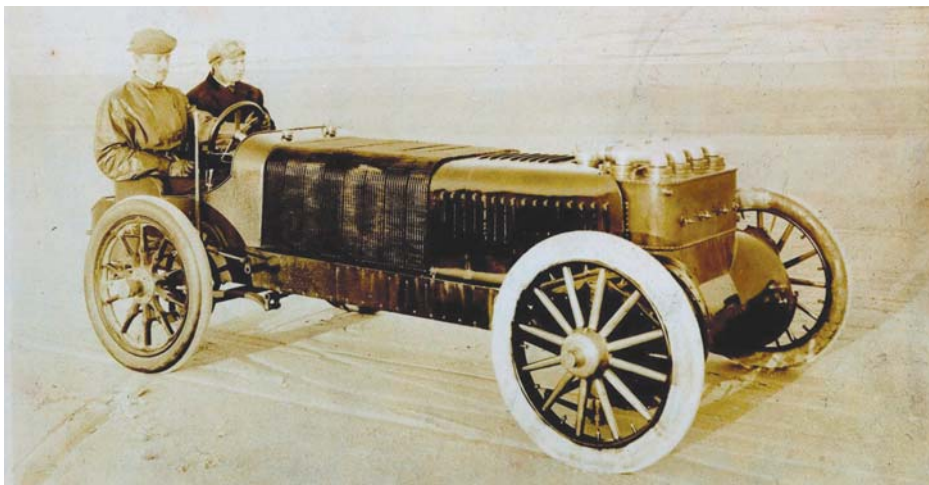
During the course of my research on Christie, I became aware that the late Michael Rosen, the San Francisco researcher who collaborated extensively with *Griffith Borgeson*, was also a collector of Christie materials. I came across a few tenuous leads on where Michael Rosen's materials on Christie and his cars may have ended up. I was told that Rosen was a bachelor and that his mother, who survived him, said that Michael's collections were sold to someone in Georgia. She could not recall a name, and this could have happened before or after Michael's passing in 1999.

Would any member be able to shed some light on the possible resting place of Michael Rosen's papers on Christie's automobile efforts from 1903 to 1909? Any original prints of Christie cars and engines are also of great interest.

I would be very appreciative of any leads and promise to pursue them assiduously. email: ejklein@mac.com
—*Enrique J. Klein*

Dear SAH Members,

I am seeking an additional judge to evaluate non-English-language books for the 2010 competition, which will



grant a Cugnot award to the winner, and an Award of Distinction to one or more runners-up. We currently have three judges, including me. In particular, I'm seeking a judge who has some familiarity with one or more continental European languages. Full proficiency in any such language is not necessary, but some knowledge is preferred. For example, I am proficient in German and semi-proficient in French. Because of my knowledge of these, I can manage enough Dutch (due to its Germanic roots), and Italian or Spanish (due to their Romance roots) to be able to assess the quality of books written in those languages. I can also understand enough Hungarian to get the gist of something written in that language, which came in handy when we judged a Hungarian-language book two years ago.

None of the judges, so far as I know, has any proficiency in any of the Slavic languages. Although we have successfully judged such books in the past, based on photograph quality, years and names of cars given in captions, accuracy of production and specifications tables, presence or absence of indices and bibliographies, etc, it would be ideal to find a member who can give more in-depth assessments of the text contained in such books. This year, we have one book written in Polish to judge. Applicants can contact me at: bill.kreiner@gmail.com. Thank you for your time.

—*Bill Kreiner*,
Non-English-Language Cugnot Award
Competition Committee Chair

Dear Checker Experts,

The March-April *SAH Journal* notes the history of Checker. I have one story to verify. I used to have several 1953-4 Hudson Jets and ran into an old timer that claimed he took a front fender off of a period Checker and put it on his Jet. Murray built the Jet bodies and I guess the first piece of evidence would be that they also built the Checker auto bodies.

The second bit of ground truth would be that the dimensions of each fender are similar. That of course would include the wheel cutout so the same dies could be used. I find no early 1950s Checkers photos in my books so my question is did Checker use a Hudson fender or did Hudson use a Checker fender?

—*DJ Kava*



The early-1950s Checkers were virtually the same as the 1947 model (started mass production in 1948), appearance-wise, though there were enough modifications made that a body part of a 1948 (top image) may not match that of a 1953 exactly.

The fenders of those first postwar models would not match those of a Jet. The 1956 (bottom image) was totally redesigned, and there might be some similarities there. I don't have time to compare the 1956 to the Jet myself at the moment.

I'll check my Checker data to see if I come up with something concrete.

—*Bill Kreiner*

Book Reviews

Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City

By Greg Grandin

416 pages, limited B&W photos, location map on end papers, includes bibliography, references, credits, and index.

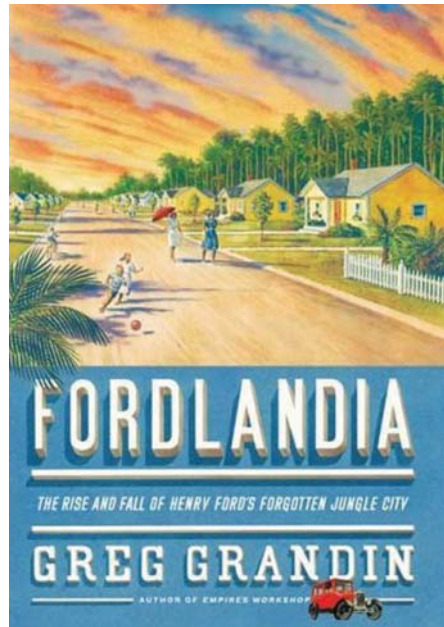
ISBN-13: 978-0-8050-8236-4

Published by: Metropolitan Books, New York, NY. 2009, \$27.50

In the annals of automobile history's many colorful personalities, Henry Ford surely sits at the pinnacle of the quixotic. *Fordlandia* is one of the least known, and unreported episodes, in the long and well-documented list of accomplishments of the Dearborn Company and its founder.

The Amazon River basin is the native environment of *Hevea brasiliensis*, the rubber tree species that produces the purest of latex product. From the early 18th Century through the last of the 19th, Brazil had a monopoly on this world essential commodity, creating extreme wealth and worldwide domination. Both Belem, the port city at the mouth of the Amazon where it joins the Atlantic Ocean, and Manaus, sited 900 miles upriver, were hailed as the "Paris of the Tropics."

World domination ended when, in 1871, a British "bio-pirate" named Henry Wickham illegally spirited 70,000 Amazonian seeds to London's Royal Botanical Gardens, where they grew and matured. The plants were subsequently shipped to British colonies in Southeast Asia, where they thrived, establishing the competition which eventually devastated the



Amazon's domination of the rubber industry.

Southeast Asia was free of the brutal humidity, insects and fungus that plagued the Amazon jungle, facts which Henry Ford would learn at enormous cost. Brazil's rubber industry languished in the early 20th century. Many schemes were attempted to restore the Amazon River basin to prosperity. All subsequently failed, and in 1927 Henry Ford appeared on the Amazon shores.

By the start of 1927, Ford had purchased a massive tract of land, about the size of the state of Connecticut, about 600 miles up the Amazon River from the port city of Belem. Ford's intent was to add latex to the complex of natural resources which he controlled or hoped to control.

"Fordlandia," as the enterprise came to be called, became a contest

between the storied industrialist, the man who created the Model T, who had perfected the assembly line, and forever changed the face of everyday life in America, and the mighty Amazon Jungle, the storied river basin which

encompassed over one third of South America. A wild, diverse ecosystem of natural, primal organisms that to date had proven unconquerable.

Over the course of almost two decades, Ford spent tens of millions of dollars, planning and building two prototypical Midwestern American towns. The first plantation was devastated by insect blight. The towns were complete with paved streets, central squares, Cape Cod-style houses, indoor plumbing, a fully staffed 100-bed hospital, theaters, pools, and a golf course. The roadways were of course dotted with the ubiquitous Model Ts and Model As.

The native workers rebelled and rejected the Midwestern Puritanism which Ford imposed on their lifestyle, and turned the settlement into a racy tropical boomtown. Ford's regimented approach to apply mass production techniques to the growth of rubber trees resulted in a rash environmental threat to the rain forest.

The story that author Greg Grandin tells of the cast of characters sent from Dearborn, rogue managers, botanists and other "experts," reads like a first-rate novel. The entire story seems stranger than fiction. Grandin has documented "a parable of one man's rather arrogant attempt to force his will on the natural world." *Fordlandia* tells the story of a quest to salvage a by-gone America that the Ford factory system did much to dispatch.

"Fordism" is a term which has many applications in automotive history. Regarding *Fordlandia*, the Washington Post's definition seems best: "Ford efforts conceived in disregard or ignorance of Ford limitations."

In summation of this excellent book, as an architect I would have appreciated more site plans and layouts of the town. Photographs and documentation of the physical plants, the many buildings, and the built environment are rather limited, but the story and its documentation are a worthy and highly recommended read.

—Stanton Lyman

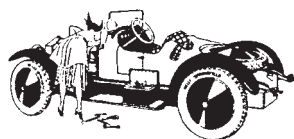
May - June 2010

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Book Reviews

Storied Independent Automakers Nash, Hudson and American Motors

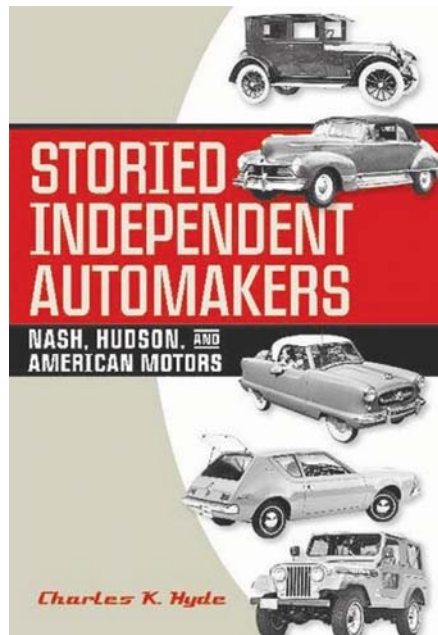
By Charles K. Hyde
Wayne State University Press
Hardbound, 7.25 x 10.25", 308 pages,
100 black-and-white photographs. ISBN
978-0-8143-3446-1. \$35.00 plus \$4.54
shipping.

The author, an editor of Wayne State's Great Lakes Books, in his preface describes seeing Nash and Hudson records at the Chrysler archives while researching his 2003 book on Chrysler. Nearly a decade later we have his mea culpa book, noting he cleaved a quarter of the manuscript to make the book affordable. Too bad; it makes it a slightly choppy read. Ostensibly it is a business history interwoven with biographies of the now-not-so-famous founders and later leaders, which makes it better than a straight business tome.

It starts with a brief bio of the Jeffery family in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Then there's a description of their bicycle business, including their patent fights with the Pope interests in the mid-1880s and their 1899 sale of the business to the American Bicycle Company combine.

By then the family had an auto interest, having attended the 1895 Chicago Times-Herald race. After displaying prototypes under the ABC banner, they started auto manufacturing in 1902 in an old Sterling bike factory they purchased from ABC for \$65,000. Details of the ABC are irritatingly scant, probably because it is so complex and possibly crooked.

Owner Charles Jeffery bailed out after surviving the May 1916 German submarine attack on the passenger ship *Lusitania*. Within three months, at age 40, he sold the company to Charles Nash to pursue other interests. Nash had recently been relieved at General Motors after the second coming of Durant, and jumped at the opportunity.



A good description of Nash's activities follows, up to his semi-retirement after the '36 merger with Kelvinator to procure the services of George Mason. Mason's career is followed and the author brings us up to date with the company just before the 1954 Hudson merger. It was clearly the stronger company financially.

Time resets and a history of Hudson starts in a series of chapters noting Roy Chapin, Howard Coffin and Roscoe Jackson's connections in the 1890s at the University of Michigan, and James Brady and Frederick Bezner connecting at turn-of-the-century Olds. All the Thomas-Detroit and Chalmers-Detroit information, although irritatingly abbreviated, is correct.

Hyde hits all the important Hudson-Essex-Terraplane innovations. Fresh to my eyes was a 1930 cheesecake photo from the Jack Miller collection, showing seven secretaries with knee-high skirts.

The biggest flaw for a business book is a missing description of the A.E. Barit power base with the Webbers, descendants of H.L. Hudson who took over the department store business. One Chapin-interest critic told me that during the Barit years they were sufficiently rewarded by the success of the Hudson stores

that they had no need to press him. Another reason was that they didn't want to pay extra taxes if Hudson made money so they just didn't care what Barit did, an interesting motive in the era of FDR's presidency.

The author summarizes that Barit mismanaged the WWII military contracts and I think that is a bum rap. Unmentioned is the fact that many skilled workers were drafted and replaced with new employees, many of them women with no industrial experience. Many delays (for the military "delay" was failure) were not necessary Hudson Motors' or Barit's fault. He had a fairly good rank of older middle managers that missed the draft that got things done. Many corporations much larger than Hudson fell down on schedules causing domino-effect delays starting at the blueprint level.

The author's summary states that Chapin was not recognized with parks, schools or roads. That is technically true but there is still a ten-block Chapin Street in Detroit between Gratiot Avenue and Cadillac Boulevard. Missing too was the fact other Hudson founders lost their street names when they moved out of town! Bezner's street was changed to Algonquin and the leader of the Village of Fairview Historical Foundation lives on Newport, a street formerly known as "Coffin." The story of choosing the Essex name from a list of British counties is repeated without acknowledging Detroit's Essex Street, named years before Thomas-Detroit was founded only blocks away from the second factory. That, too, had to be an influencing factor.

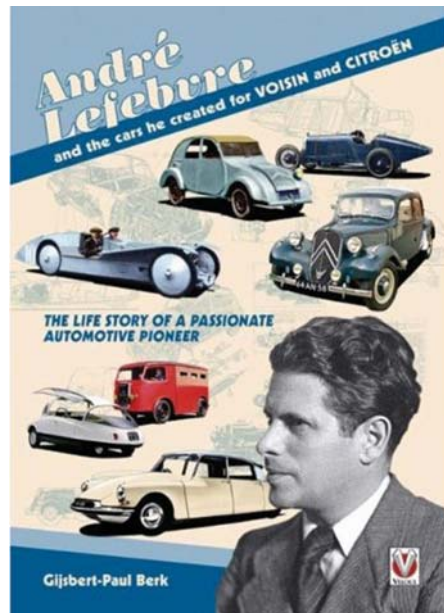
The book is fairly well organized, and rarely are several pages turned without finding an important black and white photo. It is well footnoted with a better-than-average index. The only downside is going to Detroit Public Library to read the original manuscript to see what was discovered but deleted from the book.
—D.J. Kava

André Lefebvre and the cars he created for Voisin and Citroën – the story of a passionate automotive pioneer

By Gijsbert-Paul Berk. © 2009 ISBN 978-1-845842-44-4. Hardcover with dust jacket, 144 pages, 125 pictures, color and mono. Price £19.99 UK; \$39.95 USA. Veloce Publishing, 33 Trinity Street, Dorchester, England, DT1 1TT, 01305 260068, www.veloce.co.uk

Take two car makers as diverse as Voisin and Citroën and one discovers an almost unlikely common denominator in the personality of André Lefebvre. Voisin cars were large, powerful and expensive machines which were at the leading edge of automotive technology. It has been said that Voisin, based at Issy-les-Moulineaux to the south-west of Paris, was the French Bentley. Citroën, however, arrived later on the motoring scene than Voisin, and from the marque's establishment in 1919 it became known for producing well-constructed but mass-produced vehicles. It can be argued that the cars bearing the double chevron insignia were, until 1934, largely conventional, but after that date the models from the Quai de Javel set new standards in respect of design and engineering.

Knowing of André Lefebvre's expertise developing complex motor vehicles for Gabriel Voisin, the fact that he was at the forefront of Citroën's groundbreaking Traction Avant and its corrugated sibling the H-Van, as well as the idiosyncratic 2CV and DS, not to mention the astonishingly bizarre Ami 6, comes as little surprise. What is remarkable, though, is that for someone of such undisputed talent, and who is credited with laying down the foundation of the modern motor car, it has taken so long for his story to emerge from the dark shadows of automotive history. For someone whose work is instantly recognized and whose products which, over the decades, have been so highly acclaimed, the fact that Lefebvre has remained an enigma is as extraordinary as the very cars he created.



It was in Paris in October 2005, at celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Citroën DS, that the author of this new and interesting book was inspired to discover more about the life and work of André Lefebvre. Certainly it was known that Lefebvre was the genius behind Citroën's iconic front-wheel drive cars, and that before going to work at Javel he had endured an unhappy interlude on the opposite bank of the Seine working for the ultra-conservative Louis Renault, to whom he had sought an appointment after having worked for, and with, Gabriel Voisin.

Setting the scene of this biography, Gijsbert-Paul Berk takes us to the formative years of Gabriel Voisin telling how the young man, born in 1880, abandoned his architectural studies in Lyon in favor of finding work as a draftsman employed with the organizers of the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris, and how this led him to become one of France's aviation pioneers. Voisin was pictured airborne aboard a glider in 1904 and by 1911 was building aeroplanes which were technically very much advanced inasmuch they were constructed using a metal frame rather than wood. It was in this environment that André Lefebvre, born 1894, joined Voisin, having studied at the Ecole Supérieure de l'Aéronautique et de Construction Mécanique in Montmartre.

The first half of the book details Gabriel Voisin, his aeroplanes and cars, and the work undertaken on his behalf by Lefebvre who became Voisin's "spiritual son." As author, Berk has achieved much in this respect, venturing not only in the detail of Lefebvre's career but his personal life also. Nevertheless, there is a feeling this part of the work is almost as much a biography of Gabriel Voisin as it is Lefebvre. That said, Berk unravels segments of history to tell of Lefebvre and Voisin spending many hours together after the Armistice when the latter had moved to automobile manufacturing.

In designing and road testing Voisin cars there are some interesting anecdotes such as Voisin refusing to go to local garages when needing roadside repairs for fear of the weak points of his vehicles being discovered. Then there are instances where Voisin would take Lefebvre on high speed test runs from the factory at Issy-les-Moulineaux to Cannes and back, often covering 950km within 12 hours in each direction. Whilst at Cannes, where Voisin had a boat, the two men would round up attractive girlfriends and have a lot of fun.

Gaining more experience of motor vehicles, Lefebvre was assigned a design team to develop Voisin's competition cars, and here the author explains how Lefebvre became a highly successful racing driver. He tells, too, of his, and his team's, exploits at Montlhéry chasing record attempts, and the development of the massive 11.66 liter V-12-engined car which was built to endure 40,000 kms at the Paris track which would take 15 days and nights to complete, and which it failed to do with success in sight....

In the short chapter dedicated to the history of front-wheel drive, Berk refers to Gabriel Voisin's biography and the search for information about a mysterious Voisin V8 fwd car that never materialized. Discussions between Berk and Lefebvre's son

Book Reviews

Michel (born 1924) indicate that Lefebvre was indeed working on the design of a fwd car, and, though he was only a boy at the time, he recalls that this was the design that eventually emerged as the Citroën Traction Avant. In this respect it has to be said that the Traction Avant as first introduced had a four-cylinder in-line engine. A V8, known as the “22,” had been planned. Whilst the V8 “22” Super-Traction was extensively tested, and a number of prototypes constructed, production of the car was abandoned.

This brings the book nicely to the Citroën era via Renault. When Gabriel Voisin was unable to continue manufacturing he steered Lefebvre towards Billancourt and Louis Renault. There is, surely, much to be revealed about Lefebvre’s short but tempestuous tenure at Renault, especially with Louis wanting nothing to do with anything adventurous like front wheel drive and chassis-less construction. Berk hints that Louis Renault was angry at Lefebvre’s ideas, which he considered madness, and it’s surprising, therefore, that this period of Lefebvre’s career is accounted for in fewer than three pages. What a shame there is not more about this obviously interesting episode.

With Lefebvre’s departure from Renault, Berk recalls how Gabriel Voisin gave him an introduction to André Citroën. Voisin and Citroën had been friends for years and Voisin knew that Citroën was planning to build a front-wheel drive car and that he lacked the expertise on behalf of his personnel to tackle the job. Lefebvre was just the man to have at Javel and the fact that the Traction Avant was produced so quickly is thanks to Lefebvre’s masterly understanding of automotive technology. Berk provides some insight as to the problems that were encountered with the car, along with Lefebvre’s dealings with *Le Patron* at a time when life at Javel was very

tedious owing to financial difficulties as well as the fact that *Le Patron* was suffering from stomach cancer. Introduction of the Traction Avant was Citroën’s salvation as far as the firm’s finances were concerned; hence the car was unveiled before time and with some development work waiting attention. It is also well understood that the first Traction Avants were a disaster owing to the car’s premature launch, and a few pages on the trials and tribulations of Lefebvre and his team would have been useful, as would some clear indication as to the working relationship between Lefebvre and *Le Patron*. Also of interest would have been more about the association with Flaminio Bertoni who worked alongside Lefebvre producing such delicious automotive styling as seen with the Traction Avant, the 2CV and Ami, and the DS.

The author misses out on some pertinent issues surrounding the affairs at Javel, the clue being that he states that André Citroën’s death was unexpected. Really? He does, however, provide some interesting material that shows that Lefebvre and Gregoire, that other advocate of front-wheel drive, had bad feeling towards each other regarding the design of the Traction Avant’s drive shafts.

Berk takes us through the Citroën era covering the 2CV, the H-Van and its smaller stillborn sibling the G-Van and, of course, the DS. Far too little is revealed about the period during and after André Citroën was losing control of his company to the Michelin brothers, and shortly afterwards his death from stomach cancer exacerbated no doubt by losing his lifelong work. With someone so prominent within Citroën, some background detail as to what was going on behind the facade of the Quai de Javel would have helped put history into greater context. We know that it was Michelin money that perfected the Traction Avant and that it was Pierre Boulanger who instigated the 2CV as well as the Traction’s successor, the DS. It can only be conjecture

as to the DS’s performance had the intention to develop a flat-six air-cooled engine come to fruition. More about the postwar period, and what was going on elsewhere within the Citroën empire, as well as what was happening in other quarters of the French motor industry, at Renault, Peugeot, Panhard and Simca for example, would no doubt have cemented the story still further. There is, however, detail about the work of Paul Magès which gave Citroën its lead in hydraulics.

What the author does quite well is his account of the final years of Lefebvre’s life, when illness prevented him working at Citroën and how he overcame serious health difficulties to produce some incredible designs which, sadly, never materialized but nevertheless live on as prototypes at the Citroën museum in Paris.

Compiling this work has commanded great effort on behalf of the author. Not only has he well researched Voisin, he has been in contact with the Lefebvre family who have allowed previously unseen photographic material to be used. They have also provided information regarding both Voisin and Citroën days but one gets the feeling that not all has been revealed about this secretive character, probably because some of the subject’s lifestyle remains a mystery, even to them.

This is a book, albeit in this reviewer’s opinion too brief, which automotive historians will find fascinating, and which Citroën specialists will pore over only to be left wanting more in way of information. The work is opportune at a time when Citroën is celebrating ninety years of production as well as being allowed to, once again, take a highly innovative route in current automotive technology. It fills a gap in motoring history that is long overdue in its telling, but I guess it will inspire others to take up the cudgel to unearth even more about this still elusive genius that gave the world some of its most remarkable cars.

—Malcolm Bobbitt

Editorial

Editor's Query

Have any members seen, photographed or driven autos from -Pyonghwa Motors in North Korea? -the Saroukh el-Jamihiriya or "Libyan Rocket" built in Libya? The Saroukh was apparently introduced in 1999 and updated in 2009. -the Z-600 from Lagos, Nigeria, designed by Dr. Ezekiel Izuogu circa 1997-98? The vehicle was intended to be manufactured with 90 percent African content.

When Three is Enough

What is the appeal of a three-wheeled cargo vehicle? Some factors are lighter weight than a four-wheeler due to twenty-five percent fewer suspension components, with simpler construction. Reduction of weight translates to better fuel mileage when the vehicle is empty and possibly a slight advantage in overall loading capacity for a given size. Types with a center driving position can be designed with a smaller width to thread through traffic or narrow pre-automotive streets. In some jurisdictions a three-wheeled truck is allowed on public roads while an otherwise identical four-wheeled version is restricted to off-road use.

Negative considerations are that three-wheelers with direct handlebar steering require cautious driving and some smaller types have brakes only on the rear axle. Weight load on three tires is higher than on four in theory though the actual weight distribution of the vehicle tends to change when laden. The third wheel travels between the tracks of the other two, subject

to road hazards on pavement or minor obstructions off road. Three-wheeled commercial vehicles are less common today, but have a long history.

Cugnot's *fardier* was intended to be a three-wheeled materiel carrier in 1770. The vehicle featured front drive with a cantilevered steam powerplant, supported and steered with the front wheel. This cumbersome arrangement did not help maneuverability, resulting in an accident as legend tells.

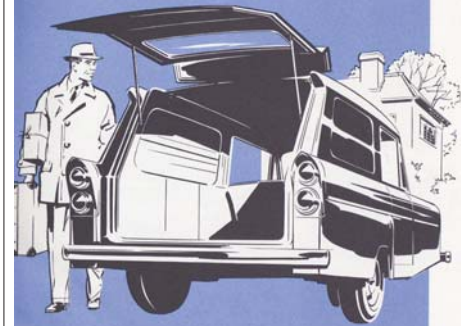
During the following century examples of steam traction engines and carriages appeared, some with three wheels, many with four or even six wheels. Gasoline-powered three-wheelers came from Knox Automobile Company, Auto



Carrier, and Phänomobil (above) among many others. From the very beginning there was no "standard" layout for the vehicles. Single front wheel, two rear with rear drive; driven single front wheel; driven single rear wheel; or two driven front wheels. In a technical sense, a motorcycle with a cargo box sidecar would fall into this group though it is not a purpose-built vehicle per se. Steering arrangements could be by tiller, handlebars, or steering wheel.



Reliant 10cwt van (above). 747.5cc inline four, side valve, water-cooled. Load capacity 20 crates of milk bottles weighing 54 pounds each. Brakes on all wheels.




Bond Ranger (above). 250cc two-cycle powerplant cantilevered ahead of the front wheel. Steering pivots 90 degrees each direction; the vehicle turns in its own length. Wheelbase 66 inches on 132-inch total length.



Tempo Hanseat van (above). Load area 54 x 88 inches, 44 high, 14 feet long total, the smallest version. 2-cylinder 2-cycle 396cc engine, water cooled, mounted above and steering with the front wheel, enclosed chain drive.



Mazda TEA 43 (above). Air-cooled 577cc V-twin engine, mounted behind the cab. Brakes only on the rear wheels. Load area 44 x 46 inches. Claimed payload 661 pounds. Smaller 356cc engine was standard.



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Mazda TUA 32 S (above). One of the largest postwar three-wheelers. 4-cylinder, 4-cycle 1484cc water-cooled engine mounted under the cab. Load area 160 x 61.6 inches, claimed payload 4409 pounds, with 24.7 MPG.

Editorial

In the postwar era it was common to see three-wheeled trucks as low-speed vehicles used in commercial facilities, or for limited utility uses such as the Scammell Scarab tractor. Other types are used as "triporteurs," tiny delivery vehicles. This type may have a one-person cab, narrow enough to thread through traffic. American municipalities use vehicles like the Cushman or Go-Four for parking enforcement or other limited uses.

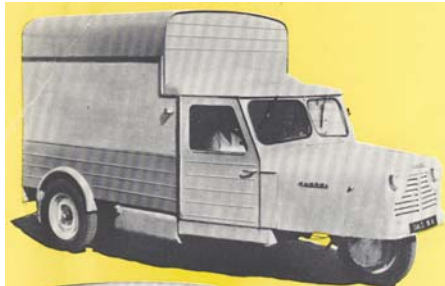
Overseas, such small three-wheelers have been the backbone of local transport, larger and more protected than a scooter or bicycle, free from the restrictions of overcrowded buses and trolleys. The appeal of these increasingly uncommon vehicles has remained the same for at least half a century; just enough room, just enough cargo capacity, just enough power to bring one or two people and a small amount of cargo to a given destination.

—A. Meyer

Piaggio Ape "Bee" (below). Early examples of this model had a novel independent rear suspension using enclosed chain drive cases as trailing arms to each wheel.



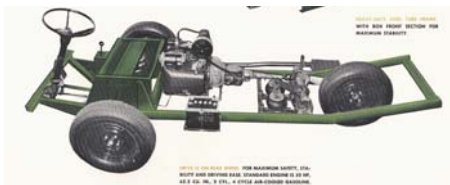
The early-1960s Trivan by Roustabout (above). The vehicle had an opposed-twin air-cooled engine. Cargo bed was 96 x 60 inches, a claimed 50 cubic feet.



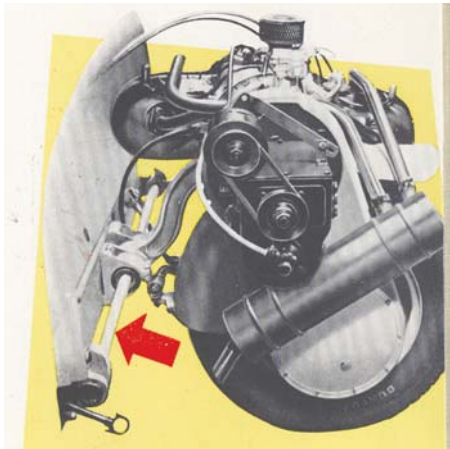
French Sherpa (above and right). Load area 57 x 88 inches, 1800lbs claimed payload. Engine, Panhard Dyna 850cc air-cooled opposed twin, transverse mounted above and driving the front wheel by enclosed chain. Three-wheel brakes.



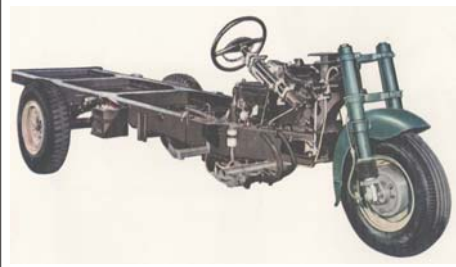
Daihatsu Midget MP4 "Trimobile" (above). One of the longest-produced three wheelers, known throughout Southeast Asia as the "Tuk-Tuk." This example came from a Lockheed facility in Burbank, CA in the 1970s.



Trivan chassis (above) with single rear wheel, rubber spring elements. Rear wheel is driven.



The Sherpa power plant pivots with the steering, suspension by front torsion bars (arrow), rear coil springs.



Kurogane KY chassis showing the telescopic front forks with hydraulic brake on the front wheel. Wheel-type steering, 4-cylinder 1488cc water-cooled engine, claimed 62 hp.

London street scene (left) from 1981 showing an electric "Milk Float" in Knightsbridge.

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