

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 24, 2007

Early Regions of the Antique Automobile Club (as I remember them): AACA was founded in Philadelphia in 1935, the first of the national clubs. The Veteran Car Club of America was founded in Boston in 1938 and the Horseless Carriage Club in California about the same time. For many years thereafter, Philadelphia was the headquarters of AACA, as was Boston for VMCCA. Although people from more distant places became members, these eastern clubs were run from Philadelphia and Boston. Many collectors belonged to both, and there was full cooperation for many years. Starting in 1946, the Glidden Tour Revivals were run one year by AACA and the alternate year by VMCCA.

Having perhaps 100 members at the end of World War II, AACA grew rapidly, attracting members from places far distant from Philadelphia. Each year a Spring Meet would be held not more than 40 miles from Philadelphia, and the Fall Meet settled on the Chester County Horse Show grounds at Devon. The first two "regions," some distance from Philadelphia, were the Connecticut Valley Region (which may have been a joint venture between AACA and VMCCA) and the Ohio Region. Regional activities proved to be highly successful, and these regions grew rapidly in membership. Based on these successes, Philadelphia-area members were wanting local activities where the entire national membership need not be solicited. Some of the founders, led by Sam Baily, felt this was not necessary since the club was based in Philadelphia, and they opposed it for some time. Other officers of AACA were in the group desiring local activities, however, and since there was a roadblock with the national club, the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania was founded in the early spring of 1949. The first tour HCCP sponsored was to Valley Forge Park in April of that year. My Stanley Model 607 was apart in Bill Allaband's paint shop in Kennett Square, and I was rushing to get it back together and on the road to make the trek to Valley Forge. My father and Homer Kratz went in the newly restored 1916 Model 725. I was behind everyone else but about to leave Kennett Square with my passenger, Charles Bernard, grandfather of FAHP member Richard Bernard. One of the small kerosene pressure tanks sprung a leak in the bottom, I removed it and had it soldered nearby, but it was afternoon by the time we got on the road. We met all the other cars that had been at Valley Forge as they left the Park just before we entered. This independent club has been highly successful and today boasts nearly 700 members!

Bill Swigart of Huntingdon convinced the AACA officers that mid-Pennsylvania was far enough from Philadelphia to warrant a region, and the Allegheny Mountain Region was chartered with Swigart as its first Regional Director (now the title is "president"). My father and I joined, and we enjoyed going to several of their meets during the 1951-54 period. This region covered a wide area at first, from Altoona and State College to Harrisburg to Gettysburg to Cumberland, Maryland. About the same time, the National Capital Region was established in and around Washington, D.C. When Bill Pollock and Ernie Hunter appealed to run the AACA Spring Meet at Pottstown in 1952, the founding of the Pottstown Region soon followed. The Marshalls joined that one too, and my father and I enjoyed the monthly dinners held at a country club on a hill just north of Pottstown. In 1954 and again in 1957, the Pottstown Region sponsored the AACA Spring Meet, held in those years at the hill school. Regions soon sprang up in many places: New Jersey, Lehigh Valley, Delaware Valley, and Gettysburg, to name a few. In 1956, G. Leslie Shaffer and his wife, Grace, of Arden, Delaware, assembled nearby antique car people at their home, and the Brandywine Region of Delaware was chartered early in 1957. Some of you have heard of BRAACA, still going strong after 50 years.