

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 19, 2011

The Growth of AACA Regions: The Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA) was founded in Philadelphia in 1935, the first of three national (and eventually international) antique car clubs. The Veteran Motor Car Club of America (VMCCA) was founded in Boston in 1938, and the Horseless Carriage Club of America (HCCA) in Los Angeles about the same time. Most of the AACA meets and tours took place in the Philadelphia area until the club began sponsorship of the Glidden Tour revivals in cooperation with VMCCA in the late 1940s. Several of the founding fathers of AACA felt there was no need for local regions around Philadelphia, as the club headquarters was there (it moved to Hershey in the late 1950s). The Ohio Region and the Connecticut Valley Region, some distance away, were two of the first AACA regions, both going strong before 1950.

Because AACA members, including several officers of the club, wanted events for local people without needing to send notices throughout AACA's membership, the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania (HCCP), not affiliated with AACA, was founded in the spring of 1949 and held its first one-day event at Valley Forge National Park in April. My father had completed the mechanical restoration of his 1916 Model 725 Stanley, and he and Homer Kratz made the round-trip to Valley Forge. I had intended to go in my newly repainted 1914 Model 607, but since it was still in Bill Allaband's paint shop in Kennett Square with a little re-assembling to do, I was late getting under way and passed the others as they were leaving Valley Forge. Charles Bernard, grandfather of our Richard Bernard, rode with me that day. The Historical Car Club has prospered as an independent club for 62 years, with a membership in recent years approaching 700.

In 1950, the Allegheny Mountain Region, with William E. Swigart Jr. as its director, was chartered, and it encompassed a much larger area than at present. Cumberland, Maryland, Altoona and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Yorklyn, Delaware, had active members in this region. In 1952, Bill Pollock and Ernie Hunter of Pottstown chaired the AACA Spring Meet at the Hill School in their hometown, and shortly thereafter, the Pottstown Region was chartered, the closest one in distance to my father and me. We attended many of their dinner meetings through the winter, as we did the Saturday luncheons of the Historical Car Club. The barrier was broken; AACA regions were starting to blossom in the greater Philadelphia area. In the early 1950s, there was a New Jersey Region and a National Capital Region, and in 1956, the Brandywine Region of Delaware (BRAACA) was chartered with G. Leslie Shaffer of Arden as its first regional director. Soon there were regions in Maryland, a South Jersey region, a Delaware Valley region (Philadelphia), and many, many more.

The VMCCA and HCCA also encouraged regional activity, and there were no restrictions geographically. Many antique car collectors belonged to two or three national clubs, in addition to several regions. For example, I have belonged to the three national clubs, am a past member of AACA's Allegheny Mountain Region and its Pottstown Region, and currently belong to BRAACA and the Susquehanna Region of HCCA. I also belong to the Packard Club and several steam car organizations. The Historical Car Club has given me a membership, as they have done with their living past presidents (I think). Thanks, HCCP!