

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 7, 2014

Packard Twin Six Clover Leaf Roadster: Cadillac pioneered the V-8 engine with its 1914 models, and the next year Packard came out with its famous V-12, which was called a "Twin Six." Although available in 1915, this "First Series Twin Six" was billed as a 1916 model. The race was on for multi-cylindered high-end cars, and no less than ½ dozen additional manufacturers offered V-8s or V-12s by 1918. In 1915, Buick built some V-12s, and in 1918 you could buy a V-8 Chevrolet. Packard improved its Twin Six for the 1917 model year, offering removable aluminum cylinder heads as standard equipment.

A Clover Leaf body was unusual, as it was a two-door car that looked like a roadster but offered seating inside the body for four. The back seat was accessed by walking between the front bucket seats. Such a second series Packard Twin Six of 1917 was sold by AACA pioneer Sam Baily of Philadelphia to George Gerenbeck at the end of World War II. Gerenbeck's interest in the antique car hobby was short-lived, but in his active 2 or 3 years, he served as president of AACA for one of those years. My father bought his Packard Clover Leaf early in 1947.

My dad owned this car for about 10 years, and we had many pleasant experiences with it. It may have had its original paint, and very little had been done mechanically, but it always ran well. I often remarked that I had never driven a car of that age that handled more like a modern car (of course, a "modern car" was made in the 1940s). It had a left-hand gear shift handle, next to the parking brake, but it shifted easily and well. In the late 1940s, old cars were cause for amusement among the general public, and they were sought after for local parades. Parade organizers would pay owners to bring their cars and participate (we took three Stanleys to Media on one such occasion and got paid \$15 for each car). There was a parade down North Broad Street in Philadelphia on July 5, 1947, for which either \$15 or \$25 was offered, and my father and I, along with our passenger Norris Woodward of Mendenhall, drove into the city and participated. Although stopped much of the time on a very hot day, the water in the big Packard engine never boiled over. We were dressed in Halloween-type costumes; an old car and anyone who rode in it was supposed to be funny.

The AACA National Fall Meet was at the Devon Horse Show grounds in early October, immediately following the Glidden Tour of 1949 through Virginia. Along with five other Stanleys, and a Doble steamer for one day, I was driving my 1914 Model 607 on the tour with its new blue-and-red paint scheme. When I broke up the engine (a wrist pin broke) near Tappahannock, Virginia, and my car was no longer operational, my father told me I could take the Packard Clover Leaf to the Devon Show, which I did. On the way home, I took part in an evening parade at West Chester, celebrating some sort of anniversary for the borough. I enjoyed driving this Packard, but it was not challenging like a Stanley.

In the 1950s, my father began serious trading, back and forth, with James Melton, the well-known opera singer who was the Jay Leno of his day in his love for antique cars. A model carousel, a cigar-store Indian, the 15"-gauge Cagney locomotive, a smaller 9-inch gauge locomotive and train, a Model 71 Stanley (now owned by Jim Keith), and other things came our way. Two of the things that went to Melton were a big Model G White steamer racing car and the Twin Six Clover Leaf. The transaction for the Packard was consummated in mid-winter about 1957.

Melton told my father he would like to drive the Packard home to New York over the brand new New Jersey Turnpike, and he would come to Wilmington by train to take delivery. He asked if my father could get it to the station so he could begin his return trip immediately. I drove it to Wilmington with "Cliffey" following to bring me home. Melton's train was right on time, and I turned over the Packard to him. He was alone and dressed in a heavy coat resembling a bear rug, with an Eskimo hat and heavy driving gloves. It was a clear afternoon, but the temperature must have been well below freezing. Undaunted, he pulled away, headed for the Delaware Memorial Bridge and the New Jersey Turnpike. He was in touch with my father the next day and reported that he had a perfect trip. I never saw the Clover Leaf again (or another like it), but I'm sure Tim Martin knows where it is. It was a great car.