

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 24, 2014

Steam Car Tours at Woodstock, Vermont: I am quite sure more steam car tours have been headquartered at Woodstock and nearby Quechee, Vermont, than at any other place. I did not attend all of them, but I may have missed only two, in 1968 and 1972. Woodstock was the hometown of Paul A. Bourdon (1913-2001), who bought his first Stanley about 1930 and owned many after that. Paul's two sons, Curtis and Don, took up the hobby in a big way and worked their way through college by operating their father's Mountain Wagon on evening tours from the Woodstock Inn. In addition to the Bourdons, longtime Stanley owner and fine car collector Frank Gardner and his wife, Eloise, adopted Woodstock as their summer home, and by the 1960s, they owned two properties there. Despite paralysis from polio in 1952, Gardner continued to operate his 1912 Model 74 Stanley, and he and the Bourdons were responsible for many tours in great steaming country with little modern traffic.

Although I had been with my father when he visited Paul Bourdon about 1946, my first visit to Woodstock in a Stanley (our Model 76) was in 1954, when the New England Glidden Tour stopped at the old Woodstock Inn for one night. To my knowledge, the first all-steam tour at Woodstock was in 1962, when my father, Norbert Behrendt, and I attended in our Model 87. We had borrowed an open trailer and towed the big car to Bennington (with my '55 Chrysler Windsor), driving it over the road the last 90 miles to Woodstock. The number of steamers there that year numbered eight or 10. Again we stayed at the old Woodstock Inn on the Green.

In the 1960s, steam car tours were not annual affairs. We had at least three small tours in Delaware during that decade. The Bourdons and Frank Gardner planned a big one for Woodstock in 1968, using the old inn as headquarters just before Laurance Rockefeller tore it down. Several steamers from this area were driven over the road, including Weldin Stumpf's Model 77, Marvin Klair's Model 735, and Frank Springer's Model 740 sedan. My father was ill, and I did not go. I think about 30 cars were there. In 1970, I drove our newly restored 1912 Model 88 Mountain Wagon, accompanied by Tom Ackerman, to a Brass and Gas Tour at the new Woodstock Inn, but this was not strictly a steam car tour. (The room rate at the inn was \$22 daily; now it is about \$300.)

In 1972, another steam car tour was planned by the Bourdons and Frank Gardner. It was even larger than the '68 tour, and the headquarters was at the Shire Motel. Again, I did not go, as I was on my first "Trans-Con" 8,300-mile tour with our Model 87. Ray Stanley, son of F. E. Stanley, was there and was a big hit with the steam car community. In 1973, another Brass and Gas Tour attracted me to Woodstock, and I drove our Model 76, accompanied by Harry Bracken.

In late June 1976, a steam car tour was headquartered at the Shire Motel. This time, Weldin Stumpf with his Model 77, and I with our Model 71, both took our cars on open trailers.

It was a large tour that used two or three other nearby motels to accommodate everyone. One evening I was invited by Emily Seaman Nagle, a former playmate at Rehoboth, to have dinner at their summer home on a mountain top just north of Woodstock. Using the Model 71, it was dark when I returned, I was using the gas lights, and the gravel road leading back to town was all downhill. The whole town of Woodstock was laid out before me. What a sight!

In 1980, we were at Woodstock again. This time Weldin Stumpf drove over the road in his Model 77, and I took the big 87. We stayed at the antiquated New England Inn, across the street from the Shire Motel. Since I was alone, 14-year-old Mark Herman rode back with me; his parents picked him up in Delaware a few days later. By this time, there was no question that Eastern steam car tours had become annual affairs. In 1985, there was a double-hub tour using Woodstock and Shelburne, Vermont. Bob Reilly joined me in the Model 87 a few weeks before Ruth and I were married. In 1991, Don Bourdon and Brent Campbell planned a 12-day progressive steam car tour that started and ended at the Marshland Farm Inn near Quechee. Ruth and I used our Model 76, and we circumvented northern New England from Lake Champlain to the coast of Maine.

The year 1992 brought another steam car tour to the Woodstock area, and this time our headquarters was the Quechee Motor Lodge on Route 4. It was a large tour, but it was marred by rain most of the week. Bob Kirkpatrick, driving his father's 1902 Stanley, made the tour in the rain every day! The year 2000 was the latest (I hope not the last) Woodstock tour, again using the Quechee Motor Lodge, about 9 miles from Woodstock itself. This was the third annual tour in which our Steam Team participated, and we had the Models 76, 87, and 725 in Vermont. Of those who used to plan those great Vermont tours, Don Bourdon is the only one living.