

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 26, 2015

Traveling by Steam with the Gardners (Part Two): The 1954 progressive New England Glidden Tour started in Hartford, Connecticut. Norbert Behrendt and I drove my father's newly restored Model 76 from Auburn Heights. On the second morning of the tour, we stopped for water in Brattleboro, Vermont. Looking across the street, I saw this beautiful 1912 Stanley Model 74, equipped with original wheels and tires to fit (tires for 28" rims were practically non-existent) and retrofitted with hand controls and a propane pilot. Behind the wheel was Frank Gardner in complete control with Weezie at his side and their friends the Eldredges in the back seat. Renewing old friendships, we planned to travel together for the rest of the tour and had a great time along with other steam car participants. At the invitation of Frank and Weezie, Norbert and I joined Frank's mother one night for dinner, as she was staying at Peckett's on Sugar Hill, very close to where the Glidden Tour was headquartered. When the tour ended at the Larz Anderson Museum in Brookline, Massachusetts, a few days later, we were invited to spend a night at the Gardner home before we began the journey back to Delaware. We met their three daughters then living (I think #4 daughter, Barbara, was born in 1955, and son Cleveland in 1957). Frank and I had our pictures taken in our respective cars at the same spot where the Stanley twins were photographed in their first car in 1897. This proved to be the first of many happy touring experiences with the Gardners, Frank in his Model 74 and I in our Model 76 or 87.

With the Gardners, John and Shirley Miller, and Henry Shepard (uncle of the first astronaut Alan Shepard), Norbert and I planned, promoted, and operated the steam car tour at Lakeville, Connecticut, in 1955. In 1956, Frank came to our area for the Schwenksville-Yorklyn Steam Car Tour, and he and I roomed together, as Weezie did not come. In June 1957, again using his Model 74, Frank and his friend Frank Johnson drove to Roxbury, New York, where they met Bob and Kay Way (Kennett Square) in their Model 735 and Albert Harvey and me in the Model 76. We then traveled together to Lenox, Massachusetts, spent the night, and had lunch for our first time at a Friendly's Restaurant in nearby Lee before parting company, with the two Franks heading for Boston and the Ways, Albert, and me heading for Kennett and Yorklyn.

Early in 1959, with snow on the ground, I accompanied Frank in his Stanley as he drove to Calvin Holmes's home in Abingdon, Massachusetts, to have the Stanley serviced. That year in the spring, my father and I drove to West Newton, wherefrom Frank had arranged for us to visit the Edaville two-foot-gauge steam railroad, with red carpet treatment provided by his church friend John Merrill, railroad historian of note who was on the Board of Nelson Blount's "Edaville." In 1962, at the conclusion of an early Woodstock, Vermont, steam car meet, Frank and second daughter, Nancy, John and Shirley Miller, and Norbert Behrendt, my father and I drove to Keene, New Hampshire, in our Model 74, Model G White, and Model 87, respectively, to ride on Blount's first Steamtown operation, with the owner himself running the locomotive.

The Gardners liked to tour in our part of the country, just as we enjoyed New England. In 1969, with their Model 74, they participated in a three-day tour from Newark, Delaware, to Rehoboth Beach to Easton, Maryland, and return. In 1973, they took part in a three-day tour we ran from the New Garden Airfield. In the early '70s, they also bought a motor home and stopped at Auburn Heights as they began an extended trip that took them to Fairhope, Alabama, and then west to Arizona. I visited them in West Newton in the winter of 1974. Soon after, disaster struck the Gardner family again, as their fourth daughter, Barbara, died from a head injury in Mexico City where she was attending college. Later that summer, however, Frank and Weezie invited me and some friends to tour northern New England with his '29 Packard Model 633, seven-passenger touring, and my '32 Packard Twin Six dual-cowl phaeton. Pownall, Peggy, and Andy Jones (age 13) drove with me to Woodstock, where we joined the Gardners and their friends the Fishers. We made a round-trip to the White Mountains, where we stayed at the Spalding Inn at Whitefield, New Hampshire.

(To be completed with Part 3 next week. See also the Weekly News of January 12, 2009, for an obituary of Frank H. Gardner.)