

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 23, 2015

How Clarence Marshall Joined the Old Car Hobby: As has been mentioned many times, Clarence Marshall acquired his first old Stanley to “play with” in 1940. Although he had stopped to see Fred Marriott in 1938 and found that Fred was still doing work on Stanley cars, it had been over 20 years since Clarence had sold his last new Stanley as a dealer. In the early spring of 1941, when his 1913 Model 76 was licensed and running again, he knew of no one nearby who was enjoying old automobiles. No doubt a few people, usually with great frivolity, would spread the word that they saw a funny old car on the road. Most thought it was a Model T Ford that was running hot.

The affluent Folwell family had an estate in Merion on the outskirts of Philadelphia and a summer farm at Chambers Rock on White Clay Creek between Newark, Delaware, and Landenberg, Pennsylvania. A young patent attorney named Hyde Ballard had married Mary Folwell, and they lived with her parents. Hyde had a great interest in early automobiles and had become active in the fledgling Antique Automobile Club of America that had been founded in Philadelphia in 1935. He especially liked Packards, Mercers, and Stanley steamers. Some of the early AACA meets were held on the Merion grounds of the Folwell estate. As Hyde passed back and forth from Merion to Chambers Rock, he learned of this man who was running a Stanley in the Yorklyn - Kennett Square area, and he sought him out. By 1942, Clarence was invited to attend AACA events around Philadelphia. Soon he knew most of the founders of the oldest national club: men such as Sam Baily, George Hughes (Sr.), Tom McKean, Ralph Weeks, Ted Brooks, and a young New Englander who had moved to the Philadelphia area named Paul Cadwell. He learned there was another steam man in the group, Earle S. Eckel of Washington, New Jersey, who, like Clarence, had been a Stanley dealer. When Eckel sold a new 1919 model to a customer, he took a 1914 20-horsepower Stanley roadster in trade, and he had driven this roadster over 100,000 miles since that time.

Through the Fred Marriott connection and others in the Newton (Massachusetts) area, such as Thomas S. Derr who built water-tube boilers for Stanley cars, the Rev. Stanley Ellis, and George Monreau, Clarence learned of several others in the northeast who were running Stanleys, almost all the late-model condensing cars. He started corresponding with Brooks Jones, a schoolteacher near Glens Falls, New York, who published a tiny digest called “Steamobile and Ye Olde Time Car,” Ralph Van Dine, Mervin Allatt, Donald Randall, Walt Lewis, Byron Spence, and Bob Chase. In June 1942, Clarence bought his second Stanley from Chase, a 1922 Model 740 that was driven from Earlville, New York, to Auburn Heights for delivery by Brooks Jones. A wide variety of Stanley cars and parts were available from this cadre of steam car friends. Floyd Clymer of Los Angeles had started to publish his Motor Scrapbooks, and he featured the conversion to steam of my father's '40 Packard 180 in his first steam car edition.

Clarence drove his 740 to the first meet he ever attended (in the Philadelphia area). Soon thereafter, he wrote me (away at school) that he was disappointed -- that his car was not old enough to be noticed. He vowed that next time he would take the 1913 Model 76.

This is how it all began. During World War II and immediately thereafter, Clarence would buy almost any Stanley that became available, along with useful parts, many of them NOS. The present museum building was constructed in 1947. He became a board member of AACA, and in 1952 he served as president. He and Earle Eckel were known as the “Deans of Steam.”