

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, May 9, 2005

Mountain Wagon and Cross Country March of Dimes, 1956: In early January 1956, the late Austin Clark left Boston in a '29 Lincoln touring car carrying a Pony Express pouch. His destination was Los Angeles, and the historic pouch was to travel in an antique car for the entire distance to benefit the March of Dimes. Old car collectors were asked to participate for sections of the prescribed route for as long as they could, some for a few hours, some for several days, and important promotional stops were arranged in major cities. The pouch was to be passed from one car to another. It turned out Austin himself was the only one to make the entire trip.

I asked my father if I could take his '15 Mountain Wagon for about three days, joining at Phillipsburg, New Jersey, and ending somewhere in the Baltimore area. He reluctantly consented, so on a very cold Sunday (the temperature reached 22 degrees at noon), I left Yorklyn enroute to Earle Eckel's home in Washington, New Jersey, 100 miles to the north. Earle said he would join Monday morning with his '14 Stanley roadster, and we would have two Stanleys on a few days of the trip. Sunday afternoon I stopped for water at Norristown and Lambertville and each time was allowed on the wash rack in a filling station to permit car and driver to thaw out. About 15 miles short of Washington, I was stopped by a patrolman who said traffic was getting lost in the vapor, and I would have to stop. It was getting colder by the minute, and darkness was approaching so I prevailed upon him to let me continue if I pulled off whenever cars were piling up behind. Thankfully, he allowed me to proceed on that basis. I got to Washington, and Earle had storage for the Mountain Wagon in a warm place.

It snowed during the night, but Monday morning the temperature had risen to 32 degrees. Earle decided, however, that he would take his '25 Pierce Arrow roadster, rather than the Stanley. We drove the 10 miles or so to Phillipsburg and waited for the entourage, which had left New York that morning. About eight cars of us followed the tour route that day through thawing slush, but it wasn't slippery. We had promotional stops in Easton, Bethlehem, and Allentown before the final sprint to Reading. That night in the garage of the Abraham Lincoln Hotel, the Pony Express pouch was passed to the Mountain Wagon and its driver. (Final chapter next week)