

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 24, 2006

Tom Almost Penniless in 1940 Packard, 1948: In March 1948, driving my 1940 Packard 110 four-door sedan, I went to Vandalia, Ohio, to attend the first-ever Central Handicap Committee meeting of the Amateur Trapshooting Association of America (A.T.A.). I was a charter member of this original three-member committee, which attempted for the first time to assign official yardages to registered trapshooters from all parts of the country. The other two were S. W. McKibben of Rushville, Indiana (chairman), and Parr Rhines of Marseilles, Illinois. We were appointed by President Merle Henkel of Portland, Oregon, on the recommendation of Ray E. Loring, Manager of the A.T.A.

Following the two-day meeting and not having a regular job at the time, I made a circuitous return trip, visiting the Lincoln sites around Springfield, Illinois, and then headed east through southern Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia, new territory for me at the time. In the days before credit cards, the cost of the trip was estimated in advance, and I thought I had sufficient cash to complete my itinerary, and in addition I had a check for \$91 in my pocket as reimbursement for expenses in connection with the Vandalia meeting.

Passing westward through Indianapolis, it started to snow as I crossed the Illinois line and was quite slippery for the last 30 miles from Decatur to Springfield. Being unable to secure lodging in the city as the legislature was in session, I had a nice dinner and walked the several blocks in the snow after dark to look at Lincoln's home at 8th & Jackson Streets. He must have done the same thing many times about 90 years earlier. The house was dark except for a dim light in one of the rear first-floor rooms. Perhaps a caretaker was there, but I don't know as I lost my nerve when about to knock on the front door. How different it is today! I got a room in a tourist cabin on the south side of town, and that night the temperature went into the single digits.

The next morning was bright and clear, but the Packard wouldn't start. I had to be towed to get it started, and that cost \$15 I hadn't planned to spend. Heading south toward Edwardsville where I wanted to visit a trapshooting friend, the motor began running rough, and after my brief visit, when I turned eastward toward Vandalia, Illinois, and Effingham on U.S. 40, it got much worse. Afraid to go farther I stopped at an old hotel in Vandalia for the night and learned that there was a Packard dealer in Effingham, about 40 miles farther. The next morning I limped into the Packard place, and the mechanic there established that it was a blown head gasket, which he replaced. I paid him in cash something like \$60 or \$70, as he had never heard of the Amateur Trapshooting Association and didn't want a check from them. After the transaction, my available cash was under \$20, and I was three days from home via my anticipated route.

I ate very little, probably spending \$1 to \$1.50 per day, and had to buy gas once in a while at about \$3 each time. I visited Lincoln's boyhood home in southern Indiana and his birthplace at Hodgenville, Kentucky, and stayed in a tourist cabin at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, at about \$1.50 for the night. The weather was improving, but my available cash was something in the range of \$4, so I decided not to eat that day. Early that evening, as I arrived in the outskirts of Charleston, West Virginia, I had 47 cents in my pocket (plus the A.T.A. check for \$91), and the fuel tank was almost empty. I knew of a prominent trapshooter by the name of LaFollette from Charleston, so I spent 10 cents to call him. We had a pleasant conversation, but I lost my nerve and didn't ask him for a loan (he probably would have cashed the check).

I drove to the center of town and parked near the Daniel Boone Hotel, where there was a AAA office. It cost 35 cents in advance to park, reducing my available assets to .02 cents. I found the AAA office, but it was closed. I went to the hotel's front desk and pled my case. Soon the assistant manager, a kindly older man, appeared and listened to my story. He didn't want the A.T.A. check either but said he would cash a personal check for \$20. I was back in business! I had a nice dinner at the hotel for about \$2 and a room overnight for \$5 or \$6. Even after filling with gasoline the next morning, I had about \$8 for the 480-mile trip home, enough to buy more gas on the way, and that night I ate my mother's cooking at Auburn Heights. I enjoyed some of the trip.