

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, May 22, 2006

1970 Trip to Woodstock, Vermont, in 1912 Stanley Mountain Wagon: In an earlier story, I told of restoring a very rough 1912 Mountain Wagon before and after my father died in 1969. It was finished in the spring of 1970, and I prepared to drive it to the Brass and Gas Tour at Woodstock, Vermont, in June of that year. Tom Ackerman went along as my passenger. The plan was to take two days in each direction, stopping overnight in Kingston, New York, about the mid-point of the journey. It was indeed an eventful trip.

Saturday morning we made good time and stopped somewhere near Bushkill Falls, Pennsylvania, for lunch. In the early afternoon, however, just beyond Milford, Pennsylvania, a loud clanking noise developed in the engine, and I pulled into a garage at Matamoras, Pennsylvania, to investigate the problem. Several balls from the engine crossheads had escaped from their horizontal races and were found broken up in the engine case. The garage man called a local Model T collector who was president of the bank in Matamoras, and he called several of his friends to locate the right-size steel balls. By late that night, we had our new steel balls, we got a room at a roadside motel nearby, and before noon on Sunday, we thought we had made a good repair and were on our way again. Darkness caught us near Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where we spent the second night. About 20 miles short of Woodstock on Monday afternoon, the packings on the engine began to leak a lot of steam, but we made it in, knowing we could not take part in the daily tour runs without again checking into the engine. Again we found a good garage and dug into the problem. Headquarters for the Brass and Gas Tour was at Lawrence Rockefeller's new Woodstock Inn, where our double room rate was \$22 daily, but they did not expect their guests to be covered with steam cylinder oil.

The balls had again escaped their crosshead guides, so it was decided to make a more permanent repair by installing bronze slides instead of the original-type balls. Harland Whitcomb of nearby North Springfield, Vermont, had a source for the round bronze bar stock, and a local ski-tow manufacturer in Woodstock turned them on his lathe and drilled them to fit. Once everything was put back together, I asked the master Stanley mechanic, Calvin Holmes, who was camping in Paul Bourdon's backyard, to check the clearances. He advised me to set one end of a slide somewhat looser—excellent advice. So Tuesday night after bedtime, Tom Ackerman and I had everything put back together and set to make three days of the five-day Brass & Gas Tour.

Harland Whitcomb rode with us on the final day (Friday), along with about eight others. As we were climbing a long Vermont grade in a drizzling rain, one of the passengers in the back remarked how well the Mountain Wagon was handling the climb. Harland, on the front seat with me in his dry Vermont accent said, "It has something to do with the management." That was one of the nicest compliments I ever received.

Tom and I left Woodstock for home in heavy rain on Saturday morning. It cleared in the afternoon and became windy. As we crossed the new high bridge over the Hudson River at Kingston, the wind velocity approached 60 M.P.H., or so it seemed. I shouted to Tom to climb over the seats and unfasten the rear curtain, as we couldn't stop on the bridge. He accomplished this outstanding feat, and the top was saved. I had remembered that January day nearly 15 years earlier when the top of our other Mountain Wagon was ripped to shreds on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. On our final water stop at Pottstown Sunday afternoon, a lady admiring the car said she had an original duster she would like to give me if I'd wait for her to go up the street to her home to fetch it. I was glad to accept the old and somewhat holey gray duster. When I got home and examined it further, sewed in the collar was a name tag "B. Oldfield." No doubt the holes down the front were from his legendary cigar.