

Using Stanley Cars for More Than Transportation: It's always good to have a Stanley car around. In the old days, there were many uses, and it's true today. A hundred years ago, most mechanical types were "steam men" who had learned their trades in mills and factories during the Industrial Revolution or on the railroads. It was natural that they would be interested in steam automobiles, not only for transportation but for other uses and for "just tinkering." While many of them could not afford new cars, rapid annual improvements caused fast depreciation and very reasonably priced used cars.

In the "old days," cars six or eight years old with seemingly little value would have their boilers removed to power something else or their engines removed for similar projects. Small pumps, mills, boats, and other things were frequently powered by Stanley or White components. In 1927, three years after the last Stanleys had been built (and even after the "SV" period), my father wrote to Stanley Steam Motors in Chicago asking if they could supply a new 30-horsepower boiler. They applied in the affirmative, but so far as I know, the deal was never consummated, and I have no idea why my father might have wanted it (it would be 13 more years before he acquired our Model 76, the first car in the collection).

While still using the Stanley system in an automobile, these "mechanical types" would make all sorts of modifications to their liking, always believing they could improve on a Stanley as it was built. My father always said they invariably made its performance worse, not better, and that doctors and professional people made better owner/operators, as they did not try to improve anything.

We, too, used Stanley cars for other purposes during the past 60 years. Since our buildings at Auburn Heights were heated by steam from the nearby mills, about twice each winter we would get a call from the company saying that they would be shut down for eight hours or so to make a repair or alteration. Usually we had at least 24 hours notice of an interruption to our steam supply. At least twice, my father said, "Let's heat the house from a Stanley," so we parked the Mountain Wagon alongside the house and ran a steam line from its boiler through a cellar window and into the heat pipes that circumvented the basement before delivering steam to the radiators on the floors above. We would jack a wheel so we could run the Stanley's engine to run the water pumps and the fuel pump while we were delivering steam. On one such day, the outside temperature was about 35 degrees, and we kept the big house at 72 degrees for eight hours, but we used a lot of water and 15 gallons of kerosene as the engine turned over slowly with a rear wheel jacked.

At several hobby shows before and after 1950, my father demonstrated his 3/4-inch-scale 4-8-4 locomotive inside the building where the show was held by parking a Stanley just outside said building and again running a steam line from its boiler into the tiny locomotive's boiler, thereby turning the driving wheels on rollers under the locomotive. In the worst of winter, the down-pipes from our flat tin roofs over the sun porch and the kitchen at Auburn Heights have frozen, and the build-up from melting snow above has caused these roofs to leak. A steam line from a Stanley boiler will soon remedy the problem by melting the ice in the down-pipe and allowing the water to flow as it should. Finally, in recent years, steam from a Stanley boiler just outside the museum has run our model two-cylinder stationary engine to rotate our "steam-powered Christmas tree." It's tough to get along without a Stanley around!