

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, August 20, 2012

**“Secondary” Steam Car Tours:** In the 1960s, the Eastern Steam Car Tours were sporadic; some were sponsored by the relatively new Steam Automobile Club of America, but some were not. Of the early tours, Woodstock, Vermont, was host to the most, with Lakeville, Connecticut, being second. SACA-sponsored tours I remember were at Wilmington, Delaware, in 1961, Cape Cod in 1966, and a three-day progressive tour to southern Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland in 1969. There were also hub tours at Woodstock in 1962 and 1968, using the original Woodstock Inn, a charming old frame hotel built close to the sidewalk facing the Green. The earlier Interlaken Inn at Lakeville hosted the Eastern Steam Car Tour in 1955 and 1958, with the very first SACA Tour being held at Lake Forest, Illinois, also in 1958.

By the end of the 1960s, attendance and interest was rapidly increasing, and instead of an average of 10 to 15 cars, there could be as many as 40 cars expected. Also changing was the method of getting to the tours, with cars being trailered far outnumbering those driven over the road. Several steam car owners enjoyed these tours so much that two in one year were frequently offered, especially if the “big tour” was held in early summer.

In 1972, the main tour was at Woodstock in June, this time using the Shire Motel, and a second and smaller tour was hosted by George Schieffelin at his home in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, in September. I drove the Model 87 to the latter and swallowed a yellow jacket on top of a Coke can during a picnic lunch along the Delaware River near Lambertville. In 1975, the main tour was at Carl Amsley's at St. Thomas, Pennsylvania, in July, to which I drove our Model 76 with Johnny Springer as my companion, and a secondary tour was held at Chatham on Cape Cod in September. Weldin Stumpf and I drove our 1924 Doble E-11 to the Cape and back, and some would say we had some trouble. A steering tie-rod end broke on the right front, preventing control of that wheel, the left rear wheel came off and rolled down the road ahead of us, we broke a valve rod in the engine, and an electric solenoid controlling the water level in the boiler shorted out, but we learned a lot and drove the car round-trip.

In 1976, the main June tour was again held at Woodstock, with a secondary tour with about 11 cars held at Lakeville in September. Having taken the Model 71 to Woodstock, I drove our newly restored Model 87 to Lakeville with Marvin Klair as my passenger. In 1981, the main tour was held at Sturbridge, Massachusetts, in June, with an 11-car progressive tour from Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, to Kingfield, Maine, and return in late July. The Kingfield tour was made in our 607 carrying Bob Reilly and me, and our Model 78 was used by Mike and Kathryn May. In 1984, with the main tour being hosted by Carl Amsley in June, there was a second progressive “Kingfield Tour,” this time from Concord, New Hampshire, in late July or August. Stumpf and I took our Model 71 in my new closed trailer. Finally, with the large Eastern Tour at Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1993, a second “Steam Cars and Steamed Crabs” Tour was held on Maryland's Eastern Shore with headquarters at Easton in September, when Ruth and I enjoyed the operation of our Model 725.

Despite the increasing popularity of the big tours, the idea of a second one slowly fell by the wayside, perhaps because it was not worth doing for a small number of cars and perhaps because steam car tours were fast developing in all parts of the country and in England. The all-time record for the number of steam cars at a single event was in 1999, when the Stanley Museum sponsored the annual tour at Mount Washington in early August and over 80 cars were entered, six of which were from the U.K. This tour commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first successful ascent of New Hampshire's famous mountain in an automobile by F. O. and Flora Stanley on August 31, 1899.