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U.S. Route 202, Our Longtime Steamer Route to New England: My father never liked city driving or having to stop for traffic lights. He would frequently drive miles out of his way to find a less-traveled route. When the federal highway numbering system came along in the early 1930s, parts of U.S. 202 were numbered 122, but there was a duplication with the future Pennsylvania Route 10 from Oxford north, which was also U.S. Route 122. The confusing 122 was removed from both roads. Route 202 was established from Wilmington, Delaware, to Bangor, Maine, keeping west of all major East Coast cities. We traveled it often and knew most of it well.

In going northeast from Delaware, we had to pass through the center of West Chester, Norristown, and Doylestown in Pennsylvania, and Morristown, New Jersey, before reaching the New York State Line at Suffern. Sometimes we went east from Suffern to cross the Hudson River's Nyack-Tarrytown Ferry, but most of the time we stayed with 202 that crossed the Bear Mountain Bridge, as did east-west U. S. Route 6. Routes 202 and 6 paralleled each other to Danbury, Connecticut, and on toward Hartford. In this scenic stretch, it passed Newtown and Sandy Hook, the Taft School at Watertown and through the clock towns of Thomaston, Terryville, and Bristol, Connecticut. Before reaching Hartford, Route 202 turned north again, passing through Farmington, Connecticut, and Westfield, Massachusetts, reaching the Connecticut River at Holyoke.

We had few occasions to use 202 north of there, but its route was northeastward across northern Massachusetts and southeastern New Hampshire through Concord and Rochester. In Maine, it stayed west of Portland, passing through Auburn-Lewiston and Augusta en route to its northeastern terminus at Bangor.

We started to use Route 202 before the many Stanley trips after World War II. In 1937 and for several years thereafter we followed it to Westfield, (Massachusetts) en route to Maplewood, New Hampshire, and the trapshooting tournament there. Continuing to use 202, we went twice to the North Jersey Gun Club at Fairfield, northeast of Morristown, and in 1939 we attended the Connecticut State Shoot at Danbury. My father used it to the west of Hartford en route to Boston. I took my car to M.I.T. over the same route in 1942 and returned that way less than four months later, crossing the Bear Mountain Bridge at midnight with snow and ice covering the road for most of the trip.

In 1947, we attended our first Glidden Tour in my father's Stanley Models 71 and 735, using Route 202 in both directions. The tour began at Hartford, Connecticut, and ended in Newport, Rhode Island. After traveling up the Connecticut Valley, then to Concord, Intervale, and Portsmouth in New Hampshire, we headed south through Boston to its finale at the Viking Hotel in Newport. I have claimed to have driven a Stanley to New England 20 times, and in almost all cases, I used Route 202. Near home, we even had designated water stops, the first being in Norristown at an Esso station run by "George." On many other trips, we would take 202 to Doylestown, then Route 611 north through Easton to the Poconos and beyond. We knew every mile of the route, and it was a pleasant way to go.

In the late 1940s, travel in an antique car was a different experience. Sometimes we were appreciated, but much of the time we were ridiculed. Bystanders would shout disparaging remarks ("Get a Horse!" was overused) or burst out in laughter. Young drivers with hot rods would shoot around us on the road as we were traveling at 35 m.p.h., wanting to prove that they could do 50.

Today, much of Route 202 is "impossible," with hundreds of traffic lights and heavy local traffic. With a modern car, it takes nearly twice as long to most destinations as traveling on limited-access highways, even though it is more direct. But the old 202 was fun, such as driving alongside an interurban electric trolley northeast of Norristown (the Interurban from Philadelphia to Allentown).