

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 31, 2017

Steam Car Tour at Quechee (Woodstock): Ten of our active volunteers with three Stanley cars plan to attend the Eastern Steam Car Tour in Vermont next week. This will be the first steam car tour with headquarters there since 2000, but in the 40 years before that, there were a lot of them. It is a wonderful place for a tour, and I was privileged to have a steamer there 11 times, seven of which were driven over the road from Auburn Heights.

One of two good reasons why Woodstock hosted early steam car tours was that local attorney Paul A. Bourdon (1913-2001) lived there. He was known as an early collector of Stanley cars, owning his first in 1930 at the age of 17 and driving another, along with his new bride and another couple from their home to the New York World's Fair and return in 1939. The other reason was that Frank H. Gardner (1920-2004), another Stanley operator, fell in love with the area in the late 1950s, bought property there, and spent many happy summers steaming around the countryside. His widow, Eloise, still spends her summers at Sky Farm, about 8 miles southeast of Woodstock, and their daughter, Nancy Powlison, has been a long-time member of FAHP. Don Bourdon, the 2017 tour chairman, is Paul's younger son.

The Glidden Tour of 1954 stopped there, and I attended two Brass and Gas Tours sponsored by the Veteran Motor Car Club of America (1970 and 1973). In 1981 I drove our Model 607 to Woodstock and left it in Frank Gardner's garage following the first trip to Kingfield, Maine. In 1985, a double-hub tour was held between Quechee and Shelburne, and in 1991 Don Bourdon and Brent Campbell ran a 12-day circle tour of northern New England that started and ended at Quechee. In 1962, 1976, 1980, 1992, and 2000, I attended strictly steam car tours there, and I missed at least two of them (1968 and 1972). Before the old Woodstock Inn was demolished in 1969, that was always the headquarters, then it was the Shire Motel in Woodstock several times (with the New England Inn and other motels for overflow), before it was moved to Quechee in the late 1980s. Only one of our several Stanleys participating in tours at Woodstock/Quechee is no longer in the collection, it being a 1912 Model 88 Mountain Wagon now owned by Allen Blazick.

The 2017 tour book, prepared by Kathryn May, will feature five exciting days of touring. From past experience, here are some of the things participants can expect (not that all can be included on one tour): Typical small Vermont villages with greens, country churches, and inviting inns. A floating bridge at Barnard. A country home at Orford (NH), with its spacious lawn sloping toward the Connecticut River. A fine early New England inn at Grafton. Newfane, county seat of Windham County, with its small inns facing the Green, which 30 years ago had only two lawyers in town. Weston, with its world-famous Vermont Country Store. Plymouth, birthplace and boyhood home of Calvin Coolidge. Hanover (NH) and Dartmouth College. Simon Pierce glass-blowing factory, showrooms, and restaurant at Quechee. Windsor, the first capital of Vermont, with its American Precision Museum and the longest covered bridge over the Connecticut River. Laurance Rockefeller's home and gardens, now a tiny National Park. The Bourdon home and shops, where Don builds boilers, restores cars, and turns out mega-gallons of maple syrup each year. Who can ask for anything more?

Advance thanks to Don Bourdon and his step-daughter and to Mike and Kathryn May for co-chairing this exciting tour, which will bring so much pleasure to well over 40 steam cars and their occupants.