

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 9, 2018

Eastern Steam Car Tour, 1948-2018: This week FAHP is hosting the 2018 Eastern Steam Car Tour, at which we have about 40 visiting steam cars and over 100 people. We last hosted this private tour in 2007; I had something to do with many others from 1949 through 1977. Some of the early ones were held at Auburn Heights and lasted about 1½ days with only 3 or 4 visiting cars; other hub tours like Schwenksville in 1956, New Garden Airfield in 1973, and Red Caboose Lodge in 1977, visited for one day each.

The very first steam car tour, held in 1948, has been described in the "News" before. It was held at Charlemont on the Mohawk Trail in northwestern Massachusetts in July that year, and was attended by 11 cars, all driven over the road to get there. It was chaired by the Rev. Stanley Ellis, Frank Gardner, and Henry Wing, Sr. and Jr., and we were there three nights. I remember the attendees with their cars: Paul Bourdon (1911 Stanley Model 63), Ed Battison (1903 Stanley Model C), Earle Eckel (1914 Stanley Model 712), John Miller (1910 White Model OO), Murray Brown (1909 White Model O), Evans Larson (1923 Stanley Model 740), Stanley Ellis (1914 Stanley Model 607), Henry Wing, Sr. (1914 Stanley Model 710), Henry Wing, Jr. (1913 Stanley Model 64), Clarence Marshall (1913 Stanley Model 76), and yours truly 70 years ago (1914 Stanley Model 607). On Saturday, we played 4 or 5 games with the cars, and on Sunday we visited Wing, Sr.'s home and shop at Briar, and the Packard Brothers' vast collection of Stanley cars and parts stored in barns and sheds near Goshen, both in Massachusetts within 20 miles of our hub at Charlemont, with some steep grades between.

As was the case with many early tours, we had as much fun going and coming as we did on the tour itself. We also planned some impossible things. As an example, A. H. Kellogg-Clarke of Buffalo had bought a 1913 Model 65 from Jim Keith, then of Charlottesville, Virginia, and my father and I had made it operable. I went to Buffalo in June and spent a full day with the new owner to show him how to operate it. Quite confident, he planned to drive it over the road to Charlemont, nearly 400 miles one way. My father and I planned to meet him at Williamstown, and we would go over the Mohawk Trail together. On our second day from home, we arrived at the old Williams Inn on time, but there was no sign of Kellogg-Clarke. There was a message at the front desk telling us he was not going to make it. He had attempted to fire up at home with no water in the boiler. What folly it was to think that he could drive all those miles on a tight schedule in a car he knew nothing about! Neither my dad nor I had remembered the stiff grades of the Mohawk Trail, and on a hot July day, we crept down the east side at less than 10 m.p.h.

In 1949, we hosted a second steam car tour at Auburn Heights. It was only Saturday and Sunday, and those from a distance stayed in tourist homes in Kennett Square. DeNeal Hunter of Claremont, New Hampshire, and Earle Eckel of Washington, New Jersey, drove their Stanleys over the road to attend. The other 4 or 5 cars were from my father's collection. A number of steam car people were there, however. Frank and Weezie Gardner and Stanley Ellis took the night train from Boston, and my dad and I met them at the Wilmington station with his '15 Mountain Wagon, after which we drove uptown for breakfast at the Hotel DuPont, and then to Yorklyn. Bob Chase and his son from Earlville, New York, Walt Lewis from Scotia, New York, Eugene Delling (manufacturer of steam cars in New Jersey in the 1920s), and Ralph Van Dine of Cambridge, Massachusetts, also attended.

The third Steam Car Tour was at Wellesley, Massachusetts in 1951, and the next (the first BIG one with 25 cars) was at Lakeville, Connecticut in 1955.

So this week, FAHP hosts the 2018 Eastern Steam Car Tour. Many old friends and new ones are in attendance, and over 125 attended our opening banquet last night. Hopefully, another great tour will be enjoyed by those in attendance.