

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 15, 2018

Old-Time Automotive Stories: Two of these stories were handed down to me; the third is one I read in a book, but the character's name is forgotten.

1. About the time F. O. Stanley and his wife, Flora, first visited Estes Park (1903), his twin brother, F. E., and his wife, Augusta, joined a group of affluent couples in building a summer cottage on Squirrel Island, off the Maine coast opposite Boothbay Harbor. These "cottages" were large summerhouses that were occupied only about 10 weeks each year. F. E. designed and built an electric plant to supply services to Squirrel Island. It was his custom to spend about half his time there when his family was in residence and the other half in Newton (MA), where he could keep an eye on things at the Stanley factory. His son Raymond (1894-1985) told me this story. It took place about 1912:

"I had my car at Squirrel Island, and my father had his, and we both wanted to return to Newton the same day. Early in the morning, my father said 'Raymond, do you want to go with me or do you want to drive your own car?' I was about 18 and naturally I wanted to drive my own car. My father was in a hurry, he took the ferry to the mainland where our cars were stored, fired up, and headed for Boston at top speed (F.E. always drove at "top speed").

"Partway through his journey, he passed through a small town with a speed trap. The officer of the law pulled him over, and advised that he would have to take him to the local magistrate. My father, always in a hurry, told the officer he would plead guilty if he could pay him the fine and be on his way. The officer quoted \$10. My father gave him \$20, and when he had to explain this to the officer he said: 'My son will be coming through here before long. If he is heeding the speed limit, stop him and give him \$10 back. If he is speeding, his fine is paid.'" Raymond said the fine was collected.

2. There were a number of elaborate homes at Corn Point, a fashionable section of Marblehead, Massachusetts, about 25 miles from Boston. One was owned by a prominent banker, who usually took the commuter train to and from Boston on workdays. He delighted in arriving at the station just as the train was pulling out and would chase it until the conductor would slow down enough to let him get aboard. This was a routine occurrence, and each day the conductor would be cursed at in front of the passengers. Once in a while, he drove his big Pierce Arrow instead of taking the train. Through several towns and cities, traffic lights were beginning to appear, but he didn't believe in them. Often, the officers couldn't catch him, and when they did, his ridiculous stories made it impractical to collect a fine.

On the front lawn of his home at Corn Point, he had an operating cannon. Sunday morning, he would get up early and fire the cannon at 7:30, waking all his neighbors. He delighted in their indignation. About 1948, commuter service was discontinued on the Marblehead Branch. He was determined to take the last train. As he proceeded with his usual routine, he was racing toward the back of the train as it was pulling out. The conductor saw him coming, brought the train to a complete stop, and welcomed him aboard.

3. The White brothers, Rollin and Walter, ran the White Sewing Machine Company in Cleveland when they started to make steam automobiles about 1901. Walter White was mechanical, was granted several patents, and drove some of their steamers in track races and on Glidden Tours. Like F. E. Stanley and Fred Marriott, Walter, along with a driver named Webb Jay, won many races, but for some reason the Whites and the Stanleys never raced against each other. We believe that Rollin White was the business manager for the company.

This story was told to my father by Joe Vanderveer of Kingston, New York, who drove White steamers and Pierce Arrows in the early days. It seems that Rollin and his family were spending a few weeks at the Poland Spring House in Maine one summer, and he had a new White steamer shipped there for his use, along with a chauffeur. The first day they wanted to use the car, they had trouble firing it up, and they tried everything. In

desperation, Rollin sent word to their New York distributor to send their best mechanic to Poland Spring. In a day or two, the man arrived and looked the car over, finding nothing wrong. Finally, he kicked the fuel tank and said, “Put some fuel in it, it should be fine.”