

*Wisconsin Society of
Automotive Historians*

Carhart Chronicle

WINTER 2021



**BROOKS STEVENS: CREATOR OF THE SUV;
THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE; AND
WE'RE MEETING IN GREEN BAY!!**

BREAKING NEWS: SAVE THE DATE !!!

It is official. The Spring meeting of WSAH is set for April 24th at 1 p.m. at the Automobile Gallery in Green Bay, pictured below. Meeting details will be in the Spring issue of the Carhart Chronicle.



BROOKS STEVENS

Jeep is bringing back the Grand Wagoneer for model year 2022. The concept vehicle previewing the production version was unveiled last year – and Jeep wants you to know it's the real thing. Jeep's website describes it as the "The Return of an American Icon... blending modern design aesthetics with an unmistakable heritage."

That "unmistakable heritage" was created by Brooks Stevens, of Milwaukee.

In fact, Brooks Stevens created the SUV.

Here's the story:

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WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

It looks like we might be about at the midway point with the dreaded virus...wait...I promised myself I was done mentioning the virus but I'm finding it necessary. Of major importance to our WSAH is knowing that the Iola Car Show is on for 2021, as are several other very large shows, although there are still some events being canceled. The theme for Iola, "The '70s Show - Rerun" is carried over from last year's canceled show and is scheduled for July 8-10. Hopefully everything goes as well as it always has and we can just consider 2020 a bad dream.

A year or so ago we had intentions of sending a membership list along with a mailing of the Carhart Chronicle. At that time, I asked that anyone who would not want some or all of their contact information included to let me know. That, of course, would mean your name, address(es), phone number(s), email address(s) - whatever you have previously submitted for contact information. We will plan to send out the list with the next issue of the Carhart Chronicle, so it is important that you immediately update your information if necessary and decide if you want anything withheld. You can let me know, but it is best to let Treasurer Gary Koehn

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WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT CONT.

know as he keeps the list updated.

We have also talked in the past about having a meeting or some sort of get-together in west-central Wisconsin and we have some ideas for that. Your input is encouraged. Regardless of where we meet there will be quite a distance for many members to drive since we are spread out over a large area. I will soon be checking on whether we can meet at The Automobile Gallery in Green Bay as we did a few years ago. That meeting was well attended even though it is a 100-200 mile drive for several members, as is lola.

As always, check out the WSAH and SAH websites, keep up on your dues, and try to get to one or more of our meetings this year. I always look forward to seeing members who I have not yet met along with those who I have known for decades.

Ken Nimocks

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MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2020 MEETING

Although adverse conditions have not evaporated due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians have decided, with conditions, to hold a Fall meeting. The Wisconsin Automotive Museum was the setting with great weather as well as a treat of a small automobile show on the campus. President Ken Nimocks called the meeting to order promptly at 2:00 p.m. Members in attendance were as follows: President Ken Nimocks, Treasurer Gary Koehnke, Directors Jim Morris and Don Chandler, Secretary Dan Manola, Director and Webmaster Jessica Zdanowicz, and members Gene Steinfeldt, Dan Sharpee, Randy Nimocks, and Wisconsin Automotive Museum Executive Director Dawn Bondhus Mueller. A guest of Gene Steinfeldt's, David Beyer also attended our meeting.

Gary Koehnke read the treasurer's report and a motion was made to accept by Dan Manola and seconded by Jim Morris. Ken spoke briefly about minutes taken at the meeting at the lola car show rally and what direction the lola Car Show would proceed for 2021. Ken also mentioned that our plans to have George Tesar proceed with a conference and meeting in Madison at the Wisconsin Historical Society were experiencing numerous roadblocks to being able to have such a meeting. So at this time, plans have been delayed for a possible future meeting.

Discussion amongst members centered on the events that took place at the lola Car Show Rally. There will be an ongoing auction set up to bid and donate monies to the lola Car Show. Dawn visited the site during our meeting to get some details. She explained some of the ways the donations could be made. October 24, 2020 is one of the dates for the auction. Dan Manola made a motion to donate \$250 to the lola Car Show which was seconded by Dan Sharpee after the membership discussed just how much we could or should donate. At this time the membership also passed a motion by Gary, seconded by Jessica, to make our annual \$1000 donation to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum.

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SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES CONT.

Ken spoke of the various personnel changes which have taken place within the Iola Car Show. Larry Fechter has retired and Denise Clumpner has stepped up to assume the duties of Show Car Director.

The buildings which house the many displays of the Iola Car Show also continue to experience changes. The various buildings at the show such as the food vending and other activities are evolving.

It was brought to discussion that our meeting at Hill & Valley may be uncertain due to the many changes in the venues of putting on such shows with the Covid 19 risks. Alternate meetings may be scheduled in other places such as The Automobile Gallery in Green Bay.

Dawn updated the membership of the various upgrades taking place within the museum. These include replacing many of the museum's overhead lighting with LED. Also, newer type switches have been replaced for easier control of operating the various areas of the museum. The Nash automobile people have also stepped up and made improvements which Dawn had desired. Vehicles recently donated include 1914 and 1918 Kissels. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dan Sharpee and seconded by Gary Koehnke. Meeting was adjourned at 3:25 with plans to visit Hank's Eatery in town. Dawn also invited those interested in visiting the museum showroom to view the newer Kissel and Nash displays.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Manola, Secretary

THE REV. DR. JOHN WESLEY CARHART

THE CARHART CRONICLE IS NAMED IN HONOR OF THE REV. DR. JOHN WESLEY CARHART, CREATOR OF THE "SPARK" STEAM CARRIAGE, CONSIDERED THE FIRST TRUE AUTOMOBILE, AT RACINE, WISCONSIN, IN SEPTEMBER OF 1873.



*I am yours,
Respectfully,
J. W. Carhart*

BROOKS STEVENS CONT.

Brooks Stevens was an industrial designer, born on June 7, 1911. The Milwaukee Art Museum, where his archives are housed, explains that "[h]e was from the first a person who liked to design and build, and fortunately for the history of industrial design, he never stopped." One of his many friends, automotive journalist Richard Langworth, described Stevens as "a tall, good looking man who belied his age, whose appearance and demeanor reflected accreditation to what Cole Porter would have called High Society. . . For Stevens there was only one way to fly to Paris - Concorde - and one way to get to England in the summertime - first class on the QE2. His personal tastes reflected similar standards, producing an effect of refined elegance.



Stevens in his office with consumer products of his design

"In his presence people were impressed but not overawed, because he was so completely natural and so full of courtesy and fun. It was never hard to gain

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BROOKS STEVENS CONT.

Brooks Stevens' acquaintance, whether one was a coverall-clad mechanic or the President of General Motors. Along with an inborn civility and an interest in others went an all-encompassing enthusiasm and love for everything connected with cars, an encyclopedic firsthand knowledge of the industry, and a streak of nihilism."

Brooks Stevens was a pioneer of industrial design. This was a new field, one that gained momentum when General Motors established the Art and Color Section under Harley Earl. If making the product appear more attractive and modern helped sell cars, then why not apply the same approach to selling other products, such as appliances? The advantage Stevens had over his competitors, such as Raymond Lowey, was location. They were in New York. Stevens was in Milwaukee. So was his clientele. It helped that his father was the vice-president of engineering for Cutler-Hammer and steered a contract to redesign the appearance of the company's electrical control boxes to his son. That entre helped, but it was Stevens' talent that allowed him to turn the Depression into an opportunity. Companies needed every possible competitive advantage to survive – and modernizing their product's design could provide that advantage.

This was the man who would give Jeep its future.

Before World War Two began, Willy-Overland Motors was running out of money. Its future, if it were to have one, depended on landing a government contract to produce a military light reconnaissance vehicle. The United States Army had studied the German military use of the Volkswagen Type 82 Kubelwagen. Less than a month after Paris fell to the Germans on June 14, 1940, the Army issued specifications and invited bids – but with a requirement that a prototype be delivered within seven weeks.

Only the American Bantam Car Company and Willys-Overland submitted bids. Only Banatam produced a prototype by the deadline - so Bantam won the contract to supply 70 vehicles for further evaluation. Bantam, however, was exactly that: small. It did not have production facilities adequate for manufactur-

ing the volume of vehicles the Army would require. When the production contract was awarded, it went to Willys-Overland, whose entry was selected over a Ford bid largely because the Willys engine had more power and torque than the tractor engine Ford proposed. By the end of the war, Willys had produced 362,000 jeeps. Demand was so great that Ford was later awarded a contract, producing 281,000 jeeps.

Now, with the war over, Willys-Overland was facing the same problem it had faced before the War. The cars they manufactured didn't sell. They needed something new, something people would buy.

In 1942, Stevens delivered a speech to the Society of Automotive Engineers. In that speech and in an article published in Popular Mechanics, he envisioned the post-war automobile market. Though Stevens' predictions proved generally accurate (except for the one anticipating less use of chrome and "other useless ornamentation"), one comment stood out to Willys-Overland's management. Stevens had suggested that after the War "a civilian version of the army jeep might be a most acceptable and desirable piece of transportation equipment." He had also suggested it "could be executed with simple tooling and a minimum of fabrication expense, yet could have pleasing lines within these limitations."

In January of 1943, the then-president of Willys-Overland, Joe Frazer, asked Stevens to create proposals for post-war Willys-Overland automobiles. As Stevens would later recount, he arrived for an 11:00 a.m. appointment to present the proposals to Barney Roos, vice-president of engineering - only to be kept waiting until the end of the day. Finally, he was ushered into Roos's "fifty foot deep office on the fourth floor" to make his presentation. When he finished the presentation, Roos told him he had the job.



A prototype from the design is shown here. What Frazer wanted was a replacement for the pre-War line of Willys automobiles, not a post-War jeep. Accordingly, Stevens

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BROOKS STEVENS CONT.

submitted designs for a small passenger car based on the same engine used in the jeep, but carrying little else over from the military vehicle.

Frazer's background was sales. He wasn't an engineer. He envisioned what he thought he could sell. He did not give much thought to what Willys-Overland could produce.

When the War ended, reality foreclosed manufacturing the vehicle Frazer envisioned, and Stevens had designed. Like other independent automobile manufacturers, Willys-Overland contracted body manufacture to outside companies. Frazer's prediction of a seller's market for automobile companies was correct. What Frazer missed was the corollary: it would also be a seller's market for suppliers. With the war over, companies manufacturing automobile bodies could choose the highest volume, most profitable contracts. They did not want Willys-Overland's smaller volume. What ensued was an executive suite power struggle at Willys-Overland as Frazer tried to wrest control from company chairman Ward Canady.

Frazer lost. Canady quickly replaced him with Charles Sorenson, a production genius. At Ford, Sorenson had developed the techniques that allowed casting the flathead V-8 engine block as one piece.

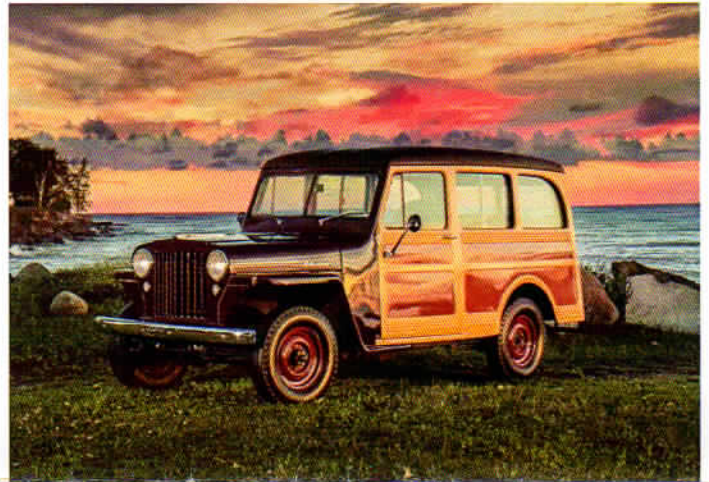
Sorenson found a solution to Willys-Overland's problem. Sorenson bought a stamping plant complete with presses. Willys-Overland could now produce its own bodies. But those presses had been designed to manufacture washing machines. They had a maximum "draw" of six inches. ("Draw" is the extent to which sheet metal is formed into a shape from the original flat blank.) That equipment could not stamp the curved surfaces of Stevens' original proposal.

Sorenson told Stevens they needed a new design.

Stevens delivered it three days later.

The new proposal was a station wagon. It wasn't what Willys-Overland executives had expected. It

was what they could produce, and it was a product they could sell. Designed with largely straight panels that could be produced on the company's former washing machine presses, the boxy shape drew directly on the wartime Jeep's appearance and, by that, upon its reputation for reliability and strength. Designed as a six-passenger station wagon, a type of vehicle previously identified with upscale country estates, it aimed at a completely new market – families that needed a vehicle that could serve as both family car and utilitarian load-carrying vehicle.



Jeep Station Wagon

Introduced in July of 1946, the Jeep Station wagon was the father of the sport utility vehicle. It would remain in production through the 1964 model year. Jeep also used the Station Wagon as the basis for its line of three-quarter and one-ton trucks – using Stevens design to give those vehicles the same instantly recognizable brand identity.

The Jeep Station Wagon began the long association between Brooks Stevens and Jeep that continued when Kaiser Motors bought Willys-Overland in 1953. Stevens had been one of the designers Kaiser retained to rework Howard "Dutch" Darrin's designs for the 1949 through 1951 Kaiser and Fraser automobiles. After the acquisition, Kaiser elected to expand the Jeep product line. It retained Stevens to design a new line of pickup trucks, to be produced as an addition to the existing trucks based on the Station Wagon.

The result was the FC – forward control – truck that debuted for the 1957 model year. The FC's modern

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BROOKS STEVENS CONT.

look was still unmistakably Jeep. The cab-over-engine design featured the signature outline of a military jeep grill as its "face." With a six-foot bed, the truck's



Jeep FC truck

overall length was two inches shorter than a Nash Metropolitan. No other vehicle approached its curb weight to payload weight capacity ratio of 1 to 1. The FC could climb a sixty percent grade. It also reflected Stevens' genius in reworking an existing product to produce new at a price his customer – the manufacturer – could afford: the FC chassis was that of the CJ-5 and its engines were the existing Jeep four (that dated to the pre-War Willys-Overland and had been improved for the military jeep) and the Kaiser six from its now defunct automobile line.

The FC trucks, like the station wagon, created their own market. But Jeep's success in creating a market for four-wheel drive trucks had attracted competition. Chevrolet and Dodge were now offering four-wheel drive as a factory truck option and Ford would inevitably follow. International Harvester was developing a direct competitor for the Jeep CJ – the Scout. Import brands – Land Rover and Toyota – were also competing with Jeep for four-wheel drive buyers.

Jeep needed a new product. It needed to leapfrog the competition with a new vehicle offering innovation available nowhere else.

They called Brooks Stevens.

The Jeep Wagoneer, introduced in November of 1962 as a

1963 model was all that and more. It was the first four-wheel drive vehicle offering an automatic transmission, the first with independent front suspension, and the first vehicle of any kind since the 1930's to feature an overhead cam engine. Power steering, power brakes and air conditioning were available. The Wagoneer was the vehicle designed for the person who wanted a vehicle that could do it all, in comfort.

Evolution

Revolution

The world-famous army "Jeep" vehicle started it all. Then came the evolutionary changes. Sensible changes. Like more ground clearance. Stronger suspension. Weather proof tops. Fun changes. Like pink and white striped upholstery. Fringed surrey tops. Lively colors. A sports roadster. A station wagon – rugged, durable, designed for work and play.

Then came the "Jeep" Wagoneer. A revolution! The Wagoneer is so revolutionary, it's hard to recognize your old "Jeep" friend. It's a station wagon. And a looker! You'll be stunned. Slide into that luxurious interior. Beautiful. Comfortable. Visibility unlimited! Turn the ignition key. You've got an overhead cam engine purring for miles. The only one in any American production car. Try that steering. Power.* The brakes. Power again.* The transmission. It's automatic.* Feel that ride. Pure luxury.

And the "Jeep" heart and spirit are still there. Pull one simple lever and you're in "Jeep" 4-wheel "Drivepower."† Then there's hardly a hill that can keep you down... hardly a mud hole that can bog you down. In fact, there's scarcely any driving situation that can get you down. You're free to go anywhere with the traction to pull you through.

Drop in on your "Jeep" dealer. He's so enthusiastic about the "Jeep" Wagoneer he'll be glad to give you a test drive. Actually, he gets a kick out of it himself!

*Optional items at slight extra cost.

KAISER JEEP CORPORATION Since 1962

DRIVEPOWER™ is Wagoneer station wagon's new, improved and exclusive 4-wheel drive system.

ALL NEW 'JEEP' WAGONEER

See the Wagoneer demonstrated on "THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH," Tuesday nights, ABC-TV Network.

Stevens design for the Wagoneer, which also served as the basis for the new Gladiator truck line, would span eighteen years of production encompassing three different corporate owners of the Jeep brand. In the process, it would define the modern sport utility vehicle.

Stevens began work on the design in 1958. At least four prototypes were constructed. The original, built in 1959 and known as the Malibu, featured a vertical bar grille design. A second prototype, the Berkley, was similar but had a different roof treatment. (No image

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BROOKS STEVENS CONT.



Jeep Station wagon next to Malibu concept

of it survives.) The third prototype, the J-100 of 1961, was close to the ultimate production version. It drop-



J-100 concept

ped the Malibu's full-width grille in favor of an upright center grille. Unlike the production version, the J-100 featured a stub front fender line reminiscent of the Station Wagon and was a two-door. The last proto-



type pictured above, had all the design features of the production version, but again as a two-door. (There were no production two-door Wagoneers - they were

all four doors.) Three years after its introduction, Jeep changed the Wagoneer grille to a full-width design similar to that of the Malibu. It continued the J-100 design on Gladiator trucks.

Though the Jeep Wagoneer is considered Stevens' masterwork, he was a prolific designer of a variety of industrial products. In 1950, it was calculated that products of Stevens' design accounted for \$1 billion in annual sales – over \$10 billion in today's dollars. You've probably seen the Oscar Mayer Weinemobile. Stevens designed it. If you're a train buff, you know that top industrial designers of the forties and fifties designed express passenger trains. Stevens designed the Milwaukee Road's top tier express trains, the Hiawathas. These featured the most innovative observation cars on any railroad: the Sky Top Lounge cars with panoramic windows around and above the passengers. Stevens designed outboard motors and boats for Evinrude, the Lawn Boy lawn mower, the Harley-Davidson Hydra-Glide motorcycle, the Skylark pattern for Formica, children's tricycles for AMF, cookware for Mirro, product packaging for 3M, and more mundane industrial equipment, including electrical control boxes for Allen-Bradley. The soft-cross logo for Miller High Life beer – yes, Stevens designed that, too.

And he designed Studebakers.

Here are the prototypes designed by Stevens – the Studebakers that might have been, the Sceptre that



Studebaker Sceptre concept – now owned by the Studebaker National Museum in South Bend, Indiana

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BROOKS STEVENS CONT.

would replace the Hawk and the Cruiser intended to replace the Lark, originally planned for production during the 1964 to 1968 model years.



Studebaker Cruiser concept – now owned by the Studebaker National Museum in South Bend, Indiana

Studebaker had long ties to Raymond Lowey, who had designed both pre-War and post-War Studebakers. His firm had designed the Hawk, introduced as a 1956 model. But Ford and Chevrolet engaged in a price war in 1953 and Studebaker was collateral damage. With higher production costs and obsolete chassis and drivetrains under the Lowey exteriors, Studebaker profits turned to losses by 1954. The company turned a profit briefly after it put a redesigned body on its old Champion model and introduced it as the Lark in 1959. But it returned to losses as the larger automobile manufacturers introduced their own “compact cars.”

In 1961, Studebaker had hired a new president, Sherwood Egbert. Egbert had gone back to Lowey to design the vehicle that would become the Avanti. However, he didn't want to pay Lowey's high fees to facelift the existing Studebaker line or design their replacements. Studebaker hired Stevens to do that.

Of the Stevens designs that did see production, his face-lift of the Hawk was the most dramatic – and again illustrates Stevens genius at turning the proverbial sow's ear into a silk purse, using as much of the exiting components as possible to keep production costs low. For the Gran Turismo Hawk, he removed the fins, cleansed it of Lowey's chrome ornamentation, added a formal roof and a Mercedes-Benz

style radiator shell (a brand Studebaker distributed at the time). Stevens also designed the most innovative station wagon of the time: the Lark Wagonaire that featured a forward-sliding roof panel to allow carrying tall cargo that would otherwise require a pickup truck, and revised the Lark Daytona.

STUDEBAKER
invites your inspection
of a distinctive new family sports classic
The Gran Turismo
Hawk
designed and made in the meticulous tradition of
the great European road cars and offering
the comforts and conveniences
preferred by the discerning
American motorist

- Full 120" wheelbase. Thunderbolt 4 DMY engine. 3 speed synchromesh transmission standard. Optional four-wheel drive or Automatic.
- The Gran Turismo Hawk's sleek and aerodynamic air streamlines. The standard stainless steel appearance. Chrome trim pieces.
- The Gran Turismo Hawk's full passenger capacity. Sports car type hood easily forward. Jet down arm rest in rear. Optional reclining seats.
- 2 cupholders with drink. Standard transmission with power shift. Available. Also with power. Available. Ready to go.
- The long list of Gran Turismo Hawk options includes: 1000 Miles, limited slip differential, air conditioning.

Gran Turismo Hawk advertisement in Life magazine, October 27, 1961

The Avanti, however, was a production failure – only 4,647 were manufactured. The money spent with Lowey could better have been devoted to the facelift Stevens was performing on the main product line – a point Stevens bluntly made in a public comment after Studebaker ceased automobile production in 1964.

Even so, Stevens association with Studebaker did produce one more design:

The Excalibur.

That's a story all its own – and one for another issue, another day.

Brooks Stevens died on January 4, 1995.