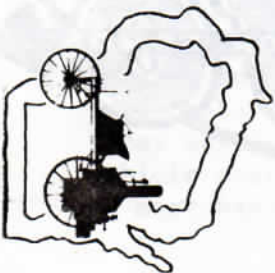




The Society of Automotive Historians — Wisconsin Chapter

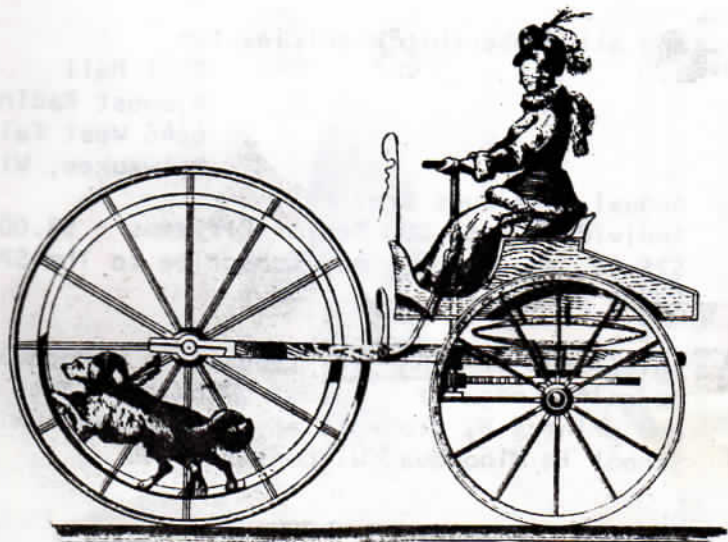
Robert J. Gary
1316 Fourth Ave.
Stevens Point, WI 54481



THE SPARK

SAH-Wisconsin Chapter Newsletter

No. 14



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the SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS

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WSAH is a non-profit, tax exempt organization affiliated with both the Wisconsin Historical Society and with the Society of Automotive Historians. Membership and donations are tax deductible.

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PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

I find myself in a totally strange position as I face a blank sheet of paper with a message to the membership to write. The knowledge that over the years, thousands of newly elected presidents have also faced this situation is of little comfort. No, it's not because of any lack of things to say, nor that I'm at all scared to say something. Rather, there are so very many things that have crossed my mind to say over the last few weeks, that I hardly know where to begin. Then too, there are a lot of half-baked ideas that need looking into before they are mentioned at all.

I am well aware that our newsletter IS WSAH to many of you, and you will hopefully find some positive policy and content changes. In conversations with many of you at Iola, I was given to understand that while you agree SPARK should continue to focus primarily on Wisconsin people and vehicles, it should also occasionally reflect the non "in state" interest we all have. We're not all wild-eyed about "home soil" products, after all, and SPARK should therefore attempt to provide something of interest to everyone - so long as we don't lose sight of our regional interest.

Unless there is an overwhelming tide of dissent, we shall therefore present much in the way of Wisconsin history, sprinkled occasionally with "foreign material". When we do this, however, you may rest assured that it will be evenly balanced. The subject of some non-Wisconsin articles currently under consideration include Davis, Datsun, aerodynamics, etc. Other histories require out of state and occasionally out of country aspects as well. I hope that this slight deviation in editorial policy will be satisfactory to you. If not, please let Bill or myself have the benefit of your thoughts.

Perhaps least important to WSAH's future, but of prime personal importance, is to convey to you all a sincere "thank you" for the support reflected in your ballots. I am greatly honored by the office you have elected me to, and I shall do my very best to represent you during my tenure.

Just as I couldn't have arrived here without your help, I shall be unable to do the sort of job I believe the office demands without your continuing help and support. What all this boils down to is yet another plea from me to you. In order to do my job, I have to know how you feel about WSAH - where you think we should be going, what we should be doing, what we shouldn't do, etc. You don't have to be on the Board to express yourself, and I hope you will each take the time to make your views known.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the immense contribution made in our formative period by Matt Joseph. Thanks to his leadership, we have passed the many and varied hurdles smoothly, developed goals, seen some through to completion, and others placed within the realm of possibility. In order to look clearly at our future, it is necessary to appreciate our past achievements. From where I sit, the future looks bright, and I would like to see WSAH expand and accelerate from our current status toward being a center and disseminator of automotive history. Unfortunately it's becoming somewhat trite to say so, but this can only be done with the participation of the membership.

In the more immediate future, it's still a bit early to discuss some ideas that are being batted around, but I feel it safe to reveal that plans are underway for another February meet spectacular. We are also preserving our goal to publish an encyclopedia of Wisconsin-built vehicles, though we have adopted a more realistic "as and when" timetable for the project. It could be completed and ready for the printer this year, or ten years from now.

As I noted last issue, we have both lost and gained members in the last year. Losses are regretted, gains applauded, and we welcome aboard our newcomers. In an effort to expand our ranks still more, I would point out that rare, indeed, is the member who doesn't include among his friends several non-members who would find us valuable to their interests, and vice versa. We encourage you to hand these people membership application forms and talk us up a bit. If you need more forms, contact Phil Hall.

Wally Wray

OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT, DAVID L. LEWIS,
COMMENTS ON EDITORIAL POLICY

I have the feeling that your publication might best devote itself to Wisconsin-related vehicles and automakers. If a chapter member wishes to write about a non-Wisconsin-related product or person, it would seem to me that he might be better advised to seek another publishing medium.

RAY SCROGGINS' THOUGHTS ON EDITORIAL POLICY

The membership of Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians is comprised of automotive historians who live in Wisconsin and of people who are interested in the history of the automobiles built in Wisconsin. Because national SAH covers the broad field of automotive history, our first priority will be to record, refine and develop topics relating to the history of automobiles and trucks built in Wisconsin and the impact of these vehicles in the state. Recognizing that some members may have limited interest in these subjects, we will also consider topics relating to automotive history in general, especially those that may not be as well suited to publication by the national SAH.

FROM BOB LICHTY - ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Any WSAH members who would like to aid the national organization by donating items for the "Annual Banquet Auction", to be held in Hershey this October 8th, please send items to Bob Lichty, % Krause Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990. Literature prior to 1965, books and automobilia are suggested. I need the items by October 1. Anything is deeply appreciated.

We would like to see many WSAH members in attendance at the Hershey meeting. I realize it is a lot to ask since the distance is a problem for some, as is the time off from work, but it is an opportunity to meet the eastern folks you have heard so much about. I have always had a pleasant evening. Last years auction got a bit long, however, Howard Applegate and myself plan to remedy that this year.

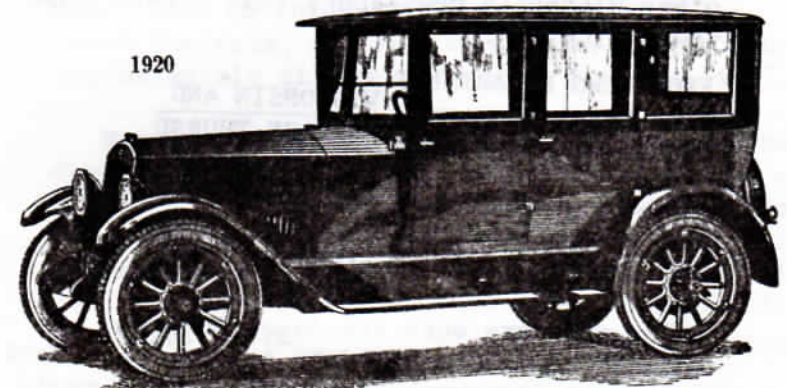
One other quick note. It has been brought to my attention many of the local level and larger shows are not getting the quantity of older cars in attendance as they used to. Old timers in the hobby say they don't want to subject their cars to the abuse of large crowds and feel out-numbered by the younger hobbyists in the newer postwar and muscle cars. They feel it is too much of a hassle to get the older cars on the road and too uncomfortable driving to the show in them. Ok, these areas are pretty good reasons, but don't come crying to me about car shows looking like a used car lot, or you didn't enjoy a certain show because a certain era car of your interest was not in attendance. Encourage the owners of these cars to bring them despite the problems involved. If you own such a car or have the privilege to take a borrowed car to a show, parade or event, do so. This is a "Catch 22" type of downward spiral that already has me alarmed. The fewer older cars that come to shows, the fewer older car owners care to attend, and so on.

Worse than that, younger people are not exposed to the older cars and do not create an interest in them. Without "younger" old car enthusiasts the hobby is doomed, as the present owners and enthusiasts die off. Let's wake up to the problem before it is too late.

Bob Lichty
Assoc. Director

TO WHICH BILL CAMERON REPLIES -

I particularly appreciate your thoughts on displaying older cars at car shows and parades as I have just completed the restoration of my 1908 Cameron car but have hesitated to show it in public for the reasons that you mention. I do definitely plan to bring it to Hershey this year (by trailer) where things are much better supervised than in the average car display. For instance, I brought my 1915 Smith Flyer to Iola where it sustained quite a bit of abuse at the hands of a number of small boys as well as those of a few adults. It has taken about a pint of red paint to cover up the scratches and the engine has a number of thumps and squeaks that didn't previously exit.



1920

ABOVE — Mitchell, of Racine, Wisconsin, built this freakish looking car in 1920. It had a V-type windshield with heavy center posts, and was jokingly referred to as the "Drunken Mitchell" because the radiator was mounted in a slanting position.

FoMoCo Looks at Wisconsin

The following press release, dated May 7, 1953, was sent to SPARK by it's author, SAH President, Dave Lewis. In his cover letter Dave explains the circumstances under which it was written.

"I'm enclosing a copy of a press release which I wrote in conjunction with Ford Motor Company's 50th anniversary in 1953. At the time I was a member of the News Department and my job was to assist journalists in their research in the soon-to-be-opened Ford Archives and to develop news releases for the anniversary year. In the latter connection, I wrote "tailored news releases" for most of the states and regions of the country, including one for "Wisconsin and Upper-Penninsula". The idea behind these releases was that journalists coming to Dearborn for the 50th anniversary celebration would have some "homestate" material awaiting them. Also, we sent the releases to newspapers and other publications in the states and areas involved. The release shows how Ford Motor Company, in hopes of further publicizing its 50th anniversary, related its early history to Wisconsin and the UP, which the company believed was more closely tied to Milwaukee and other Wisconsin newspapers than papers from Lower Michigan."

FROM NEWS DEPARTMENT
Ford Motor Company
DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

WISCONSIN AND
RELEASE THURSD

In 1952, when even road signs wer
Janesville, Wis. family made histor
all the way to New England in their

The pioneers were the James Howards, who bundled their two children into an open Ford and spent four weeks traveling rutted roads between southern Wisconsin and Boston. No one had dreamed of motels, and the Howards spent their nights camping in the open.

A letter telling of their venture recently was found in the Ford Motor Company Archives, dedicated today at Dearborn, Mich. The Archives, a collection of more than 5,000,000 documents, is located at Henry Ford's former home, Fair Lane.

Although cataloging will not be completed for several years, the institution already is the world's largest industrial archives. It contains information on every phase of Henry Ford's life and Ford Motor Company's history.

Early business records name Wisconsin's oldest Ford dealers, Kriwanek Brothers Company of Denmark, founded early in 1909 and William F. Christel, Inc. of Valders.

There is a 1909 letter from the Fond du Lac dealer, P. B. Haber, who was arrested for exceeding the 12-mile an hour speed limit, but considered the resultant publicity well worth the fine.

And there is the 1912 letter from Edward Kennedy, of Auburndale, who at 61 bought his first car, a Model T. He reported his R.F.D. mail route "is now covered in two hours, where it used to take five and one-half hours by the old horse and wagon. All I regret is that I have spent so much of my life on the road...and to think it was costing me \$40 a month for oats, and now 30 gallons of gasoline is approximately all my cost for a month's time".

During the 1920's and early 1930's, Ford Motor Company assembled Model T's and Model A's at a plant on No. Prospect avenue in Milwaukee. But when Ford manufacturing methods dictated larger assembly plants serving larger areas, Wisconsin dealers began receiving cars from Chicago and Twin Cities plants.

In 1920, Ford built a plant at Kingsford, near Iron Mountain, Mich. There, in the heart of company-owned timber lands, wooden body parts were made for the Model T. In 1934, the plant

started production of station wagon panels. Five years later, construction of the entire station wagon body began.

But by 1951, two years after Ford began building all-steel station wagon bodies, the Iron Mountain operation was halted and the plant was sold.

Ford operates sawmills in L'Anse and Alberta, Mich. At L'Anse, 101 of the 204 employes have worked for Ford 30 years or more, a service record matched by few other Ford plants in the nation.

Today, Ford controls three Northern Michigan mining operations.

It leases the Blueberry Mine, at Ishpeming, and the Book Mine, at Alpha, to North Range Mining Company. The two mines are expected to turn out 370,000 tons of iron ore this year.

By late 1953, a new mine at Humboldt, jointly owned by Ford and Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, is expected to be capable of producing 200,000 tons of concentrated ore yearly. A flotation process for recovering low grade ores is reviving the property which had not been mined since 1920. Plans call for ore concentrate yield to be doubled by 1955 through construction of additional facilities.

Last year, Ford bought \$17,000,000 worth of supplies in Wisconsin.

THE HITCHING POST

Thanks for all the positive comments on the column. Thanks also to those of you who've contributed items for this issue.


One of the many beautiful antique cars brought to Iola this year was Bill Cameron's 1915 A. O. Smith Flyer. It was to be the promised extra attraction at the WSAH booth, but things didn't work out that way. Since last year, "our" booth received a new coat of paint, and now sports a huge OCW logo, which only compounded our identity problem. Our new President, by some quirk of fate, was the only one to sign the booth duty roster, and while he was relieved from time to time, Mother Nature saw to a final closing for the duration.

It seems that Iola is trying to take away Hershey's reputation for wetness, and Saturday's afternoon downpour was but a matinee for the evening and night. Several of our members found themselves in charge of Bill's Flyer when the rains came, and pushed it under a tent for the duration. This lead Wally into the unexpected experience of being interviewed on local TV.

Of the two, the Flyer performed far better, but in spite of this, Wally was later rewarded by finding a window crank for his Davis in the flea market. And they say Hershey is the place to find the unfindable!

Word has reached us that our glowing words in #13 about Earl Tramburg's '26 Pontiac came a bit late. He too was at the April in Rockford auction, and saw his car successfully cross the auction block.

Chris Halla asks us to remember that his book, DREAMBOATS AND MILESTONES, is getting good reviews, and is selling like hotcakes at \$11.95 softcover, \$18.95 hardcover. Publisher is TAB Books, Inc., Blue Ridge Summit,



1907

PIERCE-RACINE

You will find in our Model D PIERCE-RACINE, the *Greatest* value ever offered in an Automobile. Modern and up-to-date in every particular; speedy, powerful on hills; noiseless in operation; extreme simplicity.

Send for our Illustrated and Descriptive Catalog

PIERCE ENGINE COMPANY
RACINE, WISCONSIN

New England
896 Baystate Street
Boston, Mass.

Pacific Coast
1030 South Main St.
Los Angeles, Cal.

40 H. P. Four Cylinders.

Pa. 17214. His corporate history of Harley-Davidson is available from the H-D folks at P.O. Box 653, Milwaukee, WI 53201, for \$3.95.

Chris is currently working on an article on the social impact of the automobile and would like to know your most intimate (or important - take your pick) experience in a car. He furthermore suggests that those of us who missed the Vintage Races at Elkhart Lake missed a good event.

Gary Busha, we are informed, has joined Snap-On Tools as writer and editor.

Don Luebke, our resident sports type, has begun writing a column for the DESERT WIND, publication of the water-cooled, front drive VW owner's club, and is putting his knowledge to good use. His researches have grown to include aerodynamics, and we are hoping to see him contribute to The SPARK in the near future.

Bill Cameron picked up the fenders for his Cameron at Iola, and reports that they have been painted and mounted - the final items in his restoration. He's done a wonderful job, and we're looking forward to seeing it at Iola next year.

Ken Buttolph, of Krause Pub., was once again spotted at the Kissel Kar Klub show at Hartford, as was Wally Wray. Ken was accompanying Chet's beautiful Kissel touring at the annual gathering of the marque in the town of its birth.

The Lewis Six was built in Racine, Wisconsin in 1913, 14 and 15 by the LPC Motor Company (Lewis, Petard and Cran). Absorbed by Mitchell-Lewis Motor Company in 1915.

1915

LEWIS "VI"

Monarch of the Sixes

Future Construction—Our Present Delivery

While other manufacturers are still seeking ideas from Europe's 1915 automobiles we have already anticipated them. We offer for immediate delivery a replica of Europe's most elegant type of automobile. It is equipped with a wonderful motor; the same type of motor which won the first four prizes in the Indianapolis races this year. Rene Petard, the famous European engineer, whose name recalls his former association with the Italia, Fiat, Unic and Darracq cars, has designed a small bore, long stroke, high speed motor, the

SPECIFICATIONS

Wheelbase 133 inches, short turning radius.
Speed without shift, 2 to 60 miles per hour.
Long stroke six cylinder motor (3 1/2 by 6), assuring continuous perfect alignment of crank shaft.
Weight 3250 pounds, carried low. This, with even distribution of weight, assures great tire economy.
Silk mohair top built streamline to harmonize with body. Nickel trimmings prepared against rust and tarnishing. Deep luxurious upholstery—hand buffed leather.
Spark and throttle on top of steering wheel. Foot accelerator also furnished.

Lewis Year-In-Advance Six

and Wm. Mitchell Lewis, that pillar of American automobile industry, is building this wonderful car in his own new shops at Racine. Into the motor Monsieur Petard has incorporated all the genius of his great engineering skill; into its appearance he has displayed all the beauty, all the identifying grace of the highest price European 1915 cars.

And above all he has produced a car that sells for \$1600

Compare it with every car made; place it beside Europe's and America's finest cars—even those costing twice as much—and you will still be proud to own a Lewis Six. Don't wait several months for delivery on a next year's "Six." Investigate the one that is ready for delivery now; the year-in-advance car—The Lewis Six.

A \$3000 Car for \$1600.

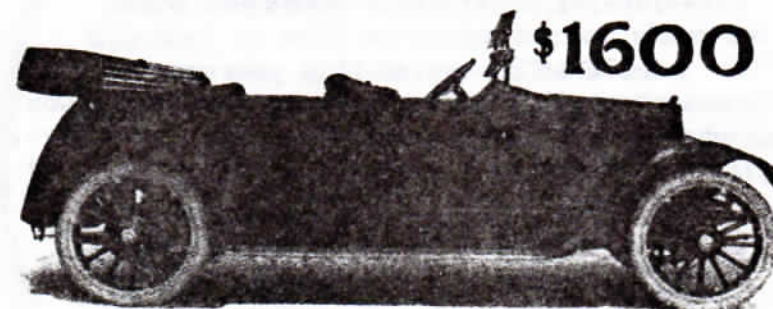
L. P. C. MOTOR CO.
25 GILSON ST. RACINE, WISCONSIN

Builders of the Lewis Six

Complete catalog gratis upon request. May we send it to you?

SPECIFICATIONS

Full floating rear axle—road clearance 11 inches.
Demountable rims (1 extra). Oversize tires.
Gasoline tank in rear—absolutely accessible, avoiding spilling gasoline in front of car.
Vacuum gasoline feed with auxiliary supply which can be used only by turning valve.
Electric starter. Electric lights. Electric horn concealed under hood.
Left hand drive—rain vision windshield.
Underlugs rear springs giving perfect riding qualities without necessitating shock absorbers.
True streamline body (French). 16 to 18 miles on one gallon of gasoline.



The original Mitchell automobile was built by the Wisconsin Wheel Co. of Racine in 1902-03 and then became the Mitchell Motors Car Company which, in 1910, merged with Mitchell-Lewis Co. and absorbed the LPC Motor Co. The company was reorganized in 1916 as Mitchell Motors, Inc. The plant purchased by Nash Motors in 1923.

WERE THE "GOOD OLD DAYS" SO GOOD AFTER ALL?

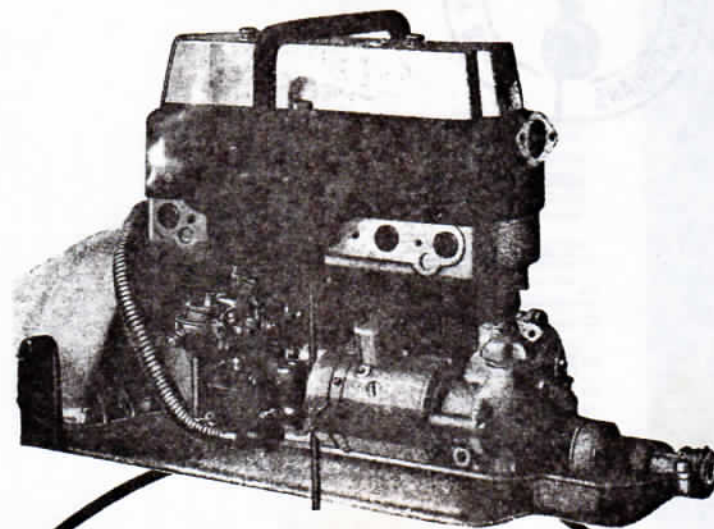
One of the most interesting, yet frequently overlooked aspects of automotive history, is the impact it has had on society. I recently picked up a copy of an 1888 book at a flea market, and while it deals solely with the history of the railroad in America, I have found it to be a valuable resource on the society into which the automobile was very soon to be thrust. In these days of \$8000 economy cars, we tend to smile indulgently at the thought of \$20,000 Duesenbergs and \$260 Fords. We are also amused to read that Henry Ford paid a minimum wage of \$5.00 per day, and this was TWICE the going rate at the time! Citizens in those days also complained of rising prices.

What is your salary? In the late 1880's, an average railroad employee took home \$50 per month, while a conductor - an obviously skilled worker - received double that, and the promise of an increase of \$5.00 every five years. An engineer, meanwhile, cost his employer approximately \$.036 per mile.

But what of costs? Did your new car just cost you \$8700? In 1888 the same money would have bought you an American type locomotive, while a New York elevated Forney type would have set you back \$3500-4000! For \$13,250 you could have purchased the most powerful freight engine - about 165,000 lbs. of 12-wheeled powerhouse. Mere cars were more affordable, naturally. A flatcar went for \$350, a boxcar for \$550, but a sleeping car was a major investment at up to \$20,000.

What does all this have to do with automobiles and automotive history? Not a whole lot, probably, but it does give us an idea today why, a few years later, a personal vehicle costing several hundreds of dollars or more was considered a plaything of the rich!

1924



The Model "B" Rajo Valve-in-Head will give you more speed than you ever dreamed of getting with a standard Ford! It will jump to 50 miles per hour in two city blocks! It will average better than 20 miles to the gallon! — The Model "B" provides its owner with the most powerful car on the road and to the man who sells it, it provides a three-way profit. Whether you own a garage or just drive a Ford you owe it to yourself to get all the facts about the three models of the Rajo Valve-in-Head.

RAJO MOTOR CO., 1355 Racine St., RACINE, WIS.

RAJO
VALVE-IN-HEAD FOR FORDS