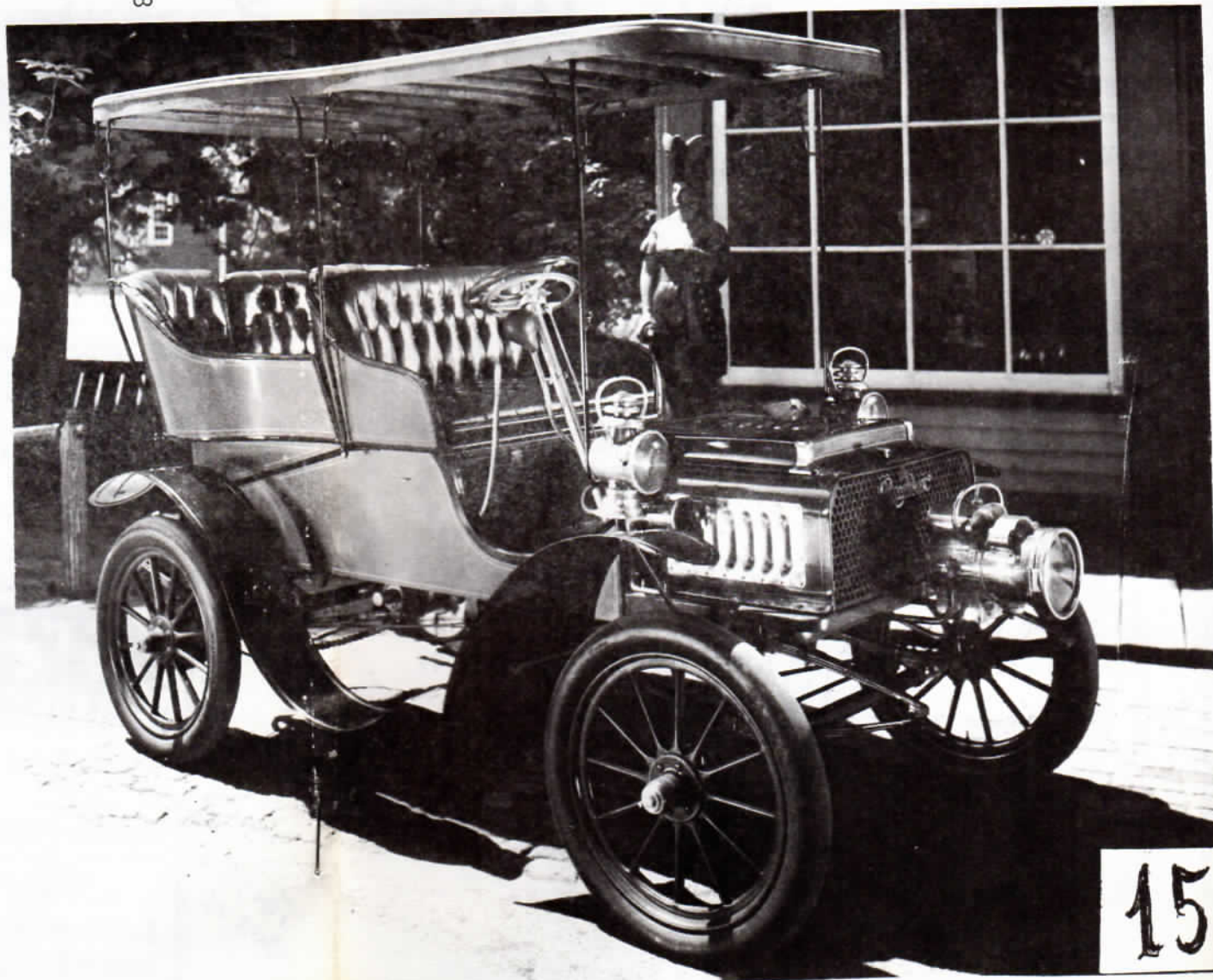


# THE SPARK

The Society of Automotive Historians  
Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Chapter - SAH  
Editorial Office  
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Cover picture courtesy the HORSELESS CARRIAGE GAZETTE

1904 Rambler featured a rear-entrance tonneau when most other makers had gone to a long-wheelbase side-entrance body. The two horizontally-opposed cylinders of this car have a combined displacement of 236 cu. in. Built by the Thomas B. Jeffery Company of Kenosha, Wisconsin, who with Olds Motor Works ranked at the top of US volume producers in 1902 and 1903. After the company founder Jeffery (a pioneer bicycle manufacturer) died in 1911 the firm was reorganized, and in 1914 the car's name became Jeffery; two years later Charles Nash, formerly head of G.M., gained control and used his name on the cars produced.

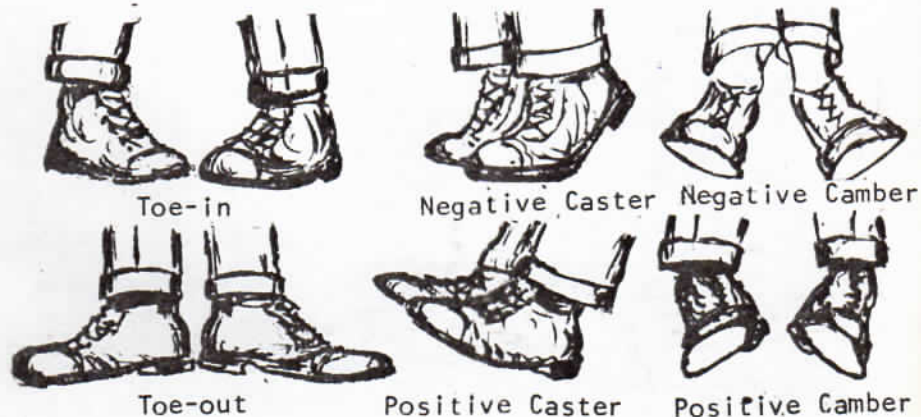
### PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

Well, here we are at the end of yet another year! There's an old cliché that says "time flies when you're having fun". I've made the personal discovery that rapid passage of time is also symptomatic of A) staying busy, and B) getting old(er). I will plead guilty to at least the first two!

While guilt is being levied, I'd better also accept a bit of it for this issue of SPARK being so over-due. There's not a whole lot the Editor can do without promised material from the president - especially his words of wit and wisdom to the membership. Please don't remind me - I know - that I promised that this wouldn't happen again, but....

To say that the past 12 months have been action-packed for WSAHers is perhaps to understate the case. I've had the pleasure of hearing from many of you and being kept up to date on your activities. I also appreciate the effort some have taken to respond to my appeals for input of ideas and materials for SPARK. Hopefully the new year will see communications from more or you.

From my view of the road ahead, the next 12 months are also going to be full of activity for WSAH and it's members. Our last Board of Directors meeting saw a number of good ideas for upcoming membership meetings brought up and discussed. Out



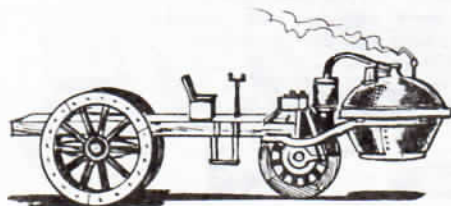


of this wealth of brainstorming should come some interesting programs, and we hope that you will all be able to participate.

First item on the agenda is the annual Winter Meet. Plans are still pending, so we cannot at this time reveal a schedule of events. It appears in the long-range view, however, that it will be another interesting and informative get-together. We are again planning a SE Wisconsin program, but with a difference. Due to conflicting schedules, the date has been tentatively set back a week. This will allow members who wish to include a side trip to the Chicago Auto Show the opportunity to do so, yet free up the first weekend for those of us whose professional schedules require them to be there opening weekend. We can also hope that another week toward summer may precipitate good weather.

Further along the road, plans are being discussed for the Iola weekend. With so much to do over those very short days, we realize that time is of some premium, but we will never-the-less try to provide more than our usual open business meeting and thunderstorm. Here again, ideas are more than welcome. So are volunteers!

Finally, and in best tradition of saving the worst for last, it's my duty to remind you that it's once again dues-paying time. Believe it or not, SPARK costs cold, hard cash to print and mail. We're holding the cost line as well as possible, but the treasury needs feeding this time of year. Actually, we should have mentioned it last time around (our dues year is August 1 - August 1), but we goofed.



Your servant,

Walter E. Wray,  
President - WSAH

1926 PONTIAC  
LANDAU COUPE

by

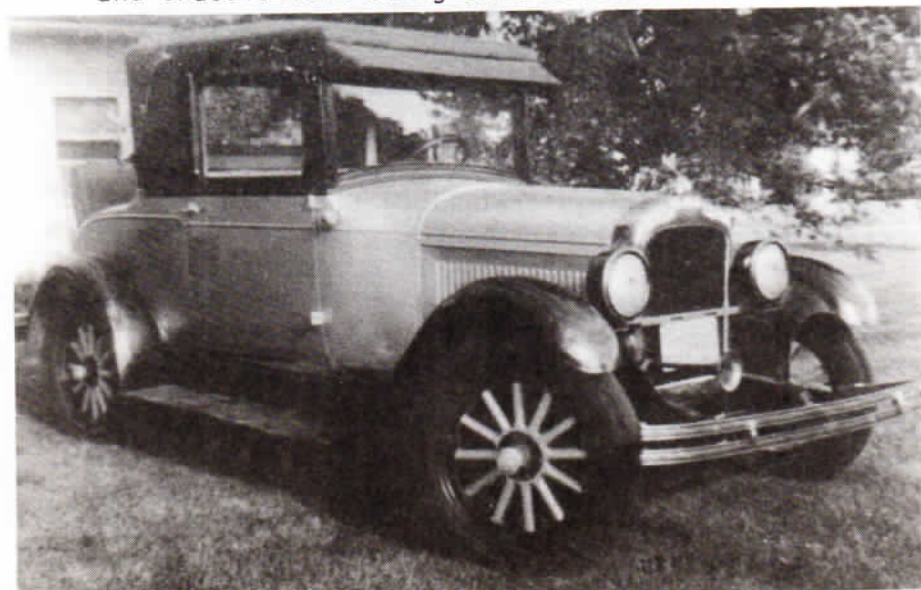
EARL TRAMBURG

In July 1976 it happened - the restorers dream come true. I asked a friend to show me his Model T and Model A Fords stored on his brother's farm. While returning to Fall River, he said, "Do you want to see one more? I have an old Pontiac coupe in my father-in-law's machine shed".

Naturally I had to see it, and the very large honeycomb cells in the radiator took my eye immediately. The wood was dry-rotted, all the glass broken and the dash instruments, seats and steering wheel wood had vanished.

I lucked out and bought the early Pontiac for \$100.00. The ID tag on the firewall showed it to be a 1926 model. I joined POCl and learned that 1926 was Pontiac's first year of production as a companion car to the Oakland - What luck!

My first step was to remove and disassemble the stuck engine. In the storage area of the auto repair garage, which my father started in 1917, I found a box of assorted NOS piston rings, one set of which fit my 3½ inch 6 cylinder Pontiac pistons. I overhauled the engine while the body and chassis were being sandblasted.

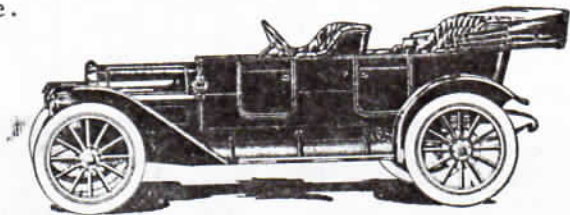




As a base coat I sprayed the body and chassis with zinc chromate to prevent rusting from atmospheric humidity. Next came the removal of the body and duplicating the rotted frame and body wood. My woodworking shop had an ample supply of oak for sills, spruce for body framing and dash and windshield header boards, and fruitwood for roof framing and ribs. Using epoxy to assemble the wood frame I put the body together on the chassis. Next came a new dark brown pebbled roof fabric over chicken mesh and cotton padding.

I had made a walnut steering wheel, installed new tires and rear wheel only woven asbestos lining in the external brake bands. I lucked out and found 42" seat bench and backrest at two swap meets.

The clutch and tranny each had to be rebuilt and I had to solder the radiator. My son, John, and I installed the engine and we took our first ride in the '26 Pontiac. We didn't run very far tho', the rust flakes in the gas tank plugged the gas line. Upon removing the tank we washed out two cups of rust flakes, replaced the tank and took a ten mile drive.

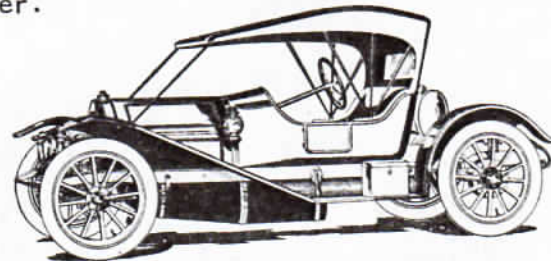


However, the unbalanced engine vibrated so badly at 30 mph that I never drove over 22 mph. Next the rod bearings that I had tightened started knocking.

In 1980 we removed the engine again and had the cyls. bored +.030. I purchased aluminum pistons from Egge Machine Co. and had the crankshaft electro-sprayed and ground standard. I bought a 1928 Pontiac engine off a buzz saw rig (very rusty) and used the babbitted con rods and main bearing inserts. I had the engine balanced and blued in the bearings on the crankshaft. After reassembling and installing the engine it ran quite smoothly at 40 mph.

I couldn't make the DRO Carter carburetor stop running over so I bought a universal updraft carb with an accelerator pump from Wisniewski and it ran very well. When I told an early Pontiac dealer that I only got 8 mpg, he said that was about average for those early Pontiac split head sixes.

It was an interesting adventure. My next restoration, however, will be a 1931 Model A Ford R/5 Roadster.



#### WHO WILL ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE?

The JOURNAL OF THE SAH included this paragraph from member Ralph Dunwoodie.

#### GORMLEY and JEFFREY

One cannot blame anyone for not recognizing this one - correct spelling is Gormull and Jeffrey. This firm built the forerunner to the Rambler and went briefly under that name (or just G & J) until it was named the Rambler, then became the HYDROCAR for a brief period while a part of the American Bicycle Company group, then finally renamed the RAMBLER again when production began in Kenosha (I have yet to see the formative years of Rambler properly written).

Who out there among our membership is the expert on the early history of this interesting forerunner of AMC? An article on this phase of automotive history in Wisconsin would be a real contribution to our History Project and improve our image with the national organization.



## WHO SAYS OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT DOESN'T HOB-KNOB WITH THE SWELLS

Your editor recently received a flattering communication from Dave Lewis and enclosed the photo reproduced below. The good looking girl with Dave is Kathy Ford, wife of THE DEUCE - HF II.



### A NEW SOURCE OF WISCONSIN TRUCK HISTORY

Your editor recently met an automotive historian who has a world of information on Wisconsin built trucks, including such unusual makes as the GRASS-PREMIER built in 1923-28 in Saulk City, Wisconsin. In addition he has the complete history of the STERLING, starting as the Sterling Motor Truck Company 1916-1933, the name later changed to the Sterling Motors Corporation 1934-51, both corporations with headquarters in Milwaukee. Sterling sold out to the White Motor Company of Cleveland in 1951.

His name is Orv Gritzmacher, 102 Cassidy Drive Wausau, Wisconsin 54401 - phone (715)842-1110. In addition to being a history buff Mr. Gritzmacher is a dealer in new and used old car and truck parts with a garage at 604 Thomas Street, Wausau. To you out there restoring antique trucks, here is a possible source of parts and historical data.

## GEORGE RISLEY

It is with a great deal of sadness that we report the death of George Risley, a long time member of SAH and for many years associated with the late James Bradley, curator Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library.

The complete obituary that appeared in OLD CARS WEEKLY was submitted by SAH member William L. Bailey of Royal Oak, Michigan.

George Risley's contribution to the Collection was the preparation of thousands of 3 x 5 file cards on which were pasted press releases from early automotive journals on just about every make of automobile produced early in the twentieth century. Each press release was carefully identified as to it's source and date with each file being arranged in chronological order.

After George reached retirement age he continued to devote much of his time to the Library as a volunteer. Your editor met with George Risley several times in connection with his (hopefully) soon to be published history of the Cameron car and joins with other members of SAH in offering our deepest sympathy to George's family.

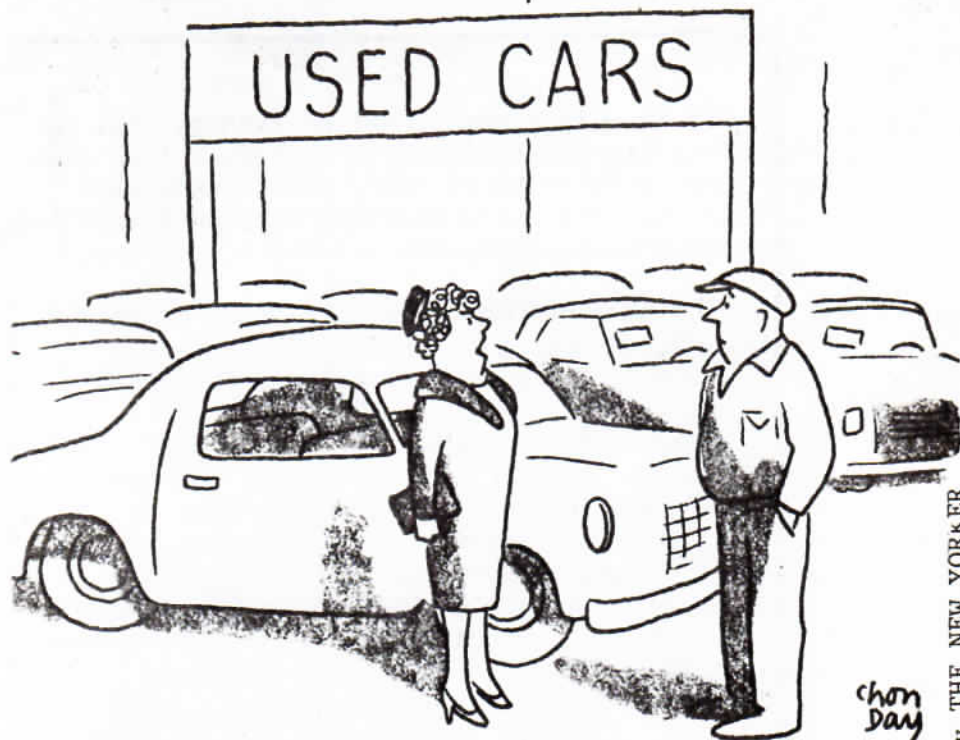
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*"You said it was a nice little car, and it isn't a nice little car."*

#### THE HITCHING POST

Word has been received that the restoration efforts of John Barth and Bill Cameron have been highly rewarded. John's Healy won top honors in it's class at the sports car meet at Brooks Stevens Museum this past summer. He has done wonders with it since purchasing it from the Steven's collection subsequent to the WSAH tour in February 1981.

Bill Cameron's car also won honors. Following completion of his restoration efforts, Bill acquired a trailer and took it to Hershey where it won second place in it's class.

Well done, gentlemen!

Courtesy THE NEW YORKER

Wally Wray's Baby, the 1947 Davis prototype (known to the Davis design and engineering staff as "Baby") is a long way from winning any honors but is coming along nicely. Brakes have been a consistent problem and he is hoping that a reader will be able to shed some light on it's Kinmont discs. These were a very early (and somewhat primitive) disc brake application to automobiles, being an after-market accessory for Fords.

Don Leubke is continuing his research on front-drive VWs and has become Feature Editor of DESERT WIND, publication of Club Sciroco. The first installment of his history of VW has crossed this desk and it is excellent. We are looking forward to future contributions to SPARK from Don.

Both Bill Cameron and Chris Halla have visited head offices in the recent past, had a ride in "Baby" and discussed much of importance to the future of WSAH.

It seems that everyone is becoming involved in one way or another with a writing project. Chris continues as a free lance writer, Bill has returned to his history of the Cameron venture, Wally is hard at it with both his steam car book and history of Davis and, naturally, everyone at Krause Publications has their ongoing projects.

Of interest to many of us, as well as a major news story of the recent past, was the destruction by fire of the Pecatonica Fair Grounds main building. This was the scene of the annual Lew Lazarus collector car auction. We were saddened to learn that the caretaker lost his life in the tragedy. It also seems possible, tho' confirmation is lacking, that a number of collector cars may also have been lost as the building has long been used in winter for storage of area vehicles. Most of these were of the modern camper and boat type, but a 1950s DeSoto is also known to have been stored there in past years and it is also likely that several of the Lazarus cars have shared the quarters in the past.

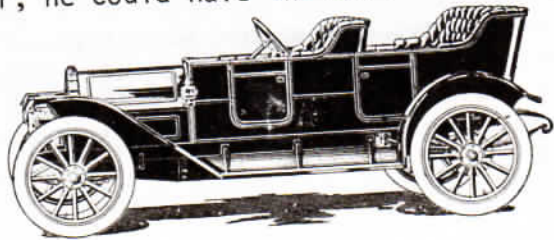


A letter from Earl Tramburg recently set the wheels of memory spinning back a couple of decades and the telling may prove of some interest. Earl recalled that back in 1958 he had the opportunity to purchase a running '24 Chevy coupe for \$35., but had to pass it up.

And I thought I'd seen '20s Chevys going for bargain basement prices! Back in the '64-65 school year, a friend with an equal interest in the old-timers invited me to accompany him to an antique car auction in Savage, Minnesota and I readily accepted. We rode with a friend of his in the fellow's '26 Overland and I could have worked a deal then and there for \$750. It broke down on the way, though, and cooled my interest, even though it turned out to be nothing more serious than a plugged fuel line.

At the sale, I almost jumped at a gorgeous 1914 Hupmobile touring for \$1500, but what college kid had that kind of money back then? Besides, a guy could have bought more '20s and '30s Chevys than one could shake the proverbial stick at for between \$100-\$200! The very few T-Fords were bringing 2 to 3 times as much though. One that sticks in my mind was a very decrepit mid-'20s roadster on a trailer that fetched \$360.

Back in the dorm I told a senior friend about the sale and he related a tale that still gives me the shivers. When he was a freshman, a buddy of his was also an antique car fancier and spent many hours scouring backroads for signs of the one-in-a-million Duesy in a barn. A Duesy he didn't find, but did turn up an ancient yellow radster in a shed. An inquiry about it's availability brought the happy news that if he rebuilt the shed so it would stand by itself, he could have the car.



That's where my friend entered the picture as he was recruited to help with the reconstruction. Several weekends later the 2 x 4s running from fenders and running boards to the building's roof were removed and the car pushed out into the open. A bit of adjusting, some water, gas, and air, and the car was driven away. Now, my friend didn't pretend to know anything about old cars, but thought he might be able to recognize a picture of it, so I hauled out some of my books. "That's it!", he exclaimed at last and pointed to a '12-'14 Stutz Bearcat. When I showed him another of a similar vintage Mercer, some of his assurance melted, but he had at least identified the general appearance. What the chances are that he was pulling my leg, I don't know.

I do know that that country held some strange old cars back then, and some even stranger owners. We found one guy with a steam traction engine in his yard, and a '20s T-Ford truck in a shed. He also claimed that there was a 2-pedal, 2-lever T touring in another of the numerous outbuildings, but couldn't remember which one. Anyway, they all belonged to his grandpa and the old gent didn't want to sell anything. Too bad, as that early touring would have been a real prize - it was one of the first 100 T's built in 1908!

And then there was the old nut with a huge junk yard around his farm buildings. In addition to the many '20s and '30s cars, trucks and tractors, we were told there also was a WWI rotary aircraft engine. I don't doubt it, although I couldn't find it myself. I gave up looking when I rounded a bend and found half a dead horse behind one of the piles!

### THE BIRTH OF THE SEMI-TRAILER



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It's a fact of the old car game that rarities crop up in the strangest places. Things like an early barrel-hood Franklin town car on an abandoned estate not 100 yards from Lake Superior, or the rumored Minerva town car parked in a Chicago basement garage. It was never recovered when the wrecking crews moved in when the Chicago Circle college campus was being built, and is still there. A friend did once find a Duesy in a barn but the owner didn't want to sell and another chap I once spoke to claimed to have been engaged in removing an ancient hay pile in a barn on property his father had just purchased, when he stumbled on another. It was, according to this gentleman, one of the abortive Auburn V-12 powered experimental units.

Sure, you say, it all sounds a bit far-fetched. I can't vouch for the accuracy of the tales I've been told, only the first-hand experiences. If you still think I'm trying to put one over on you I can only ask if any of the above sounds any less likely than that two of the 17 Davis cars built were once owned in Milwaukee, and that one of these was the prototype! I can vouch for this 100%, so if you still have your doubts, come on down and I'll introduce you to her!

W. E. Wray



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+ WSAH SPRING MEETING will be held in Milwaukee +  
 + March 4th and 5th so MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW! +  
 + There are a few details of time and place yet +  
 + to be filled in but you will soon receive a +  
 + package containing full information. +  
 + It appears now as tho' we'll have two well +  
 + know automotive historians as speakers and - +  
 + if all goes as planned - there will be a +  
 + tour of the American Motors plant. +  
 + Don't miss this important event. We will see +  
 + you in Milwaukee March 4th and 5th. +  
 + +++++

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