

The Hood Release

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHEAST CLASSIC CAR MUSEUM

Website: classiccarmuseum.org

Summer 2008

ON THE ROAD AGAIN!



MODEL A CLUB KICKS OFF THE SUMMER TOUR SEASON

On June 16th, the Museum hosted about 40 cars and their passengers from the Rubber City (Penn, Ohio) Chapter of the Model A Ford Club. Home base for the trek was in Ithaca, with daily side-trips to area attractions such as Watkins Glen Race Track and Museum and the Corning

Museum of Glass. In addition to the tour of the Car Museum, members enjoyed a visit to the Bullthistle Model Railroad Museum and lunch in downtown Norwich before heading back to Ithaca.

RARE CAR LATEST ADDITION TO MUSEUM EXHIBIT

The latest addition to the new *Nifty Fifties* exhibit is a rare 1954 Kaiser-Darrin sports car, on loan from Norm Oliver of Niagara Falls, NY. One of only 435 sold by Kaiser in 1954, the radical little two-seater has a fiberglass body, with sliding doors that disappear into the front fenders, a three-position convertible top, and a grille that says, "I want to kiss you!"



Designed by Howard "Dutch" Darrin, who had designed the other beautiful Kaiser cars beginning in 1951,

the Kaiser-Darrin was one of several limited-production sports cars that took advantage of the light weight of the new fiberglass material (Chevrolet made one too). The fiberglass body permitted some design elements that

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THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



First, I would like to thank R C Woodford for his service as President of the Board Directors for the past two years. During his tenure his business background and personal-

ity enabled him to bring much to the table to assist the museum to continue to operate successfully

I have been a volunteer to the museum since its inception more than ten years ago beginning with helping to paint building one before the grand opening. I joined the Board of Trustees in May, 2005 and was nominated to serve as Vice President of the Board in May, 2006. During all of this time, I have been impressed by the knowledge and hard work of officers, board members, office staff and volunteers. All have made significant contributions to the museum and have made the NECCM the gem of a museum that it is today.

Organizationally, many changes have occurred during the past few months. As many of you know, Kay Zaia retired from the position of Executive Director and was replaced by Doreen Bates earlier this year. Kay is staying on in a part-time position for awhile to orient Doreen to the operation of the museum and we thank her for that. Kay has been a wonderful presence and

positive contributor to the museum during her term as Executive Director.

Doreen comes to the position with considerable experience as a manager in the nonprofit arena. The Museum is already realizing the positive effect of her experience. For those who have not yet met Doreen, please stop by to meet and get to know her.

Jim Dunne announced that he was stepping down from the position of Treasurer. During the June meeting, the Board gratefully acknowledged Jim's years of service keeping NECCM in sound financial shape. Jim's increasing involvement in community affairs necessitated his decision. The Board then elected Hugh Kearney as Treasurer. Hugh's experience as treasurer with other nonprofit groups, his service as Chair of the Industrial Development Agency and past business experience all made him an outstanding candidate for the position.

Joe Angelino was elected Vice President of the Board during the June meeting. Joe is a current member of the Board of Trustees and his experience will serve him well in his new position.

Our museum continues to grow! The building adjacent to the museum (formerly the Label Gallery) was donated to NECCM and is currently undergoing renovation. NECCM has been successful over the years because of the wonderful support that we have received from George Staley, whose premier collection of antique and classic cars on display and his generous contributions have made the museum possible. The success enjoyed by NECCM is also made possible by you... the Museum members. With your ongoing support, the NECCM will continue to be the "best of the best."

Sewain Conklin, President Board of Trustees

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT...

...but that didn't stop people from making May 16th, the opening night for the new *Nifty Fifties* exhibit, a record-breaker. The exact count is not known, but is estimated to be between 250 and 275. Museum members, volunteers, and exhibitors enjoyed an evening of good company, good food, and a great collection of cars from the 1950s. See page 3 for the story behind the new *Nifty Fifties* exhibit and a brief history of that important decade.

RARE KAISER-DARRIN

Continued from page 1

would have been difficult using steel, and was produced under contract by Glasspar, a pioneer in the use of fiberglass.

The engine was a 161 cubic inch, 90 horsepower, Willys F-Head 6, available as a result of the recent merger of Kaiser Motors with Willys-Overland. While not exactly a laggard, the engine's lack of punch was one of the reasons that Kaiser dealers struggled to dispose of their inventory toward the end of the year.

Part of a last-ditch effort to save the Kaiser company,

the Darrin was introduced to the public in January of 1954, and by October the company had announced that it was leaving the domestic automobile business. After Kaiser ceased production, Dutch Darrin bought about 50 leftover bodies and stuffed a 365 cubic inch Cadillac engine under the hood, and, using the same Henry J. chassis, produced a really hot car.



You're Appreciated!

- THE NIFTY FIFTIES -

The 1950s, a decade of history that took place 50 years before the present decade, is usually thought of as a discrete, homogeneous period. The music of the 50s? Why, rock-n-roll, of course. The attire? Peg pants and poodle skirts, naturally. And the cars? Well, everyone knows they all had fins and bright colors, right? Actually, all of those trends were representative of the latter part of the decade only.

The reality is that, for many cultural parameters, the early years of the decade of the 1950s were quite different from the later years. Anyone who graduated from high school in 1955 knows that the records played at those dances after the basketball games did not include rock-n-roll, but were ballads such as *You Belong to Me* by Jo Stafford, *Too Young* by Nat King Cole, *If* by Perry Como, *Please Mr. Sun* by Johnnie Ray, *Wish You Were Here* by Eddie Fisher, *Wheel of Fortune* by Kay Starr, and *Why Don't You Believe Me?* by Joni James. The saccharine lamentations of the crooners were relieved only by some novelty songs such as *Come On-a My House* by Rosemary Clooney and *Doggie in the Window* by Patti Page.



Bill Haley and the Comets introduced the rock-n-roll era in 1956 with *Rock Around the Clock*, in a movie by the same name. Also in 1956, Elvis Presley captured the ratings with four huge hits: *Heartbreak Hotel*, *Don't Be Cruel*, *Hound Dog*, and *Love Me Tender*. Examples of other hits that followed were *Great Balls of Fire* by Jerry Lee Lewis in 1958 and *Stagger Lee* by Lloyd Price in 1959. The latter years of the 1950s thus became the beginning of the rock-n-roll era. (The Beatles didn't appear on the Ed Sullivan Show until 1964.) This is the music that is commonly associated with the 1950s, even though in reality it represents only the latter half of the decade.

The same is true of other elements of 50s culture, including the automobile. Cars of the early part of the decade were quite different from those of the later years. To understand the changes that occurred throughout the automobile industry, it is necessary to go back to 1946, when the post-war production took up where pre-war styles had left off in 1941. Generally speaking, fenders

were separately defined, transmissions were standard shift, batteries were 6 volt, and colors were dull. These styles continued until 1949, when the first "shoebox" Fords led the way to a more streamlined appearance. All the car companies, and there were several more American brands than there are today, changed the side view of their cars to a straight line that extended from the headlights to the taillights, making "fender" a term that merely identified the four corners of the car. Automatic transmissions became more common, but the colors remained on the dull side, with a preponderance of black, gray, dark blue and dark green. These changes, considered radical when they were introduced in 1949, continued through the early 1950s, with minor style changes making each year easily identifiable.

The next major change in style occurred in 1955, proving the point that the decade saw two distinct types of cars. In addition to a further streamlining that was influenced by the jet airplane and the rocket, the cars of the late 50s appeared in bright colors, sometimes two or three in combination, and began to grow.....fins! As everyone

knows, the fins grew in size and prominence, reaching their spectacular peak in 1959. The changes in appearance from year to year became more pronounced, and the interest in each September's introduction of the new styles was intense for most young men. The new models were closely shielded from the public's eye until the announced date, when searchlights lit up the sky to publicize the grand event.

The difference between the cars of the early 50s and those of the late 50s is evident in almost every aspect of the automobile. In addition to the colors and styles of the exterior, engines became more powerful, interiors were prettier in both color and material, and cars became bigger. Station wagons represented a greater proportion of cars sold.

The Nifty Fifties exhibit contrasts cars from both ends of the decade, as well as shows some of the automobiles from companies which are no longer with us.

Jim Dunne, Chairman Exhibits Committee

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

The Northeast Classic Car Museum and the Chenango County Historical Society recently opened a new fashion exhibit of dressed mannequins placed alongside corresponding cars of the day.

Pictured in the photo is Mary Davis, a long-time volunteer at the Museum, standing next to a mannequin dressed in an outfit that was worn by her mother, Melba Whitmore, in the 1940s. The fulled-wool, 3/4-length coat features faux leopard collar and cuffs and has a matching pillbox hat. (Fulled-wool is defined as a process of moistening, heating, and pressing woolen cloth to shrink and thicken it.) A dark brown silk-velvet dress from the Historical Society's textile collection completes the ensemble.

Diane Hamblin, exhibit coordinator for the Society, coordinated the exhibit including writing a brochure that describes the fashions and gives a brief history of styles in the 20th century.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Education Committee has prepared a number of car-related questions for visiting students. Answers to the questions will be covered by guides during the tour, and then discussed with students after tour, or back in homeroom.

We are giving Museum evaluation questionnaires to all student groups, requesting the leaders to evaluate their visit and return them to the museum. We are getting favorable feedback.

A cut-away-engine is now in Building 2, in the aircraft engine row. It gives a good basic look at how an automotive internal combustion engine operates.

By turning the fan blade, all parts move showing valve, piston, crankshaft and driveshaft action.

2008 is the 100th anniversary of the Model T Ford and also of the start of General Motors. In recognition of this, the museum has a storyboard for each event in the lobby near a 1924 Model T and an early Cadillac.

Dick Ellinwood, Chairman Education Committee

A Museum Membership is a great gift for any occasion .

IS THIS THE PAST OR THE FUTURE?

With the price of gasoline reaching new heights, pressure is mounting to find alternative sources of fuel. Could it be that the answer is right here in plain sight - right in our own back yard?

In 1908, M. W. Hazleton of Oneonta built a coal-burning steam car with a long wheelbase and shod with steel tires. Its inventor claimed that 100 pounds of steam could be raised from cold water in six minutes, and he drove the car frequently in Upstate New York.

“I would like to correspond with parties interested in this car with a view of manufacturing it,” Hazleton wrote to the editor of *The Automobile* in the fall of 1908. “The cost of a two-seated car using all of the best possible material, would be about \$700, and it will last longer than any \$2,000 car on the market. The steel tires will last ten years.” Whether he was contacted by any interested parties is not known, but any interest generated did not result in the manufacture of the Hazleton Steam Car.



1908 Hazleton Coal-burning Steam Car - Oneonta, New York

THE CHENANGO CAMP TRAILER

Although there is no record of any cars ever being made in Norwich, our city was once the home of the company which manufactured the Chenango Camp Trailer. From 1920 until the mid-1950s, thousands of the marvelous little house-on-wheels were sold to campers all over the country. One was even sold to the Governor of Mysore, India.

The trailer that was to become known as the Chenango Camp Trailer was designed by a man in Canastota named Sherwood, who apparently sought someone with more business and entrepreneurial skills to manufacture the technologically-superior camper. A group of Norwich men, led by William H. Brennan, stepped up as soon as they saw a demonstration, and an article in the April 21, 1920 edition of the Norwich Sun announced that, "Another industry is about to locate in Norwich." Citizens were encouraged to sign up for shares of stock in the new company. (Apparently, looking for a government grant did not occur to anyone in those free-enterprise days.)

located on the east side of the Lackawanna tracks between Hale and Division streets. Other men involved in the venture and elected directors of the new company were Frank W. Zuber, Arden M. Jones, Dr. F. E. Roper, Devillo Neish, L. J. Glasgow, Dr. J. L. Weiler, Charles G. Brooks, and James S. Flanagan.

W. H. Brennan was the perfect man to head up the company, which was called the Chenango Equipment Manufacturing Company. Brennan was an entrepreneur and a self-made man. He was born in King Settlement in 1852, the son of Irish immigrant parents. He owned a grocery store and then a hotel with a saloon and billiard parlor. A well-known picture of downtown Norwich shows the saloon with a sign in the window that reads, "Hot show at Brennan's tonight!" Later, he built and ran a hotel at Chenango Lake from 1895 to 1900. He then owned the Buick agency in Norwich for several years. A newspaper story from 1920 states that, "W. H. Brennan and a party of



Assembly line at the Chenango Equipment Manufacturing Company in Norwich

The camp trailer did not fold flat like today's "pop-up" models, but when closed looked like a triangle sitting on a box. The sides folded down to provide two double beds, while the center portion contained a table, icebox, gas cooking stove, and cabinets. Its two wheels were the same as the artillery-style wheels used on the Ford model T, and it had a tongue that attached to the rear bumper of a car. It was claimed that, "Within a minute of stopping on the road, you can have your bed ready for the night, and your house in shape to cook a splendid meal." William H. Brennan obtained the patent for the trailer from Sherwood, and began making changes to the old Rushmore Creamery Plant,

drivers have returned from Buffalo, driving a string of new Buick motor cars." In addition, he was the president of the Norwich Motor Club, and organized "runs" for motorists to well-known resorts for dinner. The Club was very active, with several committees. One committee was responsible for obtaining and placing signage along the roads; one of these signs can be seen on the wooden wall behind the "Found in Barns" exhibit in the Museum.

The Chenango Camp Trailer can lay claim to being the first camp trailer to be produced on an assembly line. The organization of the production process was born of

Chenango Camp Trailer

Continued from pg. 5

necessity, with the initial concern that the Company would not be able to meet the demand for its superior product. While production didn't start until August of 1920, 21 trailers were sold that year, and orders were taken for several more. In the spring of 1921, the factory employed 16 men and turned out two finished trailers per day. The retail price was \$475. Orders were filled as fast as the trailers were produced, although there were slack periods during the winter when the plant would shut down for short periods. Testimonials were received from happy campers and were used in the company's advertising. As a result of their suggestions, the Norwich Motor Club used its dues of

\$3 from each of 300 members to open a "Norwich Auto Camp" on South Broad Street, where McDonald's is presently located. Running water and toilet facilities were provided, and the camp was "free to all genuine automobile tourists, but gypsies and peddlers will not be tolerated."

Although W. H. Brennan retired in 1928, the Chenango Camp Trailer was produced into the 1950s. The Museum owns one of the later ones, a gift from the Danforth family of Bainbridge. In preparation for a special exhibit, we would like to acquire another, preferably one from the early days of the Company. We are also looking for vintage camping equipment to complete the display.

Jim Dunne, Chairman Exhibits Committee



W. H. Brennan poses with his salesman, Jim Dolan, next to a 1922 Chevrolet. The early Chenango Camp trailer is in the closed position, ready to hit the road as soon as the corner jacks are raised.



The plant, looking north from Hale Street in Norwich.



Chenango Camp Trailer still in use today. It is owned by Doug Hauge of Stittville, New York.



Norwich Auto Camp located on Rt. 12 where McDonald's is today.

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?



behind
found it the
their customers,
of their customers.

You can't always find a doctor at the Museum, but you can always find a doctor's coupe. Presently on exhibit there are two—a 1924 Ford owned by Museum board member Bill Ballard and his wife Sandi, and George Staley's 1926 Franklin. Until recently, there was a third, a 1929 Buick, but that one is taking the summer off to travel the car show circuit. The term "doctor's coupe" is really a misnomer. Most major car manufacturers made a model called a business coupe. These cars had two doors, one seat for two or three people, and no rumble seat in the back. The "no frills" interior was perfect for traveling salesmen who used the space the front seat to store paperwork, samples, and items for sale. Rural mail carriers found it the perfect car to carry the sorted mail to be delivered, the mail they would pick up from their customers, and for the stamps, postcards, and other supplies that they had to have on hand for the convenience of their customers.

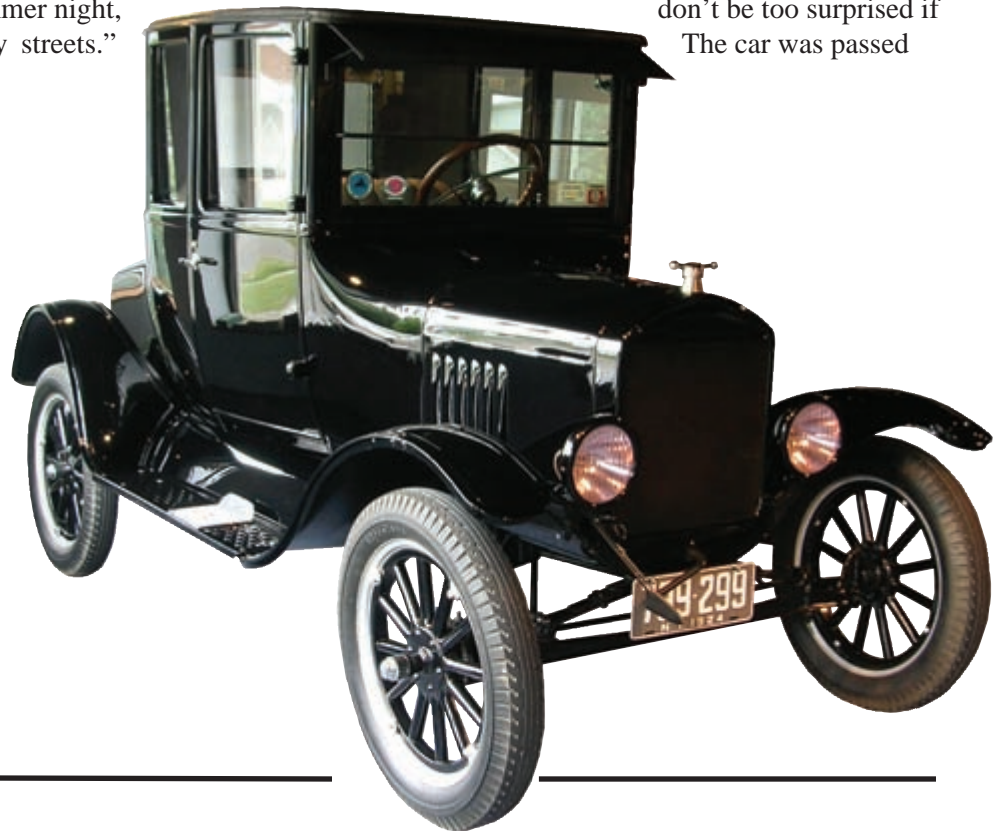
In a time before ambulance service, the doctor was, in many cases, the person who transported his patient to the hospital. For a doctor, the interior of the business coupe was more specialized. As shown in the inset, besides the driver's seat and a bench seat in the back, there is a folding "jump-seat." Folded, this seat allowed more leg room for the patient, but for a more seriously-ill patient, it allowed for someone to care for the patient while being transported. In the back seat, directly behind the driver's seat, there is a platform to hold the doctor's bag.

Museum board member Warren Nash owns a Franklin doctor's coupe identical to the one in the Museum's Franklin Exhibit. If you're in Norwich on a summer night, you see him "putting around the City streets." down to Warren from his father.

don't be too surprised if
The car was passed

Bill and Sandi Ballard's 1924 Ford Doctor's Coupe

This car was purchased in 1960 and carefully restored to its original condition. The wheels have painted wooden spokes. Black finish was the only color available from the factory. The tan/brown upholstery is the authentic color for the period, changing to gray/black in 1926. Base price for this car was \$525.



In the Gift Shop: Museum Logo T-Shirts for Adults & Kids, Golf Shirts, Windbreaker Jackets, Baseball Caps, Golf Balls, Coffee Mugs & more!

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT



Doreen Bates became the new Executive Director of the Northeast Classic Car Museum on March 17th, replacing Kay Zaia who had held the position since 2001. Doreen is a Chenango County native and has lived in the area for most of her life. She is no stranger to many of the Museum volunteers as she was RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) Director for Chenango County for 9 years.

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Hood Release Editor

Kay Zaia

Joining Doreen behind the wheel is Sewain Conklin, newly-elected President of the Board of Trustees for the Museum. He replaces RC Woodford who held the position since May 2006. Sewain has been a Board member since 2006 and has served on the Exhibit Committee. He is a long-time member of The Rolling Antiquers Car Club and is presently the club's Vice President. Sewain recently retired from the Human Resources Department at Mead Westvaco in Sidney, NY.



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