

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 11, 2005

1948 Steam Car Tour, Charlemont, Massachusetts: At the end of World War II and liberation from gasoline rationing, antique auto enthusiasts thought it would be fun to tour in their early cars, even though very few antique tire sizes were available. My father with two friends drove the Model 76 to Connecticut and back in late 1945 or early 1946. James Melton, Jerry Duryea and others organized the first Glidden Tour Revival in late August 1946, which started in New York and Boston, traveled to Detroit, and returned to the starting points. My father and I went on our first Glidden Tour the next year with our Models 71 and 735, drove to the starting point at Hartford, Connecticut, toured northern New England and southeast to the finale at Newport, Rhode Island. Then we drove home. Stanley Ellis was on that tour with his '14 Model 607, Henry Wing Jr., had his newly restored Model 64 roadster, Earle Eckel drove his faithful '14 Model 712 roadster, and Murray Brown and John Miller had their White steamers, Model O and Model OO respectively. Frank Gardner was on the tour with his '18 Franklin; his Model 74 Stanley not yet operable. The steam car people decided they must have a meet or tour of their own, just for steam cars.

The tour (it was really a "meet") was planned for mid-July 1948 on the Mohawk Trail near Charlemont, Massachusetts, with Messrs. Ellis, Gardner, and Wing as the organizers and planners. It began with dinner Friday night and ended Sunday afternoon. My father and I drove two cars from here, he the Model 76 with Homer Kratz as his passenger and I the 607. We stayed at Kingston, New York, the first night and were supposed to have a rendezvous with Kellogg-Clarke of Buffalo at Williamstown, Massachusetts, the next day, about 30 miles west of the meet headquarters. The Buffalo man scorched his boiler in firing up and sent word to Williamstown that he would not be there (he never tried to drive a steamer again and sold his Model 65 to William Swigart of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where it can still be seen in the Henry E. Swigart Automobile Museum). Not knowing how steep the grades were on the Mohawk Trail, we made our way across, going down the east side toward Charlemont at about 10 M.P.H. to save brakes on a very warm afternoon. Some do-gooder went ahead and reported to the authorities at the meet headquarters that two steamers had broken down on the trail, so a search party was sent out. By the time they came across us, we were almost down, and all was well.

It was a great get-together, with all of the 11 cars that were there having been driven from their owners' homes. We had the greatest distance, but the Eckels came from Washington, New Jersey; Ed Battison from Windsor, Vermont (in a 1903 Model C); Paul Bourdon from Woodstock, Vermont; John Miller from Connecticut, and several from Massachusetts. On Saturday, we played games with the cars (Butch Cannard's research says I won most of them), on Sunday we visited the home and shop of Henry Wing Sr., at Brier, Massachusetts, and the Packard Brothers near Goshen, Massachusetts. We started for home on Monday, arriving some time Tuesday. The trip home was uneventful, but we did not cross the Mohawk Trail again, choosing a more level route down the Connecticut River.