

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 6, 2006

The Devon Fall Meet, the Highlight of AACA's Year, 1945–1953: The Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA) was founded in Philadelphia in 1935, and informal meets and parades were held at early members' homes or in their home towns surrounding Philadelphia. My parents, along with Bill and Peggy Carr, who lived in our third-floor apartment, attended one of the first formal meets at Beaver College in Ambler in our 1913 Model 76 Stanley, probably in the spring of 1945. Bill Carr was a captain in the Air Transport Command and flew out of New Castle Army Air Field, about 10 miles from Yorklyn.

It is my understanding that the first Fall Meet was held at the Chester County Horse Show grounds at Devon in the fall of 1945, and I feel sure my father must have been there. I went with him in his newly restored Model 71 the next fall, having been home from the service about a month. Roy Benge went in our Model 76. I told of the near-disaster this young driver experienced in an earlier Weekly News anecdote (4/11/05). In addition to the primitive judging, there were always games to play by using our cars, a lot of fun for participants. At these early meets, all cars were driven over the road, and in addition to the Philadelphia-area cars, Ray Levis would drive his early one-cylinder Cadillac from Annapolis, George Green his curved-dash Olds from Lambertville, New Jersey, Walter Matter his 1910 Model T from Hawley, Pennsylvania, Earle Eckel his '14 Stanley from Washington, New Jersey, and several other active owner-drivers would come from Atlantic City, New York, and New England.

In 1948, the Pennsylvania Glidden Tour began in Fairmount Park the day after the Devon Meet, thereby making it attractive for tour participants to enter, and we had several cars from Ohio and Michigan. In 1949, the Glidden Tour revival began in Gettysburg, visited Luray, Richmond, and Williamsburg in Virginia, and ended in Wilmington the night before the Fall Meet at Devon. Six Stanleys were on that Glidden Tour, the most ever, but I broke a wrist pin in the engine of the 607 near Tappahannock, Virginia, and had to ride with Ed Pamphilon in his '19 Model 735 and my father in his Mountain Wagon for the rest of the tour, settling on taking my dad's '17 Packard Twin Six clover-leaf roadster to Devon.

The opera star James Melton, America's best known collector in those days, wanted to treat some of his friends at Devon to lunch, so he cornered me to go with him to a local delicatessen to fetch our vitals. Inside the store, he was recognized as a famous entertainer, which seemed to displease him. Several years later he bought the '17 Packard from my father, came from New York to Wilmington on the train on a cold day, and, wrapped in a bear-robe coat, drove it home over the New Jersey Turnpike.

In 1950, Yorklyn provided four Stanleys for the Devon show, as Roy Benge took his 1915 Model 720, my father took one of his cars, and I drove *two*, first the 1914 Model 607 and then the 1908 Model EX, being shuttled back by a friend, George Davis. After the show, I left the EX in a dealer's showroom in Wayne for a couple of days, coming home Saturday in the 607. In 1952, the Glidden Tour started again in Fairmount Park the day after the Devon fall meet. My father drove his 1912 Stanley Model 87, and I drove his 1910 Model 71 (which we then thought was a 1911 model). After circling through eastern Pennsylvania, the tour culminated in Washington, D.C., where we helped the AAA celebrate its 50th anniversary. The AACA, with its many new regions and increased attendance, was fast outgrowing the Devon site, and 1953 was the last year at the old horse show grounds. On October 16, 1954, the first Fall Meet was held inside the stadium at Hershey, which turned out to be the day after Hurricane Hazel swept through the area. There was no flea market, which began in the early 1960s, when most Americans first learned what visitors to Paris had been patronizing for years.