

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, August 18, 2008

**A Trip to Atlantic City, 1921:** My parents were married on June 4 that year, and my father was driving a 1921 Third Series Packard Twin Six roadster, with plenty of room in the back for luggage. Some time that summer, he and my mother went to Atlantic City for a weekend. My father had license tag #8 on his roadster, a number he had had since the first tags were issued in Delaware in 1909. The usual route in those days was to drive to Fourth Street Wharf in Wilmington (at the foot of East Fourth Street) and board the ferry to Pennsgrove, a ride of nearly ½ hour down the Christina and across the Delaware Rivers.

When they got near the ferry slip, traffic was backed up for a block or more, and a number of police officers were in evidence. As they stopped at the rear of the line, to their surprise, they were waved to the front and right onto the ferry while the line remained behind. Soon big cars that appeared to be official filled in behind them, and one of them contained President and Mrs. Harding. They, too, and their entourage were en route to Atlantic City. In all probability, they had traveled by train from Washington to Wilmington, and it had been arranged with local car dealers who sold big cars to furnish transportation from Wilmington to the famed seashore resort. It's my guess that Frank W. Diver, who, with my father, formed the Packard Motor Company of Wilmington in 1922, may have been involved in furnishing one or more cars for the caravan. The good officers of the law, having seen Delaware #8, figured its occupants were a part of the official party.

Although my father never said he shook hands with the President, my parents' route to Atlantic City paralleled that of the presidential party. When they reached Woodstown, the caravan stopped, and Harding dedicated a new high school. My parents stopped and listened but didn't recall anything he said. Very occasionally, I go through Woodstown today on Route 40, and the large brick school building is still there on the east side of town. Harding died somewhat mysteriously in San Francisco two years later, after a trip to Alaska.