

Our 1930 Kissel Brougham Returns to its Birthplace

Charles L. Kissel; 23 - 30 Sep 21

Background

My son, Charles D. Kissel, and I travelled to Denmark to purchase a 1930 4-door 8-95 Kissel Brougham from Lauritz Lauritzen in 2016. Once the US funds were received in Denmark, we had the Kar transported back to us through the Panama Canal and on to Los Angeles, CA via a cargo vessel. That part of our story was reported in the *The Kisselgraph*, 42(4), 8-14, Dec 2016.

We had kept the Kar for the most part in the condition as purchased from Lauritzen. During that period, we attended some car shows, so that folks could see the Kar as purchased. We had hoped to eventually get our Kar to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford, WI (a western suburb of Milwaukee). We particularly wanted that to occur during an annual meeting of the KisselKar Klub. In 2020, the meet was cancelled due to pandemic restrictions.

In 2021, it was decided to hold a KisselKar Klub meeting in September, a departure from the usual timeframe during the spring. We contracted with Orange Auto Transport company to transport our vehicle from Yorba Linda on 18 Aug, and it arrived in Hartford on 23 Aug. Exec. Dir. Dawn Bondhus was extremely helpful in facilitating at the Museum's end, especially the parking space inside the workshop room. My wife, Rosemary, and I with our son and his girlfriend, Tani Irizarry, arrived in Hartford through Midway, Chicago, on 24 Aug and picked up our Kissel later that day. We drove it to our lodgings at the Westphal Mansion, where we were staying. Our Kar went well when paired with the Mansion. The Westphal's were in the cheese business, eventually selling out to Kraft (see attachment).

Our 1930 Kissel parked in Front of the Westphal Mansion in Hartford, WI



We had a great time with the Mansion's proprietors, Pam and Garret, with their small well-behaved dog. The Mansion has 3 floors and a basement, with a dining room where we were served elegantly prepared breakfast meals with the other guests and heard tales from Garret, who performed the butler's duties with nice panache. These 3-course meals, prepared by Pam and Garret, were "to die for". I have only felt this way once before, when I had breakfast in Houston's Brennan's for the first time. The meal began with a fruit and biscuit, followed by the main course consisting of an egg and meat dish, and rounded-off by a dessert! Each room was designed differently, and each reflected its own American literary author. Rosemary and I stayed in the Wadsworth Room on the 2nd floor, which was a high point of Rosemary's agenda. In the evenings, we sat and drank in the Mansion's salon, and this was where we met one of the actual Kissel descendants, Liza Stewart and her husband.

The KisselKar Klub Meet

The KisselKar meet was held on 27-28 Aug, at the Hartford museum site. My son was asked months beforehand to chair this event. Eight KisselKars and 3 Nash automobiles were present. Both Lynn Kissel and Ron Hausmann were interested in attending, but as the pandemic raged on, they decided to stay home. The Museum's Executive Director, Dawn Bondhus Mueller, made most all the arrangements, and Doug Kissel was probably the Kissel patriarch present. There was a ladies' tour, which was conducted by Shelia Kissel. Dawn also provided a larger tour of the Museum's holdings and capabilities.

We received copies of the 2016 KisselKar Klub bylaws, a first from the newly formed board. We were also furnished with the 2021 Roster of the KisselKar Klub. There are about 202 more-or-less complete Kissel vehicles out of the 25,978 produced. The Museum holds 15 KisselKars, Hausmann has 10, and Mark Kissel and the Forney Transportation Museum have 5. Several folks own 4 KisselKars; they are Don Bosco, Doug and Shelia Kissel, John and Gail Lewis, and, David and Trish Spence.

The Meet was (1) part car show, (2) part city tour scavenger hunt, and (3) an assembly of attendees to hear some talks by participants on subjects of interest. Ms. Bondhus also provided a larger tour of the Museum's holdings and capabilities. The car show (1) was held in the parking lot in front of the Museum. The KisselKars were arranged somewhat by their manufacturing dates. Our 1930 was the youngest and therefore at one end of the array. The presenters were available to speak with others about their vehicles. Hartford's County Executive, Josh Schoemann, presented a Proclamation to the event's attendees, each signed by their own special pen used by the (copy attached). We had good discussions with Peter and Tom Klug. Judging by ballot had the Kissel people judging the Nash cars, and the Nash folks judging the KisselKars. After the car show, there was a nice dinner given at a restaurant outside of Hartford.

The driving tour (2) became a scavenger hunt, which failed just after it began for two reasons. The first was the clues left at the sites to be visited were not accurate and the hunt quickly fell apart. In a failed attempt to salvage the drive, contacting the leader swamped the leader's ability to function due to the numerous calls being sent. Next, rain was expected and eventually did occur. That had us take our KisselKar with its wooden spokes back to the Museum and cover

parts to shelter it from the possibility of warping the wheels. We had discerned that the sites we were to visit related to Kissel history in and nearby Hartford. These sites were some Kissel homes, the hangar that was where some manufacturing had once been performed, and the site of the first garage used to manufacture the earliest KisselKars.

There was a lunch provided prior to listening to the technical talks (3). The talks by some attendees were held inside the Museum. Joe Leaf (owns 1 KisselKar, a '24 speedster) began with how to make small KisselKar parts yourself. He passed around some of them to the audience. Leaf also showed how to cast your own brass parts. Then Jim Dworschack spoke about some of the C. W. Nash history, concerning a vanished spot in Hawaii. Mark Kissel spoke about how to replace a crumbling pot metal generator with a modified Buick generator. The last presenter was to be Lynn Kissel, but his talk was given by Mark Kissel, who discussed some historical facts as the "State of the Klub", using a slide show format (also attached); some salient details were: 140 members, 122 are in the US, with WI having 20, then CA having 17, then MI having 9, FL having 6, and TN having 5 members. Australia, Brazil, and Canada each have 6 members. There are about 202 known more-or-less complete KisselKars out of a total production of 25,978 vehicles. Three of the four known 1930's were present at that time, ours and the 2 in the Museum. The ladies were treated to sweets and talks of their own during the KisselKar talks just mentioned.

After the talks, there was another nice dinner outside the Museum followed by the traditional awards presentation of 2021. You could clearly see the remnants of the Schauer Cannery (for processing the pea crops). Dawn was the Emcee of the awards event. Our 1930 received the "Youngest Kissel that was brought to the Meet", and the "Most admired KisselKar at the Meet" (creative copies are attached). During this time, it was noted that we received awards with my son saying that it paid to have food and drinks, but Mark Kissel got the next award, and in passing by our table remarked "money works better" (hilarious).

At the close of the Meet the next day, we and Liza Stewart and her husband were invited to Doug and Shelia Kissel's home on the lake for refreshments.

Our KisselKar and its Birthplace

Our 1930 KisselKar was spotted and photographed in several places around Hartford. After all, it was a homecoming event for it. The first photo here has our Kar in front of the earliest garage used by the Kissels to make their first automobiles prior to 1906. Not in view, but to the left of the structure is one of the Milwaukee Road tracks left that used to provide railcar service for the larger KisselKar manufacturing plant, and now allows for today's rail traffic.

The next photo has our 1930 KisselKar with the memorial plaque in the Hartford's central park area. The marker is where the larger KisselKar manufacturing plant had its northern-most property line boundary from 1906 into 1931. The KisselKar memorial is shown next. The plaque cites the town's records of the KisselKar and the Kissel family, with the final larger site operating for about 25 years before its closure due to the stock market crash. The next photo shows our KisselKar in front of the original house of William Kissel.

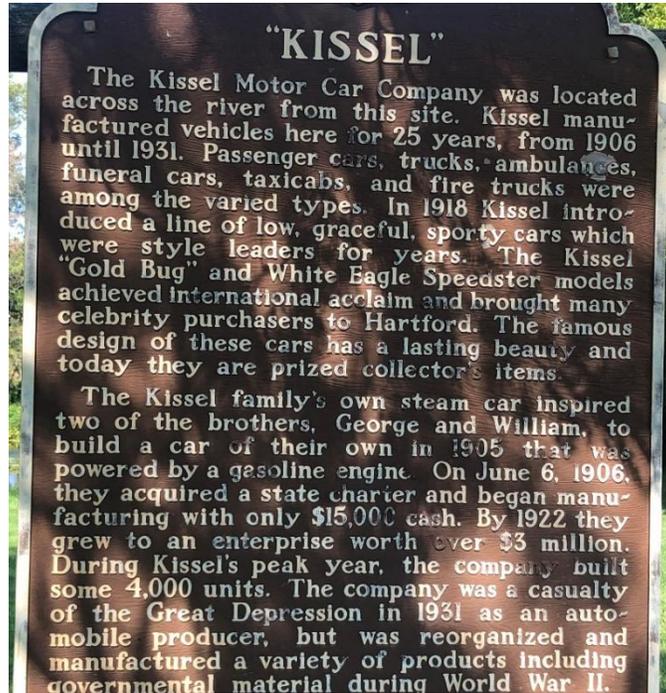
1930 Kissel Brougham at Original Manufacturing Site in Early 1900's



1930 Kissel at Hartford Marker for the Final 1930 Kissel Manufacturing Site



Kissel Manufacturing Plant Marker



1930 Kissel in Front of the Original Home of William Kissel in Hartford



Aftermath

I reflect back and note that it was a stunning time for me to sit in a room with a whole bunch of Kissels. I did not quite get used to that experience. This was also more complicated for other attendees since there were two Charles Kissels present.

I had hoped to investigate some aspects of our Kar in the Museum's files, but Dawn said there wasn't anything in them during the latter 1920's. Naturally, the Kissels were very affected by the stock market crash and were eventually going to exit the business. That search must be conducted in a different and difficult way. However, we have begun to place our 1930 Kar information into the Museum's database.

I was suggested as being available for board duty. This has begun by having Mark Kissel, Joe Leaf and me as part of a special advisory group to the KisselKar Klub board.

While waiting to leave Hartford and hoping to see our 1930 Kar loaded on the transport van, we drove around town - one more time. We left the 1930 KisselKar with Bondhus parked in the workshop room. The van did not appear for about 5 more days.

This trip was good for us, and it will remain in our minds for a very long time. We speculate taking the 1930 KisselKar back at least one more time in the next 5-10 years. There's been talk the next Klub Meet might occur in 3 years from now.

A few weeks later, I also note that our epic involving the acquisition, transport to the US from Denmark, and the Kar's return to Hartford is now concluded. It has been remarked by those that have seen our 1930 KisselKar and have heard bits and pieces of our story that we have a really unique story.

Attachments:

1. Preliminary information about the Westphal's; circle on the map is where the Mansion is located.
2. Hartford's County Proclamation.
3. Lynn Kissel's slide presentation (less photographs).
4. Recognition award certificates.

Added Information:

- a. See the Westphal Mansion's website for info and pictures of its wonderful interiors. The food you will have to sample.
- b. See the Wisconsin Automotive Museum's website for preliminary, detailed information.
- c. See the web for information about the KisselKar Motor Company.