

HISTORIC GATHERING OF GOLD BUGS

By Lynn Kissel, Ronald L. Hausmann and Ken MacKinnon Jr.

In the largest swarm of Gold Bugs since the 1920s, ten Kissel Speedsters and their owners came together for a public exhibition in Greenfield Village, Michigan, on September 11-12, 2010. Fewer than forty Kissel Speedsters are known to exist today, so it seems unlikely that this number of cars will ever be found in one place, at one event again. Owned by stars and other notables of the day, Gold Bug is a popular name coined in 1919 for the legendary Kissel Speedster.

Our historic gathering grew from the plans of Michigan residents Ronald Hausmann and Ken MacKinnon, Jr., to participate with their Gold Bugs at the 2010 Old Car Festival. While several additional cars and owners had hoped to participate, the following ten cars were exhibited at the show.

- 1920 Model 6-45 owned by Hyman Ltd. Classic Cars, St. Louis, Missouri (a special thanks to Mark Hyman for making this car available for display)
- 1921 Model 6-45 owned by Peter Heller, Chagrin Falls, Ohio
- 1923 Model 6-45 owned by Ronald Hausmann, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan
- 1923 Model 6-55 owned by Albert Nippert, Schohaire, New York
- 1924 Model 6-55 owned by Lynn Kissel, Livermore, California
- 1925 Model 6-55 owned by DeWayne Ashmead, Fruit Heights, Utah

- 1925 Model 8-75 owned by John Quam, Montara, California
- 1925 Model 8-75 owned by Ted Stahl, Gross Pointe Woods, Michigan (represented at the show by Bill Sherwood, curator at the Stahl Automotive Foundation)
- 1927 Model 8-65 owned by Mark Thomas, Birmingham, Michigan
- 1927 Model 8-75 owned by Ken MacKinnon, Jr., Freeland, Michigan

Billed as America's longest-running antique car show, the Old Car Festival is held annually on the grounds adjoining the Henry Ford museum. This event features authentic vehicles from the 1890s through 1932. Celebrating its 60th anniversary, the festival this year had 620 vehicles register this year (520 cars plus 100 trucks).

The Kissel Speedster owners were honored by the event organizers with preferred parking beside the Town Hall, adjoining the Village Green at the center of the show. Greenfield Village was established in 1933 by Henry Ford. It is like stepping into an 80-acre time machine. With its 83 historic buildings gathered from across the US this is an exquisite site for an antique car show.

The Kissel Speedsters were further rewarded when Al Nippert, Lynn Kissel and Ron Hausmann were awarded 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, respectively, in the 1919-1924 class, and DeWayne Ashmead was awarded a 1st place in the 1925-1929 class. Entrants were evaluated in five-year bins across all of the vehicles being judged at the show.

Arguably the Kissel Speedster is one of the most significant of the many types of vehicles

produced by the Kissel Motor Car Company. Introduced in 1918, the Model 6-45 Speedster had dramatic styling that featured bicycle-style fenders, bumble-bee rear deck, racer-cut sides, a hood line that ran straight to the base of the windshield, horse-collar radiator grill and unique outrigger seats on drawers that slid out of the body in front of the rear fenders.

Redesigned in 1923 as the Model 6-55, the outrigger seats were replaced by another unique feature, golf bag holders on both rear fenders. The Model 6-55 Speedster would be available through 1928.

In 1925, an eight-cylinder Model 8-75 was introduced. Optional four-passenger seating became available with the rear storage converted into a rumble seat (available with either the six- or eight-cylinder engine).

Kissel introduced the Model 8-65 Speedster with a smaller eight-cylinder engine in 1927, while continuing to offer the 6-55 and 8-75 models.

The last year for the six-cylinder Model 6-55 Speedster was 1928. Two eight-cylinder Speedsters were also offered in 1928, a Series 8-80 and a special trim "White Eagle" Series 8-90. All 1928 and later Speedsters were configured for four passengers.

Kissel redesign all their automobile offerings for 1929. Most noticeably, the bicycle-style fenders and horse-collar radiator shell first introduced in 1918 were replaced. The front fenders were now flatter and flowed into the running boards; the revised radiator shell featured a large, spread-wing eagle on the top tank. All Kissel cars were now called "White Eagles." For model years 1929-1931, four-passenger Speedsters were

available with eight-cylinder engines as the Series 8-95 and 8-126.



Kissel Speedsters on the Village Green at the Old Car Festival, September 12, 2010.



Kissel owners (left to right): Ken MacKinnon, Jr., Bill Sherwood (representing Ted Stahl), John Quam, Mark Thomas, Lynn Kissel, Ronald Hausmann, Albert Nippert, DeWayne Ashmead and Peter Heller.



Esther Hausmann (seated) and friend with Ron's 1923 Speedster.



Winners for the 1919-1924 class queue to receive their awards. (Right-to-left, Speedsters owned by Al Nippert, Lynn Kissel and Ron Hausmann.)



DeWayne Ashmead stands next to his 1925 Speedster, awarded 1st prize in the 1925-1929 class.



Karen and Ken MacKinnon, Jr., brave the elements with a smile next to their 1927 Speedster.