

# The Kisselgraph

M A Y 1996

## ANNUAL KISSEL GRAND REUNION, AUGUST 10th:

We've been finally able to settle out on a date of August 10th for the Kissel Annual gathering. This year will be a little bit special in that we'll be celebrating 90 years since the start of the Kissel Motor Car Company and 10 years that the Hartford Auto Museum has been open. I and others have been trying, in earnest, to get other Kissel owners to bring their cars this year if at all possible. We have received verbal commitments from many to bring their vehicles even though some may not be fully restored. I think it's important to make as big a showing as we possibly can here at the museum. If you have any interest at all in being judged, the AACA Wisconsin Region will also be having their meet on the grounds the same day. It's their "President's Cup" and for a minor fee they will judge your vehicle.

I have also had a number of contacts with various Kissel family members. So, it will also be a good reunion for them during this period of time. I'm sure that lots of stories can be gleaned from the various family members.

If you are coming and you are bringing your car, please make sure you let me know so that we can make the appropriate arrangements for the proper 'overnight' storage. If you are going to need a room, I would suggest the following Motels and Bed & Breakfasts:

### HARTFORD:

Super '8' (1 Mile East of Downtown)  
1539 E. Sumner St.  
Hartford, WI 53027  
PH: 414-673-7431

Jordan House Bed & Breakfast (Downtown)  
81 South Main St.  
Hartford, WI 53027  
PH: 414-673-5643

### WEST BEND:

Americinn Motel  
2424 W. Washington  
West Bend, WI 53095  
PH: 1-800-634-3444

Super '8'  
2433 W. Washington  
West Bend, WI 53095  
PH: 414-335-6788

West Bend Inn - FantaSuite Suites  
2520 W. Washington  
West Bend, WI 53095  
PH: 414-338-0636

I would also suggest that you make your reservation as soon as you possibly can. Since there are so many activities in this county, it is sometimes hard to get a room on the weekend. So, I hope that many of you plan to come, especially those of you who have not been here before or have not been here for a long period of time. We also look forward to many of the new owners of Kissels to be present. Please make certain that you drop me a note to let me know if you are coming and if you are bringing a vehicle with you.

#### ANOTHER GREAT KISSEL VEHICLE DONATED:

That's right! Another Kissel was donated to the Hartford Auto Museum by Delyle Beyer. This Kissel was partially restored by Alvin Keift in Michigan and it was sold to Mr. Beyer, who then proceeded with the restoration. The car is extremely desirable having been the last one built, by serial number in 1925, with an 8 Cylinder engine and it is a beautiful restoration job and a very functional automobile. I have not yet had the opportunity to take it out on the road but look forward to doing so as soon as Spring ever gets to Wisconsin. We're happy to have this vehicle and 'thank' Mr. Beyer for this wonderful donation.

#### KISSEL POPULARITY:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the popularity of Kissel vehicles has really taken an upward surge. I can hardly believe the number of phone calls, postcards, and letters I get from people looking for Kissels. Of course, they're looking mostly for speedsters but others are being requested, too. Several vehicles have changed hands in 1995, some of which will probably be at the Annual Banquet Meeting in August.

We do have a new owner's roster available. As you probably are aware, David Spence used to do our roster, however, his business has taken a tremendous leap forward and it has become increasing difficult for him to keep track of the changes and of addresses so we have done it pretty much inside our offices. No, it's not quite as pretty a publication as when Mr. Spence did it but it will work and supply you with names of fellow owners. If you would like a new roster, just send us a check or money order for \$4.00 and we'll send one right out. Upon receipt of your new roster you might let us know if there are any errors in it, from your own information or if you have information from others, so that we can continue to keep this list updated.

#### PIECE OF THE ROCK:

You all recall the slogan that Prudential Insurance used to have about owning a Piece of the Rock! Well, I've got good news and bad news for you. The Kissel Plant has been reduced in size considerably. The new owners, which are a part of Brunswick Corporation or Mercury Marine, are going to reactivate the section of the building that was built in the '60's. Much of the old factory, in fact, most of the old factory has been torn down. That's the bad news.

The good part is, "Guess who's been able to save some bricks?" Yes, that's correct! As soon as I get some pricing on engraving, I

will be able to offer to anyone a piece of the Kissel factory, namely a brick. It will be either engraved/painted and will come with a Certificate of Authenticity. I would estimate the cost to be around \$25 a piece. So, if you want your very own piece of the Kissel Motor Car Company building, let me know. As soon as I have all the details worked out I will make another mailing to advise on pricing and availability.

#### KISSEL'S POSITION IN WISCONSIN BY Dr. Val V. Quandt:

You of the Kisselgraph audience know that the Kissel automobile was manufactured in Hartford, Wisconsin, between the years of 1906 and 1930. In this latter year they went broke but continued to assemble and sell some vehicles, mainly taxicabs, into 1931.

Mostly during this time period there were well over 100 brands of vehicles manufactured in the State of Wisconsin. Listed in the Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805 to 1942, there are 125 entries. These numbers could be adjusted up or down depending on what is considered to be manufactured. In more than a few cases the output was one prototype vehicle. Also in this listing there are 35 Wisconsin towns and cities in which vehicles were manufactured.

The most prominent cities here would be Kenosha, Racine, Oshkosh, Janesville, and Hartford. Discounting Janesville as a branch of Detroit operations, Hartford with its KisselKar, later called Kissel, could lay claim to being the number two Wisconsin manufacturer of cars and trucks, right behind Kenosha. This would be in the pre World War Two era.

With the onset of the economic depression, Kissel was in dire straits in 1930, and went into a court appointed receivership to hold in trust their property in bankruptcy. This is what happened to 95 percent of the smaller independents existing at that time.

In the throes of bankruptcy, Kissel in 1930 was trying to stay alive with their plans for the front wheel drive Ruxton. They made at least the bodies for several dozen of these Ruxtons, but their joint efforts with the Moon Auto Company failed.

Kissel management reorganized as Kissel Industries and after two years started to make outboard marine engines, and later war production. Several successions of owners took over from Kissel in 1944 when the West Bend Company ran it for 21 years, then Chrysler Marine for 19 Years, and more recently U. S. Marine Division of Bayliner, and the Brunswick Company until plant closure in 1991.

#### CROSS CONTINENT TRIP IN A 1915 KISSEL KAR BY Dr. Val V. Quandt:

There was a feature story in the Hartford, Wisconsin, newspaper telling of the planned transcontinental automobile trip of Miss Anita King, of Los Angeles, California. The date was late August of 1915, and Miss King, a Hollywood actress and automobile racing enthusiast, began her journey on September 2, 1915.

The remarkable feat that she attempted and accomplished was to cross our continent from San Francisco to New York City and totally unattended. She did this in a 1915 KisselKar, 42-Six. This vehicle

had earlier been owned by Mr. A.P. Kissel, one of the Kissel brothers family that owned and ran the Kissel Motor Car Company. Miss King had owned and driven a KisselKar as early as 1908.

There is no doubt at all that this trip gained publicity for the car and its company, for Miss King and the movie company that she worked for, Paramount and Lasky films. Anita King at that time was known as the Paramount girl. She was adventuresome and described as being attractive.

At the time there was a large exposition in San Francisco and Miss King left in her KisselKar from these grounds with letters from the mayors of this city and of Los Angeles to bear to the mayor of New work.

As then recounted by Mr. H. S. Daniels, publicity manager of the Kissel Motor Car Company, "It will probably be a rather long and tiresome journey for Miss King, and not one entirely devoid of danger or possibility of accident. Many things might happen and there will be changing and difficult road conditions along the line but every possibility has been discounted in advance and she expects to drive up Broadway in New York before the end of September.

"The Kissel company has arranged to have a car meet her on arrival at the principal points and escort her part of the way East from each of these stops so, though she drives alone and makes her own repairs, she will not be entirely lonesome after all. She will have an automatic and a rifle, both of which she knows how to use." But, indeed, she was much alone on this trip and especially at the myriads of times where the road signs were extremely poor and the roads virtually impassable.

Miss King drove along the Lincoln Highway. She stopped along the way at dozens of movie theaters to talk about her trip and about her upcoming movie, the "Paramount Girl."

On September 17, 1915, the Hartford Press had gotten the following letter from her, written out of Salt Lake City, Utah. "Was lost and in distress from Saturday morning until Monday night. In leaving Fallon, Nevada en route to Austin on the Lincoln Highway I became lost due to poor road signs. My car became mired in the mud of the Salt beds and I worked for ten hours trying to extricate myself. There was no food and I finally fell exhausted. The next morning at two o'clock I was picked up by three prospectors and, leaving my car, was taken to Lovelock. Several hours later I returned to the car and succeeded in getting it out unaided. Drove almost three days and two nights without a stop all the way into Salt Lake City, on terrible roads. If all does not turn out well I shall at least not be a coward. You can say that I held out until the last breath."

Miss King had arrived in Chicago in the last week of September where she was hosted royally by the mayor and other dignitaries.

While in the State of Ohio she recounted an earlier experience she had on her trip. In the snow sheds of the Sierra Mountains she encountered a man whom she called a tramp. He insisted that she let him travel in her car with her. "I would not permit myself to show how frightened I was, but I handed him a flask of whiskey I had in the car and asked him to come to the theater in Reno where I was to appear the next night. Sure 'enough, He came and brought me a wilted bouquet of flowers."

Anita King arrived in New York on October 19, 1915, "Tired but happy." She was received in this city by a large delegation including the city mayor. Here she offered a large silver loving cup to the mayor as a gift from the Kissel Motor Car Company. This bore the inscription, "The First Woman to Cross the American Continent in a Motor Car Alone."

Crossing the country, the only mechanical problems she encountered were two broken fan felts and a spring, while enduring terrible weather and road conditions. On thirty days it rained.

Within a week Miss King had boarded trains returning her to California. On the way back she paid a visit to the Kissel Motor Car Company to experience the factory where her KisselKar was made. Here she was teased that she might want to change her movie title from the "Paramount Girl", to the "KisselKar Girl." She was to return to Los Angeles to film the "Paramount Girl" much of which would be based on her transcontinental KisselKar trip.

The writer is indebted for some of his archival material to Curt McConnell of Lincoln, Nebraska who has done research on the Anita King story in connection with his forthcoming book on transcontinental record breaking auto trips.

#### WHAT'S NEW ON THE MUSEUM GROUNDS:

As of this writing, the Hartford Heritage Auto Museum has been negotiating with the City of Hartford to donate the necessary land to build a Civic Center/Recreation Center downtown. This has become somewhat of a political issue but I do believe that most of the wrinkles have been worked out and the new city facility will be located here. Furthermore, a large portion of the money that will be used for the facility was donated by Fred and Beatrice Schauer. As you may recall, Bea Schauer was the daughter of Otto Kissel, one of the founder's of the Kissel Motor Car Company. The Museum Board and I look upon it as a good addition to our facilities downtown because it certainly will tend to bring more people here and will also help to beautify this downtown area. Let's face it, the Museum is located in an old industrial building and, as such, there is some harshness to it. We are confident that this will help soften the view. It is my understanding that construction may be starting sometime in 1997.

#### NEW SIGNS:

We're constantly trying to obtain permission for directional signs to the museum. We have come across a number of stumbling blocks in the form of the State Department of Transportation and County regulations, etc., etc., and I'm sure many of you are aware or have similar problems. In any event, we were finally able to get 2 signs located at the intersection of Rural and Sumner Streets, that's the point where you turn North to get to the museum. This is a state program of uniform signage for historical sites. Along with the signs comes an added benefit that each location has a number and the State of Wisconsin has printed, or is printing, brochures to be provided to tourists that wish to find historic sites. It's a handy guide to have and it provides us with extra advertising and, of course, it provides us with a much better sign for turning.

INTERNET:

Well, Internet I know is a buzz word for a lot of people that are constantly using computers, E-Mail, Internet, Webb, and all those sort of things. It's really quite interesting to find out through one of our museum volunteers, while he was at a relative's house in Arizona, that when Hartford was looked up on some portion of the Internet, up came one item and that was the Hartford Heritage Auto Museum. So, we're definitely on the Internet. If you ever want to look us up, you could find information about us. Of course, everybody knows about us anyhow, isn't that right?

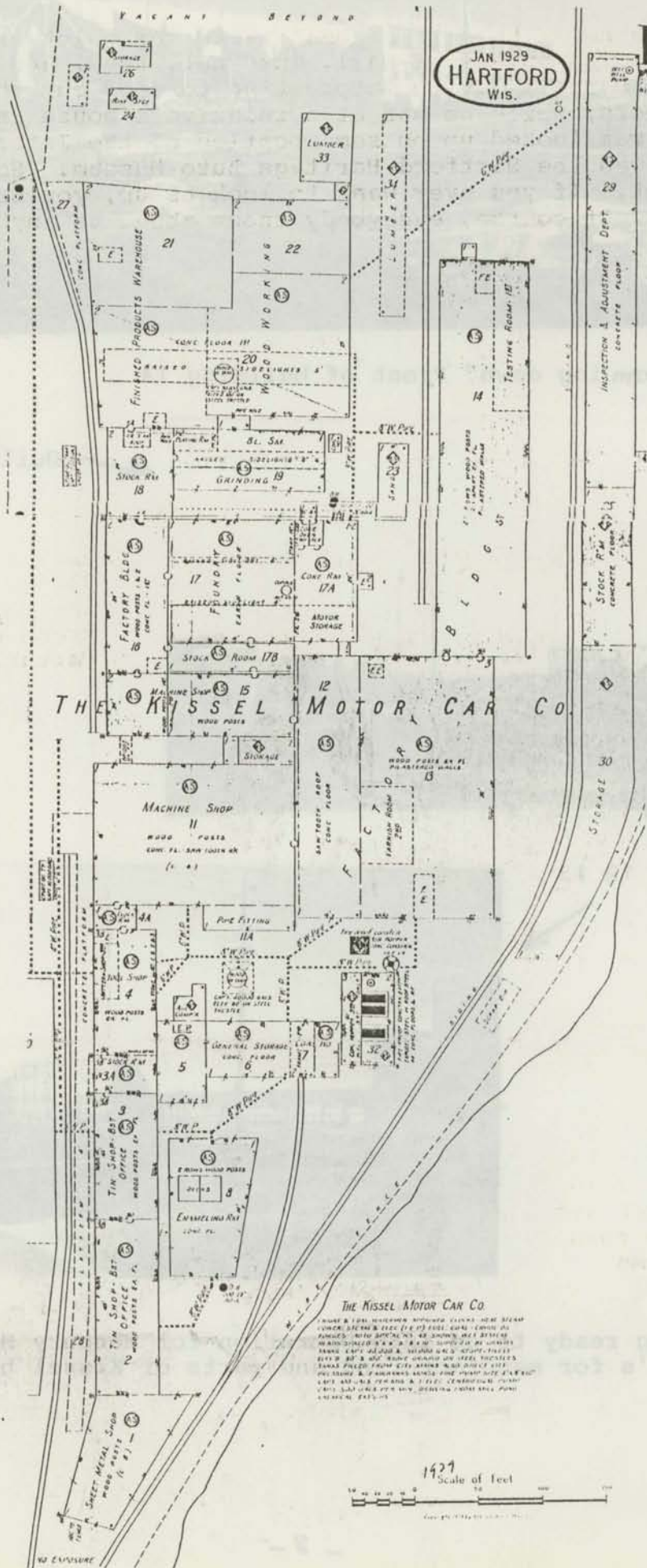
*Dale W Anderson*



Anita King in the KISSELKAR that crossed the USA. Also shown is grand opera star Geraldine Farrar.

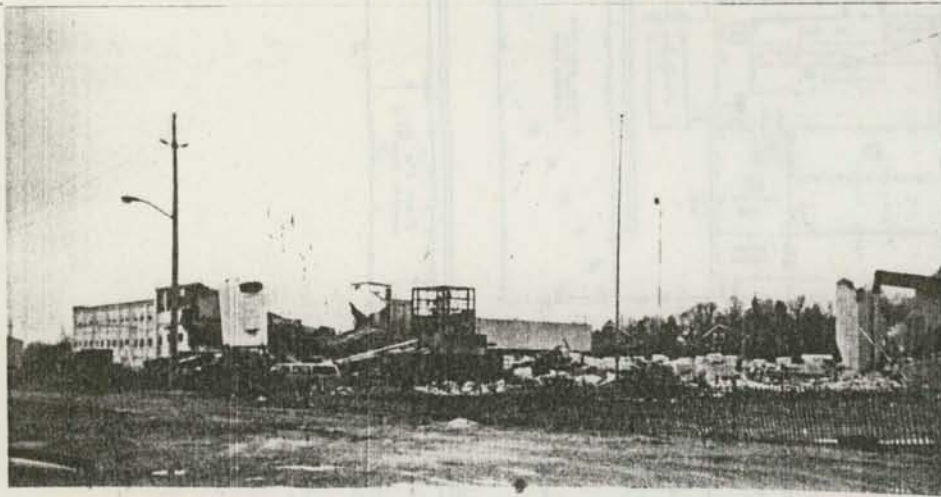
As you may remember the KISSELGRAPH was sent to the Hartford troupes in WW I. This booth was set up on the street in town to gather news items





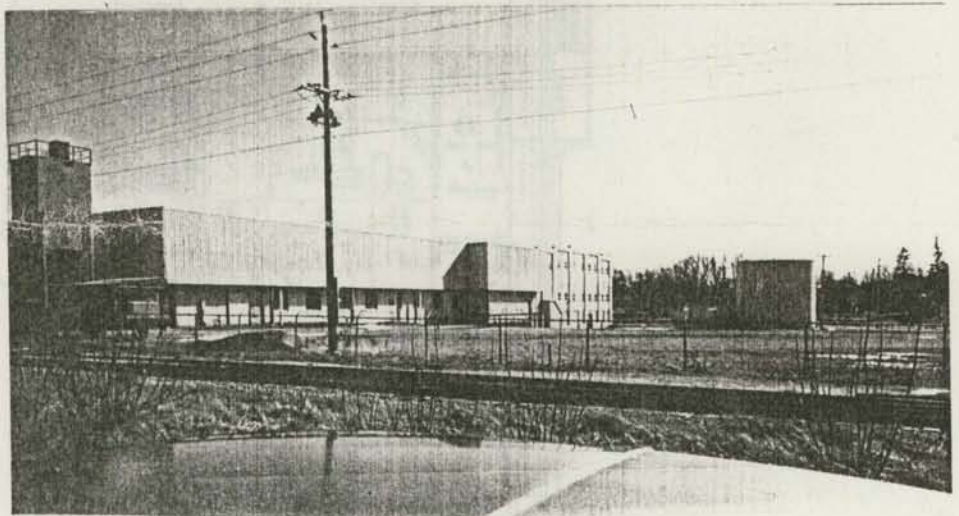


"Coming down" Front of building 14



← Buildings 11 12 13

West side of 11 12 13



Plant is getting ready to go into operation for Mercury Marine. Newest part built in the 60's for manufacturing and parts of Kissel buildings for storage