

The Kisselgraph

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Official Publication of the Kissel Kar Klub
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2006 IS COMING QUICKLY

2006 marks the 100th anniversary of the Kissel Motor Car Company, and it will be the museum's 20th year of operation. Please mark your August 2006 calendar for the celebration. Everyone that can possibly bring his or her Kissel, please plan on it. There are 21 Kissels in the museum. Wouldn't it be great to double that number for a weekend? If you are in the process of restoring your Kissel, make August 2006 the target date (right now it looks like August 17-18, 2006).

KISSEL VISITORS:

Since the last newsletter, we sure have had a lot of Kissel owners drop in at the museum. Some left with Kissel parts, some with Kissel souvenirs, and some even left their Kissel here for awhile. Mark Kissel (that bought Jerrie Beards' Speedster) left his here for about nine months. Tom Harrington bought another Kissel, a Sedan original, and it is here presently. This brings to mind that if you are ever near Hartford, stop in! Look over our entire collection of cars,

and while you're at it, feel free to go through our Kissel files.

OLDER KISSEL KARS:

While we do have 21 Kissels on display, we sure could use some earlier models. Presently, we have one 1912; the rest are 1920 and newer. So, if you are looking for a place for your older Kissel, give us a call, for we would love to have it on display.

PRODUCTION TOTALS? :

For years, we have been stating that Kissel built 25,000 to 35,000 cars and trucks. Most of our information was based on serial numbers set aside for production and the rest an educated guess. I have recently gone through our files and come up with a figure that is based on the printed word.

Production figures for 1907...100

years ahead of its time in auto body fashion.

Reported production from Automobuilders' Magazine 1910...602

Highlights of his professional career at Kissel included the development and patenting, together with Will Kissel, of the All Year Top. This came out in 1914 and consisted of a metal and glass top for winter use, to be removed and replaced with a soft-top for the warm months.

Estimate production based on actual sales dollars
1916...2080
1917...2315
1918...1345
1919...2124

War Production Trucks 1918-1919...2000

Then, in 1918, Kissel and Fred Werner had their greatest success and acclaim with their Speedster, a Roadster in the color of chrome yellow that was called the "Gold Bug."

Actual Kissel production Figures 1920-1930...16000

Total 26,566

I can't seem to find any records on articles that give production for 1908-1909 or 1911 - 1915.

Kissel made trucks from as early as 1911. These varied in size from one ton to five tons. Kissel contributed to the First World War effort by producing their three-ton ammunition carrying truck. Also, in 1915, Werner teamed with Kissel, leading to the production and patent of a cab enclosure for truck drivers in 1918.

KISSEL BODY DESIGNER:

Fred Werner arrived in America from Germany in 1905. By 1908, he was in Hartford, Wisconsin in the employment of the Kissel Motor Car Company. This company was then in its second year. He came from a long line of family carriage makers in Germany. These were for horse drawn carriages in the last decade of the last century. From 1901 to 1905, Werner worked for the Opel Company at Russelsheim, Germany. It was here that he designed the first automobile for the German Kaiser Wilhelm II and one for the Czar Nicholas of Russia.

A storehouse of Fred Werner artifacts exists at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum, on loan from Werner descendents. This includes the Werner collection of vehicles made in the early to mid thirties, mostly carved out of wood, of vehicles of transportation from antiquity to the present. These are fastidiously done on a scale of one and a half-inch to a foot and were to go on display at the Milwaukee Public Museum. A lack of funding stopped this application of this plan, but he continued to produce these models in the basement of his home.

His twenty-five years with the Kissel Motor Car Company spanned the entire existence of this auto company. He was responsible for the Kissel Kar body. This was generally considered to be

MUSEUM REMODELING:

As I had mentioned before, we are going through the remodeling process here. We received a \$426,000 grant from the Department of Transportation (80-20 split). Many of you made donations to our match of \$85,000, and in particular, Chester Krause, of Old Cars Weekly, gave the largest single donation. As projects go, we did run into a major problem on the south-facing wall. At the parapet level, brick was pulling away from the wall and the fix will cost \$50,000. This is the same amount we had set aside as a "contingency fund." Well, so goes the contingency fund and so do some of the other improvements we had planned on.

If you have an interest in the efforts of the museum, please consider a donation so we may do the other work and provide an even better facility.

I hope to send another newsletter of just museum pictures before Christmas so you will know more about the museum.

FIRST CAR BUILT IN HARTFORD

At the corner of Rural and West State streets, just north of the auto Museum, stands Hartford's very first garage. It is a brick-sided building erected in 1866 and has the distinction of being the site where the first car was built in Hartford in 1902.

Christ and Adeline Forbes Favour farmed in Hartford Township for nineteen years. James was born on this farm in 1859. The family moved to Hartford in the late eighteen hundreds. They operated a sawmill, which was situated between the railroad and the

Favour shop. When the sawmill was flourishing, logs would be piled up from the track up to West State Street. James Favour operated this sawmill until 1926, according to entries in the Wisconsin State Business Directory.

James also ran a threshing machine business for farmers in this area. The huge thresher was housed in the center part of the shop building and the doors there were quite high. Later, when the shop was used as a garage, lower doors were installed and the upper area was filled with three small windows. The steam engine was housed in the lower shed at the left, which supplied the power for the thresher; this steam engine was often in early Hartford parades pulling floats. The flooring in the shop is pine, two inches thick and three inches wide, obtained as surplus after the building of a local church.

In the northwest corner of the building, the forge area still contains the anvil and bellows that the Favours used for their ironwork. They collected the babbitt that was thrown out along the tracks by the railroad workers. Babbitt is an alloy of lead, tin, antimony, and copper, which is used in bearings to lessen friction. This alloy was melted in the forge and the lead was sold.

James Favour's first wife died in 1889, and James remarried in 1892. They had three children, including Ben, who was the owner of the shop and supplied the information about the shop.

George Hall, Gustav Frederickson, Sam Toles, and Heston Knickerbocker built their own cars in this shop. The earliest one was completed in 1902, and another was produced in 1906-1907.

Frederickson and Toles were pattern makers for Kissels. Hall moved from Hartford to Rubicon and built a hotel that still stands. Knickerbocker came from Detroit, where he had worked as an auto mechanic and had learned much about cars. Later, about 1909-1910, Knickerbocker ran the garage and had the shop wired for electricity and telephone.

The cars built in the shop were patterned after White Steam Cars. Gasoline was used to create steam in a flash boiler. A coil was heated, water was added, it turned into steam, and ran the car. The more water added, the faster the car ran, with each car costing about \$2,500 to build.

The Favours also rigged up a system of running water for the steam engine shop. They built a set of movable shafts, which ran from the steam engine, along the side wall of the central room, out along the back of the building, and up the hill to the pump. This system pumped water into an underground pipe down to the steam engine room. The piping is still in place underground, but the pumping apparatus is gone. Some men go to engineering colleges, -- these early residents of Hartford "had it in their fingers." James Favour had very little schooling, but he was considered a very intelligent man by the townspeople.

Ben Favour was employed by the city utility department. In March of 1929, he set up his own electrical shop in the central part of this building. He did all types of electrical work including stokers and oil burners. His father, James, died in December of 1938, and Ben continued his business until about

1965. He has now passed on, but the garage still stands.

BROOKS STEVENS ON RUXTON

(Reprint of an article from 1974)

(Brooks Stevens was a famous industrial designer from Wisconsin)

Sometime in 1938 a friend of mine who incidentally drove a beautiful then contemporary 1936 V-12 Pierce Arrow brougham, asked me if I would like to drive to Hartford, Wisconsin, to look over the old Kissel motorcar plant.

I secretly hoped to find somewhere under tarpaulins or hidden within the engineering department coveted models of the elegant Kissels of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Kissel brothers were, of course, still in residence in Hartford and it was reputed that they had retained several of their cars for personal use and that one elegant eight-cylinder brougham had been truncated and made into a pickup truck.

After our arrival at the plant and the tour through the outboard operation, we returned to the former executive garage where my then 20/20 vision was still attempting to seek out at least the Kissel pickup truck, for which I would attempt to bargain. It must be remembered at this time I was already a minor automotive collector, having then several Cords and several Packards. As we were about to take leave I noticed in the corner of the garage an enclosed area with a raised floor and steps leading up to a locked door. This could easily have been a storeroom or power room or some such functional element, but my fiendish curiosity would not let me go without query. Our host explained that it

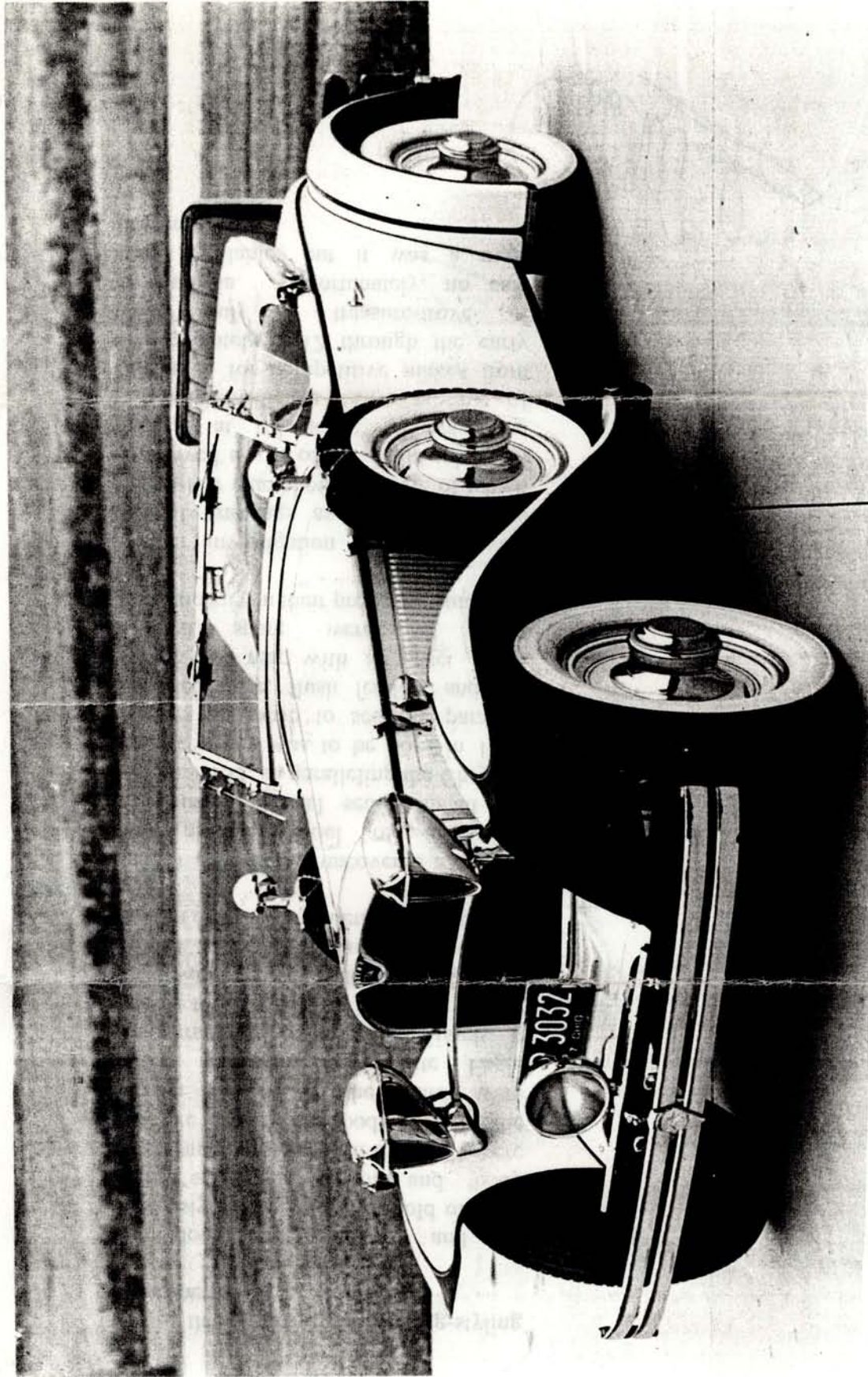
was the old engineering-styling department.

The door was unlocked and we nervously crossed the threshold of Fritz Werner's small design and body development studio. On the walls were full size chassis and body lofts of the Ruxton car and on the boards were further drawings of White Eagle roadsters and all other elegant Kissels. It was as though he had just left, yet the date would have been approximately August 31, 1931 when all Kissel and Ruxton efforts were silenced forever.

Further exploration uncovered a quarter size plaster model of a future aerodynamic Kissel sedan slated for 1932 or 1933, so paralleling the Chrysler airflow which was to be born in 1933 that it was eerie to see the parallel. Rounded nose, flush fenders and the beaver tail rear with an inset metal covered spare were all most revolutionary in their prophetic concept.

Further investigation showed drawers full of drawings as far back as the Kissel-Kar race-about of 1910, of which I received a gift of the India ink cloth tracings at 1/8 scale. I was also presented with the entire morgue of brochures for competitive makes from approximately 1912 through the early '30's, truly a treasure-trove of automobilia. Unfortunately, no cars were available, but it was a most rewarding day.





The 1931 Ruxton, in Roadster body style. Low slung and featuring "cat eye" head lamps.