

The Kisselgraph

☆☆☆ The official newsletter of the KisselKar Klub ☆☆☆

VOL. 41 NO. 1

JUNE 2015

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The 1911 KisselKar Fire Truck on Parade



The first motorized fire apparatus purchased by the City of Salida, Colorado, shown on parade in this updated photo (prior to 1926). The patriotic fervor on display, the age of other vehicles and the dress of the people observing the event suggest a date in the mid or late 1910s. Is this a Fourth-of-July observation or perhaps a celebration marking the end of World War I? Note the earthen streets, the horse-drawn float following the KisselKar, the clouds of smoke behind some of the vehicles, and the large dog that has joined in with the festivities. (See the article starting on page 6.)

The Kisselgraph is published for the benefit of members of the KisselKar Klub through substantial support from the Wisconsin Automotive Museum.

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Our website is an on-line presence for the KisselKar Klub and features a **gallery of member vehicles**, back issues of *The Kisselgraph* and other information.

Website: <http://kisselkar.net/>

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From the editor

How About This? Lend or Donate Your Literature to the Museum!

By Lynn Kissel

There's a undeniable satisfaction in owning original manuals and contemporaneous printed materials for your collector vehicle. But for most Kissel owners, it is a serious challenge to find original literature. It is scarce and expensive.

In many cases, an owner would be happy to have access to important information, even if it were only a poor quality photocopy.

It would be fantastic if more Kissel owners followed the example of Ron Hausmann and others, and donate or lend your literature to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum. This makes the information available to others and benefits the entire community.

Most of the records of the Kissel Motor Car Company were lost when the company closed. At the time, there was no organization like Wisconsin Automotive Museum or the KisselKar Klub to receive them. What a pity.

The Wisconsin Automotive Museum has arguably the largest collection of Kissel literature and information in the world. The files are the accumulation of efforts to by Ralph Dunwoodie, Gene Husting, Dale Anderson, Harold Scheutz, Val Quandt and others. Still it is not a complete record and it has many gaps.

There is an ongoing effort by the Klub to digitize the Kissel files. Data DVDs are available through the museum with all we have collected of parts books, instruction

books (owners manuals), specifications, sales literature and other resources useful to owners.

Why give others access to materials that you have spent considerable wealth and time to accumulate?

A good answer to this question is the moral rule of **enlightened self interest**. Through your donation you improve the community of which you are a part. As others follow this principle, you gain access to a larger body of information than you could accumulate by yourself. Through helping others you help yourself.

If you're like me and in spite of my attempts to the contrary, I often manage to "buy high and sell low". So another answer to this question is that contributions to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum are tax deductible; and it is way easier than trying to sell it at a swap meet or on eBay.

Maybe you can think of other compelling reasons?

Contact Lynn Kissel via email to editor@kisselkar.net.



"Kissel: Wisconsin's Luxury Automobile"

That was the title of a talk given recently by Dawn Bondhus Mueller, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Automotive Museum. Dawn made the presentation on May 5 at the Wisconsin Historical Museum, as one of their "History Sandwiched In" lecture series. Though time for the talk was limited, some stayed longer to ask questions. Visitors to the museum the following week mentioned the lecture as the reason for their visit.





KisselKar Klub Meet is being Planned for June 24-26, 2016

By Dawn Bondhus Mueller

Mark your calendars for the next KisselKar Klub Meet in Hartford! It is planned for June 24-26, 2016. That's the Friday-Sunday weekend following Fathers' Day.

The first meeting to form the Kissel Motor Car Company took place on June 25, 1906, so precisely 110 years later is the perfect day for Kissel owners and enthusiasts to gather.

Next year also marks the 30th anniversary of the museum opening, and the 100th anniversary of the beginning of Nash Motors.

All of these milestones certainly call for a celebration!

The Nash Club is also planning a regional meet at the Museum that weekend so this will surely spark-up the event energy level.

We expect that both clubs will join in a **driving tour on Friday**. Details of the route are being discussed, but even our oldest vehicles should be capable of at least parts of the tour.

On Saturday, a joint car show is planned in the lot in front of museum. Advance publicity will generate considerable interest from the community so this should be an exciting affair and you'll want to be there..

The KisselKar Klub **dinner and meeting will be held on Saturday evening** at the museum. **A light breakfast, discussions and farewells will be held on Sunday morning** at the museum.

Jim Dworschack from the Nash Club recently visited the Museum to freshen the



A view of some of the cars at the 2006 KisselKar Klub meet. About 10 Kissel vehicles, some brought from as far as California and Utah, were proudly displayed in front of the museum. Kissel owners from as far as Australia and Europe attended this event marking the 100-year anniversary of the Kissel Motor Car Company.

Nash exhibit. Jim was enthusiastic about the 2016 meeting plans and it sounds like there will be a good turnout of their members. I'm certain that the beautiful Kissel vehicles and the dedicated KisselKar Klub members will greatly enliven the experience for everyone.

Everything is still in the early planning stages so your suggestions for the weekend will be timely and help us make the weekend a great success.

A block of rooms has been reserved at a special price for the weekend at the Hartford AmericInn for the nights of June 23–25 (<http://www.americinn.com/hotels/wi/hartford>). Call the hotel front desk (262-673.2200) and ask for Ann Wolf to book

your rooms under the Wisconsin Automotive Museum car meet block..

Luxury accommodations can be found at the Westphal Mansion Bed and Breakfast (<http://www.westphalmansioninn.com/>). Another choice in Hartford is the Super 8 Motel.

More information and a registration form will follow in the next issue of the *Kisselgraph*. The Klub meets infrequently, so you don't want to miss this event. We need your support and hope to see you in Hartford next year!

Dawn Bondhus Mueller is director of the Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford, Wisconsin. You can contact Dawn via email to 'Dawn.Bondhus@kisselkar.net'.



“Built for Garbo and Fairbanks but Still Here

Lynn Kissel's 1924 Kissel Speedster Was One of the More Glamorous Cars of the Jazz Age”

Your editor had the distinct privilege of having his two Kissel cars featured in a small article, titled as above, in the January 21, 2015, print edition of the *Wall Street Journal*. *My Ride* is a weekly feature focused on vehicles and their owners written by **A.J. Baime**. The print edition contains several paragraphs of text and a single pho-

tograph, but the on-line version contains additional images.

Freelance photojournalist **Max Wittaker** was the one responsible for taking the photographs. Two of his stunning images are reproduced here with his kind permission. A.J. tells Lynn that the Journal editors liked the photographs so much that they expanded the number of images for the on-line gallery to fifteen.

Here is a pointer to the on-line version, but you will need an WSJ login to see the whole article (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/built-for-garbo-and-fairbanks-but-still-here-1421778071>).





Saving the Past: Our 1911 KisselKar Fire Truck

By Doug Bess,
Fire Chief
City of Salida,
Colorado

There are many ways that we work every day to build a sense of community and civic pride, to create common interests that help distinguish ourselves within the larger society. An important way is through preservation of our past.

In the City of Salida, one of our community projects is the continuing restoration of our early KisselKar fire truck. The public has expressed considerable support for this effort and it serves as an important piece in the rejuvenation of Salida's historic downtown district. Projects such as this foster conversations about the community's early history as a booming railroad town, and serve as a tangible object illustrating the city's history.

On September 27, 1912, after two fires had devastated the city, the Salida City Council approved the purchase of a motor fire truck at a cost of \$5300 from the Anderson Coupling and Fire Supply Company.

To put this in context, \$5300 was a big expenditure in the day. In 1912 the average American made about \$200-400 per year, so this truck represented more than 10 or 20 years of income for an individual and a big investment by the City of Salida.

The KisselKar was a combination hose and chemical car. The chemical car did not have a pump, but rather functioned much like a gigantic soda ash fire extinguisher. Acid mixed with an alkaline water would generate carbon dioxide (CO₂), creating pressure within the tank that pressurized the fire hose. Once the water was expelled, the truck would need to be refilled and the process repeated. By today's standards it was inefficient; similar fire extinguishers are no longer in use.

In 1926, the apparatus was retrofitted with a Waterous 300 GPM pump which is basically how all modern fire apparatus operate.

The KisselKar was in service from November 1912 until April 1942 when it was replaced with an International Howe (which the city still has). The KisselKar was then



Two firefighters play with the firehouse dogs in front of the KisselKar. This photo was taken prior to 1942 while the truck was still in service.



A recent photo of the KisselKar next to a more modern piece of fire fighting equipment. Although the KisselKar is not a small vehicle, it looks small when sitting next to a modern engine.

relegated to the City Water Works on Little River.

In the 1960s, the Salida Volunteers and paid staff under the direction of Chief Jack Henderson retrieved the KisselKar in pieces from the water works and restored the apparatus. It became the pride and joy of the firefighters and became a parade favorite. During the 1970s, the firefighters competed in hose laying events at the annual state convention which was held in different towns around the state. To kick off the state convention, a parade would be held in the host town. It was common practice for the firefighters to load the KisselKar onto a trailer and take it to the host town's parade.

In 1997, Chief Pete DeChant took great interest in the KisselKar. Pete was a good

mechanic and was able to get the truck running smoother. Pete was able to locate and purchase a new set of Michelin tires that fit the wooden spoke wheels. The KisselKar continued to be a parade favorite as well as a draw at the annual Angel of Shavano Car Show. In 1998, the KisselKar was featured in the Society for the Preservation of Antique Motor Fire Apparatus in America's (SPAAMFAA) quarterly publication. During my career we have had countless visitors from around the country stop by Station 11 to see and take photos of the truck.

Unfortunately, around 1999 the truck began to overheat in parades. There was a concern that the engine block might be cracked but this has never been verified. The truck was again taken out of service

and has not been driven since.

As Fire Chief, my goal is to see this 100+ year old piece of rolling history Land-marked and restored and once again on the streets of Salida for all to enjoy.

Issues that we hope to address in the future are listed here.

- **Evaluate current condition:**

Isolate cooling problem; Disassemble truck and evaluate parts

- **Rebuild engine:**

Disassemble engine and evaluate parts; Acquire or manufacture necessary parts; Acquire and install carburetor; Replace or manufacture new radiator

- **Rebuild drivetrain:**

Evaluate clutch and replace parts as needed; Evaluate transmission and rebuild as required; Evaluate rear differential and rebuild as required; Evalu-

ate steering box and rebuild as required; Rebuild or replace Watrous pump

- **Restore truck body:**

Provide new nickel plating for plated parts; Media blast all painted parts and frame; Repair cracks to frame and sheet metal parts; Epoxy prime metal parts as required; Prime and Sand all parts to be repainted; Paint all parts; Apply 23k gold leaf and striping; Clear coat painted and decorative parts

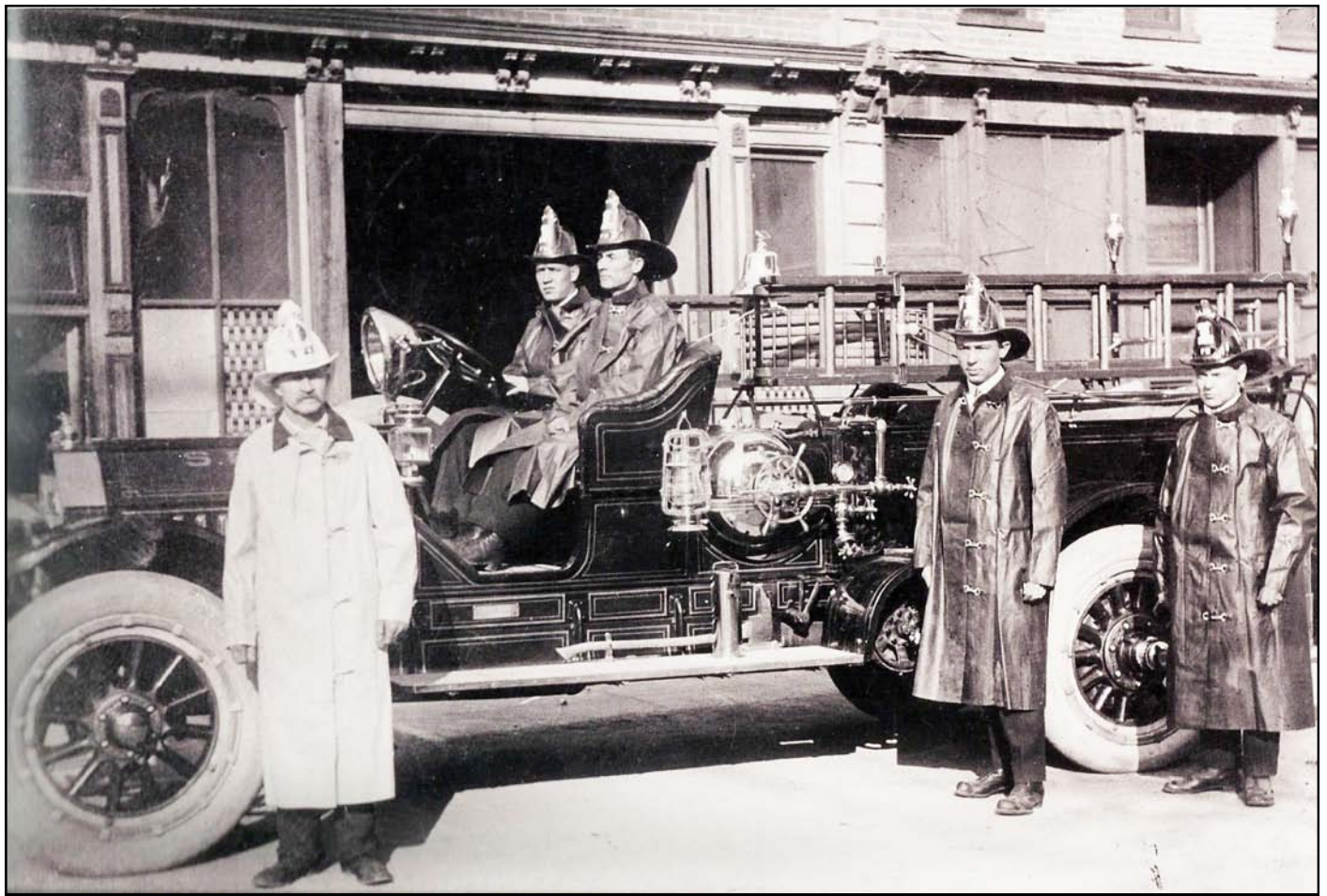
- **Restore interior:**

Rebuild wooden steering wheel, if necessary; Re-upholster seat in black leather; Restore dash gauges, hand-cranked siren, and switches; Install new wiring harness; Fabricate and install new wooden hose bed or restore existing if possible

On February 2, 2015, the City of Salida



A photo from 1942 when the KisselKar was taken out of service. The hoses are draft (intake) hoses for the Waterous 300 GPM pump that was installed in 1926. This photo was taken in front of the firehouse out of which we still operate.



The Chief stands proudly with his men and the KisselKar truck. Although the date of this photo is unknown, it was taken prior to 1926 as evidenced by the large chemical tank behind the passenger seat.

was awarded a State Historical Fund grant in the amount of \$60,000 from the Colorado Historical Society. Emily Katsimpalis, an intern for the City of Salida, was instrumental in writing the grant request. Separately, the Salida City Council pledged \$7,500 and \$12,500 has been raised through donations. We are currently under contract with the State Historical Society to proceed with the restoration of the 1911 KisselKar.

In June of 2015, the Kissel will be transported to KVR/LLC in Estes Park, Colorado, where Douglas Klink and his crew will begin restoring the Kissel.

Donations are being gratefully accepted to help us fund the remainder of this exciting restoration effort.

We are grateful for the support from the KisselKar Klub. I hope that members of the Klub, as they pass near Salida, will make the effort visit Station 11 and view this important piece of kinetic history that over 100 years ago helped protect our city from ravages of uncontrolled fire.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Lynn Kissel for edits to my early drafts of this article.

Doug Bess was born in Salida, Colorado. He joined the Salida Fire Department in 1994 and became Chief in 2012. His step father was a member of the department and he basically grew up in the fire house. You can contact Doug via email to 'Doug.Bess@kisselkar.net'.

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1911 KisselKar Fire Truck



Purchased new by the City of Salida, Colorado, in 1912, this fire engine is built on a two-ton Kissel chassis and is scheduled for a major restoration starting in 2015. Chief Doug Bess tells us more about the background of this vehicle and its significance to the preservation of the city's past, inside. (See the article starting on page 6.)