

The Kisselgraph

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

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Klub member Ronald Hausmann (Birmingham, MI) received the upper image from a stranger in FRANCE that admired Kissels. The car appears to be a circa 1927 Kissel Coupe Roadster. The unsolicited message to Ron identified the woman as H el ene van Zuylen.

An internet search informs us about Baroness H el ene van Zuylen van Nijvelt van de Haar, "one of a trio of French female motoring pioneers of the Belle Epoque. She entered the 1898 Paris-Amsterdam-Paris Trail, thus becoming the first woman to compete in an international motor race." (Wikipedia)

Is this our first indication of a Kissel that was owned by an aristocrat?

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/>

E-mail: webmaster@kisselkar.net



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Good Questions All! Where Can I Find the Answers?

A recent email asks your editor these simple questions. *“How many Kissels were made during the years? Do you have yearly production numbers? How many are known to be left? What is the oldest survivor, what is the last production survivor?”*

So where can you find a simple answer to these simple questions? Only here! But all the answers aren't so simple.

Lynn Kissel and **Doug Kissel** prepared “A Visual Essay on Kissel” in 2023. A copy is stored under “Articles” on the Klub’s website. It answered all these questions, save one. (See <https://kisselkar.net>)

How many Kissels were made during the years? Do you have yearly production numbers? How many are known to be left?

Lynn and Doug do their best to answer these questions on slide #32, but there are caveats. We know of no reliable source for pre-1920 truck production. This estimate uses the dollar value of truck sales to estimate number of trucks produced. See slide #32 for the details by year. Bottom line, July 1906 through Nov 1930, Kissel total production was about 29,000±.

22,731 cars,
5,400 trucks,
576 funeral cars
339 taxis

Last Production Survivor



1930 Model 8-95 Brougham (eng #4832)
Konstantin Nikitin (Bratislava, Slovakia)

(Konstantin Nikitin)

“Kostya” Nikitin is the retired President of the Association of Collectors of Historical Vehicles in the Slovak Republic (a FIVA Member organization). Kissel entered receivership on Sep. 18, 1930, and ceased passenger car production in Nov. 1930. Calendar 1930 automobile production totaled 93 units, which includes sixteen model 1931 automobiles. (Heasley 1977)

12

(The 2021 total production estimate of 26,000± was criticized for under estimating pre-1920 truck production. Still earlier, we have seen production estimates of 35,000 but don't know the basis of that number. Hopefully these as a narrowing range of estimates?)

What is the oldest survivor?

Slide #11 addresses this. We list two 1908 Kissels as the oldest survivors.

1908 Model D Touring (eng# 703)

Donna Renuart (Kalamazoo, Michigan)

1908 Model E Roadster (eng# 733)

Gerry Groenewold (Grand Forks, North Dakota)

What is the last production survivor?

Lynn and Doug had neglected to address this question in earlier versions of their presentation. That now has been fixed with a new slide #12, displayed above.

1930 Model 8-95 Brougham (eng# 4832)

Konstantin Nikitin (Bratislava, Slovakia)

Wisconsin Automotive Festival 2026

The KisselKar Klub is planning our next meet in Hartford, Wisconsin. The dates we've selected are **June 10-14, 2026**, so please mark your calendar!

We are preparing a celebration of vehicle manufacturing in Wisconsin that extends well beyond Kissel. As in recent Klub gatherings, we will embrace the enthusiastic participation of the Nash Car Club. But we are seeking participation beyond Kissel and Nash. We are soliciting and welcoming participation of other clubs as we generally celebrate Wisconsin legacy vehicles at Wisconsin Automotive Festival 2026.

Details are still evolving but the overall contour of our festival follows. Over five days we will admire and drive our cars, listen and share our knowledge with others, dine and socialize, renew old friendships and make new ones, as we celebrate early Wisconsin vehicles.

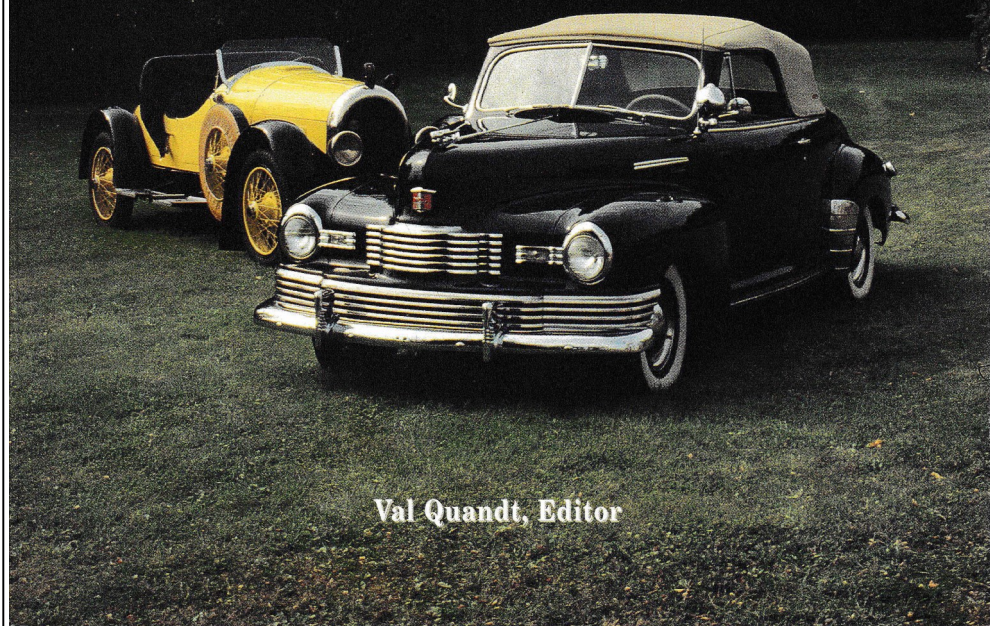
The following are some visions of our festivities.

Car Show, Saturday

There will be an exhibition of collector cars outside the Wisconsin Automotive Museum. In addition to Kissel and Nash vehi-

Wisconsin Cars and Trucks ~A CENTENARY~

by Wisconsin Society Automotive Historians



Val Quandt, Editor

Dawn Bondhus, Wisconsin Automotive Museum Exec Director, reminds us that both of the cars on the cover of this book are on display at the museum.

cles brought by owners, we anticipate showing other Wisconsin manufactured vehicles.

There will judging of vehicles for several awards with winners announced at the banquet that evening.

Driving Tour, Friday

It would have been a common sight to see Kissel, Nash and other Wisconsin cars and trucks on the roads around Hartford 100 years ago. That vision has faded through the years.

Our driving tour reintroduces our legacy vehicles to Wisconsin roads. It is an immediate and visceral reminder with sights, sounds, smells that help keep the memory of Wisconsin manufactured vehicles alive today.

Presentations

We hope to offer several interesting and stimulating presentations by Klub members and others during our meet. Presented inside the museum, attendance will require meet registration or museum admission.

Some presentations may be of a “360” nature. A vehicle will be moved into an aisle for a close-up and personal view.

Organization

A motivated committee has been meeting monthly via video conferencing to organize this event.

Klub co-president **Ron Hausmann** is serving as the chair of our meet. Others involved include **Dawn Bondhus, Lynn Kissel, Jim Nicholson, Chuck Kissel, Rob Morris, Doug Kissel, Lee Krombholtz, Charles Kissel,** and **Joe Leaf.**

Others are welcome and encouraged to get involved. Contact the Klub editor if you want to join us. Our upcoming video/phone conferences in early 2025 are at 8PM (USA Eastern Time) on Jan. 8, Feb. 5, Mar. 5.

Connecting with the Members

The Klub roster represents the most comprehensive summary of surviving Kissel vehicles in the world. As for past meets, we will publish an update roster at the meet.

Ownership and serial numbers evolve over time and should be periodically verified. This is one important reason for a plan to connect with our members in the coming year.

Another — Equipped with knowledge of our 2026 festival plans, some members will be curious and will want to know more. A personal contact will likely increase attendance and may encourage more members to bring their vehicle to the tour or for exhibition. It is a special thrill to see out-of-town collector vehicles parked in front of the Wisconsin Automotive Museum.

How Can I Learn More?

Here are some ways to know more as our plans evolve.

We are preparing webpages that document our dynamic plans. Look for these to appear under “Events” on the Klub website (<https://kisselkar.net>).

KM2026@googlegroups.com is a special email group created to aid our internal discussions. We have also been posting summaries to keep others informed to KisselKar-Chatter@googlegroups.com. Send a note to the Klub editor if you would like to join either of these email groups.

Lynn Kissel, Klub Editor
<mailto:editor@kisselkar.net>

“Wroblewski has set a storytelling bonfire... *Familiaris* is as expansive and enlightening a saga as has ever been written.” —TOM HANKS

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE STORY OF EDGAR SAWTELLE

FAMILIARIS

Oprah's
Book Club
2024

DAVID WROBLEWSKI

(Blackstone Publishing)

Book Features Kissel and Hartford

Museum Executive Director Dawn Bondhus tells us...

“This week I found out about a book of historical fiction that prominently features the Kissel factory, automobiles, and Hartford. The author is David Wroblewski and the title of the book is Familiaris. Wroblewski is a native of Oconomowoc, WI, which is near

Hartford. This book, and a previous book about the same fictional family in a different time period, were chosen as an Oprah Book Club selection.”

Dawn says that this book has brought new patrons to the museum as they explore the background of the book.

Google Books offers a preview edition of this book.

<https://books.google.com/>

High Tea with Miss Amy

Lynn Kissel, Cameron Park, CA

Miss Amy (our 1929 Tourster, car# 95-1504) was invited as an exhibit at the Annual Tea, Sep 19, an annual benefit for the **Murer House Foundation** (Folsom, CA). The theme this year was the "Golden Age of Hollywood." Indeed, Miss Amy attracted considerable attention as a backdrop for photos with the glam attendees.

As many of us know, Kissel was a popular ride for many actors in the early days of Hollywood. We're familiar with the image of Paul Parrot, Hal Roach and friends in an early 1920s Kissel Speedster.

Anita King, the Paramount Girl, first woman to drive solo across the US, used a 1915 KisselKar Touring. A touring car on display in the Wisconsin Automotive Museum still wears the block lettering from participating in the centennial celebration.

(<https://thestoryofanitaking.wordpress.com>)

I've read about celebrity Kissel Speedster owners Fatty Arbuckle (comedian), Bebe Daniels (actress), Ralph DePalma (racecar champion), Eddie Duchin (band leader),

Amelia Earhart (aviator), Douglas Fairbanks (actor), Greta Garbo (actress), Gladys George (actress), Ruby Keeler (actress), William S. Hart (actor), Al Jolson (singer), Mabel Normand (actress), Mary Pickford (actress), and Rudy Vallee (singer).

Here's a bit of trivia related to this event. In the photo of Lynn with the three beauties, he is flanked by two versions of Audrey Hepburn. The lady in black recalls Audrey in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961). The vision in white is Audrey in "My Fair Lady" (1964).



(Photos by Robert)

Kissel's Expanding Horizons in 1911

The Klub has been communicating with **Rudy Rathert** on his active efforts in the restoration of his 1911 KisselKar D-11 Semi-Racer (eng# 50-3826). Rudy has promised pictures of his Semi-Racer for the Klub files.

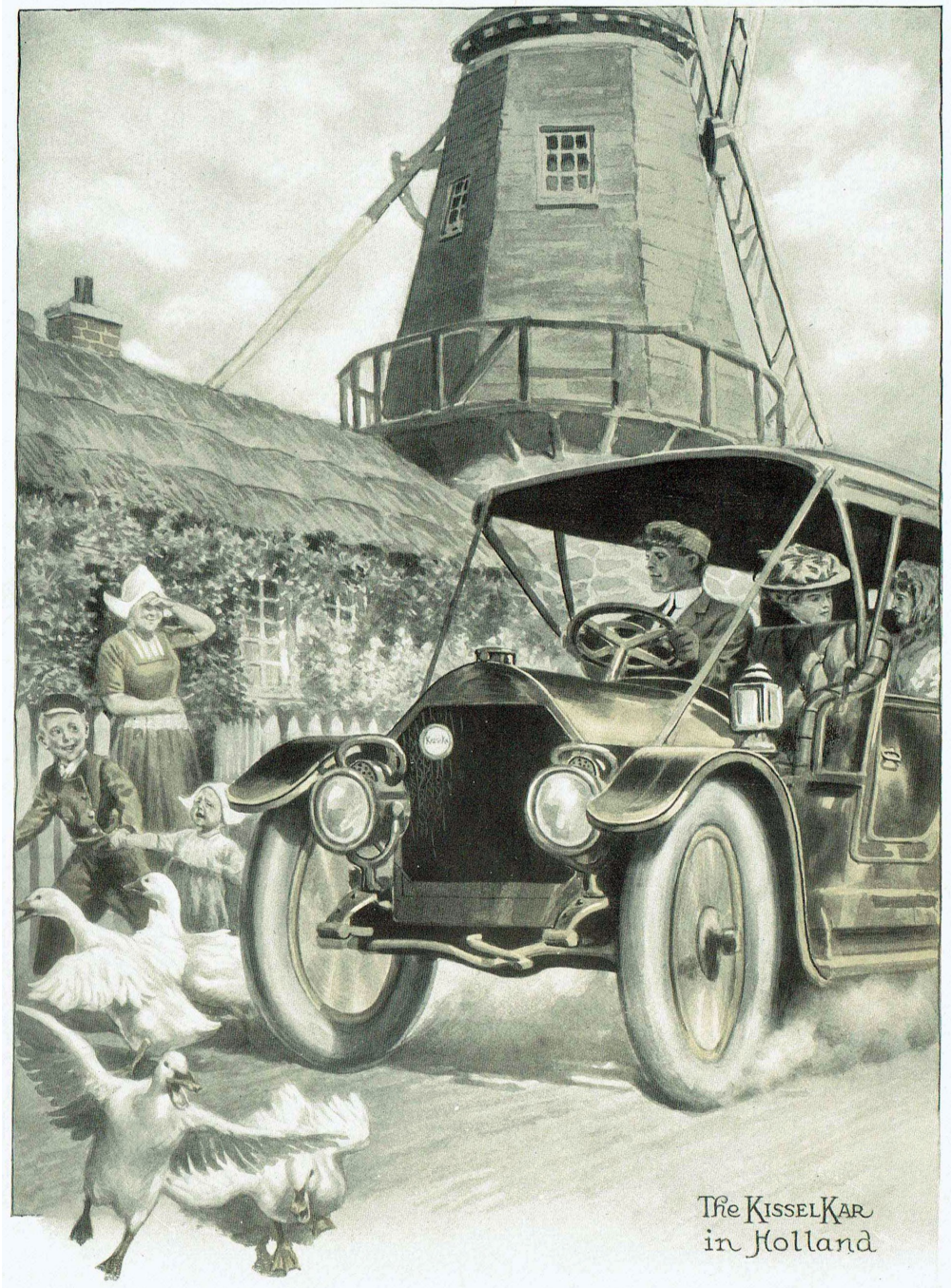
On Rudy's recent visit to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum, in conversations with executive director Dawn Bondhus, the question of factory colors came up. Interestingly, Kissel sales literature specifically states that color was the option of the buyer of a 1911 Semi-Racer.

While examining sales literature, your editor was struck by the marked departure in 1911 from previous years. For the first time, Kissel issued a separate brochure for commercial vehicles and offered trucks on a dedicated chassis.

But it was the overt international overlays that really caught our editor's attention. A full page illustration entitled "The KisselKar in Holland" greets the reader on the first page. The backgrounds on other pages depict scenes from New York, Paris, Germany. The inside covers illustrate outlines of 11 different geographic locations: all of the Western Hemisphere; Italy; Great Britain; Spain; the Netherlands; Africa; France;

Southeast Asia; Japan; India. Do these international references indicate areas to which they had already, or planned to, market their vehicles? Seems quite ambitious for a small manufacturer with annual production somewhat shy of 1,000 units!

Still, we have ample evidence of Kissel's international reach through the vehicles that survive to this day. Clearly Kissel was a growing, enthusiastic and enterprising endeavor in these early years.



The KISSELKAR
in Holland

1930 Kissel for Sale, in SPAIN

Through museum director Dawn Bondhus, we have recently learned of a “new” Kissel in Spain. There is a 1930 Kissel 6-73 Brougham (car# 73-2508) for sale in Valencia. Checkout a brief description and several photos here.

<https://www.antequeraclassic.com>

This vehicle had come to the attention of the Klub over a year ago when we saw an offer for sale on *Hemming Motor News*. But we had misidentified it as a 1929 that was once thought to exist in Sweden, so we think the Swedish Kissel is still missing. BUT we are excited to welcome a new Spanish Kissel to the Klub!

We have received a lengthy email and additional photos for this car from **Javier**

Antequera who owns this car with his father. The car apparently runs with a replaced engine and transmission (damaged originals available). Interestingly, there is extensive documentation on the history of the car since the 1970s, including digitized Super8 movies!

It is reported to be the winner of the “Trophy of His Majesty the King of Spain” in 1990. Sounds impressive! Our second brush with royalty in this issue, see our cover note on Baroness H el ene van Zuylen.

The Klub thinks this Spanish Kissel is among the first batch of 1930 cars. Its car number is within 10 of the start for the model year. Recall that Kissel started their model year in July, so it was likely completed sometime in the second half of calendar year 1929.



(Javier Antequera)

Christmas In Folsom

Lynn Kissel,
Cameron Park, CA

Miss Amy's appearance at the Murer House Tea in September was so successful that she was invited to an even bigger follow-on performance. Honored by the Folsom Historic District, Miss Amy was invited to serve as Santa's "sleigh" for multiple events of *ChristmasInFolsom.com*, a month long holiday celebration.

Our 1929 Kissel 8-95 Tourster (car# 95-1504) was tasked with ferrying Santa, Mrs Claus and Rudolph on several occasions as they spread holiday cheer. Scheduled for six appearances in December, only three evenings were realized; her others were called because of rain. Here are some photos and personal observations documenting these extraordinary festivities.

By a wide margin, the official tree lighting on December 6 was the event with the crushing crowd. Parked a city block from the tree, it was a solid wall of humanity around the car when the tree was lit. Most people were considerate of the 95 year old car, but I did ask some people not to sit on her



Inside the residence we see, from the left, Gumdrop the Toy Soldier, Santa Claus, Lynn Kissel, and Mrs. Claus. She doesn't use it in public, but I'm told Mrs. Claus' first name is Gertrude.

fenders.

Early that evening, when the crowd was still sparse, I invited people to sit in the car. But that quickly became unmanageable as the evening progressed and the crowd swelled. The Clauses were scheduled to be in residence from 6 to 7:30 PM, but they didn't leave their house until almost 10 PM this night.

On other nights the scene was much more sedate. Sutter Street is in the commercial center of Folsom's historic district. It featuring several blocks of fine dining, libations and entertainment. It is now simply ablaze with holiday lights. The legacy steam-train turntable has been converted to an ice skating rink. *ChristmasInFolsom* has built Santa a residence on the banks of the rink. (Consider that the winter night-time temperature rarely dips to freezing here.)

Miss Amy takes the Clauses for a brief drive through the historic district. Santa is ho, ho, hoing as we drive. Mrs Claus and I wave, I sometimes toot the horn, Rudolph blinks his red nose. We surprise some adults not expecting us and get waves and shoutouts in response.



Lynn tips his hat as Buddy the Elf takes our picture.



(Lynn Kissel)

The scene around Miss Amy before the lighting of the tree.

Adults with children quickly bend and point out Santa. I catch nice things being said about Miss Amy. I feel the Christmas spirit! All is right with the world.

Miss Amy deposits the Clauses and Rudolph at their residence next to the rink. Together with *Gumdrop the Toy Soldier* and *Buddy the Elf*, the Clauses receive a steady stream of child and adult visitors through the early evening hours.

I am intrigued with some of the public reactions to the car. The most common reactions were overwhelmingly positive, feeding my already bloated ego.

As I waited for the Clauses, I parked the car and engaged those who came for a closer look. Few had heard of Kissel and I deliver sermons of varied length tailored to the stamina of my congregation.

A few people wanted to know if the car was available for birthdays, weddings, bar mitzvahs. I responded that “Yes! I do that for close friends and relatives.” It appeared that some considered, but all ultimately passed on my invitation.

One person was certain that Miss Amy was a “kit” car. In spite of my testimony and the CCCA badge on her cowl attesting to her authenticity, I think this man left unconvinced.

I had multiple inquiries about her sale. Everyone has a price, I guess, but I wasn’t here to sell the car.

The limitations of a 1920s automobile rapidly become more apparent at night. Lighting is the first thing you notice. For the driver, illumination from 1929 lights seems to completely disappear when facing modern traffic. It feels like driving around with no lights. It’s scary.

There are other limitations. Perhaps the definition of a third-brush generator is that it is either putting out too much or too little current. The nights were spent idling or travelling at low-speed. Miss Amy, lights afire, was running on battery. I’m happy that Miss Amy has a voltmeter and two independent batteries with separate cockpit cutouts. Running on one battery, I watched as the voltage dropped below 5.5 Volts. In spite of installing LED headlights, I needed to “race” the engine to reverse the power drain,

unseemly behavior for the car when it needs to be at a polite parade rest. I wondered how lower I could let the voltage drop before experiencing trouble?

On these cool winter evenings, fogging of windshield, mirrors and seats became an issue. Fortunately Miss Amy’s windshield folds down and she spent much of the evening in this configuration.

Well dressed, the Clauses didn’t mind the open car, but I got cold on my first night out. Adding layers on later excursions. I still came home with cold feet.



(Lynn Kissel)

Buddy the Elf manages the line and takes pictures.

The KisselKar Klub
c/o Wisconsin Automotive Museum
147 North Rural Street
Hartford, WI 53027

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

A car for exciting times!



(Wisconsin Automotive Museum)

Executive Director Dawn Bondhus sends us this fascinating photo. A company of performers poses with a Kissel Speedster on display in the Wisconsin Automotive Museum. From the adjoining Schauer Arts Center, these costumed actors fit perfectly with the Roaring 20s vibe of the Kissel “Gold Bug.”