

Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*

Antique Autos Roll Into Museum Spotlight

LOU ANN GOOD
*Food And Family
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HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Like most of the 63,000 members of the Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA), Bill Smith did not start out collecting antique cars. He was one of those teen-age guys who found a car no one wanted and fixed it up to have something to run.

"I was 14-years-old and fixed up a Model A Ford. That was before I had my driving license, so I drove it around our orchard," Smith said.

No other family members shared Smith's passion for fixing up old cars. His mother expressed her frustration for his hobby by saying, "You waste so much time with those old cars."

But Smith proudly tells people that the first word he spoke was "car."

"My crib was placed next to a window that overlooked the neighborhood garage, and I could watch all them pump gas into the cars that stopped by," Smith said.

Growing up he spent a lot of time at the "mom and pop" garage. I learned by watching. And if I wanted to know anything, I just asked," he said.

Smith's first venture into restoring an antique car was not entirely pleasurable. He said that a friend talked him into going into partnership with him in restoring a 1927 Model T Roadster Ford pickup. Smith donated his share before seeing the vehicle.

"It was in a basement backed up to a coal furnace. Over the years, the ashes had been dumped into the bed of the truck. When Smith saw the overflowing ashes that partially hid the truck, he was furious.

The ashes had eaten away the metal.

"I figured my friend had taken me for a Model T ride," Smith said.

It took Smith four years and parts collected from 13 states to

restore it. But he won first prize a the AACA show based on the excellence for original finish, maintenance, and workmanship.

That success, of course, spurred Smith to take on more projects.

Restoring a car to its original appearance with gleaming chrome, a smooth-running engine, and wheels, becomes a passionate pursuit for those who try it.

"Like golf and all hobbies, restoring cars is expensive, but it balances out for the pleasure derived from it," Smith said.

Now executive director of AACA Museum, Smith's fascination with automobiles never dims.

Unlike most antiques, automobiles are in a league of their own.

"To be considered an antique, cars need to be 25 years old," said Smith.

The average person who joins AACA is about 30 years old. That's the age when he looks back and remembers his first car and says, "Hey, I wish I had that old Ford Mustang or whatever," Smith said.

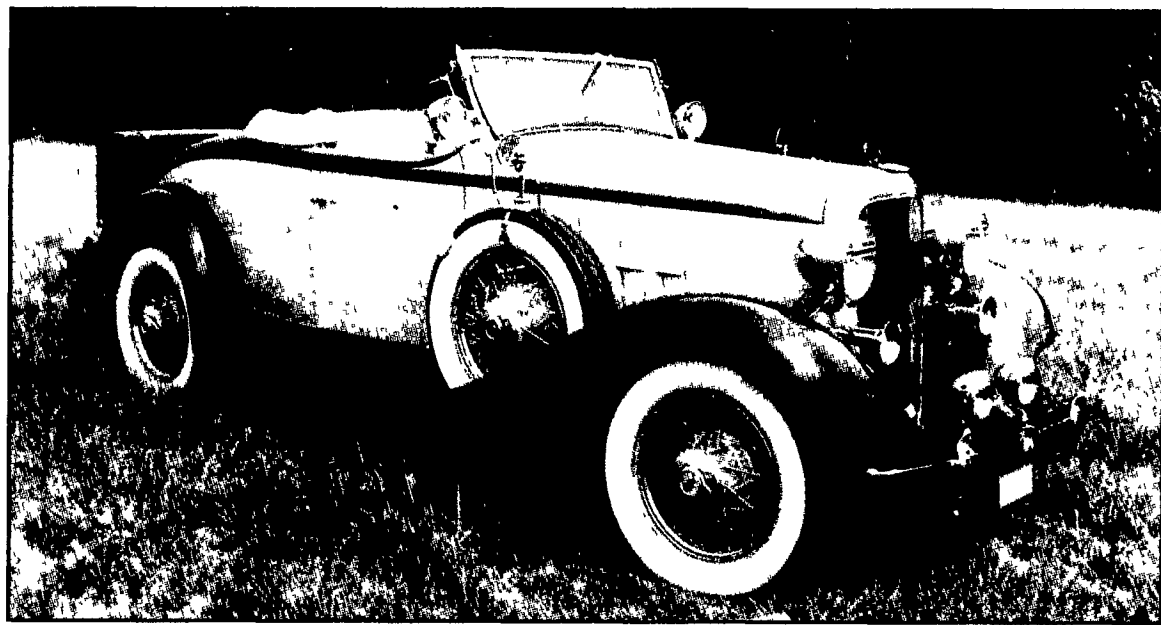
When searching for parts to fix up older cars, the novice discovers people with similar interests and strong friendships are forged.

It's a natural progression to advance from restoring dilapidated autos to going to shows and starting another project.

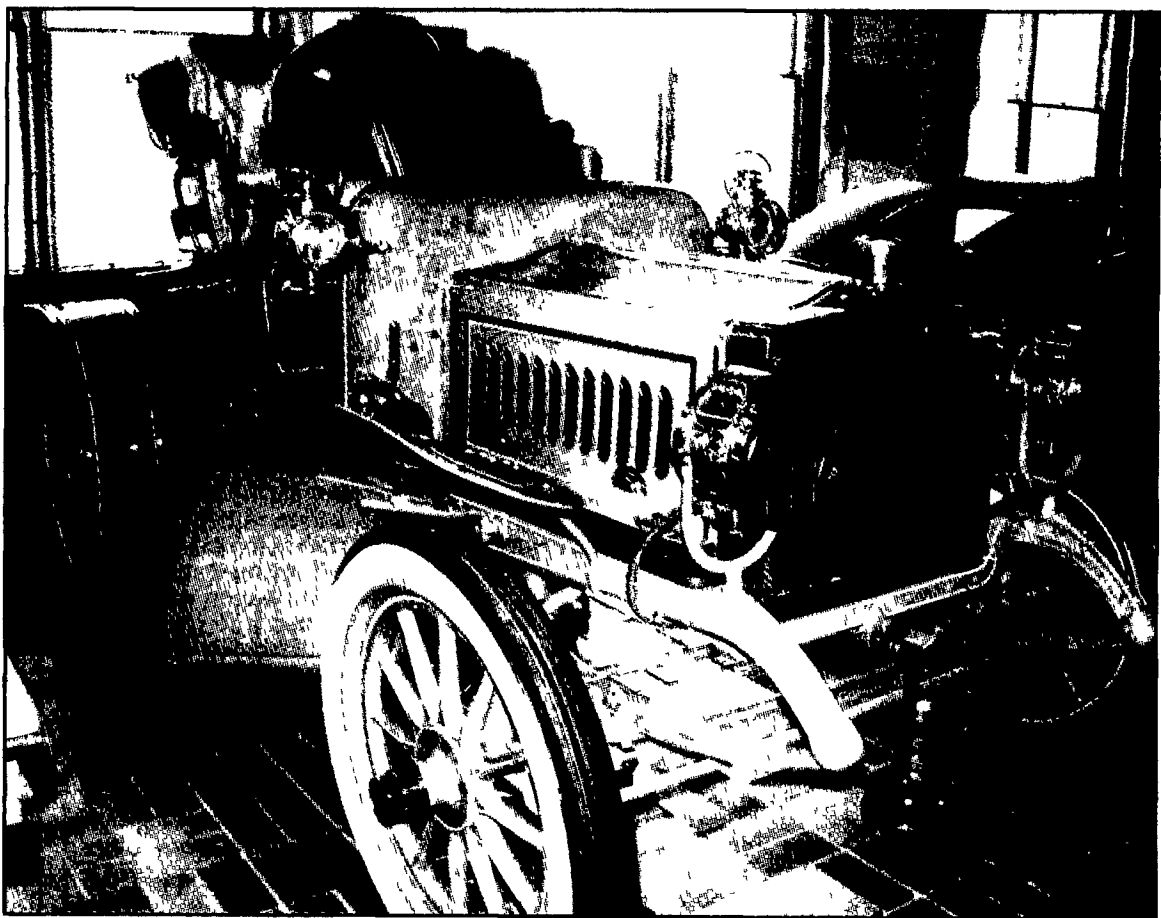
The AACA provides a fountain of information and reliable source for car buffs. Members of AACA attend monthly meetings at regional chapters. The subjects change from month to month but includes sessions on insurance, paint, upholstery, and restoration expertise.

Chapter dues are \$26 annually. Members receive a monthly magazine and are eligible to participate in all national functions, meets, and tours.

The AACA was formed in



The 1933 Chevrolet Roadster features dual fog lights, dual horns, dual spotlights, dual sidemounts, a trunk for luggage, and a rumble seat that folds.



The 1906 green Mitchell Model is a C-4 Roadster made in Racine, Wi., is one of the cars donated to the museum.

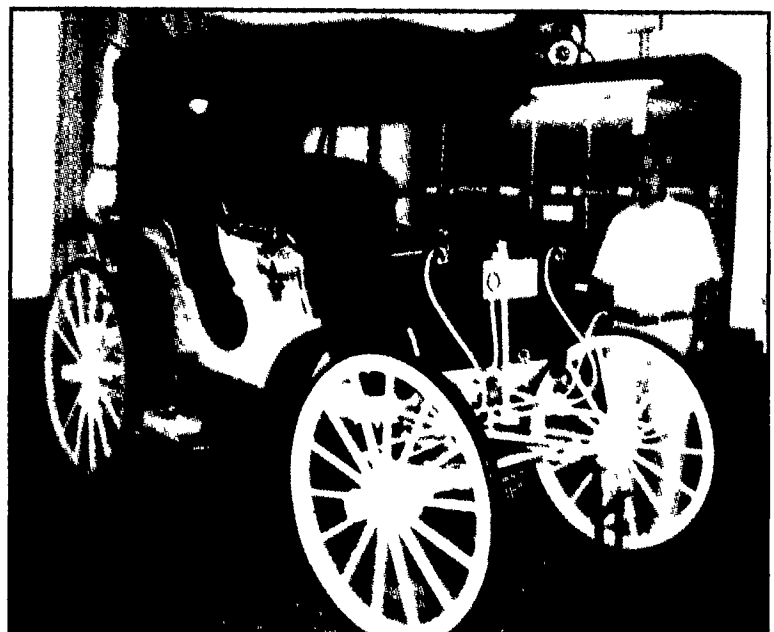
1935 in the Philadelphia area by 14 men. It has grown to 406 chapters with 63,000 members worldwide. In the early 1950s, the annual shows were moved to the Hershey area.

"Today the annual show is the largest auto show and flea market," Smith said. More than 250,000 people attended last year's show.

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The clock and radio that required a separate key to turn on still operates.



This Chicago motorcar is as stylish today as in 1895, but its worth has increased to \$350,000, according to Bill Smith, executive director of AACA Museum.

AACA Museum Project Plans July 21 Expo

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HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — The Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA) Museum has purchased property to erect a museum to transport visitors back to the days of the horseless carriage and bring them step-by-step through the years, showing the technology and evolving mystique of the motorcar.

From wooden spokes to rumble seats, then to fins and muscle cars, this interactive journey promises to fascinate and educate visitors.

The track of land is along Route 39 near Hershey. To date, utilities, roads, and a storage building have been erected. But more than 5 million is needed to complete the project and more is

needed to design, construct, and maintain the exhibits.

The AACA Museum Expo is one of the ways money is raised for the project.

The sixth annual AACA Museum Expo is planned for July 21 at the Palmyra Fire Company Grounds, E. Spruce and N. Grant St., Palmyra.

Gates open at 7 a.m. Show cars are welcomed at 8 a.m. Trophy presentation at 3 p.m. for seven different categories, starting at 1929 and earlier to the 1970s. In addition to the vehicle show, the day-long event includes a flea market, arts and crafts, car corral, tractor and farm machinery display, and a pedal car display.

For more information or to register entries, call (717) 534-1910.