



## **Notes from the Past**

compiled by Kim Baechler

*As I continue to sort through files from my late father, Glenn Baechler, I come across notes, clippings, and pictures which transcend through time, especially since we are dealing with the antique car hobby. The following story was presented in Vol 3; #2, #3, #4 and #5 (May through December 2001) of the Commutator and recorded the events regarding the history of our Ontario region chapter of the HCCA. It was originally titled "Here Comes Yesterday" and there is absolutely no reason to change the title now. 2022 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the initial formation of our regional club so it seems appropriate that the story is shared again.*

*I have taken a few editorial privileges not to embellish the story but to slightly reduce the length.*

### **HERE COMES YESTERDAY!**

#### **The 50 Year History of the HCC of Southern Ontario**

**By Glenn Baechler**

There was a time in automobile history when an "old car" was just that! Derisive vocabulary not only insulted the driver but referred to the vehicle as junk, jalopy, scrap on wheels and in my own case the question, "What are you going to do with that piece of iron?"

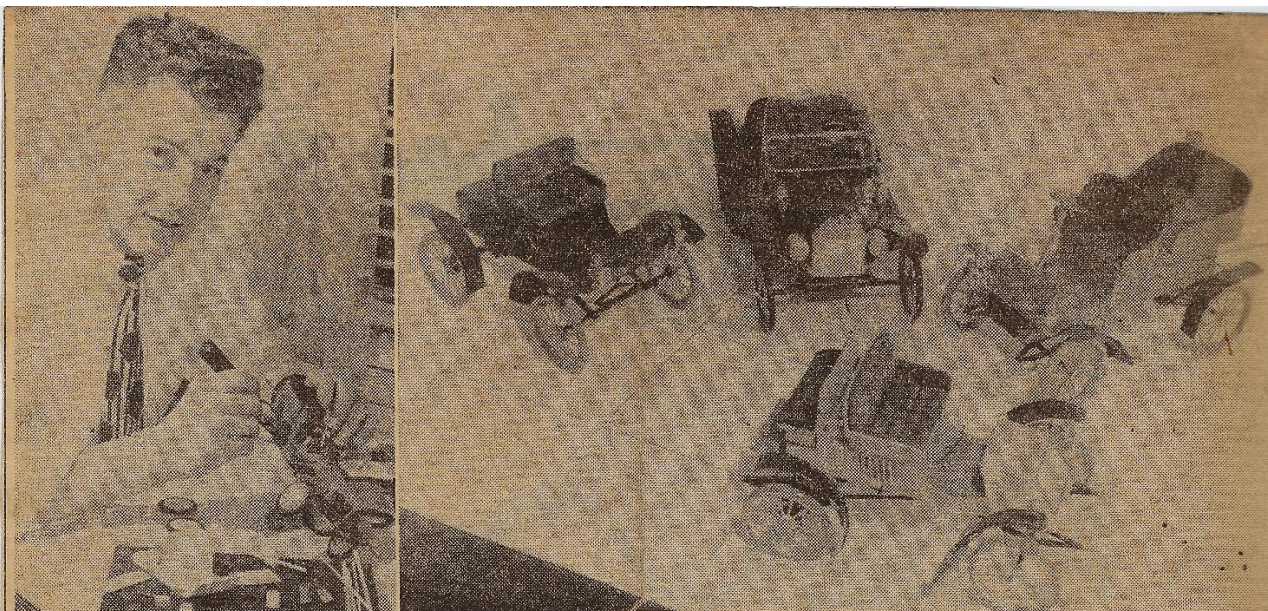
The Veteran Car Club of Great Britain is credited with the beginning of the Veteran Car Club of America, but it is the Automobile Club of America, located in Philadelphia in 1935 that is the daddy of all the North American Clubs. This organization grew out of the annual "Old Car Derby" a publicity stunt to promote the local automobile show.

The Horseless Carriage Club owes its beginning to the few people in California who provided jalopies for the movies. This was strictly a business and often "after the show" the vehicle ended up as scrap. However, it was from this group of owners that the nucleus of collecting on the west coast began. These antique automobile collectors organized themselves in 1937 and became known as the Horseless Carriage Club of Los Angeles. They met three or four times a year and were transported in their museum pieces, as no car was trailered or towed.

HERE COMES YESTERDAY was the title of an article in The Saturday Evening Post of 1944. Coloured pictures of old cars with drivers in costumes of the period was exciting. This was the proof that any young man needed, who was trying to assure his family that an interest in old wheels was not cause to ostracize him from the community.

It is 1950 the passion persists, you chase rumours, only to find another scrap pile. Finally, one positive response is "Yes my Mother has one sitting in her barn". \$25.00 later and a truck haul and you are the proud owner of a 1920 McLaughlin light six touring with only 10,269 miles on the odometer. It isn't until later that you realize there is a good reason for the low mileage.





**MAKES MODEL CARS**—Glen Baechler, 192 Cameron St. North, spends his spare time making accurate scale models of autos of early 1900 vintage. He is shown at left working on one of the models, with four of the complete articles appearing at right. Record Staff Photos

## Fashions Old Auto Models for a Hobby

Don't be surprised if you see an ancient horseless carriage lurching spasmodically along a Kitchener street one day soon.

Furthermore, it will probably have a cap and goggle-bedecked driver at the wheel and he'll be wearing one of those grey, pin-striped coats that comes down to his ankles—the kind you see in the movies.

Chances are it will be Glen Baechler, a 23-year-old Kitchener man who is enthused about beaten-up old jalopies.

Recently he got a 1920 McLaughlin and with the aid of Ray Holtz, 123 Locust Ave., tore the whole thing apart—not in anger—but in curiosity.

They hope to put it together again . . . if they can.

It shouldn't be such a tough job because when they ripped her apart they put everything that came off in a little bag, then numbered the bags—and they've got piles of them.

### Put It Together

They figure the McLaughlin will look exactly the same as when it left the factory—when they get it together.

Not only that, but they are eager to work over any other old vehicles they can get their hands on. Their fingers start twitching every time they see a vehicle that's older than 30. One report stated that the two men were considered dangerous by museum attendants in both Canada and the United States—but this was only a report.

This vehicular hobby has so fired the imagination of Mr. Baechler that he'd like to start a chapter of the Horseless Carriage Club in Kitchener. He's urging itchy-fingered, mechanically-inclined folk to get in touch with him at his domicile, 192 Cameron St. North.

### Interesting Work

Incidentally, both chaps found old-time car construction methods "very amusing" — and sometimes confusing.

When he's not delving into the mechanics of the real thing, Mr. Baechler, a veneer salesman, assembles scale models of old-time vehicles. His oldest model is a tiny replica of a 1903 model K Ford—and he has four others which take about 60 to 70 hours to assemble.

But to get back to that 1920 McLaughlin, they've got the motor together and are still going strong.

March 3, 1951

Kitchener-Waterloo Record



Suddenly everybody knows the character who bought an old car and "The Kitchener Record" prints the interview on Saturday March 3, 1951. In the closing paragraph the interviewer has kindly mentioned that the hobby has so fired the imagination that "itchy fingered mechanically inclined folk" are urged to get in touch to start a chapter of the Horseless Carriage Club in Kitchener. Two days later a gentleman in the person of Roy Fleischauer, knocks on our door, and announces that he too has an interest in old cars.



Roy was the Secretary of the club for many years and it was his initial support that made this regional group a reality. In April Carl Sattler of Waterloo joined the nucleus and on June 12th Jack Koehler and Boyd Snider became associate members of the HCC. Ten days later this group inquired about a regional group charter. Hilbert Wiebe of New Hamburg became interested and joined late in 1951, and it was Hip's shop that became the site of many of the early meetings.

Correspondence with the National HCC President Lindley Bothwell encouraged us to form a Regional Group. On February 8th 1952 the official letter to the HCC Board of Directors was sent with the proposal to name this Region "The Horseless Carriage Club of Southern Ontario". The petition was signed by John Koehler, Carl Sattler, Roy Fleischauer, Hilbert Wiebe and Glenn Baechler. By letter of Feb 20th 1952 Lindley Bothwell informed us that our petition had received unanimous board approval and welcomed us as a new region, the first outside the U.S. We were now a CHARTERED REGIONAL GROUP.

Our first car show was Sunday June 7th 1952 and under the caption "Don't Call Them Jalopies". The Record newspaper covered the King Street parade and the activities in Breithaupt Park.



First Official Meet – June 8, 1952

The interest in old cars was not limited to the Kitchener Waterloo area and during the spring and summer of 1952 several members joined from Woodstock, Ont. among them Willis Schneider. Another well known collector who joined that fall was Gordon E. Smith of Orillia. Gordon through his radio station CFOR was telling his listeners stories of old Canadian car companies and urging them to get in touch with him if they knew of old vehicles stored away and forgotten. We all envied his free advertising appeal. In a car list of Nov. 1953 Gordon was listed with 25 vehicles, from a 1903 three-wheel Precision to a 1937 Rolls Royce.

Our H.C.C. Bulletin started in Jan 1953 and by the March issue the name Canadian Klaxon had been chosen as official caption. Under the editorship of Bob Peel of Galt, this "sheet" along with our monthly announcements kept everyone informed and accounted for turnouts of 80 to 85%.

Court Myers of Hamilton had taken over the editor's office of the Klaxon at the beginning of 1955 and the printed heading showing a Klaxon horn became the standard logo with volume 3 issue #1.

The first published roster was 1955 and listed sixty six members from points as far west as Sarnia, as far east as Lindsay, north to Orillia and everything down to the lakes. We truly were a Southern Ontario Club.

We were no longer an old car voice in the wilderness. Other clubs in the form of the Vintage Automobile Club Of Montreal the Antique Automobile Club of America, Ontario Region and several independents had gathered members. The GLIDDEN TOUR came to Canada in 1955 travelling through the Niagara peninsula, Hamilton, Toronto and on to Montreal, this American visit had a major impact on our hobby.

HCC of Southern Ontario celebrating its 10th anniversary, was no longer the only club for "old car" activity. New groups were beginning in every area of the Province and also in other parts of Canada. Some of these organizations were formed to recognize specific automobile interests. Such a group was the Antique and Classic car club of Canada. The ACCCC (A four C) was a very popular club and its members were well known for their interest in Classic Cars. This group also opened chapters and began to produce the most colourful club publication that rivalled even those produced by the U.S. parent organizations.

"OLD CAR" activity now included almost anything on wheels. There were so many clubs that a group headed by Doug Charter, chairman of the Vintage Automobile Club of Montreal attempted to form a federation of clubs in Canada. Committees were established, but it was some time until The CANADIAN HISTORIC AUTOMOBILE FEDERATION became a reality. In Southern Ontario a group of HCC members from the Brantford Cayuga area were clandestinely considering reorganizing the HCC region into an all-Canadian club. The Provisional Board of Directors under it's chairman Fred Thompson had made application for a Federal Charter. Rather than starting a new organization for their own purposes the decision was to take over the Regional group. Whether nationalistic spirit or other reasons so prevailed was never explained. Possibly it was the Horseless Carriage Club's interest in controlling the age of cars allowed for club activities that created the rift. Nevertheless, the writer representing a list of over 50 members made an impassioned appeal to the 1962 executive and the membership to allow a split in the group with both the HCC and the new Historical Automobile Society of Canada to pursue their individual programs and each retain its own identity. The original organizer had the support of the HCC national, but in spite of everything short of legal action, the HCC charter was impounded by the new HASC organization. The HCC of Southern Ontario was disbanded in April 1963.

While the HCC of Southern Ontario had died a few people still retained memberships in the National club and the Gazette was our connecting link. John Smith our current president was responsible for bringing some American friends to several pre 1915 and steam events that allowed the owners of the oldies to participate in some organized activity. It was this personal connection of John Smith and Stan Passfield with members of the Horseless Carriage Club of New Jersey that saw the Ontario HCC phoenix rise again.

The New Jersey H.C.C members arrived for a week long tour in August 1979. An enthusiastic group of tourists who simply loved "the old cars". Once again Stanley steamers, one and two cylinder "chuff chuff" wagons were running the roads in Ontario. The enthusiasm spilled over and by June 22nd 1980 a meeting had been called for all those wishing to establish a new regional group to "play with 1915 and older vehicles". It had been determined from the

national office of the Horseless Carriage Club of America that since no activity had been recorded since 1963 on the old Charter, there was no reason not to use the original Southern Ontario designation for a new charter that was to be issued. For the record the new charter members who signed the request were John Smith, Bill Chalmers, Bruce Greeniaus, Sandy McTavish and Glenn Baechler. The inaugural get-together was Sunday September 14<sup>th</sup>. Ten members with their families and eight antique cars celebrated the rebirth of the "new" Horseless Carriage Club of Southern Ontario. The pre 1915 automobile would once again be enjoyed by their enthusiastic owners.

The cooperation of the New Jersey group and the ongoing relationship between our two Regions has been the tonic or elixir that has helped our Region through some growing pains, but now with the arrival of new members participating in activities, I am convinced rolling antiquity is alive and well!

May the bright wheels for ever roll!

Glenn Baechler

March 2001

