



SIDE LIGHTS

OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION

SANTA ROSA

REGIONAL GROUP

Horseless Carriage Club of America

November 2017



**The Santa Rosa Regional Group
Of the
Horseless Carriage Club Of America
P. O. Box 3993, Santa Rosa, CA 95402**

Dedicated to stimulating interest in antique automobiles and promoting interclub good will

OFFICERS, DIRECTORS & NON-BOARD POSITIONS FOR 2017

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|
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| Vice President | Wayne Simoni 789 Furlong Rd. Sebastopol Ca. 95472 | 823-1637 |
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| Treasurer | Linda Eggleston 7505 Malone Rd. Forestville Ca.95436 | 887-2412 |
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| Directors At Large | Bill Scales 2244 Juliet Dr. Santa Rosa Ca. 95409 | 526-4943 |
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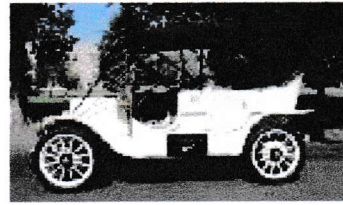
A non-profit organization, The Santa Rosa Regional Horseless Carriage Club was chartered on September 23, 1955. Monthly meetings are currently held at members' homes or at a local restaurant on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. unless otherwise notified. Members are notified of the meeting dates and events by the **SIDE LIGHTS**, the Club's monthly newsletter. Guests are welcome at all meetings.

THE SIDE LIGHTS was first published in July 1959 to inform members of meetings and current events. It is mutually exchanged with other **HCCA Regional Groups** and is circulated to paid members, National HCCA Directors, HCCA Gazette Editor and paid advertisers. Opinions expressed by **THE SIDE LIGHTS** contributors are not necessarily those of **The Club**. Materials to appear in **THE SIDE LIGHTS** must reach the **Editor** by the third of each month as much as possible in order to be publicized in a timely manner.

- NOTES:** (1) National HCCA membership is a mandatory pre-requisite to any Regional HCCA Group membership. However it is not necessary to own a pre-16 vehicle.
(2) Other HCCA clubs may reprint any material contained herein for their use.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 2017



As a reminder, we have gone back to having our general meeting on the Third Thursday of the month; still at 7pm at the Round Table Pizza, Guerneville Road at Marlow Road, any changes will be noted in our Side Lights newsletter.

Last Friday it looked like it would be raining on Saturday so we canceled our planned tour. Well wouldn't you know it, Saturday turned out to be a great day to tour!

Thursday November 16 is our next meeting and we should nominate members to replace our board members going off the board.

Jan. 28 is the tentative date for our installation dinner at the Union Hotel in Occidental; let us know if that works for you.

Well, we are near the end of another year and I think most of us will be glad to see it end and hope that 2018 will be a better one! Want to thank all the members for their support this year...I appreciate it. We had some good touring for as small as our club has become. Hopefully 2018 will see new members bringing increased enthusiasm! Lets all keep a lookout for potential members.

Best Regards

John Pearson



Those Crazy Old-Timers . . .

"Some People are Crazy Enough to Think They Can Change the World . . .
and these are the ones that can!"

Howard E. Coffin -

Chief experimental engineer (1902-1905), chief engineer, Olds Motor Works (1905-1906); vice-president and chief engineer, E. R. Thomas-Detroit Company (1906-1908); vice-president and chief engineer, Chalmers-Detroit Company (1908-1909); vice-president, chief engineer, Hudson Motor Car Company (1909-1930); president, National Air Transport (1925-1930).

- condensed from *The Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography: The Automobile Industry 1896-1920*
from the library of Joe Whitney

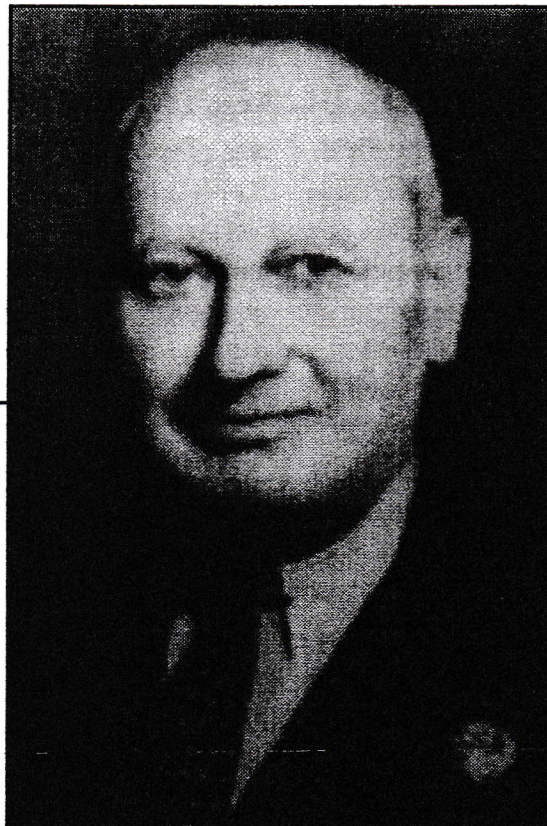
by Robert J. Kothe

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OWARD E. COFFIN was born in West Militia, Ohio, on September 6, 1873 to English emigrants, Julius and Sarah Coffin. After spending his youth in West Militia he went to boarding school in Maryville, Tennessee. His mother later moved the family to Ann Arbor, Michigan, to administer a boardinghouse. He there attended public high school.

Coffin studied engineering at the University of Michigan, but in 1896, after three years at that school, he was forced by lack of funds to take a part-time position at Ann Arbor's post office. While continuing his education part-time he developed a single-cylinder 2-cycle gasoline engine. He then constructed a steam car, which he later claimed provided transportation on his mail route for several years. This vehicle is presently housed in the collection of the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

In 1900 Coffin returned to full-time study at the University of Michigan, but prior to graduation he accepted a position as chief experimental engineer with the Olds Motor Works, producer of the Curved-Dash Oldsmobile. He began to establish a reputation as an outstanding designer and was named Old's chief engineer in 1905.



Howard E. Coffin

Coffin's exposure to the atmosphere of entrepreneurship surrounding the Olds operation influenced him to become more than an employee. In February, 1906 he joined Roy D. Chapin, Frederick O. Benzer, both from Olds, and James Brady to form the E. R. Thomas-Detroit Company in partnership with Buffalo, New York, automaker Edwin R. Thomas. The new firm used the established dealer network of Thomas's Buffalo company, makers of several upper-market cars. The new company added a smaller, less-expensive vehicle.



1899 Coffin Steamer

Coffin served as vice-president and chief engineer of the new firm and was responsible with his three Olds partners for securing \$50,000 of the company's paid-in capital of \$150,000. The group fell far short of that goal and failed to attract further investors, so Thomas agreed to increase his investment. Coffin designed the 2-cylinder Thomas-Detroit automobile, 500 of which were assembled the first year in a former match factory.

In 1908 Coffin sold his interest in the company to Hugh Chalmers, recently retired administrator of the National Cash Register Company. The company was then reorganized as Chalmers-Detroit with Chalmers as president and produced an essentially unchanged car. Later that year the company added a 4-cylinder, 30 horsepower model selling for \$1,500.

Public appreciation of the performance of these cars contributed to growing sales for the company. Then Coffin began to involve himself in other ventures. In 1909 he, Chapin, Benzer and Chalmers became interested in a small, 4-cylinder car designed by two other former Olds employees, Roscoe B. Jackson and George W. Durham. That group solicited backing from J. L. Hudson, owner of Detroit's largest department store. Thus was the Hudson Motor Car Company organized, which began to produce the car as a low-priced companion to the Chalmers-Detroit. Before the end of 1909, however, Chalmers sold his interest to Coffin, Chapin and Benzer for \$80,000. They in turn sold their Chalmers-Detroit holdings to Chalmers for \$788,000.

Hudson left the management of the company bearing his name to Chapin, company president, and Coffin, who continued in his role as vice-president and chief engineer. The company produced 1,100 Hudsons in 1909 and 4,556 in 1910. While Chapin provided the managerial drive, Coffin headed the design effort. The company continued to produce better cars. In 1912, when Hudson announced a 6-cylinder model for 1913, the automotive press touted Coffin as the industry's


“foremost engineer,” responsible for more “successful” automobiles than any other. The source of his success was his realization that the appearance of automobiles played a part in marketing strategy.

In an analysis of the industry’s 1914 models he noted that makers were presenting fewer mechanical improvements as new features. Mechanical features, such as the 1912 Cadillac’s self-starter, were quickly adopted by all car makers, and as a result the possibility of achieving major new technological breakthroughs declined over time. Chapin recommended, therefore, that Hudson distinguish its new models through “annual changes in body styles.” He noted a streamlining trend in competitors’ makes and suggested making “comfort — even luxury — combined with convenience and utility” the chief design objective. The company went in that direction. Advertisements for 1916 emphasized Hudson’s “Yacht-like Body,” its “Ever-Luster Finish,” and its “Roomier Tonneau.”

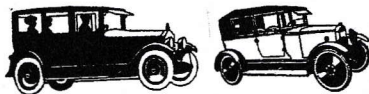
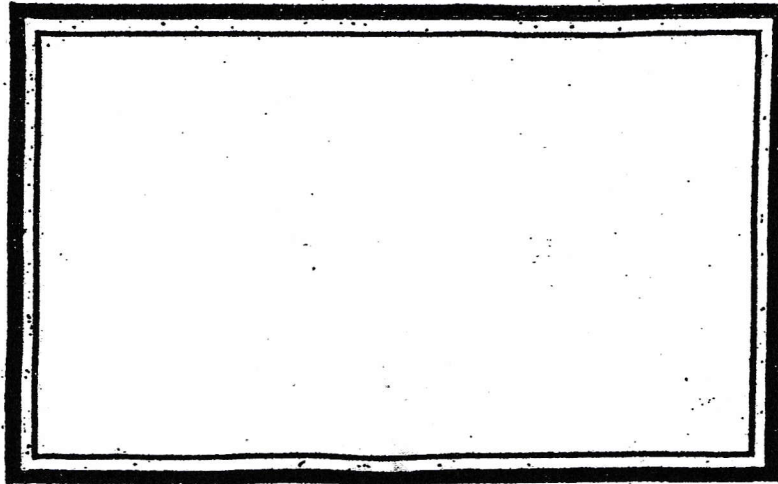
Coffin became deeply involved in the organizational side of the automobile industry. He was a founding member of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) and served as its president in 1910. In this organization Coffin was a leader in the effort to standardize automotive parts and materials. As a result of his efforts, for example, 800 types of lock washers were reduced to 16 standard sizes. This type of reduction lowered manufacturing costs and increased efficiency, making mass production more viable. He served as test chairman for the Association of Licensed Automobile Manufacturers. He was involved in racing and helped found the Manufacturers Contest Association.

Coffin withdrew from active involvement in the management of Hudson as his wealth and influence grew. He retained the title of vice-president but retreated to a consultative role. Involvement in government service took up much of his time during World War I. He became deeply involved in the industrial effort to equip the military, assuming a position in 1915 as chairman of the committee on production, organization, manufacture and standardization of the Naval Consulting Board. The following year President Wilson appointed Coffin to a commission to advise the Council of National Defense, created to direct the preparedness program. In 1917 he was made chairman of the Aircraft Production Board, where he standardized the designs and materials in military aircraft.

His wartime experience stimulated Coffin’s interest in airplanes after the war. He went to Europe in 1919 to study aviation as a member of an American research group. In 1922 he helped organize and served as the first president of the National Aeronautical Association. Then, in 1925, he became president of a pioneering airline company, National Air Transport. Coffin ceased his association with that firm in 1930.

The Depression placed a great strain on Coffin’s fortune. Although many of his properties remained valuable, his income, estimated at \$800,000 per year in the mid 1920s, dropped dramatically. In 1930 he gave up his position at Hudson to start a new career as chairman of Southeastern Cotton, a textile marketing firm. During the early ‘30s he also experienced personal tragedy. His first wife, from 1907, died in 1932 after an extended illness. The couple had no children. He remarried in 1937, but by then his health had deteriorated precariously. Coffin died on November 21, 1937 from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound. 

H. C. C. A. Santa Rosa
P. O. Box 3993
Santa Rosa, CA 95402



From:
The Portland Gas Leak



*Happy
Birthday*

NOVEMBER 07 PAM JOHNSON
NOVEMBER 11 LINDA PEARSON
NOVEMBER 22 WARREN WELSH

FOR SALE

- **1925 Franklin 11A Sport Sedan** \$15,000
Steve Smith (971) 282-5222 ssns39@vahoo.com
- **1928 Chrysler Model 72 Golf Club Coupe**
New wood wheels, brake cylinders sleeved, other upgrades.
Art Sell, phone (360) 241-0903
- **1930 Lincoln 176-B Dual Cowl Phaeton**
Top cover, side curtains, trunk with rack.
Very Nice! \$75,000
Frank Hurley, (360) 256-9855 or (360) 921-1450
- **1931 LaSalle R.S. Convertible Coupe**
Original & complete, nice daily driver. \$60,000
Frank Hurley, (360) 256-9855 or (360) 921-1450
- **1953 Jaguar XK120 Coupe Project** \$40,000
Dennis Peterson, (503) 650-4356
- **1926 Dodge, 4-Door Sedan** - Fully Restored,
beautiful mohair upholstery and interior, less expensive than a Model T Ford, but twice as comfortable. \$14,500.
Jim Zordich, (503) 603-0115
- **1928 Ford Roadster** - High-point Canadian car.
Jim Schoffstall, (503) 680-3412
- **Misc. 1910-1920 Reo Engine Blocks**, some with pistons, rods, etc. Mostly rusted. Free to someone who can use them.
Donn Snyder, (503) 826-1944
- **1911 Kelsey Motorette** 3-wheel-2-cyl. tiller driven - rare \$35,000
1915 Studebaker SD4, older restoration, \$20,000
1923 White Fire Truck, small ladder & hose carrier \$15,000
Jerdice Booth (503) 532-3202