

President's Welcome Message

My fellow members and I, as representatives of the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri, Inc., would like to wish you a sincere welcome to the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri's website. HCCM is perhaps the epicenter where St. Louis automotive culture and history merge. 2019 is our 75th Anniversary! So much has taken place in this town related to automotive culture since those early days. The individuals who comprise the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri, Inc. view the organization as the "hub" of the antique automotive community in St. Louis. The organization was founded by many of the St. Louis automotive pioneers who set up shop in the area because of its' central location in the country and the symbiotic/collaborative relationships that were fostered as early automobiles which resembled motorized buggies were refined into viable means of transportation as standardization and mechanized assembly lines ultimately emerged. St. Louis became a leader in automotive manufacturing and also the creation of adjunct products and technologies.

All things automotive really gathered momentum in 1904 with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, better known as the 1904 World's Fair. That fair was the shot of adrenaline that put St. Louis on the map as much more than a one horse town, but a "Horseless" city. A lot was happening to spawn the St. Louis automotive community and ensure that it was nurtured, thrived and matured. Concurrent with the 1904 World's Fair, the Summer Olympics were also held on Washington University's Francis Field which was found at the west side of the Forest park/Fair grounds and still serves as the home of the Washington University Battling Bears. The automobile was beginning to take shape and become a practical means of transportation by 1904. Forest Park was where one could see the focus of this movement - being the heart of St. Louis with scenic drives snaking through beautiful park lands. At first, we saw the "high-wheelers" that resembled carriages and wagons with simple engines attached for motive power, perhaps as more of an afterthought in lieu of the trusty horse. In essence, that's what they really were..."updated" buggies that went "Horseless." Next we saw dedicated designs begin to emerge. The 1904 "St. Louis," built by the Saint Louis Motor Carriage Company was the epitome of the finest technology of the day. The St. Louis was built by George Preston Dorris at 1211-13 North Vandeventer Avenue in St. Louis. To this day...the descendants of Mr. Dorris, attend this show...and often we see them bring one of their "St. Louis" cars...driven to the park - never trailers..."Rigs That Run!" That was their advertising slogan and it is now the one we adopted in 1944 too. The Dorris' were instrumental to the founding our organization. Our roots were clearly in "brass" or what we would term the "Brass Era." While we have had to change with the times to survive, we still fondly look back on our past and promote our legacy with a pocket of folks like myself (and my 1913 Model T Ford Touring Car) who try to keep that brass polished and on the road with somewhat of brass focused segment that serves a core function. We don't discount more modern iron and we embrace all things automotive because we love this hobby.

St. Louis became one of the centers of early American automotive manufacturing between the early 1900s and 1930 when the Great Depression occurred. We were second only to Detroit during that time period. We were accessible by river, rail, land and eventually air. St. Louis names forever synonymous with the automobile emerged...Dorris, Moon, Gardner, Ruxton, Windsor, etc. There was a Ford factory here, and soon, a Chevy plant. The founders of all of these companies were visionaries...and some of these places remain today, repurposed into other uses. Ford remains (not as Ford) and Dorris remains...the Dorris complex restored to nice loft apartments in the trendy and eclectic Central West End.

It was only natural that some of the early St. Louis automotive tycoons were also the founders of the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri, Inc. You saw names that included Dorris, Dyke, Deeken and others. You can read about them in a book we have available in our organization called Four Wheels, No Brakes. It is a fascinating account of early motoring in St. Louis. These folks made up a fairly closely knit community and spent much time together. It was only natural that an organization would emerge from this close association. In 1944, the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri, Inc. was founded. Before then, it was a loose confederation of local automotive pioneers and enthusiasts who just liked to get together to talk about cars, drive their cars and have a good time swapping abundant stories.

Our biggest show is our Easter Concours d'Elegance in Forest Park where the club's legacy is reinvigorated yearly...

Easter spent in Forest Park is truly the finest of St. Louis traditions and signifies the turning point into spring for St. Louisans, and that has taken place since the late 1800s. People would parade in their Easter finery and enjoy the emergence of Daffodils and Tulips, their vibrant colors sprouting from the newly thawed grounds. In the early days of the park, which opened in 1876, one could observe carriages and ultimately, a strange new phenomenon called the "Horseless Carriage." It was in 1893 that St. Louisans glimpsed the first "horseless carriage" on the streets of their fair city. Hoping to cash in on a growing industry, enterprising entrepreneurs quickly formed several automobile companies. Some companies lasted a short time and produced only a handful of cars, while others lasted for many years and manufactured hundreds of thousands of cars.

It is now 2019...Over 115 years have elapsed since the 1904 World's Fair and we do our best to commemorate those glory days for this town. Our shows and events pay homage to the legendary individuals that founded this club and those who devotedly come out to our shows and events to bring and view some great automobiles. We have many other events throughout the year...Brass and Nickel in the Fall at the Museum of Transportation, Father's Day, Cars With Class, the "Car Show and Swap Meet" and assorted tours. Some of those St. Louis built cars...they still come out to remind folks of some rich traditions.

Sincerely,

Martin L. "Larry" Hassel

President of The Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri, Inc. for 2019