White Steamer

From Sewing Machines to Steam Cars.

Roberto M. Rodriguez (Ret.)
2/22/2012

In the Automobile World:
The interesting announcement is made that President-elect Taft has purchased a White steamer. The car, which is a seven-passenger touring car, has the coat-of-arms of the United States painted on its doors, and will be delivered to Mr. Taft before the inauguration. The President-elect has had three years’ experience in White steamers, and his choice is naturally pleasing to the makers of the White.
From Sewing Machines to Steam Cars...

In 1858, at the age of 22, Thomas White began manufacturing New England-type sewing machines which he sold for $10 apiece. The first machines were manufactured at the small Wilkinson Machine Shop in Templeton, Massachusetts. White and a business partner pooled together $350 to start their company. Funds were so scarce that each machine made had to be sold before Mr. White could afford to manufacture another. In 1866, sewing-machine production was moved to Cleveland, Ohio. And in 1876, the White Sewing Machine Company was incorporated.

A vibrating-shuttle lock-stitch sewing machine was introduced in 1876. From the beginning, it was a very popular model, with a total of about 80,000 sold from 1876 through 1880. In 1882, the company was producing about 1,200 sewing machines a week and about 60,000 machines annually.

In the late 1890s the company's vibrating-shuttle model was supplemented with a new rotary model, known initially as the "White Family Rotary". It became the most popular White model and continued to be manufactured by the company in various incarnations into the 1950s.

In the late 1890s, the company diversified its operation and began manufacturing items such as roller skates, bicycles, kerosene lamps, lathes, and screw machines. In 1901, the company produced its first automobile. Thomas White, still president of the company, gave control of vehicle production to his three sons, Windsor, Rollin, and Walter. All were auto enthusiasts, and helped get the company into the automobile industry.

In November 1906, the auto making part of the business split off into a separate company, named the White Company. After 1911, the company stopped making Steamers and focused on producing gasoline driven engines. Over the course of their steam-making career, the company produced 9,122 White Steamers. In 1918, the company stopped making cars (except if they were specially ordered) and concentrated on making trucks until 1980.
Thomas H. White: (26 Apr. 1836-22 June 1914), founder of White Sewing Machine Corp., parent company of WHITE MOTOR CORP. and Cleveland Automatic Screw Machine Co., was born in Phillipston, Mass. to Betsey Pierce and manufacturer Windsor White. After a common-school education, he devoted himself to mechanical studies. By 1857 he had invented a small hand-operated single-thread sewing machine, starting his own business, with partner Wm. Grothe and $500 initial capital, making "The New England Sewing Machine," retailing for $10. Seeking a central location near markets and materials, in 1866 White moved his company, White Mfg. Co., from Templeton, Mass. to Cleveland. In 1876, White Sewing Machine Corp. was formed, with White as president and treasurer. Within 10 years, production had increased from 25 to 2,000 units per week, making Cleveland the center for making sewing machines. Branch dealers were opened across the country and in England. Civically active in Cleveland, White gave generously to charities and educational institutions, including, in 1908, financing the building of a separate studio for sculpture at Cleveland School of Art. He also served on Cleveland City Council, 1875-76. White married Almira L. Greenleaf of Boston on 2 Nov. 1858 and had 8 children: Windsor, Clarence, Rollin H., Walter, Ella, Alice, Alice Maud, and Mabel. He is buried at Lake View Cemetery

Rollin Henry White: (11 July 1872-10 Sept. 1962), a founder of WHITE MOTOR CORP. and Cleveland Tractor Co., was born in Cleveland to Almira Greenleaf White and Thos. H. White. He graduated from Cornell University in 1894 and worked in Cleveland for his father's White Sewing Machine Co. during the 1890s when the company added roller skates, kerosene lamps, bicycles, automatic lathes, and screw machines to its production. Thomas left the automobile-manufacturing to his sons, Windsor, Walter, and Rollin. In 1899, Rollin invented a flash boiler that could safely be used on steam automobiles. In 1900, the Stanhope model, the first White Steamers, was introduced. To demonstrate White automobiles were safe, Rollin raced them; in 1901 he set a world's land speed record for steam carriages. In 1906, White became vice-president of the newly formed White Co., continuing production of White Steamers until 1909. In 1910, the first gasoline White trucks were produced. In 1914 Rollin left White Co. and in 1916 organized Cleveland Motor Plow Co. to produce tractors. In 1917, the company became Cleveland Tractor Co., or CLETRAC, INC., with White as its president.
From 1921-23, Cletrac produced the Rollin, an automobile. In 1930, White became the company's chairman of the board; his son, W. King White, became president. White retired in 1944 when Cletrac merged with Oliver Farm Equipment Co. He married Katharine King in 1896 and had 3 children, Rollin Henry, Jr., Wm. King, and Elizabeth King. White died in Hobe Sound, Fla. and was buried in Lake View Cemetery.

**Windsor White:** Son of sewing machine manufacturer Thomas H. White, Windsor became president of the White Company when it split from its parent the White Sewing Machine Company in 1906.

**Walter White:** Youngest son of sewing machine manufacturer Thomas H. White, Walter became vice president of the White Company when it split from its parent the White Sewing Machine Company in 1906. He became president of the White Motor Company in 1921, and died in a traffic accident in 1929.

**The White Steamer**


*Thomas H. White had begun the manufacture of sewing machines in Massachusetts in partnership with William L. Grout. Following the Civil War he moved to Cleveland where he established the White Sewing Machine Company and where at the turn of the century his sons (like the Grout brothers in Massachusetts) moved the company into the manufacture of steam cars.*
A semi-flash boiler invented by Rollin White in the late 1890s provided the impetus, though brothers Windsor and Walter were involved in the auto making venture from the beginning. By the spring of 1900, four White steam cars had been built, and the company’s first truck followed that year; production in 1901 climbed to 193 units.

In the New York to Buffalo Endurance Run of 1901 four Whites were entered, each of them being awarded a first-class certificate. The first Whites were chain-drive, tiller-steered, wire-wheeled stanhope, with their two-cylinder engines mounted under the floorboards. A condenser to recycle exhaust steam was added in 1902, and in 1903 the White lost its buggy look with the engine now mounted up front under a hood in a touring model, and the substitution of wooden artillery wheels and shaft drive. A total of 502 cars were produced in 1903. Nineteen five saw introduction of the hood design known as the “white curve,” which remained a distinguishing feature of White cars to the end- and White trucks into the Thirties.

A special racing White nicknamed Whistling Billy and driven by Webb Jay set a world’s mile record of 73.75 mph at Morris Park Track in July of 1905, catapulted the White steamer into national prominence, and was a principal factor in the healthy increase in White sales: 1,015 cars in 1905, 1,534 in 1906. The latter represented the White steamer’s peak annual production, and was about twice the number of cars produced by its principal rival, Stanley, in any single calendar year.

A white had been the only car in the 1905 inaugural parade of President Theodore Roosevelt, who became the first U.S. chief executive to drive an automobile when he took the wheel of a White in Puerto Rico the year following.

His successor, President William Howard Taft, established the first official White House automobile fleet in 1909, and a White steamer was included in the Presidential garage. Other prominent White steam car owners included John D. Rockefeller and Buffalo Bill Cody.

Until 1906 White’s automobile business was simply part of the White Sewing Machine Company; in November of that year it was given its own producing organization, the White Company, capitalized at $2.5 million and the company moved into a brand-new factory at 842 East 79th Street. The workforce numbered 1,000. Unlike rival Stanley, Which remained with steam cars exclusively to the end, the White Company added a gasoline car to the line in 1910.
In January 1911 the last White steam car was built. In 1918 the White Motor Company ended the manufacture of passenger cars to concentrate on the commercial vehicle field.

Models:

1900-1901
   Model A Steam

1902
   Model B Steam

1903
   Model B Steam
   Model C Steam

1904
   Model D Steam- 10 hp, 80” wb

1905
   Model E Steam- 15 hp, 93” wb
   White Racer- “Whistling Billy”

1906
   Model F Steam- 18 hp, 114” wb

1907
   Model G Steam- 30 hp, 115” wb
   Model H Steam- 20 hp, 102” wb

1908
   Model K Steam- 30 hp
   Model L Steam- 20 hp

1909
   Model M Steam- 40 hp
   Model O Steam- 20 hp

1910
   Model M-M Steam- 40 hp, 122” wb
   Model O-O Steam- 20 hp, 110” wb

1911
   Model M-M Steam- 40 hp, 122” wb
   Model O-O Steam- 20 hp, 110” wb

Photographs, taken in 1914, show a 1910 White MM (now owned by Nick Howell) top and a 1906 White Model F. These cars originally belonged to Clinton H. Atkinson. Atkinson was a railroad engineer in his home state of New Hampshire, and is to be credited with designing two items many of us are familiar with - the steam whistle found on many restored Stanleys, and the deck gun found on modern firefighting apparatus.
Some of the White Steam Cars Extant:

White Model E-10hp-1904-Tourer, owned by Mr. Walter Thompson of Wiltshire, England.

1907 White Steam Car, 30 Hp, owned by Jay Lenno, Burbank, California.

1907 White, owned by the Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum, Fairbanks, Alaska.

President Taft’s 1909 White is now owned by the J.K. Lilly III Automobile Museum at Heritage Museums & Gardens, Sandwich, MA
The text panel at the Museum identifies the Trust’s White Steamer as dating from 1909 and further states that it is a 7 passenger Touring, one of two MM models known to exist, and that only about 150 White Steamers remain.

Researching the automobile now reveals that it is a 1910 model, is one of 167 Whites extant, one of 5 MMs, and is one of three 1910 MMs with a Pullman body. (See White Register at http://whitesteamer.us)

My thanks to Richard Fraser, Nick Howell, and John Woodson - Admin, StanleySteamers.com & SteamGazette.com, for their assistance in identifying this automobile and establishing its provenance.
White Model MM Pullman Specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>CH:</th>
<th>Present Owner</th>
<th>Seal Cove Museum (Richard Paine)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>Condenser: 47</td>
<td>Previous Owner</td>
<td>Morris Frost [71]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Type</td>
<td>Pullman</td>
<td>Flowmotor:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Roland Giroux [67]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial Number</td>
<td>8448</td>
<td>Duplex: Ashton 138,526</td>
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<td>Fred Dunshee [47]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine</td>
<td>MM 41</td>
<td></td>
<td>Notes:</td>
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<td>Air</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1910 White Model MM Pullman Specifications

Engine Location     Front
Drive Type          Rear Wheel
Price               $4,000 - Pullman Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheel Base</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspiration/Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsepower</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuel Type (Gasoline, Steam, Electric)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Production Figures

| 1910 White Steam Car Production for 1910 | 1,208 |
| 1910 White Gasoline Cars                | 1,200 |
Provenance:

Fred Dundee was the original owner of the Trust’s White MM, purchasing the car new in 1910. Dundee owned a machine shop in Portland, Oregon, Known as the Fred Dundee Motor Car Repair and Machine Works, it was located on Broadway at Flanders, and had been on Jefferson Street. Dundee had previously been a race car driver around the turn of the century. He raced cars from the White Motor Company.
Dundee owned the Trust’s White until 1947 when it was sold to an acquaintance, Roland Giroux.

In a series of articles by Roland Giroux, ‘Operating the White Steamer’ he wrote of Fred Dundee, “Fred Dundee would run the stage line from Portland, Oregon up to the Mount Hood Resort. I have the car now, an M-M White, which he used on that stage run.”

Roland Giroux of Reno, Nevada, was an active member of the Steam Automobile Club of America, Inc., in the 1960s.

Giroux and his wife Norah appeared on the Fall 1965 cover of The Steam Automobile published quarterly by and for the Steam Automobile Club of America, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of steam car history, the restoration of antique steam cars, aiding the development of a modern steam car, and interesting manufacturers in producing a modern steam car.

This same image first appeared on a postcard printed by the Steam Automobile Club of America for their 1962 meet in Sparks, Nevada.

The article mentioned in the COVER description is ‘Operating the White Steamer,’ and quoted in part in the reference to Fred Dundee. The article is attached in full as an addendum to this document.
Roland Giroux would own the White for twenty years until tragedy struck in 1967 with the death of his wife, son, and daughter-in-law. His two Whites, including the MM, were put up for sale soon after.


Best known in Stanley Steamer circles, Frost built the Stanley Rocket replica shown at the ‘Stanley Land Speed Record 1906 - Centennial - 2006’ and at the Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance in 2007.

City’s 1906 Stanley Rocket replica wins honors at the Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance classic car show AMELIA ISLAND, Fla –

The city-owned replica of the 1906 Stanley Rocket Racer won the “Race Torations Award” for the best re-creation at the March 12 Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance classic car show.
The original Rocket Racer, driven by Fred Marriott, set a famous world land speed record of 127.7 mph on Ormond Beach in 1906 that held for four years. An announced crowd of about 20,000 people were on hand for the event, which included 300 cars that ranged from Indy racers to electric hybrids to pre-1900 Stanley Steamers. The eleventh annual event is considered one of the top car shows in the world and raises over $100,000 a year for the Community Hospice of Northeast Florida and other charities.

The Rocket Racer, fresh from its run on the sands of Ormond Beach during the Jan. 26 Stanley Centennial at the Birthplace of Speed, was one of the highlights of the Concours, featured prominently on the event web site and other publicity. The event’s founder and Chairman, Bill Warner, arranged for the transport of the Rocket, normally on display at Daytona USA where the car will return later this week.

The original Rocket Racer was destroyed in a 1907 crash on Ormond Beach that almost killed Marriott as he was trying to break his own world record. The Rocket replica was built by Morris P. Frost (1918-1998) in Lake Park, Florida between 1969 and 1971 at a cost of about $300,000. Frost had owned and restored two Stanley’s, and had discussed how the Rocket was built with Marriott in the 1940’s. After it was completed, he donated it to the City of Ormond Beach, and it has been on display at the Daytona USA exhibit for several years.

Conclusion:

Based on research conducted as of February, 2012, I conclude that the White steam car owned by the Richard C. Paine Jr., Automobile Collection Charitable Trust and on exhibit at the Seal Cove Auto Museum, Seal Cove Maine, is a 1910 Model MM Pullman, engine number MM-41, having been originally owned by Fred Dundee, and then in turn Roland Giroux, and Morris Frost before being acquired by Richard C. Paine Jr.

It is one of approximately 167 White automobiles known to exist and is one of only three 1910 Model MM Pullmans extant.

The automobile is well documented from its first owner onward to its eventual acquisition by Richard C. Paine Jr., and display at the Seal Cove Auto Museum.

(In December of 2010, American stand-up comedian and television host Jay Leno called me at my residence in Vermont to inquire if the White was for sale. I politely told him no).

Research sources:


Stanley Steamer, White and Doble steam cars
www.stanleysteamers.com/

White Motor Company - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
www.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Motor_Company

whitesteamer.com
www.whitesteamcar.com/

1907 White Steam Car, 30 hp - Steam Cars - Jay Leno's Garage
www.jaylenosgarage.com/at.../steam-cars/1907-white-steam-car-30-h..

white steam car
www.steamcar.net/art-white-model-l.html

Maine Memory Network - 1909 White Steamer
www.mainememory.net/artifact/15085

J.K. Lilly III Automobile Museum at Heritage Museums & Gardens, Sandwich, MA

Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum, Fairbanks, Alaska

The Steam Automobile
www.steamautomobile.com/SA.html

White Register Display Cars
www.whitesteamer.us/whiteregister/display.

[PDF]
OB-SMI-BPOS-Brochure3 - City of Ormond Beach

Legend of the Stanley Steamer Rocket lives again! | Jacksonville.com
jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/031006/aut_21307968.shtml

Appendix:

Additional photographs of the White at the Seal Cove Auto Museum. Note the text panel; it is incorrect and will need to be updated.