



OCT. 2-5, 2008. OGDEN, QUEBEC

Henry Seth Taylor's Steam Buggy Comes Home for "Art and the Automobile"

- July 27, 2008

A car rally, an automobile show, a photo rally, and an art exhibition: "Art and the Automobile" will showcase them all in the Eastern Townships of Quebec from Thursday, October 2, to Sunday, October 5, 2008. The headquarters for this unique cultural event will be the Davis-Kell Farm at 3605 Chemin Griffin in Ogden, near Stanstead.

On Saturday, October 4, and Sunday, October 5, visitors will have an opportunity to see Canada's oldest automobile in the very region where it was built more than 140 years ago.

In September of 1867, the Stanstead Journal reported on a newly completed "steam buggy," which was to be unveiled at the upcoming Stanstead Fair. "This mechanical curiosity is the neatest thing of the kind yet invented, the whole carriage, engine and boiler only weighing 500 lbs. ... It is intended to run without noise or smoke, and will probably show some fast time." It was Canada's first horseless carriage.

The owner, thirty-four-year-old Stanstead resident Henry Seth Taylor, was a watchmaker by vocation, an inventor by avocation. He designed the steam buggy and created much of it himself, machining cylinders, drive shafts, and axles with precision. He called on other local artisans for whatever else he needed. Blacksmith Joseph Mosher, for example, forged the iron braces and fittings for the body, which was patterned after a conventional horse-drawn carriage but reinforced to carry the weight of the boiler.

The boiler, which was designed to withstand sixty pounds of pressure, was at the rear of the carriage and was connected to a front water tank by two rubber hoses. A hand throttle controlled the speed both forward and reverse, and a tiller controlled the steering. Because the local roads were badly rutted, and there seemed little chance of Taylor's losing control, he never installed brakes.

The day that Taylor drove his new buggy onto a field at the Stanstead Fair, a hose burst, releasing steam and bringing the vehicle to a halt. Taylor had to push it off the field amid jeers of ridicule from onlookers. Despite this public humiliation, which the Stanstead Journal duly noted as a "contretemps detracting somewhat from the interest of the occasion," Taylor made the necessary repairs and continued to drive his steam buggy around town. He also brought it to display at various fairs in eastern Canada and New England.

One summer morning, after making some adjustments to the valve mechanism, Taylor took a test run. In descending a hill, he gathered speed too quickly and lost control. Without any brakes and with a fully stoked, scalding-hot boiler at his back, he had no choice but to jump out of the vehicle, which overturned at the bottom of the hill.

Disheartened, Taylor gave up driving. He discarded the shattered wheels of his steam buggy and stored the remains in a hayloft in his barn. He later removed the boiler and installed it in a steam launch.

ART AND THE AUTOMOBILE

Taylor died in 1887, and “Taylor’s Folly,” as the steam buggy was unfairly dubbed, might have been forgotten had it not been for a series of serendipitous events that led to its purchase by an American antique car buff. He restored the vehicle—and Henry Seth Taylor’s reputation. In 1984 the owner enabled the car’s return to Canada, where it resides at the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa and is highly prized because, in the words of the curator of transportation, *“it represents Canada’s entry into the world of automobiles.”*

It has been nearly fifty years since the vehicle left the Townships. It will be coming home, at least for a few days, for “Art and the Automobile.”

Everyone is welcome to attend the automobile show on October 4 and 5. Part of the daily admission fee (\$10) will be donated to Child Haven; a regional food bank; and local historical societies. For more information, please visit www.artandtheautomobile.com. You can also email info@artandtheautomobile.com or contact **Terry Kell**, director general of “Art and the Automobile,” at 1-613-301-1000.

“Art and the Automobile:” Driven by Imagination and Design.

