

THE HUB OF NEW ENGLAND'S CAR COMMUNITY

mesh

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NEW ENGLAND

JOHN W. DANA'S
OFFICE.





The Old Motor

words by David Clark and photography courtesy of David Greenlees

Down the road about half an hour from our shop is the home and workshop of David Greenlees. While his is not exactly a household name, if you are the proud owner of an early Stutz Bearcat, a Cole Speedster or a Chain Drive Simplex, you probably already know him. David's own ride is a 1915 Model 48 Locomobile.

When I visited with him recently, the Ex-Peter Helck 1914 Mercer Raceabout, and a 1910 chain drive, 825 cubic-inch, six-cylinder Thomas Flyer, the former property of Nevada gambling magnate Bill Harrah, were the only cars in his shop. But they took up a good deal of the shop, the Thomas Flyer being some 18 feet long!

But we're not here to talk about fixing cars. Greenlees is booked about a year out right now—we're here to talk about his other project.

If the 20th century was the petroleum age, the enduring symbol of the golden age of petroleum is undoubtedly the automobile in its almost infinite number of iterations—and the instrument that has recorded the history of this internal combustion-engined object-of-our-desire is, of course, the camera.

Eastman Kodak might be on the ropes today, beaten down by the relentless progress of technology—soon to be followed, at least according to News Corporation's Rupert Murdoch, by newspapers and magazines. But film photography's principal antagonist, the digital camera, has triumphed hand in glove with its cyber cousin the internet, which is busy just now jumping up and down on the fingers of print journalism, barely clinging to the ledge.

One hundred plus years of Kodak Brownies and Instamatics, Nikons, Rolleiflexes and Polaroids have left us with a visual archive that will keep us in images well into the first part of the new millennium.

Greenlees' current undertaking is the simplest of internet media, a daily web journal called *The Old Motor* (<http://theoldmotor.com/>). After posting for 10 or 12 years for *Prewarcar.com*, the *Hemmings Motor News* blog and the *Antique Auto Club of America* forum (this in addition to his primary responsibilities behind the lathe and vertical milling machine), he began mining his collection and those of others, an incredibly rich trove of

visual artifacts—and for about 1,500 regular visitors it's a daily addiction.

The *Old Motor* is enjoying support from a cadre of advertisers including Gooding and Company, Paul Russell, Hyman Ltd., Morris & Welford, Race-maker Press, the Collier Collection, the Larz Anderson Museum and the Dutch Louwman Museum. But what matters most is the content. *TheOldMotor.com* contains over 5,000 incredibly interesting period photos, videos and art representing the years 1895–1965 and covering the whole gamut of wheeled transportation during that time.

For instance, the April 25th posting on *The Old Motor* marked the death that day 86 years ago of 25-year-old Frank Lockhart on the Daytona Beach sands at the wheel of his V16-engined record breaker when a tire blew out on him at 200 mph. An early automotive legend, Lockhart had already won the 1926 Indianapolis 500 at the age of 23. an amazing three laps ahead of the second place finisher. The post is filled with incredible photos from Racemaker Press of Boston, who rolled out their latest book on Lockhart that same day.

One of the many evocative photos accompanying the story shows a bystander holding Lockhart's head up out of the water to keep him from drowning while his record breaker was towed out of the surf with the help of onlookers after an earlier mishap in 1927.

Another recent posting is titled, "Drive It Like You Hate It!" which is a video clip of a 1962 Volvo television commercial with a professional rally driver seriously mistreating a new Volvo 122 Sedan.

The look and feel of the printed page is what draws us to publications like *Mesh New England* magazine, but it's obvious that the internet isn't a fad like CB radio; it's here to stay. However, because of the efforts of serious car people like David Greenlees in producing *TheOldMotor.com* and others like it, the world wide web is fast becoming the default archive of the automotive age.

You can follow David Clark at www.ThisWeekatTheShop.com.

