



# COLE MOTOR CAR REGISTRY BULLETIN



Volume 1 Number 3

May 2019



It is now the month of May and time for our Cole 110th anniversary meet up. It should be a great event and a lot of fun. Here in Michigan it is finally Spring and it has been good to start getting the cars out of the garage and onto the road. Summer cannot come soon enough and for those living in warmer climates, you are lucky to be able to use your Coles all year round!

In preparation for the Cole Car Meetup and the upcoming Cole exhibit, I have been doing a lot of moving of cars lately. Just yesterday, I brought the 1925 Cole Brouette over to the Gilmore to put in their storage building until the event. It was a wonderful Spring day out, so I took the opportunity to drive the car around their campus a bit and stopped at the Blue Moon Diner that they have for some lunch and a milk shake. It could not have been a better afternoon.



## COLE 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1909-2019

The time for the Cole meet up is finally here and we will have 10 or 11 Coles there. The cars that are confirmed to be there are the 1909 Cole High Wheeler, 1911 Cole 30 Roadster, 1913 Cole series 9 Touring car, 1915 Cole Roadster with the first Cole V8, 1917 Cole Toursedan with body by Springfield, 1919 Cole Toursedan with Westinghouse air suspension, 1919 Cole Dual Windshield Sportster, 1923 Cole Two Person Coupe, 1924 Cole Royal Sedan, and the 1925 Cole Brouette. Four of these cars have ownership history by the Cole Family and were stored in the basement of the original Cole factory for a good portion of their life. A few of the cars will also be going on the Friday tour and I will be driving the 1925 Cole Brouette.

The museum has been getting ready for the event and there will be lots of other amazing cars there besides all of our Coles. It will be a great opportunity to meet each other as well as share knowledge about these fine cars and look over the different models to see how things were similar or different. There should be a good amount of spectators coming to the museum for the event as well and I know not many of them have seen a Cole before. Here is a picture of the 1911 Cole 30 Roadster that will be at the event.



**When:** May 17th and 18th, 2019    **Where:** [Gilmore Car Museum](http://www.gilmorecarmuseum.org), 6865 W Hickory Rd, Hickory Corners, MI

### The Registry Update

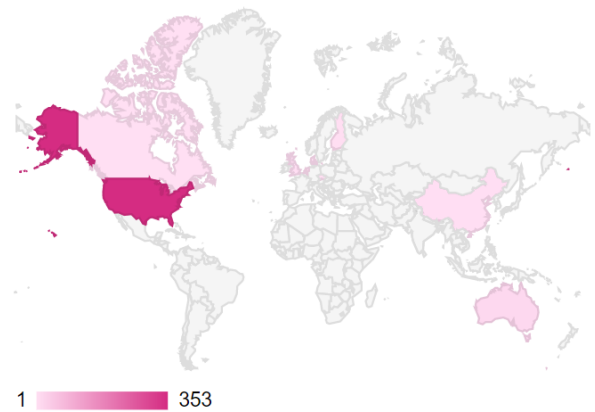


The Cole registry continues to be pretty busy and during the month of April we had 353 visitors. The graphic to the right shows where people have visited the site from around the world. People are hearing about us either through word or mouth, search engines, social media such as Facebook, or we appeared in the Gilmore Industry Standard Magazine as well as the May issue of the HCCA Gazette. Word is getting out and I hope that the Cole Registry is a valuable source of information for the site visitors.

We have had a few people reach out to us since the last newsletter with Cole cars and we are tracking down some specific information such as their serial numbers to determine if their cars are on the registry or not. There is potential right now to move these two cars to the additional found Coles list, though we are not there yet.

The first contact is a big car collector in Illinois who has a 1913 Cole Series 8 6 cylinder car. This person was at Amelia Island and Jeff Keyser let him know about the registry. I have since talked to him and am waiting for him to send over some further details.

The other person that reached out in April is someone who is helping someone in Indiana get an old Cole that they had in the barn back on the road. The car is a 1919 Cole Toursine and was used as the limousine for a funeral home. The car has a divider between the front and back seats as you would expect a limo to have. This may be one of the only Cole Limousine style cars to still survive. One major hurdle that they have to getting this car on the road is they are missing the wheel locking mechanism to keep the wheels onto the axles. As you can see in the pictures, they have the hub caps, but not the internals. They are looking for some or at least someone who has a 1919 or similar that can be used as a template to make some new ones. Here are some pictures of the car as it was when pulled out of the barn.







# GILMORE

C A R M U S E U M

## Cole Exhibit

The Gilmore Car Museum will be having a special Cole Exhibit that will start on May 20th and will continue through October 31st. There will be seven Cole cars on display as well as Cole artifacts and other history about the company. This will be the first time that a museum will have featured this scale of exhibit about the Cole Motor Car Company.

Here is a write up on the exhibit:

*"Name the early auto company that was the first to have four physical doors on a car, the first to use demountable fire-stone rims for easy tire changes, the first to trade mark the term 'Standardized Car', the first to inspire the modern dashboard, the first to have a V8 with detachable cylinder heads, the first to use an air suspension, and the first to use balloon tires (old name for today's tires). Also, name the same company that the founder of General Motors, Billy Durant, tried to buy three times and was rebuked. Can you think of the company?"*

*You probably would have never guessed the Cole Motor Car Company, and you may have never heard of them either. Cole was an auto company from Indianapolis, Indiana that produced quality built higher end cars in low quantities and was founded in 1909 and then self-liquidated in 1925 while still profitable. The Gilmore Car Museum is proud to have a new exhibit titled **'There's a Touch of Tomorrow in all that Cole Does Today.'** That was the slogan of J.J. Cole, the founder and leader of Cole and the company lived up to it with their innovation in both car engineering and as well as design. This is a rare opportunity to take a deeper look at the rapid pace of change in the auto industry through the lens of one automotive company. This exhibit will take you on a journey from Cole's first High Wheel automobile in 1909 all the way to the early Classic era with the 1925 Cole Brouette, body by Willoughby. There will be several other cars in between to showcase the change in technology as well as style over one of the most rapid evolutions in the industry.*

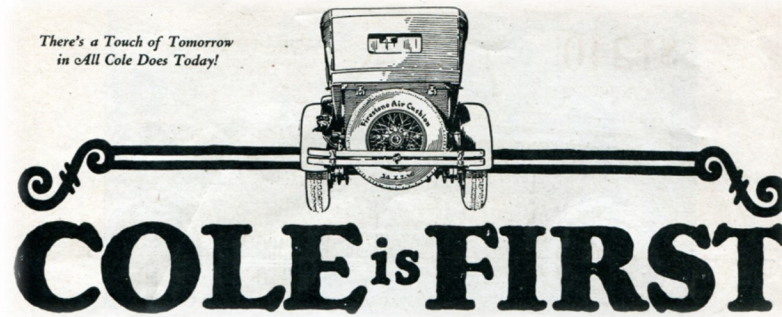
*Not only will there be seven Coles on display, but there will be Cole documents, artifacts, and other Cole historical items. Also, you will have the opportunity to review and look through Cole dealer brochures and manuals so you can go much deeper than just a typical car museum display. Even the original Cole advertising song from 1911 will be playing to accompany the exhibit. This exhibit will be the first time that a display of Coles and their history of this size and breadth has ever been put together. From early cars, to racing, to innovation, to luxury, and to an American success story, this exhibit has it all.*

*The exhibit will take place from May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to October 31, 2019. There will be special lecture and deeper look days with the Cole owners to be announced at a later date. "*

The Cole exhibit will take place on the second floor at the top of the ramp in this 110+ year old barn. They just installed new state of the art LED lighting in the barn and the entrance is right by the show field where many spectators and patrons will get to experience the Cole cars and learn about their history.



## Cole Motor Car Registry Bulletin (Continued)



The Cole Motor Company was an innovative company and they had many innovations in the automotive industry. Here are a list of Cole firsts from their tenure as a company.

1909 – Cole begins testing and tuning every Cole on the road.

1909 – Cole is the first automobile manufacturer to include Firestone demountable rims as standard equipment. Harvey Firestone buys the first 50 Coles available.

1911 – Cole is the first to include four physical doors as standard equipment on a car (1911 Cole 30 Model Q ForeDore).

1911 – Cole adopts the Prest-O-Lite self-starter as standard so all cars had an automatic starter.

1912 – Cole adopts the Delco self-starter, shortly after Cadillac. Cole adopts the complete electrical system standard on all cars and engineers their own enhancements with Kettering to make it simpler.

1913 – Cole trademarks the term "Standardized" and becomes known as the "Standardized Car."

1913- Cole debuts its Series 9 which is credited by some as the inspiration for the modern-day dashboard—complete with glove box.

1915 – Cole introduces the "One Man Top," an open car top that one man could put up or down by himself.

1915 – Cole introduces the first 90-degree flat head V-8 engine with detachable cylinder heads. Cole is the second mass production V-8, 4 months after Cadillac

1923 – Cole is the first production car to use balloon tires as standard equipment on the Volante model of cars

1924 – Cole becomes the first balloon tire-equipped pace car for the Indianapolis 500 race.

1925 – Cole uses the first self-adjusting mechanical brakes.

A vintage advertisement for Cole Motor Cars, dated November 22, 1923, from the Motor Age magazine. The headline "COLE" is in large, bold, serif capital letters. Below it, the sub-headline reads "The Car That Introduced Balloon Tires to America". To the left of the main text is a large, stylized illustration of a Firestone balloon tire. The text "Firestone" is written along the top curve of the tire, and "5.00 H.P. POWER AND ALL PURPOSE" is written along the bottom curve. To the right of the tire, the text reads: "IN THE very near future—when Balloon Tires are standard and optional equipment on all fine cars—remember that it was Cole who introduced them". Below this, it says: "—just as it was Cole who introduced Demountable Rims, Four-Doors, One-Man Tops, and a host of other engineered refinements which are now taken for granted." Further down, it states: "Throughout engine, body and chassis, the Cole embodies a number of forward-looking improvements which are not obtainable on ordinary cars." At the bottom of the advertisement, it says: "Cole engineers are always a step ahead of the procession." The company name "COLE MOTOR CAR COMPANY" and location "INDIANAPOLIS, U. S. A." are printed at the bottom. At the very bottom, the slogan "THERE'S A TOUCH OF TOMORROW IN ALL COLE DOES TODAY" is written in small capital letters.



This article is reprinted from the Cole Motor Car Club of America Bulletin Thanks to Leroy Cole!

# The Birth of the *Aero-Eight*

by Leroy D. Cole

The 10 year period from 1908 to 1918 was the most significant time of automotive history. That decade conceived the product, policy and program of automobile manufacturing. Henry Ford conceived the Model T, Billy Durant conceived GM and having lost control of it conceived Chevrolet, which later in 1915 controlled General Motors. Nash ventured into automobile manufacturing in his own right and name, and the Dodge Brothers went from a parts producer to a large automobile manufacturer. Walter Chrysler was into the thinking stage of having his own company which happened in 1920. In that time frame Sloan put together United Motors, a consolidation of many parts manufacturers which included Delco. That "GM" of the parts businesses became part of GM and Sloan later became the best board chairman the world has ever seen.

Somewhere in that 10 year period America entered and won the World War and the automobile industry stepped up to become the Arsenal of Democracy, to make the World "Safe for Democracy." This they did while incurring material shortages and industry targeted taxes.

Well, in 1908, Cole was moving from a horse drawn carriage producer to a horseless carriage manufacturer. Late in 1908, Cole's Highwheeler entered the market place directly competing with the horse drawn vehicles. By mid 1909 Cole raced into the showroom with his Cole 30 Flyer, and began to compete with the Automobile Manufacturers. Style was acknowledged, speed was trophyed, attributes were sung and momentum was experienced. Cole became a player in that bracketed 10 years: 1908-1918.

This also was a time of stack up and shake out and markets changed from a high priced "quality made" minded business to quantity minded, with every American a buyer focus. Efficient production methods were established, and efficiency of scale was discovered. Standardization was the slogan of the industry and the

name of the Cole philosophy of design and build. Cole the Standardized Car was the theme of Cole's six page ad in the July 26, 1913, SATURDAY EVENING POST magazine.

Cole was a player and contender. In 1915 he began to put together a "G.M." of Indiana based manufacturers. This included: Interstate Motor Co., Warner Gear Co., Peru Auto Parts, Loganport Casting, Western Drop Forge, Hoosier Auto Parts and Ruetener Motor. The industry was

brought merger proposals to their board of directors or the bankers. Rumors were always floating about. Billy Durant was the master of mergers, having founded GM on Buick's wealth in 1908 and brought in Oldsmobile, Oakland and Cadillac plus parts suppliers including Northway Motors. Northway was the source of Cole's engines. Durant lost control of G.M. in 1910 to the Eastern Bankers, but he continued to own and control a lot of the GM stock. He went out and began

to put together, in Flint, Michigan, another car manufacturing system. Little, Mason, Whiting, the players that grew Buick and founded GM now built upward from the base of Chevrolet. Durant begins to bring into this new holding company parts suppliers and a larger car? Cole? We have two letters that were sent from J. J. Cole to W. C. Durant in late 1915. [See letters on following page] They are in response to earlier meetings and letters between Cole and Durant. There is no doubt that Durant is "buying" Cole, but for which corporation? Chevrolet is taking off and becoming a highly profitable company and buying up some parts

suppliers, but Durant was also in the process of leveraging GM stock with Chevrolet stock in order to control GM again. Was Durant looking to bring Cole into the GM fold once he took control? If so there seems no inclina-

## Big Merger Completed

Combine of Cole, Rutenber, Warner Gear and Other Interests Arranged

NEW YORK, Feb. 15.—Special telegram —Final arrangements for the merger of Indiana motor car and parts manufacturing interests which has been in development for several months were made in New York today. Details of the arrangements cannot be made public at this time, but it is understood that the merger will include the following Indiana concerns: Cole Motor Car Co., Indianapolis; Rutenber Motor Co., Marion; the Warner Gear Co., Muncie, and others.

J. F. Morrison, secretary and treasurer of the Cole company, stated that it was his understanding that the deal is to be closed today, but he was not in possession of the final details. The Ball Brothers, of Muncie, stated that they were represented at the conference, but whether or not the Inter-State Motor Co. would be included in the deal, they were not in position to say at this time.

It is understood that A. F. Knoblock, former general manager of the Northway Motor and Mfg. Co., is to be president of the new combine and J. J. Cole, president of the Cole Motor Car Co., is to be vice-president and sales manager.

"consolidating" and you either were buying or being bought. This process was initiated at meetings between the heads of business, who engaged in the informal, "What if's." The news usually got out to the public when the leaders

## Cole Motor Car Registry Bulletin (Continued)

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### Cole Bulletin

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October 11, 1915.

Mr. W. C. Durant,  
C/o Chevrolet Motor Co.,  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Durant:

Pursuant to your request while in New York herewith hand you our statement as of August 31st, 1915. You will note the Advertising and Good Will item as being the amount we have spent in advertising since the beginning of our automobile career in 1910, and, of course, you can treat this item as an asset in such a way as your experience should dictate.

As to the capitalizing of our company here; ie, providing we should remain as an individual corporation and to be a reasonable factor in the industry and remove our sales resistance at least fifty percent should the public know that we were reasonably well financed, that a capital of three million dollars would be a minimum.

Of course, Mr. Durant, I personally would not be in a position, as well as yourself, to state as to the kind and grade of cars that we should undertake to market. It has always been the intention of our company to build a car that would list from \$150.00 to \$200.00 - under the Cadillac, and as a great number of manufacturers are leaving this particular field we might yet find a place that would give us quite considerable volume that would enable us to earn good returns on the investment. This is a matter that I would be personally pleased to discuss with you at your leisure time.

I am expecting to make a trip to New York very shortly and will be glad to make the trip to suit your convenience and hold myself in readiness at any time. Unless I hear from you to the contrary I will reach New York tomorrow week. In the meanwhile, I beg to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

JJC mm

These two letters were written by J. J. Cole to Wm. Durant in response to letters and meetings between the two, working toward bringing the Cole Motor Car Co. into the Durant fold: whatever that fold was.

November 5, 1915.

Mr. W. C. Durant,  
Chevrolet Motor Co.,  
87th & 11th St.,  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Durant:

I have been waiting to hear from you relative to your Western trip, and have been holding myself in abeyance awaiting a telephone call from you from Cleveland.

We haven't as yet made any obligations in the way of placing orders against contracts for the coming season, remembering it was your wish that we withhold any contract obligations until hearing further from you.

I have been analyzing our recent statement and am enclosing you a form as I have it made out covering the six year period, since we started in the automobile business. We originally started with \$100,000.00 - approximately \$75,000.00 in cash and \$25,000.00 Good Will by absorbing the carriage plant. Our present book value has been earned by profits in the manufacturing of automobiles during the six years. In other words, we have always declared stock dividends and have on one or two occasions paid small cash dividends in addition.

Hoping I may have the pleasure of hearing from you by return mail, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

JJC m

tion to do that when he is in full control in mid 1916. Was J. J. Cole attempting to put together an Indiana manufacturing complex on behalf of W. C. Durant?

Jim Miller, auto writer for the FLINT JOURNAL, has been brain storming that question with me. He resourced the following: "A story on May 6, 1916 says, 'Durant denies rumor of \$200,000,000 auto merger.' This was at the time when he was working to take over GM, and was almost there. But there was apparently a story in a Detroit newspaper that Durant was working on a consolidation that involved GM, Chevrolet, Continental Motors, Studebaker, Maxwell and "other motor car companies in Michigan...; and Durant reacted to that. So, did he have some kind of conglomeration talk going when at Chevrolet, while working to take GM back? The way Durant did business, I can see him working both fronts at once.

#### Enter Northway Motors:

Cole's chief engineer, Charles Crawford, had worked with Northway in 1914 to design, develop and produce the industries first flat head V8.

Cole always used Northway engines in his cars (with the exception of the High Wheeler) and had a close relationship with their personnel. A. F. Knobloch butted heads often with J. J. Cole over problems with the V8, but the distance between Indianapolis and Detroit, proved a sufficient buffer to prevent bloodshed. Also they were both surrounded by men who could "work things out." In late 1915 and surely by February 1916, the management team from Northway becomes the management team of Cole. [See pages 24-39 for a Time Line of articles from Automotive publications of the day which show pertinent personnel and business activity.]

Crawford is gone from Cole as well as other top leaders who may have resented this shift in the top manage-

ment. In fact, Cole leaves the factory in the hands of this Northway team and takes his second vacation to the Orient on board the ocean liner, The Empress of Russia. [Note the "Gone for the Year" article from Cole Bulletin Vol. 4 #2: See page 29]. It seems strange behavior for a man who lived and loved the Cole Automobile, as it was the life of this hands on, owner, manager.

The team that comes in sets up a management system and a book keeping system that can track costs and efficiency. K. T. Keller, comes on board as the efficiency engineer and sets up tracking and cost procedures, with the direction of Price, Waterhouse & Co. Was all this done to make Durant comfortable with the management and books of his "Cole Motors?" When the Indiana consolidation failed and Durant succeeds in his take over of GM, there was little reason to acquire Cole. That is why I think that Cole was visualized as part of the Chevrolet family of manufacturers. Continued on Page 20



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### Cole Bulletin

#### The Birth of the Aero-Eight:

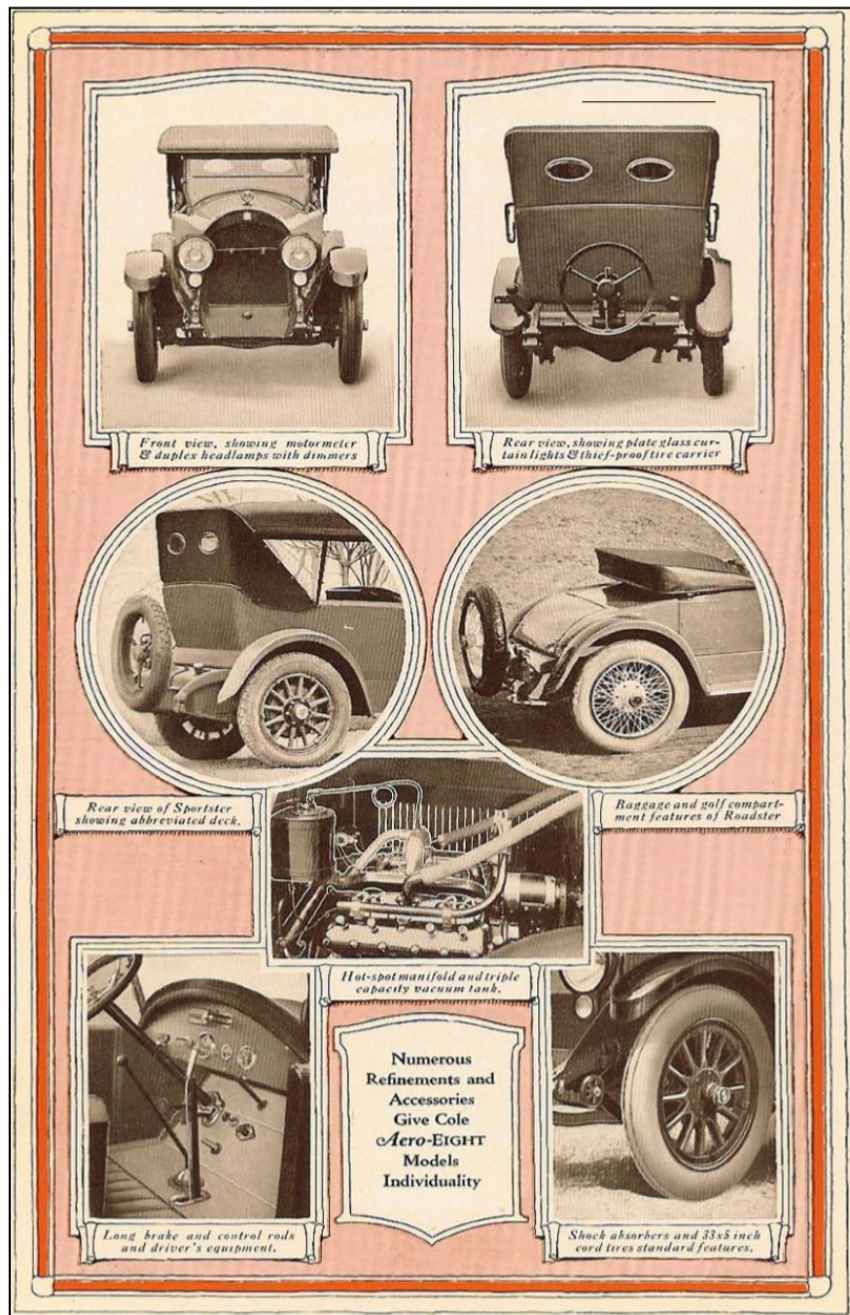
Continued from Page 19:

[In passing, 1923 finds Durant attempting to acquire Cole, but this time for Durant Motors, a corporation founded after Durant loses GM control in late 1920.]

So my research and thoughts make me think that by the spring of 1917 Cole had concluded that there is to be no merger with either Chevrolet or GM. [in 1917 Durant had financial problems and had to cool his buying.] The deal is off, and now his company is in the hands of "motor men." With their specialty being machines and cast iron, not automobiles, he began the process of concluding contracts and once again shouldering the burden of management. In November of 1917 Joe Cole made a massive change in the Cole design. He took a 1917 Cole, brought in modelling clay and mocked up the "Aero Eight." This may possibly have been the first clay modelling of a new automobile design. The end result looked like the hood and cowl of a modern airplane of that day. Cole was one of the first post WWI manufacturers to pick up on the airplane motif -- like GM's Harley Earl picked up on the P-38 and the Saber Jet after WWII. By 1920 most cars had picked up on this aero theme.

Let's look at the Cole's change over from 1917 to 1918. The Forney Museum in Denver, Colorado has a 1918 Cole Roadster, SN 50335. This is the 335th car produced, but keep in mind that the first 1918 Coles were really the 1917 carry over (note picture #3). The Aero Eight was shown at the New York Auto Show in January of 1918, two months after it was "designed." But it was not ready for quantity sales for several months. The Forney car has some of the 1917 Cole parts. Apparently the new Delco light switch and the custom headlights designed for the new Cole were not available on a production basis.

The following article (Page 21) is a comparison between my 1917 Tourse-dan and my 1920 Cole Touring Car and the Forney 1918 Cole. The 1920 is essentially the same as the 1918. LDC



#### Editor's Post Script: Forney Car Article - Pg. 22

Everything is not as simple as it seems. It would be historically wrong to convert this factory stock car to look like a later 1918 Aero Eight, i.e. headlights. The foggy bottom of historical events which prevents us from seeing them in real time should not prevent us from making conclusions based on visible facts. I can add some viability to my conclusion by giving the history of the Aero Eight from the Cole Bulletin, news articles and Cole corporate documents that have been loaned to me by J. J. Cole III. Studying and absorbing these papers is like being the proverbial "fly on the ceiling during the Cole management meeting." It would help you to have the last Cole Bulletin, Vol. X #1 & 2, 2004 double edition in hand for this study. The insert for that volume will also be helpful. If you don't have it, contact me and I will send it to you for the cost of postage. LDC