



BHC-MSS 0236

Guide to the Douglas BreVeglieri Collection of Locomobile Research August 2022

Descriptive Summary

Creator: BreVeglieri, Douglas

Title: Douglas BreVeglieri Collection of Locomobile Research

Dates: 1900-1997

Quantity: .8 linear feet

Abstract: WIP

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History:

Douglas BreVeglieri is a resident of Bridgeport with an interest in the Locomobile Company of America. He is a private individual who did not wish to add any additional biographical information.

The Locomobile Company of America began its life in Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1899. Founders John Walker and Amzi Lorenzo Barber began the company when they witnessed the steam powered car that was built by Francis and Freelan Stanley. Walker and Barber acquired the plans, and originally called their company the Automobile Company of America. That name was already taken, and Barber is given the credit for changing the name to the Locomobile Company of America. They quickly involved others in the venture, including the company's first president, Samuel Todd Davis Jr., who held that position until his death in 1915.

The company moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1900, and initially produced steam cars. During this time, steam, electric, and gasoline cars were all being developed, with no one particular type leading the pack. Around 1901, gasoline cars began to gain traction, and the Locomobile Company of America brought in engineer Andrew L. Riker to assist in developing its cars further. Prior to being hired by Locomobile, Riker had owned the Riker Motor Vehicle Company, based in Elizabeth, New Jersey, which produced electric cars. In 1903, the company began producing gasoline powered cars exclusively.

As the car developed, so did the brand, and Locomobile eschewed an assembly line focus for one that emphasized the handcrafted nature of each automobile. This developed into a boast that no more than four Locomobiles were produced each day, making Locomobile an early luxury brand. With lighting provided by Tiffany and Company, plush interiors, and careful attention to detail, this boast was used as a marketing and selling point. In addition, the small number of cars produced allowed the Locomobile Company of America to remain in touch with owners, which helped to ensure customer loyalty, as well as excellent service.

The Locomobile Company of America also participated in early automobile races. A key victory was won at the Vanderbilt Cup race on October 24, 1908, when the car now affectionately known as “the Old 16” won the race. That victory made Locomobile the only American car company to win the race, as all previous winners had come from manufacturers from outside of the United States.

In 1911, the Locomobile Company of America started to manufacture commercial trucks. These worm drive trucks had a number of different body models based on the need of the individual customer, and it also proved useful in the First World War. The demand for the truck, later renamed the Riker Truck in honor of Locomobile engineer Andrew L. Riker, contributed to the Bridgeport’s economic expansion during World War One.

Locomobile was bought by William C. Durant and incorporated into Durant Motors in 1922. (Durant helped to found General Motors.) During this time Locomobiles were still produced, but until 1925, only the Model 48 was produced under the Locomobile marquee. 1925 allowed for the introduction of the 8-66 Junior Eight, then several more models after that, but Durant motors went under in 1929. Production lasted until 1933, but after that Locomobile as a brand was no more.

As of today, there are some remaining Locomobiles. “The Old 16” racer is owned by the Henry Ford Museum, and some models appear in auction houses from time to time, retailing for extremely high prices.

Scope and Content note:

Material in the collection comprises some original research notes and extensively photocopied articles about specific Locomobiles and the company’s history. While some original advertisements exist, along with personal photographs of Locomobiles and the repair bill for one in 1997, much of the collection focuses on photocopied newspaper and magazine articles. Much of the material is undated.

Arrangement note:

Original material has been placed first, followed by photocopies of Locomobiles, followed by clippings.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Gift of Douglas BreVeglieri, 2004.23

Preferred Citation:

Douglas BreVeglieri Collection of Locomobile Research (BHC-MSS 0236), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

Names and Subject Tracings

Personal names

WIP

Corporate names

WIP

Subject tracings

WIP

Detailed box/folder listing

Box 1

1. Research, undated
2. Research, Locomobile custom bodies
3. Car parts and information, 1997
4. Locomobile advertisements [originals and photocopies], 1910s-1920s, undated
5. Photocopies, Locomobile images, undated
6. Photocopies, Riker trucks, undated
7. Clippings, Locomobile, undated
8. Clippings, Locomobile, undated
9. Clippings, Locomobile, undated

Box 2

1. Clippings, Locomobile, undated
2. Clippings, Locomobile, undated
3. Clippings, other New England car manufacturers, undated