

1914

SAXON

RESTORATION



By

HENRY HERRICK

Chronology of Events of 1977

July 14 – Bathed and cleaned car

July 15 – Loaded onto trailer

July 16 – Hauled to cottage at Three Mile Bay

July 17 – Presented to Historical Museum in a.m.

This 1914 Saxon can be seen for your viewing pleasure at the Jefferson County Historical Museum at 228 Washington Street, Watertown, New York.

Note:

I wish to give special recognition to my sister Carie Marie Herrick, now deceased, for having the forethought to take pictures of our locating parts on the farm. Without them, the story would have far less meaning.

In addition, I would like to thank Doris Field for her tireless energy in putting this story together, for getting the impressive newspaper release and tireless effort in many, many ways.



Carie Marie Herrick

Actual Picture of Uncle Jim's Car

1914 Saxon

Taken Around 1918



**Those present in the photograph are left to right
Lydia Clark – Bell Whattam – Mary Whattam (holding doll)
John Whattam – Clifford Clark**

Treasure Found In The Mud

Francis Goodfriend – Hank Herrick scratching head.



Hank removing exhaust pipe with Francis and Milford Goodfriend standing by.

Note: only one light left on car.



Front Axle Found On Wagon

**It had been welded to prevent wheels from turning left or right.
Pictured left to right: Mildred and Francis Goodfriend and
Hank Herrick**



**Front Wheels found in the farm dump.
Shown here with Cecil Angel and Hank Herrick**



Last Bath At Home

July 14, 1977



RESTORATION OF 1914 SAXON
by
HENRY HERRICK

My relationship with Uncle Jim and Aunt Ad Cornaire was brought about by the fact that Aunt Ad was my Grandfather Herrick's sister. Uncle Jim was born January 10, 1851. He and Aunt Ad were married around the year 1870. They set up housekeeping in their victorian home in Three Mile Bay, New York, and reared one daughter. The spacious front porch of their home was the scene of many happy gatherings. How well I recall on special occasions, such as the Fourth of July, Old home Day and Memorial Day, when the gathering would consist of women in all their finery. Quite often a Yankee Soldier, dressed in full blue uniform fresh from the Civil War, was there. Aunt Ad's "cordial" made everyone's spirits high.

In the spring of 1914, Uncle Jim journeyed to Watertown, New York, to complete the purchase of his first car, a Saxon. (I can well imagine the plans and arrangements that must have gone into that trip to enable him to bring the car back home the great distance of fifteen miles.) After completing this feat, the Saxon enjoyed its repose in a large barn-type garage behind the stately house.

As best as can be recalled, the purpose for driving the Saxon was to make a periodic trip to Uncle Jim's farm, a total distance of about four miles. Often Aunt Ad, dressed in her finery, would join Uncle Jim in the car. Warm memories of those outings defy description. Uncle Jim and his Saxon continued those sojourns until in the early forties when the trips ended, and the Saxon sat in the barn on four flat tires.

In 1945, a young farm boy by the name of Glen Goodfriend, was attending school directly across the street from Uncle Jim's home, and somehow heard of the old car in the barn. Glen immediately became interested, and after an inspection or two, made a deal to purchase the Saxon in exchange for a cord of wood. I recently talked with Glen, and he told me that he had very little trouble in getting the Saxon to run, but he could never keep air in the tires. Day after day he would go to the barn to fix a tire, only to find the one he repaired the day before had gone flat.

After two weeks of tedious tire fixing, he was able to back the car out and drive it to his father's farm. There the Saxon was the center of attention for Glen and his many brothers, all of whom were intent on driving it about the farm and numerous country roads. After a short time, the top was removed. Glen then decided to replace the trunk part of the body with a truck box. With tools and knowledge more capable of cutting fence wire, they set about to cut the rear off the body. Then they installed some boards on the frame for carrying objects about the farm. The boys discovered that the Saxon made an ideal car for jumping snowbanks.

A lot of driving was done on roads that most cars could not even traverse. This made for a very practical means of getting their milk to the factory when other modes of transportation were nearly impossible. A while later, it was decided that the car needed more streamlining. Using a saw and hammer, they again set to work to disjoin the remaining part of the body at the center of the doors. In addition, the fenders, running boards and carbide generator were removed and thrown into the dump. The windshield was installed on the side of the milk house to serve as an awning. This made the car racier, and with the doors flapping on the cowl, the boys were able to enjoy their snowbank hopping even more.

It was during one of those snowbank hops that the transmission gave out and locked, causing extensive damage to the transmission and breaking an axle. The old car was unceremoniously dragged into the field and left in a tin lean-to which offered little shelter from the elements. The transmission and rear end were taken apart and dumped on the ground where they became mire in the mud.

The Saxon met its demise during the winter of 1946-47. I am happy to relate that Uncle Jim was not aware of its unhappy fate at the time of his death in 1946. The Saxon was not allowed to rest, however, and became the target of vandals. Destruction included the removal of the crank assembly, headlights and yokes, horn, radiator cap and emblem. The front end of the car was taken off, hubs removed from the wheels and Austin wheels installed. The front end was then installed onto a wagon which was eventually sold to a neighboring farmer. The running board supports were installed in a garage to give support to a workbench. Many of the remaining parts were scattered about the farm with the control straps and brake assemblies ending up in the grainery. The car was now a hulk of junk that was used for target practice whenever anyone went into the field with a rifle. It was this ugly hulk that I viewed in 1960. I was fully convinced that it was beyond repair, but the sentiment I associated with the car kept my thoughts active, and I returned in September of 1961, and purchased the remains for \$75.00.

Since the car frame had sunk into the mud, we used the scoop on a tractor to literally scoop it up and dump it in the rear of a pick-up truck. We discovered that chipmunks were living in the water jacket of the engine and the lower portion of the radiator. They were extremely unhappy that we were taking away their home. Their reluctant departure out of the top of the radiator was something to behold. A portion of the body was retrieved from the dump, the windshield from the side of the milkhouse, control straps and brake assemblies from the grainery and running board supports, from the garage. This confusion of rubble was deposited in my cottage garage, and the long job of restoration began.

A lady visiting our cottage noticed the Saxon engine, and remarked that her late husband had an engine like that lying in the briar patch behind her barn. She said I could have it for the taking. When we dragged the engine out of the briar patch, my son discovered a complete crank assembly lying under the engine. It was exactly the one we needed.

In 1962, a friend gave me a September, 1961 copy of *Hemmings Motor News*, in which was advertised Saxon fenders, splash pans, running boards, cowl and doors for sale for \$75.00. I wrote to Mr. Jack Dorman of Rock Island, Illinois, and much to my surprise, I was still able to purchase them. In the course of correspondence, I sent Mr. Dorman a picture of the Saxon as I had found it. He remarked, "I have been saving those parts for someone who needs them, and boy you sure need them!"

While visiting Ken Wallace on Fisherman's Road, here in Norfolk, I spotted a set of front wheels in his garage that closely resembled the Saxon's. I was able to purchase them and shipped them off to Canada where they were mounted in new rims and the Saxon's front hubs. I had visions of the old car standing on all four tires once again.

During the period of 1962 to 1972, there was little progress on assembling the pieces. The Saxon was at my cottage on Lake Ontario, and between the distance involved and the availability of tools, I accomplished very little. I did manage to clean the pan and oiling system of the motor, and took out about one-half bucket of hickory nut shells from the water jacket of the engine and radiator. With the help of my father, we were able to get the engine running. What a thrill it was to hear it start up again! During this time, I located a hand operated Klaxon horn as was previously on the car, a good set of headlights at Hershey, and a carbide generator from the Antique Automobile Museum in Atlanta, Ga. I repaired the transmission and axle from machined down truck parts. In the Plunder House at Chaumont, N.Y., I purchased a set of headlights that I strongly believe came from the car. One had been altered to accommodate a large house light bulb. The most difficult part to find was the radiator emblem. After eleven years of extensive looking, I was finally able to purchase one from Harry Pulfer of La Crescenta, Ca.

In July of 1972, I brought all the pieces to Norfolk. The parts were now complete, with the exception of the top and trunk section. I had to completely rebuild the car from the ground up. Working mostly from intuition and memory, I was able to reconstruct the wooden frame and seat framework. As there seemed no possibility of finding a replacement section for the trunk, I decided to try my hand at fibreglassing. I built a wooden frame outline, over which I stretched fibreglass cloth. Working strictly from memory as to design, I was very pleased and surprised at the results.

Many other challenging problems arose in rebuilding the car, but the one I had a great deal of difficulty in solving was the forming of the wooden frame along the top of the body. After numerous attempts, I sawed up long strips in wafer thicknesses, coiled and soaked them in boiling water, molded them together with clamps for the shape I wanted, then let them dry. I then took them apart, applied an abundance of weldwood glue, then clamped them in place. They turned out excellently. All the wood and metal work had to blend together. Working with no figures or plan, it seemed incredible to me that the project progressed as well as it did.

The doors and hood are the real testing pieces as to how well a job is done. The doors worked fine, but the hood just would not fit right. I had several suggestions from the experts, none of which worked. I found out the hard way that if I wanted it done right, I had better be able to do it myself, or forget about it. I decided to take the hood apart, and working section by section, I was able to get it to fit and work fine.

At last came the day for painting. The original color was a dark green, but I wanted something a little brighter, so I chose the colors of brown and orange. Marty Martin came by and assisted me in the spraying. How thrilled my wife and I were at the results! I could not have been more pleased. Now all that was left was the top and the upholstery, which I dreaded to think about.

I purchased the vinyl for the seat upholstery. Margaret Davis, (who had never upholstered a car in her life), and I, tackled the project. Working the vinyl proved to be a lot of work, but after numerous attempts, huffing, puffing and a few choice words, we were able to turn out something that looked rather nice. It will not stand the inspection of the experts, but I have had many compliments on it. The upholstery is in the diamond tuft style, but I made the mistake of putting too many tufts in the seat. This created a finish that looked a great deal like the top of a Milky Way candy bar. I got the idea to call it candy top tufting, and everyone thinks it is beautiful. You can readily see that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

During one of my earlier visits, I decided to once again search the farm for the remains of the top bows. After a lengthy search, Glen Goodfriend found the rusted pieces in the dump. We were able to determine that all of the sockets, or what was left of them, were there.

I took the remnants of the top bows to a young man in Mechanicsburg, Pa., who turned out a beautiful new set. I was fortunate in finding a picture of the car when Uncle Jim had it. From this picture, I was able to determine the design of the top and side curtains, with the triangular isinglass windows. A local upholsterer, Albert Young, fabricated a new top and curtains, and restoration was complete.

The year was 1975. The big day that I had been looking forward to was near at hand. I had often thought of taking the old car back and making it a part of our Home Town Day celebration. My good friends, Norma and Buddy Fox, gave a much appreciated helping hand in loaning me the use of their trailer. As a result, we hauled the Saxon off to Three Mile Bay, N.Y. On July 5th. 1975, the car was back in familiar surroundings. Many people were delighted to see the old car again, and naturally I was very proud of the numerous compliments they extended. A special incident was when my wife drove the car by herself from the cottage to town and came back beaming as if she had just won a new Rolls Royce.

On July the 12th, we took the car to Cape Vincent, N.Y., and entered it in the parade at the Joint U.S. and Canada French Festival. What a wonderful time we had much to our surprise, we were awarded second prize in the special events category. We received newspaper and television publicity, then an unusual thing occurred. A picture of the Saxon enjoyed the center of the last page of the newspaper, and, included in the same paper was a picture of Aunt Ad and Uncle Jim from long ago.

Many hours, days and months have been spent on this project. It has been a most enjoyable and entertaining one. I had the following inscription engraved on the brass gasoline tank cap: UNCLE JIM and AUNT AD CORNAIRE – 1914. The Saxon will always be their car.