

Tail Lights

Automotive History from
a New Perspective

January-February 2012

Green Flag on 2012!

The 2012 Daytona 500 in Pictures

Perspectives of 1915, the 1960's, and the 2000's: Are We Living in the End of the Age of Gasoline?

Tail Lights

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Cover Car: Danica Patrick's car fueled at the 2012 Daytona 500 from the U.S. Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation program (CC BY 2.0) <http://www.armymwr.com/>

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2012 Daytona 5005

Photographs by U.S. Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation



Pinewood Poncho

2012 Blackhawk Council Pinewood Derby
Pack 367 (Woodstock, Illinois) Adult's Race
Modeled after a 1968 Pontiac Firebird



The Crittenden Automotive Library

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The Crittenden Automotive Library Update

By Bill Crittenden
Owner, The Crittenden Automotive Library

This issue is a little later than usual. I've been working as much as I can on stock car racing results. There's a ton of data to process through! I know there are other sites that have a lot of the same information, most notably Racing-Reference.info and UltimateRacingHistory.com. There are also photo sites (Flickr), news sites (Catchfence.com and Jayski.com), video sites (YouTube), and biography sites (Wikipedia) that already have most of this information online. The difference between them and The Crittenden Automotive Library is that I can combine information from all sorts of sources into one place and organize it in a way that some of these sites can't match. I've already taken a few Creative Commons licensed photo sets from Flickr that had little identifying information beyond a track and a year and identified the drivers in each picture and organized the pictures accordingly.

I'm putting together full racing results from NASCAR and ARCA, which expand every week as I have more time to work on them. Eventually once I have the foundation of ARCA/Truck/Busch and Cup results online, I'll start digging into the "minor leagues": NASCAR K&N East & West, the old USAC series, ASA, ISCARS, Mid-American, NASCAR's Canadian and Mexican divisions, my local asphalt track (Rockford Speedway), and American-style stock car racing from Europe and Australia.

Of course, I don't stop with numbers and data. As long as I've got all those stock car files separated out to work on, I'm going to be adding to the collection of photographs as well. In addition to what's already online from The John Walczak Collection (and exclusive to The Crittenden Automotive Library), Wisconsin's own "Royal Broil" has thousands of short-track race pictures from the Cheese State licensed for use, and I intend to get my own camera to some local races again this year.

As usual, there are also news stories and press releases to go into the Library as well from Knight Motorsports Management, and I've recently added Bradley Carpenter's Last Lap Marketing to my sources. If you're a racing team PR person reading this, send me an e-mail and get your drivers and teams included! (admin@carsandracingstuff.com) Oh, and if you happen to run a race track or racing series, contact me about getting your results into the Library!



Part of the new project, as seen above, is replacing the Stock Car Racing subject image with a new picture. At the top of the column is the original image of Joe Shear's Pontiac at the 1989 ASA race at The Milwaukee Mile. Below is Bill Elliott from the 1992 NASCAR Tire Test at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Both pictures are Crittenden Automotive Library exclusives by John Walczak.

This doesn't mean that stock car racing is all I'll work on all year long, nor am I ignoring all other forms of racing to focus the entire Library on stock car racing.

I'm making a point of focusing on this to try and at least get one major segment of the Library to the point where it is "complete" enough (no part of the Library is ever truly "done") to proudly show off to the world alongside some of the best stock car racing websites in the world, and then set aside for a while and come back to at a later date while using it as a template for other segments of the Library: open wheel racing, sports car and touring car racing, and so on.

I've already got one photo set from the 2012 Classic Plastic model car show, the Cedarville model car show is coming up soon, and then the snow melts and it's back to the Green Street Cruise Night and all the local classic car shows I have time to get to. Plus, my wife Heidi is wants to take the family on vacation for the first time since 2003, and I've got pictures from the Studebaker museum from that trip. I'm lobbying for going somewhere with lots of cars!

Oh, and before I started the stock car results project, I finally got a new computer that's more than twice as powerful as the HP from 2002 that I was using.

This issue is a little short this time, I've got a huge pile of stock car information to go through this year.

The Crittenden Automotive Library on Facebook
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Historical Awareness

By Bill Crittenden

How many people realize that they live in an historic era while they're living in it? Few can foresee the rise and fall of cultural elements that make up our collective existence. Did anyone predict that one of the favorite eras in automotive history, the era of the American muscle car, would come to a close due to a cultural shift in the value of safety or the geopolitical consequences of imported oil? Or was it assumed that technological progress would always make cars faster and more powerful year after year and that the late 1960's would be just a dot on an ever rising chart line? Did the automotive enthusiasts of the era ever think that a device as unrelated to gas, grease, and oil as the integrated circuit would change the way cars are designed, built, and driven? Were they looking forward to a bright future not realizing how fondly people would be looking back on their time?

There have been a few times when sweeping changes in the automobile industry lead people to believe that they are witnessing history in the making. Perhaps we are living in such a time ourselves, as the push for electric automobiles could make this current generation of cars the last run on petroleum-based fuels. Or the serious attempts at hybrid and electric cars could be remembered as an era of quirky automotive follies looked at in the same way modern society views the various attempts at microcars and plexiglass bubblecars of the 1960's. In 50 years time the Toyota Prius could be the Chrysler Turbine of our generation, or the gasoline-powered V8 engine could be as antiquated as the living horse for powering vehicles.

One generation that was well aware of its historical significance was the generation that experienced the first generation of automobiles and witnessed the transition from horse to horsepower. Evidence of this awareness is found in an article marking the 20th anniversary of the practical automobile in The New York Times on December 5, 1915:

TWENTY CAR-PACKED YEARS.

What a Lot of Automobile History from 1895 to 1915!

Few industries can show the strides made by the automobile industry. In twenty years, practically, has come the immense development of the motor car both as to efficiency and use. A few facts, bobbing up from various sources this week, emphasize how much automobile history has been made since 1895.

In 1895, in the first noteworthy motor derby in the United States, the most powerful racer attained an average speed of 7.5 miles an hour. In 1895 the first motor exhibi-

tion took place in England. Five cars took part. It is stated by The London Daily Telegraph that there were only about six motor cars in all England at that time. The same year, 1895, the first automobile race was run between Paris and Bordeaux.

Of course by 1915, or even by 1905, it was completely clear that a new technology was reshaping civilization. But just 5 years earlier, who in the world was aware that a few tinkers working in unknown little machine shops were about to bring the centuries-long era of a horse-drawn civilization to an end?

The electric car is trying to change the world of motoring, but it has not been an easy transition. First there was the Saturn EV-1, which mysteriously disappeared. Then the Toyota Prius combined the best of electric efficiency and gasoline range and brought the word "hybrid" into dinner table conversation, but after a decade has yet to catch on as more than an environmental statement. The Chevrolet Volt attempts to rebalance the hybrid more towards the electric side than the gasoline side but is caught up in Presidential politics, the Tesla Roadster is allegedly prone to "bricking" (yet another word we'll have to add to the world's glossary of automotive jargon), but the Nissan Leaf is a bright spot.

Thinking of the distant past, I am reminded that electric cars aren't a new thing. Last month's issue had a picture of a 1919 Detroit Electric on page 11. But it goes even further back than that. "Since then, however, an enterprising Frenchman has invented a four-passenger electric carriage which weighs altogether 2,573 pounds, including 330 pounds for two passengers, 240 pounds for the motors, and 925 pounds for the accumulators. The batteries are of the Fulmen type, and the motor produces 2.6 horse power at a velocity of 1,200 revolutions per minute. The carriage is capable of making a trip of eighteen miles without recharging at a maximum rate of twelve miles an hour on a good, level road." That was from June 17, 1895. 18 miles range 116 and a half years ago! 12 miles an hour, though not good by today's standards, but not bad considering one of the first recorded speeding tickets was issued a year later for only 8 miles per hour.

Is the gasoline powered automobile going out in a blaze of high-powered glory revisiting all the great muscle cars of the past (Camaro, Challenger, retro Mustang) before we all finally convert to whooshing around quietly in technology that resembles the future of Star Trek...and not the generation that it came from? Or will the future be more subtle, as humanity finds new hydrocarbons to burn more efficiently? Either way, 40 years from now, I doubt anyone will be designing retro cars to look like the cars of 2012 with the technology of 2052.

2012 Daytona 500

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