Strut & Axle is published four times a year by the Owls Head Transportation Museum, a nonprofit organization accredited by the American Association of Museums. Founded in 1974, the Museum’s purpose is to collect, preserve, demonstrate and exhibit pioneer ground and air vehicles and related technology significant to the evolution of transportation and/or the State of Maine. The Museum’s core collection includes aircraft, automobiles, engines, motorcycles, bicycles and carriages dating from the 1890s through the 1930s. Contemporary vehicles are exhibited for comparison.

A subscription to Strut & Axle is a benefit of Museum membership. Membership categories include: Individual $40, Dual $50, Family $60 and Participating $100. For more information on these and other membership categories, as well as the Museum’s current schedule of events, contact the Museum at PO Box 237, Owls Head, ME 04854. Tel: 207-594-4418. Email: info@ohtm.org. Web: www.owlshead.org

4 From the Cockpit
DISCOVERY MODE
By Russ Rocknak

10 View from the Tool Box
LIFE AT THE MUSEUM
By Warren Kincaid

14 Departed Friends

15 2013 Events Schedule

16 Pitcairn Sport Mailwing
The last surviving PA-7S listed on the FAA registry By Jenna Lookner

20 Clara Bow’s 1929
Rolls-Royce Phantom Tourer
A glimpse into the history of the 1929 Rolls-Royce Phantom Derby Tourer By Jenna Lookner

26 Gypsy Wagon
The story is of a clan of people called the Romani By James S. Rockefeller Jr.

34 Rearview Mirror
Postcard supplied by Steve Lang

ON THE COVER: 1911 Cadillac and 1938 Standard J-1 Photograph by Russ Rocknak
SHIFTING GEARS from first to second is always an exciting part of a vehicle’s transition through the process of forward movement. Maxing out the revs through launch to a sustained speed, a shift to second gear provides the ability to build upon the efforts the first gear had provided, launching the vehicle toward its mission at a greater speed and smoother velocity. In this case, first gear is our Director Emeritus Charles Chiarchiaro, providing the tremendous effort put forth of 36 years in the driver’s seat, providing the direction and action needed to bring the Museum to where it stands today. The shift to second gear is representative of my position now as your Executive Director. It is a very exciting time here at the Museum as we are experiencing a transitional year with new blood, vibrant ideas and goals. Think of *The Wizard of Oz* when the set goes from black and white to living color.

Visiting the Museum today, you will notice right away an experience that piques our five senses—from all outward appearances including signage and messaging to our ability to be prepared to harness the passion of our guests through demonstrations of most of our collection. The redesigned *Strut & Axle* you are holding today also reflects this passion in a two-dimensional form. A fun fact—our first outdoor event of this year was a washout from a weather standpoint, but that did not stop us from giving demonstrations of more vehicles in two days than have been run in the past 10 years, including our 1908 Stanley Model K Semi Racer, a very complicated steam car, no less. We wowed our guests and gave them all a take home experience regardless of the rain. That is attributable to our staff.
From the Cockpit

Wings, but the aircraft is very innovative for the time that it was designed and engineered to fly. Actually the Taube’s wing design is based on the zanonia tree seed pod, which drifts through the air for great distances. Karl went up to one of the wing tips and gently raised the trailing edge up. “Check out the steering wheel in the cockpit and the other wing,” he said. As he moved the edge up, the wheel spun to the right and the other wing’s edge tipped down, countering the effort made by Karl. This is all done with an intricate set of control wires external to the plane—simply amazing. I asked if the plane actually flies, and he smiled proudly. “Yes, as a matter of fact we have an air-to-air picture of JSR flying it,” he explained. To me that equates to pure passion for flight, all pioneering forward the best flight possible. Pioneering, indeed, and these stories are endless here at the Museum.

Only 9:00 in the morning, and I am going to smell the fumes from a 1911 Cadillac.

Wings, but the aircraft is very innovative for the time that it was designed and engineered to fly. Actually the Taube’s wing design is based on the zanonia tree seed pod, which drifts through the air for great distances. Karl went up to one of the wing tips and gently raised the trailing edge up. “Check out the steering wheel in the cockpit and the other wing,” he said. As he moved the edge up, the wheel spun to the right and the other wing’s edge tipped down, countering the effort made by Karl. This is all done with an intricate set of control wires external to the plane—simply amazing. I asked if the plane actually flies, and he smiled proudly. “Yes, as a matter of fact we have an air-to-air picture of JSR flying it,” he explained. To me that equates to pure passion for flight, all pioneering forward the best flight possible. Pioneering, indeed, and these stories are endless here at the Museum.

One of my first missions on board was to have our Ground Vehicle Conservator, Warren Kincaid, wake up a few of the jewels of our automotive collection from years of slumber. Methodically Warren took on the task and started bringing the cars one by one through his shop for an assessment. Soon, Warren began to call me on the walkie talkies that we use to communicate in the Museum and ask if I would like to see a particular car run.

1913 Etrich Taube, being flown by Jim Rockefeller.

1907 Renault Vanderbilt race car oil distribution unit.

1911 Cadillac is among the permanent collection of vehicles that the Museum staff runs and demonstrates on a nearly daily basis.
One day Warren’s voice came over the radio. “You want to see the 1911 Cadillac run?” he asked. I thought to myself, well, this is a good day at the office; it is only 9:00 in the morning, and I am going to smell the fumes from an 1911 Cadillac.

I hightailed down to Warren’s shop to find Warren and a large group of school kids circling the car. He was patiently educating the kids on the automobile, showing all of the little intricacies involved with getting it running. After finishing with the start-up prep, he headed toward the front of the car and looked at the crowd. “Of course, this was the last year of a crank start for Cadillac,” he said. With that he bent down and gave the crank a compression turn, found the sweet spot, and with one quick spin the Cadillac came to life; not only did the car seem to be grinning, but the crowd definitely did.

Smiles abound around here, including mine. There is something special about seeing what most people term as a static experience—an automobile on display in a museum—come to life and do what it was meant to do: run and move. Everything here at the Museum was designed to do just that—move. How the manufacturers achieved this in this era was a free-for-all of sorts, lacking any standardization. Each manufacturer had their own solution regarding the power (gasoline, steam or electric) as well as their own solution for making it run and getting the power to the ground—for instance, the Model T with its three-pedal setup with none of them being the throttle. Or the 1907 Renault Vanderbilt race car with its dry sump engine and oil distribution unit mounted on the dashboard for the mechanic to handle the lubrication efforts while the driver does just that—drive, and drive hard. This automobile tops out at about 90 mph!

Another marvel is the 1932 Harley Davidson Model V. This is the vehicle I have chosen to demonstrate during the busy schedule of summer shows this year. Before the weather had decisively rounded the corner toward spring, I had Warren give me a tutorial on the Harley so I could wrap my mind around the requisite muscle memory to get the split second actions required to safely run the motorcycle. My “pre-programmed motorcycle riding 101” mental rule book went right out the window in order to digest the Harley’s riding rule book: This V-Twin is a 3-speed, tank-mounted shifter motorcycle. The clutch is a rocking foot pedal on the left, the rear brake is controlled by the right foot pedal, the front brake is the lever on the left side of the handlebar—and on the right there isn’t a lever, just the throttle grip that doesn’t spring back to idle when released after advancing. The left hand grip advances the spark when twisted. Got that? Believe me, it sounds like more of a challenge than it really is. And it is a joy to ride, as this is a very proud, honest 100 mph+ motorcycle made in 1932.

Along with the daily duties of managing the Museum, it is imperative that I know each and every vehicle, engine and carriage that is in the collection, and I am well on my way. Discovering the magical engineering that was continuously developed and uniquely designed and executed by each manufacturer during the pioneer era is a wonderful experience. Almost every vehicle here has its own personality that longs to be discovered. This discovery is the joy that we celebrate and will demonstrate here at the Museum for all generations to enjoy for many years to come. Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!

Russ Rocknak, Owls Head Transportation Museum Executive Director

Proud to Support the Owls Head Transportation Museum.

An insurance policy should be as unique as the vehicle (and the driver) it covers. We’ll find the coverage that’s right for the both of you.
I’M HONORED AND PLEASED at the invitation to contribute to *Strut & Axle*. For those who don’t know, since last November I have filled the vacant position of Ground Vehicle Conservator here at OHTM. My thanks to Peter Curtis for looking after the collection for the past 10 years; it’s a big job to keep up with the many vehicles this Museum has entrusted to its care. Before I go any further, larger thanks go out to the volunteers who show up on Thursday night as well as during the week and for special events. Doug, Don, Bryan, Ryan, Philip, the Parker family, Wesley, Dick, Charlie, Jeff, Jake, Al, Jason, numerous Bobs and a host of volunteers whom I have met and have yet to meet … you all contribute to a sphere of Museum operations that many never see. Some of you have been busting your knuckles on these rare and valuable cars (and motorcycles) for over 20 years; some of you are new. We all agree that it’s both important and fun to keep the mission of the Museum alive by exploding gas in a cylinder and seeing what we can make that do.
Because this is my first submission to Strut & Axle, I’d like to put forth my philosophy about where the ground vehicle restoration workshop fits into the larger picture of “life at the Museum.” We, by definition, are a running and active museum. A large volume of the lifeblood at the Museum is our ambition to run our vehicles, explain, educate and entertain, taking a fair amount of risk with the collection in doing so. When I first visited the Museum many years ago I was captivated by that careful but cavalier attitude of the founders and first volunteers. Here the keys weren’t just in the ignition; they were in the “run” position!

Today, the various departments of the Museum operate in the same way. My goal is to step the Volunteer Workshop up to that level. The workshop is an integral part of the whole, and should be a place as interesting to the public as the main display. I’d like to achieve a clean, orderly, but obviously active workshop. I have no reservations about visitors seeing a work in progress. A balance between activity and display can be had in every room of the Museum. The main display lures us with promise. The events deliver that promise. The shops and volunteers are the hub that allows it to happen. I’m thinking that the public would like to see that hub turn, and the shop has the potential to meet this goal. I notice that the shop doors have hinges; I’d like to make sure the shop looks good and opens them.

Already we have marched a large part of the rolling stock through the shop to get the vehicles ready for the summer season. The Museum’s annual Shine & Dine is behind us, and the collection is looking good thanks to the dedicated volunteers.

I’d like to achieve a clean, orderly, but obviously active workshop.
who turned out to help. There are plans in the works to operate some vehicles that you may not have seen in running order for many years.

I plan to outline specific projects in future editions of *Strut & Axle*. We have things in the works, but it will be a process. For those of you who can’t get to the Museum often, this can be a small window into the workings of our shop. I also try to post workshop activity on Facebook as well, so that our fans from near and far can be tuned in to what’s happening in the shop. Not all is “spit and polish” as it appears out in the main display. All those vehicles rely on oil, grease and gasoline to make those explosions, and the parts must mesh and do their job on time. The Volunteer Workshop is not much different. At the core my thought is this: It’s an interesting process to watch.

Warren Kincaid, Owls Head Transportation Museum Ground Vehicle Conservator

---

**In memory of those friends who have recently left us...**

Andrew Spaulding  
Dorothy “Dot” Rankine  
Grace Conway  
Kenneth “Smitty” Smith  
Linwood “Pete” Smith  
David Trask  
David Dillion  
Carrol Church  
Irene Dentino  
Anne “Nancy” Hiatt  
Howard Brown  
John Goodrich  
Phillip Bibber  
Dave Mauro

---

**VIEW FROM THE TOOL BOX**

---

Bob Kinghorn and Jim Westervelt working on the 1940 Ford “Woodie” Station Wagon.

---

**2013 EVENTS**

**JULY 6-7**  
**Fabulous ’50s & Sensational ’60s Car Meet**  
Featuring more than 400 classic autos from the auto industry’s most stylish decades.

**JULY 20-21**  
**Trucks, Tractors & Commercial Vehicles Show**  
More than 250 antique pick-ups, delivery vans, tractor trailers, military vehicles, engines and more.

**AUGUST 3-4**  
**Wings & Wheels Spectacular & Aerobatic Airshow**  
Focusing on all things with wings and wheels. Featuring a world-class aerobatic airshow guaranteed to impress.

**AUGUST 17**  
**36th Annual New England Auto Auction**  
Up to 200 antique, classic and special interest vehicles go up for bid. *Preview week August 12-16.*

**AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 1**  
**Vintage Motorcycle Meet**  
A much anticipated annual gathering of antique and classic motorcycles, including both domestic and foreign examples.

**SEPTEMBER 21-22**  
**Earth Movers & Shakers**  
An earth-moving gathering of large construction vehicles complete with demonstrations. This fun family event is historically a crowd pleaser.

**OCTOBER 5-6**  
**Foreign Auto Festival**  
With Jaguar as our 2013 featured marque, this is our annual salute to vintage foreign marques hailing from the world over. This gathering of exquisite vehicles is a great finale to the show season.

**NOVEMBER 2-3**  
**Great Fall Auction & Flea Market**  
Fundraising auction featuring a diverse assortment of items, including travel packages, antiques, collectibles and gift certificates galore!

---

Antique Aeroplane Show at designated Festivals & Car Shows weather permitting.
WHEN PITCAIRN PA-7S Sport Mailwing, NC13158, arrived at Owls Head Transportation Museum in October, it quickly became a favorite among museum staff, visitors and volunteers. The aircraft boasts a remarkable history and is the single surviving example of a PA-7S on the Federal Aviation Association registry.

The sleek 250 horsepower plane, which weighs a mere 2,134 pounds empty, is now on display as part of OHTM’s permanent collection.

According to an April 1984 report in *Sport Aviation* magazine, NC13158 was acquired by Stephen Pitcairn—son of National Aviation Hall of Fame member Harold F. Pitcairn—in 1979. The aircraft was originally manufactured in June 1930 and sold in 1932 to John Haddock of the Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania-based coal company Horizon Coal.

The original list price for the aircraft was $9,500, but the Horizon Coal Company purchased the plane for a reduced sum $6,700 due to financial strain brought...
on by the Great Depression, according to the 1984 report that was authored by Stephen Pitcairn.

The Horizon Company used the aircraft as a promotional tool, delivering 25-pound trademarked bags of coal to towns throughout New England as a special advertisement for their company. Though the aircraft was originally designed for mail delivery, it was reportedly never used for that purpose.

According to previously published reports, NC13158 was sold by Horizon Company and subsequently owned by 13 different people in various regions of the United States prior to being purchased by Steve Pitcairn in 1979.

Pitcairn purchased the plane in Vero Beach, Florida, and in his eagerness to get the plane back east—to Trenton-Robbinsville Airport in Robbinsville, New Jersey—he did a hasty preflight inspection. After a short (albeit successful) test flight, he took off from Vero Beach bound for Robbinsville, “without a radio and a compass without fluid.”

Pitcairn wrote that his navigation for the flight was based on “sectional charts and the interstate highway system.” After departing Vero Beach he stopped to refuel in Ormond Beach and resumed flight, reporting that within two hours “the engine stuttered and started missing several beats every four or five minutes.” Pitcairn reported that he began to scour “farmers’ fields and airports as [he] passed over so [he] would have an emergency field to land in if the engine got worse.”

The engine trouble did get worse, and about five minutes out of Walterboro, South Carolina the engine quit. Pitcairn wrote that he was able to revive the engine by pumping the throttle, making a 180-degree turn and safely landing the plane on a relegated Army training field in Walterboro. He flew home via commercial airline, returning to repair the plane and complete the flight to New Jersey two weeks later.

The original restoration of the aircraft began in 1979 under Pitcairn’s direction and was “quite extensive.” Pitcairn reported that he returned to the sky with the NC13158 in July 1983, heading to the EAA National Convention in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, piloting his long-awaited, newly restored “dream ship.”

According to a logbook for the PA-7S, the aircraft underwent a full re-covering in 2000.

The rare aircraft was donated to Owls Head Transportation Museum by the estate of Stephen Pitcairn following his death in 2008. The acquisition process took nearly two years and was completed in autumn 2012, according to Owls Head Transportation Museum Aircraft Conservator Karl Erickson.

Jenna Lookner, Owls Head Transportation Museum Director of Public Relations
The first time I perused the collection as a potential employee of the Owls Head Transportation Museum I found it difficult to wipe the pervasive, child-like grin from my face. As I walked the Museum floor admiring row after row of shining specimens of the winged and wheeled variety, my eyes rested on a particular vehicle. A cursory read-through of the placard gave me a glimpse into the history of the 1929 Rolls-Royce Phantom Derby Tourer before me, and thus my interest in that car was effectively piqued.
With its cream-colored exterior and lush, quilted red leather interior, the convertible 1929 Rolls-Royce Phantom Derby Tourer that originally belonged to silent film actress Clara Bow has been referred to as a “valentine on wheels.” The stunning vehicle is now displayed and operated as part of the Owls Head Transportation Museum’s permanent collection, and has been since it was acquired and donated by Tom Watson Jr., one of the founders of the Museum.

While the history of the Bow Car may well end with its conservation in Owls Head, Maine, were it able to provide a history the vehicle would undoubtedly have no shortage of riveting tales to tell. From a 15-year tenure as Clara Bow’s personal vehicle to use on the glimmering movie sets of old Hollywood, the car has made an indelible impression on legions of admirers since it was manufactured 84 years ago.

The chassis of the Bow Rolls-Royce was produced in Springfield, Massachusetts when, following World War 1, American investors obtained the license to build Rolls-Royce vehicles in the United States. Those vehicles, known as Springfield Rolls-Royces, enjoyed a successful production run for approximately a decade, ceasing U.S. production in 1931.
when demand for the luxury cars fell as the Great Depression gripped the country.

Delivery of the Springfield-built Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost began in 1921, followed by the Phantom in 1927. The Springfield plant built approximately 20 Derby Tourers—the model of the Bow Car—in 1929. The body of the Bow Car was built by Brewster of Long Island City, New York, one of the specialized companies contracted to build the bodies for the U.S.-built Rolls-Royces. To date, Springfield is the only location outside of the United Kingdom where Rolls-Royce vehicles have ever been built.

The Rolls-Royce Phantom Derby Tourer was built as a factory production model, but due to the specialized nature of the vehicle, owners could order their automobiles with custom modifications, including changes to paint color and various custom upholstery options. The vehicle’s details include mahogany running boards and pie wedge-shaped doors; the signature flying lady hood ornament was imported from England.

The Clara Bow Phantom Derby Tourer, which bears Springfield chassis number S-293KR and Brewster Body number 5606, originally retailed for $17,840 during a time when a Ford Model A touring car cost around $500. The Clara Bow Car was reportedly once said, “I can’t get a car that will drive fast enough.”

Known as the Hollywood “It Girl” of the late 1920s, Clara Bow’s life began in Brooklyn, New York in 1905. Born into a family that struggled with the dueling demons of financial hardship and domestic violence, the starlet of silent film was discovered after winning a beauty contest. She would later gain global recognition for her unconventional beauty and ability to express herself on the silver screen. Her role in the 1927 silent film “It,” based on a novelette by Elinor Glyn, is largely regarded as her most significant performance. Bow appeared in nearly 60 films during her career.

Bow’s roles—and her personal affairs—frequently pushed the envelope, often landing her in precarious situations. Known for her candor with the press and affinity for off-color humor, Bow’s conduct was frowned upon in her era. Partially due to her willingness to embrace a troubled past openly, Bow was successful but not always socially popular with her Hollywood peers. A plethora of rumors circulated about her affairs with various men, including several famous actors. At the age of 26 she married cowboy actor Rex Bell, and the couple had two sons together. With her heart-shaped face, hourglass figure and thick hair that was often dyed an unmistakable shade of auburn, the uninhibited Bow was largely regarded as a figurehead of the flapper culture.

After “talkie” films took Hollywood by storm Bow retired from acting, last appearing in the 1933 film “Hoop-La.” She and Bell kept the iconic Rolls-Royce through World War II and gave the vehicle to their family physician in 1945. In 1951 cotton machine dealer P.M. Ingram of Coalinga, California reportedly traded his Model J Duesenberg for the Bow Car, which was then painted yellow with a red interior. Allegedly Ingram had initially purchased the car from the physician’s estate and experienced terrible remorse after selling the vehicle, catalyzing his desire to reacquire it. In 1960 Ingram sold the car to another Californian, Alton Walker, who was in 1950 the first chairman of the now-famed Pebble Beach Concours and a Rolls-Royce aficionado. Tom Watson acquired the vehicle sometime after 1973. Watson gifted the Clara Bow Rolls-Royce to the Owls Head Transportation Museum in 1986.

Under the direction of Ground Vehicle Conservator Warren Kincaid, each vehicle in the Museum’s collection is receiving an assessment. On the sunny afternoon of April 10, 2013, Kincaid delighted staff and volunteers by running the Bow Car on the grounds of the Museum.
LOOKING AT THE MUSEUM’S GYPSY WAGON, walking around it, stirs strong emotions. It is the combination of color, the complexity of design, the magic of what might be inside—like a giant Christmas present on wheels. The story of its birth starts eons ago in India. The story is of a clan of people called the Romani. They were considered a low caste, like the untouchables, reputedly making a living by singing, dancing, performing magic tricks and participating in other endeavors that were considered nefarious for

Reading Wagon 1921, which quickly became known in gypsy circles and was highly praised for its design, beauty and ability to go off road over rough ground, thanks to its large wheels.
One of the first was Antoine Franconi, 1738–1836, a patriarch of the circus. He was also a wild beast tamer, toreador, horsebreaker and equestrian, in addition to being a circus proprietor. He was the talk of Paris and in later years, for amusement, built a “voiture nomade” with a dining room, bedroom and galley.

The horse-drawn living wagon reached England in the early 1800s as the roads grew better and the stagecoach started entering the scene. Tinkers, fairground folks, racing event people, peddlers, miners and forest workers were the first to use them. They were simple vehicles at the start, called tilt wagons or carts, with a canvas tarp used to cover the goods and to sleep under at night. From the myriad types of goods and people that needed to be transported from A to B, and the different wagons to suit their various needs, the exotic Gypsy Wagon (spelled with two “g’s”) evolved. Their reign was roughly that of Queen Victoria, from the middle 1800s to the early 1900s. Because of demand, England became the home of the foremost builders in the world of these painted masterpieces.

Dunton & Sons of Reading, England developed the “Reading Wagon,” which quickly became known in gypsy circles and was highly praised for its design, beauty and ability to go off road over rough ground, thanks to its large wheels. Of all the builders, Dunton, perhaps, found its primary niche with the Romani from 1874 onward. Reading, a town of 19,000, was at the center of Southern England’s commerce and industries devoted to the carriage trade. During World War I the Dunton Company repaired army horse-drawn vehicles as a sideline. But Dunton refused to work on motor vehicles and, as the story goes, come on building roads as he did on forts and other military infrastructure. By 1810 one could travel from Paris to Milan in 10 days. England’s roads were terrible in comparison, and much of the transporting was done by water.

Probably the first users of “living wagons,” as they were called, were circus folks who built heavy vans for their menageries.

Driven to become nomadic, no longer able to claim a homeland, they took on a new freedom peculiar to their own—the freedom of the open road. Barriers were thrown in their path wherever they went, for again, with their different ways, they did not assimilate into the culture. On the move, their children couldn’t go to school, resulting in a state of ignorance producing little chance for good employment. On the whole, they were a destitute lot, the depth of poverty depending on the country they chose in which to scratch out a living. Spain and the Balkans were the worst. SETTLING in Northern Europe, they fared better. Eventually, England and Sweden proved the best.

Until shortly before Roman times there were no real roads, just paths suitable for domestic animals to pull crude contrivances for short distances. A network of decent roads took decades to develop. When Napoleon came to power in the early 1800s, he spent twice as much on building roads as he did on forts and other military infrastructure. By 1810 one could travel from Paris to Milan in 10 days. England’s roads were terrible in comparison, and much of the transporting was done by water.

Probably the first users of “living wagons,” as they were called, were circus folks who built heavy vans for their menageries.

Those times. They never assimilated into the general population and, becoming increasingly oppressed as so many minorities are, they formed bands and migrated northward into Europe back in the Middle Ages.

The living wagon reached England in the early 1800s as the roads grew better.
Gypsy Wagons

The Reading or Dunton
This was the most prized. The sides slope out toward the eaves. In early 1900 a sky-lighted roof was added. It is ten feet long with a porch at either end and with rear wheels 18˝ higher than the front. The extent of decoration reflected the wealth of a gypsy family—elaborate inside and out.

The Ledge
This has a very strong frame with a living area extending over large rear wheels. It is 12 feet high with an arched roof and brass brackets attaching the carriage to the frame.

The Bow Top
This is based on the Ledge design but lighter, with a wood-frame canvas cover. Because it is lighter, it was more stable in high winds. It was painted green to be less noticeable among trees. The interior has scrollwork and includes a stove, table and bed.

The Open Lot
This is very similar to the Bow Top, but has a curtain instead of a door for privacy.

There are four basic designs of the Gypsy Wagon, also called a Vardo.

In the morning, after putting out the small stick fire that cooked their breakfast (cooking was done outside unless the weather was terrible), everything tied down or put away inside, a horse harnessed in front and another often tethered to the rear of the wagon, chickens in their boxes and the dog trotting on a leash on the side, the group would head out for the next campground. One of the last tasks was to leave a sign of who had been there. It could be a sod cut at a corner. Sometimes it was a hazel stick, known as a “pitch,” banded to show how many wagons had been at the campground and pointing in the direction of travel. This blazed trail acted like a telegraph or the Internet of today.

There were rest periods at the tops of hills or at pubs or other places that offered a chance to barter, plus a two-hour break at midday when the horses would have a chance to graze. In the evening, if horses were “the servants” of gypsies from time immemorial, dogs were also a part of the menagerie. The “lurcher” was favored. It was a crossbreed between greyhound and collie, used for protection and as a guard for the wagon when the gypsies were away. Bantam chickens were also a part of the mix. Small and hardy and streetwise from birth, they were housed in “pan boxes” on the side of the caravan. The vans would often take off quickly, leaving the bantams to run after their departing hay-lined little homes.

World War II Mr. Dunton used his leftover gold leaf tissue to roll cigarettes, letting the gold leaf blow away. Today, Dunton Wagons are prized for museums and private collections. Our Gypsy Wagon at Owls Head is a Dunton. The Reading Caravan represents the Golden Age of the Gypsy Wagon and, looking at its elaborate interior, one can understand why it was the most prized belonging of a Romani family—they would pay five gold sovereigns as the work progressed. (On the other hand, the Bristol Wagon & Carriage Works, founded in West England around the 1850s, went on to build everything on wheels from steam rollers to later Pullman cars.)
the procedure was reversed. If there were to be several days’ stay at a pitch, the women would make baskets or wooden clothespins or other crafts to sell.

The relationship between the Romani and their horses is entwined in their history. The Gypsy Horse is a result of breeding that goes back hundreds of years. Gypsy breeders even today continue to improve the strain that incorporates the blood of Shires, Clydesdales and Fell Ponies, among others. In 2005 there were 900 Gypsy Horses listed in American Gypsy Horse registries. By nature they are gentle, quickly bond with their owners and love to play. Yet they are willing to work all day when asked. Splashed with black and brown markings, they often have beautiful “feathers” above their feet.

Riding, driving, frolicking in pastures or in the water, they are a delight to see. It is said by many Romani that you can’t be a true member of the clan unless you have a horse. When you look at a gypsy caravan you should imagine the horse, with its calm strength, that pulled it. They are inseparable.

Carl Benz’s horseless carriage was the beginning of the end for the horse-drawn gypsy caravan. World War I hastened the decline. Thousands of horses went off to war and never returned. The motorcar’s time had come, replacing the steam traction engine and the horse. For a while folks other than gypsies took up caravanning as a sport. But traffic continued to increase, and horse-drawn vehicles were forced onto back roads. In 1900 there were 40,000 horse-drawn omnibuses and 4,000 tram horses in London. By 1924 they were all gone. Businesses that depended on the horse had dried up.

When a Romani dies all of his possessions, including his caravan, are burned. There was no future in building new ones even if a builder could be found. Some gypsies ended up incorporating their prized possession into a house. The nomadic way of life had come to an end.

Today, with our Airstreams and luxurious motor homes, we can travel hundreds of miles a day. But the horses are gone, the gold leaf, the iron kettle over the stick fire. Campsites, by and large, are sterile places, including the parking lot at Walmart. But once a year in England at the Appleby Fair the old storybook reopens. Gypsies from all over England and beyond gather with their remaining caravans and hundreds of beautiful horses to compete in races, bargain, make music, have fun and frolic. So the spark is still alive, fanned by the pull of freedom on the open road.

James S. Rockefeller Jr., Chairman

REFERENCES

The English Gypsy Caravan
C. H. Ward-Jackson and Dennis E. Harvey
Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey
Isabel Fonseca (a history of the Gypsies)
Gypsy Horses and the Travelers Way
John S. Hockensmith
All Museum Members Receive

- Unlimited **FREE ADMISSION** to the Museum and all exhibits, events and programs
- Museum quarterly membership publication, **STRUT & AXLE**
- **FREE SPECIAL GUEST PASSES** to share with family and friends
- A membership decal
- 10% General Admission discount for your guests (*excluding event days*)
- 10% Discount and MEMBERS-ONLY OFFERS from the Museum Store

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE EMAIL

Membership Choices

- Individual $40
- Dual $50
- Family $60
- Grandparent $60
- Participating $100
- Exhibitor* $40

**Make a Difference!**

- LIFE $5,000
- Benefactor $1,000
- Sustaining $500
- Supporting $250

*Must be an approved exhibitor to qualify for special rate.

Give a GIFT! □ Mail to Purchaser □ Mail to Recipient

GIFT TO GIFT FROM

RECIPIENT'S ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

RECIPIENT’S PHONE RECIPIENT’S EMAIL

Payment Method (Circle One)

- CHECK
- CASH
- VISA
- DISCOVER
- AMERICAN EXPRESS

Send payment to: Owls Head Transportation Museum, PO Box 277, Owls Head, ME 04854 or CALL (207)594-4418 | ONLINE: www.OHTM.org