



Eric Santomauro-Stenzel | The Daily Star

Antique Franklin automobiles, manufactured in Syracuse, sit parked in the upper Yager Hall lot at Hartwick College in Oneonta, Wednesday, July 15.

Antique car club meet draws enthusiasts from across country

ERIC SANTOMAURO-STENZEL
STAFF WRITER

The streets of Oneonta have some new traffic this week, but the cars are very old.

Since Saturday, July 11, members of the H.H. Franklin Club have been driving around the community in their roughly century-old automobiles from the Syracuse-based Franklin Automobile Company and H.H.

Franklin Manufacturing Company. The business sold the luxury vehicles from 1902 to 1934, when the company went out of business.

Hartwick College is hosting the annual Franklin Trek, which is scheduled to end Friday.

The gathering draws enthusiasts from as far as the other side of the country.

"This trek is like a family reunion," club president Mike

McCarthy of Oregon City, Oregon said Wednesday, a sentiment repeated by several other attendees of the meet.

The meet was held in Syracuse originally, then at Cazenovia College for more than 50 years until the school closed, followed by Union College in recent years.

This year's is the 72nd meet, organizers said, and the first to be held in Oneonta.

Activities included drives

to the Northeast Classic Car Museum in Norwich, Hyde Hall and Glimmerglass State Park on Otsego Lake and the Hanford Mills Museum in East Meredith.

The Franklin's air-cooled engine is what draws out many of its fans.

"That's why you see the interesting-looking noses on some of the cars," said Susan Roberts,

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the club's registrar.

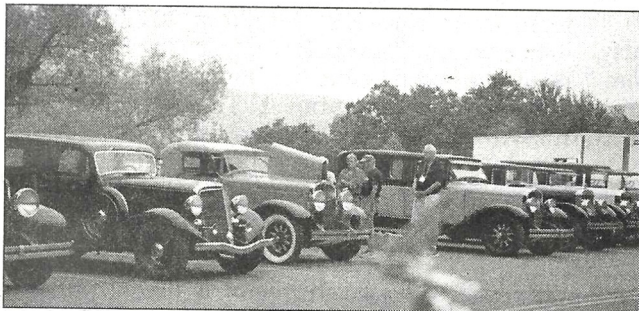
"Oh my gosh, I love it," she said. "The smell of a Franklin running — mmm."

Roberts, who is from Wakefield, Massachusetts, ran to hug Jolene Short, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, when she arrived.

"We couldn't wait," Short said of her and her husband, who brought a Franklin colored blue and white at their granddaughter's request. "We know (Roberts is) going to be here when we get here, and all our friends we've met the last (about 15) years. We love them."

"Beautiful city, by the way," Short said about Oneonta.

Some members used trailers to transport their vehicles to meet, while others who live closer chose to drive their Franklin to the meet. In addi-



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Members of the H.H. Franklin Club look at a Franklin car's engine at Hartwick College in Oneonta, Wednesday, July 15.

tion to everyday aficionados, students from McPherson College in Kansas attend the meets to get hands-on training as part of the school's four-year degree in automotive restoration.

McCarthy said the club pays for the students' expenses.

"We give them their room and board, and transportation costs," he said. "Part of the club's mission as a 501(c)(3) is to educate, and so these students get a chance to learn

about the cars."

Matt Goist, a graduate of the McPherson program who is now the collection manager for an antique car collection in Newport Beach, California, runs the student experience at the trek. He said he had brought about 80 students during a 10-year span.

"We've got 10 brand new students this year," Goist said, adding that about a dozen students who previously received support from

the club returned this year. The program is intended to support students in getting involved and staying involved, he said.

"The roads are are really great for this type of car in the Oneonta area, he said. "It's a little hilly, but that's OK. They climbed hills when they were new."

While the younger generations get started, the older ones remain. Andy Wittenborn, of Pleasantville, New York, whom Goist called a "legend," said his first Trek was in 1964. He is 90 years old and the club's photographer.

"The club is basically is one of the better clubs where everybody's standing around, and there's no uppity," Wittenborn said. "We don't care if you come in a raggedy old Franklin or no Franklin."

For more information on the H.H. Franklin Club, visit <https://www.franklincar.org>.