

Bio-Gilbert Stevenson

The Harvard Crimson Published: Wednesday, April 20, 1938

Steam Car Modeled After Stanley Steamer Makes Auspicious Debut

Gilbert Stevenson of Yale Guides the Two-cylinder Model Through Thick Cambridge Traffic as Four Harvard Men Hang on the Sides to Supply Ballast

Something new in transportation, a steam car modelled after the old Stanley Steamer, made its debut here Wednesday night with a Yale man at the wheel.

Gilbert Stevenson, Yale '36, of Pelham, New York, one of the associate engineers in the steam automobile enterprise, which has its headquarters in Newton, guided the new experimental, two-cylinder model through thick Cambridge traffic with four Harvard men hanging on as ballast.

No Explosions

It didn't blow up. It didn't backfire. It didn't stop dead in the middle of the street. But it did beat a 1938 Ford on a traffic light; it sped backward up a hill at 35 miles an hour; and it hit 25 in five seconds from a dead start half-way up the same hill.

The design of the new car follows closely the fundamental principles of the old Stanley Steamer, but years of improvement have gone into the new design. Eric Delling, chief engineer for Stanley, is in charge of the new steam car company.

In Low-Priced Field

Maximum speed of 55 miles an hour was developed by the two-cylinder test car Wednesday night, but the car which eventually reaches the market will be eight cylindered, have four of these two cylinder units. It will be priced to sell with the lowest three gas cars on the market.

The new steam car eliminates one of the principle objections to the old Stanley car, namely that it took from 10 to 15 minutes to get steam up. The new car requires only a few seconds longer than it takes to start a modern gas car to get up enough steam to start. It has no gear shift, being governed entirely by the throttle and the brake.

Out in Front

At traffic lights it leaves everything else behind because the operator merely steps on the throttle while the other cars are shifting gears. So fast is the pickup that the car will move from a dead stop as fast as the wheels will turn without skidding.

The Newton company, headed by Delling and Stevenson, hopes to have some cars on the market in a little less than a year. Their present headquarters is in the rear of Fred Marriot's garage midway

between Newton Corner and Watertown. Marriot achieved lasting fame a generation ago when, as Stanley's chief test driver, he took off from a sandy stretch of beach in a steamer at 190 miles an hour and lived to tell the tale.

The Pittsburgh Press 1938

Will Steam Auto Return? Tests being made with eight-cylinder engine

The steam auto that swished its way back to popularity in the linen-duster era of motoring may be due for a comeback. In a workshop in newton, Mass., three men have assembled an eight-cylinder steam engine they predict will bring new economy, riding comfort and driving ease to motorist. Above, William Lamken and Erik Delling, designers of the motor, inspect a two-cylinder unit.

The dashboard on an experimental steam truck. At left is the steam pressure meter. On the floor board is the reverse pedal (left) and right the brake. Accelerator is at extreme right. The designers say the engine will develop speeds up to 75 miles an hour and run 16 miles on a gallon of furnace oil costing seen cents a gallon. No gear shift or transmission is needed.

Here is the steam boiler as it appears in the experimental truck. It weighs about 410 pounds and takes up no more room than the conventional gasoline motor. A 25-gallon water tank at the rear will supply enough water to drive 400 miles with refilling. Financing the enterprise is Gilbert Stevenson, 24-year-old Yale graduate. No immediate attempt at mass production is planned.