

Tom Kimmel

4671 E. Hillcrest Dr.
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
(269) 473-6221

georghomaskimmel@gmail.com

February 2, 2014

Transcription of a letter dated Nov. 2, 1941 from John H. Leslie to Byron Spence

John H. Leslie 609 Sheridan Road, Winnetka, Illinois Nov. 2, 1941

Dear Byron,

I am really very ashamed not to have answered your letters before now. For the last couple of months I have been working six days a week, always till six thirty and very frequently till eight or nine in the evening. The result is that in the little time I do have to myself I just rest. Sundays I usually spend reading the paper between naps.

To make matters worse George (Crosby) has been travelling for Signode for the last few weeks, so no work has been done on the car for a couple of months.

Rather a discouraging picture as far as progress is concerned, but I think we will do a little better in the future. Actually, the car is virtually complete and I am almost certain we will get steam up next weekend and try to coordinate the engine and boiler units which are now interdependent due to the engine driven feed water pump. On first thought it may seem wrong to make the boiler in any way dependent on the engine, but for reasons of simplicity and efficiency I believe it is the thing to do. In fact, George and I have decided that we must run the burner fan and fuel pump, and the boiler circulation pump from the main engine. In that way the auxiliary power system will be done away with except for a small electric motor for starting, comparable to the starter on a gas car. It will, in fact, be a starter motor and although it will run somewhat longer till there is one or two hundred pounds in the boiler, enough to allow the engine to take over, the electrical drain on the battery will be little more than that on a gas car's battery because the amperage will be very much less.

There are some unknowns to be solved to make the engine run all auxiliaries, but I am sure it is the right thing to do. It will make for greater simplicity and allow a standard electrical system. "The greatest virtue a machine can have is simplicity".—Watt said, I believe.

I have read the Doble articles with much interest and must confess I am not so sure of some of my beliefs now. But, Byron, the complication of one of his Triple expansion engines must be terrific. Take just for example packing glands: there are six of them in his engine, not one in George's latest four, and every packing gland is a source of trouble probably, and certainly will require maintenance. And again, there appear to be no less than thirty piston rings in the Doble design, and I'll bet he would have to add oil control rings to the crosshead guides too, which would bring the grand total to nearly forty. George's four has only 16. The piston valves and pistons must be lubricated which means oil in the steam line and an oil pump. It's hardly necessary to go over the tremendous objections there are to this latter feature.

But probably the biggest objection to Doble's engine is that the Skinner engine company who make all the smaller steam engines that are made, 100 to 600 H.P., apparently favors single acting poppet valve engines, and one of the biggest reasons for so doing, they give as efficiency.

Well, I could go on for some time as you will know, but I had better save something for the next time I see you which will be soon, I hope.

I am going to write Mr. Lincoln from whom I received a letter asking for an article on the car and tell him I can send him something in 3 or 4 weeks.

I would have sent you the pictures you asked for, but unfortunately in moving George mislaid the only pictures that were ever taken of the new engine in and out of the car.

The next time you are out this way be sure and give me a ring. I think it is more than likely that I will be able to make some definite report on the performance of the car.
Sincerely, Jack

P. S. I almost forgot the point of all this—to thank you very much for letting me see the Doble articles. My forgetfulness is due to my one track mind that was completely occupied digesting Doble's remarks, which is proof, in a way, of how much I appreciated the reports. Jack.

{John W. Lincoln is listed as Editor of New Steam Age while Byron Spence is listed as Contributing Editor}

{On the cover of Vol. XV No. 199-204 April-September, 1948 Steam Car Developments and Steam Marine Motors is a photo of the Leslie Car with its owners standing in front: J. H. Leslie, R. Webster, and Gilbert Stevenson}