

Baltimore's Streetcars Roll Again – And Everyone Enjoyed The Ride

By Dave Benson, Photos By Buzz Diehl

If an early April Sunday afternoon is sunny, with pleasant late spring weather, will a car show attract a lot of vehicles and spectators? The answer is that on April 5th the Chesapeake Region's season opening car show at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum had 39 cars and trucks (and a bus) parked in every available spot around the museum's grounds. It's another example of antique car enthusiasts champing at the bit to get their vehicles out of winter storage and on the road again. We haven't been keeping attendance figures on the Streetcar Museum spring show, but everyone agrees that they can't remember any of the previous shows having anything close to this many members and vehicles show up.

The museum's staff helped us position our vehicles so that they could get the three streetcars used for the day past the display. There were some close quarters on the show field at the turnaround curve in front and on the track near the car barn.

Almost every streetcar run was mostly full and the last car run just before 4 PM was quite full. The museum used one of their older open-side summer streetcars from the turn of the 20th century during the day, which was unusual for the spring show. These early streetcars afford an extra experience for passengers. The motorman can operate this streetcar design from either end, and so instead of using the turnaround curve, they run the car on straight track. At each end of the ride passengers flip the wooden bench seat backs, and presto you're headed in the opposite direction still facing the front.

1940 Buick Limited

A car that took up almost as much space on the show field as the bus was Hank Reus, Sr.'s 1940 Buick Limited model 91 Formal Sedan. This black beauty is an original car with some

minor repainted areas. It has dual side mounts and accessory driving lights. The odometer shows only 69K miles.

Hank has always liked high-end automobiles, which he remembers from his childhood. Prior to acquiring this 1940 Buick, he had been looking for a 1936 or 1937 Buick Limited for awhile, but was unable to locate a suitable car. Club member Vince Truant alerted Hank to an e-Bay offering for the 1940, which didn't sell. Hank was able to deal directly with the owner and bought the car, which was located in the Pennsylvania Poconos.



The 1920s era streetcar loading passenger for the next trip.

With a 140 inch wheelbase, the Buick is more than 18 feet long, weighing 4,875 pounds. It's powered by the larger Buick straight-eight, 320 CI engine, which gives it surprising performance for a very large automobile. Hank reports that when this car is parked in the garage it barely fits – ¾ inch from the back wall and there's only about two inches garage door clearance.

The 90 series Buick is designated by the CCCA as a classic car. For 1940 only 417 model 91 Buick Limited formal sedans were produced. Hank's car does not have jump seats, but the interior is still enormous. A most unusual accessory on this car is a perfectly preserved Wendell Willkie for

President (1940) license plate topper.

1940 Packard 110

New Club member Bill Hensyl brought his 1940 Packard 110 four door sedan to the Streetcar Museum show. This Packard is not a classic car. In fact Bill claims that the 110 series, which was Packard's entry level car, was known as a "broom peddler's special." While the 110 models were a somewhat stripped version and had the six cylinder engine instead of the famous Packard eight, the rest of the car is still all Packard.

Bill believes that he is the sixth or seventh owner and has traced the history of the car to Zell Motors, Baltimore as the new car dealership. The first owner apparently was the manager of the Lord Baltimore hotel. An interesting accessory on this car is a small light mounted on the driver's side rear fender. Back in the day there was a Baltimore City ordinance requiring cars parked overnight on city streets to have a hazard light on all night. Zell Motors equipped their Packards with an aftermarket low power, small light to meet this ordinance. This helped save the battery because it used less power than parking lights.

The 110 is Bill's first antique car. It's definitely a solid car, but is a work-in-progress, which Bill readily admits. To prove this, last year the car won a trophy at the Meadow Wood show as the "Best Restoration in Progress."

The Sponsor's Choice trophy, as selected by the Museum's Dan McCaffrey, was Rick and John Gambo's 1961 Metropolitan. The little black and white convertible is an AACA Senior car.

Participating in the Streetcar Museum Spring show were: Stan Rosensky, 1975 Corvette; Billy McKee, 1969 Camaro; Tommy Thompson, 1973 Chevrolet; Wayne McDaniel, 1951

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Streetcar Museum – Continued

Chevrolet; Lynne & John Horn, 1953 Hudson; Bud Currey, 1965 Pontiac, Larry Butcher, 1938 Lincoln; Chuck Talbert, 1939 Ford;; Rick & John Gambo, 1961 Metropolitan; Paul Habicht, 1959 Cadillac; Thelma & Dave Johnson, 1956 Thunderbird; Neil Lenhart, 1962 Chrysler Imperial; Elaine & Courtney Shenkle, 1967 Buick; Hank Reus, Sr., 1940 Buick; Hank Reus, Jr., 1929 Nash; Lyndie Vantine & Ron

Fleming, 1957 Chevrolet; Allen Pogach, 1970 Oldsmobile; Jerry Ross, 1954 Kaiser; Bill Hensyl, 1940 Packard; Mel Gofstein, 1972 Chevelle; Gil Siebel, 1949 Packard; Dave Benson, 1937 Cord; and Read Van Zile & Joanne Day, 1963 Thunderbird.

Also in the show were: Don Rhine, 1940 Buick; Matt Livingston & Bob Battista, 1979 Jeep; Pat Wenderoth,

1969 Corvette; Mary & Ed Allen, 1957 Chevrolet; Linda & Tom Young, 1980 Plymouth; Jeanette & TW Scott, 1953 International & 1979 Porsche; George Farrinholt, 1976 Chevrolet;; George Cason, 1972 Oldsmobile; Elsie & Norman Reese, 1963 Chevrolet; Bob Lenio, 1968 Plymouth; Earle Benson, 1976 Mercedes fire truck; Tom Golden, 1965 Ford; John Engleman, 1957 GMC bus; and Walt Meyers, 1930 DeSoto.



Bill Hensyl with his 1940 Packard 110



Hank Reus, Sr. with his 1940 Buick Limited



Above: Earle Benson's 1976 Mercedes fire truck. On the right, clockwise from top left: Dan McCaffrey & John Gambo – Sponsors Choice; Dave Johnson & Bud Currey; Margaret & Francis Werneth; and Joanne Day & Read Van Zile. Below: Vintage advertising cards from inside the streetcars.

