



The Steering Wheel

March, 2020

Newsletter of the Midwest Antique Auto Club
Not affiliated with any national club.

An independent group of collectible vehicle enthusiasts.

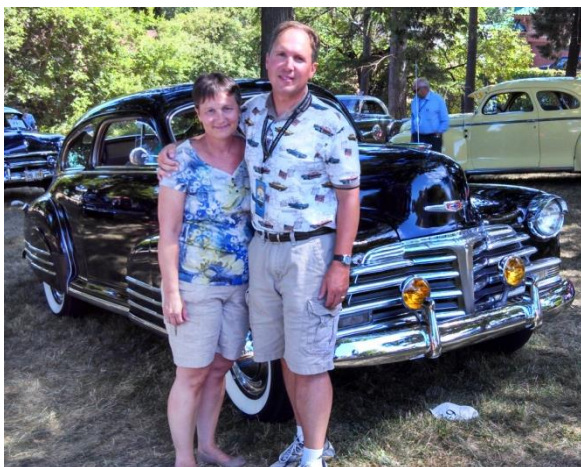
Dedicated to the preservation of the antique/collectible automobile.

<u>Presidents</u>	<u>John & Karen Thurber</u>	<u>Ph. (402)-496-7701</u>
<u>Vice Presidents</u>	<u>Dave Hansen</u>	<u>Ph. (402)-350-6505</u>
<u>Secretaries</u>	<u>Gloria & Tom Kannas</u>	<u>Ph. (712)-566-9818</u>
<u>Treasurers</u>	<u>Dixie & Ken Foote</u>	<u>Ph. (712)-566-2803</u>
<u>Tour Committees</u>	<u>Ed & Janet Hedegaard</u>	<u>Ph. (712)-566-2220</u>
<u>Tour Committees</u>	<u>Jim & Cheryl Cushman</u>	<u>Ph. (402)-558-0150</u>
<u>News Letter Editors</u>	<u>We still need someone</u>	<u>Ph. (xxx)-xxx-xxxx</u>
<u>Historians</u>	<u>Clif & Joyce Ellis</u>	<u>Ph. (402)-397-4279</u>

Meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month. The Board meets at 1:30 p.m. and the general meeting begins at 2:00 p.m. during the months of November, January, February and March at the **NEW CASSEL RETIREMENT CENTER at 900 N. 90th St., Omaha, NE 68114.** During the summer months of April, May, June, July, August, September and October, there are no inside meetings. In these months we have “Official Car Tours” on the third Sunday of each month. Plus whatever extra tours may please us. There is no meeting in December, that meeting is replaced by our annual Christmas banquet. All vehicles are welcome, any year, make or model, but a drivable collectible/antique vehicle is not a requirement for membership.

The deadline for articles for the Steering Wheel is the last Saturday of the month.

The President's Message



Hello Everyone,

As I am writing this, the weather one year ago was a high of 9 degrees. Currently, its 59 degrees outside. What a difference a year makes! Let's hope that we don't have any flooding issues this year.

I hope everyone is enjoying the good weather to finish up any winter projects for your cars. Unfortunately, I didn't do much this year to work on my car since I have been spending most of my free time working on my father's car. I hope to get a few projects done before April.

I would encourage you to drive your cars when it's warm outside. I don't like leaving my cars sitting for too long.

See you at our March Meeting.

John and Karen Thurber❖

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 15th (Sunday) 2:00 pm.

March MAAC Meeting, New Cassel, 2:00 p.m. Plan to join us to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with Corned Beef and Cabbage (and potatoes). Please bring a dessert or salad. We will be watching a few videos from the 1940s and 50s produced by Jam Handy about automobile production.

March 8th, 2020

LINCOLN, NE — 47th Annual Rocky Manginelli Memorial Swap Meet, Lancaster Event Center, 4100 N. 84th St. Doors open at 7:00 a.m. "The first and largest swap meet of the year held in Nebraska!"
www.enwicc.com

March 14, 2020

Kuck Motorsports Museum open to the public from 1 to 4 p.m. 2251 Humphrey Ave. Lincoln NE. \$20 freewill donation to enter the museum. If you haven't been to the Kuck Museum, it is worth the drive to Lincoln to see an outstanding collection of pre-war classic cars and muscle cars from the 50-70s.

April 19, 2020

April MAAC Driving Tour, First Driving Tour of the year. We will be going to Ed and Janet Hedegaards' home in Underwood, IA. We will meet at Bomgaars (formerly Kmart) parking lot on Kanesville Blvd, Council Bluffs, Please bring a dessert or salad.

May 9th, 2020

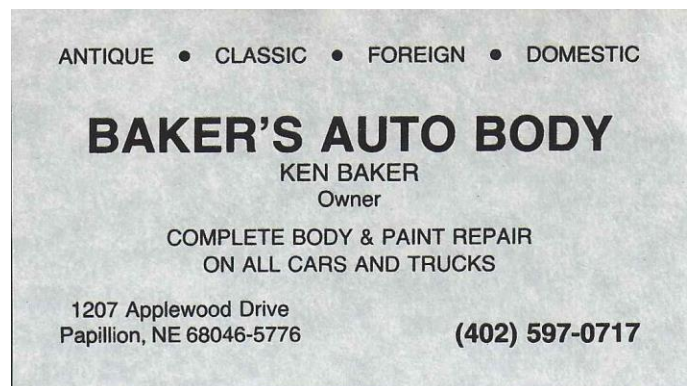
GRETNA, NE — Skills-Grilles, Gretna High School. Registration 9 a.m. to noon. Sponsored by Meadowlark Model A Ford Club. Information: Jim Musel 402-995-1005 or Bob McKinney 402-332-3993 or <http://meadowlarks.omahaneb.org>.

May 17, 2020

May MAAC Driving Tour. tour to Bob and Gloria Chaleks' in Malvern, IA, More information to come.

June 17th-20th, 2020

Future Tour to Norfolk with the Omaha Region Horseless Carriage Club! The tour is open to other clubs wishing to join the fun. Please contact Don Ohnstad (402.203.7131) for more information and to register <https://www.hcca.org/events/June-17-20-2020/flyer.html>. See flyer at end of newsletter☼



Member News

****DUES ARE PAST DUE! PLEASE SEND THEM TO DIXIE FOOTE IF YOU HAVE NOT YET PAID.**

We know we all get busy and forget or thought we did, when we didn't. Or there may be needed communication in case you did not get marked as paid, and did in fact pay. We don't want this to be your last newsletter.

The March 2020 MAAC meeting Thank you to all the BINGO winners

Today we learned: The Fiero wasn't Pontiac's first mid-engine car

Daniel Strohl, 2019 Hemmings Motor News



Not counting horseless carriages and other early automobiles that placed their engines under and behind-ish the driver, the Pontiac Fiero is often hailed as the first mid-engine American production car, arriving 35 years before the mid-engine Corvette. But, as it turns out, Pontiac's engineers had investigated the mid-engine layout 50 years ago, long before the Fiero.

True, the XP-21 Firebird I placed its gas-turbine engine behind the driver, making it a mid-engine design, but all three gas-turbine Firebirds were considered GM designs, not of any particular brand, similar to the XP-8 Le Sabre and the Futurliners.

We did recently come across mention that GM considered switching the Firebird and Camaro to mid-engine in the early days of the third-generation F-body's development. However, it appears those ideas progressed no further than drawings and scale models, and the GM folks involved spent more time debating whether the third-gens – in pursuit of lighter and more fuel-efficient packaging – should be front-wheel drive than they did debating whether they should be mid-engine.

But even before then – coincidentally in the same year that Pontiac first used the Fiero name on a V-8-powered two-seater showcar – Pontiac's engineers screwed together a small runabout with a curious drivetrain. As Jim Dunne wrote for *Popular Science* in its April 1969 issue, the X-4 “combines the chassis layout of a racer with the power potential of an airplane engine.”

Though Dunne noted that neither Pontiac nor GM would confirm the car's existence, he had photos (one of which reportedly showed John Sawruk working on the car) to prove it was real and plenty of information on its construction from a personal inspection of the car.

The mid-engine layout – much like the Fiero that followed 15 years later – was chosen not for its sporting capabilities but for its compactness, a feature that went hand-in-hand with a radial four-cylinder engine placed near-vertically between the rear axle and the bench seat. The engine, though it used a cylinder configuration similar to Eugene Farkas's experimental X-8, was two-stroke rather than four-stroke, thus

eliminating the valvetrain, and paired each set of opposing pistons via a Scotch yoke, vastly simplifying the piston/connecting rod/crankshaft assembly.

According to Dunne, the engine design evolved from GM's X259, a two-stroke airplane engine that the company tested in cars just prior to World War II. While the X259 produced roughly 200 horsepower, the X-4 was good for about 80 in its 100-cu.in. form.

Curiously, rather than work out an independent rear suspension design based on the Tempest transaxle, the X-4's engineers bolted the radial engine and its torque converter directly to a solid rear axle with the planetary gears of a three-speed automatic transmission incorporated into the axle. The entire unit, as Dunne wrote, moved as one with its 12-inch tires, adding unsprung weight and thus making the car's handling erratic.

Still, the entire package made for a light car, coming in at about 1,500 pounds, and probably one that, due to its simplicity, could sell for peanuts compared to the rest of the Pontiac lineup. Dunne seemed convinced that Pontiac, with its reputation for experimental designs reaching production, would actually put the X-4 in showrooms once its engineers worked out an independent rear suspension and a two-stroke engine design that smoked less than the prototype.

However, with emissions already an issue by the late Sixties, a two-stroke air-cooled engine was a non-starter. In addition, fuel economy wouldn't become an issue for U.S. auto engineers to confront for another four years or so, and by that time the Pontiac Astre version of the Chevrolet Vega (which Dunne tangentially references at the end of his article) was already on its way to the U.S. market.

Spiritually, the X-4 and the Fiero share a number of traits, but given that the Fiero started out as a clean-sheet design a decade after the X-4, it's unlikely the later design borrowed anything from its predecessor. Also, given the paucity of references to the X-4 outside of Dunne's article, it's unlikely the X-4 still exists to this day. We'd be happy to be proven wrong, though.

As far as whether it's the first mid-engine Pontiac, we believe that another, much earlier, experimental mid-engine Pontiac did exist. Should we ever track down more information on it, we'll elaborate on it in a future article.



2020 – 64th Annual HCCA Midwest Regional Tour
June 16-20, 2020, Norfolk, NE
"Experience Nebraska"
Hosted by the Omaha Regional Group HCCA

Name of entrant: _____

Address: _____

Horseless carriage: _____
(year) (make) (model) (body style) (gas, steam, elec.)

CELL PHONE NUMBER: _____ (we don't want to lose anyone on tour)

HCCA Membership # _____ is only necessary to be eligible for the regional HCCA Award

Tour Fee @ \$185.00 each _____

Tour Fee @ \$125.00 age 16 and under _____
(Excluding lodging) (Names)

TOTAL enclosed _____ Make Checks payable to OMAHA HCCA

Please note the Banquet Meal Selection is on the next page, this must be returned with your registration.

Tour & Motel Registration deadline is May 15, 2020

Make your room reservations by calling the Norfolk Lodge, 4200 W Norfolk Ave, Norfolk NE 68701 at 402-379-3833 or book online at <https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/MS1882>. Tell them you are with the OMAHA HCCA Car Club. Room Rate: \$98.00 per night, for single king or for double queen plus tax.

Please make your room reservations by May 15, 2020, (that is the date the block will be released.)

Name of Insurance Carrier _____
(company) (agent)

I agree that the Omaha Regional Group of the Horseless Carriage Club of America, its officers, sponsors, or membership will not be held liable for any accidents or injuries incurred while I or any of my passengers participate in this tour on June 16-20, 2020 in Norfolk, NE and surrounding areas.

(signed by entrant)

(date)

Mail completed entry form to:
Don Ohnstad
13707 N 240th St
Valley, NE 68064

If you have an email address include it here:

M.A.A.C.
c/o Thurber
3122 N. 179 Street
Omaha NE 68116

MIDWEST ANTIQUE AUTO CLUB



AN INDEPENDENT GROUP OF COLLECTIBLE VEHICLE ETHUSIASTS