

GREAT ARROW news

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Twenty Years of our Pierce-Arrow Museum at Gilmore

By Stuart Blair
Pierce-Arrow Foundation Treasurer

Time passes quickly – twenty years have passed since our Pierce-Arrow Museum first opened to the public on the Gilmore campus in Hickory Corners, Michigan. A brief timeline of events follows; from the planning and execution preceding our 2004 opening through the museum you see today.

1999 – The Planning Phase

Plans were finalized to establish a Pierce-Arrow Museum to be located on the 90-acre grounds at the Gilmore Car Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan. The late Past PAS President Dave Harris and others had previously formed the Pierce-

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continued on page 4

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PIERCE-ARROW FOUNDATION

Operating the Pierce-Arrow Museum on the Campus of the Gilmore Car Museum

Dear Fellow Pierce-Arrow Enthusiast:

In late August 2024 the Pierce Community experienced a rare convergence of significant Pierce events in Michigan.

The Pierce-Arrow Society held its 66th Annual Meet in Kalamazoo, Michigan. That event overlapped with the Gathering at Gilmore which has been held for the past 20 years on the campus of the Gilmore Car Museum. The Pierce-Arrow Museum, operated by the Pierce-Arrow Foundation, celebrated its 20th year on the campus of the Gilmore Car Museum. And finally, a Pre-War Orphan Car Show attracted many cars to the show field on August 25th. A "THREE Ps" section for the Pierce, Packard & Peerless cars joined discontinued "orphan" vehicle marques on the show field on Sunday.

Over the past year many devoted Pierce enthusiasts have actively assisted in the freshening and upgrading of the Pierce-Arrow Museum. A qualified and well regarded consultant was hired and she assisted with identifying best museum practices including the most impactful signage. During our convergence week, many accolades were heard from old and new visitors to the museum.

On display this year in the museum is the custom built Fatty Arbuckle 1919 Pierce-Arrow, Model 66 (on loan), the Marc Hamburger 1931 Pierce-Arrow, Model 41 Club Sedan and the Greg Thomas 1933 Pierce-Arrow Club Brougham (on loan).

The museum's *Collection Plan* outlines the management of its holdings, including acquisitions, accessions, deaccessions, borrowings, loans, restorations, and disposals. This plan will ensure the continued, long-term success of our museum.

As you renew your annual PAS membership, we encourage you to also become a Museum member. Your membership and donations are essential to sustaining our museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, your donations may be tax-deductible. We gratefully accept a variety of items, including Pierce vehicles and memorabilia for our collection, as well as other saleable goods like non-Pierce vehicles and items. Your support, whether through membership or donations, is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Richard Lange
Chairman



"SMILE FOR THE CAMERA, HONEY!"

A lady poses with the museum's beautiful red 1931 Series 41 Dual Cowl Phaeton that greets visitors in the new foyer of the Pierce-Arrow Museum at Gilmore.



Look Toward the Future.

We all share a common vision to sustain our museum and its legacy 25, 50 or 100 years into the future.

Will you partner with us to support this legacy and continue our positive impact on Gilmore's +150,000 annual visitors - many of whom are motivated to learn more about the Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Company.

Please contact Richard Lange to discuss opportunities to support our museum as a *Pierce-Arrow Foundation Legacy Partner*.

RICHARD LANGE
Chairman, Pierce-Arrow Foundation
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The rear wall of the Pierce-Arrow Museum at Gilmore features informative storyboards that provide over 150,000 annual visitors with a comprehensive history of the Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Company.

Arrow Foundation as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, for the purpose of establishing a stand-alone museum. This maintained separation from the Pierce-Arrow Society which is a 501(c)7 membership supported club. From 1995 until 2023, Dave Stevens, from Whitehall, Michigan, competently served as Museum Director, exhibits curator and fundraising promoter.

2004 – Open to the Public

Our Pierce-Arrow Museum on the Gilmore campus finally opened its doors to the public. Ours was the first single-marque museum at the Gilmore and laid the foundation for other single-marque museums which would soon follow, including Franklin, Lincoln, Ford Model A and Cadillac-LaSalle. The multi-marque CCCA Museum predated our presence at Gilmore.

2022 - Time for a Refresh

In museum curation circles, the lifespan of even a “permanent” exhibit is about 20 years; accordingly, our museum, which had evolved since 2004, was due for a refresh. Late in 2022, PAS *The Arrow* Editor Steve Rossi suggested the Museum’s trustees contact the well-regarded museum exhibit developer Mary Seelhorst for ideas and recommendations. Mary had previously worked on notable Gilmore Museum projects including the CCCA renovation and expansion, Lincoln Motor Car and the yet-to-be-built muscle car museum. Outside of Gilmore, Mary has worked on automotive exhibits for The Henry Ford, the Ford Piquette Avenue Museum, The Brumos Collection, NASCAR Hall of Fame, the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, the Early Ford V8 and Saratoga Auto Museums, and many others.

The primary refresh objective was to assess



Fatty Arbuckle's 1919 Pierce-Arrow Model 66 is currently on loan through November 2024 thanks to Stahls Auto Collection. (Photo by Ann Beals)

what resources were already in place and what supplemental information and displays were needed to provide our visitors with a succinct overview of Pierce-Arrow as America's Finest Built Motor Car. Thanks to two decades of efficient management by Dave Stevens, the Museum Refresh Committee, consisting of Liz and Rick Horne, Mary and Karl Krouch, Curtiss Pool, Greg Long and Stu Blair, had much to work with. Plans were to begin the refresh work the day after season closing on December 1, 2023, with completion planned for Gilmore's opening day, April 1, 2024, and in advance of August's 66th Annual PAS Kalamazoo Meet with "Celebration of 20 Years at Gilmore" a primary theme. Countless meetings, both Zoom and on-site followed; brainstorming sessions and emails, planning, budgeting, cost estimating, displays and signage supplier sourcing, estimates from outside contractors, storyboard writing, editing and re-writing, history and dates fact checking ensued with donations solicited. All of this work was guided on-site and off by Mary Seelhorst and completed by our small committee with an even smaller budget, big ambitions,

countless hours of elbow grease, sweat and callouses and a common vision shared by the committee of the finished product. On May 1st, we reopened—one month late, but under budget—and with fresh paint on the walls, shiny polished floors, new graphic panels with beautifully colorized photos, additional LED lighting, and a backlit Pierce sign with an anecdotal history about its "wrong way" arrow. Visitors are greeted in the vestibule with the early story of the company—birdcages, iceboxes, bicycles, motorcycles and a patent attorney's recitation on Pierce's fender headlamps. Most striking, our big, beautiful red 1931 Series 41 Dual Cowl Phaeton is front and center impressing visitors at first sight. This car represents the pinnacle of Pierce's preeminent

offerings, so visitors unfamiliar with the marque immediately realize why Pierce is such a revered marque. Right there, even if visitors go no farther, they can now identify a Pierce-Arrow by its unique headlights, and understand the company's Buffalo, New York, lineage.

Once inside and proceeding in a counterclockwise rotation, Pierce-Arrows are displayed in chronological order. The back wall highlights nine



1913 Pierce-Arrow R-2 Truck has returned to the museum after repairs and was a big hit on the field for both events in August!

storyboards providing a succinct narrative about the rise and fall of one of America's most remarkable automakers and its products, from bird cages to travel trailers. Supplementing the storyboards are 8 free-standing panels explaining such topics as White House Pierces, Studebaker's financial intervention, WWI trucks, the King of Persia, Pierce's artistic advertising, etc. Elsewhere, visitors using their phones can scan QR codes located in strategic locations to derive additional insight on the fender light patent, archers, notable owners both past and present, or join the Pierce-Arrow Society. Four matching exhibit cases have been retained to display original archer mascots, factory and employee artifacts, and period accessories. One display contains PAS historical items including trophies and dash plaques from meets back to 1958. Concurrent with our refresh, the Gilmore addressed deferred exterior building maintenance items which included new fascia trim, repaired soffits, and replaced windows. Near-future museum projects include a WIFI security camera system, a flat screen monitor with a repeating Ab Jenkins Bonneville speed records and other videos, additional weatherproofing insulation and climate control system, and a new front door with insulated glass for a more visible and inviting outreach to Gilmore's visitors.

2024

Recent Pierce-Arrow donations include a 1931 Series 41 LeBaron Club Sedan donated by the family of the late PAS Past President Marc Hamburger of Atlanta and a 1933 Model 1236 Club Brougham on permanent loan from Greg Thomas of Cincinnati. On loan for 2024 from the Stahl Collection in Chesterfield, Michigan is the famous Fatty Arbuckle 1919 Model 66 touring. These cars join our own twenty Pierce-Arrows plus two Gilmore-owned Pierces on permanent display ranging from a 1903 Stanhope to a 1937 1702 Twelve seven passenger sedan.



This 1928 Packard - shown here with the show's participation ribbon - won its class at the 1st Annual Pre-War Orphan Car Show held at the Pierce-Arrow Museum where more than 50 "orphans" converged on site.

First Annual Orphan Car Show

Following this August's Kalamazoo meet, the Pierce-Arrow Foundation held its first Orphan Car Show at the Gilmore. This first show was limited to prewar cars with a special focus on the "Three Ps." A total of 52 cars participated including 17 Pierce-Arrows;



PAS President Karl Krouch awards a blue ribbon to an excited winner at the first Orphan Car Show event.

Karl Krouch and Rick Horne served as the judges and classic award ribbons for six classes were presented at 2 o'clock. Participant feedback was all positive; remarkably, cash flow for this first year Museum fundraiser was also positive. During next

August's Gathering at Gilmore, and with minor changes and improvements, we plan to repeat this show and expand it to include postwar orphans through 1965. Our primary goal to drive Gilmore attendance through the front gate is certainly supported by Gilmore with our Museum deriving the revenue sharing benefit for our specified weekend in August.

The Future

We all share a common vision to sustain our Museum and expand it into the future; will you partner with us to support this legacy and continued positive impact on current and future Pierce-Arrow enthusiasts? Our Museum exists solely on contributions and membership dues and its outreach now favorably impacts Gilmore's more than 150,000 annual visitors; many are motivated to learn more about the Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Company.

Please become a "Legacy Partner" - Your support can be provided in many ways – through contributions of cash, stock or bonds, through the donation of automobiles including Pierce-Arrows and other makes, or by naming the Foundation as a beneficiary in your will, trust, annuity or insurance policy. Please contact Richard Lange to discuss opportunities available to support our Pierce-Arrow Museum as a Legacy Partner.



The Pierce-Arrow Foundation recently received this handsome 1933 Pierce-Arrow Model 1236 Club Brougham on permanent loan from Greg Thomas of Cincinnati, Ohio.



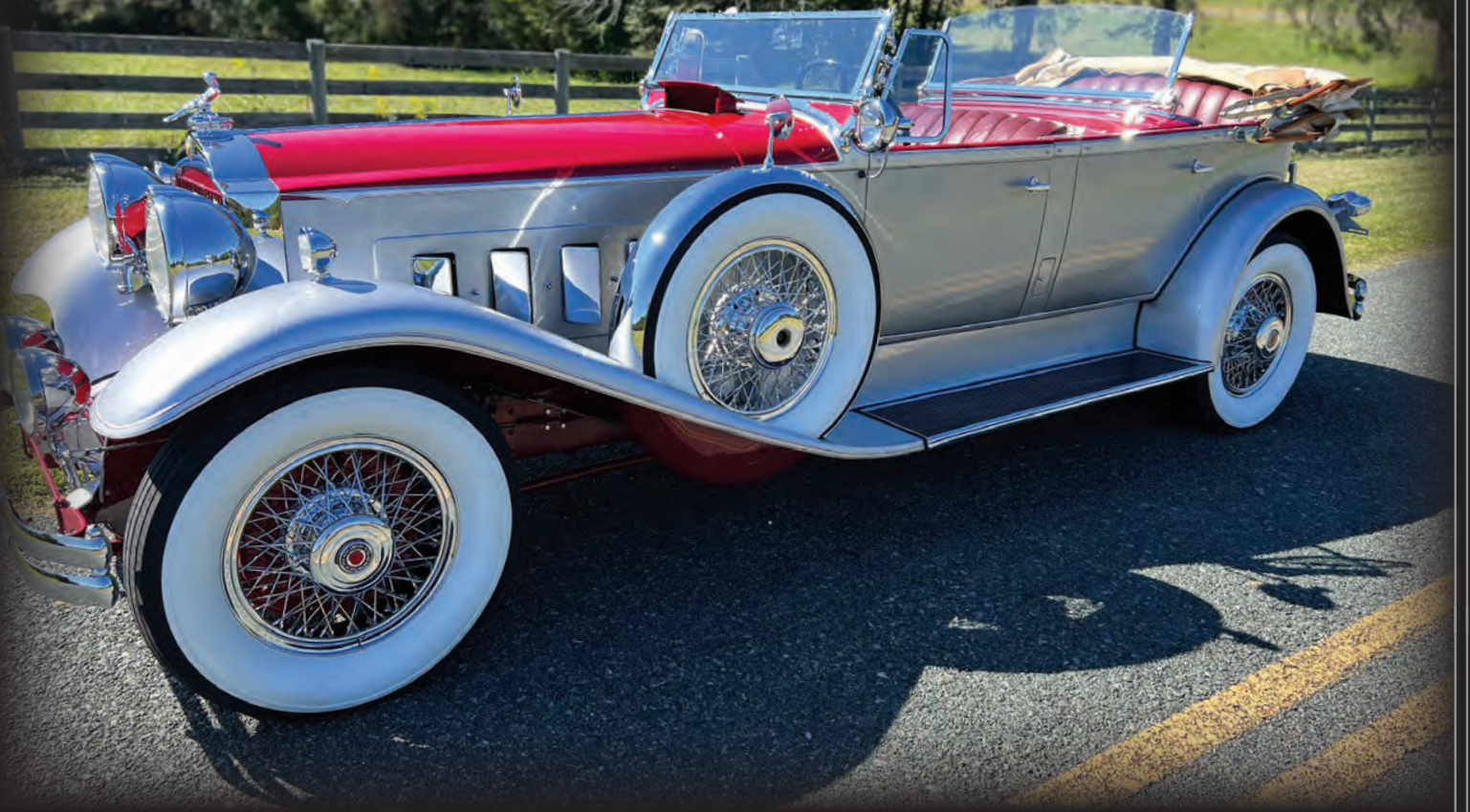
The Pierce-Arrow Museum at Gilmore received a generous surprise donation from a visitor during the Annual Meet Car Show! After a brief 'interview' of Liz Horne and tour of the new museum, Joe Wheat decided to graciously donate his father's Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Company employee badge #823002 to the museum.



This elegant and rare 1931 Pierce-Arrow Model 41 Club Sedan by LeBaron was recently donated by the Marc Hamburger Family of Atlanta, Georgia.



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