



# The Off-Side Undo

English Motoring Club of Mississippi

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"A GENTLEMAN DOES NOT MOTOR ABOUT AFTER DARK." -- JOSEPH LUCAS, ATTRIB.

## Voyage to the Far North Country

The things one will do to perpetuate the hobby.

Case in point. The North American Singer Owners' Club has some 150 members, including this writer, spread across the U.S. and Canada and even a few across the pond. The website ([www.singercars.com](http://www.singercars.com)) is superb, the chat pages interesting, but rarely do we get a chance to get together to visit with each other "in person." So, in attempt to remedy this problem, I recently loaded my 1949 Singer Nine Roadster aboard its trailer and headed out from Natchez, MS, some 1,500 miles north to Montréal, Québec, Canada, for an All-British Car Day event where fellow Singerites and their cars would be in attendance.

Along the way, in Louisville, KY (where I grew up and resided for many years), I was joined by two fellow British car enthusiasts, Jim Wilson and Bryan Marshall. Jim decided to haul his 1966 Jaguar E-type Roadster to the show as well, since the event was featuring the 40th Anniversary of the E-type. Bryan has a 1936 Singer Nine Sports four-seater in storage, so he wanted to tag along in an effort to garner needed information for his car's restoration.

As we headed up I-71 toward Cincinnati, it started raining, and by the time we reached Columbus, we thought the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane Season had been launched several hundred miles to the north by mistake. It kept raining and raining and raining. No fun, and our British cars on their respective trailers were getting soaked.

We reached Cleveland, then headed to Detroit where we crossed the border into Windsor, ON — and quite frankly, didn't know what sort of reception we would get from Canadian Customs officials. Told in advance by the Montréal Tourist Commission that passports for U.S. citizens "weren't necessary," we nevertheless had handy our birth certificates, titles to the tow vehicles, trailers and British cars, and drivers' licenses containing our mug shots and Social Security numbers.

The border crossing went something like this:

"Where are you going today, sir?"

"A British car show in Québec Province."

"Let me see the title to that vehicle on the trailer."

"Here it is."

"Do you have a photo I.D.?"

"Here it is."

"Okay, you may proceed."

Simple enough, and we entered Ontario following that province's equivalent of a U.S. interstate highway, "the 401." Heading due east, the highway is more or less straight and flat and paved rather well. It had one great feature that us Southerners had never seen before: giant "rest areas" right on the highway featuring a major brand gasoline station connected to a fast-food outlet. Not having to exit the highway on a cloverleaf and then go through several traffic lights to eat and gas up was greatly appreciated.

we reached the outskirts of Toronto by nightfall and decided it was time to call it quits for the day. Having no prior reservations in that city, we "guessed" at where suitable lodging might be located and, thanks to a friendly gas station attendant, ended up at a new Holiday Inn Express in Whitby, a few miles east of Toronto.

The next morning, we again headed east on 401. When we reached the Province of Québec all of the signage turned to French. We couldn't decipher the majority of it, but one sign gave us a big laugh: "Poulet Frit Kentucky" — Kentucky Fried Chicken! The highway also changed numbers, becoming "la 20."

Our goal was Hudson Heights, Qué., which was some 30 miles west of Montréal. This is where, thanks to NASOC Editor and Pre-war Registrar Phillip Avis, we would be storing the trailers with the British cars left on them. Paul Bouchard, a fellow Singerite who helps Phillip with the production of the NASOC club magazine, subbed for Phillip as our official greeter and led us to the storage site. We unhooked Jim's tow vehicle, thanked Paul for his hospitality, and the three of us headed to downtown Montréal.

Parking the car in our hotel's garage, we freshened up and headed by taxi to visit such famous sites as the Ritz Carlton Hotel, the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, and the district of the city known as "Old Montréal."

Our first stop was the bar at the Ritz Carlton. We

were tired and thirsty. And since years before we had all been inducted into the (ahem) Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, we decided to order "Kentucky Champagne."

The Ritz Carlton's resplendent bartender approached us, uttering "Oui?"

I responded accordingly, "Y'all have any Maker's Mark?"

"Eh?" he replied.

"Maker's Mark Bourbon... it's a bourbon."

"Ooh... bourbon," was the reply. "We onlee 'ave one bottle of bourbon left, Wild Turkee... and there is onlee one drink left een it."

We were speechless. *No bourbon* at one of the most prestigious hotel chains in the world in a major city with a tremendous tourist industry? It was our first clue that we were truly in a foreign country. Bryan got the "last drink" of "Wild Turkee" while Jim and I opted for other libations. Then it was off to "Old Montréal."

We began at Place Jacques-Cartier, one of the oldest squares in the city. Many of the buildings were from the 17th century and were lighted magnificently. We chose a terrific restaurant featuring an open-air courtyard. It was packed, but the wait was worth it. Then we went sightseeing and souvenir shopping up and down the narrow cobblestone streets. 'Twas great fun.

JULY 2001

Singerite in Montreal

by Terry Trovato

## LOYALTY TO FAR NORTH CONT'D)

The next day Phillip and Andrea Avis were our tour guides and hosts in the tiny, but handsomely picturesque, village of Hudson. (Phillip had immigrated to Canada from England in 1967 and Andrea had done the same thing some 10 years later.)

We began the day by attending "Finnigan's Flea Market," an open-air venue located on the site of an old farm with probably some 50 vendors hawking their wares. Bryan bought a large vase and Jim purchased a military crested spoon. From there we proceeded into the

village itself. While sightseeing, we got involved in a "collie dog rescue" operation, when a fine elderly collie had gotten separated from his owner. Both, thankfully, were reunited in a couple of minutes.

We bid the Avises a fond *adieu* and headed back to Montréal proper. For fun this evening we started out at

the bar at the Queen Elizabeth, then headed to Biddles' Jazz Club.

Unbelievably, Charlie Biddles, the owner and bass player extraordinaire, greeted us at the door as if he'd known us all of his life. "What are you doing way up here?" he asked.

"We're here for a British car show," we replied.

"You know, I had a Jaguar XK150 and a TR3 and sold 'em both," Charlie said.

The band took the stage and we ordered a beer. Trying to be good tourists and "do as the Romans do," we selected Molson Dry. We started examining the label and discovered the stuff was 8% alcohol. In the U.S., Colt 45 is considered stiff at 4.5% alcohol, and the Molson Dry beat that by almost half. The beer was nice and cold and the music great. We headed back to our hotel early since tomorrow was "show day."

The day dawned miserable. Rain, with no let-up in sight, according to the weather prognosticators. We uttered several expletives but, rain or not, we were going to drive the Singer and the E-type to the show.

We journeyed to Hudson Heights to retrieve the British cars and roll them off of the trailers. The rain started to subside to a fine drizzle. While Jim's E-type has a superb canvas top and roll-up windows, the Singer has a tonneau cover and that's it. I donned my waxed cotton jacket and cap, turned the key in the ignition, pressed the starter button and the car jumped to life. It was some 15 miles to the show site at Beaconsfield, and off we went.

The trip was made without incident and as we turned into Beaconsfield's Centennial Park, the drizzle began to dissipate. Jim headed center stage to join the other E-types, while I helped establish a suitable site for the Singers. Now the clouds started to part and a ray of sunshine appeared. Unbelievable! Not only that, we ended up with four Singers in place, plus a handsome command tent and wonderful tailgate.

Representing the North American Singer Owners' Club were Bob Tayler's 1934 Le Mans two-seater, Phillip's 1936 Le Mans Speed Model, Paul Bouchard's 1948 Nine Roadster, and my 1949 Nine Roadster. By noon there were approximately 100 British cars in place — a nice turnout, considering the threatening weather forecast.

The show is sponsored by the Montréal Jaguar Owners Association and is really more of a social gathering than the sort of traditional British car show we have in the States. There are no entrance fees and no awards, but everyone gets a handsome dash plaque and there is a tailgate contest.

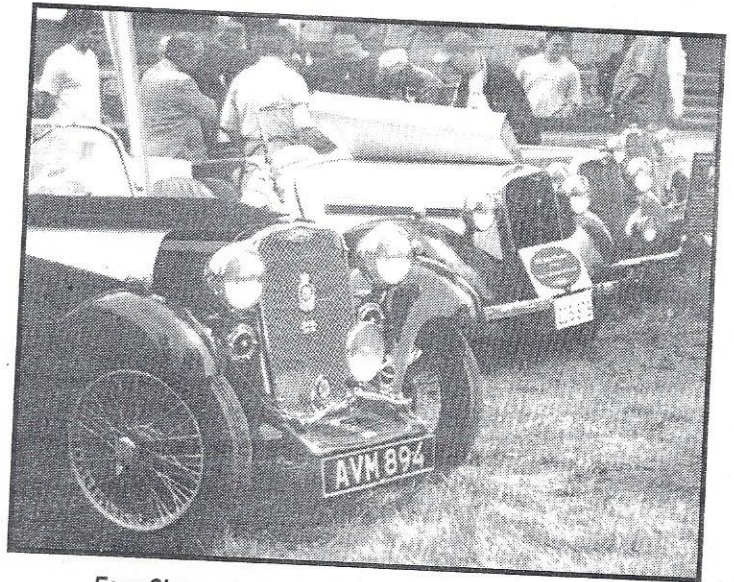
We'd read about the tailgate contest on the Internet, so Jim, Bryan and I decided to go all out to try and win the prize. I'd brought along my vintage banjo and Bryan packed julep cups. When the judges arrived, Jim and Bryan poured mint juleps and we belted out "My Old Kentucky Home," giving it all we've got. We finished to applause and smiles.

Later, the judges summoned us forward. No, we didn't win — the prize went to the Montréal MG Club, which was out in force — but we are thanked for making the effort to attend from so far away.

Then, the self-appointed Tailgate Chef of the Montréal MG Club presented the three of us with his *piece-de-resistance*: a grilled banana filled with ice cream, brown sugar and Cognac. I make a brief acceptance speech thanking them for their hospitality. When I finished, a wise guy in the audience replied, "Now, will you please say that again in English!"

At around 4 p.m. we headed back to Hudson Heights, but our fun was not over. We had supper with the other Singerites at the Willow Inn and enjoyed one of the best meals we had during our stay.

The next morning, we headed south for the Mason-Dixon Line, with fond memories of our trip to the Far North Country.



Four Singers in one place — wow! Bob Tayler's 1934 Le Mans two-seater, Paul Bouchard's 1948 Nine Roadster, Terry's 1949 Nine Roadster and Phillip Avis' 1936 Le Mans Speed Model. As always, these rare cars drew a great deal of attention.

Photos by Terry Trovato