

# The Carroll Motor Car Company of Strasburg

by Donald J. Summar

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Prior to the First World War, small companies were organized to manufacture automobiles in cities and towns throughout the United States. In Lancaster County, attempts to enter the infant automobile industry were made by companies such as the Wenger Simplified Motor Car Manufacturing Company of Lancaster, the Thomas Wagon Company of Lititz, the Carroll Motor Car Company of Strasburg, and the Light Commercial Car Company of Marietta. At that time it seemed relatively easy to enter upon the manufacture of automobiles. All that was needed was a little capital, a suitable building, a few skilled mechanics, and a great deal of good fortune. While most such small companies quickly failed, some did produce vehicles for years, and a few survived by adapting their facilities to some other, often related, line of work. One example of adaptation is the Carroll Motor Car Company of Strasburg, which was started primarily as an effort to build automobiles but continued in business for several years as an automobile sales agency and garage for repairs. That the Carroll Motor Car Company can be found on virtually every list of automobiles manufactured in the United States is rather surprising, for the company's production totaled just one vehicle.<sup>1</sup>

The origin of the Carroll Motor Car Company may be traced to December 1910, when D. M. Aument, a tobacco merchant in Strasburg, purchased a two-story frame building at the corner of West Main and Fulton Streets and announced that the building, which formerly had been used by P. C. H. Sharpe as a butchering and bologna-making factory, was to be "transformed into a complete motor car works and garage." Mr. Aument's two sons, Carroll M. Aument and H. Chester Aument, had gone into partnership under the name Carroll Motor Car Company to manufacture automobiles in the Sharpe building.<sup>2</sup>

Carroll M. Aument, who had attended Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, was an experienced machinist and was said to be an expert in the "motor car industry."<sup>3</sup> He was company engineer while his

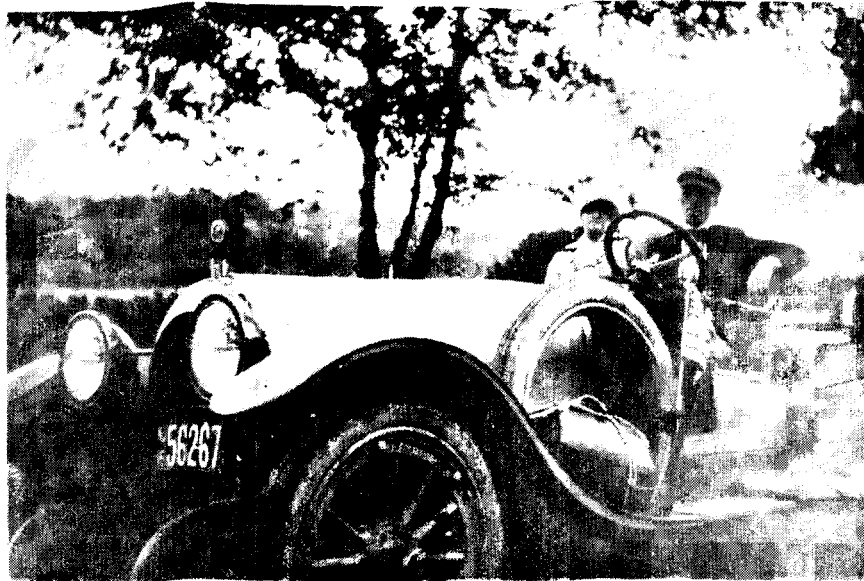
brother Chester was manager. They also were the company's only employees.<sup>4</sup> Carroll Aument wasted no time after the organization of the company. He made a business trip to York, Pennsylvania, on January 3, 1911, where he visited the factories of the B. C. K. Motor Car Company and the Hart-Kraft Motor Company, presumably to determine how to set up manufacturing facilities.<sup>5</sup> The Carroll company's first advertisement, which appeared in the *Strasburg News* on January 14, listed the selling of tires and supplies and the repairing of automobiles, and ended with the words: "Carroll Motor Car Company, manufacturers of CARROLL CARS."<sup>6</sup>

Aument visited the automobile show in Philadelphia during the week of January 16 and arranged to take on the agency for the Marion automobile, manufactured by the Marion Motor Car Company, Indianapolis, Indiana. The Carroll company's advertisement of January 28 was revised to read: "Agents for the Marion and Builders of Carroll Cars."<sup>7</sup> On February 2, Aument went to Philadelphia by train and returned to Strasburg in a new Marion touring car to be used as a demonstrator of the car's features.<sup>8</sup>

During February events moved ahead swiftly, at least as far as the auto dealership was concerned. The company ran a large advertisement supplied by the Marion company of February 11 and repeated it the following week. The advertisement, which was two columns wide and a half page long, featured a cut of the Marion touring car. The company name of the Strasburg firm was given as the "Carroll Garage", probably because an illuminated sign with the word "Garage" on it had been put up on the front of the building to attract passing motorists. The advertisement closed with the notice that in addition to the Marion, the company had taken on the agency for the Cutting automobile, manufactured by the Clarke-Carter Automobile Company, Jackson, Michigan.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the month the Carroll company had also taken on the agency for the Jackson Automobile, produced by the Jackson Automobile Company, Jackson, Michigan.<sup>10</sup> It would seem that the agencies for the Marion, Cutting, and Jackson automobiles had been taken on to keep the Carroll Motor Car Company in operation until the Carroll Car was in production.

Work on the chassis of the first Carroll Car was underway by May, at which time a three-horsepower electric motor was installed in the factory by L. J. Bair. The motor was needed to provide power for the metal-working machines in the plant.<sup>11</sup> During the summer of 1911, as work on the chassis progressed, Carroll Aument visited the factories of the Middleby Auto Company and the S.G.V. Company in Reading, Pennsylvania, in late May, and went to Philadelphia in July to purchase some parts needed for construction of the car.<sup>12</sup> One of the largest components of the chassis purchased from an outsider was the engine, which was built by the Continental Motor Manufacturing Company.<sup>13</sup>

The chassis of the Carroll Car was completed in time for it to



The 1912 Carroll Car as it appeared in 1916. The man at the wheel is Carroll M. Aument. Apparently the touring body mounted on the car in early 1912 had been much altered over the years. (Courtesy Dallas W. Hagans)

be displayed at the Lancaster Fair, held the last week of September. The *Strasburg News*, in an article titled "CARROLL CAR AT THE FAIR", stated:

The chassis, or running gears and machinery of one of the new high-grade 50-horsepower Carroll automobiles, built by the Carroll Motor Car Company, Strasburg, was exhibited at the Lancaster Fair this week . . . Being only the bare metal work, motor, and tires, it showed the real business parts of an automobile in a way that cannot be in any other manner so well observed. This is one of the high grade cars equal in speed and equipment to the best made anywhere.<sup>14</sup>

The reference to "one of the new . . . Carroll automobiles" is the only reference to company activities which might be interpreted to mean that more than one Carroll Car was under construction. However, the fact that the Aument brothers were the only employees of the Carroll company would seem to preclude the construction of more than one chassis at a time.

During the winter the chassis of the Carroll Car was finished, a touring body made in Lancaster was fitted, and the car was made ready for a test run, which took place on February 23, 1912. It definitely was identified as the car which had been displayed at the Lancaster Fair the previous fall in chassis form. The car was listed in a newspaper article in the *Strasburg News* as the "Carroll-40" be

cause the engine was rated at 40-horsepower under the A.L.A.M. rating system. The article stated, in part:

Those of us in Strasburg who have seen it in course of construction need not be told of the quality and high grade of the material and workmanship that lies under the polished brass, glistening paint, and luxurious upholstery. Strasburg feels that it is a credit to have it made here, and confidently expects, that when the people have seen it, that many orders will come to its makers for cars of the same pattern.<sup>15</sup>

The most interesting aspect of this article is that it is the last mention of the automobile or the company's plans to manufacture automobiles that appeared in the *Strasburg News*. The last advertisement to carry the slogan "Builders of Carroll Cars" had appeared in the newspaper in May 1911. An advertisement which began its appearance in the newspaper of March 16, 1912, carried no such slogan.<sup>16</sup>

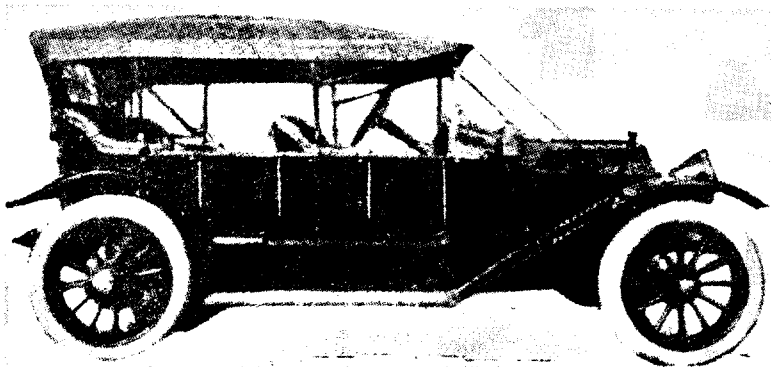
Despite the complete absence of publicity on plans for automobile production, it seems apparent that the Aument brothers did not give up at that time. In January 1913, brief specifications for the Carroll Car appeared in *Motor Age* and in March complete specifications appeared in *Automobile Trade Journal* under the title "Carroll Gasoline Pleasure Cars, made by the Carroll Motor Car Co., Strasburg, Pa." The specifications were for the Model 4-D-40 five-passenger touring car, priced at \$3250 and supposedly the planned production model for which the 1912 Carroll-40 was the prototype. Specifications were:

Motor 40 hp, 4 cylinders, 5 in. bore, 5 in. stroke, cast in pairs, water cooled, 4 cycle, mounted on sub-frame, 4 point suspension; honeycomb radiator; Rayfield carburetor; ignition by Bosch or Connecticut magneto, 2 sets of spark plugs; lubrication splash system; disc clutch, steel discs, shaft drive; selective sliding transmission, located in middle, operated by hand, 4 speeds forward and reverse, direct on 3rd; full floating Timken rear axle; 2 sets of brakes, expanding and contracting, located on rear wheels, lined with Raybestos; pneumatic tires 36 x 4½ in. front and rear mounted on Firestone rims; right or left side steering, 18½ in. wheel, control levers at right or center; springs semi-elliptic front, three-quarter elliptic rear; wheelbase 128 in.; road clearance 12½ in.; frame pressed steel; gasoline tank located rear, 3 gal. reserve; pedal engine starter; equipment: top, windshield, and electric lights.

The Carroll company also listed two other five-passenger touring cars: Model 6-C-40, priced at \$3500, which was basically similar to the 4-D-40 except that it was powered by a six-cylinder engine of 40.8 horsepower; and Model 4-E-32, priced at \$2400, which was a smaller 32 horsepower four-cylinder machine with a 118 inch wheelbase.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the publicity in the trade journals, it would seem that nothing actually was done to begin the manufacture of the Carroll Car. No items on the company's manufacturing plans appeared in the *Strasburg News*, although items on the company's activity as a sales agent did appear from time to time. No employees were hired

to work in the Carroll factory. No Carroll Motor stock was advertised for sale to raise capital for production. Nothing happened except that articles on the company's proposed line of cars were published in a few trade journals. These journals uncritically published whatever was sent to them, so the appearance of the articles is proof only that the Aument brothers wanted to build and sell automobiles. Lacking both capital and manpower, they could do nothing, and the Carroll Car progressed no further than the prototype stage. That only one car was built seems definite, for both Dallas W. Hagans and V. Chester Brown, who knew the Aument brothers and had been given rides in the Carroll Car, stated in 1968 interviews that only one car had been built.<sup>18</sup> In addition, *A History of Strasburg*, published in 1926, stated that the Aument brothers "also manufactured a Carroll Car which is in the building (old Carroll factory) at the present time."<sup>19</sup>



The 1913 Carroll 4-D-40 as it appeared in the March issue of "Automobile Trade Journal." This automobile was never built by the Carroll Motor Car Company. It is markedly different in appearance from the 1912 Carroll Car and would seem to be a retouched photograph of a 1913 Marion of the type sold by the company. (Courtesy Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library)

Although the Carroll company failed as a manufacturer of automobiles, it continued in business as a sales agency until November 1917. In 1911 the company held agencies for the Marion, Cutting, and Jackson automobiles. It is possible that as many as three automobiles were sold in 1911, for in March 1912 three second-hand touring cars of unspecified make were offered for sale by the company. The Cutting and Jackson automobiles were not advertised for sale after 1911.<sup>20</sup>

During 1912 the company did not advertise in the local newspaper except for the used car advertisement, which appeared from March 16 to August 17.<sup>21</sup> Three Marions were sold in 1912. In February Dr. D. C. Martin of Landisville took delivery of a 30-horse-

power Marion roadster. In the first week of March, just after the test run of the Carroll Car, Chester Aument and Harry S. Nolt traveled to New York City, where they received Mr. Nolt's 45-horsepower Marion roadster and drove it to Strasburg. In May, Samuel M. Carpenter of Eden Township took delivery of a 35-horsepower Marion touring car. Presumably most of the Aument brothers' time was spent in doing repair work, at least in the latter part of the year.<sup>22</sup>

Sales of the Marion increased during 1913 as seven vehicles were sold by the Carroll company. The first sale was made in May, T. Scott Woods of Leaman Place purchased a Marion roadster that had attracted much attention while on display at the Carroll garage.<sup>23</sup> Marion touring cars were sold to Abram Long of Landisville in early June and to John K. Hershey of Leaman Place in late July.<sup>24</sup> In October the Carroll company received its first Marion Model G six-cylinder touring car, which had many new features as standard equipment, including an electric self-starter and shock absorbers. The car was not sold until early 1914.<sup>25</sup> The Carroll company closed the year with the delivery of four Marions in December. A Marion roadster was delivered to Dr. J. Henry Musser of Lampeter early in the month. On the day after Christmas three 40-horsepower touring cars were received from Philadelphia and immediately delivered to their purchasers: J. J. Messner of Strasburg, Elam K. Herr of East Lampeter Township, and T. Scott Woods of Paradise Township. It was the second Marion purchased by Woods during 1913.<sup>26</sup>

The Carroll company improved the repair facilities of the garage in early 1914 and announced the improvement in an advertisement titled "WELDING" which appeared in the *Strasburg News* beginning on February 28. The advertisement stated:

We have installed a complete Oxygen Acetylene Welding Plant and are in a position to weld any kind of metal such as Cast Iron, Cast Steel, Malleable Iron, Steel, Aluminum, Bronze, Brass, Copper, and all kinds of brazing.<sup>27</sup>

This marked an increase in the Carroll company's emphasis on automobile repair work, which took as much importance as auto sales during the remaining years of the company's career in Strasburg. The advertisement was placed in the newspaper every week and was continued without change until December 8, 1917.<sup>28</sup>

Sales of the Marion declined during 1914, if the four reported sales included all sales made. In January, B. B. Gonder purchased a Marion six-cylinder touring car, probably the six-cylinder machine received by the Carroll company the previous October.<sup>29</sup> Marion touring cars were purchased by Frank L. Musselman in April, by Charles R. Book in August, and by George Hagans in September.<sup>30</sup>

To offset the decline in Marion sales, the Aument brothers took on the agency for the Saxon roadster, manufactured by the Saxon Motor Company, Detroit, Michigan. The car, which weighed only 900 pounds, was powered by a 15-18 horsepower Continental engine which was said to run 30 to 40 miles per gallon of gasoline. The



The building at the extreme right in this photograph is the former Carroll factory as it appeared in the 1920's, which was occupied by the garage and automobile sales agency of John McCord. The house beyond formerly was the home of D. M. Aument. Carroll and Chester Aument resided there while operating the Carroll Motor Car Company. (Courtesy Strasburg News)

Carroll company began advertising the Saxon in July and quickly made two sales of the car, which sold for only \$395. One car was sold to A. M. Hostetter for use on his R.F.D. mail route and the other was sold to William W. Bair for use with his business as an electrician.<sup>31</sup> Two other Saxons were sold during the year, to Isaac W. Rohrer of East Lampeter Township in September and to Clyde Groff of Quarryville in October.<sup>32</sup>

After the sale of eight automobiles in 1914, only one sale was made in 1915 and the Carroll company had to rely on its repair work to remain in business. During 1915 Carroll M. Aument left the firm, after which his brother Chester became sole proprietor. The last mention of Carroll Aument in connection with the Carroll company occurred in January 1915, when he went to the Philadelphia Automobile Show in company with Frank L. Musselman, Ellis Bachman, Will M. Musser, and Jay Bachman.<sup>33</sup> After that he was not mentioned in the local press until late 1916, by which time he was an employee of the Simplex Automobile Company, New Brunswick, New Jersey.<sup>34</sup>

The only sale made in 1915 was to Dr. George E. Day, who purchased a Marion touring car in September.<sup>35</sup> No more Marions were sold because of the failure of the Marion Motor Car Company. Just why no Saxons were sold cannot be determined, for the Saxon was a big seller in 1915. The Carroll company's advertisement for the Saxon appeared for the last time on March 13, 1915.<sup>36</sup>

Chester Aument did a great deal of repair work, two instances of which were noted in the local press. On August 5 he used a Marion six-cylinder touring car to tow the automobile of Harry H.

Groff, which had become stalled in high water at Fairview.<sup>37</sup> In early November he repaired the automobile of two Lancaster ladies. Their car, which had collided with a telephone pole in Strasburg, had suffered damage to the headlights, the fenders, and one front spring. The fact that Aument had time to repair such damage and see the ladies on their way the day of the accident would seem to indicate that he was not preoccupied with pressing business.<sup>38</sup> To increase his business, Aument decided to install a gasoline tank and pump, receiving permission of the Strasburg Borough Council on February 7, 1916, to "install a gasoline tank with improved system at the curb in front of the Carroll Motor Car Company's property."<sup>39</sup>

On January 6, 1916, Aument attended the New York Automobile Show with Harry S. Nolt. While there he may have taken on the agency for the Republic truck, manufactured by the Republic Motor Truck Company, Alma, Michigan, for the first sale he made during 1916 was of a Republic truck to Christ E. Lamparter of Green Tree in May.<sup>40</sup> All other sales made in 1916 were of the Marion-Handley touring car, manufactured by the Mutual Motors Company, Jackson, Michigan. Mutual Motors had been organized by J. I. Handley, who had purchased the assets of the defunct Marion Motor Car Company. The Carroll company, which sold four Marion-Handleys in 1916, made deliveries in late October to Ellis Bachman, Christian Neff, Frank Worrall, and Dr. George E. Day.<sup>41</sup> In December 1916 a removable sedan top was fitted to the Marion touring car of Harry E. Harsh of Bart.<sup>42</sup> It is possible that the top was an "All-Weather Top" made for some other make of automobile, such as the Kissel, and was merely altered by Chester Aument to fit Harsh's Marion. This is the only reference to such work having been done by the Carroll company.

Chester Aument sold only two automobiles in 1917, but made up for that modest accomplishment with the sale of six trucks. Automobiles sold were a Franklin roadster to Dr. Walter J. Leaman in January and a Saxon roadster to Enos Hagans in May.<sup>43</sup> Aument received a Franklin sedan in February as a demonstrator but there is no evidence to show that he sold the car.<sup>44</sup>

The Carroll Motor Car Company's best sales week was the week of January 29 to February 2, 1917, when Aument sold five Republic trucks. Sales included two 1-ton trucks to Christ E. Lamparter of Green Tree; one 2-ton truck to Foulk Bros. of Strasburg, one 1½-ton truck to Walter Aument of Quarryville; and one 1-ton truck to Geo. Lamparter's Sons of Lancaster. Foulk Bros. purchased their truck to haul brick to Coatesville where they had 65 houses under construction.<sup>45</sup> Walter Aument was a lumber and coal dealer; both Christ E. Lamparter and Geo. Lamparter's Sons operated glue factories.<sup>46</sup>

The other Republic truck sold in 1917 was purchased by Oliver H. Wenger in July for use in his furniture business.<sup>47</sup> This is the last known sale made by the Carroll Motor Car Company. By the



fall of 1917, Chester Aument, who had been running the business by himself for over two years, had decided to sell out and take up some other line of work. A deal was worked out for the sale of the business to David Batterman of Leacock Township. Batterman arranged to continue the business under his own name in the Carroll business, which remained in the hands of D. M. Aument. On November 22, 1917, Batterman took over the business from Chester Aument. The Carroll Motor Car Company's advertisement titled "WELDING" appeared in the newspaper for the last time on December 8 and with its withdrawal the company passed into history.<sup>48</sup>

The eventual fate of the 1912 Carroll Car is not known. It was never sold and became Carroll Aument's personal property. The one existing photograph, which shows the car with 1916 New Jersey License, presumably was taken when Aument visited Strasburg while an employee of the Simplex Automobile Company. The Carroll Car was back in Strasburg in 1926 and was stored in the old Carroll factory, which had been occupied by John McCord since he had purchased the garage business from David Batterman in 1919.<sup>49</sup> The car's whereabouts after 1926 can not be determined. The site of the Carroll Motor Car Company building is now occupied by Yunginger's service station.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Don Summar

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Research is presently being carried out in preparation for articles on the Wenger, Thomas, and Light companies.
- <sup>2</sup> *Strasburg News*, December 31, 1910.
- <sup>3</sup> "The Carroll Car on Memory Lane". *Lancaster Motorist*, August 1968, page 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Dallas W. Hagans on December 4, 1973.

- 6 *Strasburg News*, January 7, 1911.
- 7 *Ibid.*, January 14, 1911.
- 8 *Ibid.*, January 21, 1911, and January 28, 1911.
- 9 *Ibid.*, February 4, 1911.
- 10 *Ibid.*, February 11, 1911, and February 18, 1911.
- 11 *Ibid.*, February 25, 1911.
- 12 *Ibid.*, May 6, 1911.
- 13 *Ibid.*, May 27, 1911, and July 15, 1911.
- 14 "The Carroll Car on Memory Lane."
- 15 *Strasburg News*, September 30, 1911.
- 16 *Ibid.*, March 2, 1912.
- 17 *Ibid.*, May 20, 1911, and March 16, 1912.
- 18 *Automobile Trade Journal*, March 1913, page 226. Also *Motor Age*, January 9, 1913, page 48.
- 19 "The Carroll Car on Memory Lane."
- 20 The Graduating Class of 1926 of Strasburg High School. *A History of Strasburg*. Strasburg, News Print (1926) page 56.
- 21 *Strasburg News*, April 8, 1911, and March 16, 1912.
- 22 *Ibid.*, August 17, 1912.
- 23 *Ibid.*, February 24, 1912, March 9, 1912, and May 18, 1912.
- 24 *Ibid.*, May 10, 1913.
- 25 *Ibid.*, June 7, 1913, and August 2, 1913.
- 26 *Ibid.*, October 18, 1913.
- 27 *Ibid.*, December 6, 1913, and December 27, 1913.
- 28 *Ibid.*, February 28, 1914.
- 29 *Ibid.*, December 8, 1917.
- 30 *Ibid.*, January 31, 1914.
- 31 *Ibid.*, April 25, 1914, August 22, 1914, and September 5, 1914.
- 32 *Ibid.*, July 4, 1914.
- 33 *Ibid.*, September 26, 1914, and October 17, 1914.
- 34 *Ibid.*, January 16, 1915.
- 35 *Ibid.*, October 26, 1916.
- 36 *Ibid.*, September 4, 1915.
- 37 *Ibid.*, March 13, 1915.
- 38 *Ibid.*, August 7, 1915.
- 39 *Ibid.*, November 6, 1915.
- 40 *Ibid.*, February 12, 1916.
- 41 *Ibid.*, January 8, 1916, and May 13, 1916.
- 42 *Ibid.*, October 28, 1916.
- 43 *Ibid.*, December 16, 1916.
- 44 *Ibid.*, January 6, 1917, and May 5, 1917.
- 45 *Ibid.*, February 10, 1917.
- 46 *Ibid.*, February 3, 1917.
- 47 *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer*, February 2, 1918.
- 48 *Strasburg News*, July 21, 1917.
- 49 *Ibid.*, November 24, 1917.
- 50 *A History of Strasburg*, page 56.