

January 2019 A Frame  
5351 Chestnut Street  
New Orleans, LA 70115-3054

**Officers of New Orleans A's Chapter  
Model A Ford Club of America**

President: Carl Hunter  
1st Vice President: Toni Schaub  
2nd Vice President: Phil Strevinsky  
Secretary: Brad Persons  
Treasurer: Hall Townsend  
Sergeant-at-Arms: Caroline Schaub  
Sunshine Lady: Toni Schaub  
Directors: Carl Hunter, Angelo Ricca, Anthony Nicolich  
Phone Committee: Carl Hunter, Lynn Welsh, Anthony Nicolich  
Newsletter: Mickey King

**Monthly Meeting:** Wednesday January 23rd at Randazzo's at 6:30 pm for dinner. Please wear your Model A shirts to the meetings and events!

## **Coming Events:**

**French Quarter Parade.**

## **Suggestions:**

Lunch at Audubon Park Golf course restaurant  
Trip down River Road to a plantation  
Go to see the PT boat at Lakefront Airport



## THE GARDNER AUTOMOBILE STORY

After the Civil War, my great-grandfather, Russell Gardner began producing horse drawn carriages under the trademarked name of Banner Buggies. The St. Louis based company was tremendously successful, and by the turn of the century, Gardner's sons, including my grandfather, took over the business operations which had offices in Memphis and New Orleans, in addition to St Louis.

The younger Gardners could see that the buggy would soon be replaced by the automobile as the country's primary source of transportation, and they began to make plans to capitalize on the auto boom. Initially Banner Buggies contracted with Chevrolet to sell its cars alongside their carriages. Eventually it began to assemble complete Chevrolets in St. Louis and, by 1915, had a monopoly on all Chevy sales in states along the Mississippi River.

With the entry of the United States into WWI, the demand for automobiles skyrocketed and the demand for buggies plummeted. After the war, the Gardners took all the knowledge of auto manufacturing they had acquired during their years with Chevrolet and formed the Gardner Motor Company in 1920 of which my grandfather was a vice president.

The first Gardner, the Model G, was introduced in 1920. Mounted on a 112-inch wheelbase, the Model G was powered by a 4-cylinder 35hp Lycoming engine. The car featured cast-iron valves and pistons, thermos-syphon cooling, Hotchkiss drive, a Carter carburetor, Goodyear tires and Westinghouse lighting.

The Model G was a moderately priced car available in three body styles. The 5-passenger touring car and 3 passenger roadster were both listed at \$1125, while the 5-passenger closed sedan cost \$2145. The model proved successful enough in its first year of production (selling over 2000 units) that Gardner carried it over essentially unchanged for 1921 and 1922. Sales figures for 1921 reached 3800 units and skyrocketed to almost 9000 for 1922.

As the Gardner cars proved exceptionally popular, the company made plans to expand both its dealership network and product line. Upgrades and improvements to the firm's facilities brought plant capacity up to 40,000 units annually- an ambitious number for a small independent automaker.

For 1923, Gardner introduced the new Model 5 which is the car I own. Advertisements said the car had "All That a Four Can Save- All That a Six Can Do." Using the same 112-inch wheelbase as the Model G, the Model 5 was propelled by a stronger 43hp, four-cylinder power plant. Cast-iron cylinder heads were still used, although the company switched to aluminum pistons. Standard equipment on the Model 5 included leather upholstery, a Boyce motor-meter, rearview mirror, windshield wipers and a heater produced by Perfection.

The lineup for the Model 5 grew to include 4 different body styles- a 2-passenger roadster, 2- passenger coupe, five-passenger touring car and a five-passenger sedan- ranging in price from \$965 to \$1365. Gardner continued producing the Model 5 for the 1924 model year but added a 5-passenger sport tourer (called the “Radio Special”) and the 5-passenger brougham.

Thereafter, Gardner would introduce a new model with new features every two years. By 1927 it had 15 distributors in all the major southern and western cities. The largest distributorship was in New Orleans on St Charles Ave. headed by Gillis Melancon. In 1928, Russell Gardner moved his home to New Orleans to oversee these operations and purchased an interest in the New Orleans Pelicans, its professional baseball team. In New Orleans, he met Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears who began negotiations to sell Gardner Motor Cars through the Sears catalogue.

Unfortunately, the stock market plunge of 1929 and the fact that the major car manufacturers --and in particular Ford-- were able to change and introduce new models every year which Gardner could not do was the death knell for the company. 1927 was the last in which the Gardner Motor Company would see a profit. By the end of 1931, Gardner had stopped building passenger cars and shortly sold all of the plants and facilities to General Motors in exchange for an exclusive agreement to market the Chevrolet in all cities west of the Mississippi River – similar but more profitable to the agreement they had in 1915 with Chevrolet.

Warren Gardner





## HARAHAN CHRISTMAS PARADE

The parade took place on Saturday December 15 with the following members participating: Phil Strevinsky (Fordor), John Maiorana & Bill Pfaff (in John Troendle's AA truck), Calvin Ohlsson (Model A truck), Anthony Nicolich (coupe), Geoff Goodbee, Brad Persons (Phaeton), and Ray, Toni & Caroline Schaub (Model A limo). A good turnout by the club.





