

WHITLOCK CAR

Of all the aspects of the Whitlock family history the Whitlock Car has to be the one that has sparked the most interest. In your first meeting with someone who has a passing interest in their Whitlock ancestors just the mention that there was once a Whitlock Car seems to bring the conversation around to "something worth talking about".

I first learned of the Whitlock Automotive Company of Holland Gate from Mrs. May McSweeney of Finchley, London. Mrs. McSweeney was descended from Henry Whitlock, Coachbuilder and was one of the first to reply to my Questionnaires sent out in 1969. We corresponded regularly until her death in 1982 and many of the letters I wrote in 1970 were typed on an old typewriter Mrs. McSweeney donated to the cause while we were living in England.

The Whitlock Automotive Company was an offshoot of Henry Whitlock & Company who had been coachbuilders since 1778. A fact that always puzzled me since Henry was born about 1786! I assume the founder of the coachbuilding business must have been Henry's father, Robert Whitlock. There are family traditions that one of the Royal Coaches was built by the Whitlocks and they are shown as "Coachbuilder to Her Majesty Queen Victoria" in one of the old directories.

It was therefore only logical that in the early 1900's that the firm's transition to the automobile take place. According to "Autocar", in 1903 they marketed the Whitlock-Century of 6 1/2, 9, 12 and 16 horsepower but apparently these were manufactured elsewhere. In 1904 they brought out a car of their own manufacture called the Whitlock-Aster because of the Aster engine and Whitlock body. Several models were produced, the two cylinder models being armoured wooded frames and the fours made of pressed steel. In the 1905 Tourist Trophy the Whitlocks ran a 12/14hp car and finished 22nd (it doesn't say of how many!!!).

The Whitlocks opened a branch in Liverpool but by the 1914 it had been taken over by J.A. Lawton-Goodman. Different Whitlock cars appeared sporadically and were exhibited at the Olympia Exhibition grounds up to 1929 with some catalogues listing entries up to 1936. From the 1920's all the cars had been made by the Lawton-Goodman works at Cricklewood, near London and the Whitlocks had ceased to be active in the business. The interest did not die though as Mrs. McSweeney remembered occasionally driving by the works to see how things were going. The last remaining Whitlock vestige was the Whitlock Coat of Arms in terra cotta that remained over the gate well into the 1950's.

(Main Lines 8 & 9, included in this issue of the Newsletter are descendants of this part of the family)