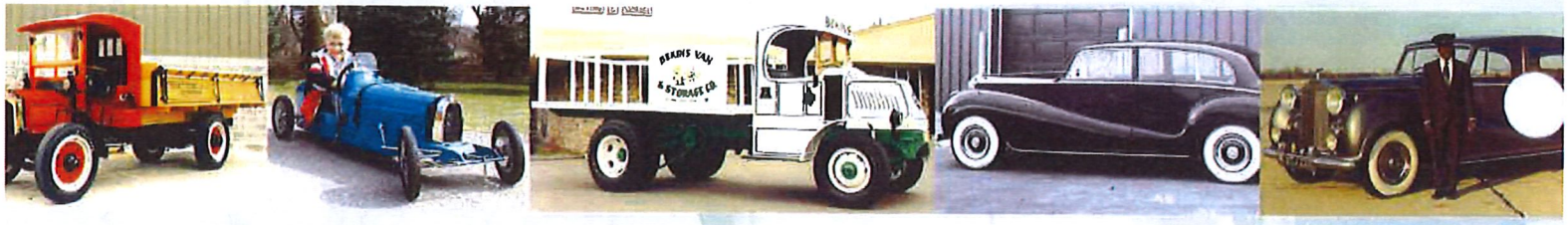
1919 PACKARD TRUCK

By: Irving Jensen, Jr.

Serial #175434; 2-2½ Model E – U.S. Army.

Our Packard is a Model E, 2-2½ ton truck built by the Packard Motor Car Company in Detroit, Michigan. It is powered by a 283 cubic inch, 4-cylinder Packard L-head engine. The truck is well-appointed with a bright brass radiator shell, unusual head lights, horn, and a myriad of other unusual brass and nickel components. The overall length of the truck is 19'10" with a 144" wheelbase and it stands 8'3" in height.

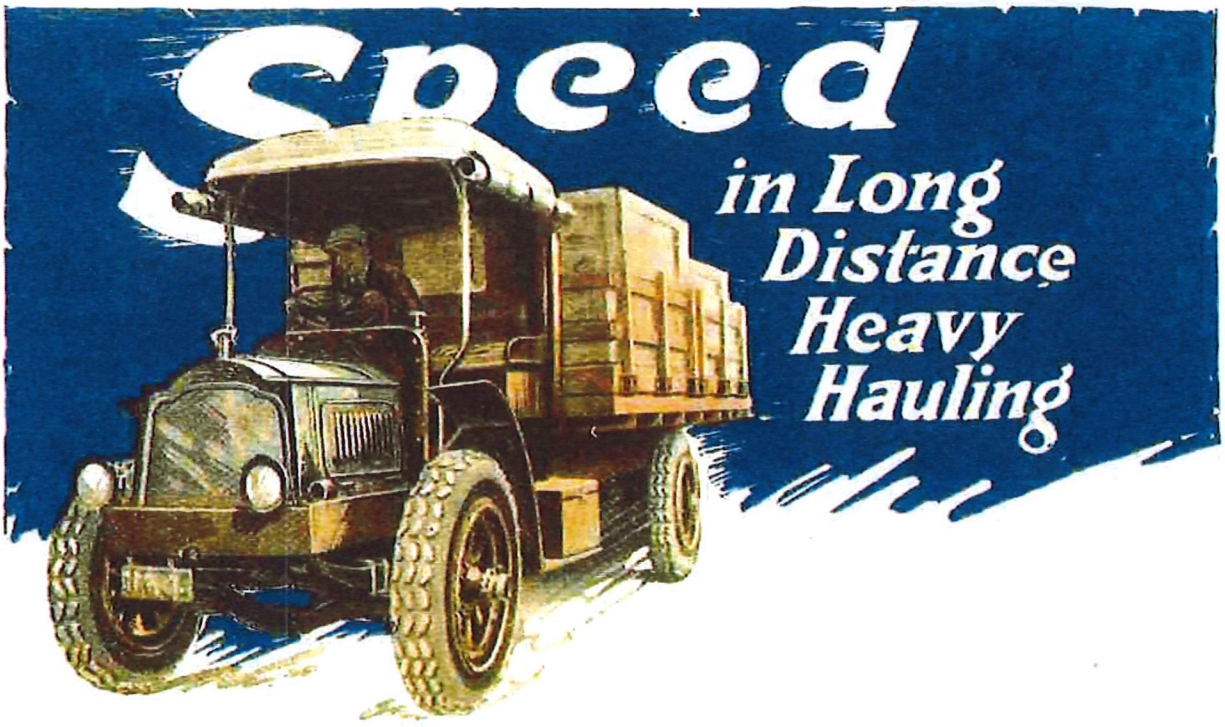


U. S. ARMY

The Packard Motor Car Company built our truck for the US Army on a government war contract from World War I. It was delivered to the US Army at Camp Douglas, Wisconsin in 1919 where it served through World War II. It was in regular use by the Army until it was sold in 1948 on public auction to S & I Cooper Company, a scrap metal business located in Tomah, Wisconsin (owned by brothers Saul and Israel Cooper).

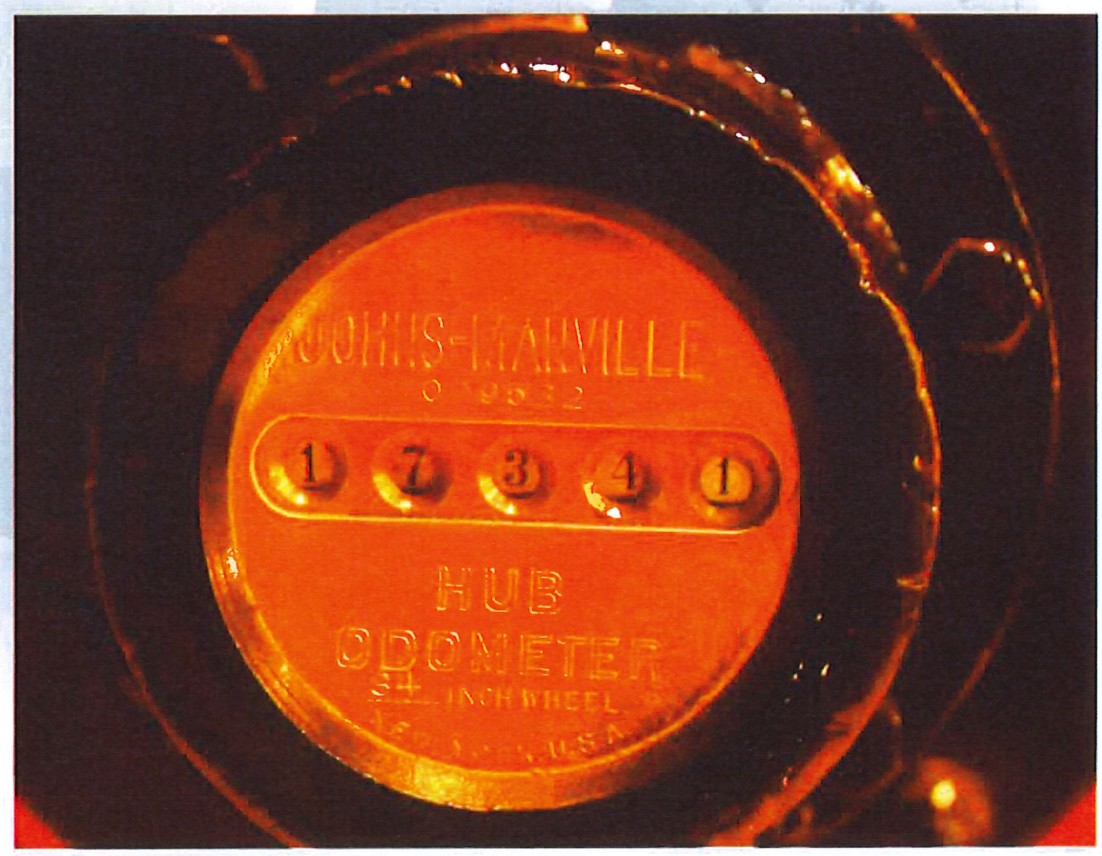
A notable feature of the Packard is that it was originally equipped with pneumatic tires (7.50 * 24 front tires and 9.00 * 24 rear tires to be exact). Most trucks of the period were manufactured with solid-rubber tires, "air-filled tires" were still a novelty in 1919.

I heard about the Packard in September of 1969 in a letter from Mr. Wayne Johnson of



Tomah, Wisconsin. As it turned-out, Mr. Johnson and I were mutual friends of car-restorer Dick Braund (of Elroy, Wisconsin). Dick knew I was looking for a Packard truck and "spread the word" on my behalf. At the time, I was making occasional visits to his restoration shop to check on our 1928 Rolls-Royce. During one of my visits, Dick and I drove the short 15 or 20 mile trip from Elroy to see the truck.

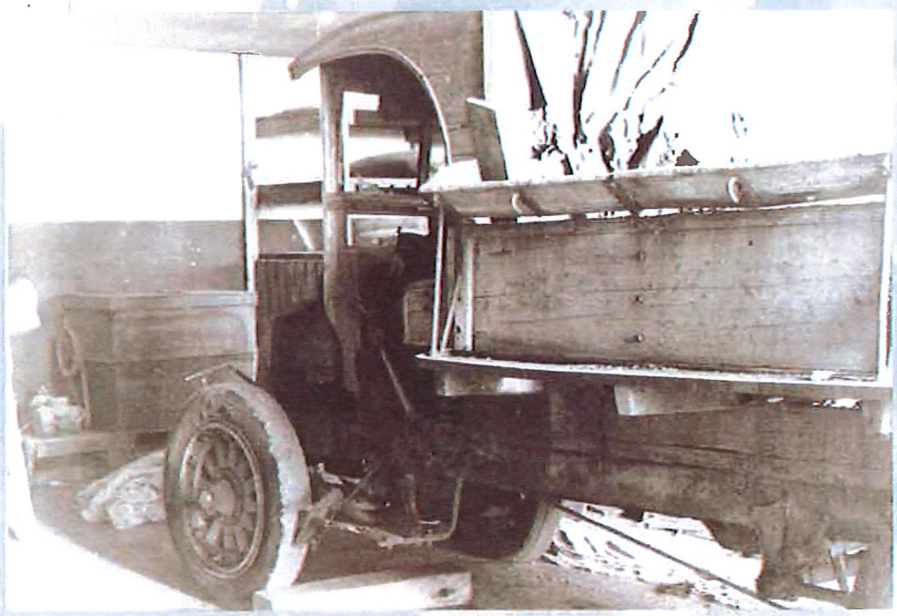
My first glimpse of the Packard was disappointing; it was standing in mud and half-buried with scrap metal. It was apparent that the truck had been without shelter from the harsh Wisconsin weather for a long time; all of the wood on the truck (cab and truck body) was severely weathered (gray) and the chassis was quite rusty. But as I inspected the truck I was surprised to find the registered mileage on the hub odometer was only 17,331 miles! I also determined the truck was complete with all lights and accessories and (with the help of a penny to scratch-off some oxidized, olive-drab paint) I discovered it was fitted with a brass radiator. But the most amazing discovery was a complete set of side curtains lying in the bed of the truck. They were soaked with linseed oil from an overturned drum. The oil acted as "a preservative" and kept them from rotting and disintegrating. They were perfect patterns for making a new set.

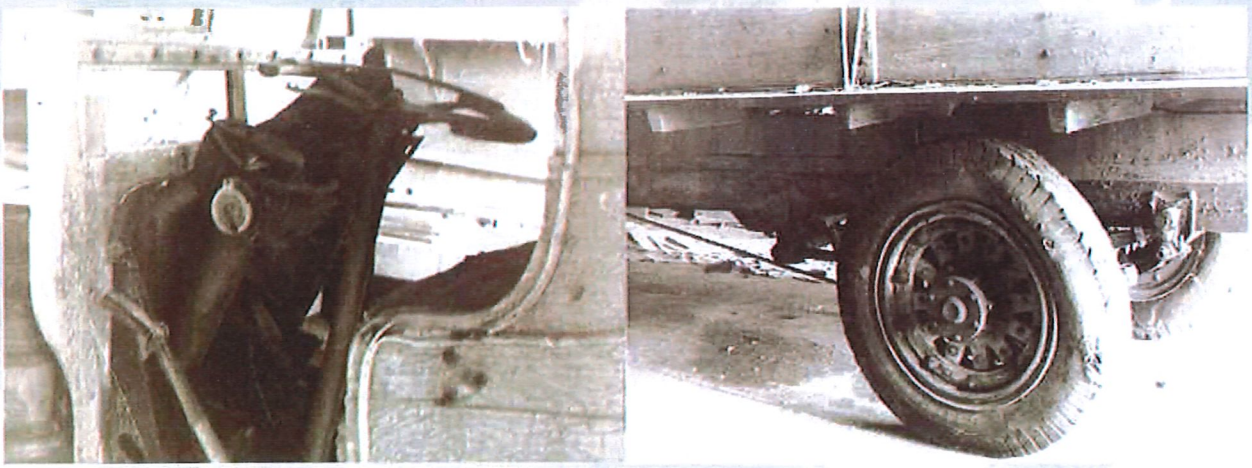


The original hub odometer mounted to the Packard's front axle hub.

With some reservation, I decided to make an offer for the truck. But the negotiations with the Coopers did not go well; at one point I was so frustrated that I gave-up and walked out. But before leaving, I discussed the situation with Dick. He encouraged me to agree to the Cooper's terms and purchase the truck. He said, "*If you really want a Packard, this is a complete truck and you may never find another one like it ... it's not a bad deal.*" Dick had a good eye for antique vehicles. So with his encouragement, I walked back into the Coopers office and successfully negotiated the purchase. We obtained the truck on February 11, 1970 for $1,300.00.

I sent a semi-truck to Tomah to pick-up the Packard, but loading it wasn't easy. Having been stored outside for <u>at least</u> 22 years, the Packard's steering linkage was seized and the wheels would hardly rotate on the axles.





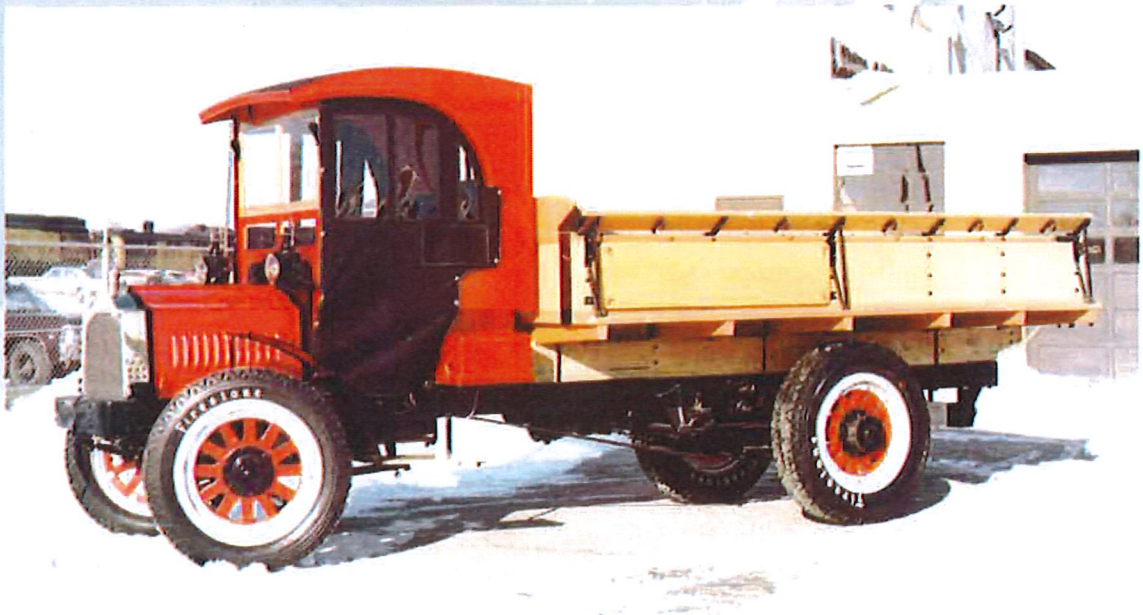
The Packard "basket case" in our company shop shortly after arriving from Tomah, Wisconsin.

The Packard truck was restored in our shop during the winter and summer of 1970 and 1971.

The chassis was restorable with the exception of both front fenders which were rusted and battered beyond repair. Fortunately, Dick Braund was a skilled coach builder and was willing to fabricate a new set of fenders.

The mechanical restoration was handled by Mr. Dudley Dudgeon. This is first the vehicle in our collection that Dudley worked on. *He ultimately restored most of the vehicles in our collection.* Disassembling the Packard tested Dudley's patience since everything was rusted, corroded, or rotten; nothing came apart with ease. Dudley fought each and every rusted nut and bolt from the first turn of the wrench to the last. He later commented, *"When I first saw that Packard truck I thought what a damn fool I was for saying I'd do something before I knew what I was going to be doing."*

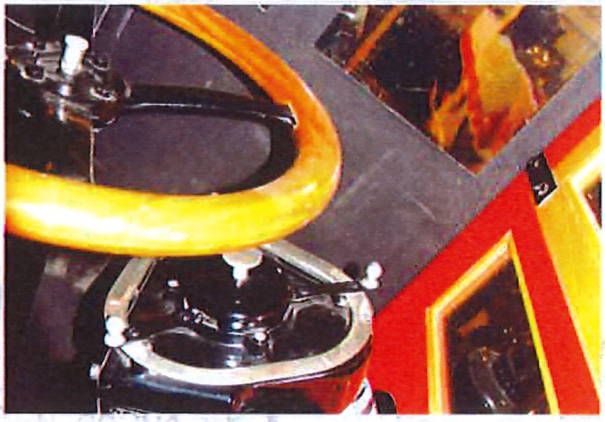
The wooden cab and body were terribly weathered and beyond restoration. In fact, nearly all wood on the truck required replacement. Master-woodworkers John Snyder and Skip Young carefully disassembled the cab and body piece-by-piece yielding a set of patterns. From there, they cut new pieces and reassembled a "new" cab and truck body. John and Skip did a wonderful job; their workmanship is superb. Other than both sills of the body and the wood framing over the gas tank (which is the base of the cab and seat), all the wood on the truck is new. Mr. Carl Eybers varnished the new body and cab window frames and Mr. John Faber handled the body work and painting.

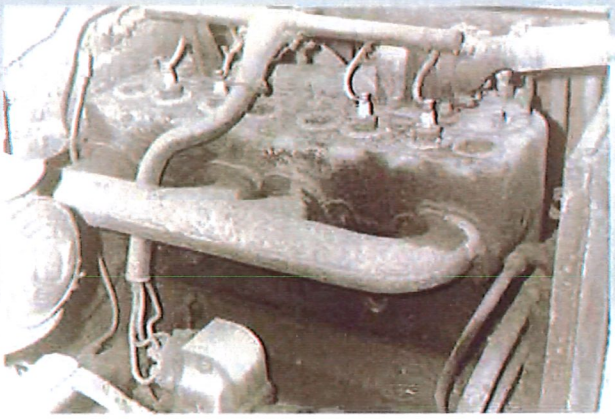


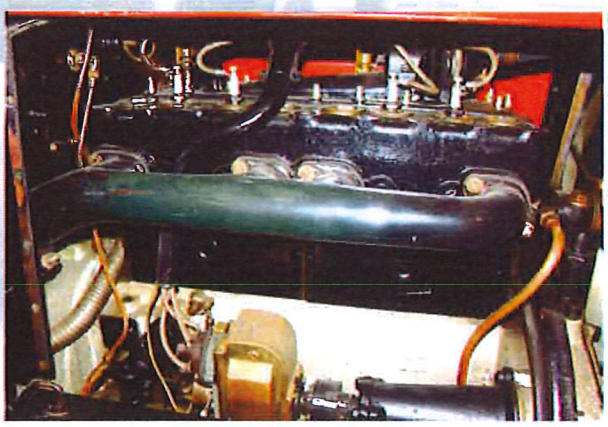
The nearly-complete Packard (still missing horn, pin stripe, and signage.)

 The restored Packard fully complete.

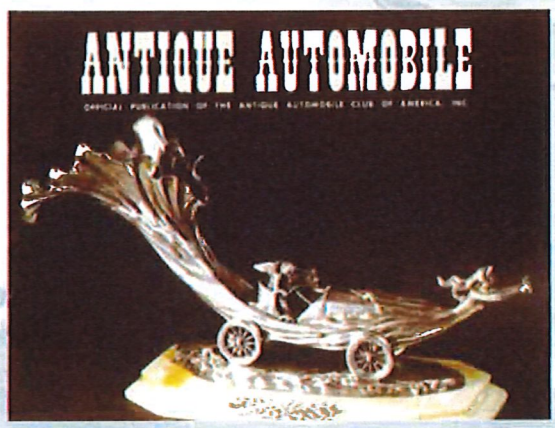
BEFORE: ***AFTER:***

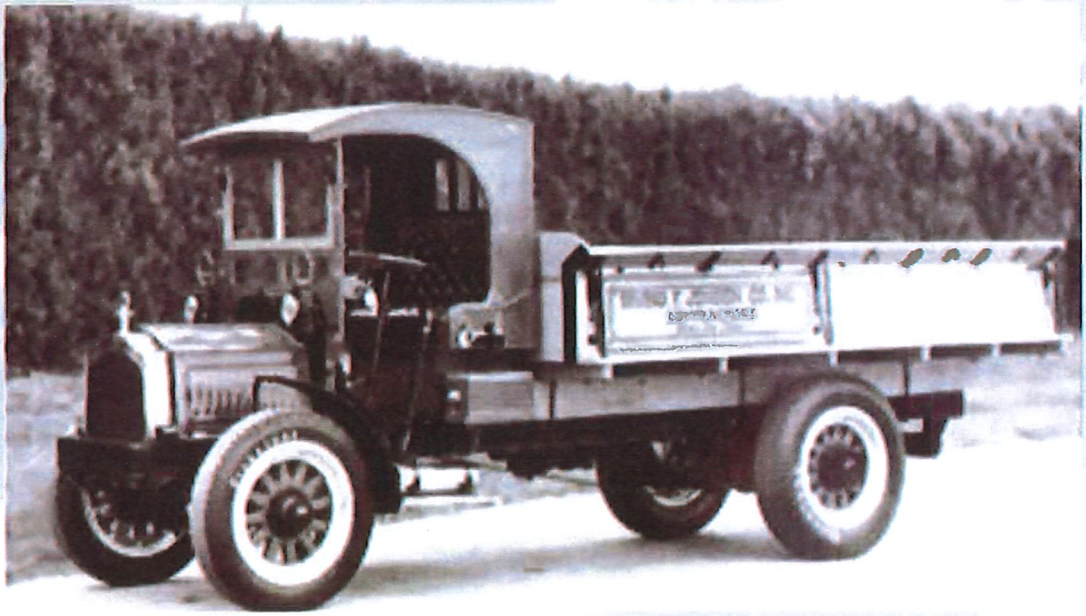




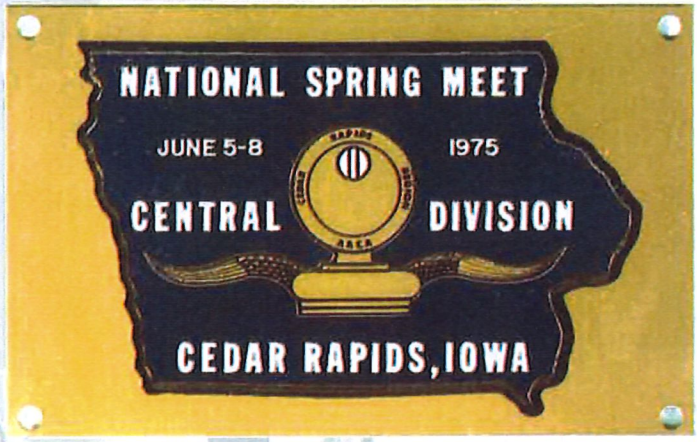


The Packard's show debut was in Hershey, Pennsylvania at the Fall Meet (Eastern Division) of the Antique Automobile Club of America in 1971 where it won **Second Place – Junior**.





In June of 1975, the Packard won **First Place – Junior** at the Antique Automobile Club Central Division National Spring Meet in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The First Place award qualified the truck as a "senior" vehicle.



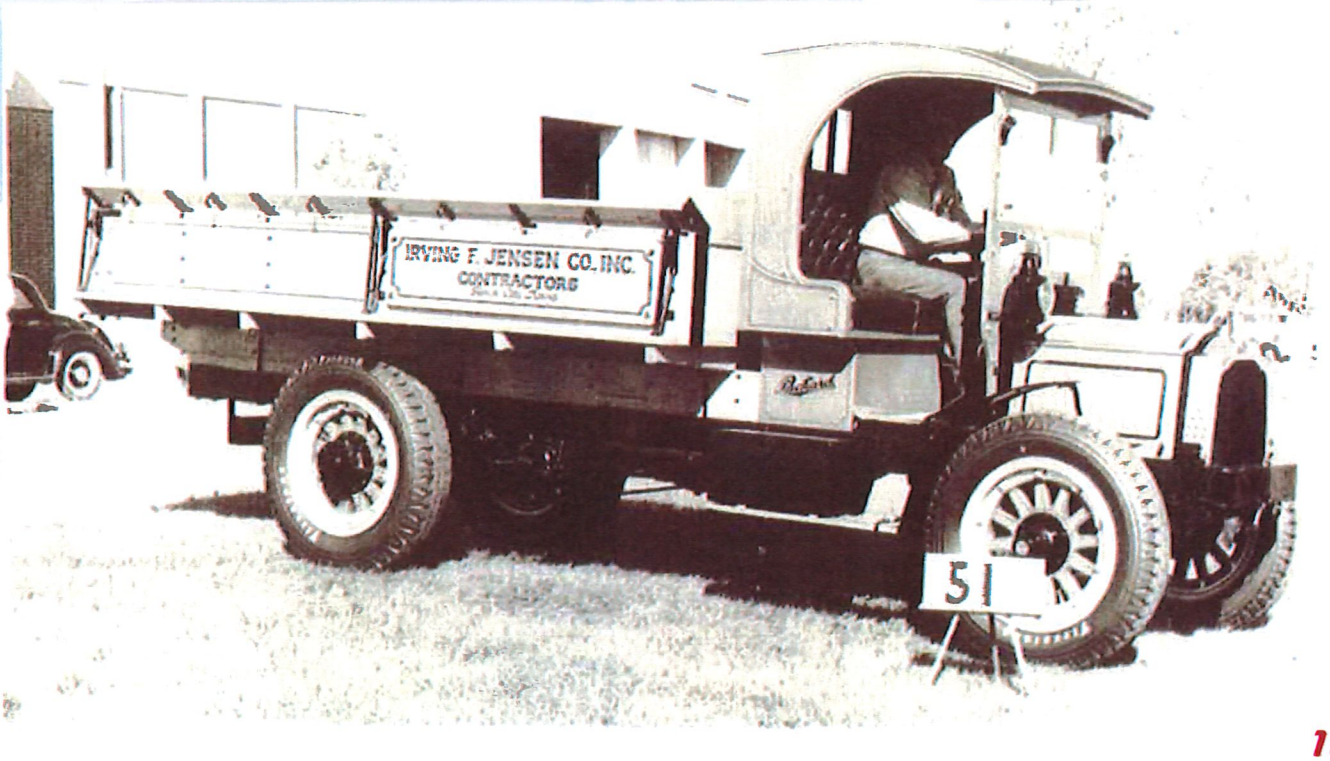
CENTRAL

National Spring Meet

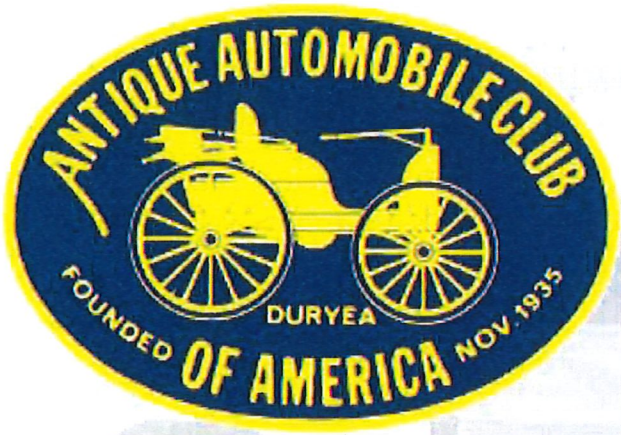
Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 5-8, 1975

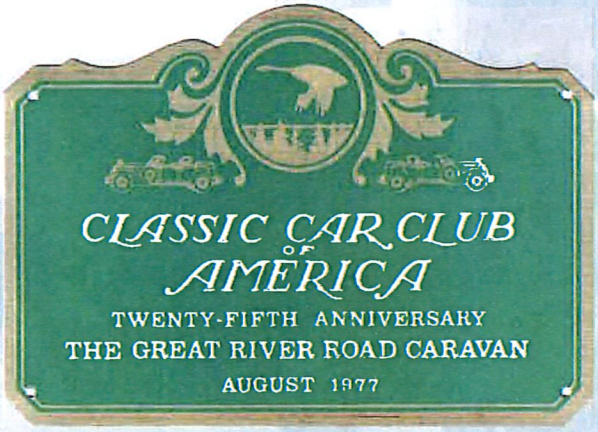
Central Division National Spring Meet
WINNERS

CLASS 22-B
FIRST JUNIOR
1919 Packard Truck . . . . . Irving F. Jensen, Jr., Sioux City, IA



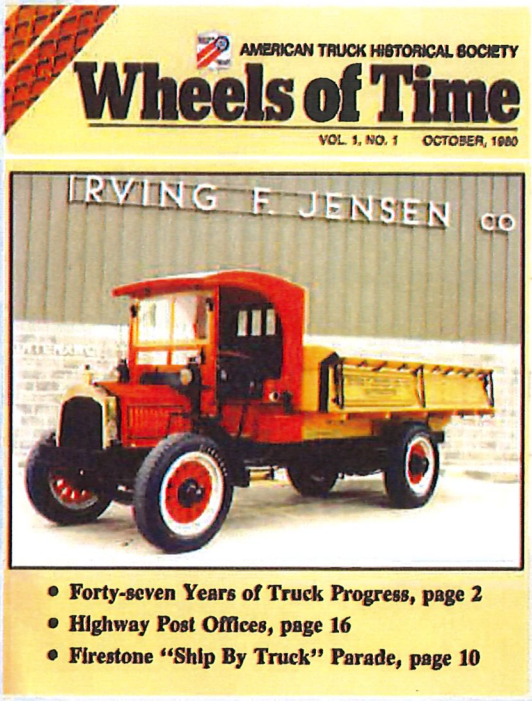
And Finally, the Packard won **First Place – Senior** in June 1976 at the Antique Automobile Club Central Division National Spring Meet in Topeka, Kansas. This was the last time the truck was shown competitively.

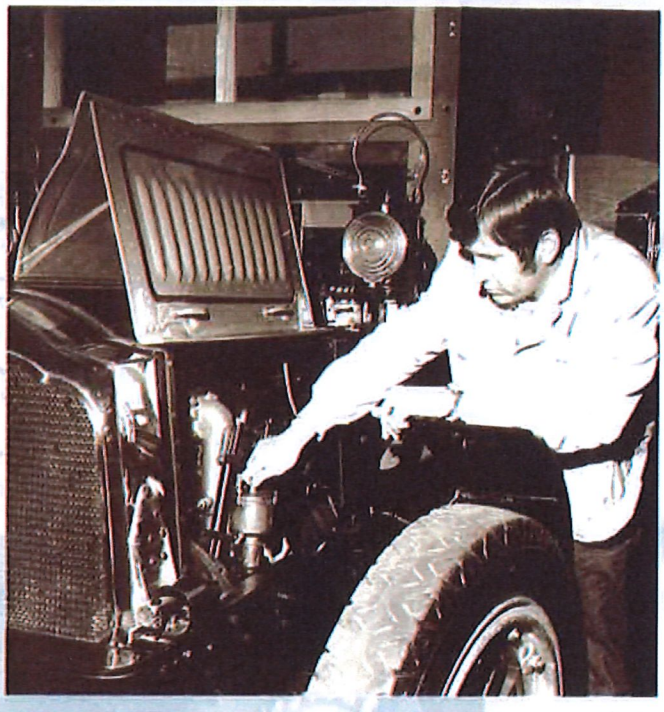




AACA National Spring Meet – Topeka, Kansas
June 1976
CLASS 22-B
FIRST PLACE - SENIOR
1919 Packard Irving F. Jensen, Jr., Sioux City, Iowa

Another honor bestowed on our Packard truck came from the American Truck Historical Society who selected it for the cover of the first issue of *Wheels of Time* in 1980. *Wheels of Time* is the society's bimonthly magazine.





In 1980, the Packard appeared on the cover of the premier issue of ***Wheels of Time****, the monthly magazine published by the American Truck Historical Society.*