

## “The 3 *Evangelines*” by Rob Patterson

### Evangeline #3

Around 2002, when I had nearly finished the restoration of our '21 Model T Ford Tourer, a friend, Terry Lloyd, had almost finished a Model T Ford Speedster that he was building from scratch. Terry was a little closer to being finished than I was and understandably keen to finish the job. But he needed some hard to get parts and rather than waiting for them to arrive from the USA, I loaned them to him so he could get his car on the road ASAP. I helped him with the build of his Speedster, consequently fell for the car and I then decided that should I ever go down the road of restoring or building another old car, it'd be Ford T Speedster.

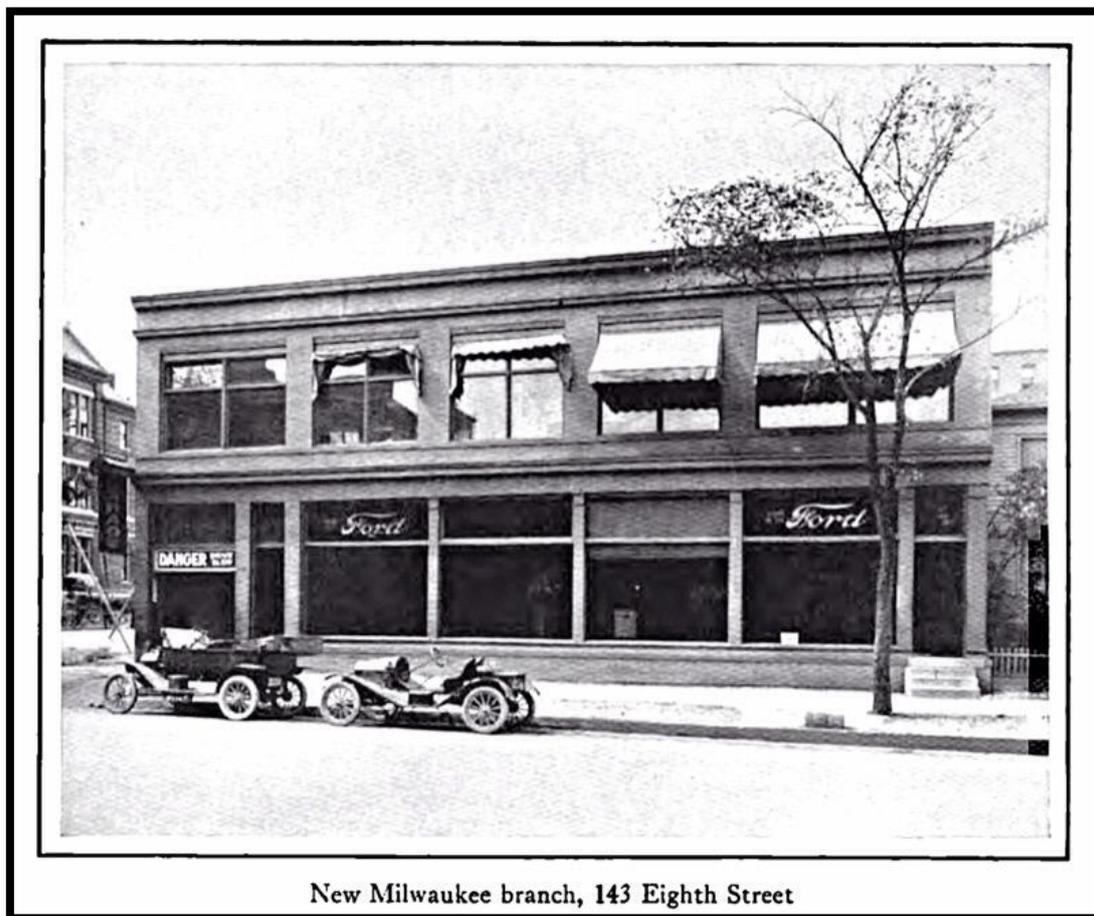
Because they are a far superior carburettor to the standard “Holley NH”, in 2010, I bought a solid brass “Stromberg OF” carb with the intention of fitting it to our '21 Model T Ford. I sent it to a vintage Stromberg specialist in Montana to be rebuilt, but by the time it came back, I'd decided not to install it on our otherwise mechanically standard T, because it would compromise that status.

Somewhere around that time, Dean Price and I were sitting on his verandah having a cuppa. I'd taken the carb over to show him just how nicely made it is, and we agreed that it should be on a mantelpiece, rather than stored in a box in a shed. Dean asked me what I was going to do with it and not really knowing what, I jokingly said I suppose I could build a Speedster around it.

The sportiest Model T's Henry Ford built were Runabout's and for just one year, in 1911, Torpedo's. The Ford Motor Company never did build "*Speedsters*". Speedsters were worked over Model T's. Worked over in the late teens and through the 20's & 30's, mostly by younger guys who wanted some excitement, but couldn't afford to purchase a real sporting car like a Mercer, Cord, Stutz, Auburn or Duesy. Not many could then....even fewer can today. But, Ford built more than 15 million Model T's, so they were plentiful and they were cheap. Many were souped up and many converted into speedsters in many different styles. Some with specialist streamlined bodies, some with absolutely no bodies, just the bare essentials bolted to the top of the chassis and it's the latter that interested me.



A Speedster had been on my mind for many years and in 2012 Sandy and I agreed that we should turn it into reality by starting to build it, a brass era, open bodied speedster. It was about then that I started dragging parts home for the build. I managed to track down a veteran chassis out at Forbes and because I wanted a starter and generator on the car, a later, 1918-24 Model T donor engine for parts. Just about everything else, new or used, is available over the counter, from Model T parts vendors in the USofA. Thanks to my restoration of "Anastasia" several years ago, I already had a network of T related folk all over the world and I had a pretty good idea of where to look for what parts. The only thing that would slow down the project was going to be the lack of \$'s. (& it did).



New Milwaukee branch, 143 Eighth Street

*This photo was first published in the Ford Times of October 1914 and clearly shows a Speedster, indicating that building Speedsters from "bits n pieces" and souping up Model T's dates back quite some time.*

Now finished, everything on the car is either a genuine Model T Ford part, Model T accessory, Model T Speed equipment, or reproductions of those parts.

The oldest part, the hood, dates to 1911, and the front spring dates to 1912. The newest, the wheels, 1928. I had difficulty finding some parts, but eventually dug them up, or alternatives to what I had in mind initially. For example, I would have liked to have had an OHV conversion head for the car. But "Rajo" and "Frontenac" equipment was cost prohibitive, so I opted for a worked over "Waukesha Ricardo" side valve head instead, which came from a farmer in Mississippi. I'm pleased I did so, for money & reliability reasons.

The end result is a **"1915 Model T Ford Laurel Underslung Speedster"**.

The "Laurel" bit comes from one of the Model T racers of the era, Laurel Motors, which made and used the lowering brackets that "under-slings" the chassis from the springs. As a result, the centre of the crankshaft is exactly 6 inches closer to the ground than a stock Model T.

The engine has been worked over and now develops an estimated 40+ HP, (more than double stock).

The firewall is 2 inches rearwards of stock, the "Torpedo" hood is 2 inches longer than a standard brass era T and the steering column is also raked down and 2 inches towards the rear.

Every single one of these modifications is exactly the same as modifications common to Model T's in the teens and the 20's. What Sandy and I have ended up with is about 90% true to the vision I had held in my mind for all those years. The other 10% are improvements on that vision.



*A poor man's "Mercer Raceabout" and at this stage still in need of floorboard rubber and a rear view mirror.*

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## **Evangeline #1**

So you can see that because the Ford Motor Company never did make Speedsters and because she's made up from bits n pieces, this Speedster is something of an illegitimate Ford. It's that illegitimacy that has prompted me to name her, "Evangeline".

Apart from it being a nice, old fashioned, ladies name that appealed to Sandy and I, the Speedster is named after **Evangeline Cote Dahlinger** .....

The Ford family historian considered Evangeline to be one of the ten most influential persons to the Fords and to this day the Ford family deny a lot of what follows.

Evangeline Cote was born of French-Canadian parentage. Her family had theatrical connections and she was a cousin to the famous actor, Tyrone Power.

In 1910, aged 17, Evangeline was originally employed at the Ford Motor Company's Piquette Ave Plant as a stenographer. Darkly attractive, self-confident and known to carry a handgun in her purse, (first rate target shooter) she soon rose to head that department and become Henry Ford's personal secretary.

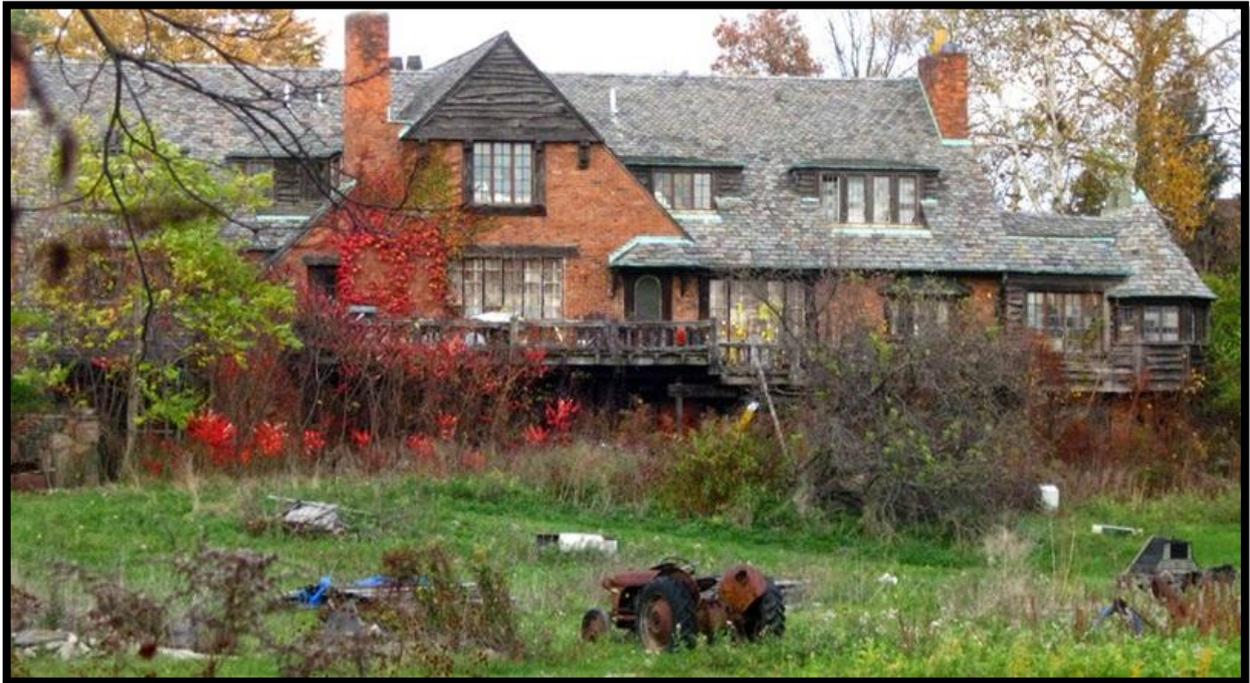
She handled personal correspondence for Clara, Mrs Ford, AND attracted the attention of the automobile manufacturing magnate, whose mistress she became.



*Evangeline and Henry had a love child, named John Cote Dahlinger (b 1923), The staff at the Dearborn Hospital Maternity Ward were shocked when Mr. Ford, the richest man in town and something of a celebrity, strolled in to be with Evangeline at the birth. John Dahlinger later wrote a book about his father and ran a nightclub in Detroit up until the time of his death in the '70's.*

Evangeline was married to Henry's chauffeur, first-rate mechanic, and Ford's racing driver, Raymond Dahlinger. It was a marriage that Henry himself arranged and it's suggested that Henry even proposed to Evangeline for Ray.

Lavish gifts to Evangeline over their 35-year affair included (but not limited to) a vacation home on Lake Huron, a Curtiss Seagull flying boat (Evangeline was the first female to carry a pilot's license in the state of Michigan.) and a 150-acre parcel of land on Williamsburg Rd, Dearborn, with a 38-room mansion, on the River Rouge, just 2 kms upstream from the Fords Fair-Lane estate. Including secret passageways to her personal bedroom.



*Often referred to as the "River Oaks Mystery House", Evangelines mansion still stands.*

It's said that Henry would sometimes disguise himself in workmens clothes and, keeping his hat down low, ride his pushbike to visit Evangeline. It was also easy for him to quietly drive his electric boat the short distance up the river to her mansion, which still stands, although in ruins.

Evangeline remained beside Mr. Ford until his death, when the family forced her to officially retire from the company.

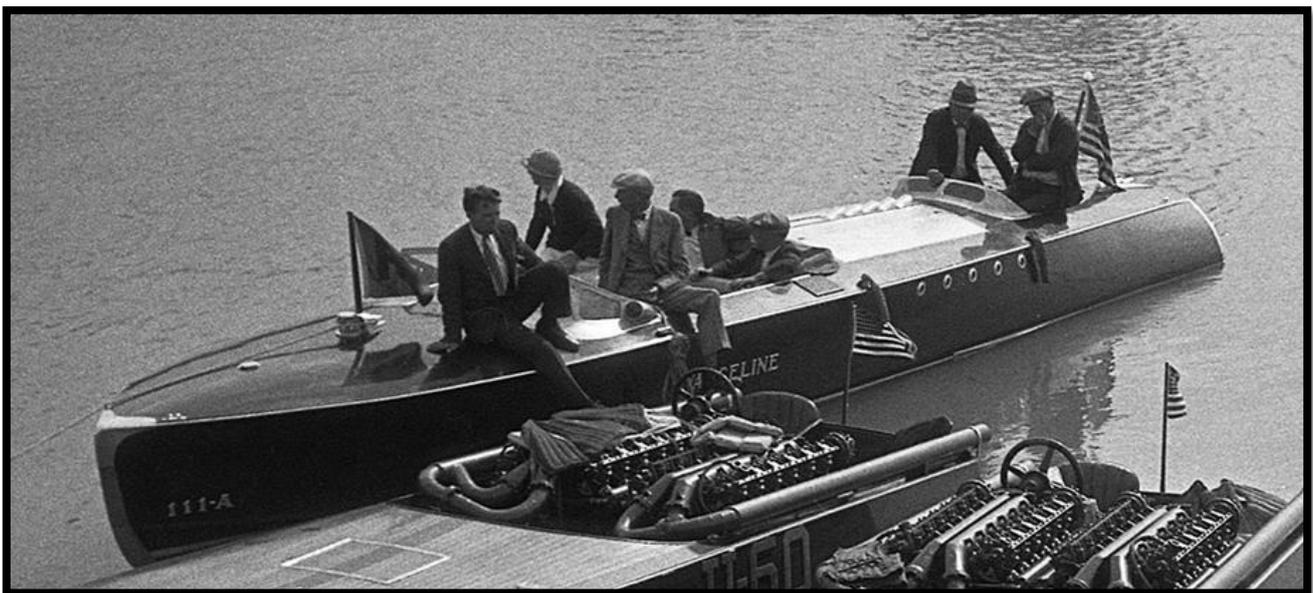
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## **Evangeline #2**

Another gift Mr. Ford gave to Evangeline was his lovely Hacker powerboat, which was rather blatantly named, "Evangeline". Following the Fords disastrous 1924 Gold Cup race, Henry decided to gift his custom 33' Hacker runabout to his long-time mistress.



*This September 1926 photo was taken at the Harmsworth Race on the Detroit River. In the foreground are Gar Wood's Miss America's III, IV, and V. On the right is the Excelsior-France challenger. On the left is the Evangeline, with Ray Dahlinger on the deck, Henry Ford behind the wheel in the light suit with his foot partially covering the name EVANGELINE on the side, and Evangeline Dahlinger over his right shoulder. Also in this photo, far left, is Horace Dodge.*





*Now fully restored, The Evangeline is seen here on Lake Tahoe CA. She was originally, and still is, powered by a (Ford built) 1,650 cubic inch (27 litre) Capital Liberty V12 aircraft engine. Gorgeous.*

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There is a long list of people from several countries, who have been involved with this project. However, I would like to pay thanks to the local folk listed here who have been a great help in bringing this project to completion.

**Steve Shields, “Moruya Farm Machinery Service”**

Patient friend, motivator, lateral thinker extraordinaire and always available mechanical magician who had a BIG hand in just about everything. I'd be at least 2 years behind schedule if it wasn't for Steve's skills.

**Dave Nettle, “Moruya Tilt & Tow”**

Thoroughly professional vehicle relocater, good friend & very tolerant workshop space provider.

**Brett "Benny" Hill, “Moruya Engineering”**

Wheel modifications, front & rear axle straightening and machining & driveshaft machining.

**Neil Hammond**, Batemans Bay NSW. Adaptable & talented signwriter.

**Bob Simpson**, Moruya NSW. Visionary & generous core engine & gearbox donor.

This is the culmination of a 17 year long dream for me and nearly 8 years of expensive (due to poor exchange rates and extortionate shipping costs) labour for Sandy and I.

Knowing what I know now, would I do it again? “NO”. But I intend to enjoy and absorb the pleasure of maintaining & driving Evangeline for as long as I'm able.



*Our Canadian built T Tourer "Anastasia" & our Moruya built T Speedster "Evangeline"*