

Sullivan Trail A's

A New Model A Chapter Motoring Along Old Trails

By Jim Morris, Ithaca, New York



Early in 2008 the idea of forming a new Model A Ford Club popped into the winter-weary heads of a few Model A owners who live in the southern Finger Lakes Region of New York. We knew that there were very likely a hundred Model A's within a 30-40 mile radius of our A's, yet there was no identified community to which these "A" enthusiasts belonged that provided all of us with fellowship and camaraderie around our enjoyment of Henry's Lady.

Over coffee and yummy donuts we discussed how to reach out to our neighbors in New York and Pennsylvania to inspire interest in forming a Model A Ford club. We had a list of car owners and their addresses, a list compiled over the years by one in our group who has an endearing obsessive-compulsive side, so we set out to contact these folks to invite them to participate in forming a new "A" club. We didn't know what to expect, but we had high hopes.

Letters were mailed to nearly 100 people inviting them to an organizational meeting in April; we eagerly waited to see how many would appear. Nearly one third of those canvassed arrived for that first meeting. We were ecstatic! More meetings were held as spring went by and summer arrived and our core group of nearly thirty enthusiastic car owners gradually became friends over talk of garage visits, tours, picnics, monthly meetings, and finally ... a club name. A club name is a big deal. It provides visibility, gives identity, and enhances group cohesiveness. Fortunately, one of our members knew about a Revolutionary War figure, General John Sullivan, who just might help us with a club name. When his name came up we knew we had something.

Here was the missing piece that would unify two states and dozens of counties and villages that we hail from. General John Sullivan's exploits of over 200 years ago had relevance to our old motorcars. Who was this fellow and what meaning does he give to our Club?

In the summer of 1779, General John Sullivan and 3,600 troops marched northward from Easton, Pennsylvania along the Susquehanna River Valley into the Finger Lakes Region of New York. Following orders from General George Washington, Sullivan's forces would meet with the troops of two other colonial armies, General James Clinton's force of 1,600 men that moved from Albany, New York, along the Mohawk River westward, and Colonel Daniel Broadhead who came northeast with 800 troops from Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh). This campaign, known as the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition, was designed to stop raids on unprotected settlements by the "Tories," colonists who sided with Great Britain during the Revolutionary War, and four of the six Indian Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy who also aligned with the British. Sullivan marched up the Susquehanna; Native Americans who watched Sullivan's army from hilltop safety compared the long blue line of soldiers to a long blue snake slithering through the valley.

The short story is that on the one hand the campaign was successful because the Tories and their counterparts were routed in the Battle of Newtown along the Chemung River southeast of Elmira, New York, but on the other hand it was inglorious because the armies destroyed many Indian villages and crops, causing many Indians to suffer especially during the ensuing



We had 17 Model A's and 40 enthusiasts. It was most likely the largest gathering of Model A's in the area in years. The weather was great and the facility was decorated with Model A era automobilia and was as neat as a pin. We had a burger buffet with fixings from beans to brownies. The adjoining barn made the perfect photo backdrop for us.



Sullivan Trail A's and our first Club event at member Jeff Barber's State Line Auto Auction facility in Waverly, New York, on July 26, 2008. Coincidentally, it was International Model A Day!
Wonderful facility, gracious and generous host, friendship, and good cheer.

winter. After the war some members of Congress criticized Sullivan's unimilitary vandalism, but because General Washington's orders were to cut off settlements, destroy crops, and do other mischief, Sullivan felt like a victorious patriot and silently sniffed at the criticism.

Today, Sullivan's campaign is referred to as the "Sullivan Trail" or "Sullivan's March." There are many historic markers along highways in Pennsylvania and New York that follow and cross Sullivan's trail, signs that tell modern-day travelers about this significant early American patriot, the Revolutionary War, and our Native American history.

Sullivan Trail A's is proud to drive and enjoy our treasured motorcars on these historic trails. We not only celebrate the history of the Model A Ford as each mile runs under our tires, but we also celebrate, and are sobered by, a critical slice of American history as we motor past historic markers, rivers, and battlegrounds that reflect the tears and triumphs of events in 1779. Indeed, we are the Sullivan Trail A's – the Model A Ford Club of the northern tier of Pennsylvania and the southern Finger Lakes Region of New York.