

CRUISING THE

Hudson River Valley

IN 1920s STYLE

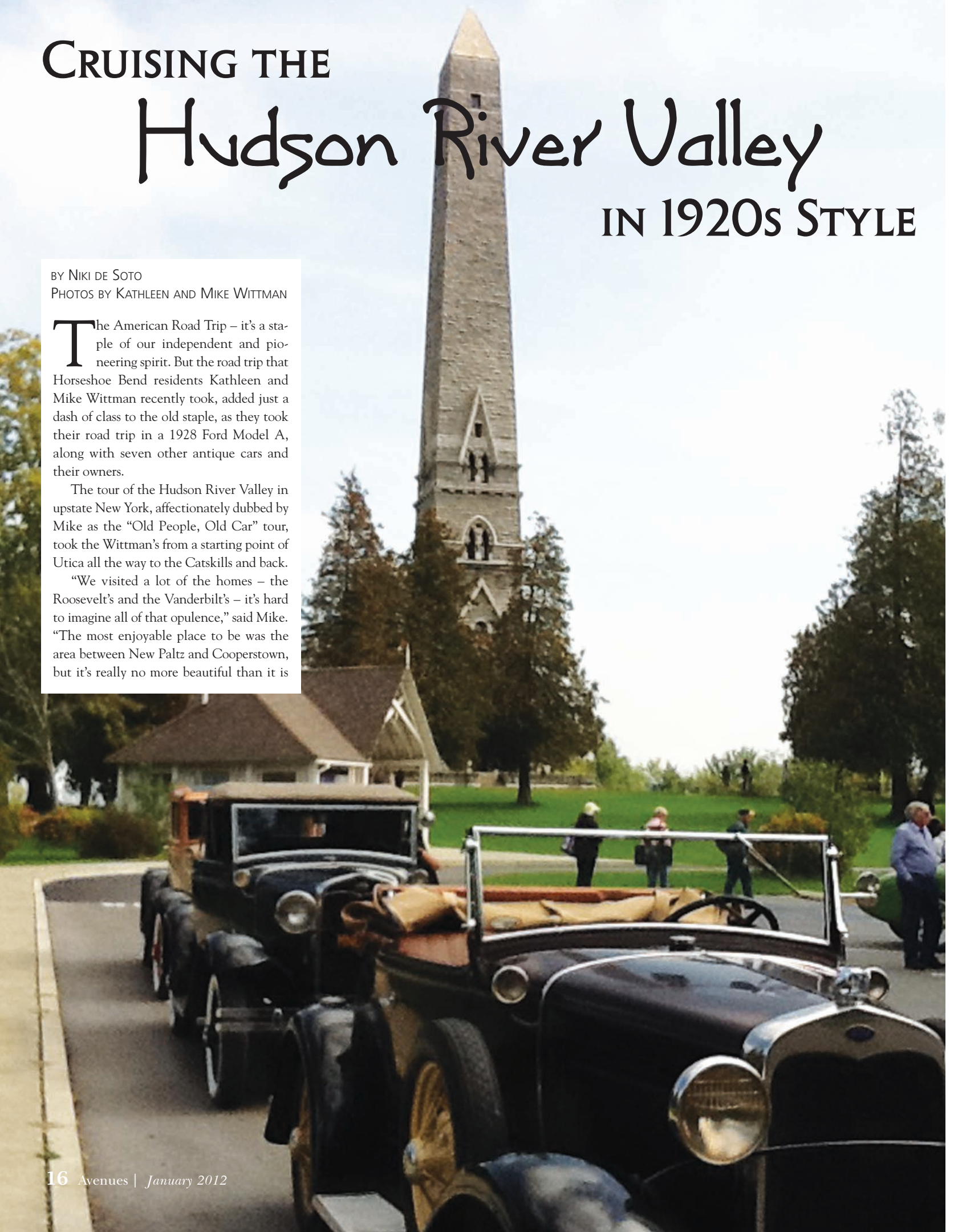
BY NIKI DE SOTO

PHOTOS BY KATHLEEN AND MIKE WITTMAN

The American Road Trip – it’s a staple of our independent and pioneering spirit. But the road trip that Horseshoe Bend residents Kathleen and Mike Wittman recently took, added just a dash of class to the old staple, as they took their road trip in a 1928 Ford Model A, along with seven other antique cars and their owners.

The tour of the Hudson River Valley in upstate New York, affectionately dubbed by Mike as the “Old People, Old Car” tour, took the Wittman’s from a starting point of Utica all the way to the Catskills and back.

“We visited a lot of the homes – the Roosevelt’s and the Vanderbilt’s – it’s hard to imagine all of that opulence,” said Mike. “The most enjoyable place to be was the area between New Paltz and Cooperstown, but it’s really no more beautiful than it is



here.”

For their entire trip, people were drawn to the unique assemblage of automobiles.

“When eight of these cars come rumbling into a small village, it sure draws people out,” said Mike.

Most of the time, as the drivers went to visit various historical venues, such as the Battlefield at Saratoga Springs or the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, upon returning to their vehicles they would usually find people checking out the cars and reminiscing about the dawn of the automobile era.

“Everywhere we went, people stopped,” said Kathleen. “It was amazing to see the interest. They would share their memories with us. A lot of folks would say things like, ‘I had one of those when I was 20 years old.’ Mike asked one man if he had a car like ours when he was a kid and he said no, but his dad did.”

On the facing page, the cars and their drivers made a stop at historic Sarasota Springs, to view the Revolutionary War Battlefield. Below, Mike and Kathleen pose with their Model A, and below right, Mike is parked at the shipyard in Rockport, Maine.



The initial gathering of all eight antique cars in Utica, New York. Although the other owners shipped their vehicles to Utica, Mike and Kathleen drove their car from Arkansas. After the tour was over, Mike and Kathleen continued on their own to Maine.

Road trips are known for many things, including the occasional bit of car trouble. But when you’re driving a car that’s over 80 years old, car trouble can be a bit of a bother to fix.

“The most unique repair that had to be made was to the Model A convertible, the Cabriolet,” said Mike. “All at once, they pulled off the road and stopped. Something had failed in the car and we started to talk about what to do. Now, there’s an organization available where other owners of antique cars who tour make themselves known, so if you have trouble on the road, you can reach out and find someone locally. In our area, I’m available to help, should someone have car trouble. So, we started making calls and just then, a man came along in a pick-up. He said he stopped to see if there was an auto show he was missing. He was 86 years old, and also was an antique car enthusiast. Would you believe he had a Model A drive shaft that he said we could have? In four hours, several of the guys, working together, changed out the drive shaft and we were on our way again.”

Kathleen felt that the people they met, just like the 86 year old car enthusiast, were the real attraction of the road trip.

“One of the most fun things about the trip, is that local people would tell us where to go for lunch and for dinner,” said Kathleen. “They told us all the inside, wonderful places to go and things to do. It really made the trip special.”



Major highways, such as I-87 (New York State Thruway), I-90, I-84, and the Palisades and Taconic State Parkways, provide access to and through the region from New York City and the bordering states. U.S. 9, 90, and 94C, the primary travel routes in the valley, connect with a network of country roads leading to places of interest.

A few of the valley's heritage sites are described at right from north to south. For more information, use this toll-free telephone number or visit this web site: 888-576-4784 www.hudsonvalleyheritagearea.com



A map of the Hudson River Valley. The cars made a stop at the Saratoga Automobile Museum, housed in an old bottling plant. Another stop was at Cooperstown and the Baseball Hall of Fame. The tour took them to the well-known town of Sleepy Hollow, made famous by author Washington Irving. Below, Mike looks out over the Atlantic Ocean, having made their way to the Maine coast.





Above left, the Model A sits parked outside of Hyde Park Station, where then President Franklin D. Roosevelt greeted Britain's King George VI on his trip to the states in June of 1939.

Top right is one of Mike's current restoration projects, the fiberglass Special created by Dick Jones and featured in a 1955 edition of Road and Track magazine.

Along with his love of cars, Mike also dabbles in model airplanes and pretty much anything that has an engine.

To the left, the cars line Philadelphia Street in Saratoga Springs.