

# Analysis of "Jeannette My Love" Research Paper

## Executive Summary

This is an impressive piece of historical detective work tracing the history of the Jeannette palatial railroad car (later renamed "Boston"). The research reveals a fascinating story of innovation, financial troubles, and the challenges of bringing a revolutionary railroad car design to market during the turbulent economic period of the 1890s.

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## MAJOR CHRONOLOGICAL DISCREPANCIES

### 1. Construction Timeline Confusion

**The Problem:** The paper presents conflicting evidence about when the car was actually built and entered service:

- **1889:** Company chartered, patents filed
- **1890:** Article states "started out on its first trip from Springfield Mass on the 15th instant" (suggesting completion)
- **1890:** Another source says car is "approaching completion"
- **1894-1896:** Your appendix suggests actual completion in this timeframe
- **1899:** The Strand Magazine article says the car was "built eleven years ago" (which would place construction in ~1888-1889)
- **1890:** The Railway Review describes it starting its first trip

**Analysis:** This is your biggest discrepancy. The evidence suggests:

- The **design and model** were created in the mid-to-late 1880s
- **Promotional activities** began in 1889-1890 (possibly with the model)
- **Actual construction** was delayed by the Panic of 1893
- **Final completion** likely occurred in the mid-1890s

**Critical Question:** Was the "first trip" in 1890 actually with a prototype or the scale model for promotional purposes? This would explain the link-and-pin couplers on what appears to be a later photograph.

### 2. The D.J. Flanders Invitation Mystery

**The Evidence:**

- Invitation dated October 15, 1890 to "Take a Trip on Our Private Car Jeanette"

- Railway Review article says the car started its first trip on "the 15th instant" in 1890

### **The Problem:**

- If the car wasn't actually built until mid-1890s, what was Flanders showing people?
- Was this a promotional tour with the 3/4" scale model?

**Your Theory (which I support):** Flanders was likely a traveling sales agent touring with the detailed model to attract investors and customers. This makes perfect sense given:

- The model's incredible detail (described in "A Novelty on Wheels")
- The company's desperate need for capital
- Common business practices of the era

### **3. Company Reorganization Timeline**

The paper shows multiple reorganizations but doesn't clearly establish:

- When did Harris Palatial Car Co. (Portland, ME - 1889) become Harris Palatial Car Co. (New Jersey - 1903)?
- What happened to the original Maine corporation?
- How many times was the company reorganized?

### **Evidence of reorganizations:**

- 1889: Portland, ME incorporation
- 1891: Annual meeting with officers
- 1892: New officers elected
- 1903: New Jersey incorporation mentioned
- 1907: Merger with Buckley Car Co.
- 1909: Charter voided for non-payment of taxes (New Jersey entity)

**The Confusion:** These appear to be different entities or the same entity reincorporated multiple times during financial troubles.

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## **KEY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**

### **Technical Questions:**

1. **What happened to the original drawings/blueprints?**

- The Canadian patent exists but doesn't include detailed drawings
- No US patent filing is mentioned - why file in Canada but not the US?

## 2. **Why link-and-pin couplers in the photograph?**

- You address this in the appendix
- If completed in mid-1890s, automatic couplers should have been standard
- Suggests either: (a) earlier completion than documented, or (b) use of pre-purchased hardware from before the 1893 panic

## 3. **What were the actual dimensions?**

- "Sills are 66 feet long and it measures 72 feet over its hoods"
- This is mentioned but not clearly diagrammed
- The 3/4" scale model dimensions are given but need conversion

## 4. **Paper wheels - which Allen patent was used?**

- Richard N. Allen had multiple paper wheel patents
- Which specific design was on the Jeannette?
- When were they manufactured (pre-1893)?

## **Business/Financial Questions:**

### 1. **What was the actual sequence of ownership?**

- Harris Palatial Car Co. → ? → American Palace Car Co.
- Sale price: \$10,000 (huge loss from \$100,000 investment)
- Who were the buyers who formed American Palace Car Co.?

### 2. **What became of Louis J. Harris?**

- Inventor and driving force
- Appears in records through 1907
- 1892 lawsuit for mismanagement
- What happened after 1909?

### 3. **The Wason Manufacturing Company's role**

- They built the car
- Car was sent there for repairs in January 1899
- They held it for \$1,300 in unpaid repairs
- Did they eventually sell it? Scrap it?

## The Allan Dudley Story:

### 4. What ultimately happened to Dudley and the car?

- The Strand Magazine (February 1901) leaves the story hanging
- Dudley hadn't been paid in 2 years
- He was owed back wages
- The car was trapped in legal limbo
- Did he ever get paid?
- Was the car eventually sold, scrapped, or does it still exist?

### 5. The "Denham" attribution in The Strand Magazine

- Article says the car was "invented by a Bostonian, named Denham"
  - But all other sources say Louis J. Harris was the inventor
  - Is "Denham" a mistake, or was there another person involved?
  - Could this be a misremembering or confusion by the reporter?
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## FACTUAL CONTRADICTIONS

### 1. Inventor's Name

- **Most sources:** Louis J. Harris (or "Louie J. Harris") with Arthur W. Crossley
- **The Strand Magazine (1901):** "invented by a Bostonian, named Denham"

**Analysis:** The Strand Magazine article appears to be in error. All contemporary sources (1889-1892) consistently name Harris as inventor. This may have been:

- A reporter's error
- Confusion with another person associated with the project
- Intentional obfuscation during legal troubles

### 2. Cost/Value Discrepancies

- Original investment: \$100,000 total
- Sale price (forced): \$10,000
- Rebuilding by new owners: \$40,000
- Valued at: \$60,000
- Outstanding repairs: \$1,300

### **The Math Doesn't Add Up:**

- $\$10,000 + \$40,000 = \$50,000$  total investment by second company
- Article values car at \$60,000
- But original company spent \$100,000 and sold for \$10,000

**Possible Explanation:** The \$100,000 included:

- Patent costs
- Multiple prototype costs
- Promotional expenses
- Legal fees
- Failed business expenses

### **3. Sleeping Capacity**

- Some sources: "24 persons"
- Other sources: "40 persons" (20 berths  $\times$  2)

**Resolution:** The confusion likely stems from:

- 20 berths total (10 per side)
  - Each berth could sleep 2 people (upper and lower)
  - Total theoretical capacity: 40
  - Comfortable capacity with luggage: 24
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## **RESEARCH STRENGTHS**

Your paper excels in several areas:

1. **Comprehensive source documentation** - You've found an impressive array of period sources
  2. **Technical understanding** - The paper wheels explanation shows deep knowledge
  3. **Context awareness** - You correctly identify the Panic of 1893 as crucial
  4. **Critical thinking** - Your appendix shows excellent analytical reasoning
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## **SUGGESTED RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

## **To Resolve the Timeline:**

1. **Search for photographic evidence** with dates
  - The 1974 NMRA Bulletin cover photo needs to be dated
  - Look for photos in railroad historical societies
  - Check Wason Manufacturing Company records (if they survive)
2. **Corporate records:**
  - Maine Secretary of State - charter records
  - New Jersey Secretary of State - 1903 incorporation
  - Bankruptcy/dissolution filings
3. **Newspaper archives** for:
  - Springfield, Massachusetts (where Wason was located)
  - Portland, Maine
  - Boston
  - Search dates: 1889-1901
4. **The 3/4" scale model:**
  - Does it still exist?
  - The "Novelty on Wheels" article says it was in the Boston Herald office
  - Where did it go?

## **To Find Technical Details:**

1. **Wason Manufacturing Company records:**
  - Some might be in the Connecticut Valley Historical Society
  - Builder's photos often survive in collections
2. **Patent office research:**
  - Why no US patent if there was a Canadian patent?
  - Were there related patents by Harris?
  - Arthur W. Crossley's role - did he have separate patents?
3. **Railroad museum collections:**
  - Someone may have salvaged components
  - Hardware, fixtures, or photos might survive

## **To Understand the Business Failure:**

### **1. Court records:**

- 1892 lawsuit for mismanagement
- 1899+ creditor attachments
- These would detail exactly what went wrong

### **2. Pullman Company records:**

- Did they see Harris as a competitor?
  - Did they interfere?
  - Their dominance may explain market resistance
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## **MODELING IMPLICATIONS**

For your O Scale model, you have several challenges:

### **Known Dimensions:**

- Length: 66' (sills) to 72' (over vestibules)
- The 3/4" scale model was 49" long, which at 3/4":1' = 49" ÷ 0.75 = 65.3 feet

### **Unknown Critical Details:**

- Exact truck wheelbase
- Precise interior layout (though the "Novelty on Wheels" article helps)
- Window spacing and sizes
- Roof ventilator arrangement
- Exact platform/vestibule details

### **Best Source for Modeling:**

The "Novelty on Wheels" description of the model is incredibly valuable:

- Kitchen with range, refrigerator, sink, serving table
- Pantry, gentlemen's dressing room, heater closet, porter's room
- Observation room with revolving chairs and sofa
- Private state room with wardrobe, wash bowl
- Ladies' dressing room and wine closets

- Center drawing room: 24" long × 6.5" wide (in model) = 32' × 8.67' actual
  - Estey upright piano
  - 10 floor sections (5 per side) with berths underneath
  - 33 mirrors throughout
  - Multiple wood types: mahogany, oak, amaranth, white paint
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## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **Why This Car Failed (Despite Innovation):**

#### **1. Timing was terrible:**

- Launched just before the Panic of 1893
- Competing with established Pullman monopoly
- Market for luxury private cars collapsed in depression

#### **2. Patent litigation:**

- The Strand article mentions "pending patent litigation"
- This scared away railroad companies
- Pullman may have challenged the patents

#### **3. Overcapitalization:**

- \$100,000 was enormous for one experimental car
- Company had no other revenue streams
- No fallback products

#### **4. Market resistance:**

- Railroads were conservative
  - Pullman had exclusive contracts with many lines
  - Maintenance concerns with unique mechanism
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## **CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SOURCES**

### **Most Reliable:**

- Contemporary trade journals (Railroad Gazette, Railway Review)
- Corporate filings



- Patent documents

### **Questionable:**

- The Strand Magazine article (1901)
  - Gets inventor name wrong ("Denham")
  - Some details may be dramatized for effect
  - BUT: Provides unique details about the car's later life
  - AND: The Dudley story appears genuine

### **Missing:**

- First-hand accounts from Harris
  - Engineering drawings
  - Photographs of the interior
  - Passenger accounts from actual use
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## **MY OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

This is excellent detective work, but the chronology needs clarification. Here's what I believe happened:

### **Timeline (Revised):**

**1885-1888:** Harris develops concept, creates detailed model  
**1889:** Company incorporated (Portland, ME), patents filed, investors sought  
**1889-1890:** Promotional campaign with model (Flanders invitation)  
**1890:** Construction begins at Wason, may have been partially completed  
**1893:** Panic hits, construction stalls, subcontractors fail  
**1894-1896:** Construction finally completed using pre-purchased hardware  
**1896-1898:** Car tours promoting the concept  
**1899:** Financial troubles culminate, car sent to Wason for repairs and trapped  
**1899-1901:** Dudley living on the abandoned car  
**1901:** Strand Magazine publishes story  
**1903:** Attempt at reorganization in New Jersey  
**1907:** Merger with Buckley Car Co.  
**1909:** New Jersey charter voided

### **The Fundamental Problem:**

The car was **financially doomed from the start:**

- One-of-a-kind meant no economies of scale
- Couldn't compete with Pullman's established network
- Too expensive to operate profitably
- Panic of 1893 killed the luxury travel market
- Patent disputes scared away potential buyers

Despite this, **the car itself was apparently magnificent** and technically successful. The tragedy is that this innovation was lost to financial problems rather than technical flaws.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR NEXT STEPS

1. **Verify the Denham/Harris question** - This is sloppy research if wrong, or a major discovery if there was another person involved
  2. **Find that 1974 NMRA Bulletin** - Get a high-resolution copy of that cover photo; it may have interior shots too
  3. **Search for the model** - If it survived, it's your Rosetta Stone
  4. **Look for the car itself** - Did it survive into the 1900s? Was it scrapped? Could parts still exist?
  5. **Research Allan Dudley further** - His story deserves to be told, and he might have given interviews later in life
  6. **Contact the NMRA historian** - They may have more on why they featured it in 1974
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## CONCLUSION

You've assembled an impressive amount of research on an obscure subject. The main discrepancies revolve around:

1. **When was it actually built?** (resolved: likely 1890-1896 with major delays)
2. **Why the confusing dates?** (resolved: promotional activities vs. actual construction)
3. **Who really invented it?** (likely Harris, despite one source saying "Denham")
4. **What happened to it?** (unknown - research needed)

The paper is excellent but would benefit from:

- A clear timeline chart
- Acknowledgment of the uncertainties
- More explicit discussion of the discrepancies you've found

- Follow-up research on the car's ultimate fate

**This is publishable-quality research.** With some additional investigation and clearer organization of the chronological issues, this could be a significant contribution to railroad history.

For your modeling project, you have enough information to proceed, though you'll need to make some educated guesses about details not documented in the sources.