

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.

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.

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?

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" ($20 \text{ berths} \times 2$)

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

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

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

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 $3/4":1' = 49" \div 0.75 = 65.3$ 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 \times 6.5" wide (in model) = 32' \times 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

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

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

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.

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

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.