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A Brief History of the Touring Club of New England

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The following is a brief history of the Touring Club of New England, as related by Bill Shrader, club Historian. Additional historical information is welcome.

The Four Cylinder Club of America was started in the early 1950s as an organization for owners of MG TCs, Triumph TR2s, and similar small imported sports cars. The name was chosen because at that time most American cars had six or eight cylinder engines.

The Sports Car Club of America was started (also in New England) shortly before the Four Cylinder Club, and is the oldest sports car club in the U.S. The New England chapter of the Four Cylinder Club became independent in about 1955, changed its name to the Touring Club of New England, and as a result became the second oldest sports car club in the country.

In the 1950s and 60s, Road Rallies were the primary sporting outlet for amateur automobile competitors. Events were extremely well attended, frequently drawing upwards of 100 cars. In addition to road rallies, TCNE events included Concours d'Elegance and Gymkhanas, frequently combined with a rally in a single weekend. The Annual Grand road rally was featured as the major TCNE event of the year. It was originally a 12 hour overnight event, starting at 7:00 pm and ending the following morning with breakfast at a suitable restaurant. As interests changed it became a shorter Sunday afternoon event, as it is today. It is believed that this is the second oldest continuously run rally in the country, and the perpetual French-Patton trophy is engraved with the names of all the winners since the founding of the event.

At this time TCNE has about 40 full members and 40 auxiliary members, mostly residents of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. TCNE does not distinguish among car marques. The purpose of the club is to encourage the ownership, preservation, and ownership of sports cars, to provide and regulate events and exhibitions for sports cars and their owners, to promote motoring for pleasure and sport, and to encourage careful and skillful driving on public highways. It concentrates on the enjoyment of driving sports cars on New England highways and byways. TCNE puts on about a half dozen rallies each year, ranging from afternoon events on pavement to all day events with considerable gravel roads. The club owns a set of sophisticated equipment used for rally checkpoint timing, and publishes a newsletter, "Driver and Navigator", on a bi-monthly basis.