California Club Puts It Together

By Allan J. Greenberg of San Jose, California



How do you build a Model T Put Together vehicle without any parts and without any funds? Santa Clara Valley Model T Ford Club asked for help.

Toward the end of 2021, at a meeting to discuss the annual event called Antique Autos in History Park (AAHP). The president and CEO of History San José (HSJ), Bill Schroh Jr., asked why we were not including the Model T Put Together activity like we had done in the past. We explained the T used for this fun event was no longer in California. So Bill suggested we build a new one in History San José's restoration shop. Oh, and one more request, "Accomplish it without using any HSJ funds."

Peder Jorgensen, a fellow member of our club and the co-coordinator of AAHP offered parts from a 1921 Model T his father, Cy Jorgensen, planned to restore, but unfortunately he passed away. Peder wanted to clear the shed where the parts were stored. So, Peder, his wife, Maria, and two fellow Model T club members loaded up three pickups to move the parts to the restoration shop.

On January 14, 2022 all the parts donated by Peder were laid out on the floor of the restoration shop. Club member, Bob Meneely, who is also a volunteer at the restoration shop, agreed to be the lead person for the project.

He laid out the parts in the general location where they would be in the Model T. He then generated a list of missing parts. This list was published on our club's website and in the club's newsletter. Members began offering up the needed parts for the T.

We decided the Put Together T would not be a restored car. We wanted it to instead be a true "barn find", with all its rust and imperfections. Then, after its full assembly, it would run and be driven down the road.

Early on we realized we had a problem; we needed four demountable rims and no one had offered any. Searching the internet revealed there was a shortage and, when found, the prices of available rims were very high.

But we were a long way from mounting tires, so we crossed our fingers and moved ahead. A couple volunteers began working on assembling the



The Put Together T was built from a donor car and a list of needed parts shared on the club's website and newsletter. Offers of parts started coming from the members.



Bob Meneely and Bill Bratt start reassembling the Model T from all the parts and pieces the club has collected.



Steve Bright begins assembling the Model T's engine.



The left front spring perch bent on installation and had to be fixed.

frame, drive train, and body. While another volunteer started working on the engine.

When the head was removed, we discovered cylinders two and three were missing pistons and rods. The transmission inspection plate was removed and we found the reverse drum moved toward the engine and back. More things to add to our Missing Parts List.

Our missing pistons and transmission issues were solved by a donation of a well-restored, 1920 "something" engine. It had been intended to go into a speedster Troed Johnson was going to build, but instead he donated the engine to the club's Put Together effort.

Sometimes we create extra jobs to add to the jobs at hand. One example was the pressing of the front spring perches into the axle. The right spring perch was pressed into the axle with relative ease. The left front perch bent slightly when the shaft was halfway installed and would not go in fully.

After removing the perch, a volunteer worked to straighten the shaft. He straightened it sufficiently enough to put it on the lathe. With some filing and the use of emery cloth, he was able to get a thousandth-of-an-inch or so removed. The next insertion into the axle was successful.

While the front axle assembly, running boards, etc, were being assembled, work began on the body. The style received was a Touring body. The rear section of the body was in very poor condition and it made the body heavier to lift onto the frame. So, the decision was made to remove the back metal and seat box to make the final vehicle a Model T Pickup.

The team decided it would help save seconds and pounds of weight, if the Touring body became a shorter Pickup body instead.





One thrust washer was missing and another had a chunk missing. New ones were bought.



After installing new thrust washers, we added the rear axle housing, we realized one axle had too much end play. It took several tries of adding shims to eliminate the end play.



Bob Meneely works on the differential and axle assembly.



Lyn Alens works to replace two of the wheels front hubs with rear hubs.



We wrapped plywood in carpet underlayment and added 3" foam to the seat. We then applied 2" foam panels cut to the size of the back of the seat.

Most of the parts donated looked usable, especially for a vehicle we wanted to look like it was just recovered from a barn. However, as mentioned earlier, not all the parts were what they looked like from the outside. In addition to the two missing pistons, missing triple gears, and transmission bands, closer inspection of the differential revealed one of the Babbitt thrust washers was missing entirely and one had a portion missing. So, the rear axle had to be repaired and new thrust washers were purchased.

After adding new washers to the differential assembly and adding the rear axle housing, one axle had too much end play. With a couple of iterations of adding shims and reinstalling the axle housing, all the axle end play was removed and the rear axle, driveshaft, and torque tube were assembled.

Next, we realized we had four front wheels and no rear wheels. We had the rear hubs, so work began on replacing front hubs with rear hubs.

After several months of seeking a used front seat, we were not able to find one. Not having funds to purchase seat cushions, we decided to make our own. We could afford 2" and 3" foam, thanks to the sale of the original donated engine.

With a sheet of plywood cut to the size of the seat cushion, we wrapped it with carpet underlay and then the 3" foam cut to size. The 2" foam was



After using leftover and donated upholstery material to cover the seats, we have a whole new appreciation for the skills of the professionals.



Lyn Alens, Bob Meneely, and John Zelinski test the ease of installing the engine and rear axle into the body. Their first attempt was not very quick.

applied to the seat back and then cut to size. Using some leftover and donated vinyl upholstery material, the seat was created.

Our final result made us appreciate all the professional upholsterers in the world.

Our first try placing the engine on the frame and attaching the drive shaft did not go as quickly as we expected. In an actual timed put-together event, we



The completed 1920 Heinz 57 variety barn find Model T Pickup is nearly completed. We ultimately had to swap the oval gas tank for a round one and we had to source a second donated hood to get a decent matching fit for the body and the radiator.

would need to perform it within a few seconds, not minutes.

The second time placing the engine on the chassis and inserting the square end of the universal joint in the end of the transmission was performed in a shorter time, but we still needed to keep practicing to improve our times.

With the various pieces of the body coming together, it was time to begin planning and building the wooden pickup bed. Drawings of a basic bed were used and modified for our Put Together T. Redwood from an old fence served as the bed of the T.

It was now time to place the body on the frame. Since many of the T's parts came from various donors, not everything fit as well as we'd like. For example, the oval gas tank was expected to fit on the frame, but did not. So we made a trade for a round tank.

The donated hood was not a good match for the body and radiator. Luckily, a second one that was donated did the job.

Just a few more tasks and the Model T Put Together would be ready for its first start-up and test drive.

On June 7, 2022 the Model T Put Together was moved out of the restoration shop and into History San José's parking lot. For the first time in the T's life, it was started and driven around the parking lot. So begins the life of this 1920s Model T as History San José's and Santa Clara Valley Model T Ford Club's Put Together car.

I want to thank everyone who donated to this project and all the volunteers who worked at HSJ's restoration shop to problem solve and help assemble the Model T Pickup Put Together. It has been 10 years since Antique Autos in History Park's last Model T Put Together event and we are now looking forward to this event returning in September. □



The finished Model T Put Together Pickup looks pretty spiffy considering it was built from an assortment of donated parts and materials.