

# Union College

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## Steinmetz electric car taken for a test drive before Commencement



*Steinmetz poses with his son and grandchildren*

**Enlarge** “In its day, electric cars were more popular than gasoline-driven cars,” said John Spinelli, associate

professor and chair of Electrical and Computer Engineering. “This car runs on 14, six-volt batteries which aren’t standard and cost about \$2,500 to replace.”

John Harnden '50, a General Electric engineer and founder of the Edison Exploratorium, funded new, high-capacity batteries for the car last year.

Gene E. Davison, a lab manager in Electrical and Computer Engineering who has maintained the car for 25 years, drove it Tuesday. The all-aluminum vehicle has a top speed of about 25 mph, is driven with a tiller rather than a steering wheel and can drive approximately 50 miles on one battery charge.



*John M. Spinelli and Gene E. Davison* **Enlarge**

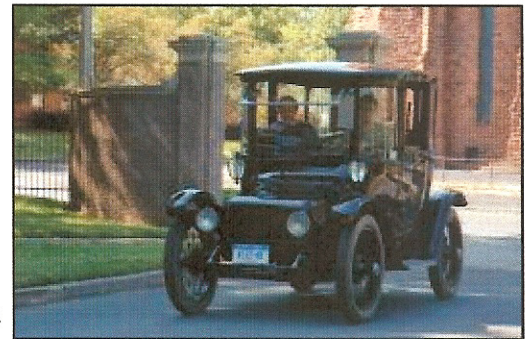
Steinmetz, an engineer and inventor, was chair of the Union College

Electrical Engineering Department from 1902 to 1913, and a member of the Union faculty until his death in 1923. He became so enamored with electric vehicles that he founded the Steinmetz Electric Car Co. in 1917.

People in Schenectady got a treat Tuesday morning when a 1914 “Duplex Drive Brougham” Detroit Electric Automobile once owned by Charles Proteus Steinmetz left its temporary home several blocks away and cruised through Union’s main gate.

The vintage car will lead the College’s 213<sup>th</sup> Commencement processional Sunday, carrying President Stephen C. Ainlay and featured guests: ABC News anchor Charles Gibson and Richard Sorabji, professor emeritus of philosophy at King’s College in London.

Found in a Glenville field 40 years after Steinmetz’ death, the car was purchased by the College in 1971 and restored for use in campus ceremonies. It has previously been on display at the Saratoga Auto Museum and is currently on loan to the Edison Exploratorium in downtown Schenectady.



*1914 “Duplex Drive Brougham”* **Enlarge**  
*Detroit Electric Automobile owned by Steinmetz*