

Nines

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Crossway Auto Center

This is the seventh in a series of articles about those who care about the Swedish brand enough to focus on the repair, service and sales of SAAB cars even as others have moved on. The point is to let those who continue to enjoy the individuality and great value of the cars to know where these unique shops are and what they offer.

Vermont has historically been a key proving ground for the winter attributes of Saab automobiles given the long winters and rolling hills. Even in 2017, certain pockets of the state still have a loyal Saab following. Examples are Brattleboro, Burlington, Woodstock and Montpelier. This is no accident since those towns are amongst the thirteen locations of authorized Vermont Saab sales and service dealerships which existed in 1975.

Montpelier had a dealership on Route 2 back in the day. That dealership closed by the 1980s and a new dealership located at 365 River Street opened. Brad Rouleau opened Crossway Motors as an exclusively Saab dealership in 1988. The dealership continued to meet the customer's needs with new and used cars, parts and service into the new century.

2009 was a hard year for the automobile industry and Saab was no exception. GM left Saab owners hanging until eventually Spyker purchased Saab and restarted production in 2010. Those years were tough on the staff of Crossway since for a while, warranty service was halted. Despite the stops and starts from 2009 forward, Mr. Rouleau continued to be the sole owner of the business until September 23, 2013. T.J. Foster and half-brother Ryan Pierson purchased the dealership business at that time but Rouleau continues to own the building and the land on which it sits.

Ryan came on board as the Parts Manager about ten years prior to the 2013 purchase. He eventually became Parts, Service and General Manager. The establishment is an Official Saab Service Center. T.J. started as a mechanic in about 2006. Later he worked in both Parts and Service; now he is the Sales Manager. T.J.'s first Saab was a 1999 9-5 Linear sedan five speed. Ryan's was a 2005 9-3 Arc five speed. The brothers are both in their 30s and it is encouraging to see the younger generation support those who continue to drive the marque.

Despite the changes that have occurred over the years and with NEVS not offering a date when new 9-3s will be exported to the United States, T.J. feels blessed that Orio is here to provide parts, warranty service support and establish Saab authorized Service Centers. Some other automobile makes that have either left the U.S. market or ceased to function at

all have left no organization to support existing car owners. At this point, for the most part, Saab parts are readily available - at least for cars made since 1999.



The showroom of the dealership maintains an appearance very similar to the days when it sold new Saabs. There is a 9-3 convertible for sale on display and a few Saab car models in their original boxes, and Saab posters are prominent on the walls. I particularly liked the large poster by the door reading: "Waste Makes Haste. The Saab Turbo." Another one states: "When we put a turbine in an airplane, we turned it into a jet. When we put one in a car, we turned it into a Saab."



The interior of the Crossway Auto dealership maintains the Saab focus. Photograph by author.

Crossway sold about 110 cars last year and about 70% were Saabs. Their clientele continues to drive that part of the business. Many of those customers end up revisiting Crossway for service which is the bread and butter of the establishment. They estimate their service customer list at about 900 cars. Despite

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it being six years since the cars were last imported, TJ is able to offer some young 2011 Saabs with mileage as low as about 25,000. At the time of the mid-July visit for this article, Crossway had three new-generation 9-5s, one original-generation 9-5 and a number of "current" generation 9-3 Sports Sedans. They recently sold a low-mileage 1992 900 convertible. They do sell and service other European makes including Mercedes-Benz and Volvo.



The above picture shows the front portion of the dealership and some of the cars for sale. Picture by the author.

While all Saab specialists are working against time and escalating car mileages, Crossway is making efforts to stem the rate of corrosion the cars see in Vermont. The Crossway Auto Center is the first Saab establishment that I have visited with stories of rust on current generation 9-3 Sport Sedans. It is not totally surprising since the dealership is located in central Vermont at the northernmost point this series has visited thus far. The state uses a particularly corrosive salt formulation which has attacked a couple of 9-3s located in the Crossway back lot. This is not something that I have seen in Massachusetts, Rhode Island or Connecticut. Crossway brings in a lot of used Saabs from the south and west to sell. Crossway offers a Protection Package with the cars sold which consist of a Rust-Corrosion Preventative Treatment, Exterior Paint and Clear Coat Protection, Wheel and Tire Wax Protectant, Exterior Window Pro-Grade Rain X and Headlight UV Protection and Sealer.

Because of the effects of road salt and driving

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on dirt roads that are not uncommon in Vermont, Crossway does not see a lot of new-generation 900 and 9000 models in for service at their shop. They are an official Vermont inspection station.

Most of the Crossway staff are shown in the above picture supplied by Crossway. From left to right are Troy Pierson, Nick Constantine, TJ Foster, Mia Foster (the dog), Ryan Pierson, James Lynch (head technician), and Nate Pinsonneault.

As in other geographic regions, many of the Saab owners are dedicated to the brand. A recent Crossway service customer had just under 300,000 miles on a 9-3S, another with an old-generation 9-3 racked up 425,000 miles and a 9-5 wagon passed the 300,000 mile mark. To aid the older models with a parts alternative, they have a few parts cars out back and two aisles of the parts department are devoted to used parts including front and rear light lenses.

Crossway Motors can be reached at 802-223-9580 or on-line at crosswayautovt.com.

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