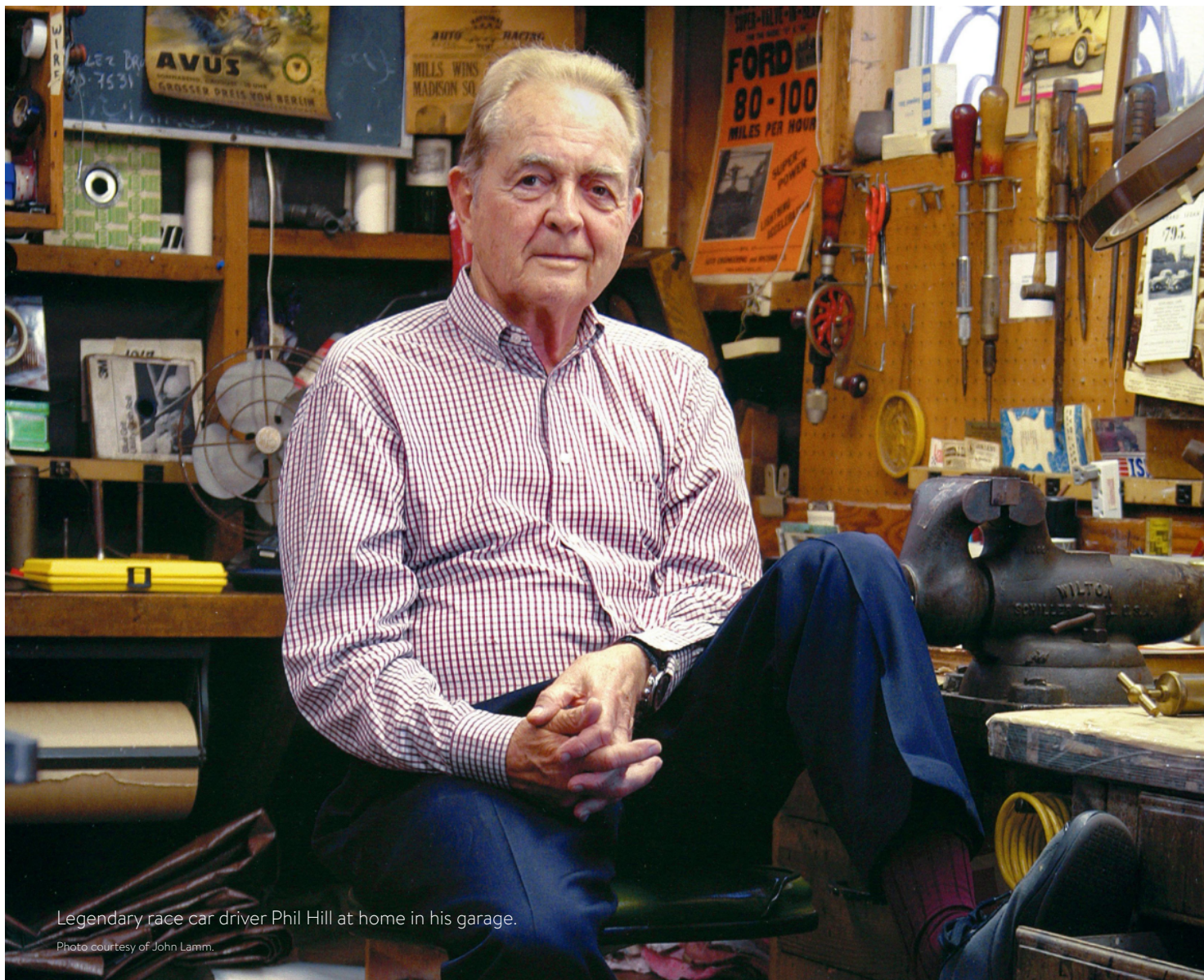


THE CLASSIC CAR



Volume XLIX, Number 1, Spring 2021



Legendary race car driver Phil Hill at home in his garage.

Photo courtesy of John Lamm.

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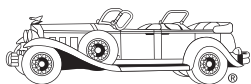
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THE CLASSIC CAR

The Classic Car Club of America is a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of New York. The Club seeks to further the restoration and preservation of distinctive motor cars produced in the period from 1915 to 1948, to provide a channel of communication for those interested in such cars, and to bring together in good fellowship all who own or admire these fine examples of automotive craftsmanship. The sole requirement for membership is a demonstrable interest in Classic cars. Application for membership should be forwarded to Club Headquarters.

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THE CONSIGNMENT JOB:
1931 Packard 845 Convertible Roadster by Derham



IN THIS ISSUE

Our March issue begins with an exciting update on the CCCA Museum, followed by an early recollection of Cadillac V-16 ownership by longtime member Al McEwan. Ray Workowski contributed a well-articulated piece about Fred Duesenberg's last drive, which is followed by another well-researched contribution by Mike Hayward on the Cord 810 and 812. Lastly, a piece by your Editor and his colleague Chris Summers about a Derham-bodied Packard.

Cover photo Courtesy RM Sotheby's; back cover from Esquire Magazine, Courtesy Rubén Verdés.

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Classic Car Club of America MUSEUM

SAVE THE DATE AUGUST 28, 2021



The Classic Car Club of America Museum is inching ever closer to its Grand Opening celebration, scheduled for Saturday, August 28. The final construction details are under way, including the installation of track lighting and the final preparation for the floor tile work that will cover the 11,000 sq.ft. addition.

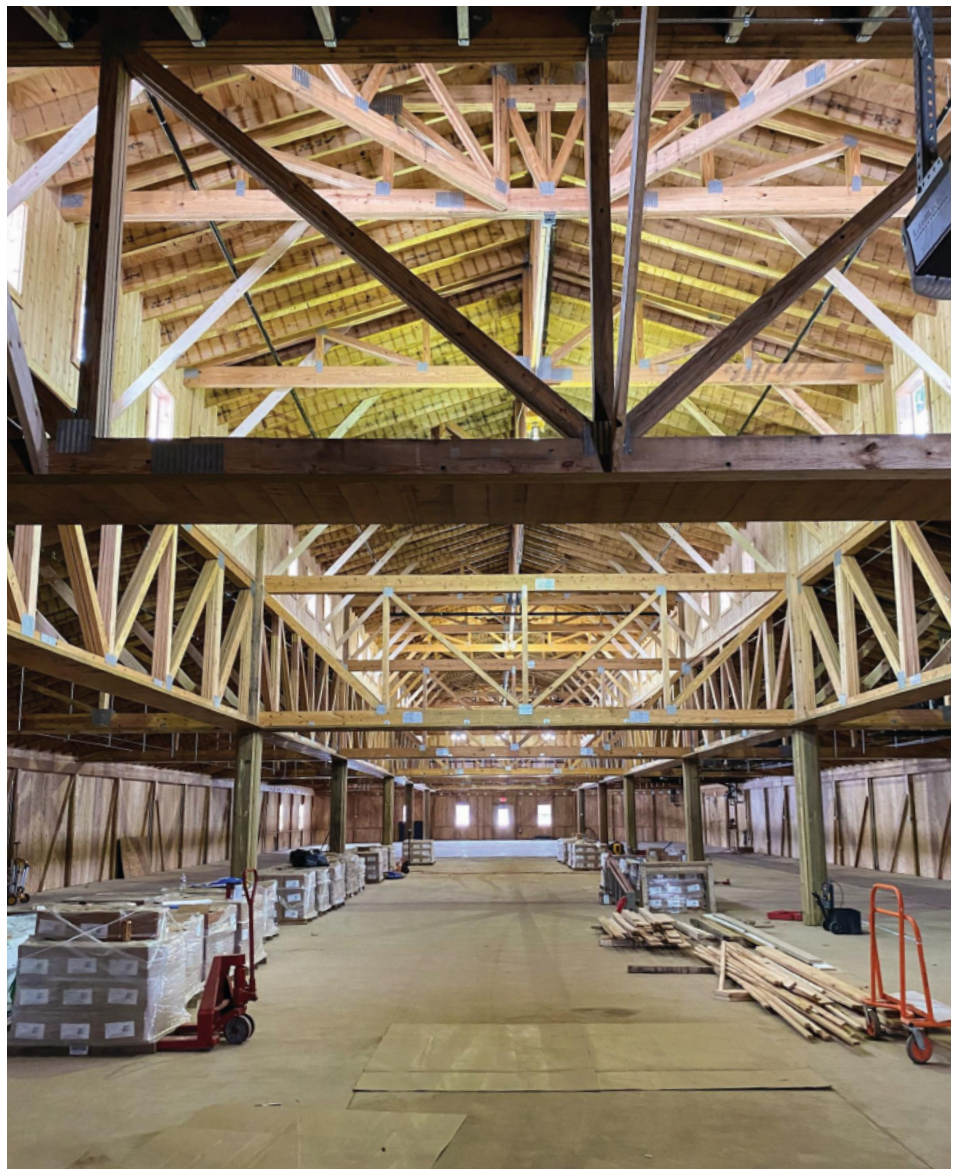
There is also a lot of work going into the interior of the original Barrett Barn. The second floor is being prepared to house the Turnquist Gallery exhibit. This includes new surfacing of the floor, added electrical and track lighting, and preparation of lighted cabinets to hold Turnquist and CCCA memorabilia. The first floor will also see an improvement in track lighting as well as a detailed change in how we exhibit the cars and the historic information that goes with them.

We are in the final stages of work with the Group Delphi Design on the final historical information and exciting exhibit installation plans. Thanks to the CCCA Museum Board for working with interest and care on how the final galleries will look and work to deliver the history of the Classic era and all that it brought to American life and enlightenment.

Our Grand Opening will start with a driving tour and lunch on Friday August 27, followed by our expansion celebration which begins at 1 pm on Saturday August 28 with a formal presentation and remarks by CCCA Museum President Howard Freedman as well as Treasurer Candace Haag and others. An official champagne reception ribbon cutting by Lee and Floy Barthel will welcome visitors to the tours and honor those who have supported the museum addition. Without their support this would not have been possible!

Guided tours of the new spaces and exhibition by CCCAM Board members and Executive Director Don Desmett will take place from 2-4 pm on Saturday and we continue to celebrate the festivities into the evening with a black tie/optional dinner in the Museum. We will be mailing invitations to all CCCA and CCCAM members with an RSVP required. We hope to see everyone the weekend of August 28.

— **DON DESMETT**
Executive Director



COLLEGE DAYS WITH A V-16:

A First-Hand Account by Al McEwan

During the fall of 1956, I was taking an economics class in college. At the time my interest in that subject matter was marginal, but the professor happened to mention classic cars on occasion, and that kept me awake. After a few weeks of class, I thought that the professor mentioned them a bit too often for it to be just an off-hand comment. So, one day I stayed after class and asked the professor if he was interested in classic cars. You would think, from his response, that he had just found his long-lost son!

Al McEwan's 1930 Cadillac 452 Imperial Sedan, Fleetwood, as he acquired it in December 1956 >

I immediately learned that he owned a Packard and was active in the vintage car group, Automobilists of the Upper Hudson Valley. He then told me about a man who had just lost his garage for a 1930 Cadillac V-16 and needed to sell the car. He told me the price was \$300 and asked if I wanted to see the car? Of course, I wanted to see the car! If I liked it, however, I wondered where I would get \$300 when my total assets amounted to about \$3! Anyway, we got into the professor's car and he drove me ten miles from Troy, New York, to the V-16's location.

The Cadillac turned out to be an Imperial Sedan, a seven-passenger body without divider window and with fabric upholstery throughout. The body was totally original with no dents, rust or metal damage, and there were no missing parts. The original paint was heavily oxidized, but both the

upholstery and carpets were original and in excellent condition. The car had the look of a running car that had been parked many years earlier. I was told that the car ran, although I do not remember hearing it run at that time. The tires were pre-World War II and the sidewalls were severely checked, cracked and split, but they did hold air.

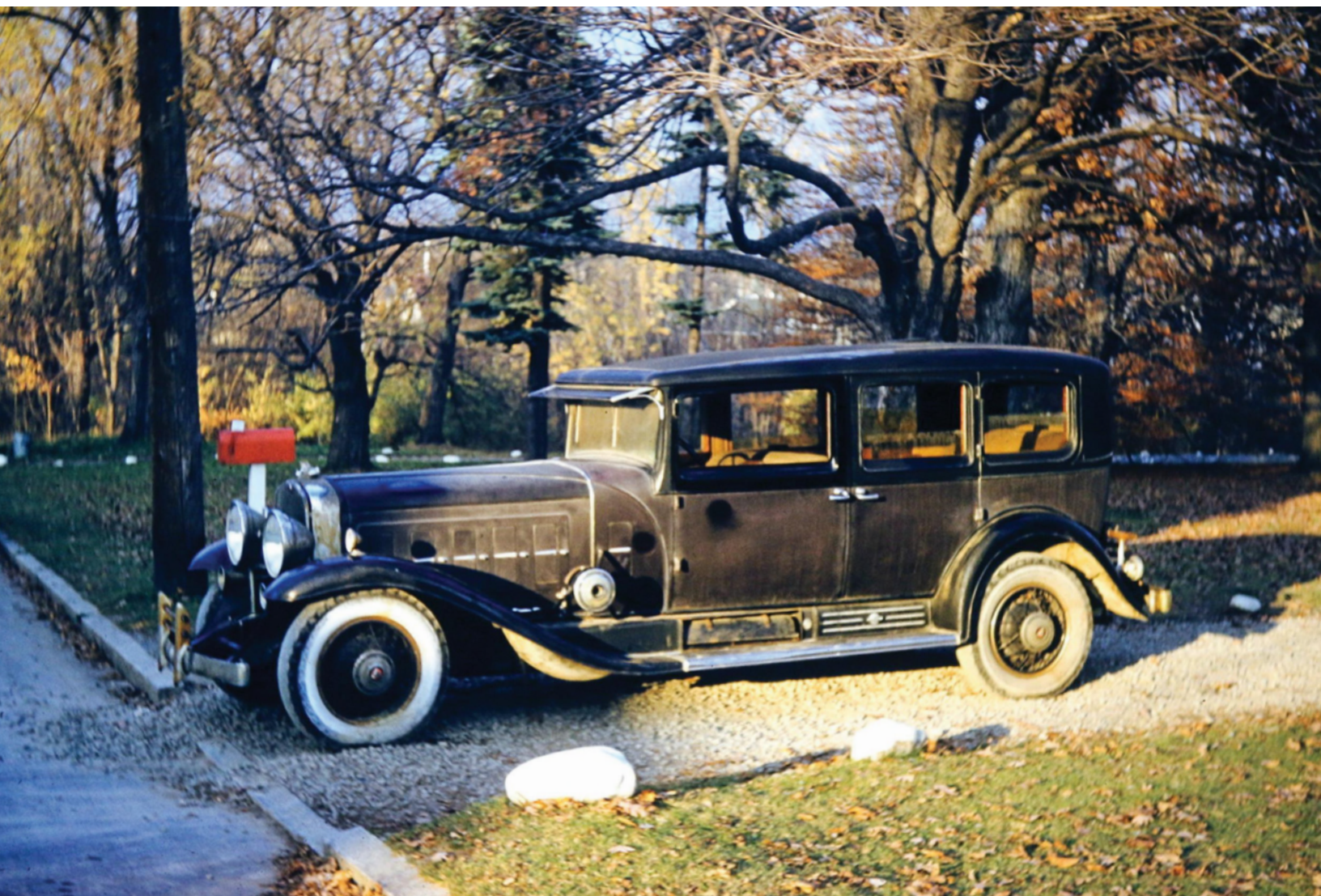
The following few days, I went to class as necessary, but most of my time was spent trying to figure out where I could get \$300 (about \$2,900 in today's dollars) to buy the Cadillac. Finally, I approached my parents for a loan. While no one else in my family had any real interest in vintage cars, my mother was particularly supportive of my interest. My parents arranged for me to borrow the \$300, and I immediately bought the Cadillac. The seller towed the car behind a truck and delivered it to me at my fraternity house.

The Cadillac was only a 26-year-old

car, but in 1956 it might as well have been a 100-year-old car. Its reception by my fraternity brothers was less than enthusiastic, and I think they would have had me committed if there had been an opportunity. By today's standards, the cars of the Fifties were large, but the Cadillac still looked huge in the fraternity parking lot!

I immediately set to work on the body with a heavy duty cleaner and elbow grease, in an attempt to bring back the original maroon and black paint. When I had finished, the car really looked good. The original paint was in quite good condition, although some of the pinstriping came off with my rubbing.

During this 'restoration,' I had to find tires. While I did not know it at the time, 700x19 tires were not readily available. I heard something about new whitewall tires at \$100 apiece, but never pursued it. If I learned anything in my professor's economics class, it



was that you do not buy \$400 worth of tires for a \$300 car.

I visited all of the major tire stores in the Troy and Albany area asking for used 700x19 tires. This was a learning experience, as I was laughed at and told that 700x19 tires were no longer available, either new or used. In Albany, a tire salesman did try to help me, saying that “if anybody has tires like that, it is ‘Joe’ down the street.” I followed the directions to a little “hole in the wall” tire store and asked the old guy whether he might have any used 700x19 tires. He scratched his head for a moment and then said, “We might have some in the basement.” I followed him to the basement. He started throwing tires around and found four used black-wall tires with good tread. I walked out of the store with the four tires after spending \$35. Once these were mounted on the Cadillac I painted on white walls.

The next problem was finding a garage.

I couldn’t leave this beautiful V-16 sitting in the fraternity parking lot through an upper New York State winter. I was fortunate to find a garage about two blocks from the fraternity that I rented for \$15 a month.

During the fall of 1956 and the spring and fall of ’57, I did attend a few meets of the Automobilitists of the Upper Hudson Valley. One weekend I drove it over to the old Mohawk Trail to my parents’ home in Massachusetts. The Cadillac always started, ran well and never left me stranded. I remember the 25-gallon gas gauge with little marks for each gallon. It seemed that you could watch the gauge move down as you drove the car.

Towards the end of 1957, it appeared that I would be coming to the west coast for work in the coming year. Driving a 1930 V-16 across country for my first job did not seem to be the best plan and I advertised the Cadillac for sale in *Motor Trend* or *Road* >

*“If I learned anything
in my professor’s
economics class, it
was that you do not
buy \$400 worth of
tires for a \$300 car.”*

& Track. At the time, both magazines ran many private ads for interesting cars, and this seemed like a smart thing to do. However, I had not given enough thought to how people would be able to respond to the ad, as I was living at the fraternity house. There was one phone in the hallway and it was answered by anybody nearby. When a call came in response to my advertisement, there would be this yell with some version of "Hey, Al, somebody is calling about that old wreck you have." While I did speak to a couple of callers and tried to be upbeat, I just could not get any serious interest.

Each Sunday I would read the Classic and Antique Car ads in the *New York Times*. Among the ads was one from a company in Hempstead, Long Island, stating that they purchased Classic cars. In December of 1957, I contacted them, telling them that I wanted to trade the Cadillac and \$500 for a 1953 Cadillac convertible which I would use for my move to the west coast. I was assured that this was a workable deal and to bring the V-16 down to their facility in Hempstead.

During the last week of December of

1957, I drove the Cadillac from Troy to Long Island with a fraternity brother following me in my everyday 1947 Mercury. First, we drove to his home in Flushing and planned to attend a party that evening in the Cadillac. About 7:00 pm, we got into the Cadillac and it would not start. I had just driven it trouble free for about 180 miles and it would not start. We hooked up a rope behind the Mercury and towed it a block in the residential area of Flushing, and I popped the clutch. There was an enormous explosion; porch lights lit up and people came out to see what happened. The explosion had blown both mufflers wide open and the car still did not run. We towed it back to the house and went to the party in the Mercury.

Two days later, on New Year's Eve, we still had not been able to get the Cadillac to run. Each day I called the dealership with some excuse as to why I was not there with the car, while we tried frantically to find and fix the problem. This sleuthing effort was going on in the street by two kids with limited experience and not much more than a screwdriver. Eventually, our best guess was

that it was cross-firing in the distributor. For some unknown reason and certainly not due to our fix, about 5:00 pm the car finally started and ran okay. I had folded the muffler shells back around the mufflers as best I could, and drove to the dealership. About a block away from the dealership I sped up to a relatively high speed, shut off the engine, and coasted into the dealer's parking lot so that the noisy exhaust would not be an issue.

The salesman was waiting for our arrival and that is when I learned that they did not have the promised 1953 Cadillac convertible that I expected, and, of course, they tried to put me into a car that they already had on the lot – none of which I wanted. Later that evening I left in a loaner 1953 Buick Skylark, which was significantly more money with the V-16 than I was prepared to spend. This was just the beginning of another long, scary experience before I finally got, four months later, an acceptable car. Yes, I was naïve and trusting at the time and had several worrisome months, but in the end, I came out on the better end of the deal as I owned the '53 Skylark! •



The Cadillac in its prime in McEwan's ownership.



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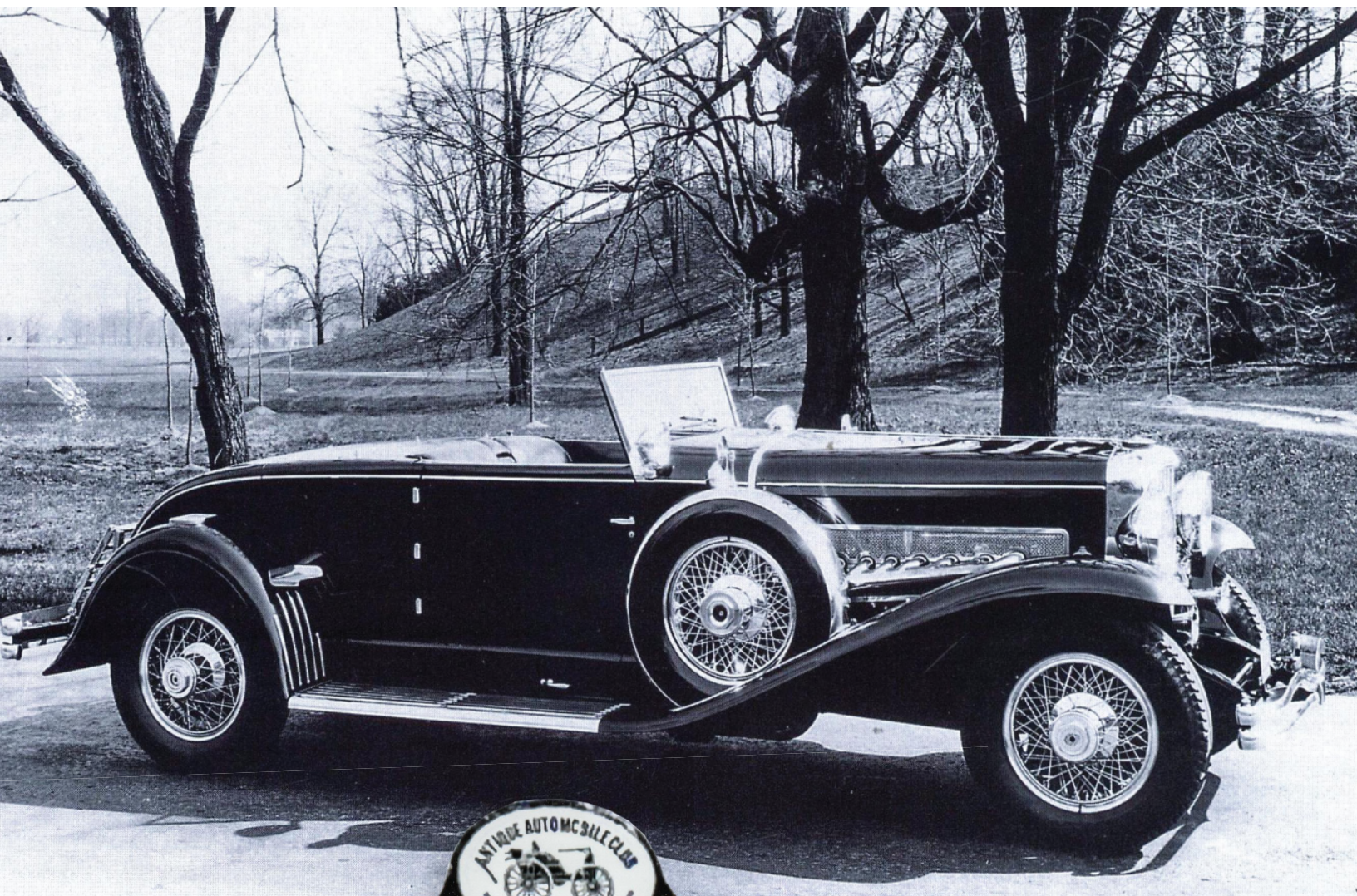
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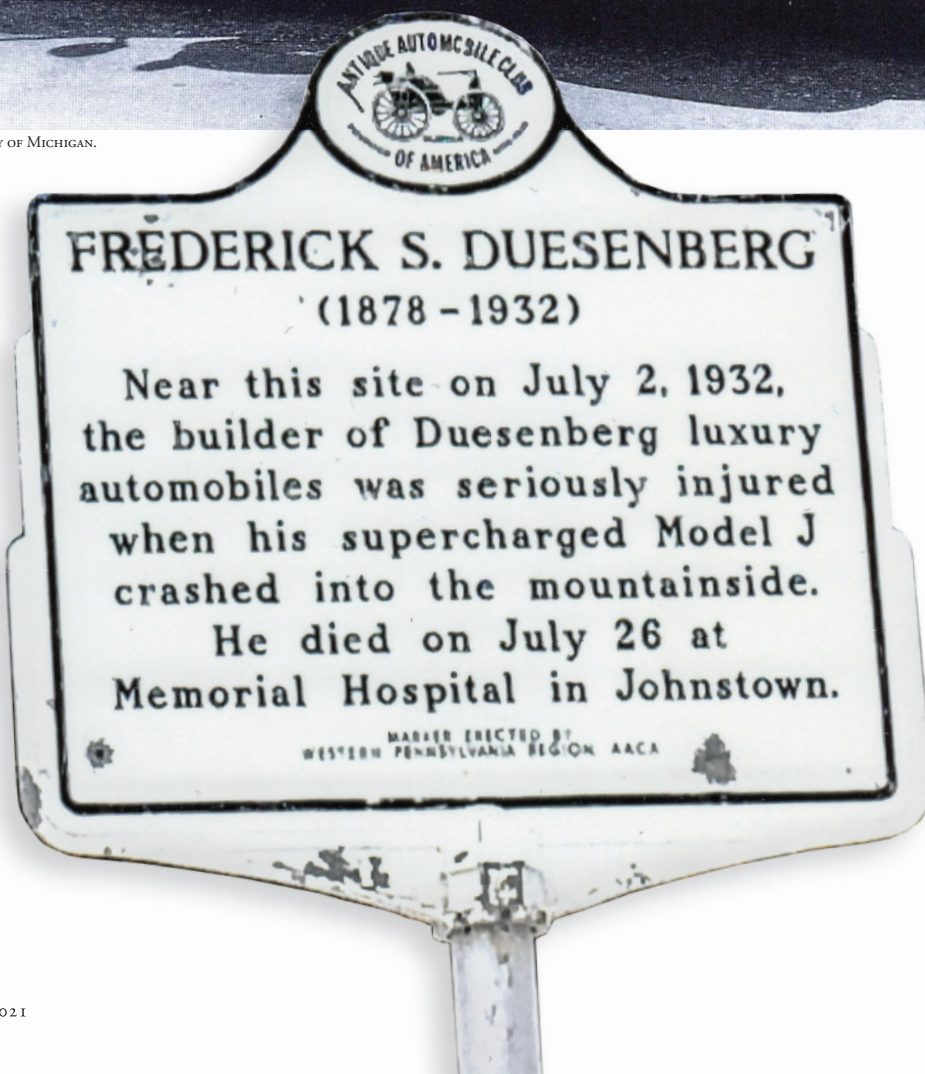


PHOTO RAY WOTKOWSKI

Photos this page (top):
The original 1932
Duesenberg Model
J 'Disappearing Top'
Convertible Coupe,
Murphy, J-298.

(left): The commemorative
sign located, inaccurately,
two miles from the accident
scene, on the east side
of Laurel Ridge. The
terms "seriously injured"
and "crashed" are a bit
misleading.

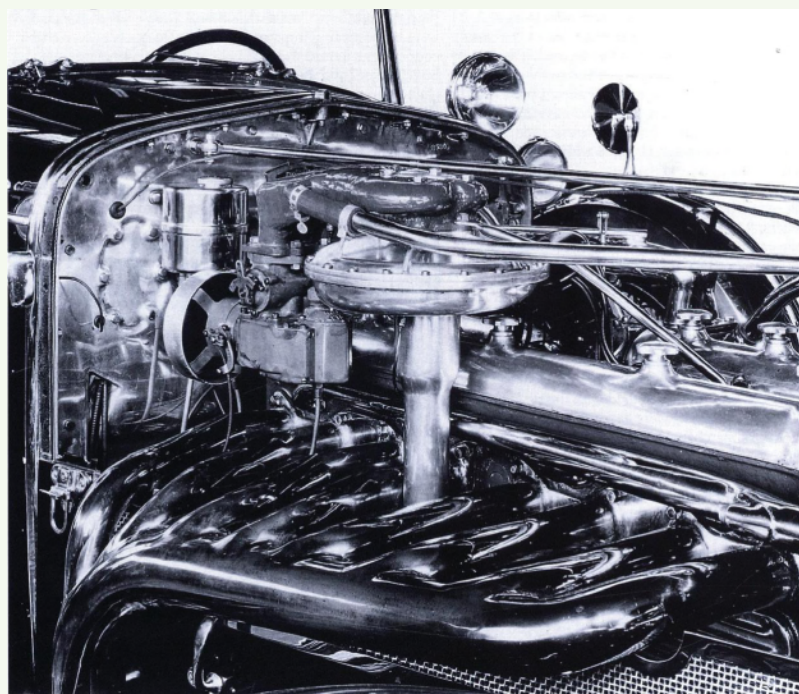
Photo opposite page: The
experimental Duesenberg
supercharger originally
mounted the hood of J-298.

Editor's Note: *The September 1981 and October 2004 issues of The Classic Car both included stories on Fred Duesenberg's accident at the wheel of one of his own cars and subsequent passing. However, the well-known story has never been covered or fully researched in-depth until now...and, as is often revealed by detailed revisiting of a long-lived tale, there is a lot more left to tell.*

A Duesy of a Tale: Fred Duesenberg's Fateful Drive

By Ray
Wotkowski

As a longtime Johnstown, Pennsylvania resident and Classic Era automobile enthusiast, I was intrigued when Barry Eash of B&L Restorations shared four articles with me, describing Fred Duesenberg's accident in one of his own cars near Johnstown and his subsequent untimely passing at a local hospital on July 26, 1932. Previously unaware of this local tie to such an automotive icon, I became intrigued by where the accident occurred, the specifics of the event, who was there, and what fate had befallen the car involved. The articles sparked a "Duesy" of interest in me to explore details and research and gather supportive information. Headlines >



COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.



and content from 1932 suggested that the car overturned and that Fred's injuries were presumably serious. As I researched, I found that these early accounts were somewhat misleading.

On the evening of July 1, 1932, Fred had stayed at his friend, Watson Stabilator manufacturer John Warren Watson's home, located near Philadelphia in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He was on a return trip from New York to Indiana, driving a Duesenberg Model SJ 'disappearing top' convertible coupe with Murphy body no. 918. This car belonged to R.W. Allen of Syracuse, New York, who purchased it in 1929, received the car in 1930, and became a frequent visitor to the Duesenberg garage for modifications. The car was meant to be driven and was more or less an experiment on wheels, adopting a supercharger built by both Duesenberg Brothers, and brakes adjustable to suit the road surface. In the midst of the Great Depression, there was a small pool of potential customers for Model Js, and catering to the desires of the very affluent was a prime concern for manufacturers. Fred's opportunity to drive the car back to Indianapolis served as a "proving ground" for its features; his hands-on experiences, one imagines, had always fueled his designing ways.

On July 2, 1932, John Watson advised Fred to reconsider completing the trip, as the car's tires were a bit worn and would be risky on such a long drive. Fred decided to drive the car with the existing tires, and all went well as he left the Warren home in Wayne. His early morning departure for Indianapolis

Photos top: There were four gas stations in Schellsburg in 1932 at which Fred could have stopped for gasoline and to call home, and where he picked up the two hitchhikers.

Far left: The author believes that the Shawnee Country Market is the most likely locale; this photo dates from 1938, and the building is no longer standing.

Center: Colvin's Garage is another possibility; the building, here photographed in the 1920s, still stands.

Far right: Also available was the Ideal Garage, an Esso station that also served as a combination bus/mail delivery station; this building, too, still stands.

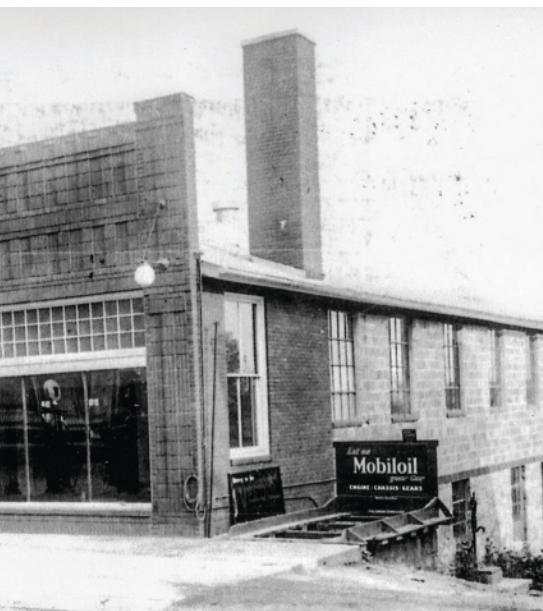
placed him by midmorning in Schellsburg, a small town located along the Lincoln Highway (present U.S. Route 30) in western Pennsylvania. In these years before the opening of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in 1940, the Lincoln Highway was the main highway through Pennsylvania and, in fact, across the country.

Fred stopped to stretch his legs, refuel the Duesenberg, and place a telephone call to Indianapolis from the Schellsburg store. At approximately the same time, two strangers arrived in Schellsburg and enter the story. Frank Peacock and Gordon Langley were 3rd year college students from Chicago on their summer break, returning from a friend's wedding in Wilmington, Delaware. The two had purchased a \$25 Ford Model T for this adventurous trip, but had abandoned the car during the return journey. Hitchhiking was a common practice at the time, the Great Depression having enhanced both the need to "hitch" and the consideration of participating drivers. That said, it was illegal to hitchhike in Pennsylvania, and as the two friends arrived in Schellsburg, Gordon was told to begin walking ahead, as there was a greater chance of a single hitchhiker being picked up compared to two of them.

Frank had no idea who Fred Duesenberg was, and no clue about the special car he was driving; he saw only the black convertible's rumble seat as a potential ride for he and his friend. When asked, Fred agreed to give Frank a ride, and about half a mile down the road, he agreed to add Gordon in the rumble seat. The convertible top was in the lowered position.

The beautiful trip through the mountains commenced in routine fashion. Route 30 wound up through the Allegheny and Laurel Mountains, passing such sights and attractions as the S.S. Grand View Hotel, a.k.a. "the Ship Hotel," a newly opened, popular rest stop tucked into the mountainside 500 feet from the top of Allegheny Mountain, overlooking seven counties and three states. It continued another 26 miles, over the rolling hills to Jennerstown, Pennsylvania. Like Schellsburg, Jennerstown was and is a small western Pennsylvania town, located at a popular intersection at the base of a mountain. All was going well as Fred and his two passengers started up the east side of Laurel Mountain.

Many accounts claim that Fred was driving at a high rate of speed as he descended the mountain; however, a more reliable source, noted



Duesenberg authority Randy Ema, suggests otherwise. Further, I have personally been driving this stretch of road for years, under all varieties of conditions, and tend to agree that speeding down the west side of the mountain would not make any sense – especially since a prominent bend in the road was clearly marked then and now.

Two cars in the opposite lane were coming up the western side of the mountain when one of them, passing the other, swerved into Fred's lane. The driver regained control in his lane and passed by, however, Fred's reaction to avoid the oncoming car and brake resulted in his car sliding and going into a clockwise spin. Both Fred and the rumble seat rider, Gordon, were thrown out on to the roadway. The much younger Gordon landed on all fours, but Fred landed awkwardly, injuring his ribs, dislocating his shoulder, and bruising his spine. Needless to say, he began experiencing chest pains. The Duesenberg, still moving, lightly struck the mountainside and came to a stop. Frank still remained in the car, and was briefly knocked unconscious as he hit his head on the top of the windshield frame.

It should be noted that Fred's first concern was to check on the condition of his passengers; he was comforted to know that they were a little shaken, but okay. A State Patrolman arrived at the scene within ten minutes; only from him did the two passengers learn that their driver was the famous Fred Duesenberg, and that he had built the car in which they were riding. Presumably, he had simply introduced himself as "Fred."

The driver of one of the cars that had >

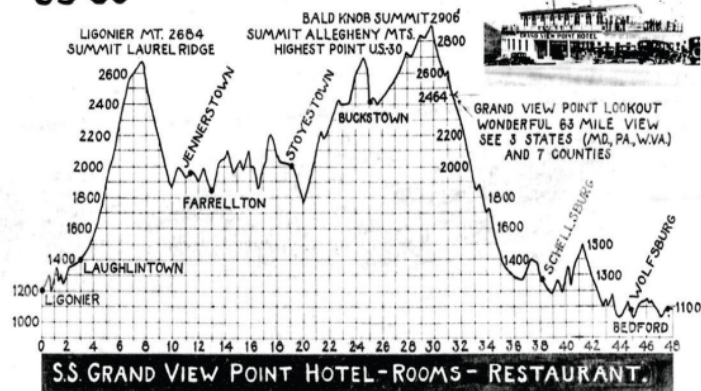


Photo right: This graph indicates the elevation of Route 30 from Bedford to Ligonier; note that the hotel was located 450 feet from the Bald Knob Summit.

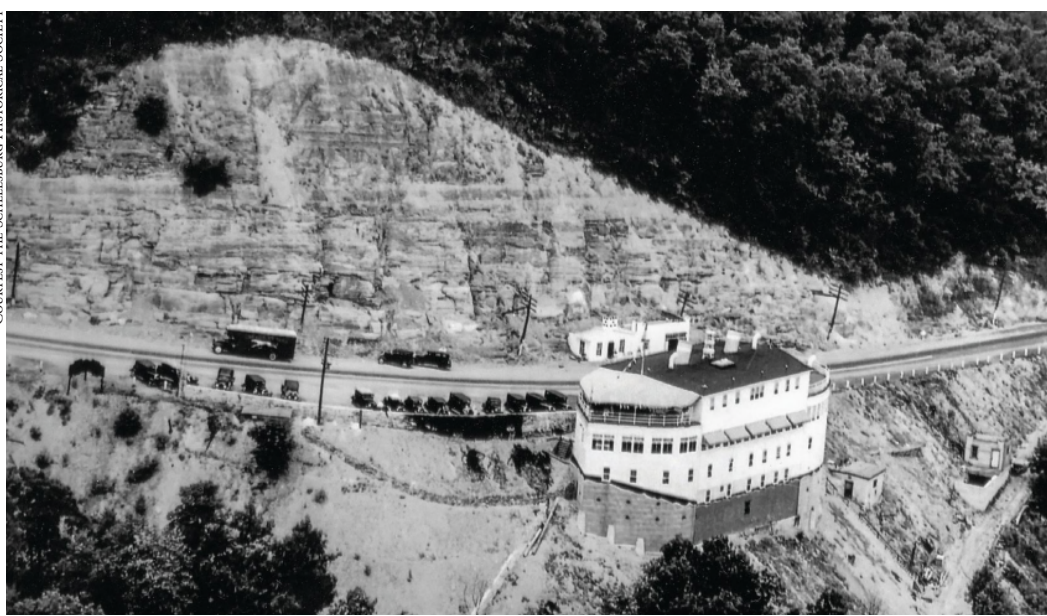
Photo below: The "Ship Hotel," Fred and passengers drove past this distinctive landmark, which was virtually brand-new in 1932.

COURTESY THE SCHELLSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LIGONIER, PA. TO BEDFORD, PA. US-30



COURTESY THE SCHELLSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PHOTOS COURTESY THE SCHELLSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

been coming up the hill apparently turned around and offered to drive the boys to a small hospital in nearby Ligonier, where their minor injuries were treated. Fred was transported by ambulance to the Johnstown Memorial Hospital for more careful examination, observation, and treatment.

A local garage, two miles east of the accident scene, arrived to tow the Duesenberg from the road. Despite the sensational reporting of the period, the car had never turned over, had never hit another car, and had remained on the roadway.

After the Accident

Ted Brant, the young operator of the aforementioned garage, was driving his tow truck, a converted Pierce-Arrow – not uncommon in a time when quality cars' power, solid chassis, and reliability outlasted their bodies. The Pierce-Arrow easily transported the 5,000-pound Model J back over the mountain, in what must have been quite a sight to behold. As this was the July 4th holiday weekend, the Duesenberg agency in Pittsburgh, upon being contacted by the police, instructed Ted to keep the car at his garage, and said that they would send someone to pick it up after the weekend.

Ted knew this car was special and knew who Fred Duesenberg was, and he was excited to immediately assess the damage for himself. All of the garage's scheduled regular service work came to a halt as he raised the hood and saw the supercharged engine with its large exhaust pipes protruding down the side. He sat in the driver's seat and saw an opportunity to actually drive the car. The extent of the Duesenberg's damage was relatively minor, including an obvious tire issue, insignificant body damage, and a bent suspension component. The left front wheel was quickly removed, the left front tie rod was straightened, and the spare tire was installed. The Duesy was placed on the ground, and now was ready for a brief test drive the following morning.

Ted could not get back to the garage fast enough on Sunday, as he planned to take the Duesy up the mountain to a small restaurant owned by J.T. Stitley, where passersby could view and photograph the special car. He also drove the Duesy up to the restaurant on Monday, July 4, for more people to appreciate.

John Walter was the owner of the garage that Ted had rented for his business. Walter's 18-year-old son, Eugene, was a frequent visitor and enjoyed seeing the various cars that were in for repairs and maintenance. The sight of the Duesy in the garage was so special that Gene looked at it for hours. Ted sensed young Gene's infatuation with the car, and told the youngster to get behind the wheel, and allowed him to drive it up the mountain. Eventually, all the fun came to an end, when Duesenberg finally collected the car and drove it – under its own power – back to Indianapolis for inspection and further repairs.

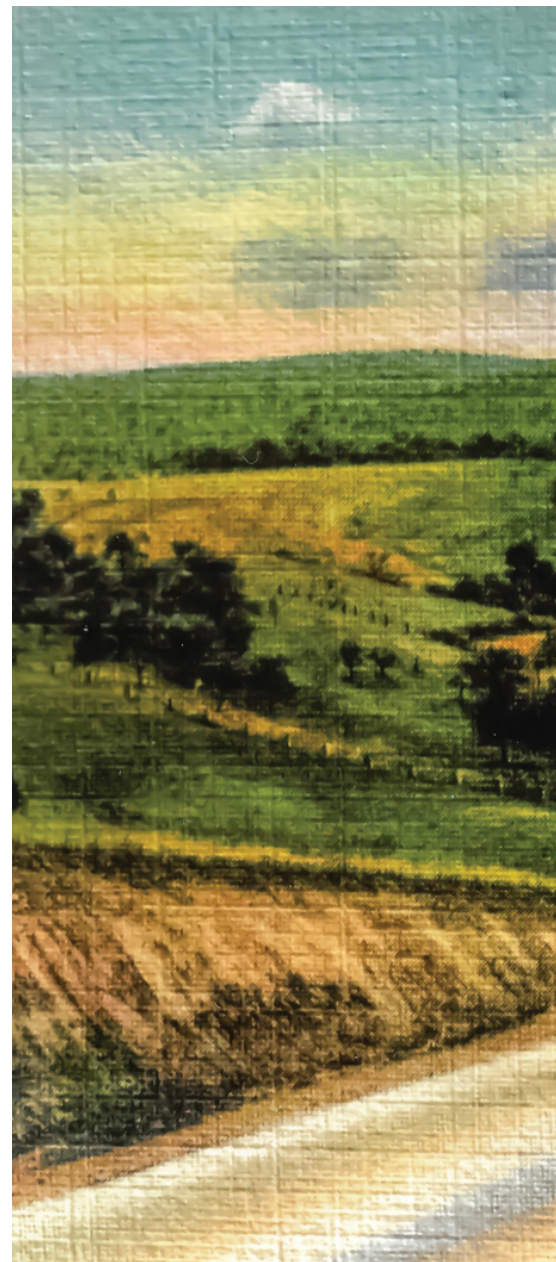
Meanwhile, Fred Duesenberg remained in the Johnstown Hospital. After the accident, Fred actually wrote a two-page letter to his wife, Isle Denny Duesenberg, and received a response. Excerpts from his letter included, "I'm fine," "I'll be home in a couple of days," "Car was not damaged much," "No broken bones," "Bruised," and "Doctor said I will be released in 3-4 days." These letters were among many personal items willed by Fred's son, Denny, to Randy Ema for his extensive archives, and he graciously shared their contents with me.

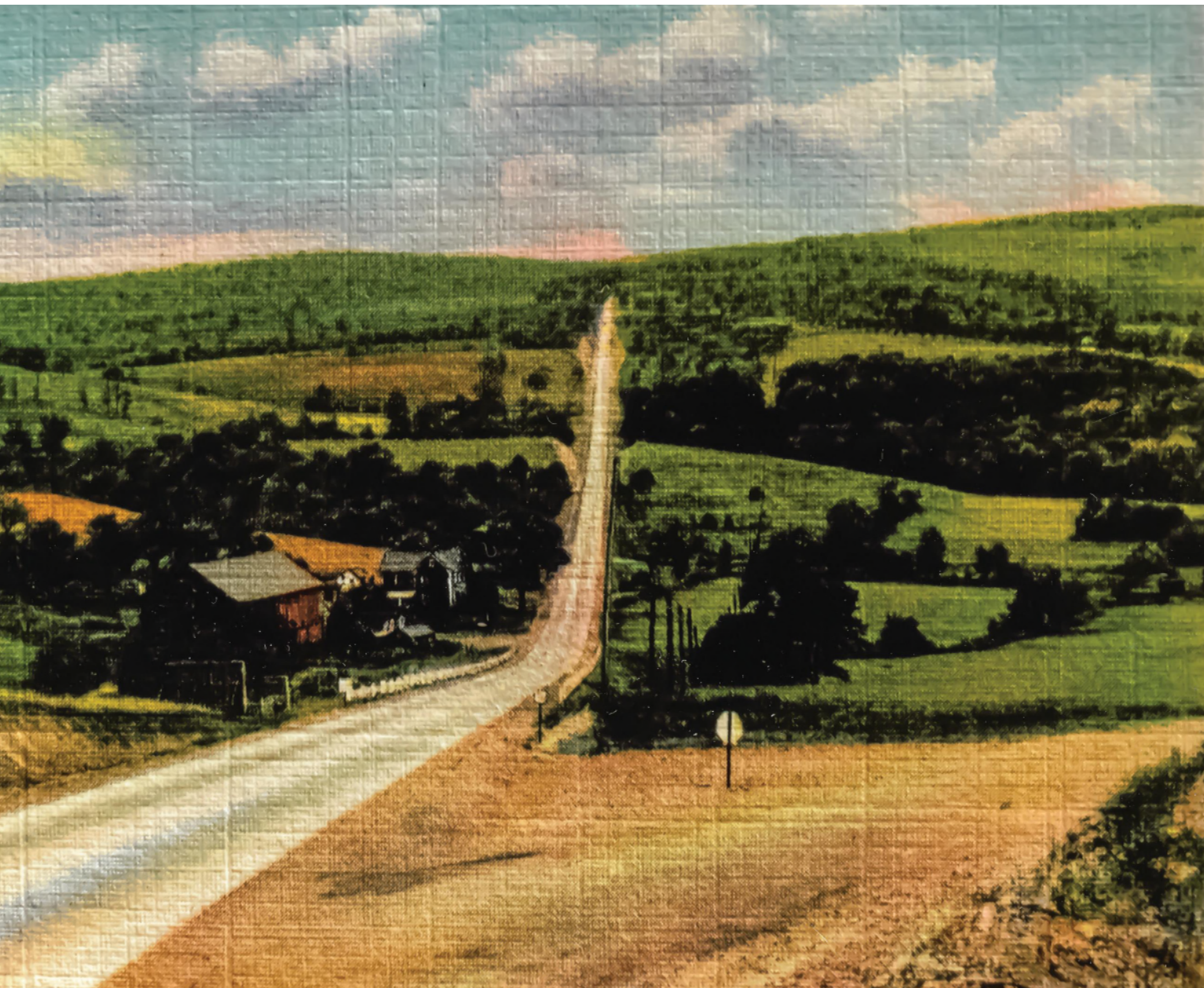
Later articles would report "Injuries Kill Duesenberg," "Duesenberg Dies of Auto Injuries," and "Killed By His Own Invention," and note that Duesenberg was "seriously injured when he crashed into the mountain." None of this was true. His years >

Photo right: Route 30 looking west, with evidence of the old Route 30 beginning on the right; it would have crossed the new road twice before the summit. The commemorative sign mounted today stands on this side of the mountain, two miles away from the accident site.

Photos below, left to right: Route 30, looking east towards Jennerstown. Old Route 30 is visible on the left side and would have crossed near this point. The commemorative sign stands near this spot.

Ted Brant at his garage. Eighteen-year-old Eugene Walter in 1932, the year that he drove J-298.





COURTESY OF RAY WOTKOWSKI



COURTESY OF RAY WOTKOWSKI



COURTESY THE WALTER FAMILY



COURTESY THE WALTER FAMILY

of racing had exposed him to all of the elements associated with engine building and car development; as a result, he had numerous pre-existing health conditions, including arthritis and seven prior bouts with pneumonia. The accident may have aggravated these health issues, as his Certificate of Death listed a fracture of left ribs 4 and 5, a fracture of the left scapula, and fracture of two lateral processes, tiny wing members off a vertebra on the left side of the

Photos top to bottom: The curve where a passing car was in Fred's lane as he descended the Laurel Ridge, beginning the accident.

Looking eastward, up the hill, from where J-298 came to rest on the roadway.

Fred Duesenberg's death certificate, listing the cause of death as "broncho pneumonia" and contributory fractures.

spinal lumbar. An eighth bout of pneumonia set in while he was in the hospital and diminished his ability to recover from these injuries, and his heart finally gave way at 7:35 a.m. on July 26, 1932, at the age of 55 years, 7 months and 20 days. Isle and Denny were able to be at his side at the end.

The Rest of the Story

I am not sure how the boys completed their hitchhiking trip to Chicago, or how this experience impacted their lives. However, hitchhiker Frank Peacock surfaced fifty years later at a speaking event by Gordon Buehrig at a men's club in Sun City, Arizona. Buehrig was the head of body design for Duesenberg and had been living in the Duesenberg home in 1932. At the event, he presented information about Fred Duesenberg's accident, describing the events as he knew them, using Warren Watson's account from fifty years past. Frank Peacock approached Buehrig afterwards, informing him that it did not happen that way, and that he and his friend actually were in the car during the accident. Buehrig, being extremely interested in the new

COURTESY OF RAY WOTKOWSKI



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COURTESY JACK BRANT



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accounting of facts, was compelled to write an article entitled, "How It Really Happened," which appeared in the September 1981 issue of *The Classic Car*. One could assume that the Duesenberg agency may have down-played the hitchhiker part of the story.

After its return to Indianapolis, the car, J-298 was returned by Mr. Allen to the Duesenberg company in return for credit towards a future purchase, and underwent a major overhaul. The Duesenberg Brothers-built experimental supercharger was replaced by a Duesenberg factory supercharger, the black paint was replaced by a pale yellow color, and the car was restyled with skirted fenders. Due to misinformation, J-298 was unfairly dubbed "The Death Car," had an unfair reputation of poor handling due to the spin-out, and proved a marketing challenge before finally being sold in 1936.

In 1972, J-298 was purchased by longtime enthusiast Robert Friggens of Albuquerque, New Mexico. In a telephone interview in February 2021, Bob graciously recounted that he rebuilt the motor with a .050 overbore, replaced the car's modified grille with a "New Old Stock" traditional Model J unit, replaced later smaller headlights with original ones, and removed the skirted fenders, while also studying aspects of the firewall for original component placement. Bob was very thankful that the body had never been modified, allowing him to return the car to its original configuration. He equipped the engine with the best-performing dual-carburetor supercharger, recalling to me that "the car would really go."

As was stated earlier, Eugene Walter's father had owned Ted Brant's garage, and in the 1940s John and Eugene built the Sliding Rock Golf Course in the same vicinity. The Brant-run garage itself had been torn down years ago and the exact location was not known. After corresponding with me, Paul Brant searched family photographs to find any evidence of the garage, in "Where's Waldo" fashion, with the

Photo top: Eugene Walter, age 90, standing at the actual site of the accident in 2003.

Photos opposite page, top to bottom: J-298 as restored by longtime owner Bob Friggens.

A period postcard view of the Lincoln Highway, Route 30, looking west, ten miles west of the S.S. Grand View "Ship Hotel." Fred would have driven this stretch about 10 a.m. The sky tells a story.

Shell sign first found in the background of a photo. Two additional family photos provided further evidence of the location of the garage, as well as period postcards of the new eastern side of Route 30. A sign for the garage was located in the area of the Sliding Rock Golf Course's current number 5 green; the cement base of the sign is the only remaining artifact to be seen today.

Eugene Walter's son, Jack, recalled his father often sharing the story about the experience of driving the Duesenberg. In 2003, when his father turned 90, Jack decided to do something special for his birthday by locating the car. The Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum directed him to Randy Ema, who, having all of the Duesenberg records, would know where J-298 was located, and pointed Jack to Bob Friggens.

Like many car enthusiasts, Bob planned to attend the annual Hershey show in October, and so made arrangements to meet with Eugene Walter and two of his three sons, Jack and Mark, at the Sliding Rock Golf Course. The three Walters and Bob drove to the exact area on the west side of the mountain and walked the roadside where the accident occurred. The hour long visit was enlightening for Bob and a tremendous birthday celebration for Eugene. Bob was especially impressed with Gene's recall of specific options that only a driver of J-298 would know; his description of the exhaust cutout lever on the floorboard and adjustable brake system were convincing proof. The visit was the subject of another article in *The Classic Car*, in "More About the J-298," in the October 2004 issue. Bob Friggens would go on to keep J-298 for a further five years, before finally selling it after 36 years of enjoyment.

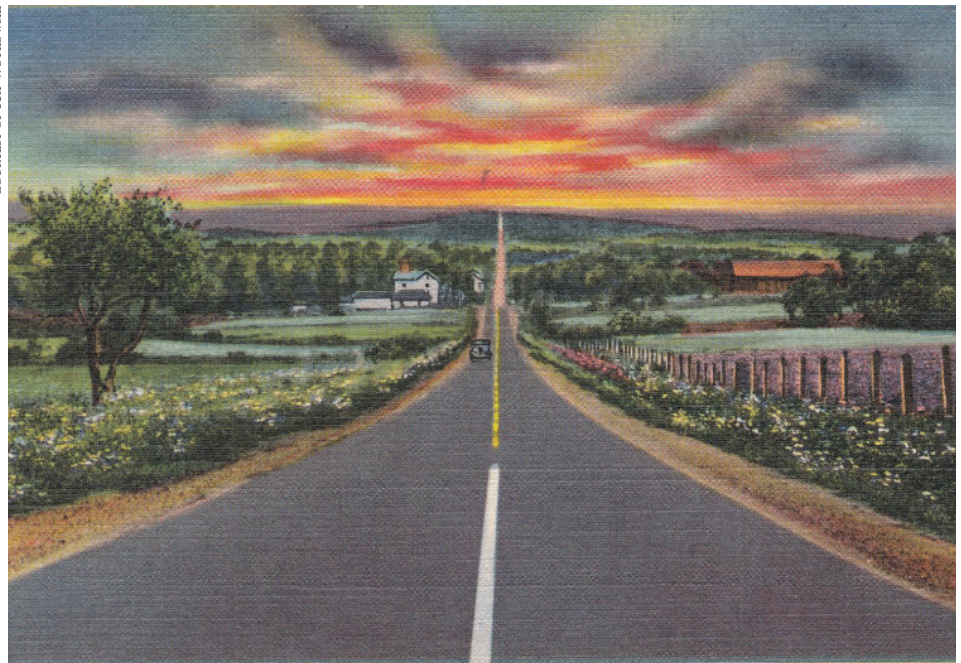
My investigation with the local Post Office resulted in an excellent lead for finding the Walter brothers, as an elderly customer informed me that Mark Walter lived in town. After finding his address, a visit, some quality car talk, and an exchange of telephone numbers, within a week the information was flowing. I was able to locate all three brothers, Paul now living out-of-state, which was as exciting for me as it was for them, because they were anxious to contribute information and promote their father's experience. Their father's direct involvement with J-298 provides factual glue for the story. Paul actually provided me a picture of Eugene when he was eighteen, while Jack provided over a dozen documents, articles and a copy of Fred's death certificate – invaluable information.



In closing, a significant segment of the Duesenberg story occurred in the Johnstown area, making the Duesenberg legacy forever a part of our local history. Through the graciousness of the Brant and Walter families, Bob Friggens, and Randy Ema, as well as many other “car guys” and friends, I believe that I have corrected many of the longstanding inconsistencies of this story. Facts tend to fade, like many stories that are passed down through the decades, and this one is no different. I still have unanswered questions to date and will continue to research and tell the most accurate version of the story, supported by facts. Among my goals is to correct the most public misinformation on the accident, a commemorative sign on the Lincoln Highway. While the sign is impressive and an appreciated gesture, it adds to the long-lived confusion of the events of the accident, noting worded, inaccurately, that the car “crashed into the mountainside.” Further, the sign itself is actually on the east side of the mountain – two miles away from the actual accident site.

Researching Fred Duesenberg’s accident has been an enlightening journey for me, and the search for relevant information will continue. ●

COURTESY OF RAY WOTKOWSKI



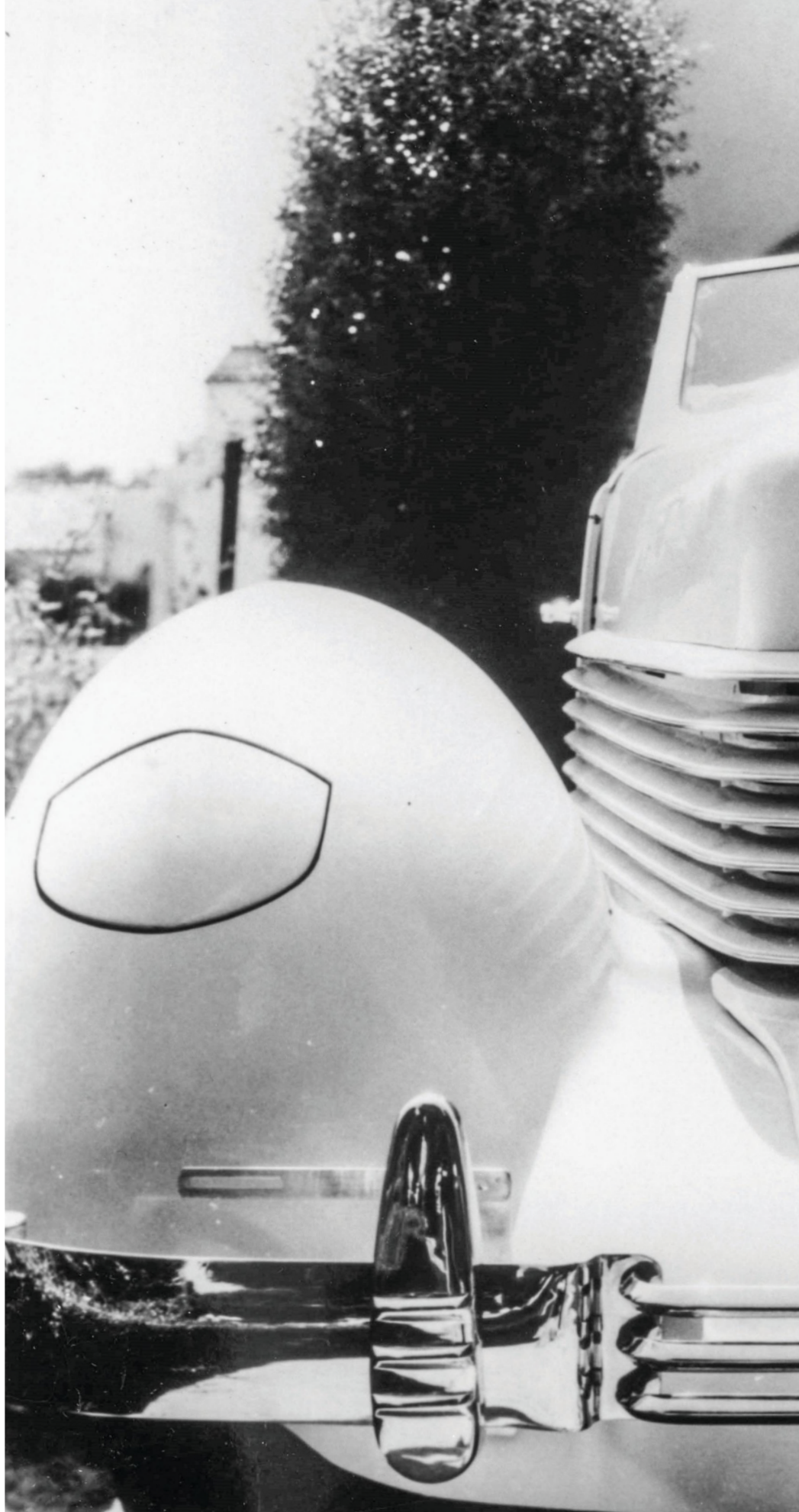
NOTE: Merriam-Webster Dictionary completely rejects any attribution of “doozy” to the automobile, noting that, “doozy” originally appeared in eastern Ohio in 1916, four years before the production of the first Duesenberg vehicles. They also say there is little evidence connecting the Duesenberg and “doozy” during the 1920s and 1930s, when the car was most popular. My response to George & Charles Merriam and Noah Webster is simple: “It’s a Duesy.” The greatest car of that decade “owns” the term.

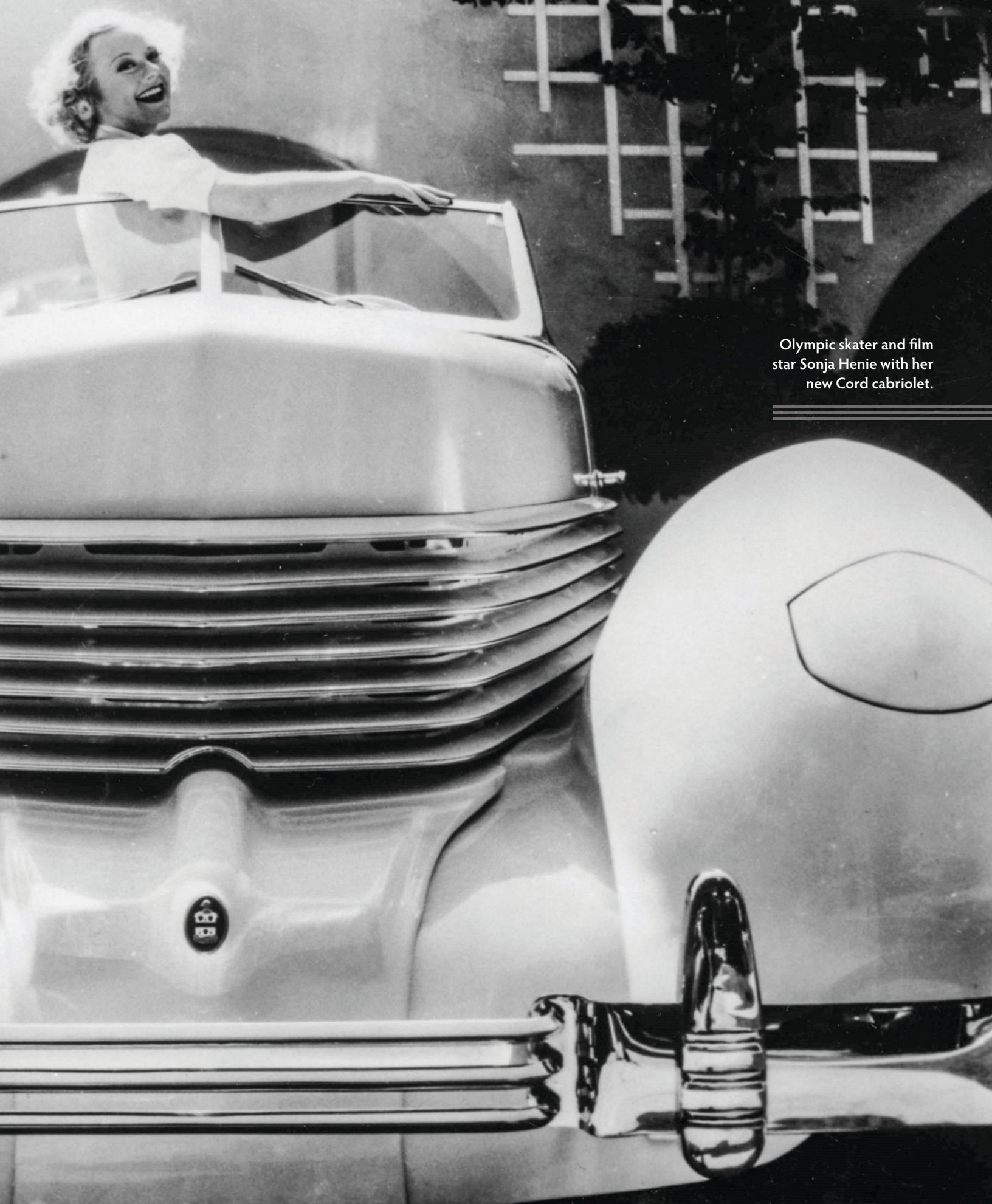
THE CORD 810 AND 812: A CAR FOR THE AGES

by Michael Hayward

*All Photos Unless Otherwise Credited Courtesy of
ACD Automobile Museum*

Among the most spectacular cars of the 1930s or any other decade were the Cord 810 and 812 of 1936 and 1937, respectively. Everything about these cars was different. There were no visible running boards, and away went the door hinges. The headlights were hidden, the hood ornament was eliminated, and the hood was hinged at the back, providing easier access to the engine. In every way these cars were far ahead of their time. >



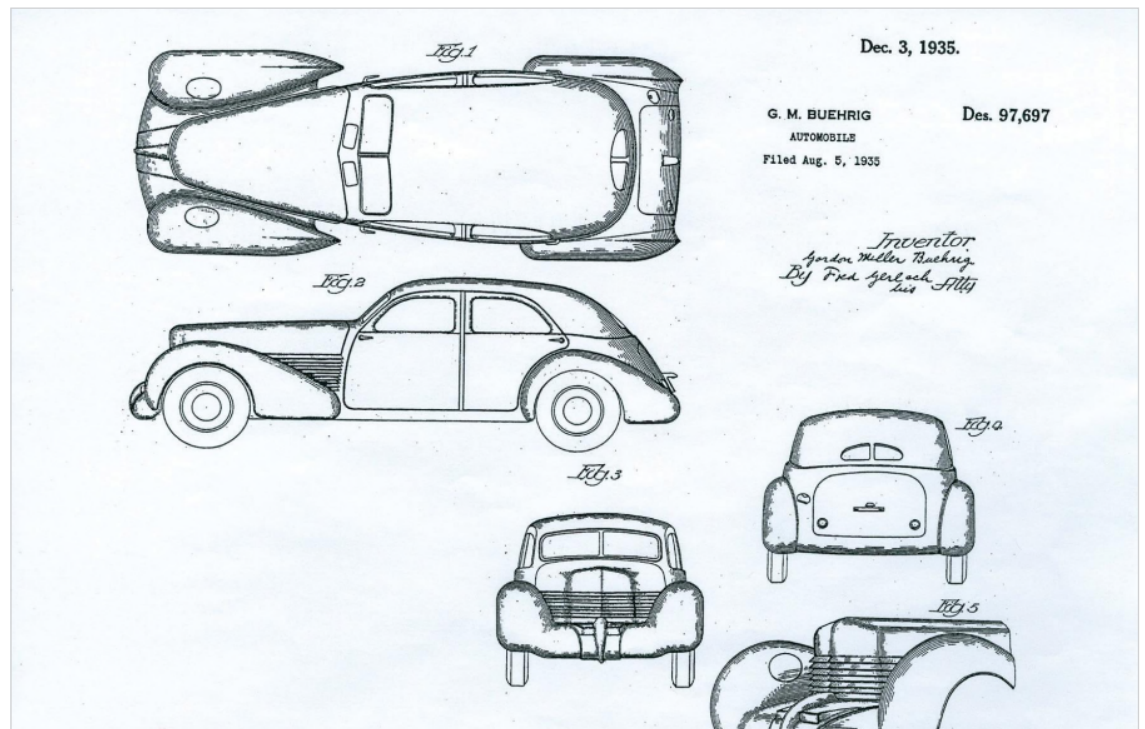


Olympic skater and film
star Sonja Henie with her
new Cord cabriolet.

Photo top right: Gordon Buehrig's original blueprint for the Cord design.

Photo bottom: The first Cord sedan rolls off the assembly line.

Photo opposite page: A factory promotional photograph of the Cord 810 Convertible Coupe, taken at E.L. Cord's estate, Cordhaven.



E.L. Cord's automotive empire was crowned by the Duesenberg marque. These automobiles catered to the upper class, and their advertising showed the wealthy going to country clubs and other high-end venues. Unfortunately, during the Depression, the cost of the average new car was \$750 or less, much less than even the Cord Corporation's less expensive Auburn. As people turned away from wealth, privilege, and prestige, and the wealthy class began to be blamed for the Depression itself, the dealers selling these high-end automobiles were having a difficult time making sales.

By 1936, E.L. Cord himself was living in Southern California. Following the death of his first wife, he had remarried and built a large home, Cordhaven, on ten acres in Beverly Hills. With the move west, Cord lost

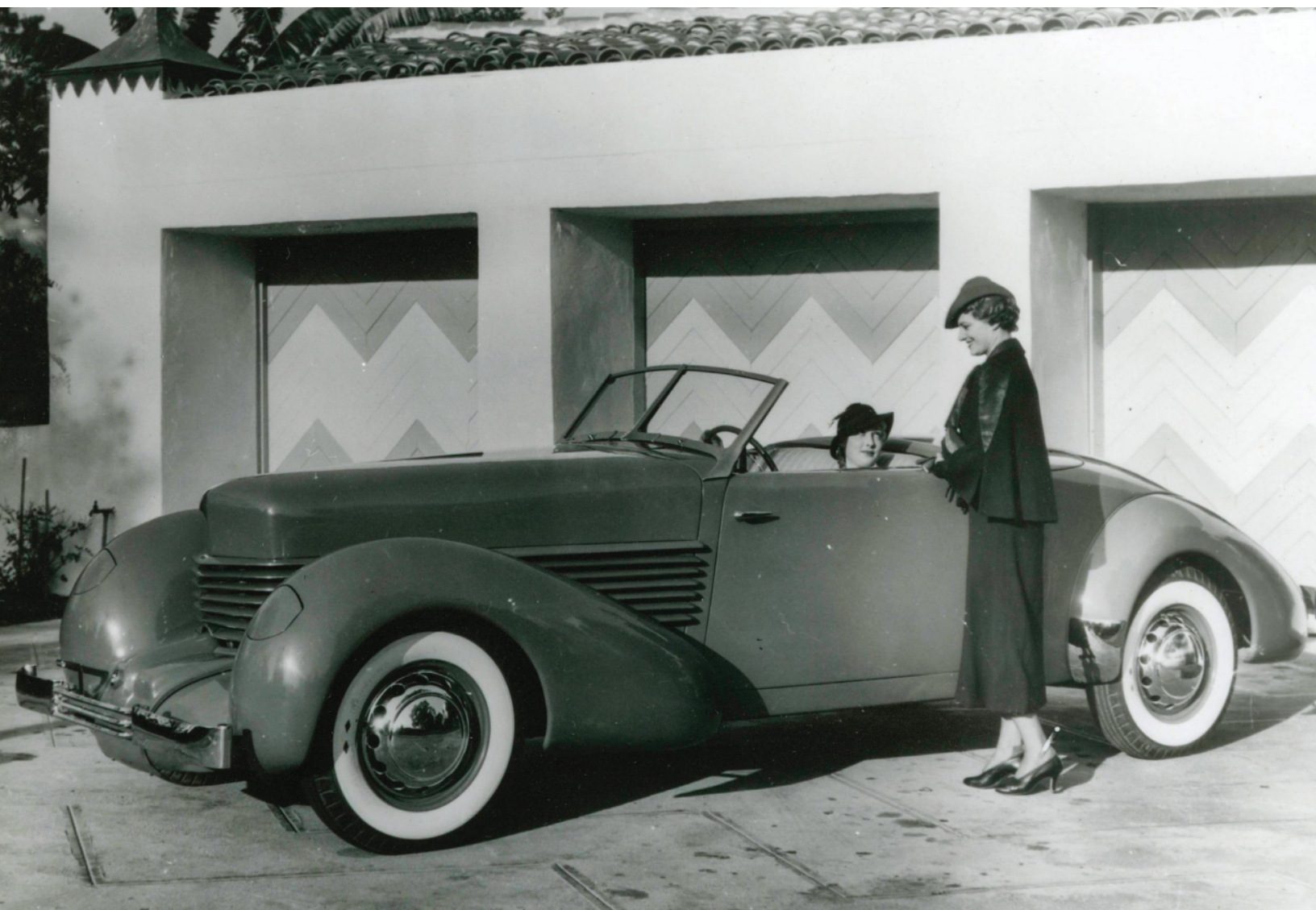
interest in his automotive empire, turning his interest to other ventures, including Stinson Aircraft, which he owned, and an airline which would become the forerunner to American Airlines. He was also part owner of the Checker Cab Company, and established large real estate holdings in Southern California. Challenges came up to his aviation and cab interests, and he was being investigated by the SEC over various stock transactions in recent years. The automotive group was "in the red." According to his son, Cord suffered a nervous breakdown in 1937.

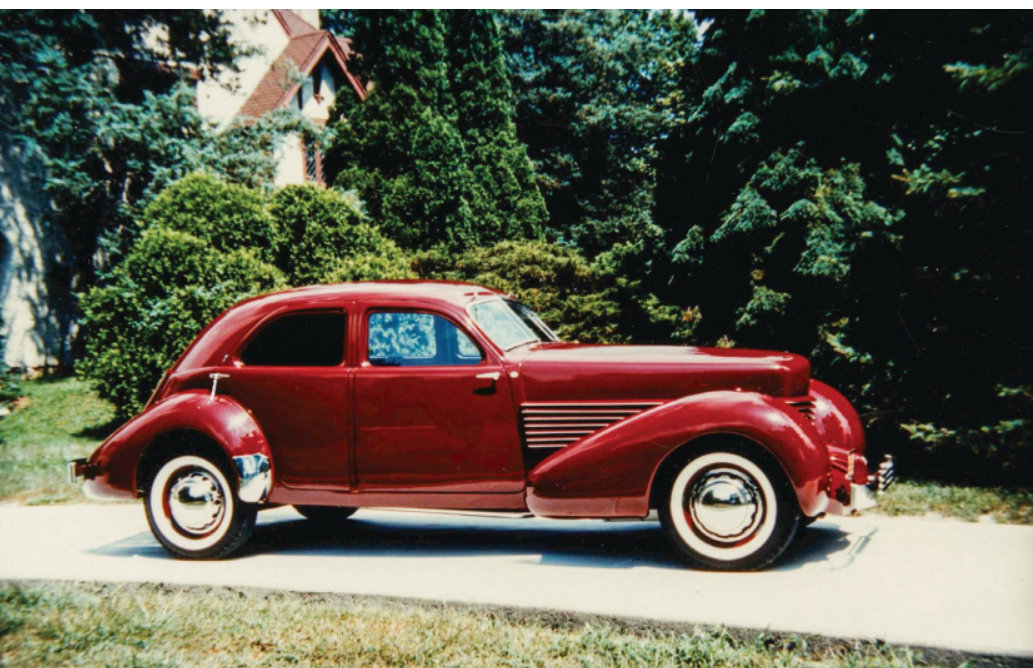
It was against this backdrop that the New Cord came into being – and considering all that was happening around it at the time, it is amazing that it was ever built.

In order to stem the tide of red ink from the Cord automobile interests, company

executives wanted to introduce a "baby Duesenberg" that would appeal to a wider audience, at the request of Duesenberg president Harold Ames. Gordon Buehrig, formerly the chief body designer for Duesenberg, was enticed to return from General Motors to work on the prototype. One of the master designers of the Classic Era, he developed a whole canon of celebrated concepts for coachwork, including not only multiple Duesenberg designs but a revitalization of the entire Auburn line for 1935, including the famed Speedster.

Originally envisioned as a conventional rear-wheel-drive car with a straight-eight engine, the Baby Duesenberg project was scrapped by Ames, now vice-president of Auburn Automobile Company. Buehrig's design would survive, however, as a new >





Photos from top: The Cord 810 Westchester, the entry-level sedan model.

The upmarket 810 Beverly with its "armchair" interior. This particular car was later owned by Gordon Buehrig, its designer.

version of the 1929 Cord.

Truly all-new, the car would share its predecessor's front-wheel-drive, but would have a V-8 engine and independent front suspension. The new engine, developed by Lycoming, produced 125 horsepower from 289 cubic inches and 6.5:1 compression,

and by using aluminum cylinder heads and intake manifold, had a weight of only 566 pounds. This engine was nearer the front wheels, which also provided better traction when going up hills. Being smaller, the new engine also provided more room in the front and back seats.

The transmission had four speeds, with the shifter located on the right side of the steering wheel. The fingertip selector was developed by the Bendix Corporation and allowed drivers to change gears without taking their hands off the steering wheel; shifting was accomplished by vacuum-powered cylinders activated by electrical solenoids. The front suspension and steering assembly were completely redesigned. Unlike the earlier Cord L-29, which used inboard front brakes, the new Cord's brakes were located outside, making the brakes easier to service and putting less stress on the U-joints.

Buehrig's "coffin nose" wrap-around front end created quite a sensation, although air cooling of the radiator was partially restricted by the stylish louver-style front end, which contributed to overheating problems. Pontoon-style fenders, without running boards, were another rakish touch. Retractable headlights, inspired by the >



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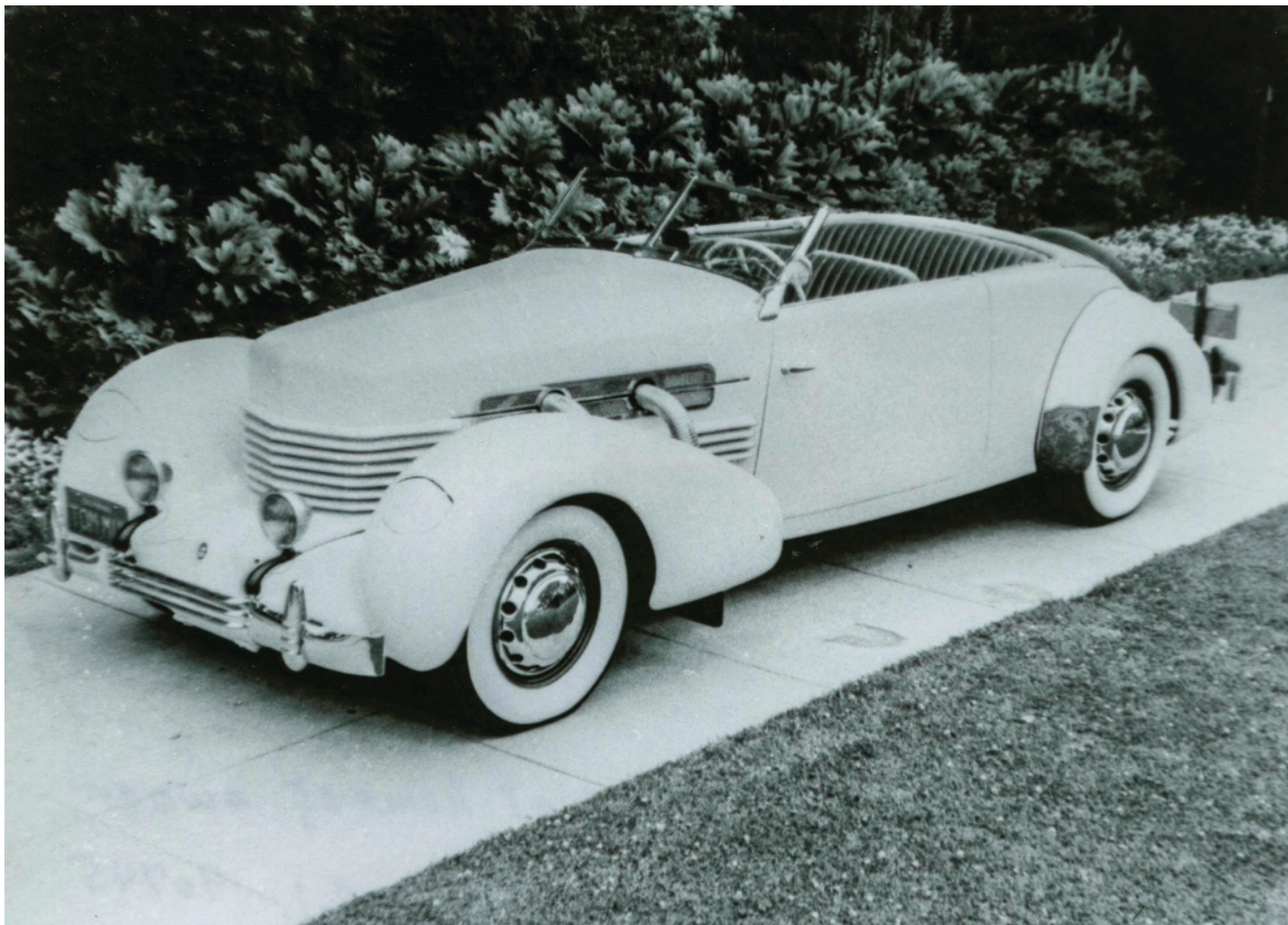


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Photos from top: The Cord 812 Supercharged Phaeton, with the supercharged engine's distinctive side exhausts.

The bronze model given impatient Cord customers after production delays.

landing gear of the Cord-built Stinson airplanes, were operated by a simplified, manually operated cable and worm gear arrangement, one for each headlight on either side of the dashboard, for which engineer Herb Snow was awarded a patent. The instrument panel was very “Art Deco;” its chrome-plated backdrop was one of the most beautiful instrument panels ever designed.

Four body styles were offered for 1936. The Convertible Coupe or Cabriolet, \$2,145, seated just two people, while the other open style, the Phaeton, \$2,195, provided a back seat and room for five; both featured a completely disappearing top, which helped give the cars a very sleek look. Two sedans were offered, the lower-cost Westchester, \$1,995, with flat-panel cloth upholstery, and the upmarket Beverly, \$2,095, with pleated

cloth upholstery and front and rear armrests. By comparison, a 1936 Cadillac Twelve town car was listed at \$2,145, a Packard Eight sedan retailed for \$2,385, Auburn’s own Speedster cost \$2,245, and a Ford Deluxe Phaeton sold for \$590. In other words, the Cord was still not an inexpensive automobile by any means.

The Cord 810 made its debut at the New York Automobile Show in November 1935 and was the hit of the show, as people lined up to see it. Salesmen started taking orders for the car around the same time, promising delivery by Christmas. Unfortunately, manufacturing and engineering difficulties delayed production until February of 1936. Some of the problems encountered included engine overheating, noisy U-joints, and difficulty in shifting the transmission mechanism. Because of the delay in >



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Photo above: At the beginning of modern Cord enthusiasm: Don Thompson's 1937 812 Supercharged Beverly in Huntington, West Virginia, in the early 1950s. *Courtesy the Thompson Family.*

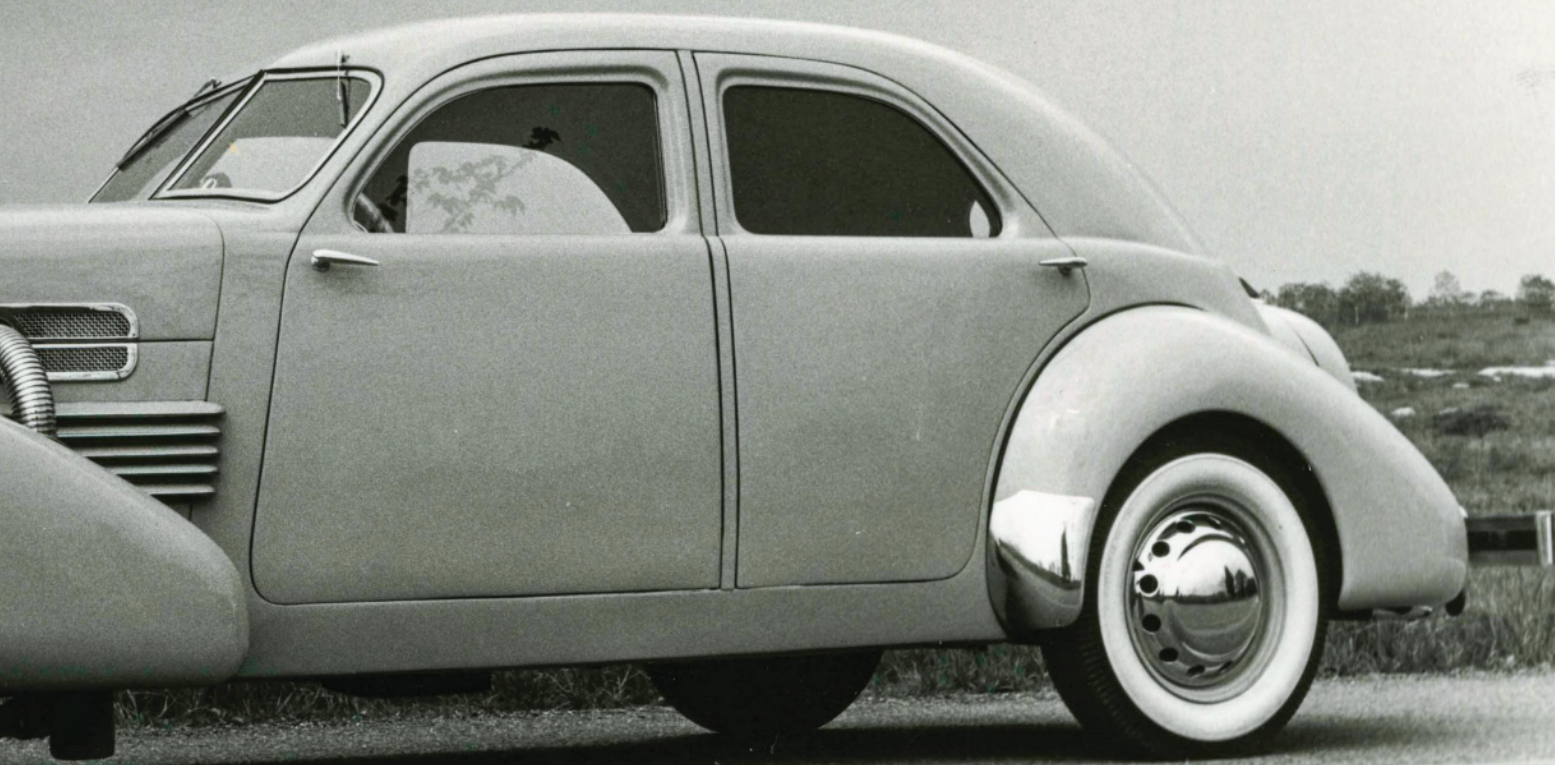
Photo right: The 812 Custom Beverly, one of the new long-wheelbase models introduced for 1937, here equipped with the supercharged engine.

manufacturing, to pacify customers Auburn sent many of the customers a beautifully detailed model as a Christmas gift. The models were six inches in length, cast in bronze, hand-finished, and mounted on a piece of onyx.

Nonetheless, many customers cancelled their orders, and approximately 1,600 Cord 810s were built for the 1936 model year. Only about 1,100 of these were sold, while the remainder were renumbered to become the earliest examples of the 1937 812.

The 812 was available with an optional Schwitzer-Cummins centrifugal supercharger, enabling engine output of 170 hp and a top speed of 105 mph. Supercharged Cords had flexible stainless steel exhaust pipes that exited the engine through each side of the engine compartment and through the front fenders. The pipes were designed by Alex Tremulis, who would gain fame later as the designer of the Tucker automobile, and helped cool the engine compartment. Also new for 1937 was a Custom series, including both a Beverly sedan and a Berline with a wind-up division window, mounted on a wheelbase extended to 132 inches, addressing customer demands >







Cord historian Josh B. Malks's 1936 810 Westchester, a restored example of Buehrig's legendary design.

for more headroom and rear seat legroom.

Despite continued improvement to the cars, the new supercharger, and the new models, sales continued to plunge, and the end was near for the Cord. Because of the low production numbers, manufacturing costs had been greater than anticipated, and so the model quickly became a financial burden. The last Cords rolled off the assembly line in August of 1937. Total production had been about 3,000 cars, of which about 2,320 were sold. E.L. Cord would sell his automotive interests in the same month for about \$2.6 million.

The tooling of the Cord was sold to Hupmobile, which entered into a joint venture with yet another fading automaker, Graham, to produce the Hupp Skylark and Graham Hollywood (NC) using modified Cord panels. Following the failure of this venture, the dies were junked.

The author has often thought that the building of the Cord was a mistake; instead, the company should have developed a car to compete with Ford and Chevrolet. Yet

this approach alone may not have saved the company from bankruptcy without E.L. Cord manning the ship and adapting the company's offering to suit public tastes; had he stayed in Indiana, he may have been able to turn things around. Who is to say?

The Cord nonetheless had been a big hit with celebrities, with notable owners including Amelia Earhart, Tom Mix, Dick Powell and his wife Joan Blondell, Johnny Weissmuller, Sonja Henie, and Max Schmeling. Its distinctive appearance meant the car itself often appeared in movies. Despite the mechanical problems, the design was breathtaking and helped influence automobile design for the future. In the Fall of 1951, the Museum of Modern Art in New York devoted an exhibit to the aesthetics of motor car design. Among the eight automobiles honored was the 1937 Cord.

Fascination for the Cord has never retreated.

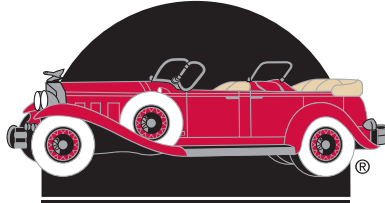
In conclusion, I would like to thank Sam Grate, the curator at the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum in Auburn, Indiana,

and his staff for help in putting this project together. In addition, I would like to thank Heather Hoesch, curator of the Amelia Earhart Birthplace Museum in Atchison, Kansas, for invaluable information. A special thanks goes out to my niece, Nycole Hayward for her much-needed help for this article. ●

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1931 Packard 845 Convertible Roadster by Derham

By Jonathan Sierakowski & Chris Summers

The Classic Car Club of America Museum is proudly home to the archives of the Derham Body Company, offering a tantalizing view into the creations of this great Pennsylvania coachbuilder. Among the records on-hand are an order for two style no. 3410 Convertible Roadsters, bodies no. 2286 and 2287, ordered by the Packard Washington Motor Car Company of Washington, D.C. A total of sixty pages of documentation and correspondence covers everything from the order of the chassis from the Packard factory, all the way through to the delivery of the completed cars to Packard Washington. >

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* ADAMS 6130

PACKARD WASHINGTON
MOTOR CAR COMPANY
1701 KALORAMA ROAD

No 2953 A

DATE May 20, 1930

TO DERHAM BODY COMPANY

ROSEMONT, PENNSYLVANIA

PLEASE SUPPLY THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES


QUANTITY	PIECE NO.		EACH	PRICE
1	2286	Convertible Derham Roadster body, mounted on packard 145 1/2" chassis - delivery September.....		\$2000.00
1	2287	Convertible Derham Roadster body, mounted on packard 145 1/2" chassis - delivery September or October. Consignment basis - payment made after sale and delivery of body.		\$2000.00

APPROVED BY *J. M. Colburn*

NOTICE
A packing slip or memoranda bill must accompany delivery of all articles. Prices must be extended and our order number shown. Failure to comply with the above will delay payment of your bill.

PURCHASING AGENT

The order form for the two Derham Convertible Roadsters requested by Packard Washington, noting body no. 2287 as being on a consignment basis.



PACKARD WASHINGTON
MOTOR CAR COMPANY
WASHINGTON

SALES
PACKARD BUILDING
CONNECTICUT AT S
SERVICE
1701 KALORAMA ROAD
* ADAMS 6130

May 20, 1930

Mr. James P. Derham, President,
Derham Body Company,
Rosemont, Pa.

Dear Mr. Derham:

As Mr. Coolican is leaving the city at noon for several days, he has asked me to acknowledge your two letters of May 19th and to tell you how much he appreciated your visit with us.

This is to confirm our verbal understanding that you are to proceed immediately with two Convertible Roadster bodies like the photographs, the same to be mounted on the 145 1/2" wheel-base chassis for delivery in September or October.

Purchase order covering these jobs is enclosed. It is understood that the first body is to be completed in September, and we are to pay you for the same upon completion. The second body is to be completed in September or October, and is to be furnished on a consignment basis, payment to be made on the sale of same.

Paint and upholstery specifications are to be furnished you later.

The Convertible Sedan is a most striking and beautiful design, but we do not feel that we should order one of these at this time. However, you may rest assured that we will keep this before us and will present these drawings to all inquiries that we receive for jobs of this character.

Very truly yours,
PACKARD WASHINGTON
MOTOR CAR COMPANY,
J. M. Colburn
L. M. Colburn,
Sales Manager.

The letter from Packard Washington sales manager L.N. Colburn, confirming order of the Derham Convertible Roadsters.

Body no. 2287 is often referred to in the file as "the consignment job," as while both cars were produced on spec for Packard Washington, by agreement 2286 was paid for up front while 2287 would be paid off upon being sold.

Perhaps because "the consignment job" had to fly off the showroom floor, the Derham records show it was outfitted with some particularly dressy features, including dual rear-mounted spares and chrome hood doors, as specifically ordered by Packard Washington. Further, the car was fitted with Derham's newly patented crank-operated top, similar to that later found on the convertible coupes built by Walker-LaGrande on Duesenberg chassis. Not all Derham Convertible Roadsters had this feature, the \$100 cost of which some clients viewed as cost-prohibitive on an already \$2,000 body.

In case all of this failed to still draw a monied buyer into the showroom, the car was finished in Black with Ronan's Perfect Red Extra Pale window reveals, chassis, wheels, and gas tank; a top and spare covers in Haartz 2390/300 Black Waterproof Mohair; and interior leather in Blanchard & Lane Devon Grain #315 leather.

Packard Washington received the body and chassis, along with items such as cushions, rugs, dust boot, back curtain, and top crank, on October 28, 1930. Correspondence dated thereafter indicates that, as had been planned and hoped for, the car sold rather quickly; the original date plate indicates the sale of vehicle no. 845-37 exactly one month after delivery to Washington, on November 28, 1930.

In the 1950s, the onetime "consignment job" reappeared in suburban Cleveland, Ohio, in the ownership of early CCCA member, Anthony Fiocco of Westlake. Fiocco and the car, restored in white but still retaining the distinctive chrome hood doors and covered dual rear spares, appeared in the 1954 Annual Review of *The Classic Car*. The car was driven on a CARavan that year, and in >



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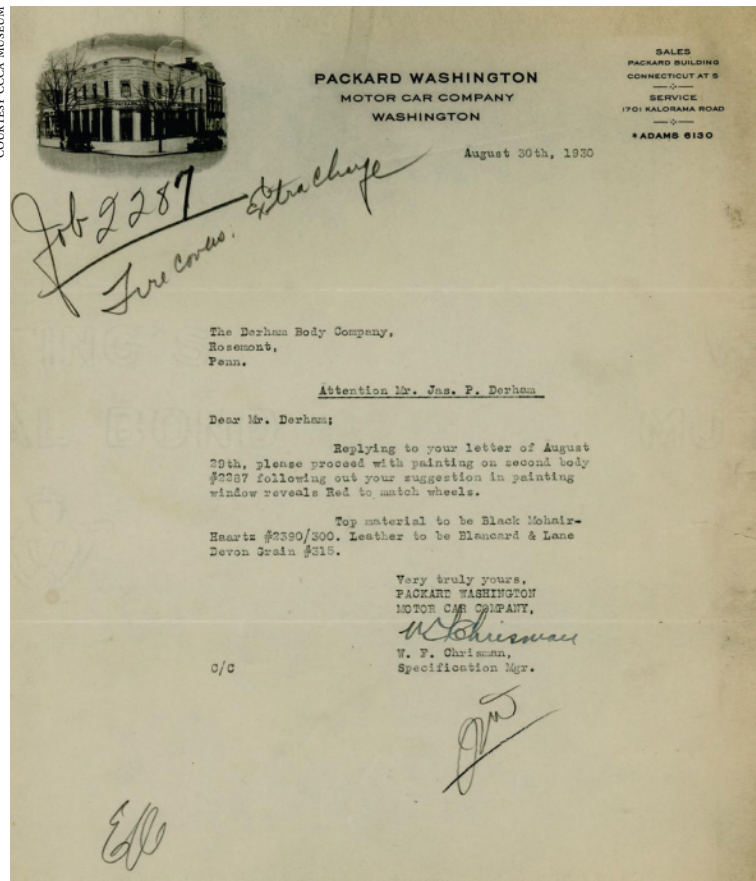
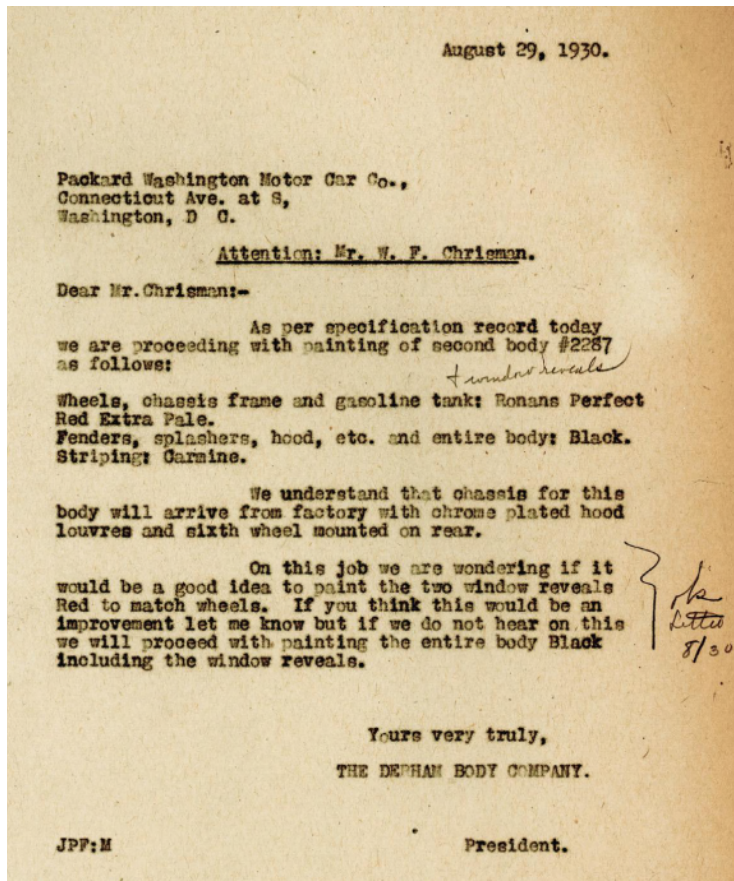
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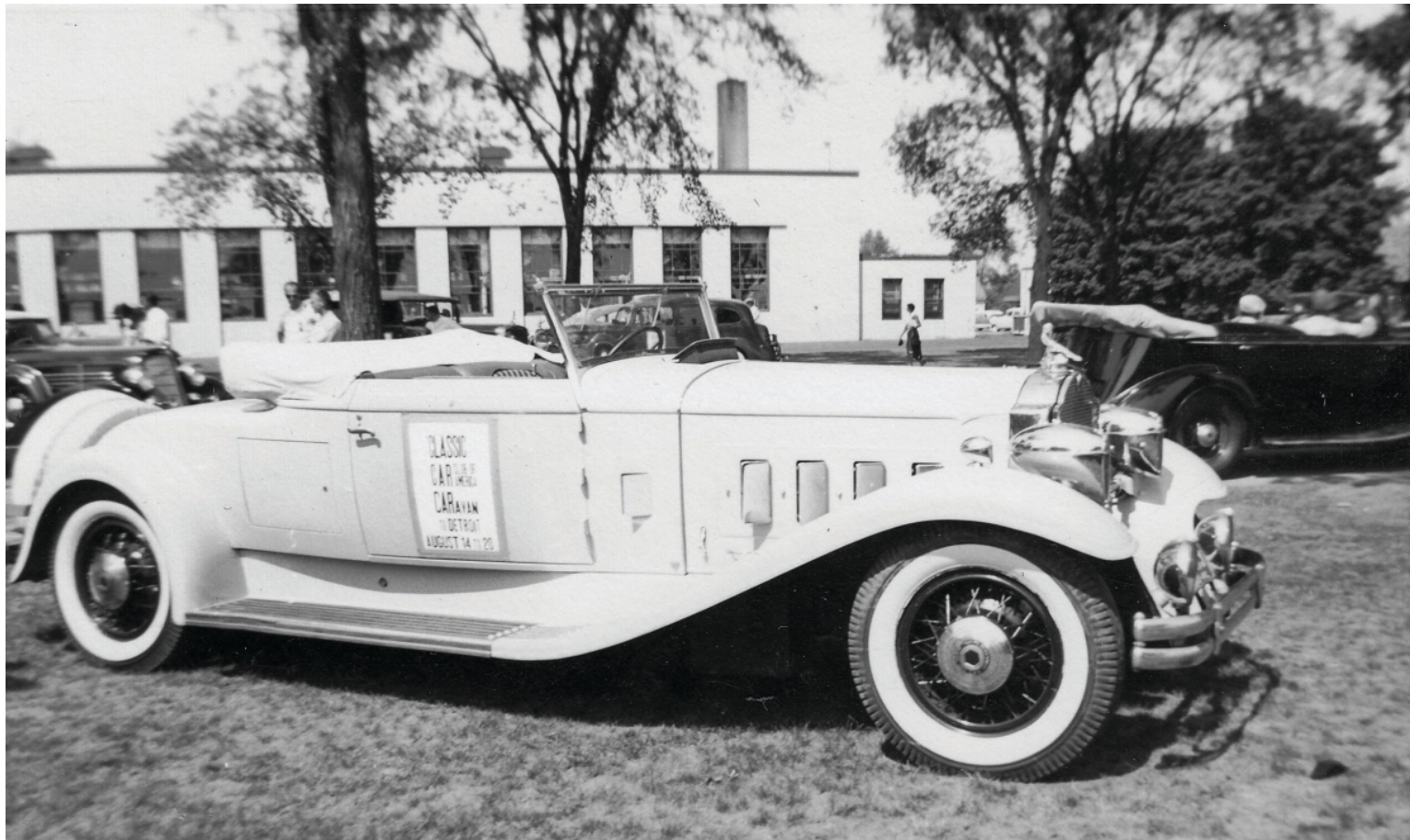


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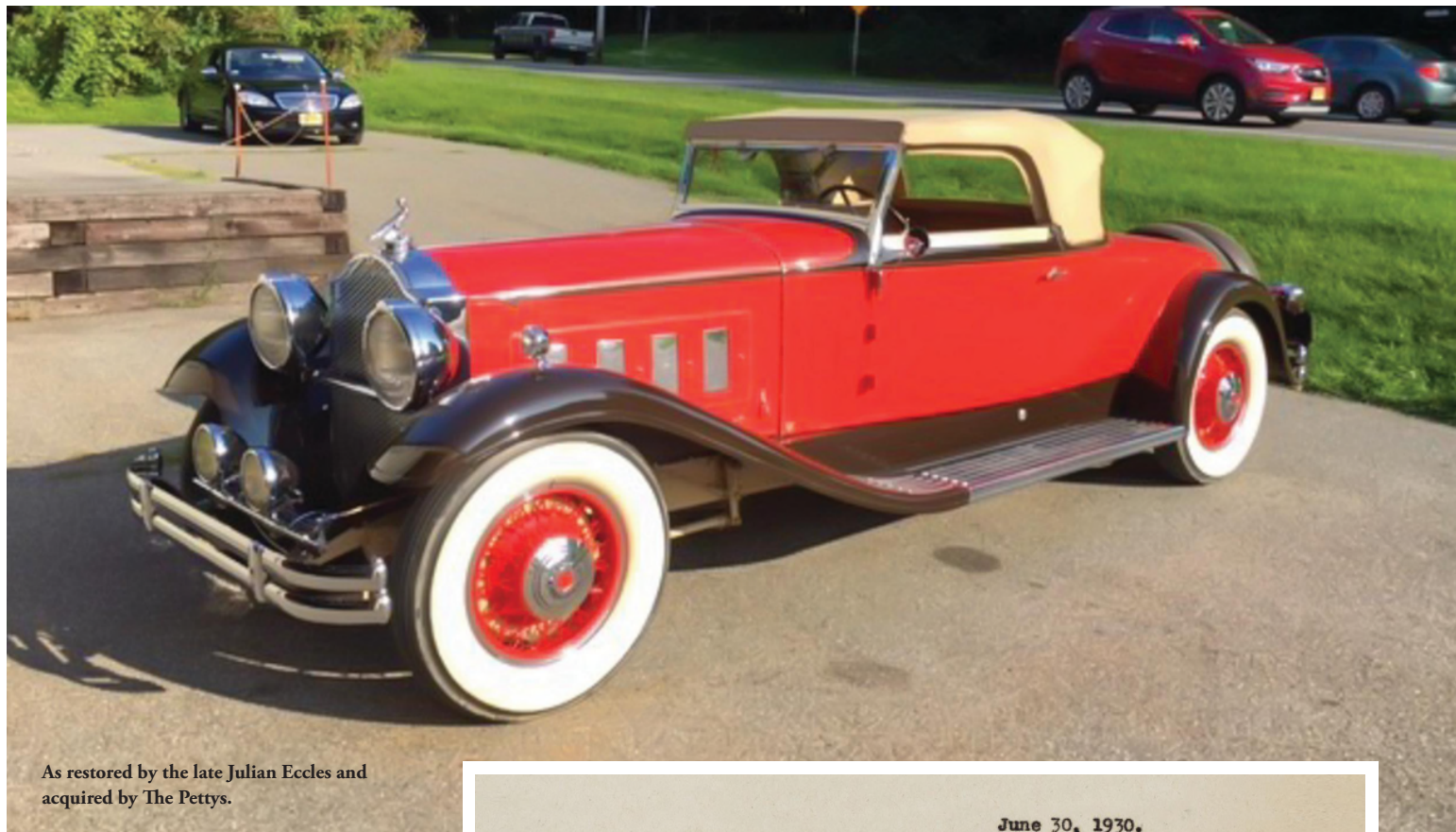
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(left to right) Derham's correspondence relating to the color scheme of the body. > Amendment to the color scheme of the body.



Anthony Fiocco's 845-37 on a CCCA CARavan in 1954.

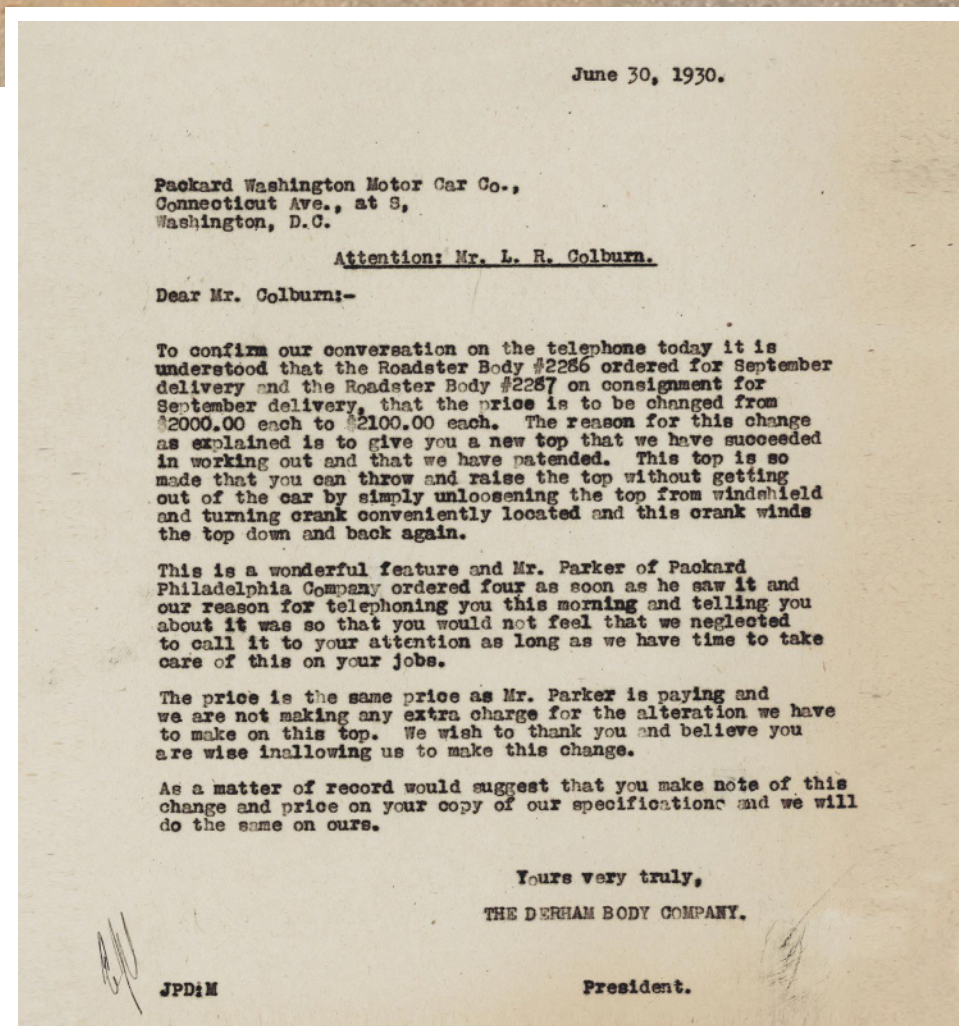


As restored by the late Julian Eccles and acquired by The Pettys.

1955 participated in the Northern Ohio Region's July Meet.

By 1960 the car had moved west in the ownership of well-known collector Julian Eccles of Oregon, who completed a fresh restoration in time for exhibition at the 1982 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. Monte Shelton offered the car on behalf of Eccles's estate in 1987, and it was subsequently sold at auction to another well-known enthusiast and longtime CCCA member, Jim Weston of San Francisco. Weston returned the car to Pebble Beach in 1999 for the 100th Anniversary of Packard as a display-only entrant, and kept it until his passing. It was then acquired by Elizabeth Ghareeb and Michael Petty of Birmingham, Alabama.

The Pettys undertook a complete fresh restoration of the Packard to its original appearance at Stone Barn of Vienna, New Jersey. Fortuitously, the car retained not only its original data plate and Derham body number tag, but the chassis, engine, and front axle number with which it was >



The Derham letter to Packard Washington, confirming change of the specification of the two bodies to incorporate the new, innovative crank-operated convertible top.

September 30, 1930.

Packard Washington Motor Car Co.,
Connecticut Ave. at S,
Washington, D. C.

Attention: Mr. L. R. Colburn.

Dear Mr. Colburn:-

We received the two Packard 845 chassis
for your account yesterday and have made the following
assignments which we trust will be satisfactory.

Chassis, Motor 188778, Vehicle 845-37, Serial 144195,
S. O. 845-37, Key 605 assigned to Body #2287. This is
the chassis which has the chromium plated hood louvres
and two spare wheels in rear as per your letter of August
28th.

Chassis, Motor 188659, Vehicle 845-54, Serial 143661,
S. O. 845-54, Key 609, assigned to Body #2286.

Yours very truly,
THE DERHAM BODY COMPANY.

JPD:M

President.

COURTESY CCCA MUSEUM



COURTESY RM SOTHEBY'S



(photos clockwise from top left) Derham's letter confirming receipt of the two chassis, and recording the original motor and vehicle numbers of 845-37 that they retain today. > At the completion of restoration, returned to its original livery and trim. > The interior top handles once missing from body 2287, reacquired for the car's restoration.





COURTESY RM SOTHERBY'S



COURTESY RM SOTHERBY'S



COURTESY RM SOTHERBY'S

Rosemont, Pa.
October 28, 1930.

Received from The Derham Body Company:

Special Coupe Body #2287 with Special Top mounted on
Packard 845 Chassis, Motor 188778, Vehicle 845-37
Serial 144195, with the following parts:

With Chassis:

4 fenders
hood
horn
battery
2 spare wheels mounted
2 tire covers
rear tire carrier
2 bumpers
instrument board complete
2 headlamps
1 tail lamp
2 fender lamps
cartoon tools sealed
1 wedge wrench

With Body:

3 cushions
2 rugs
dust boot
back curtain
crank for top

Packard Motor Car Co. of Washington

Cweebly

supplied new – all documented by the Derham archives in the CCCA Museum. The Derham archives also supplied photos of other 845 Convertible Roadsters, enabling the correct pinstriping and top binding patterns to be recreated. Mark Smith, owner of the only other survivor on the 845 chassis, graciously allowed his original, unrestored car to be inspected, further capturing many other fine details for the restoration. He also parted with an original set of interior handles for the top, likely those long missing from body 2287.

Now finally once again exactly as it had tempted Washington's elite, "the consignment job" made its grand reappearance at Pebble Beach in 2018, winning First in Class. It drew the attention of all who glimpsed it. That was what it had been built for, after all. ●



(photos from top) Delivery of body and chassis back to Packard Washington, October 28, 1930. > At the completion of restoration, returned to its original livery and trim.



1963 Chrysler Turbine

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1937 Chrysler Airflow
"Major Bowes"



1907 Franklin Model H



1931 Chrysler CG Roadster



1931 Chrysler CG Conv Coupe



1933 Pierce-Arrow Twelve



1933 Chrysler CL Phaeton

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