

The Lincoln Continental, 1940-1948



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by William S. Jackson

This 1940 Lincoln Continental Cabriolet is probably one of the most original in existence. It belongs to Harold C. Angel, of Dayton, Ohio, is unrestored and has only 53,000 miles on the odometer. The color is black with red wheels. Note the delicate treatment of the front bumper so as not to obscure the graceful grille.
(Photo: Harold C. Angel)

One of the great mysteries of the automobile industry is that the Lincoln Continental happened at all. An even bigger mystery is that it happened when and where it did.

Introduced in October 1939 as the 'Continental' model of the Lincoln-Zephyr line, this uniquely-styled convertible cabriolet was lower, longer and wider than its American contemporaries. Performance was secondary to styling; nothing was done to 'hop up' the 12-cylinder Zephyr engine under the long hood (bonnet). It handled gracefully, but acceleration was far from thrilling, even though it was a pleasure to 'rev up' in second. Transverse springs front and rear, plus a solid front axle, made for a rather harsh ride in spite of the deeply-cushioned seats.

The Lincoln Continental achieved popularity because it was different without being radical; uncluttered without being stripped of important features that were both functional and decorative; and luxurious without being ostentatious. It had a decided European flavor, typified by the then unorthodox location of the spare wheel, that quickly caught the public's fancy. It had what might be called a 'feminine' personality; 'She was a real lady', was the way one writer described her. She has often been

referred to as the 'queen of the classics.' This automobile was not designed to meet carefully tested public preferences; it created them.

The Lincoln Continentals of the 1940-1948 period have been called, 'the last of the great classics,' yet they were made years after the end of the classic era and stand today as anachronisms of that period. They were assembled from a gaggle of stretched, chopped and modified components of the Lincoln bread-and-butter Zephyr line. These were automobiles that never presented one earth-shattering improvement in the automotive industry, never opened new avenues of automobile styling, never won a major race or rally, and did not cost a king's ransom. There were only two body styles, a two-door coupé and a two-door convertible cabriolet, manufactured throughout the Continental's life span.

In spite of all this, the Continental is a 'classic', fully accepted as such around the world. It does have that aura about it which sets it off from the commonplace and makes a man's pulse quicken. In 1951 the Continental was selected by New York's Museum of Modern Art as one of eight of the world's automobiles which showed excellence as a work of art!

Since January 1953, Continental enthusiasts have joined forces in a national organization devoted to the preservation and restoration of Edsel Ford's distinctive creation. This group, which counts more than 1,700 members, is known as the Lincoln Continental Owner's Club. *Continental Comments* is their fine, semi-monthly journal which contains accurate historical data, restoration tips, news of club events, and so forth. When corresponding with one another, LCOC members generally close their letters with the phrase, 'Continentially yours.'

THE BIRTH OF THE CONTINENTAL

Looking at the car itself tells only a small part of the Continental story. One must go back through the history of two great companies, the Lincoln Motor Company and the Ford Motor Company, as well as the lives of several men, to find the ingredients which went into the Continental makeup.

The Continental was the brainchild of one man, Edsel Ford, Henry's only son, who was president of the Ford Motor Company from 1919 until his untimely death in May 1943. To the casual automobile enthusiast, the name Ford usually brings to mind transportation for the masses, the five dollar day, refinement of the assembly line idea, and fifteen million 'Tin Lizzies'. But Edsel was not a mirror image of his father; his greatness lay in another direction.

Walter Dorwin Teague, one of Ford's great designers, pointed out Edsel Ford's strength probably better than anyone when he said: 'Edsel Ford was a great soul, as anyone who came to know him well quickly realized. He was wise, generous, strong and simple, a combination of qualities that marks the greatest of men. The fact that among his many superb qualities he was also a great designer was known to few except those who had the privilege of collaborating with him in this field.'

Edsel Ford's interest in things automotive came to him as naturally as the sun's rising. Yet, the products of his father's genius always left him something less than satisfied. While they carried the honesty of a forthright idea, he felt they left something to be desired esthetically. His blazing idea, from the days when he was still in his teens, was to reverse the usual production process so valued by his father. Instead of turning over a selected group of mechanical requirements to the engineers, and seeing what the car looked like when these components were made and bolted together, the younger Ford wanted to start at the drawing board with an artist's idea, and then design the component parts to fit the concept.

The Gregorie Special roadster built for Edsel Ford and delivered 21st September 1934. The car was painted Pearl Essence Gunmetal Dark, with gray leather upholstery.



The car that started it all—the 1921 Leyland-built Lincoln Model L, here in the four-passenger coupé version. The acquisition of this line of cars prompted Edsel Ford to say, 'Father makes the most popular car in the world. I would like to make the best car in the world'. (Photo: Ford Archives)

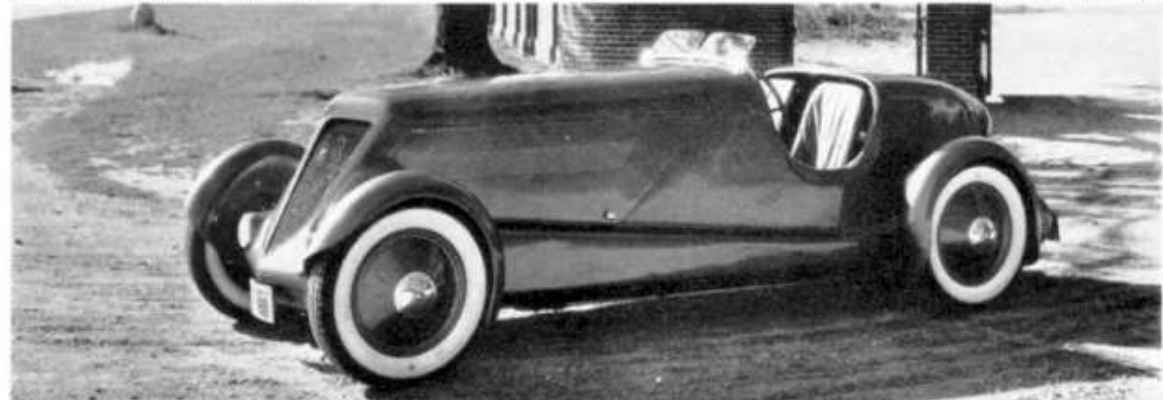


The means of bringing Edsel Ford's idea for a quality-built Ford Motor Company automobile began here on 4th February 1922, the day of the sale of the Lincoln Motor Company to the Ford Motor Company. From left: Edsel Ford, Henry Ford, Henry M. Leland and Wilfred C. Leland.

(Photo: Ford Archives)

Today, this is a common practice in the auto industry, called 'styling', and every major company has an entire department devoted to 'blue skying' the cars of the future. In Edsel Ford's time, just after the first great war, this type of thinking was extremely radical, and no major auto company had a styling department in its organisation chart.

(Photo: Ford Archives)



How did Edsel Ford come to this point with this idea? A few years back, among a pile of yellowing old records in the Ford Motor Company's archives, a researcher came upon a large old fashioned scrapbook in which he found an unusual collection. On the first page was an illustrated catalog for a 1911 foreign car, called the *Continental Pneumatik*. Flipping the pages the researcher found many pictures and advertisements of such cars as the Austro Daimler, Apollo, Hispano-Suiza, Benz, De Dion, Mercedes, Minerva, Panhard, Itala, Bianchi, plus 28 pages devoted to Rolls-Royce alone.

The significant thing about the book was that marginal notes in the handwriting of Edsel Ford were interspersed among the pictures. This was the beginning of the idea from which the Lincoln Continental was to come many years later.

THE LINCOLN TRADITION

Edsel Ford's opportunity to build the car of his dreams began to take shape in 1922 when Henry Ford bought the Lincoln Motor Company from Henry M. Leland and his son Wilfred for eight million dollars at a receivership sale. On this occasion, Edsel Ford commented, 'Father makes the most popular car in the world. I would like to make the best car in the world.' With the formation of the Lincoln Division of the Ford Motor Company, Edsel's dream was at least partially fulfilled almost immediately. Henry M. Leland had a reputation for insistence upon quality in his products that was a near-legend in Detroit. His first Lincoln cars, introduced in the fall of 1920, were masterpieces of precise manufacturing methods, but they were very expensive



Another of the Edsel Ford/E.T. Gregorie Special cars. This could be the 1934 car with later modifications.

(Photo: Auto Sports Review)

and utterly lacking in esthetic appeal.

Under Edsel Ford, Lincoln styling showed steady improvement. Ford worked with the Brunn Body Company, commissioned by the Lelands to provide a new line of bodies before the receivership. When, with Ford engineering help, the production of chassis for the Model L Lincoln surpassed the combined efforts of Lincoln's body shops and the Brunn Company to provide bodies, Edsel Ford contacted the best-known names in the custom body business to submit designs and accept commissions. This list included American, Babcock, Derham, Murphy, Fleetwood, Holbrook, Judkins, Lang, LeBaron, Locke, Murray, Rollston, Waterhouse and Willoughby.

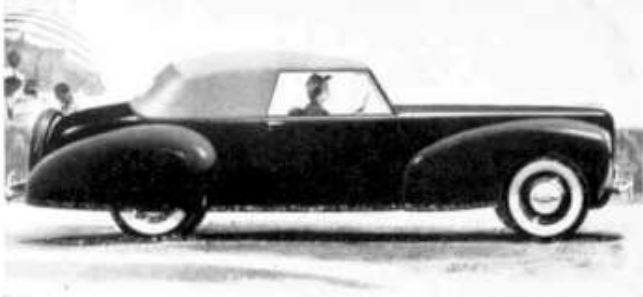
The Model L Lincoln, with an assortment of bodies, sold well, and production increased through the next few years. Little was done to modify the Model L chassis or engine until 1927 when four-wheel brakes were added.



The first Lincoln Continental, H-74750, was delivered to Edsel Ford while he was vacationing in Florida in March, 1939. It was painted Eagle Gray. The full side view of the prototype shows the influence of the Zephyr line. In the first production year which followed, the Continental was listed simply as a special Zephyr body style.

(Photos: Ford Archives)





An artist's impression of the 1940 'Continental Cabriolet' as it appeared in the 1940 Lincoln Zephyr catalog, issued in October 1939. This was the first publicly released picture.

More changes came in 1931, but the big change, which led eventually to the powerplant for the Continental, was the scrapping of Henry Leland's V-8 in 1932 for an all-new 60-degree V-12 engine, with a bore and stroke of $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ in. displacing 448 cubic inches (7,341 c.c.). Leland quality features, such as fork-and-blade rods plus extensive fine machining and polishing, made this one of the best precision V-12s made, developing 150 h.p. at 2,400 r.p.m.

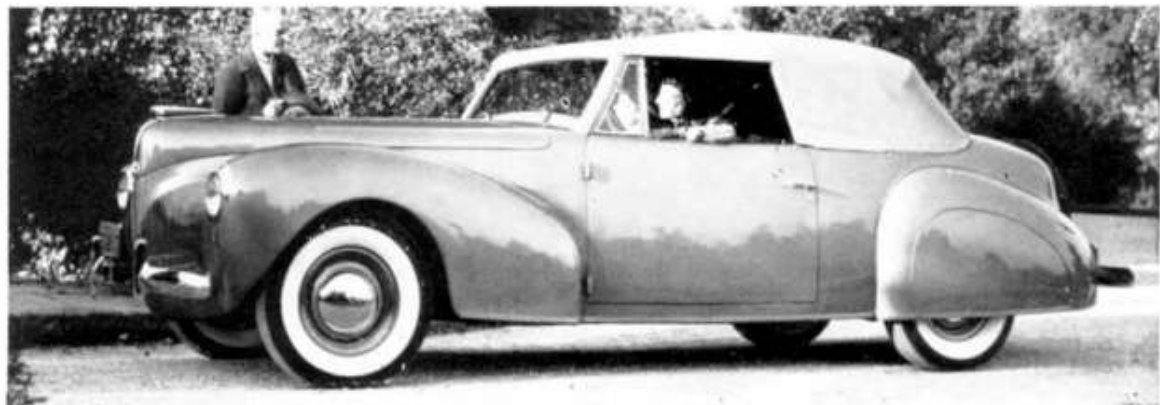
According to Ralph Roberts, one of the founders of the LeBaron Body Company, Edsel Ford showed himself to be 'one of the most gifted stylists in the industry.' He has said that working with Edsel Ford,

they could rough out a new body design in a single afternoon. What Ford contributed in these sessions seems best put by designer Teague. He has said that, in working with Edsel Ford, '... he never disturbed the plan by injecting an alien preference of his own. But from time to time he would put his finger on an element that was out of key, in a big or little way, not fitted perfectly into the designer's major intention. So the design would grow, become refined and clarified, more perfectly itself. And when the session, or a long series of sessions, had ended, the designer would feel that he had been assisted by a master.'

Lincoln introduced a smaller model, the KA, a V-12 engine of 382 cubic inches (6,260 c.c.) producing 125 h.p. at 3,400 r.p.m., in 1933. The following year brought more retrenchment, and the last vestiges of Henry Leland's Lincoln went out with Ford's announcement of the model K, a V-12 design which has often been called a 'stretched Ford V-8.' This engine, which was initially rated at 150 h.p. at 3,400 r.p.m., took advantage of Ford technology, had a one-piece block, side-by-side un-machined rods, aluminum heads, and only four main bearings.

EDSEL FORD'S STYLING STUDIO

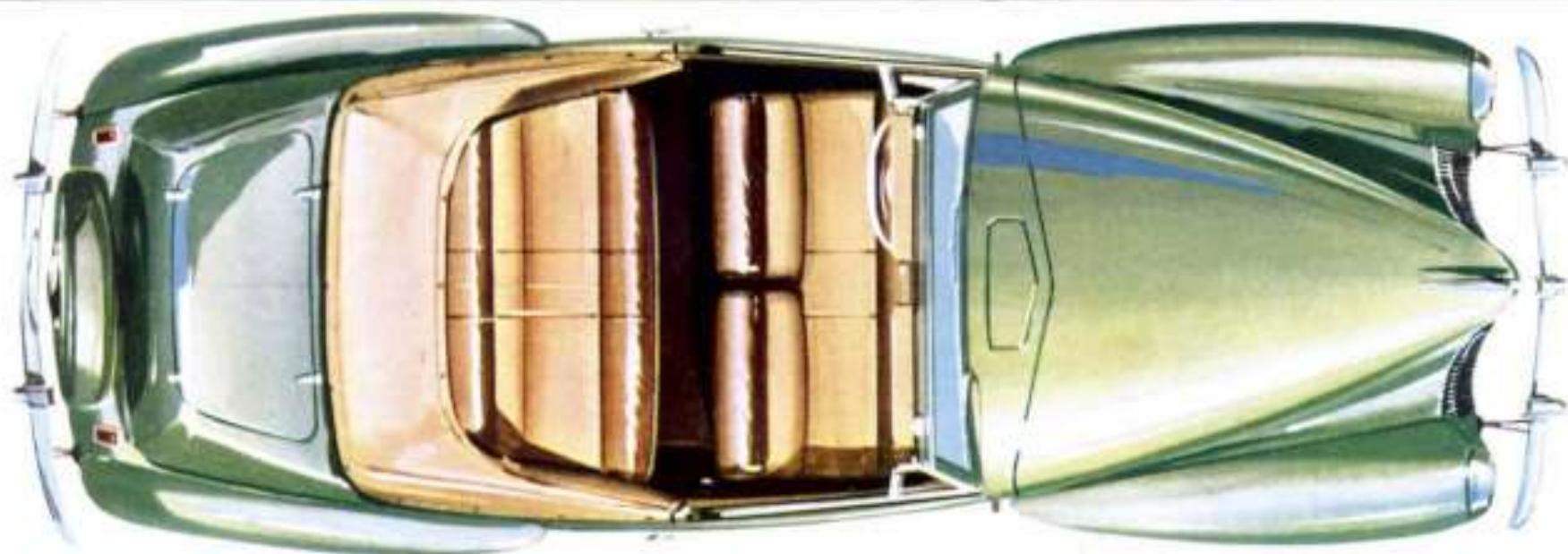
At this point in time, several things were going on at Ford and Lincoln which would directly result in the first Continental four years later. As early as 1932,



Above: An early Ford Motor Company publicity photograph showing the 1940 Lincoln Continental in what was probably a pre-production version. Note that there is no rubber gravel shield on the front of the rear fender (wing), and no metal cover on the spare tyre. (Photo: Ford Archives)

Below: The 1940 Lincoln Continental Coupé is today called the forerunner of the hardtop convertible style now quite popular in the United States. (Photo: Ford Archives)





1940 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL CABRIOLET



1942 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL CABRIOLET



1941 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL COUPE



Another 1940 Continental Cabriolet, in Arden Green with a tan top (hood), belonging to Dean E. Kennedy of State College, Pennsylvania. The directional signal lights and driving lamps are not original. (Photo: the Author)



1941 Lincoln Continental Coupe; restored by Dean E. Kennedy, the car is finished in black with red leather and tan whipcord upholstery. (Photo: the Author)

Edsel Ford had put together a styling staff, the first in the industry, and it was not long before this group began to have an effect on the appearance of Ford products.

Ford hired a young yacht designer, Eugene Turrenne 'Bob' Gregorie, still in his twenties, to head the development of a styling department. John Crawford, Edsel's executive assistant, shopmaster, and expert on production, worked with Gregorie to handle the production aspects of any designs under consideration. Edsel Ford himself rounded out the three-man team.

Work on prototype models, which eventually led to the Continental, began as early as 1932. On his return from a trip abroad, Edsel discussed European car styling features with Gregorie, and pointed out the possibility of developing a two-seater sporting type car on the Ford chassis. What is thought to be one of the first such 'idea' cars was finished in time to be pictured in *Autocar's* 24th November, 1933 issue, where it was termed Edsel Ford's 1933 Gregorie Roadster.

According to Henry E. Edmunds, Manager of Ford's Research and Information Department, at least one other similar car was built to Edsel Ford's specifications by Gregorie's styling group. Edmunds reports, 'This model was officially designated as the Ford Model 40 Special Speedster and was sold to Mr. Edsel

1941 Lincoln Continental Cabriolet; note the addition of Lincoln Continental script at the sides of the hood (bonnet), push-button door latches and Lincoln V-12 on the hubcaps. (Photo: Ford Archives)

Ford on 21st September, 1934. The car was painted a pearl essence gunmetal dark, while the upholstery was gray leather.' Still another was listed in the inventory of Edsel Ford's estate upon its filing in June 1944. This car, which was sold for \$1,000, was listed as a Ford Special Speedster, 1934 no. 18-1022711, 30 h.p. One of these early styling cars was pictured in *Auto Sports Review* magazine for January 1952. Since then the car has been completely restored by John and Earl Pallasch, of Deland, Florida, U.S.A.

Luxury cars like the model K did not sell well in the slowly recovering 1930s and, by 1935, Lincoln was faced with a crisis. A new, more economical Lincoln was needed. This came along in the form of a radical car from the Briggs Manufacturing Company, a well-known Detroit automobile body builder. This prototype was a rear-engined streamliner, the work of John Tjaarda, a Briggs engineer. It had a Ford V-8 engine suspended from a single transverse leaf spring, and presented a radical departure in body line featuring unitized construction, in which the frame and the body shell were one unit.

Ford knew that to survive, the Lincoln Division needed a new, lower-priced car in its line, and needed it right away. While the Tjaarda rear-engined version looked good and performed well, extensive retooling of the Lincoln assembly line would have been required to put such a car into production. For this reason, the Tjaarda design was thrown back to a Ford/Briggs restyling team and emerged as the front-engined Lincoln-Zephyr, true forerunner of the Continental. The car was introduced in late 1935 as the 1936 Lincoln low-priced line with prices starting at \$1,275.

The Lincoln-Zephyr was powered by a new engine, actually a reduced version of the Model K unit, designated Model H. This was initially a 75-degree V-12 L-head engine having a bore and stroke of $2\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ in. respectively, displacing 267 cubic inches (4,375 c.c.) and developing 110 h.p. at 3,600 r.p.m.

The block and cylinders were cast in a single unit per Ford V-8 practice, and, in line with the Model K V-12 before it, had more of its parentage in the Ford V-8 than Henry Leland's earlier Lincoln unit.

The stage was now set for the Continental, whose seeds had been sown years earlier.

Edsel Ford was a busy man, as might be expected for the president of a corporation the size of the Ford Motor Company. Like his father before him, Edsel sometimes sought escape from the ringing telephone and flow of problems crossing his desk. For the elder Ford, there had been his private machine shops, but for the more esthetic Edsel, his refuge was his own creation, the styling department.



There, in a dark corner, Gregorie kept several old prototype cars, covered with dust sheets. When the press of business got too great, Edsel Ford would come to the studio, throw off the sheet on one of these cars, get in, and call Gregorie over. Gregorie says, 'There he would sit, in the cool dark, to meditate and talk. Mr. Ford seemed to just relax. He would talk about anything that came into his head, such as boats, in which we had a common interest.'

THE FIRST CONTINENTALS

It was after the Zephyr had been in production for two years Edsel Ford suggested to Gregorie that he consider the possibility of a special car built around the Lincoln-Zephyr chassis. This was not to be a production car, but a distinctive creation for Ford's own use.

Designer Gregorie began with the 125-in. 1939 Lincoln-Zephyr convertible coupé chassis, and around it designed a special convertible coupé, or continental-styled cabriolet, which utilized 1939 Zephyr fenders and hood (bonnet) as well. Drawings were completed by October 1938, and by November a tenth-scale clay model was ready for Ford's examination. In a word, Edsel Ford was enthusiastic, and had work started immediately. While this prototype was under construction, he visited the shop every day to watch its creation. During fabrication he was shown a modified plan moving the outside spare inside the trunk (boot), as was the styling trend of the day. Edsel rejected this idea, saying, 'It's very nice, but I wanted it to be strictly continental.' Construction then proceeded with the exposed spare as on the Gregorie plan of October 1938. This first Continental was constructed using body panels from the 1939 Lincoln-Zephyr. Special panels to lengthen the hood (bonnet) and front fenders (wings) by 12 in. were added, while four in. were cut out of the door panels to lower the body. The remaining sheet metal was hand hammered over wooden forms in the Lincoln body shop.

Edsel's enthusiasm for the automobile taking shape was so great that he ordered two additional prototypes built for his sons, Henry II and Benson, even before his own car was completed. These two cars were built using panels from the 1940 Zephyr, with hood and fenders being lengthened only eight inches in these versions.

The Lincoln Continental for 1947: the Cabriolet version shown had only slight revisions from 1946. Some grille modifications were made and the drum-type hubcap introduced. The engine had returned to the pre-war (1941) 2½ in. bore by 3½ in. stroke (292 cu. in.) but a slightly higher compression gave 125 b.h.p.

(Photo: Ford Archives)



For 1942, Lincoln extensively revised the bodywork of the Continental, with a heavier horizontal-barred grille and bumpers, boxy fenders (wings) and squared-off hood (bonnet). Overall length was increased by 7-18 in. A block bored out to 2½ in. proved quite troublesome. (Photo: Charles L. Betts, Jr.)



In 1946, a Lincoln Continental Cabriolet painted 'Pace Car Yellow' served as the Official Pace Car for the Indianapolis '500' Race. Driven by Henry Ford II, this car was reportedly somewhat of an experimental version rather than strictly 'stock'. Note the hexagon hubcaps.

(Photo: Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation)

It should be noted here that recent research by Jesse H. Haines of Ambler, Pa. U.S.A., disputes the existence of the two Continental prototypes built for Edsel Ford's sons. He claims only one additional prototype car was built after the first car was assembled for Edsel Ford, and that he owns this car.

Edsel Ford left for a Florida vacation before his car was completed, with instructions to deliver it to him there. On 1st March, 1939, this first car began its journey to Florida as ordered. For the record



this, the first Continental, carried number H-74750, was painted Eagle Gray, and had gray leather trim.

Reaction to Edsel's dream car among his Florida contemporaries was nothing less than fantastic, and he returned from his vacation with would-be orders for approximately 200 similar automobiles.

The two 1940-based cars for Edsel's sons were completed during the summer months, and the stir created by these cars wherever they were seen finally brought the decision to produce them on a limited run basis as an addition to the Lincoln-Zephyr line.

Work was begun in October 1939 to set up an assembly line, and by 1st January, 1940, 25 cars had been produced. These were designated 1940 models and all were convertible cabriolets. In all, a total of 404 Continentals were built during the first model year (October 1939 to September 1940) comprising 54 coupés, and 350 cabriolets. Virtually all were handmade automobiles, subject to custom requests from future owners, with a variety of interior appointment options.

They used de-luxe Lincoln-Zephyr trim, with hubcaps, horn button, and radiator medallion reading 'Lincoln-Zephyr.' Interior hardware and trim were in imitation gold, with an enameled instrument panel as on the Zephyr Town Limousine model. In fact, 1940 Lincoln-Zephyr catalog no. 7193, issued in October 1939, lists the Continental simply as another body style in the Zephyr line, called the 'Continental Cabriolet' which says, 'The flavor of European boulevards is in this dashing new Lincoln-Zephyr body type. The hood is 7 in. longer than on other Lincoln-Zephyrs. The car is three inches lower. Upholstery is a special combination of leather and whipcord. The top is fully automatic.'

Easy access was provided by doors nearly 47 in. wide, but parking the cabriolet with the top up was a real nightmare. Because of the tiny rear window and the blind rear quarters, it was well-nigh impossible to see behind. Some improvement in rearward vision could be obtained by zipping open the rear curtain, but this was a last resort and somewhat of a nuisance, particularly in foul weather.

Mechanical specifications of the Model H V-12 engine for the first Continentals had a bore and stroke of $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ in., giving 292 cubic inches (4.817 c.c.) displacement. Brake horsepower was listed as 120 at 3,600 r.p.m. Valve lifters were the much-maligned hydraulic self-adjusting type.

The intake manifold and cylinder heads of the 1940 Zephyrs were aluminum, and, on the Continental models, these were highly polished with chromed acorn nuts used atop the head studs.

A Columbia two-speed overdrive axle was available as optional equipment, and gave about a 28% higher ratio than the normal 4.44 : 1 gearing.

Steering gear was by worm and roller, with an 18.4 : 1 ratio, which gave a turning circle of 22 ft. The transmission had three speeds forward with synchromesh on second and high. The gear shift lever was mounted on the steering column, a highly advertised Lincoln feature of 1940, known as 'Finger-Tip Gearshift.'

All the Continentals had single transverse springs front and rear and were built on the 125 in. wheelbase Zephyr chassis. Their overall length was just under 210 in. while overall height of only 62 in. made them appear long and low. Prices began at \$2,640 for either the cabriolet or coupé.



The Model H V-12 Lincoln Zephyr engine which powered the Continentals from first to last. The version shown is the 1941 292 cu. in. model which developed 120 b.h.p. at 3,500 r.p.m. It had polished aluminium cylinder heads and intake manifold, with chrome acorn nuts atop the head studs.



THE PRODUCTION CONTINENTALS

For 1941, Lincoln provided mostly detail improvements to the Continental. The engine remained the same and chassis modifications were limited to the addition of two inches to the front spring and $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. to the rear, with rubber inserts to soften the ride. Wheels were widened by half an inch from four and a half to five inches, but tires remained the same as 1940 at 7-00 x 16. An automatic overdrive unit was offered in addition to the Columbia option of 1940. Body details included a change to an electrically powered top (hood), hood (bonnet) release moved inside and under the dash (the 1940 opened by turning the hood ornament), and pushbutton door openers.

The Continental was separated from the Zephyr line, and now had its own trim, including a *Lincoln Continental* script on the side of the hood and on the spare tire hubcap, plus the word *Lincoln* and a small V-12 on the road wheel hubcaps. Price for the cabriolet was announced at \$2,778, and \$2,727 for the coupé. Production for the 1941 model year ran to 1,250, 400 cabriolets and 850 coupés.

The 1941 Continental was advertised as drawing its parentage from both the luxury Lincoln K line which had been discontinued in 1940, and the Zephyr. Quoting the catalog, 'The Lincoln-Continental is

true to a great heritage. It blends Lincoln precision with Lincoln-Zephyr style leadership.'

A selection of interior fabrics included combinations of blue cord with blue leather, green cord with green leather, or tan cord with tan or red leather. Full leather upholstery was also offered, in green, black, blue, red, or tan.

The Lincoln Continental underwent a drastic styling change for the 1942 model. The former teardrop design of the Zephyr was replaced by the then-modern trend typified by box fenders and a coffin nose. This model was one inch lower than the 1941, due to a $\frac{1}{2}$ in. reduction in tire radius, and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. less spring camber. The floor was only 13 in. above the road.

Tail lights now became integral with the rear fenders, whereas at the front parking and directional lights were styled into the headlights. The grille was altered in line with the more boxy fender and hood treatment, and had a series of horizontal chrome bars reminiscent of the 810 Cord. Rear fenders now had a circular opening, and the car did not look as 'undressed' as previous models with the fender skirts removed. Other changes in trim included drum type wheel discs, heavier bumpers all around, and a redesigned instrument panel.

By far the biggest change was made under the hood (bonnet), an attempt to quell the claim that the Continental lacked performance. The model H V-12 engine was bored out to 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ in., which gave 305 cubic inches (4,998 c.c.) displacement and increased the horsepower to 130 at 3,800 r.p.m. In like manner the transmission gearing was changed to give more acceleration in first and second gears, the final drive ratio being changed to 4-22 : 1 to compensate for the change to smaller, 15 in. wheels.

As the war in Europe was underway and defense production was cutting into the supply of certain metals, the aluminum cylinder heads were replaced by cast iron, and the compression ratio lowered from 7-2 : 1 to 7-1 : 1.

A new transmission option, called 'Liquimatic Drive,' was introduced throughout the line, which included a 'liquid' flywheel and automatic transmission. It proved singularly unsuccessful and was unceremoniously dropped. A new automatic overdrive unit proved a more reliable and desirable option. With overdrive engaged, it gave the equivalent of a 2-95 final drive ratio. Because of the National Defense effort, only 336 1942 Lincoln Continentals were built, comprising 200 coupés and 136 cabriolets, before all production ceased for the duration.

Production of the Lincoln Continental was resumed in 1946, as assembly line conversion began almost

Controls: 1942 Continental Cabriolet.

(Photo: Charles L. Betts, Jr.)



The heavy die-cast segmented grille of the 1946-1948 Lincoln Continentals seemed to soften the box fenders (wings) and squared-off hood (bonnet) introduced in 1942. Parking lights and turn signals were moved up alongside the headlamps, and foglights were built into the grille.

(Photo: Charles L. Betts, Jr.)



Rear view of a 1948 Continental Cabriolet, showing the heavier rear-end treatment introduced in 1942 and carried through to 1948.

(Photo: Charles L. Betts, Jr.)

immediately at the end of hostilities in 1945. The first Continentals were delivered in January 1946 and, as might have been expected, were face-lifted 1942 models. This included a new, die-cast 'mouth-organ' grille with built-in fog lights. In commemoration of the Continental's selection as the pace car for the Indianapolis 500-mile race, a new color, 'Pace Car Yellow,' was offered.

Mechanical specifications for 1946 remained exactly the same as 1942, and problems encountered with the 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. bore engines continued. They caused such a hue and cry from dealer and customer alike that, mid-way through the 1946 model year, the engine was converted back to the former 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. bore, 292 cubic inch version as manufactured in 1941, with a subsequent drop in output back to 120 horsepower. At the same time the rear axle gearing was changed back to a 4-44 : 1 ratio. A total of 466 Continentals, 265 coupés and 201 cabriolets, were produced in 1946.

THE END OF THE LINE

The Continental was beginning to become a problem to the Lincoln management, and its demise was already in sight. Several factors were in operation to dig the Continental's grave. First, the automobile industry, with war-production-fat bank accounts, wanted to move ahead with a great surge. Plans for the future did not include a small production, highly personalized automobile. Secondly, the price of the Continental had gone up drastically—from \$3,174 for the coupé in 1942 to \$4,392 in 1946. Thirdly,

even if the Continental were to be retained, it would need to be completely redesigned within the next three years, and Edsel Ford, the inspirational force behind the Continental project from its very beginning, had passed away on 26th May, 1943.

Demand for the Continental was still high, and 1947 proved its best production year. The slightly altered segmented die-cast grille treatment that had been introduced on the 1946 model was retained. The only noticeable mechanical alterations were an increase in brake horsepower to 125 through an increase in compression again to 7.2 : 1, plus starter drive and generator improvements.

Overall length of the Continental had grown from 209.82 in. in 1941, to 217 in. in 1942, and finally to 219.61 in. in the 1946-48 period. Height had grown from 62 in. in 1941 to 63.1 in. in the 1942-48 period. A change in hubcap design and hood ornament on the 1947 models rounded out the styling improvements. Total production during the 1947 model year was 831 coupés and 738 cabriolets.

The Continental entered its final year of production with a reaction of mixed emotions from both dealer and public alike. Word had leaked out through the automotive press that the Lincoln Continental would be dropped from the Lincoln line after 1948.

Prices were at their highest, \$4,662 for the coupé and \$4,746 for the convertible, and the cars were unchanged from the previous year. After 1,299 cars were made in the first three months of 1948, the company suspended production of the Continental. Some dealers claimed the fact that the earlier cars were already being called 'classics' helped them move the remaining 1948 models.

From its inception in 1940 to the end of the line a total of 5,324 Continentals—3,047 coupés and 2,277 cabriolets—had been built. In the days of mass-produced automobiles, with production figures running into millions of units each year, this is an infinitesimal figure. Their relative scarcity accounts for one of the major reasons why the car is sought after by collectors today.

This car was probably one of the last Detroit will ever produce to bear the stamp of so few: the idea and vision of Edsel Ford, and the creation of Eugene Turrene Gregorie.

The classic Lincoln Continentals of the 1940-48 period will always stand as testimony to the creativity and good taste of these two men. As the introduction to the final Lincoln Continental catalog proclaims, 'Nothing could be finer.'

© William S. Jackson, 1967.

LINCOLN CONTINENTAL SPECIFICATIONS

Year	1940 & 1941	1942 & Early 1946 (none 1943 1944 & 1945)	1946, 1947 & 1948
Engine, Lincoln Model H	12 Cylinders, 75° V-Type, L-Head, 4 Main Bearings		
Bore & Stroke	2½ × 3½ inches	2½ × 3½ inches	2½ × 3½ inches
Displacement	292 cu. in.	305 cu. in.	292 cu. in.
Compression Ratio	7.20 : 1	7.00 : 1	7.20 : 1
Taxable Horsepower	39-60	41-40	39-60
Brake Horsepower	120 at 3500 r.p.m.	130 at 3800 r.p.m.	120 at 3500 r.p.m.
Carburetor Make & Type	Holley Downdraft		
Crankcase Capacity	5 Quarts		
Coolant Capacity	27 Quarts		
Transmission	Synchromesh with Manual Lever on Steering Column		
First Gear Ratio	2.33 : 1	2.33 : 1	2.33 : 1
Second Gear Ratio	1.58 : 1	1.48 : 1	1.58 : 1
Third Gear Ratio	1.00 : 1	1.00 : 1	1.00 : 1
Reverse Gear Ratio	3.00 : 1	3.00 : 1	3.00 : 1
Rear Axle Ratio	*4.44 : 1	4.24 : 1	4.44 : 1
Suspension	Transverse (Front) 44½ inches; Transverse (Rear) 49 inches		
Wheelbase	125 inches		
Track/Tread	Front 55½ inches : Rear 60½ inches		
Tyres	7.00 × 16	7.00 × 15	
Fuel Tank Capacity	19½ Gallons		
Foot (Service) Brake	Bendix Hydraulic on all 4 Wheels		
Hand (Emergency) Brake	Mechanical on Rear Wheels		
Weight—Cabriolet Coupé	3860 pounds 3890 pounds	4020 pounds 4060 pounds	4135 pounds 4125 pounds
Factory Price—Cabriolet Coupé	\$2778 \$2727	\$3174 \$3174	\$4746 \$4662

* 30% reduction with overdrive & 28% reduction with 2-speed axle.