

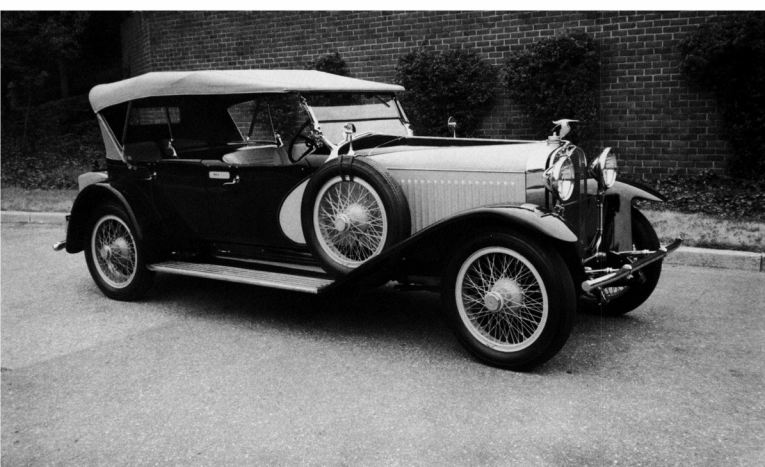
HISPANO-SUIZA



Flying stork from Noel Thompson's 1937 J-12 Cabriolet de Ville, photo by K. Karger

That he was one of the greatest engineers in the history of the automobile has been acknowledged so often and by so many that it is a virtual commonplace. For more than three decades every example of one of the world's most admirable motorcars bore his signature, his imprint, his genius. The name Hispano-Suiza itself—though students of Spanish might cavil at the mixing of genders in its spelling—recognized both the birthplace of the car in Spain and the nationality of its creator. Marc Birkigt was Swiss. Ironically, the Hispano-Suiza is most often thought of today as a French car, this because the grandest versions arrived from the Barcelona company's branch plant in Paris. The H6 series, introduced at the Paris Automobile Salon in

October of 1919, was widely heralded at the time as the most advanced automobile in the world. Its 6597 cc all-aluminum overhead camshaft six-cylinder engine derived from the Birkigt-designed aero unit which had powered over half the planes flown during World War I, a fact the company poignantly noted in the car's radiator ornament—the flying stork mascot of French ace Georges Guynemer's fighter squadron. The chassis was innovatively exemplary, as Rolls-Royce would attest, and the styling was sensational, as Harley Earl cheerfully admitted when the time came for him to design the LaSalle. The Hispano-Suiza was in a class by itself. . . .



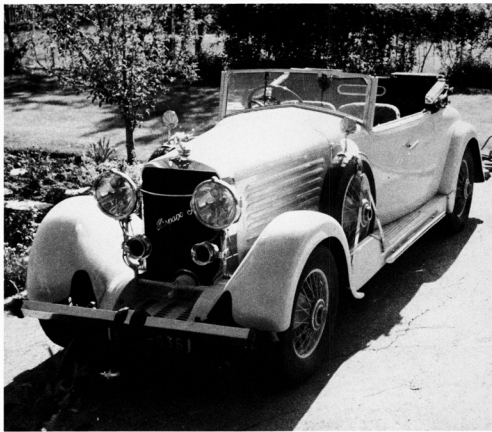
1925 Hispano-Suiza H6b Dual Cowl Phaeton, LeBaron
Owner: William J. Ingler, Jr. of Columbus, Ohio

Several thousand dollars more highly priced than a Rolls-Royce, the Hispano-Suiza was Europe's most expensive car. The company sold only the chassis. Coachwork was the purchaser's prerogative.

Million-Guiet of Paris was the coachbuilder of choice for the original owner of the H6b Cabriolet which has been Truman Stockton's since 1957. D'Ieteren Frères of Brussels bodied the H6b Cabriolet which Clive Cussler has owned for a decade.

The LeBaron Dual Cowl Phaeton has been in the Ingler family for over forty years. Comments Bill: "The original owner was Peggy Guggenheim, the noted art collector, who gave the car to her husband Laurence Vail as a divorce settlement in 1928. During the thirties it was acquired by American race car driver Ray Gilhooley. During the forties the car was in the D. Cameron Peck collection, sold by Peck to Ed Greiner in 1947 who in turn sold it to my father—W. J. Ingler, Sr.—in 1949. With its aluminum body, this Hispano-Suiza weighs less than 4,000 pounds. It is quick, handles beautifully and will cruise comfortably at 55-60 mph at 1800 rpm. One of the most interesting features of the car is the servo-brake system which utilizes the torque of the driveshaft to apply tension to the brake cables with a very light pressure on the brake pedal."

1926 Hispano-Suiza H6b Cabriolet, Million-Guiet
Owner: Truman A. Stockton, Jr. of Lakewood, Colorado





1926 Hispano-Suiza H6b Cabriolet, d'Ieteren Frères

Owner: Clive Cussler of Golden, Colorado

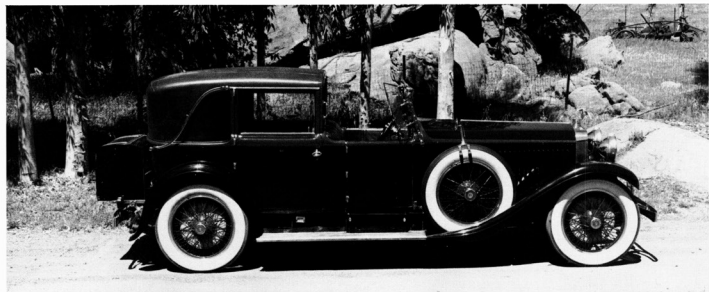
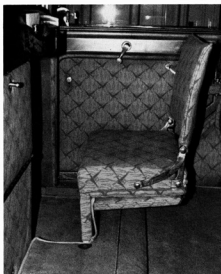




1927 Hispano-Suiza H6b Coupe-Chauffeur, d'Ieteren Frères

Owners: Eric & Molly Rosenau of Ramona, California

Hibbard & Darrin designed the Coupe-Chauffeur built by d'Ieteren Frères which Eric & Molly Rosenau have owned since 1982: "The car was delivered in June of 1927 by the Clarke D. Pease dealership in New York City to a Miss Skinner, possibly Cornelia Otis. While many town cars of this era had stodgy styling, this one is different. It is about the best looking town car we have ever seen. The design of the Hispano-Suiza overall is so well integrated that its accomplishment by one person is strongly implied. The workmanship is incredible. Aircraft heritage shows throughout the car. For example, all studs and bolts in the chassis and engine bear a Brinell hardness test mark. They tested every one!"





1928 Hispano-Suiza H6c Speedster, Kellner

Owner: Miles C. Collier of Naples, Florida

In 1927, on a visit to Paris, Seymour Knox stopped by two showrooms on the Champs-Élysées: Hispano-Suiza's and Hibbard & Darrin's. The year following, in East Aurora (New York), he took delivery of the H6b Cabriolet de Ville that has been in Mort Bullock's collection for the last quarter century: "When I purchased the car, it was on consignment at Inskip's in New York City. The salesman was Charles Willmore, who sold the first two Rolls-Royce cars delivered to the U.S. around 1906. I later contacted original owner

Seymour Knox. The Hispano-Suiza has always had a fascination for me for reasons of its rarity, workmanship, engineering genius and stylish coachwork. It is not the easiest car to drive with square-cut transmission gears and stiff steering, but it performs well on the highway with ample power and exceptionally good brakes. Hispano pioneered a number of unique engineering features such as the servo brake system and spring-loaded serrated interlocking wheel hubs. Both these items were adopted by Rolls-Royce under a

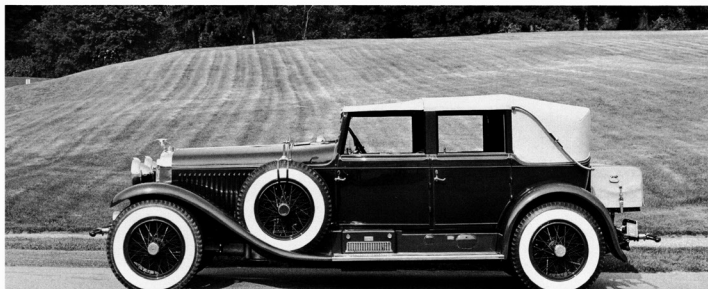
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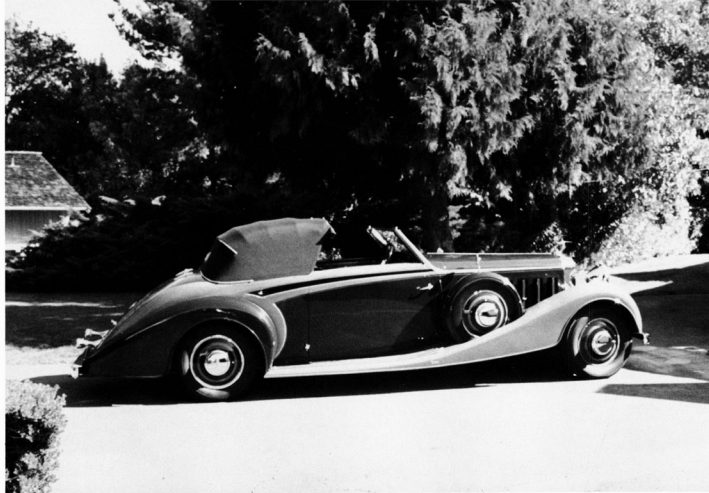
Among the most gloriously schizophrenic cars of the period, the Hispano was favored by women for its style and by gentlemen racers for its performance. The latter was enhanced in the H6c model. With an enlarged engine (7982 cc, 194 hp at 3000 rpm) and a short chassis (133 inches versus the usual 145-inch wheelbase), the car was capable of 110 mph. Miles Collier's boattail speedster by Kellner of Paris was one of only a handful of short chassis H6c's produced.

1928 Hispano-Suiza H6b Cabriolet de Ville, Hibbard & Darrin

Owner: Morton Bullock of Baltimore, Maryland

Photo: K. Karger



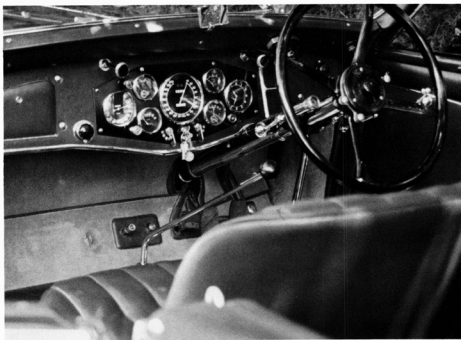


1933 Hispano-Suiza J-12 Cabriolet, Van Vooren
Owners: Jacques & Betty Harguindeguy of Walnut Creek, California

Soon after the new J-12 was introduced in 1931, Charles Faroux drove one from Paris to the Riviera, then headed straight back to the company's Champs-Élysées showroom where he parked over a clean white sheet. Not a single drop of oil spilled from the car's chassis, a fine tribute to the precision engineering of Marc Birkigt.

Birkigt's V-12 was the biggest, most complex and most expensive Hispano-Suiza in history. A 60° vee, the engine was introduced with 9424 cc and horsepower approaching 200 at 3000 rpm. The car's top speed was a genuine 100+ mph, 80 was "almost ambling," in one road tester's phrase, and reachable in second gear. But most awesome was the acceleration: 0 to 60 in just twelve seconds—over a half-century ago. Among all V-12 engines in the world, only Maybach's Zeppelin approached the Hispano's power. And very soon Birkigt settled any argument by offering an alternate crankshaft, increasing the engine to 11,310 cc and 250 hp.

Only two or three of the total 100 J-12's (or Type 68) were originally provided the larger engine, among them the Van Vooren Cabriolet which Jacques & Betty Harguindeguy have owned for nine years: "A



French airplane manufacturer ordered the car originally. In 1937 the artist Pablo Picasso became its second owner. He kept the car until 1952 when he traded it plus some money for a brand-new Buick convertible. In

addition to the extraordinary engine, this Hispano-Suiza is distinguished by the Van Vooren coachwork with its unique body moulding panels and rear fenders which point inward at the ends."



1934 Hispano-Suiza J-12 Coupe de Ville, Fernandez & Darrin

Owner: Blackhawk Classic Auto Collection, Danville, California

The two Hispano-Suizas shown here were his and hers cars. Following exhibition at the Olympia Motor Show in London during the fall of 1934, they were delivered to the Rothschild estate. His—Anthony de Rothschild's—was the 9.4-liter J-12 Coupe de Ville. Hers—Yvonne d'Anvers de Rothschild's—was the 5.2-liter K-6 (six-cylinder) Coupe

Chauffeur. The chassis price was \$13,200 and \$6,600 respectively; the total price went discreetly unmentioned in the press. This matched pair of Hispano-Suizas for Britain's preeminent banking family provides a sublime study in contrasts. The husband's car, now in the Blackhawk collection, is masculine, conservative yet intimidating. The wife's car, now

in Noel Thompson's collection, is feminine, stylishly intimate and with that chic Parisian flair which a lady who had been born in France would wish. In later years Dutch Darrin commented about how much he enjoyed designing for the Rothschilds. There was never any haggling over price. Indeed, the question of money never came up.

1934 Hispano-Suiza K-6 Coupe Chauffeur, Fernandez & Darrin
 Owner: Noel Thompson of New Vernon, New Jersey Photo: K. Karger





Wheelbase lengths for the J-12 chassis were four, designated as follows: 134½ inches (short), 146 inches (light), 150 inches (normal), 157¾ inches (long).

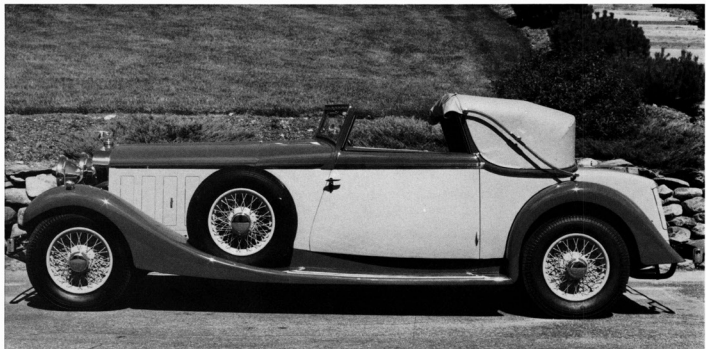
The light chassis was used for the Fernandez & Darrin Sedanca in Bob

Bahre's collection: "The J-12 is powerful and smooth, a very easy car to drive. This example, with its three-position top, vee windshield, long hood/cowl and polished brass belt moulding, has a very Continental look."

Knox Kershaw's Saoutchik Cabriolet is likewise on the 146-inch chassis: "According to research performed by a French automotive historian, this car was delivered originally to a Czechoslovakian film star. It has the larger of the two J-12 engines."

1934 Hispano-Suiza J-12 Sedanca Cabriolet, Fernandez & Darrin

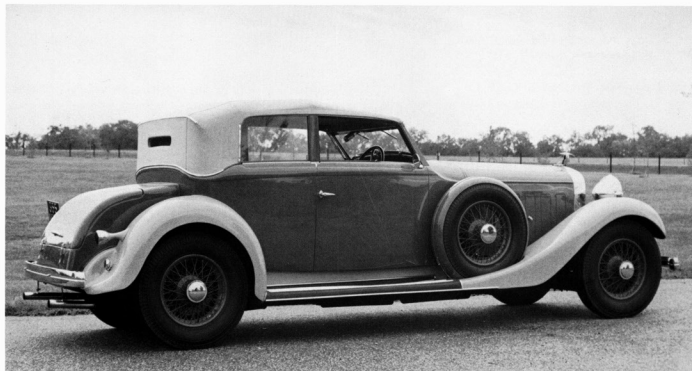
Owner: Bob Bahre of Oxford, Maine





1934 Hispano-Suiza J-12 Cabriolet, Saoutchik

Owner: Knox Kershaw of Montgomery, Alabama





1936 Hispano-Suiza K-6 Limousine, Van Vooren

Owners: Berta & Jay Leon of Hubbard, Texas

Wheelbases for the K-6 were two: 134½ and 146½ inches. The Leons' Van Vooren Limousine is on the longer. Comments Jay: "Since I was born in Spain, the Hispano-Suiza has a special meaning to me. As a limousine, this car is conservative but with flowing lines. The interior has leather in front, broadcloth in back and lovely rosewood everywhere. There is a divider window, of course, and a sun roof over the driver's seat."

Total production of the K-6 Hispano-Suiza was 204 cars. Henri Chapron bodied the three-position Cabriolet owned by Jacques & Betty Harguindeguy: "This is a very rare two-seater body with rumble seat. It's the only Chapron Hispano-Suiza two-seater in existence today."



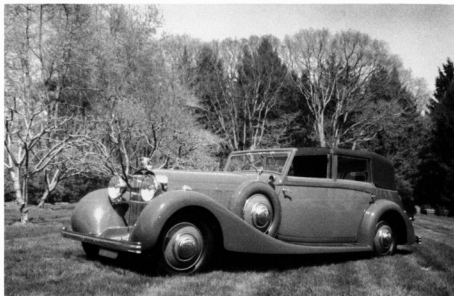
1936 Hispano-Suiza K-6 Cabriolet, Chapron

Owners: Jacques & Betty Harguindeguy of Walnut Creek, California





1937 Hispano-Suiza J-12 Cabriolet de Ville, de Villars (rear door monogram above)
 Owner: Noel Thompson of New Vernon, New Jersey Photos: K. Karger



The original owner of Noel Thompson's three-position Cabriolet de Ville by de Villars was His Royal Highness, the Maharajah of Rajkot, Sardeja who specified that the parking lights be in two different colors in order that his loyal subjects might know at all times just who was in the car (right lens red for the Maharajah, left lens green for the Maharanee). "Extremely elegant," comments Noel, "and a fantastic road car."

That nicely sums up the Hispano-Suiza. Cavilling seems petty in the presence of such a magnificent motorcar as the J-12, though one might point to the multi-plate clutch and the choice of gear ratios as not up to the perfection par of the rest of the chassis. Too, at some point Marc Birkigt might have chosen to update the chassis with independent front suspension. Possibly he never felt the need to do so. By the mid-thirties, in any case, Birkigt had turned his genius to the aviation field. From parts on hand the last few Hispano-Suiza chassis were assembled in 1938 in Paris. In Barcelona, Hispano-Suiza automobile production did not survive World War II.