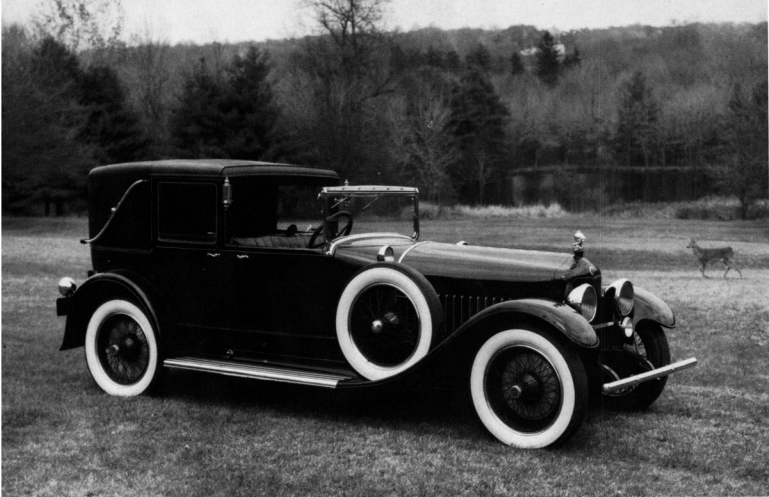


M I N E R V A



"Minerva" from the Graver 1932 Type AL Town Car by Ostruk

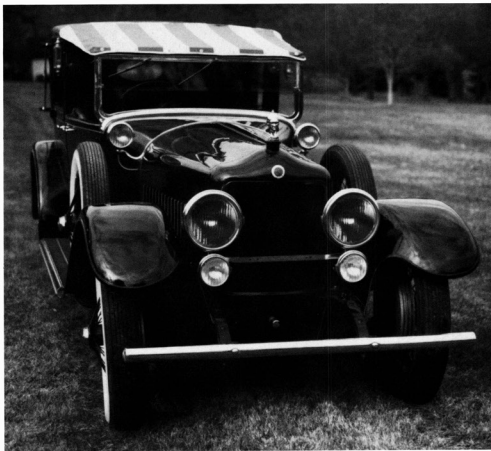
Sylvain de Jong had a fondness for mythology. A native of Holland, he emigrated from Amsterdam to Antwerp in 1883 at the age of fifteen, manufactured bicycles called Mercury beginning in 1895, traveled to America the year following to learn about machine tools and machining, returned home to Belgium in 1897 to begin building a better bicycle called Minerva, and followed with his first automobile in 1899. De Jong must have had second thoughts about an immediate plunge into the automotive field because only prototypes ensued for several years as his bicycles were motorized, and motorcycles and trikes were produced. Not until 1904 did serious automobile manufacture begin. In 1909 de Jong made a pivotal decision which would endure for as long as the Minerva did: the adoption of Charles Yale Knight's sleeve-valve engine. Quiet, efficient, trouble-free and durable, the Knight was the perfect powerplant for a *grand luxe* carriage. That it was expensive to build didn't bother de Jong because the top-of-the-line Minerva's healthy price tag would take care of that. That it was expensive to repair didn't either since a Knight rarely required attention before 120,000 miles, which was impressive. Less impressive was the Knight's thirst for oil which combined with the big Minerva's thirst for gasoline to make driving one pricey. But that scarcely mattered to the clientele of the Belgian marque. As the twenties roared, the Minerva motored silently into a position of renown. . . .



1925 Minerva Type AC Town Sedan, Ostruk/LeBaron
Owner: Robert C. Rooke of Morristown, New Jersey

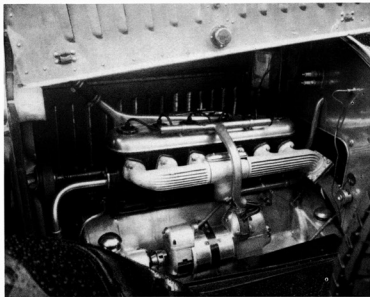
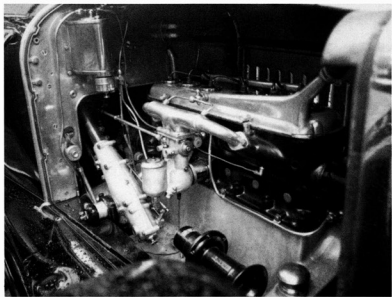
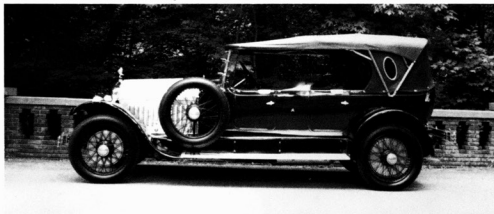
The largest Minerva in 1925 was the 5.3-liter 82 hp Type AC or 30 CV (*chevaux-vapeur*, for taxable horsepower). A multi-disc clutch and four-wheel brakes were new this year, as was the longer 146-inch wheelbase. Paul Ostruk was the importer and agent for Minerva in New York City. The chassis price was approximately \$10,000. Coachwork Ostruk designed was usually built for him by LeBaron. The Minerva was a favorite of America's moneyed elite: Clifford V. Brokaw owned two of the cars, Flo Ziegfeld three, Harold Vanderbilt four. The garages of the various members of the duPont family housed no fewer than fourteen.

John Huntington Hartford, founder of the A&P supermarket chain, was the original owner of the one-off Ostruk/LeBaron Town Sedan which Bob Rooke acquired a dozen years ago: "This is a huge, elegant, regal Classic. The wheels measure almost two feet. With a twelve-volt electrical system, the car starts easily. The fourth speed ratio is 3.61:1. This Minerva is fast. It uses fuel quickly too; at six miles per gallon, it tends to run rich. On the Garden State CARavan in 1981, I ran out of gas—twice."



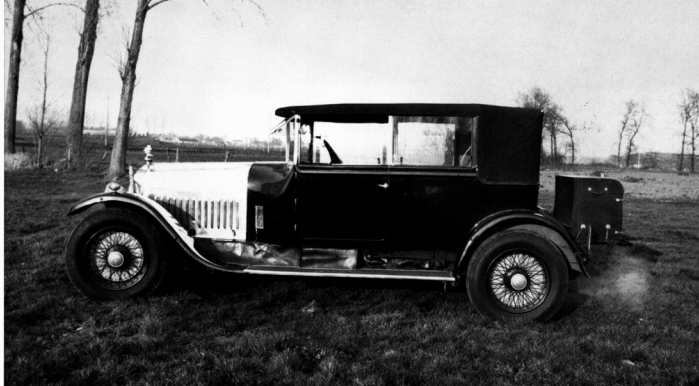


1925 Minerva Type AB Phaeton, Hooper & Jackson
Owner: Raymond A. Katzell of Medford, New Jersey



Like Rolls-Royce which introduced its 20 H.P. during the reign of the Silver Ghost, Minerva had its smaller companion car as well. Smaller is the operative word, though only relatively speaking. The 3.3-liter 55 hp Type AB (or 20/24 CV) was on a 142-inch-wheelbase chassis and rode on the same size wheels as the Type AC.

In 1983, after a blowout during a 150-mile trip, Ray Katzell decided to replace the four road tires on his Minerva and, as he says, "experienced the joy of demounting and mounting 895x135 mm clinchers." But his enthusiasm for the Minerva remains undiminished: "I have long been attracted to marques that are relatively rare, in addition to having the choice features that qualify a car as Classic. As a Belgian product, the Minerva has for me the further virtue of having ties to my paternal family. The market for high-priced cars in a small country like Belgium was necessarily limited, so Minervas were manufactured largely for export, especially throughout the British Empire. The chassis of my car was exported to Australia, where it was bodied by a local coachbuilder. At the time, Australia levied high importation taxes on complete automobiles. Since a majority of Minervas imported to the U.S. had formal coachwork on the largest chassis, this car is especially attractive because of its open body on the shorter wheelbase. The polished aluminum hood and dual sidemounts are additional sporting touches. The Knight sleeve valve provides the quietest and smoothest performance of any gasoline-engined Classic that I have experienced. Handling is easy and precise, and the four-wheel brakes make for sure stops."



1925 Minerva Type AB Cabriolet, Woodall & Nicholson

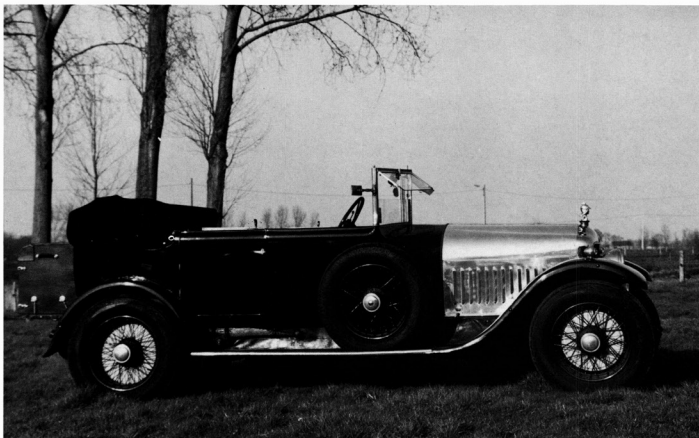
Owner: Reginald P. Ghys of Antwerp, Belgium

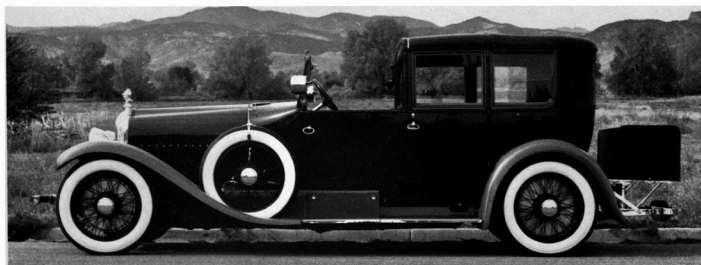
"Minervas were as trouble-free as any car I have known before or since," wrote Tom Hibbard in the CCCA magazine *The Classic Car* in the mid-sixties, "... the big six-cylinder Knight engines seemed to go forever even when driven continually at top speeds." Tom spoke from first-hand experience, for in addition to the coachbuilding house he had established in partnership with the

inimitable Dutch, Hibbard & Darrin served as the Minerva agency for France. Naturally the marque was often graced with coachwork by these two Americans in Paris, as exemplified by the elegant Hibbard & Darrin Town Car Landaulette which Clive Cussler has owned for over a decade.

The Type AB Cabriolet by Woodall & Nicholson has been owned by

Belgian member Reginald Ghys since 1975 and is a veteran of such rallies as the Paris-Deauville (1980 and 1983) and Paris-Bordeaux (1985): "This Minerva motors in silence and comfort. It's a massive five-seater cabriolet with very large windows and an unusual door arrangement. On the passenger side, the door is set at the front; the driver's side door is set to the rear."

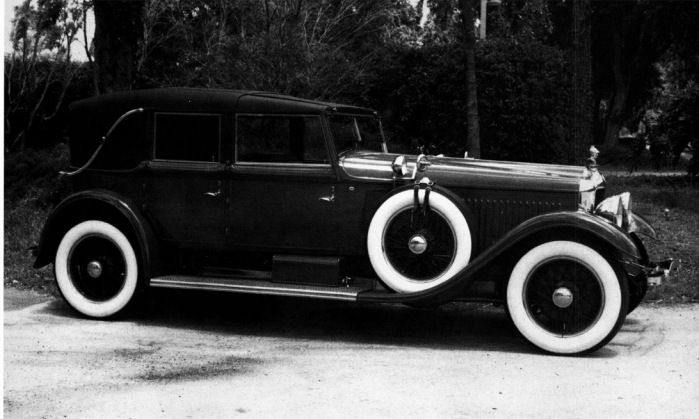




1925 Minerva Type AB Town Car Landaulette, Hibbard & Darrin

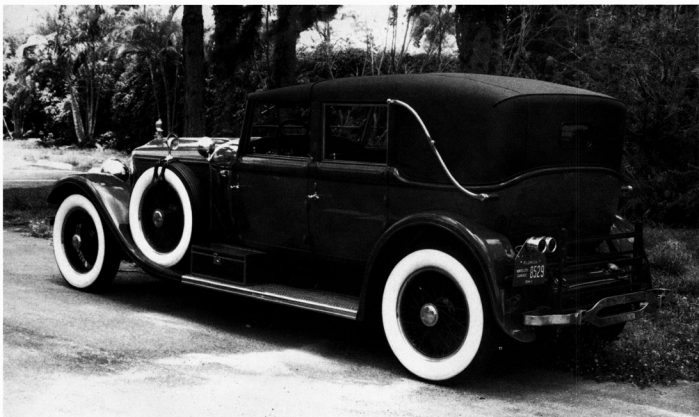
Owner: Clive Cussler of Golden, Colorado





1928 Minerva Type AF Town Car, Ostruk/Hibbard & Darrin

Owner: Thomas J. Lester of Deerfield Beach, Florida



The Type AF succeeded the AC in 1926. The wheelbase was increased to 149½ inches and Dewandre servo-assisted brakes were fitted. The big Minerva was even bigger.

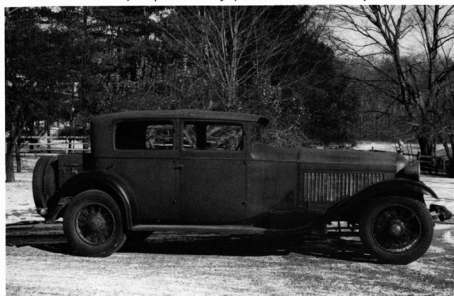
Tom Lester's Type AF Town Car was ordered by a New Yorker,

designed by the American agent and built by the Minerva agency in France. The coachbuilder's plate includes the names of both Paul Ostruk and Hibbard & Darrin. "I have never seen nor do I know of another like this," says Tom. "Fully

collapsible, it can be used as a formal town car, in semi-formal or in open touring guise. The styling, workmanship, appointments and other details on this car are simply superb and most elegant. Even moreso than a Bugatti Royale, I think."

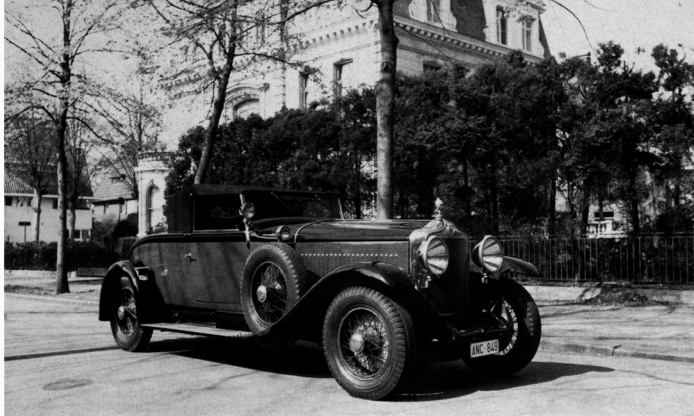


1928 Minerva Type AK Weymann Club Sedan, d'Ieteren Frères
Owner: J. Stephen Babinsky of Bernardsville, New Jersey



Introduced in 1928, the Type AK was the last of the big six-cylinder Minervas, its Knight engine bored out to six liters and designated the 32 CV. "No matter where I go, I will never see another one like it," comments Steve Babinsky of the Type AK he acquired three years ago. "Totally original, it is very interesting to examine. The car was purchased overseas, shipped to this country and has only 7,000 original miles. Its first home was an estate which is now part of the University of Bridgeport. I am in the process of tracing its original Connecticut owner. I like the long hood, the long wheelbase and the proportions of this car. And the body construction fascinates me. Built by d'Ieteren under the Weymann patent, it is all wood covered with Zapon fabric. Even the hood is covered."





1928 Minerva Type AKS Cabriolet, d'Ieteren Frères

Owner: Reginald P. Ghys of Antwerp, Belgium



The AKS was the sporting version—shorter wheelbase, smaller wheels, higher gearing, etc.—of the AK. Reginald Ghys has owned his d'Ieteren Cabriolet since 1985: "The

32 CV was the best Minerva ever built, in my opinion—the usual silence and comfort but with a four-speed transmission and braking servo by Dewandre. My car is a rare sporty

cabriolet built by d'Ieteren probably with Hibbard & Darrin influence. Many Minerva cars sold by Hibbard & Darrin in Paris were built in Brussels at the d'Ieteren coachworks."