

A S T O N M A R T I N

From the beginning, Aston Martin had more ups and downs than an elevator. ("Lift" is perhaps the better operative word.) In 1914 the first example of this renowned British car won a hill climb at Aston Clinton, Lionel Martin deciding to commemorate the event by adding Aston to the vehicle's name. The second car had to await the end of the First World War. When production finally began in 1921, Martin and partner Robert Bamford didn't have the money to carry on—and sold out to the Hon. John Benson who produced about fifty cars in four years and then went into receivership. From that downer, Aston Martin went up again as an ex-patriate Italian, Augustus Cesare Bertelli, and a sporting Englishman, W. S. Renwick, took over and produced 130 cars in four years, not enough to turn a profit, however. More upbeat was the arrival of Sir Arthur Sutherland, who took financial control of the company at the end of 1932. The Bertelli-designed single-cam 1.5-liter engine

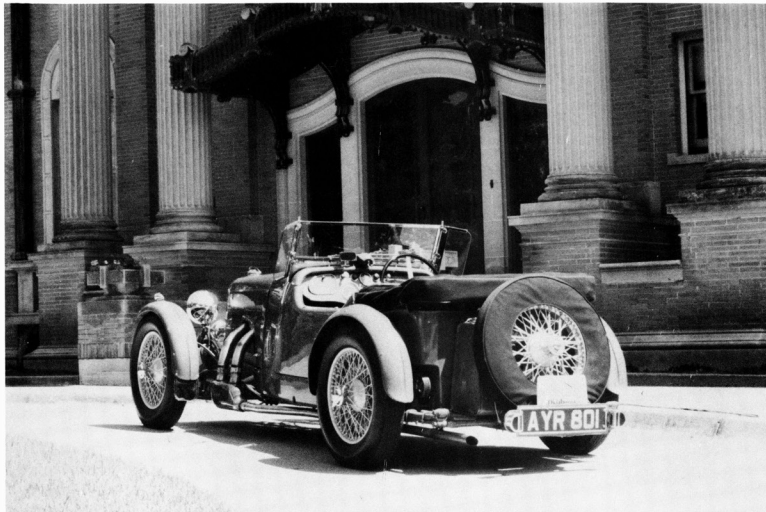
from the late twenties was improved, the cars which had never stopped racing now gave promise for victories, production of 105 cars in 1933 came close to the hoped for, and the good-looking Mark II arrived in 1934.

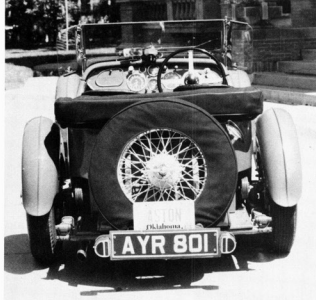
"It has often been said that the last phase of an established type is always more successful than earlier examples of an improved principle, and there is no better example of this than the Aston Martin Mark II," comments Chris Salyer. "At 1495 cc, the engine remained the same as from 1927 and, at first glance, the cars looked alike, but there were differences. The First Series International had a flat radiator, 21-inch wheels and an underslung worm drive rear. The Second Series Standard gave up the worm drive and lengthened the wheelbase from 103 to 112 inches. The Le Mans variation offered both wheelbases, reduced the wheels to 18 inches and increased the compression ratio from 6.0:1 to 7.5:1. The Third Series Mark II had the 7.5 compression, 73 hp

and mechanical cable brakes (rather than rods) operated by 14-inch drums. 'The Sportsman's Car' and 'Gentleman's Fast Motoring' were among the advertising slogans. The Mark II was one of the greatest sports cars of the thirties. Mine was one of 166 produced, one of only 61 short-chassis (103-inch) versions. The Ulster was basically a Mark II tuned and bodied for racing. Aston Martins were individually produced and modifications were relatively inexpensive. For example, silver replaced chrome on one car, padlocks could be had on the hood, and four Mark II short chassis bodies were fitted to Ulster engine-chassis. For about \$250 over the \$3,500 of a Mark II, Aston Martin was happy to 'hot-rod' the car for you. In the first half-decade of the thirties, Aston Martin exemplified the twilight of the stark, spartan school of sports car design. Racing successes at Le Mans and in the Tourist Trophy were many, the weight of the car (a little more than a ton) being more suited to endurance

1934 Aston Martin Mark II 2/4 Seater

Owner: Christopher M. Salyer of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

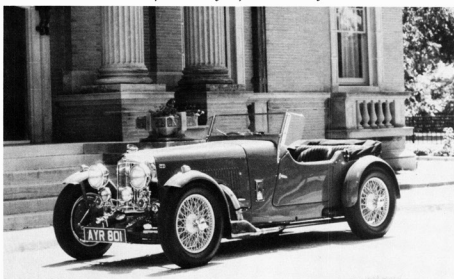




1934 Aston Martin Mark II 2/4 Seater
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racing. As an outstanding example, Aston Martin finished the Twenty-Four Hours of Le Mans in 1935 in 3rd, 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 15th out of a field of 28 finishers. The 3rd place car was beaten by a Lagonda and Alfa Romeo of much larger engine capacities."

John Mozart's Two-Seater would have raced at Le Mans in 1936 save for the cancellation of the event in strike-torn France. "Extremely fast for a relatively small cc engine," comments John of this car, one of two built for the Sarthe circuit which subsequently became the basis for a new production sports car. Aston Martin continued racing until the war. With peace, the company did not seriously return to production until after the arrival of David Brown at the close of the Classic Era.



1936 Aston Martin Le Mans Two-Seater

Owner: John Mozart of Palo Alto, California

