

# D A I M L E R

In May of 1896 the Prince of Wales had his first ride in a horseless carriage—a Daimler built in Cannstatt, Germany. Queen Victoria's son found the experience exhilarating though, as an enthusiastic equestrian, he hoped the motor vehicle would not entirely supersede the horse. And he did not rush out to buy one. Soon after the turn of the century, however, the Prince of Wales was Edward VII, and there was a Daimler in the Royal garage. A tradition had been established.

Though the Daimler Motor Syndicate Ltd. (later Daimler Co. Ltd.) of Coventry began life as a licensee of the Cannstatt company, the two firms pursued independent courses virtually from the beginning. By 1902 the German company had relocated to Stuttgart and renamed its product Mercedes. And the Coventry Daimler became as British as crumpets and tea.

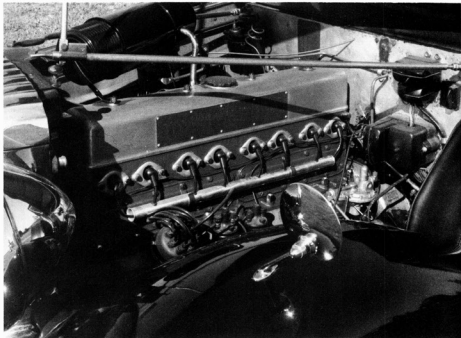
Genteel motoring was the mark of the Daimler and the company's adoption of the Knight engine in 1909 was in keeping with that policy. The quiet running of a sleeve valve provided a worthy alternative to the sometimes audible valve gear of the firm's principal rival, Rolls-Royce. The fleet of Coventry Daimlers ordered by King George V in 1910 remained in the Royal garage until 1923. The year following, when Rolls-Royce replaced its venerable Silver

Ghost with the New Phantom, Coventry replied with the Double-Six, sporting twelve sleeve-valve cylinders.

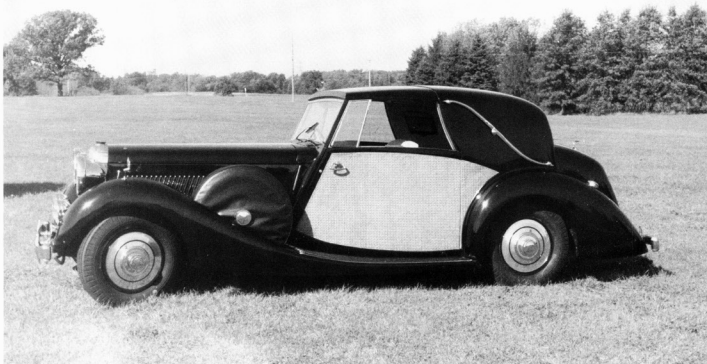
By the mid-thirties, however, Daimler decided sufficient progress had been made with poppet-valve engines to render them preferable to

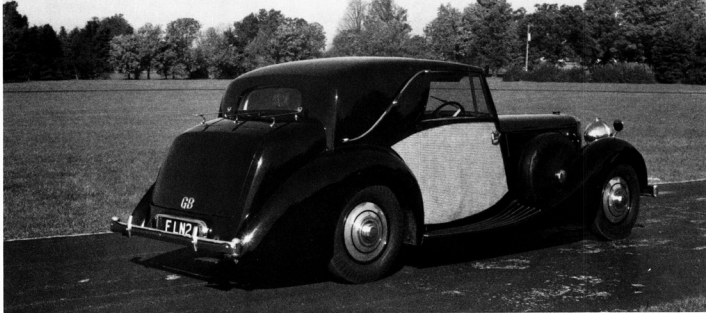
the Knight, even for Royal equipage. By the late thirties, the Coventry firm's rejoinder to its foe in Derby was the 4 Litre, an overhead valve 90 hp straight eight capable of 80+ mph motoring in traditional Daimler splendor. A fluid flywheel preselector transmission was fitted, and individual jacks were built in each wheel.

The Gilmore Car Museum's 4 Litre, purchased nearly a quarter-century ago by Donald Gilmore, is unique in its body styling. Though the



1939 Daimler 4 Litre Sedan Coupe, Gurney Nutting  
Owner: Gilmore Car Museum, Hickory Corners, Michigan





1939 Daimler 4 Litre Sedanca Coupe, Gurney Nutting (interior below)  
Owner: Gilmore Car Museum, Hickory Corners, Michigan



characteristic and distinctive radiator shell remains, the Gurney Nutting Sedanca Coupe coachwork is, by conservative Daimler standards, almost voluptuous. But one thing didn't change. As curator Norm Knight comments, "Purportedly, license plates FLN 1-5 were issued to Windsor Castle. Our plate number is FLN-2."

All of the foregoing is not to suggest that Daimler produced only for clients whose blood was very blue. So far as Farrell Gay knows, the Limousine he has owned for nearly two decades was not a Royal mews car, but remains memorable for other reasons: "It is the only one of its kind in the United States. The six-cylinder engine develops 75 hp, and the 121-inch wheelbase is only a couple of inches less than the 4 Litre. Its early type of automatic transmission has gear selection on the steering column. There's a divider window between the chauffeur and passenger areas, with a microphone from one to the other. The back seat has a crank adjustment to change the seat configuration for the comfort of the passengers. And the passenger compartment also has a small (eight-inch square) 'sun roof' for ventilation."



1937 Daimler EL 24 Limousine, Charlesworth  
Owner: Farrell C. Gay of Springfield, Illinois



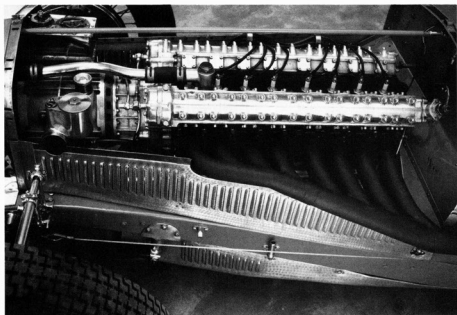
# D E L A G E

The originator of the aphorism that one drives an Alfa Romeo, is driven in a Rolls-Royce, but gives only a Delage to his favorite mistress is unknown. Undoubtedly it was no one from Automobiles Delage. "The Car with a Reputation" was among the firm's slogans, though it had nothing to do with romantic liaisons and was generally followed with "Gained by Performance."

In 1905 Louis Delage began his automobile company in Courbevoie on the Seine. In 1906 he began racing. Victories were many and the Delage reputation was made. In the twenties Louis Delage continued racing not so much to promote his product as to indulge himself. Winning the European Grand Prix Championship had become an obsession.

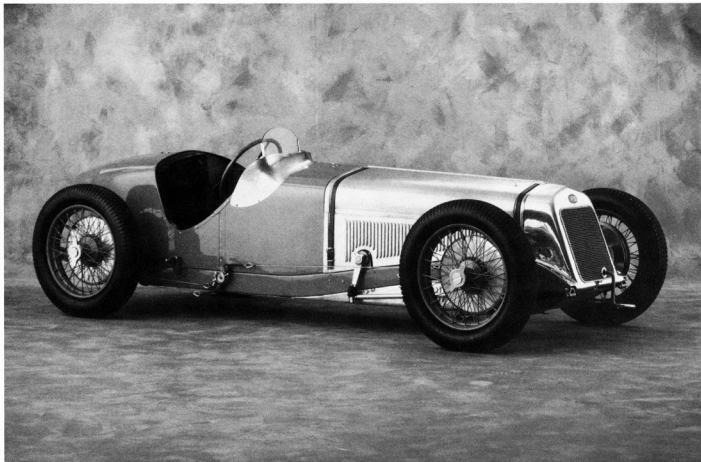
The Delage obsession resulted in a milestone in race car design. The engine was a double-overhead-cam straight eight with two valves per cylinder, a Roots-type supercharger, a jewel-like look and 170 puissant horses at 8000 rpm. The radiator was raked and the engine offset to provide for a startingly slim profile

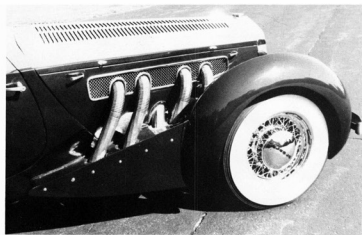
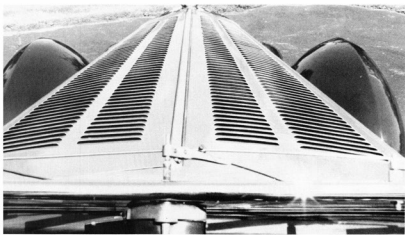
and one of the lowest frontal areas of any Grand Prix car for years. In 1927 Delage was all-conquering. Every race entered was won, the European Championship belonged to Louis Delage.



1927 Delage 1.5 Liter Grand Prix Car

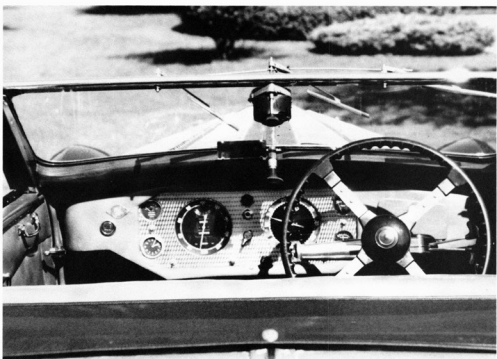
Owner: Miles C. Collier of Naples, Florida





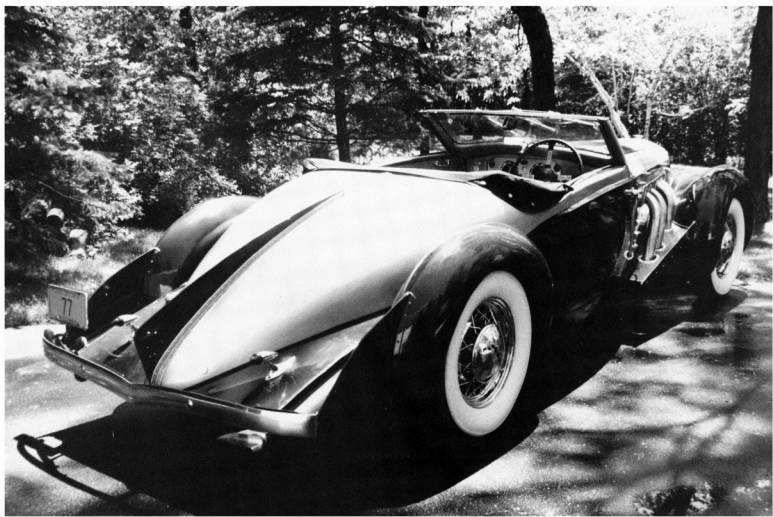
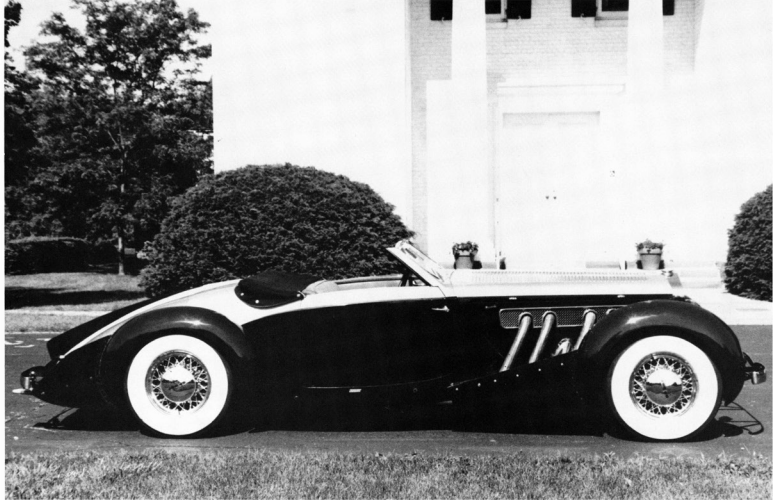
In 1928, his obsession realized, Louis Delage had closed his race department, sold off the race cars and returned wholeheartedly to manufacture. The most glamorous of the Delage line was the straight-eight D8 series introduced in 1929. Whether this car won more awards at major concours d'élegance than any other marque of the era, as Louis Delage claimed, is moot. Conceivably only the Hispano-Suiza won more. And comparatively, the Delage was a bargain: \$3,125 for the chassis, half that of an Hispano. Competitors wondered how Louis Delage could sell such a superb motorcar so inexpensively. In 1935 they had their answer, as a financially devastated Delage was forced to sell out to archrival Delahaye. Changes were many under the new ownership but Delahaye continued the magnificent D8 series. The Delages which follow are D8-120 models from 1938. Their Delahaye-built ohv straight-eight engines displace 4744 cc and develop 115 hp. Their coachbuilt bodies are on 133-inch chassis. The chassis price was \$5,220. Unchanged was the Delage clientele.

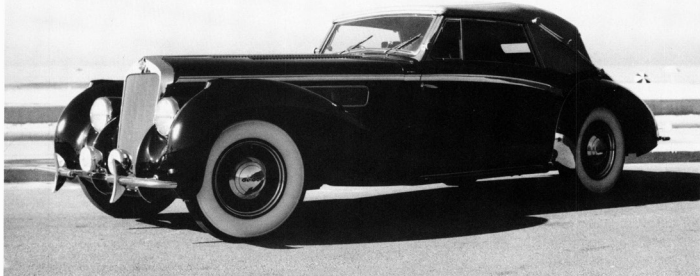
A French count and the curator of the national museum in Paris were early owners of Alberta Berndt's D8-120 Torpedo de Villars: "This is a one-off body and a huge two-seat car. Seldom seen on a Classic of this period is the extremely raked windshield which is effectively kept clear in rain by three wiper blades. Since 1971 my husband and I have driven this car over 14,000 miles. The Cotal electro-magnetic gearbox is completely smooth and has never faltered. Independent front suspension makes for great handling and ride; the hydraulic brakes are superb. The long-stroke straight-eight engine will go on forever. The car cruises effortlessly at 65 to 75 mph with reserve power. Although I am five feet one inch and 107 pounds, I can handle this Delage as well in city traffic as on the highway."



1938 Delage D8-120 Torpedo, de Villars  
Owner: Alberta Berndt of Milwaukee, Wisconsin







1938 Delage D8-120 Delta Sport Convertible, Letourneur & Marchand  
 Owner: Henry Uihlein II of Lake Placid, New York      Photos: Cindy Lewis

The two D8-120 Delages in the Uihlein collection were commissioned by the French government for display at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. Each a one-of-a-kind with body by Letourneur & Marchand, these Delages were designed to epitomize the French flair in automotive art, which undoubtedly they did very well for the duration of the exposition. Meanwhile France fell to the Germans. Because of the war, the cars were not returned home.

Henry Uihlein tells their subsequent story: "The Delta Sport was purchased for \$7,430 by Robert S. Grier, who took delivery at the World's Fair and actually drove it out of the French Pavillion at the close of the exposition. The Aero Coupe was purchased by Bruce Crarey. This was

the first Delage I acquired, in 1963 at the estate sale of the Crarey collection. I attended merely as a curious onlooker with no intention of becoming a purchaser. Nevertheless, when I saw this car, my eyes melted and a sudden inherent urge seized me and said I should try to buy it. I had no one to advise me so I phoned my cousin Brooks Stevens, the automobile designer and builder of Excaliburs, for advice. He was utterly surprised that such an outstanding and famous French car was for sale in my isolated neck of the woods. He advised me without hesitation to acquire it.

"Then in 1985 I learned that the Delta Sport in the Harrah collection would be selling at auction. I had to have it too. To own the pair was

really a ten-strike as far as I was concerned. For the first time since the conclusion of the 1939 World's Fair, these two sister cars were brought back together. Each, in its own way, brings together the quintessence of French design of the Classic Era. The Aero Coupe features the *Vutotal* pillarless window concept pioneered by Henri Labourdette; the Delta Sport the grand sweep of line characterized by Henri Chapron. Both cars were state-of-the-art.

"Experts may differ on the precise ranking of many of the fabulous French cars of the past, but any list of the truly eminent that omits the Delage is incomplete. So often you hear spoken, particularly in Paris, 'Delage is French for elegance.' How true."

1938 Delage D8-120 Aero-Coupe, Letourneur & Marchand  
 Owner: Henry Uihlein II of Lake Placid, New York      Photos: Cindy Lewis

