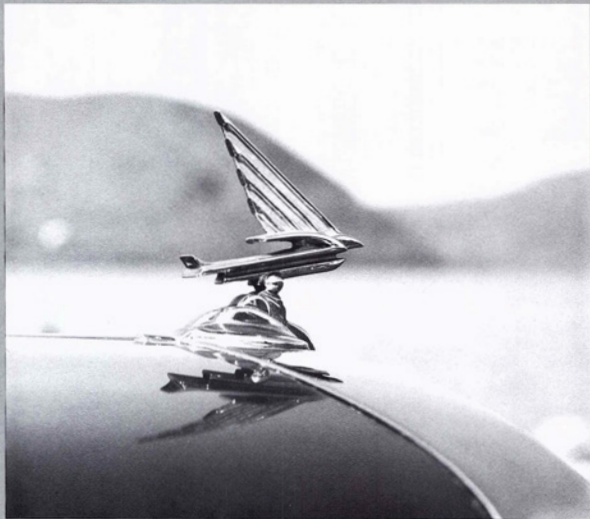
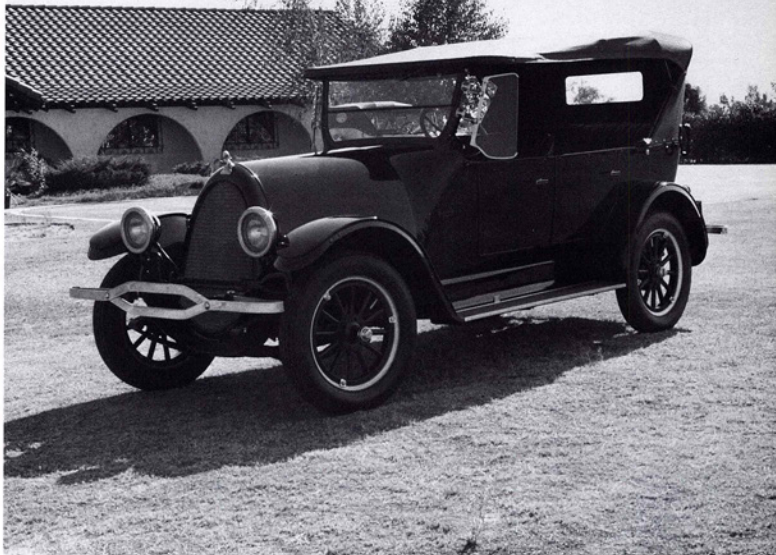


F R A N K L I N



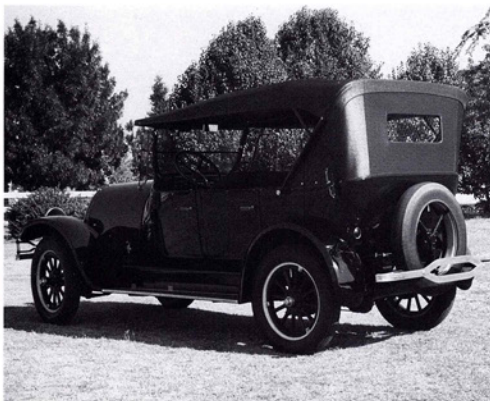
"Spirit of flight" hood ornament from Al Nippert's 1931 Series 15 Airman Speedster

Perhaps no Classic entered the Classic Era more dramatically than the Franklin. Since 1902, when former newspaper publisher Herbert H. Franklin teamed up with Cornell engineering graduate John Wilkinson in Syracuse, New York, the marque had marched to its own drummer. The company's devotion to air cooling was messianic. Its engineering budget—computed on a percentage of income basis—was among the highest in the industry. High quality with less weight was the Franklin credo. Ash wood was the choice for the chassis for twenty-six years; the engine sported overhead valves from the beginning. Full-elliptic suspension provided such stingy tire wear that it was not until 1922 that the company offered detachable rims as standard equipment. As early as 1913 Franklin had been in the forefront in championing the sedan body style. The cars seemed to be indomitable. By the Classic Era, fully 75% of the Franklins built since 1902 were still on the road—and recognizably so. No other car looked quite like the Franklin. No one in Syracuse regarded that as untoward. . . .



1925 Franklin Series 10C Touring

Owner: Don Presson of Clovis, California



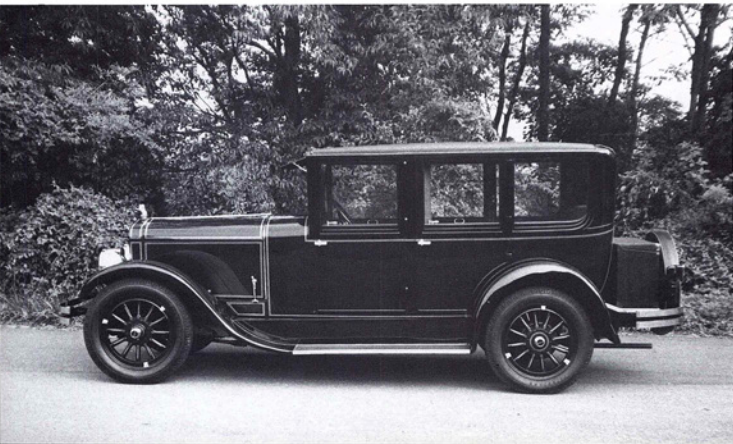
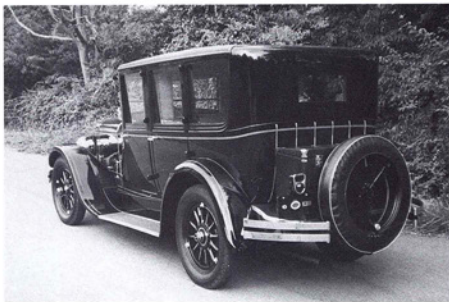
Nineteen twenty-five was Franklin's first year for the lion mascot on an imitation radiator and the last for the "horse collar" front. Franklin dealers, led by Ralph Hamlin (the company's distributor for southern California since 1905), had descended upon Syracuse with an ultimatum: new car or no car. It was becoming increasingly difficult, they said, to sell the unconventional Franklin. Chief engineer John Wilkinson was aghast; to him, the single-piece hinged-at-the-front hood of the air-cooled car was a sublime example of form following function. Probably had he been there, Don Presson would have agreed with Wilkinson. He has owned his Series 10C horse-collar Franklin (a former Harrah Collection car) for over a half decade. On a Nevada tour several years ago in pouring rain, many cars gave up but, Don says, "this Franklin just seemed to enjoy the pull."

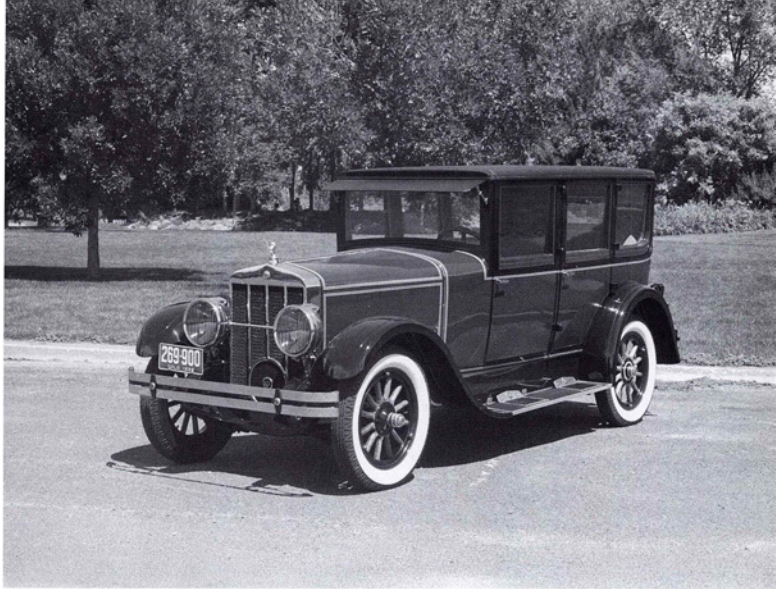
Despite Wilkinson's protestations, Herbert H. Franklin, faced with a mass defection of dealers, decided a change was in order. Even if the Franklin didn't need a radiator, it should look like it had one. Wilkinson quit in protest. The new Series 11A, designed by J. Frank de Causse who had gained fame as the creator of the Locomobile Sportif, was introduced in March of 1925.

Randy Still is a de Causse enthusiast. He acquired his Series 11A, another ex-Harrah car, in June of 1986. Among the features that won him over were the unusual triple pinstriping, the canting of the side-window glass and the rare and optional painted (not plated) radiator shell—plus the Masco heater, electric intercom, interior lights that activate when a curb side door is opened and dash-mounted oil level indicator, all of which were rather advanced for 1925: "I've always liked limousines and this one with a rear-mounted trunk with fitted luggage and a center-mounted spare excited me. The Enclosed Drive Limousine was advertised as a chauffeur-driven car made instantly convenient for owner driving by lowering the partition window. The rear compartment is broad enough for three while provision for two extra passengers is made by the auxiliary folding seats." The divided windshield glass and the word "Franklin" on the wheel hubs indicate this car was built early in Series 11A production.



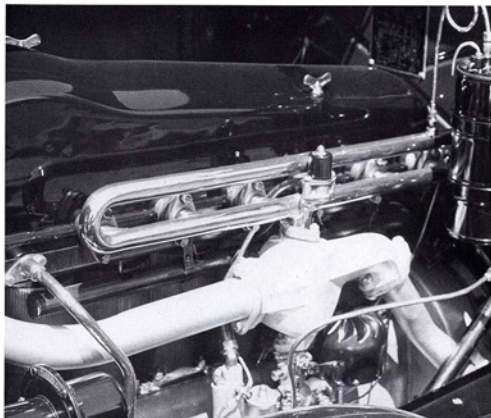
1925 Franklin Series 11A Enclosed Drive Limousine
Owner: E. Randy Still of Kingsport, Tennessee





1926 Franklin Series 11A Four-Door Sedan

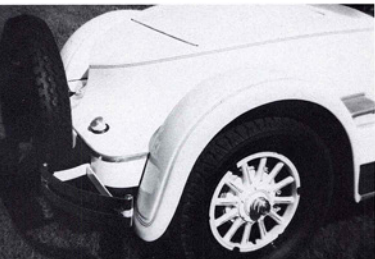
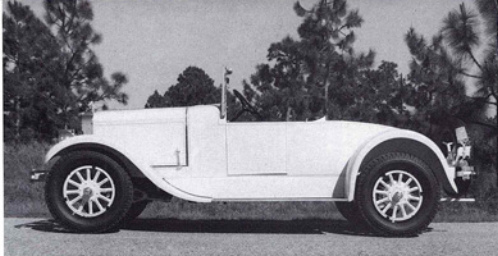
Owners: Jim & Betty Hull of Littleton, Colorado



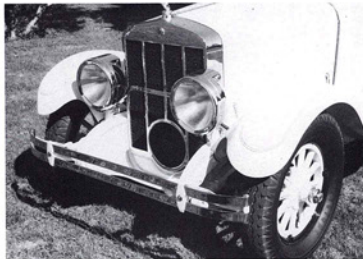
Doubtless it had been the sales decrease from over 10,000 cars in '23 to 6,075 which had resulted in the dealer ultimatum to the Syracuse factory. Franklin sales from '25 through '28 would average about 8,000 cars annually. Among them was the Hulls' 1926 Four-Door Sedan which Jim and Betty have nicknamed Aunt Sophie. She gets around a lot—three CARavans to date and tours on both coasts of Canada. "Aunt Sophie's air cooling eliminates the major problem we encountered in touring Classics—overheating," says Jim. "While underpowered by today's standards (the 199.1-cubic-inch six generates 32 hp), the Franklin was an excellent performer in 1926. Since very few roads were paved at the time, handling and ride were more important than sheer power. With her triple-laminated ash frame (as strong as steel but lighter and more flexible) and the full elliptics, she is very nimble and easy to drive."

"The boattail body hidden by the spare tire epitomizes Franklin's understated style." Brad Hindall's comment about his '27 Sport Runabout is exactly right. From the standpoint of history, it also amuses that the company most famous for its sedans was the first in America (in 1925) to catalogue a boattail, the body style that came to be regarded as the raciest of the Classic Era.

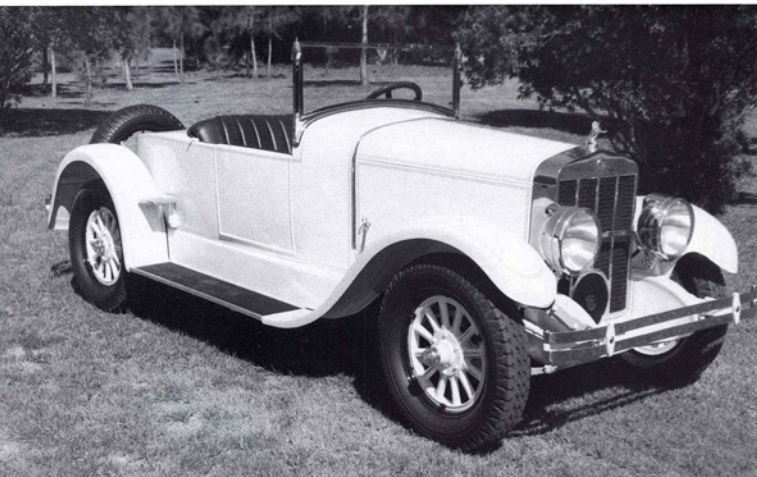
Even today the car excites attention. Bob Knapp's '28 Sport Runabout is one of the major attractions at his Deer Park Auto Museum.



1927 Franklin Series 11B Sport Runabout



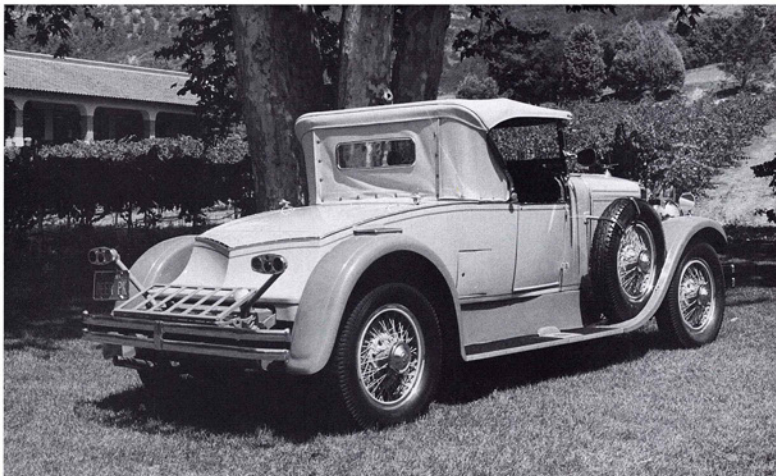
Owners: Brad & Jane Hindall of Sarasota, Florida





1928 Franklin Series 12A Airman Sport Runabout

Owner: Robert Knapp of San Diego, California

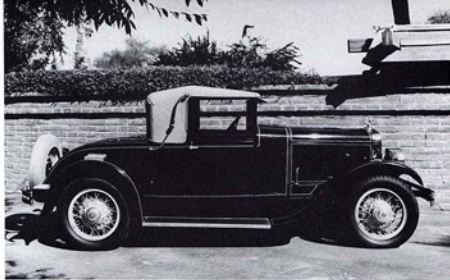


For Franklin, 1928 was as radical a year as 1925 had been. Introduced on all Airman models were four-wheel hydraulic brakes and, although the shorter 119-inch-wheelbase models continued with the laminated ash frame, the new 128-inch Series 12A employed Franklin's first steel chassis in twenty-six years. This was less because the Syracuse company had become suddenly enamoured of steel than the expense of having ash shipped across the country from the Pacific Northwest and storing it for a half decade or so while it seasoned. By 1929 all Franklins would sport steel chassis. As previously, the use of aluminum in the Series 12A was extensive, including body, crankcase and housings for the transmission and differential. Reportedly, Franklin was the world's largest consumer of the metal.

The Sport Touring that the Olsons have owned for nine years is one of only two known to exist and is a former Harrah car.

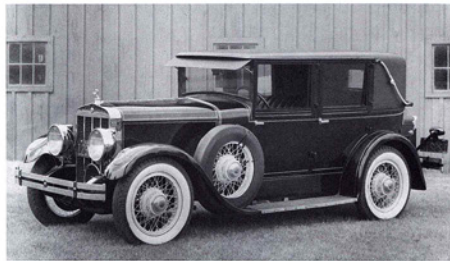
Dick and Linda Kughn have owned their Airman Coupe since December of '88.

The Airman designation introduced in '28, of course, was to honor the man who had soloed the Atlantic in '27. Although besieged with offers and gifts after his epic flight, Charles Lindbergh accepted only a Franklin, which he donated in 1940 to the Henry Ford Museum. "Lucky Lindy" was an avid enthusiast of the marque. "The most comfortable mile-a-minute car ever built," Franklin advertised its new Airman, "... the automobile's nearest approach to flying."



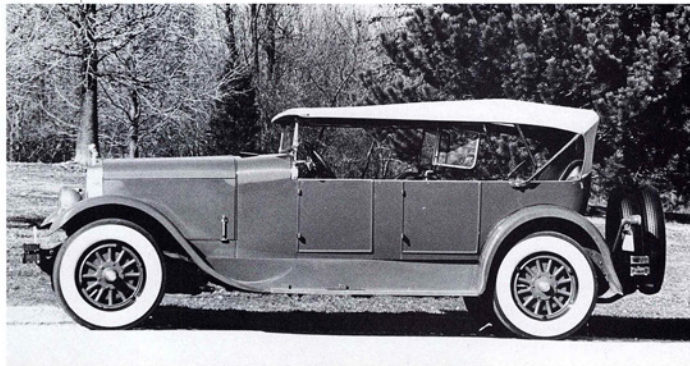
1928 Franklin Series 12A Airman Coupe
Owners: Richard & Linda Kughn of Southfield, Michigan

1928 Franklin Series 12A Airman Four-Door Sedan
Owner: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan



1928 Franklin Series 12A Airman Sport Touring

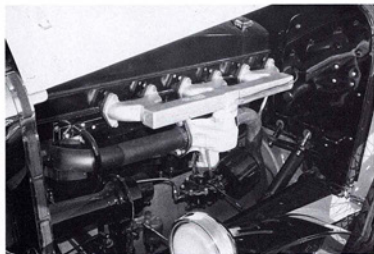
Owners: Richard & Ruth Olson of Florissant, Missouri





1929 Franklin Series 13 Airman Model 135 Convertible Coupe

Owner: Richard A. Harry of Alma, Wisconsin

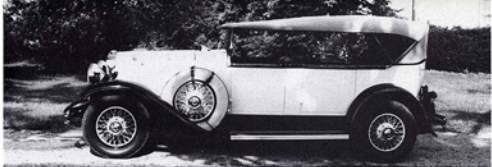


Series 13 Franklins for 1929 were offered in three models: the 130 (234-cubic-inch engine, 119-inch wheelbase), and the 135 and 137 (each with 274-cubic-inch engine but on 125- and 132-inch wheelbases respectively). With 14,432 cars built, '29 was Franklin's biggest year ever. Synchronmesh transmission was featured throughout the line. This was the last year for vertical copper cooling fins on the cylinders. With the death of Frank de Causse in 1928, Ray Dietrich had become the Franklin's designer. The beautiful Ryan headlamps with matching parking lights were a deft Dietrich touch. The top on Richard Harry's Convertible Coupe folds compactly into a well behind the front seat.

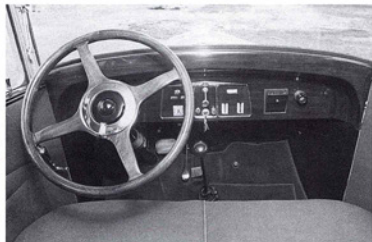
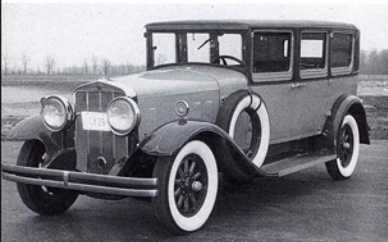
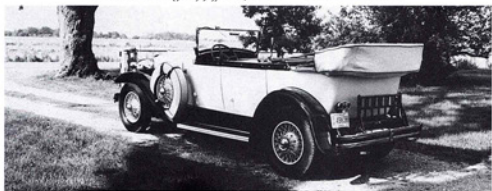
Bob Agle's Sport Touring was Dietrich's first dual cowl for the company, and the first open Franklin sold following the death of Bill Harrah who, as this portfolio indicates, had been an indefatigable collector of the marque. Since 1981 Bob has driven the car extensively and pronounces it an excellent tourer whether open or closed.

Alyce Oberhaus says the same for her Franklin Sedan: "The car cruises well at 50 miles an hour."

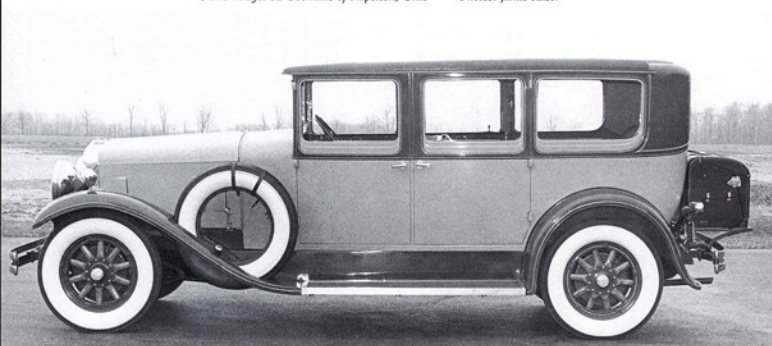
Although air cooled for over a quarter of a century, the Franklin continued to confound some people. Perhaps its faux radiator had been done too well, complete with bolted-on cap sporting a knurled edge for gaining a better grip. "Among Franklin owners of yore," Richard Harry comments, "there used to be many tales of unknowing filling station boys trying to wrestle the cap off. In one story the station man even used a Stillson wrench."

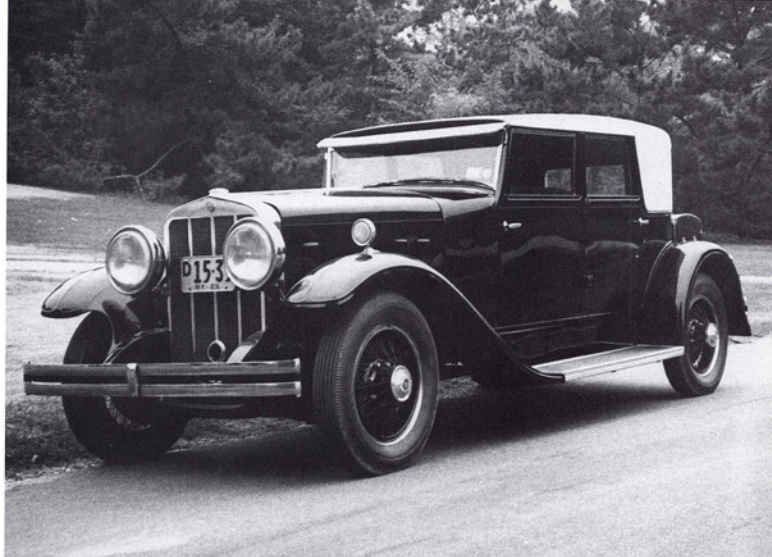


1929 Franklin Series 13 Airman Model 137 Sport Touring
Owner: Robert Agle of Jefferson, Ohio Photos: Don Smith

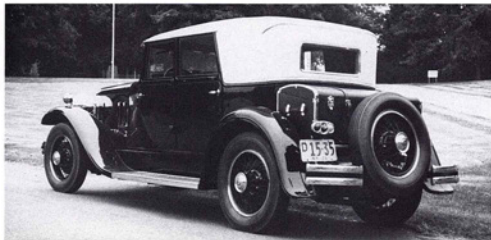
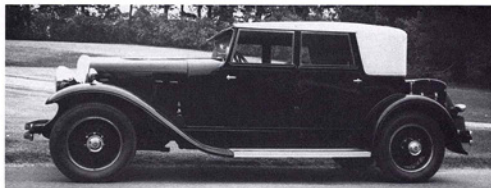


1929 Franklin Series 13 Airman Model 137 Seven-Passenger Sedan
Owner: Alyce R. Oberhaus of Napoleon, Ohio Photos: Jamie Kuser



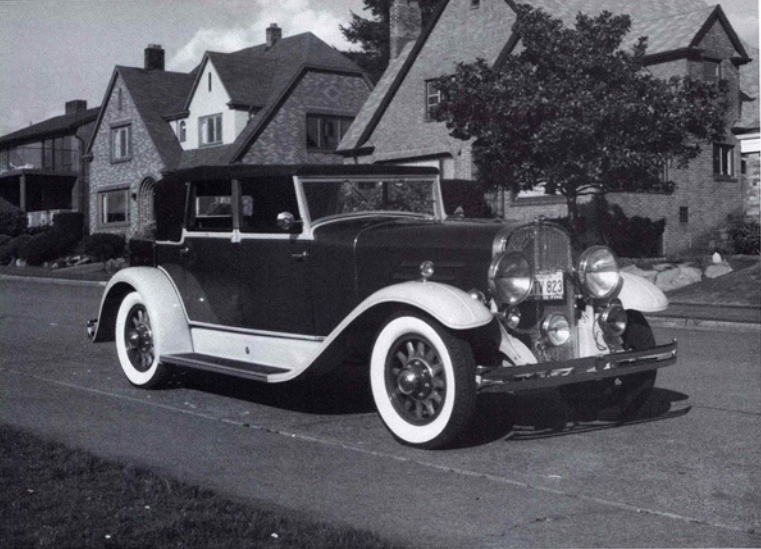


1929 Franklin Series 13 Airman Model 137 Speedster, Dietrich

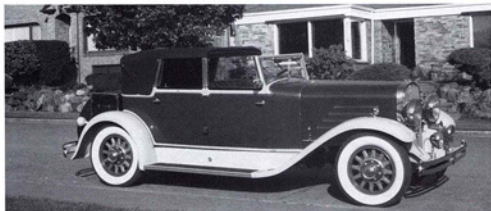


Owner: Art Kenniff of Southold, New York

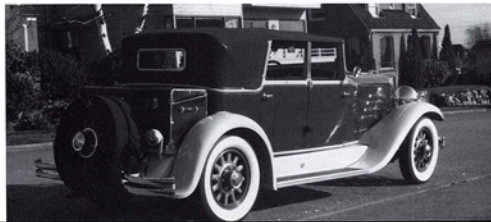
When introduced in June of 1929, the Speedster was described by Franklin as a closed car providing "a hint of future style development in the quality car class." A half century later, giving a sedan a convertible look began to enjoy a certain vogue again in the United States, but few would argue that Ray Dietrich did it much better. At \$3,375 the '29 Franklin Speedster was \$890 more costly than the Model 135 Sedan, but significantly less pricey than other Franklin custom models which began at \$5,000+. The narrow low-profile body was a hallmark of the Speedster, as was the aerodynamics-enhancing rear-mounted spare tire. A burned-out connecting rod is essentially the reason Art Kenniff was able to purchase this Franklin fifteen years ago. After suffering same on a trip to Florida and being unable to find anyone to fix the car, original owner Sidney Strong decided to sell. The Franklin passed through two dealers before Art acquired it. He is the second registered owner of the car.

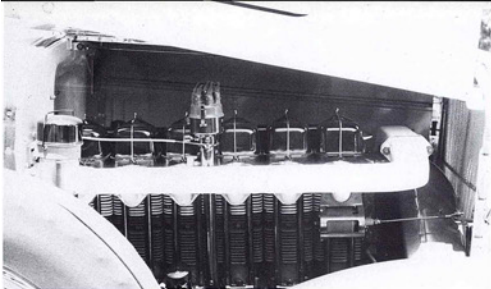


A true convertible version of the Speedster was offered by Franklin in 1930. Retained was the four-speed transmission and high-speed rear end gearing (4.25:1); the factory claimed a top speed performance of 80 mph. Donald Reddaway's Convertible Speedster was one of no more than fifty built, and one of only three known to exist today. The sedan's convertible top is a three-position. Base price for the Dietrich Convertible Speedster in 1930 was \$3,725, but options on this one raised that figure quite a bit. Among the rare or unusual accessories on the Reddaway car are the stoneguard complete with script and crank cover, the hood mascot styled after the Ryan monoplane flown by Lindbergh, demountable wood wheels and dual-mounted rear spares. A long road was traveled before this car was brought back to life. It had been used as a parts car for eight years before Don's acquisition: "Only four doors, hood, cowl, back section and a bent frame were left." Don spent five years collecting parts, and fourteen in the car's restoration.

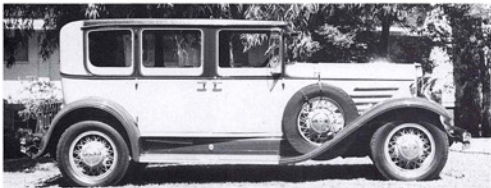


1930 Franklin Series 14 Airman Model 147 Convertible Speedster, Dietrich
Owner: Donald A. Reddaway of Seattle, Washington



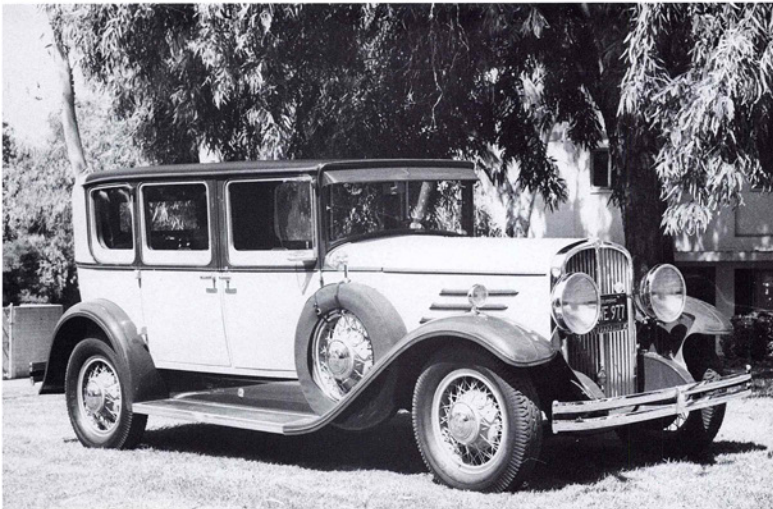


For 1930 Franklin discontinued its smaller engine and focused all effort on the larger unit. Now side-draft, the Franklin six also had larger valves, intake manifold and carburetor and a smaller but more efficient Sirocco fan. All this contributed to a monumental increase in horsepower from 65 to 95 at 3100 rpm—absolutely unprecedented for an air-cooled engine of a mere 274 cubic inches. Still, except perhaps for the Speedster, most Franklins weren't bought for how fast they traveled the roads. Not then, not now. Witness Bobbie'dine Rodda who joined the Franklin fraternity three years ago: "Everyone knows the Franklin is air cooled, but hardly any folks understand that it is more than just a car without a radiator or hoses or coolant or fan belts or any of the other plumbing that causes problems in water-cooled vehicles. What I discovered with my Franklin is that it is the easiest Classic to *drive* of any. The steering is light and direct. The brakes are phenomenal. The car is truly comfortable." Prior to Bobbie'dine, this Franklin hadn't been driven in a couple of decades. She's making up for lost time—to date, two CARavans and over 5,000 miles.



1930 Franklin Series 14 Airman Model 147 Salon Special Sedan

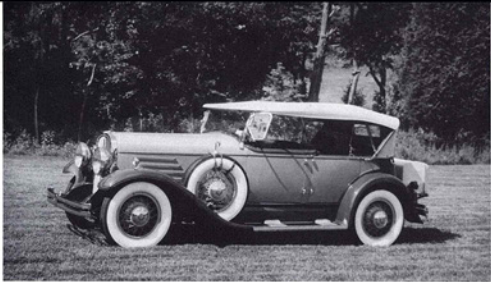
Owner: Bobbie'dine Rodda of Glendale, California



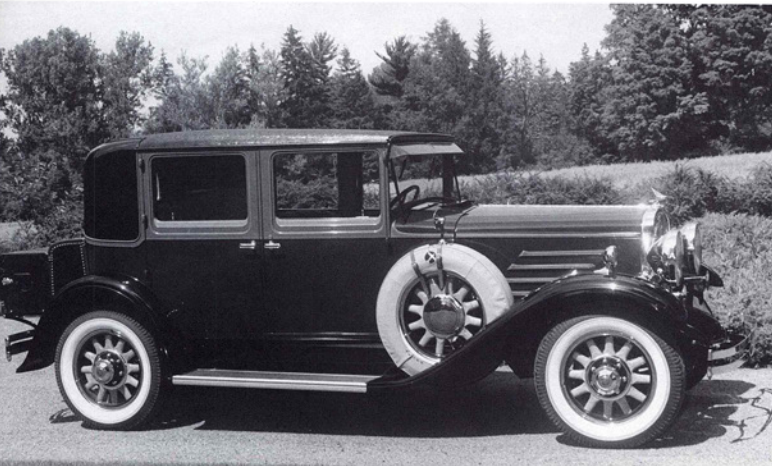
No fewer than seven Classic Era Franklins reside in the Gazza garage. The '30 Pursuit Phaeton is a favorite. The car has long been reputed to have been originally owned by Marion Davies, though Gene has not been able to document that to his satisfaction yet. Not that it matters to him who the first owner was, only that he owns it now: "The beauty of the body style is most important to me; I think the proportioning is all but perfect."

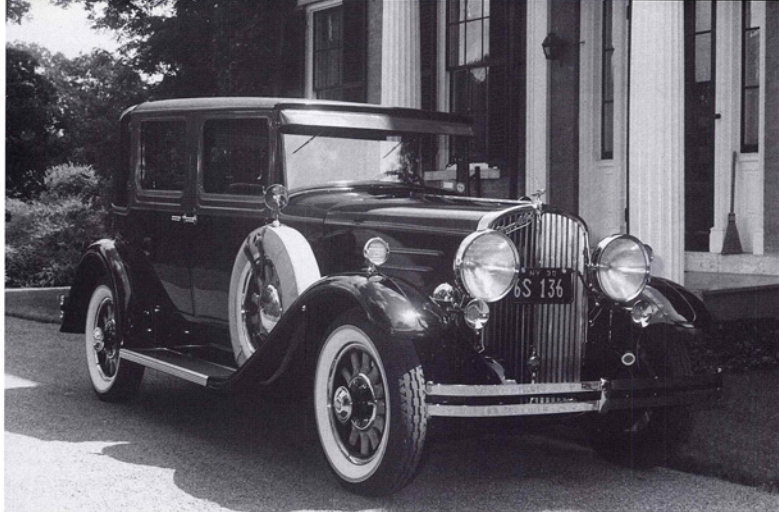
Ken Johnson's Four-Door Brougham is special to him because of its "singular engineering—the steadfast reliability of the engine, the unique suspension system and a high ratio of sprung to unsprung weight which together provide a degree of roadability and comfort not to be found in any other car of that vintage." Ken bought this Franklin ten years ago as a parts car for the restoration of a four-door sedan in better condition. Its rarity and sportier lines led him to restore it instead. The "parts car" has been back on the road for a couple of years now. Says Ken: "The factory high-speed rear axle allows for comfortable highway speeds."

Not comfortable for the Franklin company when these cars were built was its financial picture. As the Depression took hold, sales plummeted from 6,036 in 1930 to 2,851 in 1931.



1930 Franklin Series 14 Airman Model 145 Pursuit Phaeton
Owner: Eugene Gazza of Huntington, New York

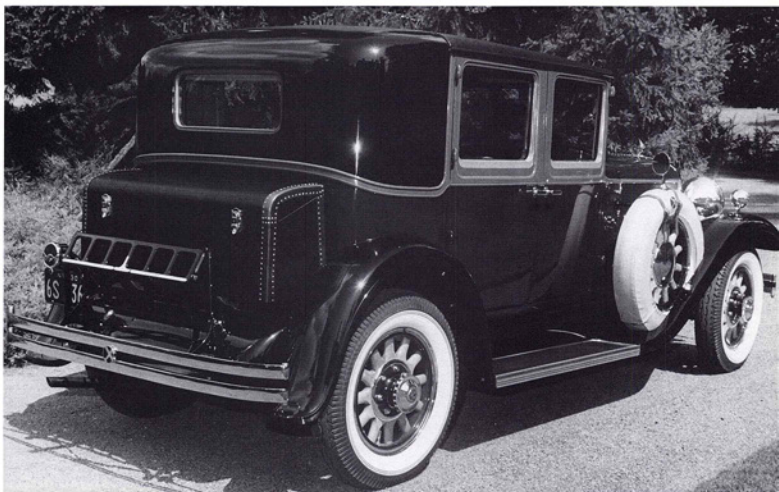




1930 Franklin Series 14 Airman Model 145 Four-Door Brougham

Owner: Kenneth R. Johnson of Valhalla, New York

(profile view on page opposite)





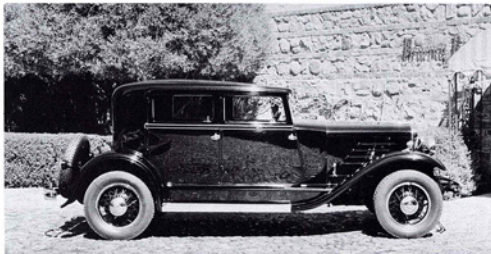
Both of these Franklins were originally owned by Herbert Cue, a merchandise buyer for F. W. Woolworth in London, England. Depending upon the weather, the Cue chauffeur would deliver his boss from his suburban home to his London office in either the Pirate Phaeton or the Deauville Sedan, spend the day ferrying Mrs. Cue and then return to the city to bring Mr. Cue back home. The Cues' daughter, Edna Crane of Yorkshire who learned to drive on the Pirate and was chauffeured to her wedding in 1933 in the Deauville, has been Tom Hubbard's guest in Tucson on several occasions and joined him in the freshly-restored Pirate for the 1988 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. From Edna, Tom has been able to learn fascinating details about both cars.

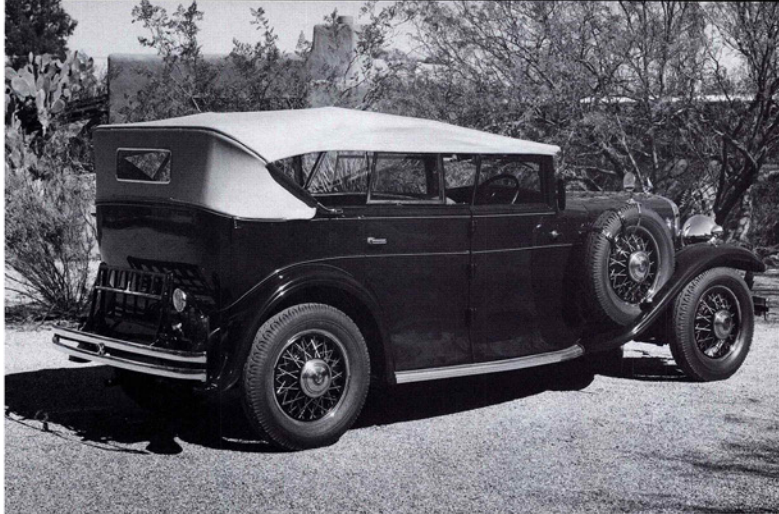
Air cooling was a novelty in England, which the family chauffeur enjoyed showing off. Often when the Cues would return to their car following an evening out, the Franklin would be surrounded by other chauffeurs. The odometer on the Pirate, she said, had been over twice, making the mileage total for the twenty years the family owned the car about 250,000. In restoration Tom found evidence of both much use and careful maintenance; the front carpet had been mended, then the mends were mended.

Tom has owned the Deauville Sedan for twenty-seven years, the Pirate for fourteen: "The Deauville has a very elegant, formal look. As part of the custom line in 1930-1931, its \$4,100 price tag was about twice that of a standard Franklin sedan. The aluminum skin of this body is unique in that there is no belt moulding around the rear quarter. The skin is one piece from the base of one rear door, around the windshield and back to the base of the other rear door. This made the necessary rebuilding of the wood framing very difficult as the sub-structure had to be exactly right for the sheet metal and doors to fit."

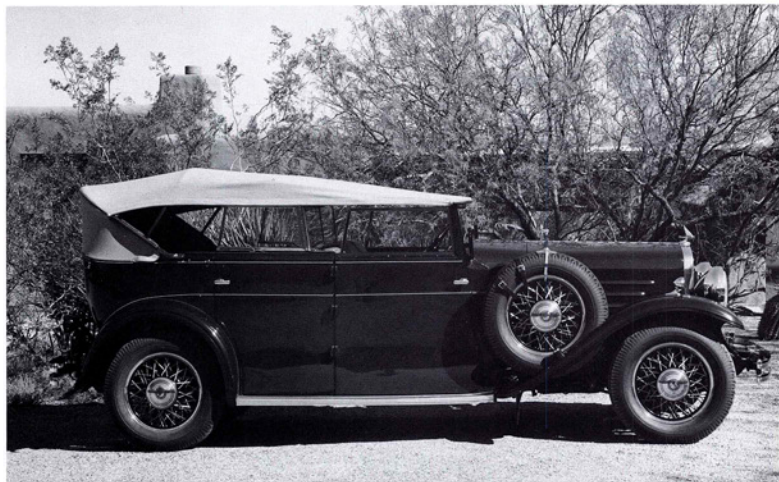
About the Pirate Phaeton, Tom comments: "The running boards on this car are concealed under full-length doors. Further, they have become part of the body in this design, with the A, B and C door posts extending past the main body sill to incorporate the running boards. Thus a truss-like structure results, giving a main sill of unusual depth and strength, especially important on an open touring car. The body is mostly aluminum so while it looks heavy, weight is only 4,200 pounds. The car is also so wide that persons from the rear seat can come and go without making those in the jump seats move."

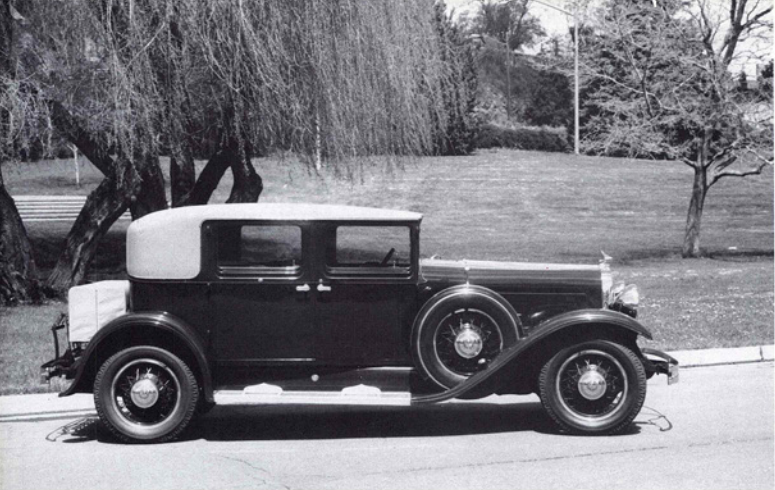
1930 Franklin Series 14 Airman Model 147 Deauville Sedan, Dietrich
Owner: Tom Hubbard of Tucson, Arizona





1930 Franklin Series 14 Airman Model 147 Pirate Phaeton
Owner: Tom Hubbard of Tucson, Arizona Photos: Maurice Koonce





The use of "Transcontinental" was Franklin's way of reminding America that one of its cars held the record for the fastest trip from coast to coast—69½ hours for a 46.9 mph average, more than eight hours better than any water-cooled car to date. The man responsible was famed transcontinentalist Cannon Ball Baker.

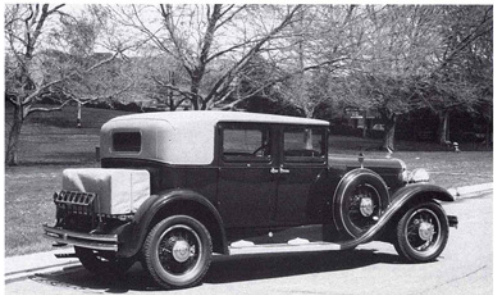
"That old waffle iron was the greatest car I ever drove," said Cannon Ball. "That snub-nosed baby buggy would run forever."

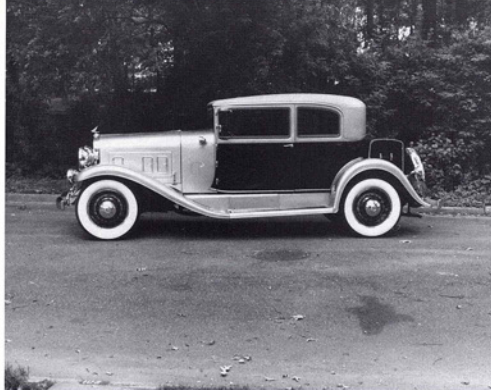
Just thirty-six Transcontinental Sport Salons were produced. The roofline is several inches lower than the standard Franklin for 1931, and its padded top of sport material gives it a convertible look. The original owner—Mary Mott of Portland, Oregon—was less than five feet tall, so she ordered the car with extensions on the brake and clutch pedals and a special hand throttle of extra length so she could accelerate without using her foot. Additional accessories she specified included a silver initial plate on both rear doors, step-plates and a small fog light. The car arrived equipped with a front fresh air heater, wire wheels, side-mounts and a trunk rack. To all this, second owner Julian Eccles added a deluxe hood ornament and "See-Rite" side-view mirrors on the metal

tire covers. Julian has known this car since it was new. He worked part-time in the Franklin dealership where it was sold and recalls when it was delivered; subsequently he was a gas jockey in a local service station and Miss Mott was a regular customer. Because of a family dispute, the car was put up on blocks in 1936. Discovering it again in late 1945, Julian spent sixteen years persuading Miss Mott and her relatives to sell. The car remains original except for tires (the

spares are the unused originals), new carpeting, glass and top cover. Julian has driven it more than Miss Mott ever did. When put up on blocks, the odometer read 7,100 miles. It now reads more than 17,800. Because Franklins were up to 100 hp by 1931, gas mileage was down. Julian averages about 10 mpg: "The transmission is a Warner four-speed with silent third gear. Low gear is only for steep hill starts. The car is comfortable to drive up to 60 mph."

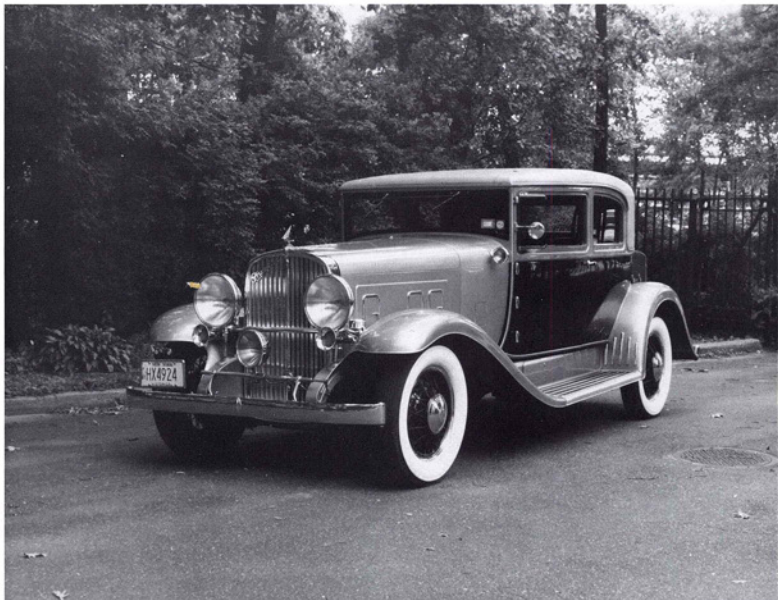
1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 152 Transcontinental Sport Salon
Owner: Julian Eccles of Klamath Falls, Oregon

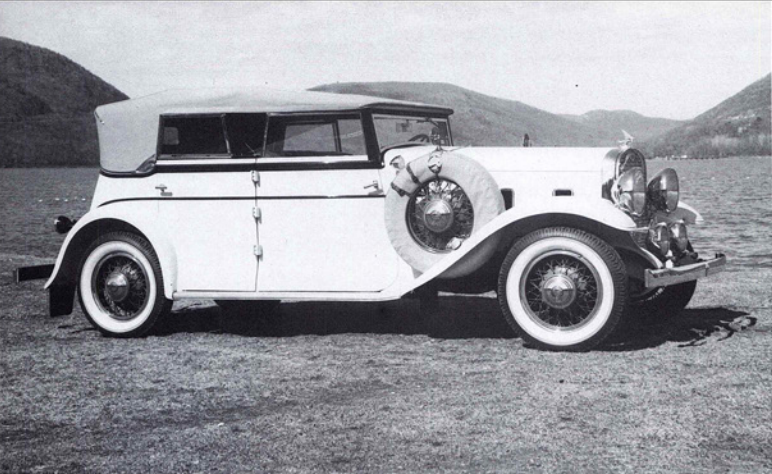




1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Sportsman's Coupe, Derham
Owner: Walter E. Gosden of Floral Park, New York

This Franklin was exhibited on the Derham stand at the custom coachwork salons in Chicago and New York. One of three built (and the only one to survive), it was purchased for \$5,800 by William Erdell of Allentown, Pennsylvania, who owned the car until his death in 1941. Since the age of fifteen when he saw its picture in a magazine, Walt Gosden had coveted this Franklin. He finally was able to find and acquire it in 1973: "I have driven the car approximately 25,000 miles without mechanical problems. It is most comfortable in the 55-60 mph range and extremely comfortable to ride in for many hours without driver fatigue. The quality of the coachwork is outstanding; the structural woodwork is substantial and reflects the fact that Derham started out as a quality carriage builder. I particularly like the styling feature of the traditional 'coach lip' at the bottom of the door posts. The short-coupled 'brougham' body styling is complemented by the placing of the spare at the rear."



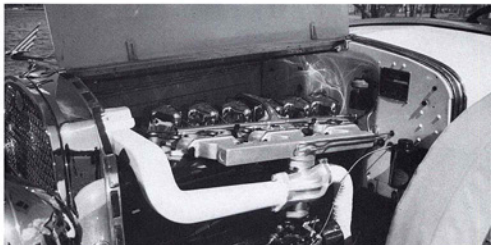
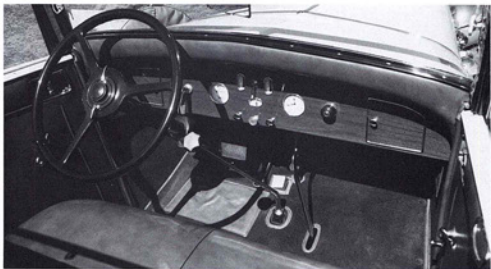


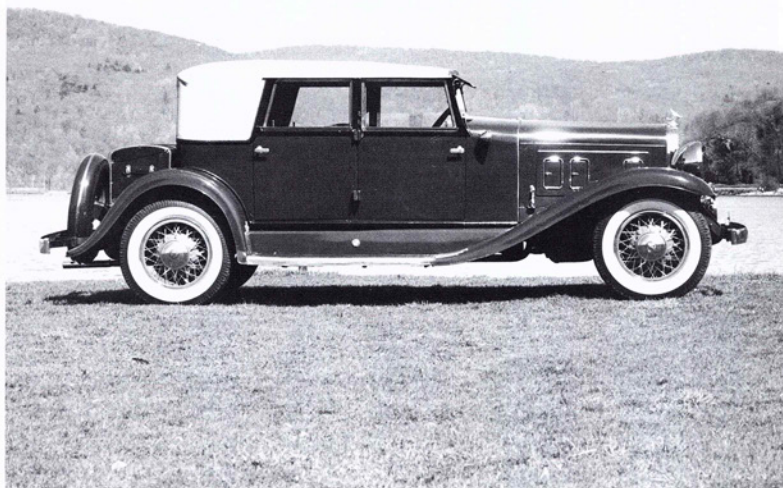
1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Pirate Touring

Owner: Albert D. Nippert of Peekskill, New York

Al Nippert has owned both these Franklins for over a quarter of a century. The Pirate is fully restored; the enclosed Speedster is completely original. Because of the monogram on the rear doors of the Pirate, that car is believed to have been originally owned by the Walker Body Company family, builders of Franklin production coachwork and the largest stockholders in the Syracuse firm save for H. H. Franklin himself. Charles Lindbergh, hired by Franklin as an engineering consultant following his New York to Paris flight, owned a 1931 Speedster and claimed it to be one of his best cars ever. Al Nippert regards the car as Dietrich's finest closed body design. The trunk is a permanent mounting at the rear.

Both Speedster and Pirate carry Dietrich's "spirit of flight" hood ornament. The front windows on the Pirate roll down and the rear door wind-wings open on a slide-and-lever arrangement, swinging out of the way as the door is opened. When not needed, they can be folded and latched against the rear tonneau windshield. Four mud flaps under the fenders keep the car clean during inclement weather motoring. The walnut-paneled rear-seat compartment accepts side curtains so occupants can be kept likewise.

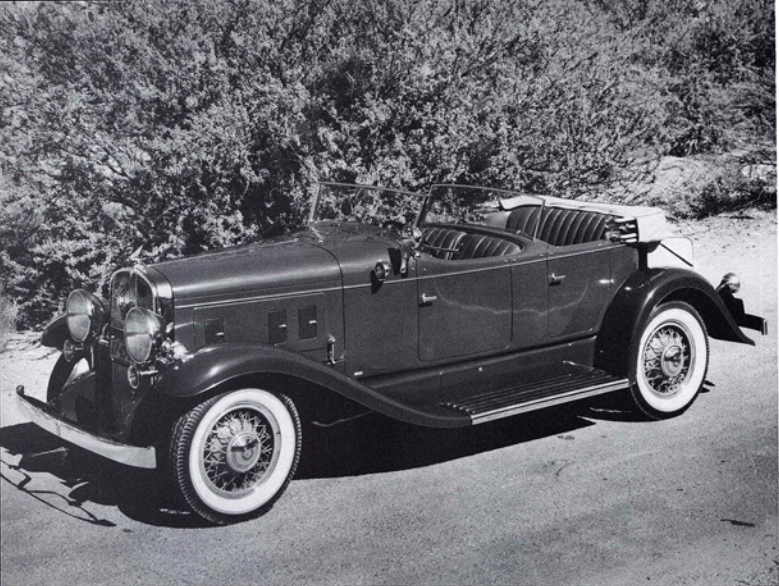




1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Speedster

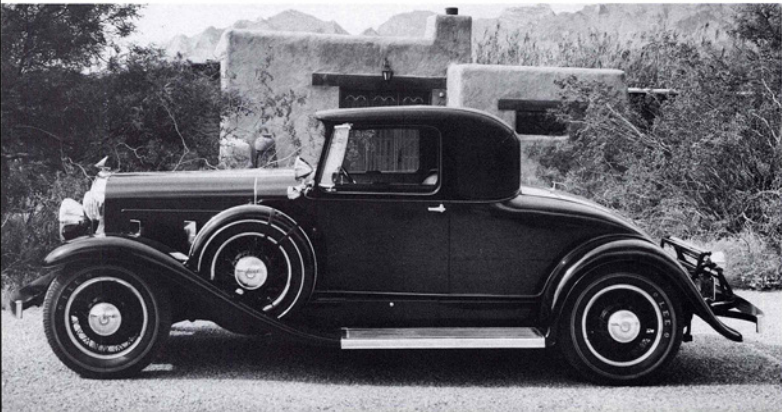
Owner: Albert D. Nippert of Peekskill, New York

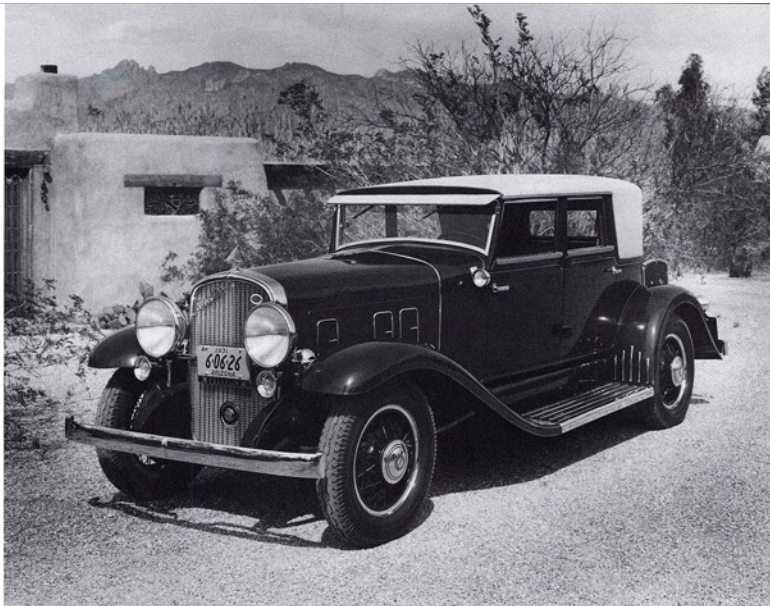




1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Sport Phaeton, Merrimac
Owner: Tom Hubbard of Tucson, Arizona

1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Coupe
Owner: Tom Hubbard of Tucson, Arizona





1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Speedster

Owner: Tom Hubbard of Tucson, Arizona

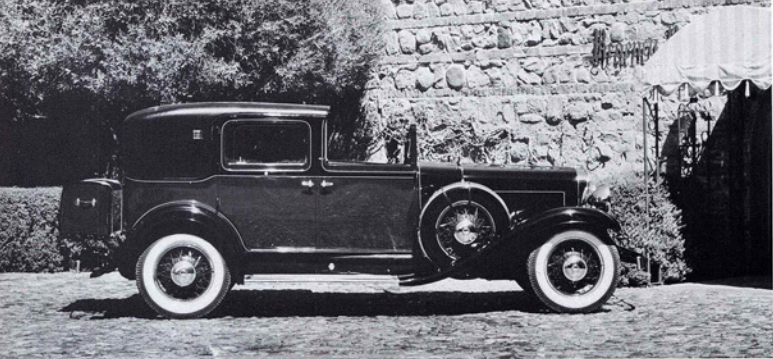
Photo: Robert Townsend

In 1930, following the introduction of a true convertible version of the Speedster, only the open car was part of Franklin's custom line. Although priced just \$150 less and actually built by Dietrich, the closed Speedster became a standard model, albeit the most expensive in the Franklin catalogue. "It is the kind of car that carries with it the strongest kind of appeal to the young society woman or to the up-and-coming type of young businessman," Paul Gardner, a Franklin salesman at the Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania) agency, was quoted as saying. "Having a half-dozen Franklin Speedsters running about town is . . . the finest advertisement that the Franklin dealer can have." Tom Hubbard has owned his Speedster thirty years.

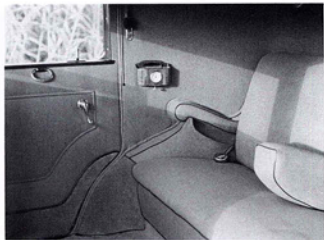
Likewise the Merrimac Sport Phaeton: "This was a one-off custom built for Stillman F. Kelley of Lexington, Massachusetts who was

twenty-seven at the time and had grown up with Franklins. He admired a body type offered by Cadillac in which the windshield for the rear seat could be cranked down into the middle cowl when not needed. The nearest type offered by Franklin had the second windshield mounted on a hinged tonneau deck. To get what he wanted, Kelley ordered only a chassis and had the Merrimac Body Company do the rest. Many people think this results in the best-looking Franklin ever made. In my opinion it also produced possibly the most satisfactory car to drive too because the four-passenger aluminum body keeps the total weight to 4,010 pounds and, with a single rear-mounted spare, the weight is almost even on the front and rear axles, making for excellent balance and a splendid 'feel.' I've enjoyed driving this car every year since I bought it, including two transcontinental trips."

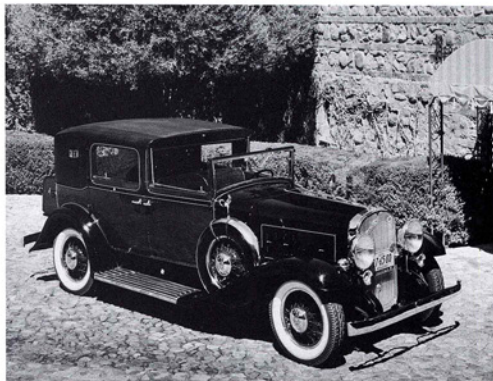
The Model 153 Coupe has been in the Hubbard garage since 1952. Its original owner had turned the car in for a new Packard in 1936 (when, of course, it was no longer possible to buy a new Franklin). Buying the five-year-old car then was Gaylord Hoyt, who had been sales manager for Locomobile in the early 1920's and subsequently became assistant sales manager for Franklin: "Mr. Hoyt was well acquainted with top people in the Franklin organization including H. H. Franklin, the top engineers, the stylists J. Frank de Causse and Ray Dietrich, and many of the Franklin dealers including Ralph Hamlin of Los Angeles who was a life-long friend. Shortly before World War II, he drove the car from Los Angeles to Syracuse where the engine was rebuilt. He kept the car for sentimental reasons until he was about eighty years old and decided it was time for someone like me to have it."



Tom's Dietrich Town Car was offered for sale at \$800 in the September 1952 issue of *Motor Trend*. The price was far too high, both for the car (Duesenbergs didn't bring much more at the time) and for Tom (who was just twenty-one): "I could do nothing but watch helplessly. The car went to Florida and thence to Mobile, Alabama where I lost track of it. In 1966 a letter to the Mobile police chief offering a reward for information leading to purchase resulted in an immediate response. The car belonged to an officer on the police force! But while pictures showed it in pristine condition when offered on Long Island in 1952, in Mobile the car had come on hard times. Stored outside in a hot, humid climate, it would have been a mercy had kids thrown rocks through the windows so the interior could have been ventilated and allowed to dry out. The result was 4,500 hours of restoration work, most of which would have been unnecessary had I the \$800 in 1952. . . . The Dietrich Town Car exemplifies a styling factor singular to Franklin. In 1931 the radiators of most cars sat directly over the front axle, where Franklin placed part of its air-cooled engine. Thus a body of essentially the same dimensions could fit on a Franklin chassis approximately six to eight inches shorter than its competitors. So a similar Dietrich body on a Packard, say, would require a wheelbase of about 140 inches versus this car's 132-inch wheelbase. The shorter wheelbase makes for more efficiency and easier handling in traffic but a less glamorous look since the hood line appears shorter."



1931 Franklin Series 15 Airman Model 153 Town Car, Dietrich
Owner: Tom Hubbard of Tucson, Arizona



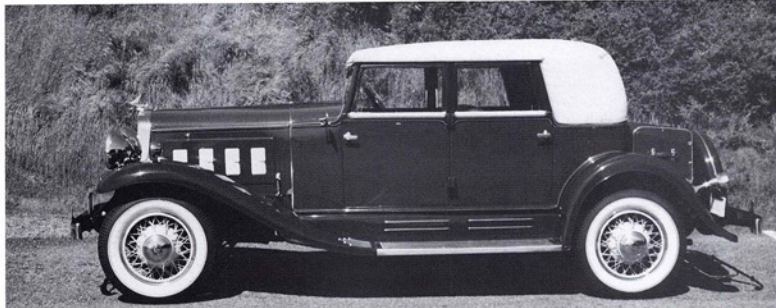
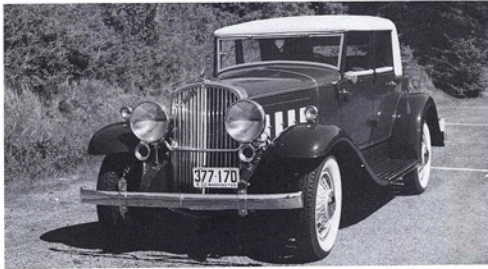
Nineteen thirty-two was the last year for the Dietrich Speedster. It had five more horses than the year before, courtesy of the 1/4 p.s.i. boost of the sirocco cooling blower and the cooler intake air from out front. And it retained a faster rear axle ratio (4.25:1 vis-à-vis 4.73:1) than the rest of the Franklin model line.

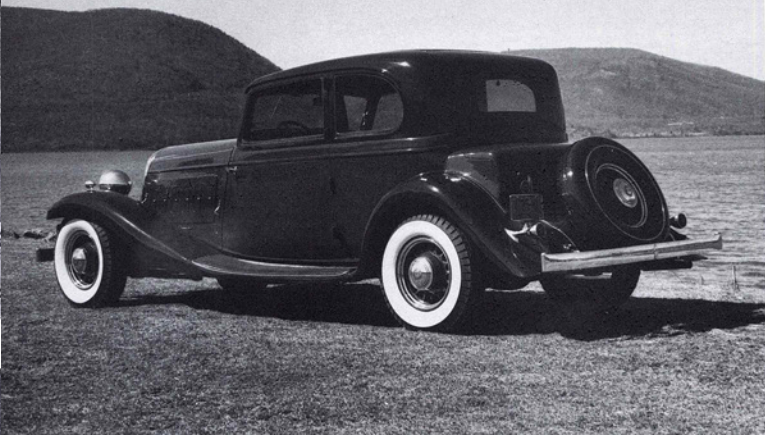
Bill Deibel purchased his car from its third owner—Robert Carlson of Belmont, Massachusetts—for \$75.00 in May of 1953. The financial transaction was followed by an admonishment from the seller: "Young man, this is a very old, very worn-out car, and I don't want to see you back here complaining about this or that being broken or missing. . . ." The odometer read 190,000 miles. The following month Bill, who was a junior at M.I.T. at the time, drove the Franklin from Cambridge to his home in Lakewood, Ohio: "The only problems I recall were a broken hydraulic brake line, a totally blown apart exhaust pipe and muffler, the windshield falling completely out onto the hood due to dry rot where it was hinged at the top, and no less than seven flat tires. Atlantic gasoline was used as much as possible for in those days their slogan was 'Atlantic Keeps Your Car on the Go.' One attendant thought we were going to be the exception."

Arrival in Lakewood and a look under the hood revealed new horrors—and a restoration story that could fill this entire book. But, as Bill says, unique engineering, a handsome body design for a purchase price of less than a hundred dollars, and thirty-five years of memories do count for a lot. At this writing the Speedster had less than 200 miles to go before turning over 200,000, a momentous occasion that he planned to celebrate on the 1990 Pacific North-west CARavan.

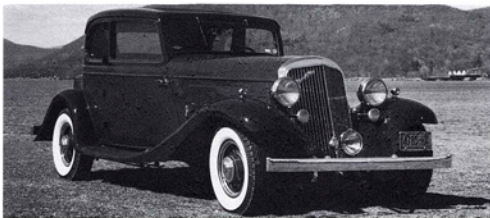


1932 Franklin Series 16 Supercharged Airman Model 163 Speedster
Owner: Bill Deibel of Seattle, Washington





Since the stock market crash, Franklin sales had more than halved each year through 1931; for '32 the figure was 1,905 cars, for '33, 1,011; just 360 cars would be produced before the factory closed its doors in '34. Despite savagely plummeting production, Franklin had been virtually forced to enter the multi-cylinder race of the thirties in order to retain its luxury image. Franklin's entry was not universally admired in the factory. The banking syndicate in control of H. H. Franklin's company was calling the shots. The new V-12 eschewed the full elliptics and tubular axles of previous Franklins and was considerably heavier, which to the weight-conscious Syracuse engineers was anathema. But the 200 people who were able to afford a V-12 Franklin during the three years it was built loved the car, and doubtless for the same reasons that Franklin collectors do today. The LeBaron-designed coachwork was gorgeous. And the car had gusto. Its supercharged twelve-cylinder engine, with dual throat Stromberg carburetion, developed 150 hp. The dashboard-adjustable ride control, three-speed transmission with free wheeling, and dual ratio rear axle



1932 Franklin Series 17A Model 173 V-12 Club Brougham
Owner: Albert D. Nippert of Peekskill, New York

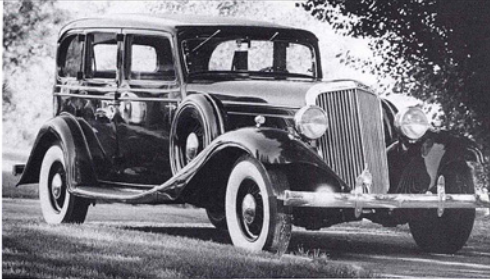


made for a Franklin that was both comfortable and a fine performer. The two-speed rear end meant that in high range the engine had a piston speed much like any modern V-8 so, with the motor "loafing," the Franklin could cruise easily at 70 mph all day. Moreover, the new V-12 retained the Franklin's traditional dependability.

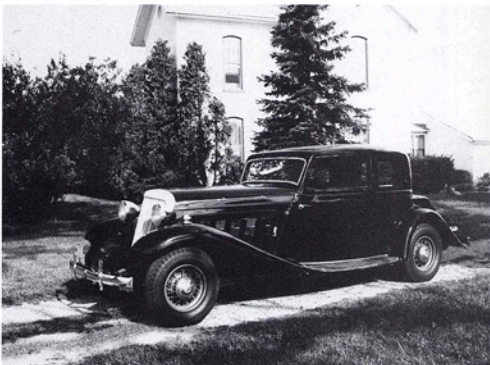
"CCCA members Ray and Elly Yeck drove this car 14,000 miles on Club tours without a breakdown," says Al Nippert of his '32 V-12. "I have had about 8,000 miles on tours without any mishaps." Al is the third owner of this Franklin, which was delivered new to S. P. Cooper of Grand Rapids, Michigan. "Unsurpassed" is Al's word for the LeBaron styling of his Club Brougham.

Equally enthusiastic about the LeBaron touch is Bob Larrabee who wittily describes the design of his big 6,000-pound sedan as "architecturally very pleasing." This '33 V-12 was once in the collection of D. Cameron Peck, a foremost early collector of Classic Era cars. "It was evident during restoration that V-12 Franklins were of limited production," says Bob, "as each front fender was made from six separate pieces of metal and the fenders were hand-shaped to fit the body." The Larrabee Franklin was a 40,000 mile car when he purchased it in 1973. "Runs with ease at highway speeds," he comments, and Bob runs with his Franklin often in West Coast events.

Bob Agle's 1934 Club Brougham was the fifth from the last V-12 built and the last one known to survive. The original invoice for the car, which Bob has, indicates the dire straits into which the Franklin company had fallen by then. List price was \$2,885, a full thousand dollars less than the figure at which the model had been introduced. The car was delivered on April 4th, 1934 to Francisco Gonzalez of Mexico City. Ironically, that was the final day of life for the Franklin company. "This car had an extremely hard life for thirty years in Mexico," says Bob. "Service was very difficult in the U.S. and almost impossible so far from the factory." In the mid-1960's the Franklin was discovered near Mexico City by Edward King, who acquired and shipped it to his home in Michigan. Five years ago Bob Agle added the car to his collection of Classics from Syracuse which, at this writing, numbers eight. Why this particular one? There is something very poignant about a Franklin that represented the end of a memorable line.



1932 Franklin Series 17B Model 174 V-12 Seven-Passenger Sedan
Owner: Robert D. "Bob" Larrabee of Clarkston, Washington



1934 Franklin Series 17B Model 174 V-12 Club Brougham
Owner: Robert Agle of Jeffersonville, Ohio Photos: Don Smith

