



1925 Julian Sport Coupe, Fleetwood

Owner: William F. Harrah Foundation National Automobile Museum, Reno, Nevada

J U L I A N

Julian S. Brown was the son of millionaire Alexander T. Brown, whose automotive affiliations included the Brown-Lipe Gear and H. H. Franklin companies. His home was in Syracuse but his image as a playboy cut a wide swath throughout Upstate New York. Julian Brown was also an eccentric. He not only marched to his own drummer, he positively cantered. But nothing of the aforementioned derogates the man's engineering acumen and inventive flair.

The Julian automobile is a super paradigm—in some aspects a contradiction in terms, in others wildly progressive for the era. Like a Cecil B. DeMille epic, it had been years in the making. Although never profitably, Brown had been manufacturing engines since before the First World War and had also built his first automobile shortly after the Armistice. The heart of his new Julian was its engine: an air-cooled rear-mounted radial of six cylinders, 268 cubic inches and 60 hp. Unlike earlier rotaries which literally revolved, the Julian's engine was fixed, a rigid

eight-inch crankshaft supported by two massive main bearings carrying fork-and-blade connecting rod assemblies in near-perfect balance. The Julian's frame weighed but ninety-seven pounds (one-third the industry norm) and was a platform-backbone type anticipating Dr. Ferdinand Porsche's Volkswagen by almost a generation. The Julian's two-wheel brakes were adjustable from the driver's seat, even with the car in motion. The wheelbase was 125 inches. Road-ready weight of the car complete was a comely 2,400 pounds. Julian Brown decided on \$2,500 for the price tag.

Fleetwood of Pennsylvania was responsible for the Julian's body, but Julian himself was responsible for its design. The flat floor pan was a mere sixteen inches from the ground, yet road clearances of 11.5 inches was two inches the better of most contemporary cars. The obtuse Brewster-type windshield, the vast expanse of glass and the curious position of the spare tire might occasion comment from an onlooker twenty feet away. Up close, the observer would be

astounded to find the driver's seat centrally located in front, with a two-passenger seat behind him and accommodation for two more passengers on flanking jumpseats, sort of a reverse cloverleaf. Even more curious in such a radical car, the upholstery was Victorian, which most of the industry regarded as passé.

Establishment of the Julian Brown Motor Car Company was Julian's next order of business, but that alas is where the business ended. He was unable to raise more than a fraction of the capital necessary to get his car into production. Thereafter, Julian Brown turned his back on the automobile industry. The \$4,000,000 he inherited upon his father's death sustained his flamboyant lifestyle for a time, but his further business adventures ended as dismally as his automobile. Four ex-wives and a passel of creditors kept Brown's attorneys busy for years.

Among the assets left in his estate when Julian Brown died in Daytona Beach, Florida in 1964 was his automobile. Today, in the Harrah Foundation museum, the Julian serves as testimony to the pragmatic inadvisability of being too far ahead of one's time—and to the creative genius of the man who conceived it.