

His last name was Weiffenbach, but everyone called him Monsieur Charles. From the late 1890's when he joined the company as chief engineer to its last days in the 1950's, Monsieur Charles was Delahaye. For years this French company prospered in the manufacture of commercial and passenger vehicles of no especial excitement. By the mid-thirties, however, Monsieur Charles thought Automobiles Delahaye needed a change of image. Purportedly, Ettore Bugatti gave him a nudge in that direction by commenting that there was not much difference between a Delahaye truck and a Delahaye car: they were both heavy and slow. *Le Patron* may later have rued that remark.

Monsieur Charles's venture into a new automotive arena was a three-pronged assault. First, his new six-cylinder 3237 cc 130 hp Type 135 was a glamorous *boulevardier*, destined to be cloaked with seductive coachwork by the *crème* of French carrosseries. Second, with the optional 160 hp competition engine, the Type 135 was a sporting car that would give Bugattis a run for the money in French racing events. Third, Monsieur Charles made sure there would be enough customers for his fast and elegant new car by purchasing the troubled but prestigious Delage company in 1935 which, among other plums, gave him a great new mailing list.

Matters proceeded splendidly, with a V-12 introduced to the lineup just prior to World War II when—at the behest of the Germans—the Delahaye factory was turned over solely to truck production. With peace, Monsieur Charles picked up where he had left off. Not surprisingly, he did not focus on the grand Delages of the prewar era. Instead, he revived his beloved top-of-the-line Delahayes, the sixes updated as the 135M and 135MS (sport), the six in the V-12 chassis as the 175. The market in postwar France was small. The cars were spectacular.

The 1946 Figoni & Falaschi Drophead Coupe that has been in the Windfelder garage for the past two decades was originally owned by the Marquis Bernard-Alexis Poisson de Menars. Comments Ed: "This car's pontooned fenders, skirted wheels and fins are hallmarks of Figoni & Falaschi and represent the peak of Art Deco automotive styling. A four-

speed Cotal electro-magnetic gearbox is fitted to the Delahaye, and it also has two built-in jacks for changing tires. The steering wheel and dash knobs are clear lucite."

Among the stars of the 1947 Paris Salon was the Delahaye Cabriolet by Figoni & Falaschi, the coachbuilder most often identified with the marque today. Noel Thompson's car was originally commissioned by Aly Khan and was later raced by King Farouk II in Tripolitania (now Libya). Behind the seat in Bob Bahre's car is a bar. Its original owner is unknown.



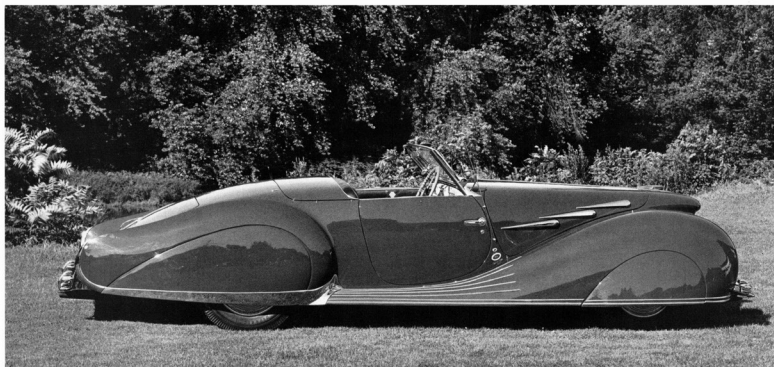
1946 Delahaye 135M Drophead Coupe, Figoni & Falaschi  
Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Edward A. Windfelder of Baltimore, Maryland





*1947 Delahaye 135M Cabriolet, Figoni & Falaschi  
Owner: Bob Bahre of Oxford, Maine*

*1947 Delahaye 135MS Cabriolet, Figoni & Falaschi  
Owner: Noel Thompson of New Vernon, New Jersey      Photo: K. Karger*





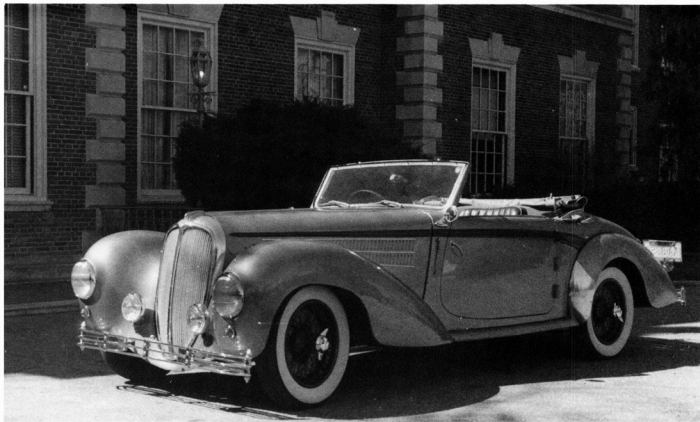
Guilloré of Courbovie bodied this 135M Cabriolet, one of two such cars built, owned by Walter Appel: "The sheer elegance of this body style was way ahead of its time, and its rumble seat is a usable feature. With its sturdy six-cylinder engine with three

carburetors, these Delahayes were very powerful and dependable. The handbook quotes 0-60 in 13 seconds, with a 105 mph top speed. I don't know the original owner of my car, but the letters 'CH' on the rear deck indicate it probably spent some of its

life in Switzerland (Canton Helvetia). In the fifteen years I have owned this 135M, I have driven it over the highest roads in the Rocky Mountains. It has never overheated. The car is still suitable for everyday use, except in the dead of winter."

1947 Delahaye 135M Cabriolet, Guilloré

Owner: Walter M. Appel of Denver, Colorado





1948 Delahaye 135M Drophead Coupe, Figoni & Falaschi  
 Owner: Dana L. Reed, Jr. of Bergenfield, New Jersey Photo: K. Karger



1948 Delahaye 135M Drophead Coupe, Figoni & Falaschi  
 Owner: William Adamson, Jr. of Marion, Massachusetts

Dana Reed has owned his Figoni & Falaschi Drophead Coupe since 1957: "The previous owner was a personal friend. Until the mid-sixties, I drove this car on a daily basis. Its performance was flawless—quick shifting Cotal gearbox, excellent cornering ability, easy to drive. Mileage to date is 30,669—after more than four decades. The car has a three-position top—and an absolutely beautiful body."

Some of the unusual features in the Adamson 135M Drophead Coupe are explained by Bill: "The lack of external landau arms is a rarity which I like because the landaus stick out so far and the car's body width in the rear is quite great anyway. Also the parking lights fore and aft are recessed into the fenders and are attractively shaped. I have both a manual shift and a Cotal preselector gearbox available for this car since the original Cotal was replaced in England in the early 1960's. The car is faster with the manual box so, for the present, I'm keeping it that way. This is a fast car even though a 135M as compared to the 135MS with the more highly tuned engine."



"The 135MS was the road version of the Delahaye which won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1938 and the Monte Carlo Rally in '39," comments Jean Gorjat. "My car is the only 135MS with a Pinin Farina coupe body."

The '48 Figoni & Falaschi 135M Cabriolet was restored by Craig Jackson and is commented upon by Russ: "This car can still go down the highway at over 100 mph and handles great. And the styling is sensational. Six similar bodies were produced, no two alike. To me, this car synthesizes the Figoni & Falaschi approach to coachwork and carries it to a zenith: the flamboyant chrome, the disappearing top, the fold-down windshield, the extra-long rear section which is due to the rumble seat. The fins on the rear fender and trunk are the highest of all the 'C' (concave) fendered Figoni & Falaschi cars. And it has the longest nose of all the 'nasal' cars, as they were called. This design won the 1948 Paris Auto Salon, and was the last year of victory there for Figoni & Falaschi."

Nineteen forty-eight was the last Classic year for the marque as well, of course. Automobiles Delahaye

soldiered on awhile, but time was against its survival. In 1953 the company merged with Hotchkiss. The few car chassis remaining were

bodied for sale through '55 but the only new Delahayes thereafter were trucks, and in a few years they bore the name Hotchkiss too.



1948 Delahaye 135MS Coupe, Pinin Farina  
Owner: Jean Gorjat of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



1948 Delahaye 135M Cabriolet, Fioni & Falaschi

Owners: Russ & Craig Jackson of Phoenix, Arizona

