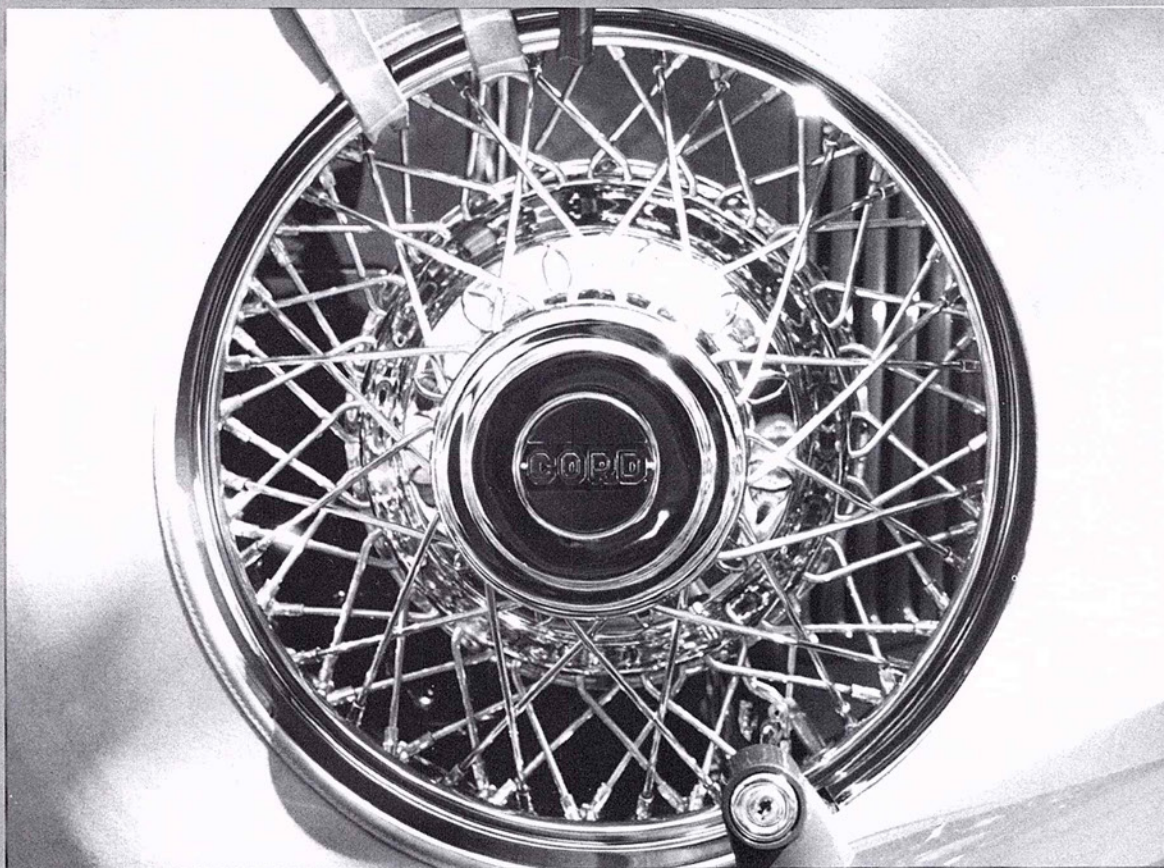


C O R D



Sidemount spare with lock from Len Urlik's 1930 L-29 Phaeton Sedan

Its pedigree was impeccable. Nearly 2,000 orders for the new car were received before the first one had even been seen. Errett Lobban Cord had made a style leader of the Auburn and recently introduced the Model J Duesenberg. Now he was entering the marketplace with a brand-new automobile he felt was worthy of carrying his name. For a full year the industry had gossiped about the forthcoming L-29 Cord. Small wonder. The specification was impressive: Lycoming 298.6-cubic-inch 115 hp straight-eight engine, a chassis incorporating hydraulic brakes,

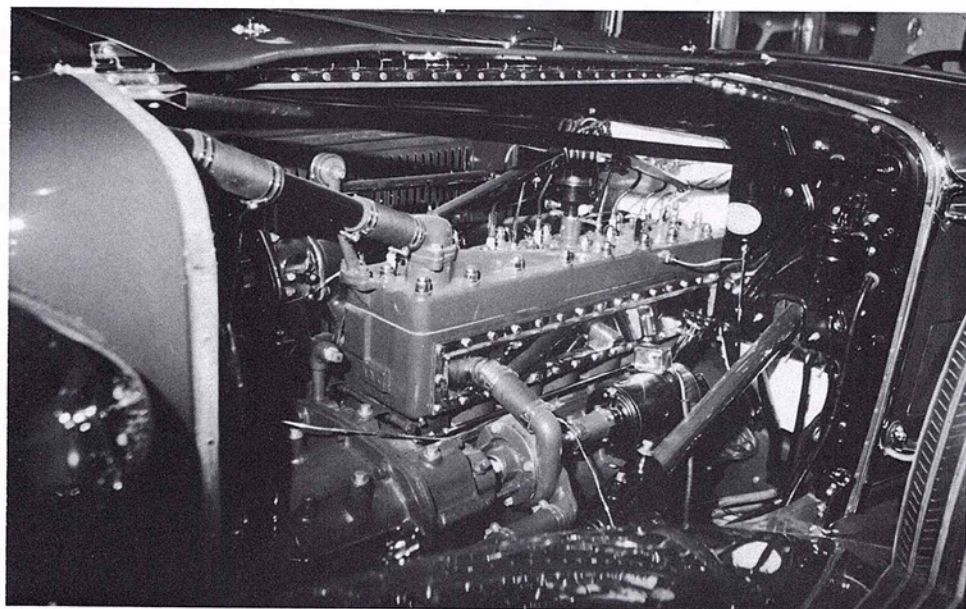
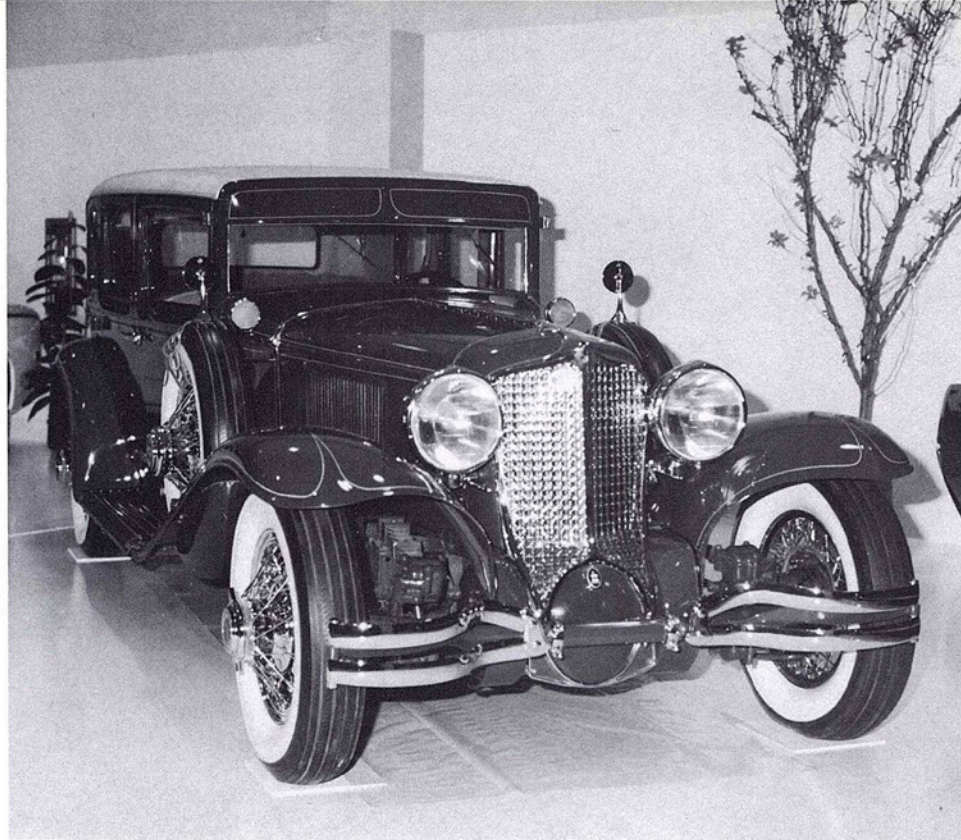
Bijur lubrication, thermostatically-controlled radiator shutters, the industry's first X-braced frame—and, most significant, front wheel drive. The cadre of consultants who had helped make the L-29 happen was top-drawer: Cornelius Van Ranst, Harry Miller, Leo Goossen, Leon Duray. These were names familiar to everyone in America who was a fan of the

Indianapolis 500. Mention of them—which the Cord p.r. department did vociferously—guaranteed that the new L-29 Cord would be regarded as a high-performance car. That the car scored equally high in aesthetics was discernible at a glance. The Cord was E.L.'s pet. He missed most of the hoopla concomitant to its debut, choosing to spend the time instead with a mechanic and an L-29 itself on a "10,000-mile buggy ride," as it was described by *World's Work* in an article about the thirty-five-year-old industrialist entitled "Youth at the Top."

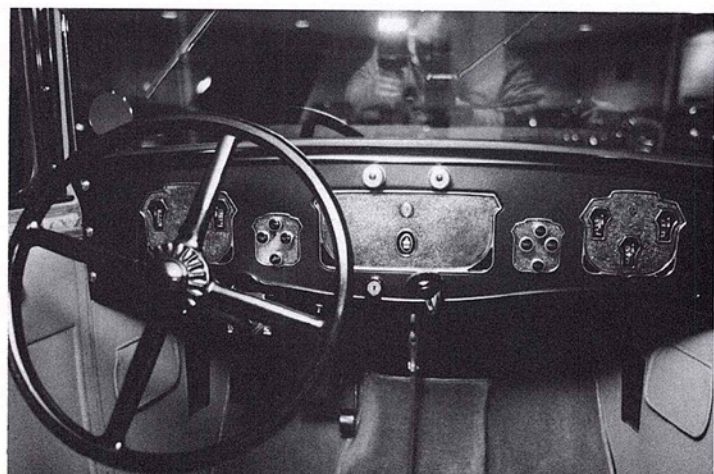
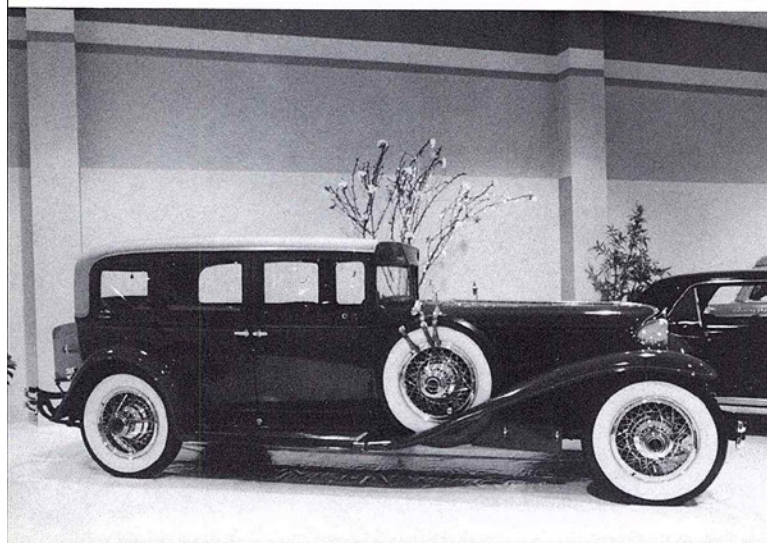
While a million-and-a-half people flocked to Auburn showrooms to see the new Cord during the first three days of its introduction, Cord himself was talking to gas station attendants, garage hands and toll booth workers on the highways of states from Indiana to Arizona. The success of his new car seemed assured. . . .

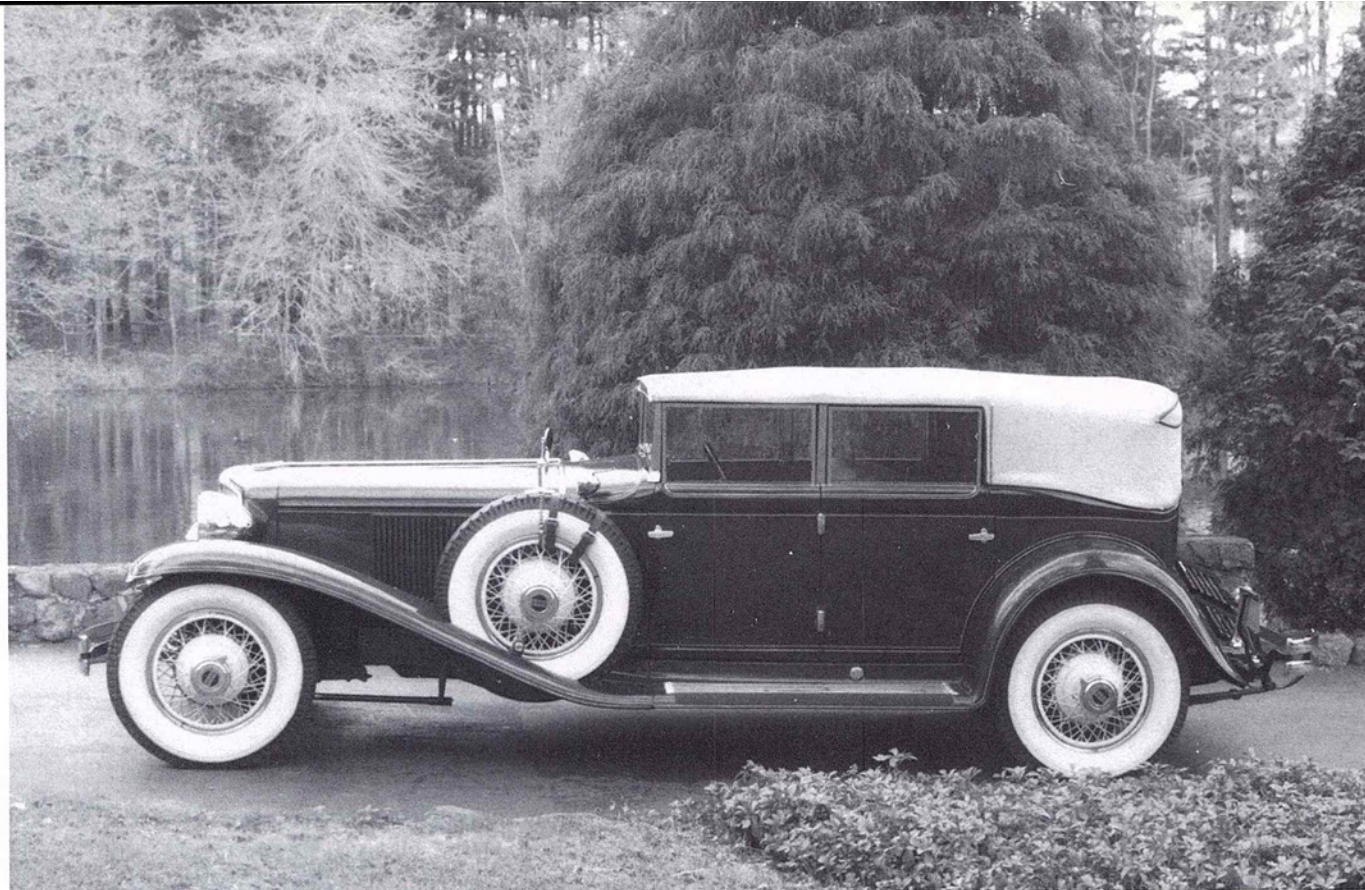
The L-29 Cord was introduced shortly before Labor Day of 1929 in four body styles priced from \$3,095 to \$3,295. Among the early purchasers was one A. U. Snyder, the original owner of Jeff Broderick's Four-Door Sedan: "Snyder owned the car until 1960 although it had been stored on blocks since '37. When I purchased the L-29 in 1973, it had a total of 36,200 miles. Restoration followed. The greatest thing about the Cord, of course, is its front wheel drive. Due to the low silhouette, the car is a guaranteed eye-catcher. But front wheel drive also offered effortless handling, a different roadability, a sense of security and an absence of fatigue for driver and passengers heretofore unknown. Without the 'hump' down the middle of the car, leg room was greatly increased. Because my car is a closed sedan, the interior is especially luxurious with a two-inch band of embroidery completely surrounding both front and rear passenger areas. The hardware is highly detailed German silver. The dashboard is a marvel to behold: detailed metal accentuated with black and two complete clusters of gauges, each gauge being a circular swivel rather than just round dial with needle. The front windshield raises and there is a baffle opening system in the muffler (creating a 'straight pipe') to increase power. The gearshift lever protrudes from the center of the dash and is handled easily. I thoroughly enjoy driving this car, especially on curving country roads where the front wheel drive allows excellent maneuverability."

Industry competitors did not take the arrival of the L-29 in stride. Rebuttal was swift. Dealers of conventionally driven cars started a whisper campaign of some proportion regarding the "risks" of front wheel drive. True, the L-29 did have mechanical teething problems common to any new design but not



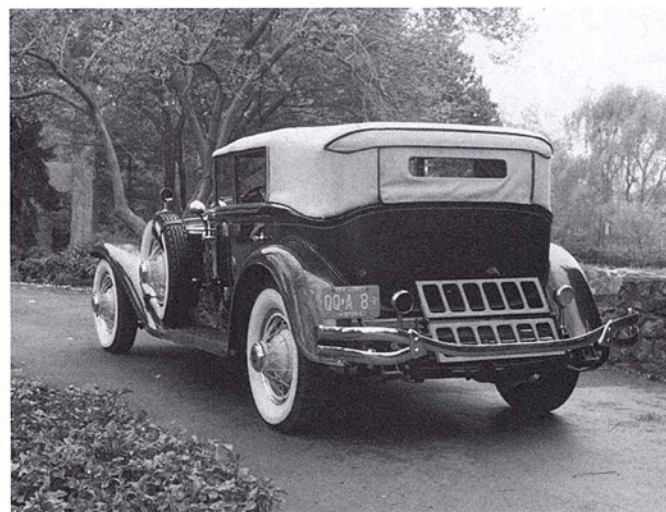
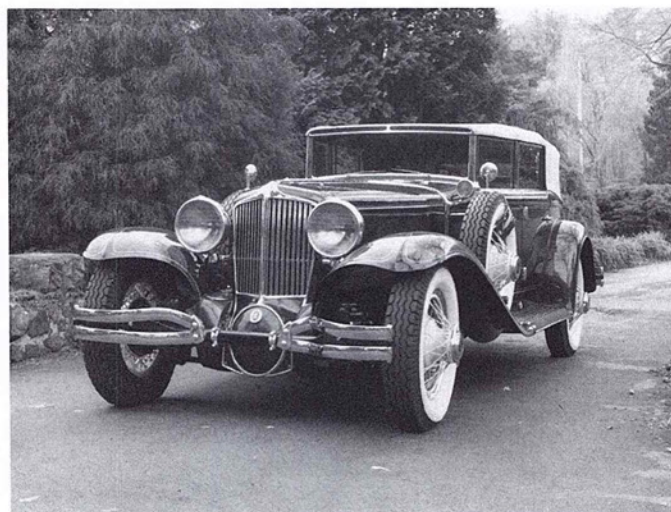
1929 Cord L-29 Four-Door Sedan
Owner: Jeffery P. Broderick of Gap, Pennsylvania





1930 Cord L-29 Phaeton Sedan

Owner: Dick Greene of Mahwah, New Jersey



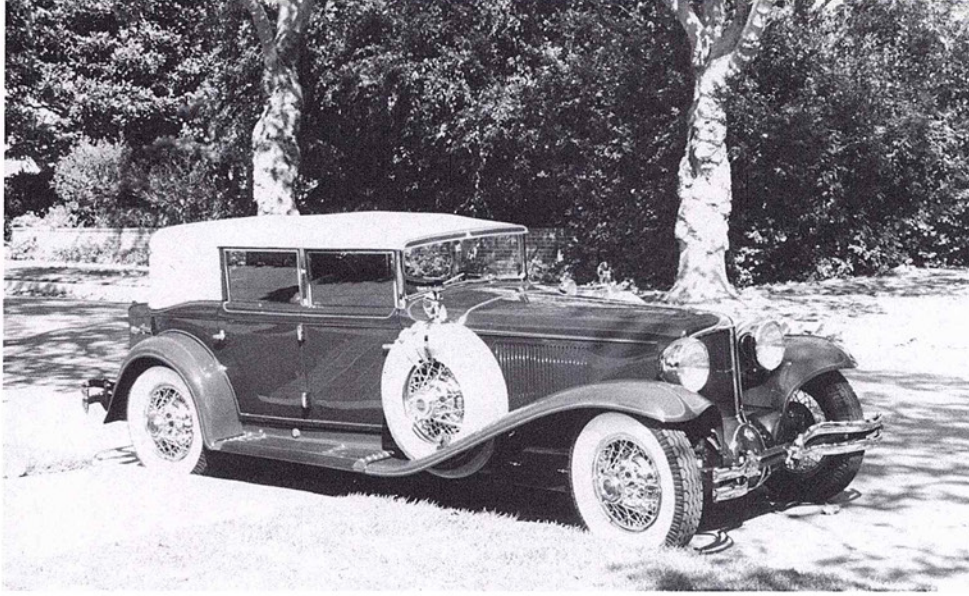
No collector carries the L-29 gospel with more fervor than Dick Greene, who owns twelve of them: "The L-29 is the only car in E. L. Cord's empire that he personally conceived, helped design, worked on its development, test drove the prototype, and put his name on. E. L. Cord was *very* proud of the L-29. During its introductory year, the car won thirty-three international first-place awards for design excellence."

The Phaeton Sedan shown here is one of two of this body style in Dick Greene's collection: "Designer Alan Leamy is credited with the first convertible sedan on the 1928

Auburn and carried the success into the L-29 low profile. The vee grille was very avant-garde. Geared a bit low, my convertible sedan is an excellent road car up to about 60 mph."

Dick Greene's L-29 Brougham is, again, one of a pair: "All told, 618 of this style were produced on the L-29 chassis; eight are known to exist. Alan Leamy and E. L. Cord worked together on this design to produce a closed car with the look of a convertible sedan—a hardtop convertible, in other words. I purchased this car a decade ago. Literally owned by 'a little old lady

from Pasadena,' it had enjoyed warm, dry and salt-free roads its whole life. Original mileage is just 33,000. It's the only car I've ever seen with termites, however. It's also one of the forty odd with the 'deluxe' dashboard; the stoneguard is an original and very rare. With a 53-11 differential, this L-29 is undergeared for the open road but *very* pleasant to drive in town (for which it was designed). During the 1980's, I had the pleasure of chauffeuring Mrs. E. L. Cord in this car during her visits to our home in New Jersey and to Auburn, Indiana. She still refers to it as 'her car'!"

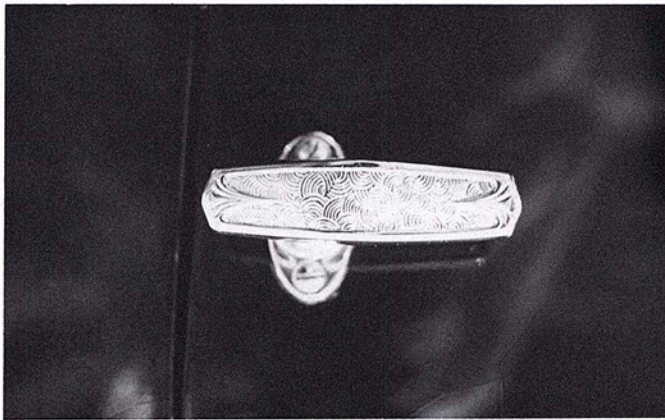


1930 Cord L-29 Phaeton Sedan
Owner: Leonard Urlik of Beverly Hills, California

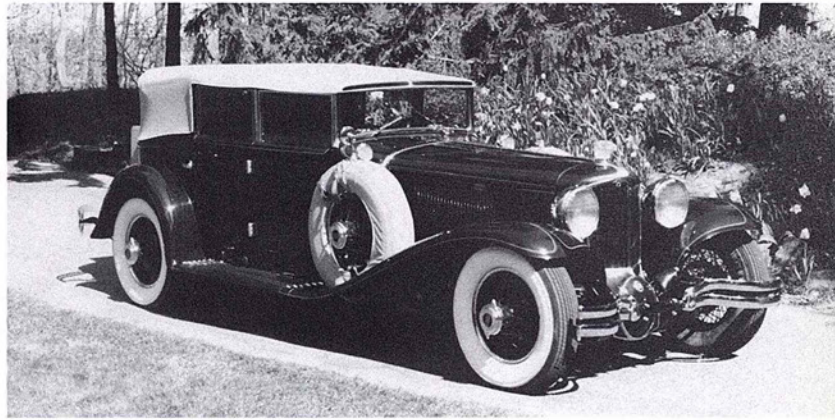
in the front-drive system. Purchasers of the new Cord seem to have been as enthusiastic about the car as collectors are today.

"The L-29 handles well and is not hard to steer despite the usual legend," says Len Urlik regarding his Phaeton Sedan (the designation Cord preferred for its four-door convertible).

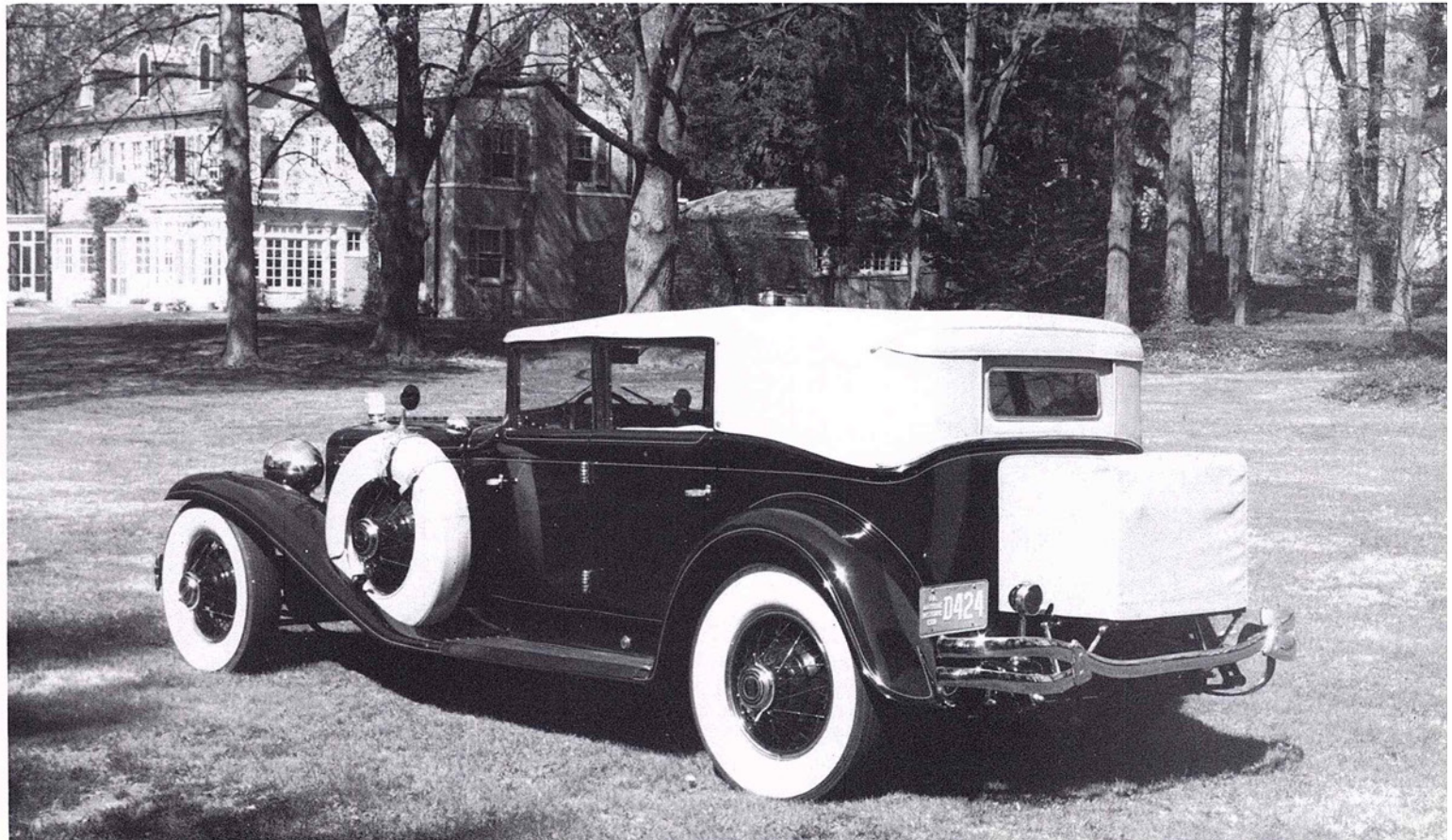
The worst driving experience Alexander Cameron has had with his L-29 wasn't the car's fault: "I lost a front wheel on the Pennsylvania Turnpike going at top speed. This was due to the fact that the front hubs had been switched by a mechanic, thereby the right hubcap was on the left wheel and unwound." Both Cord and Cameron survived the mistake.



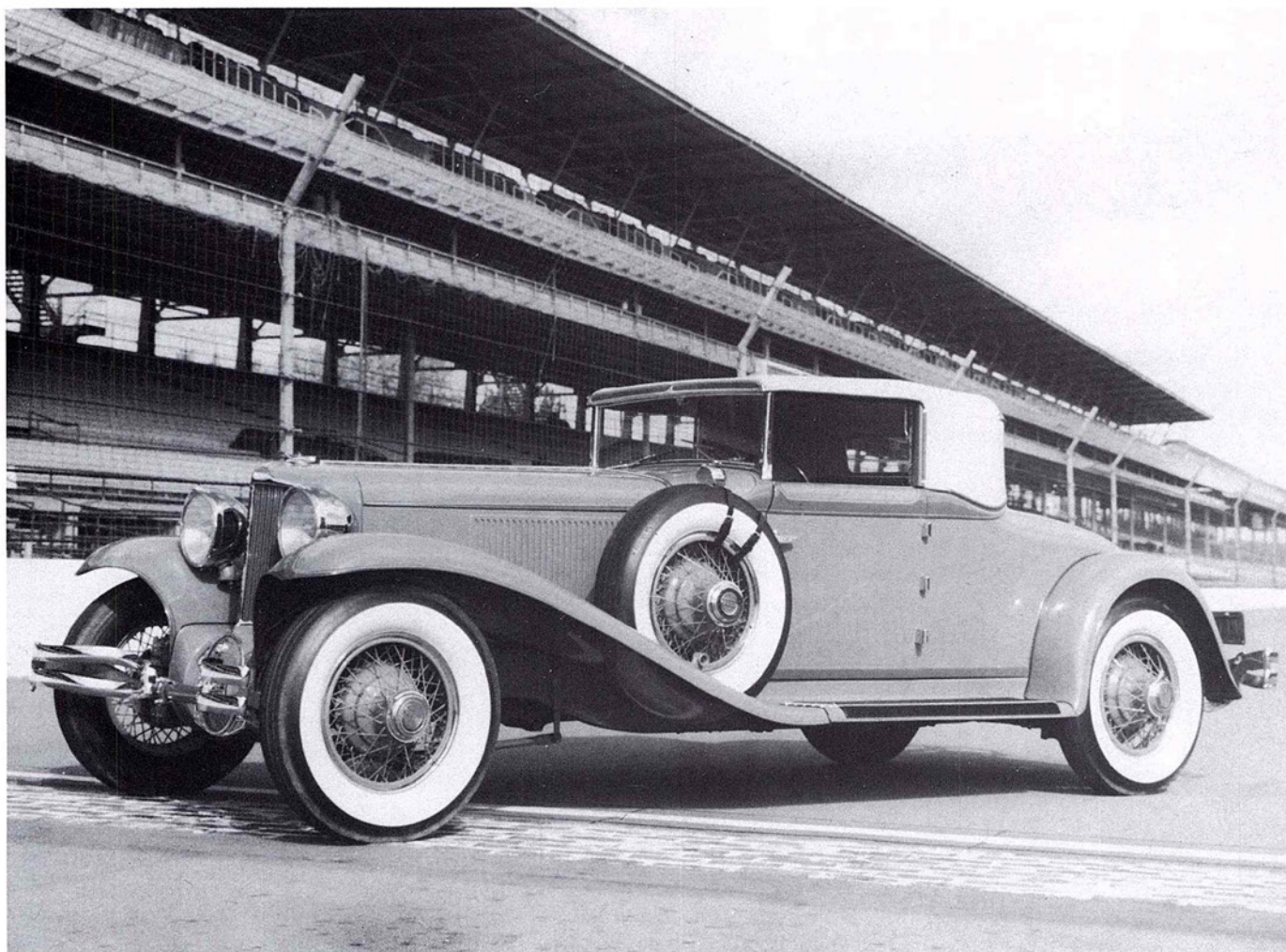
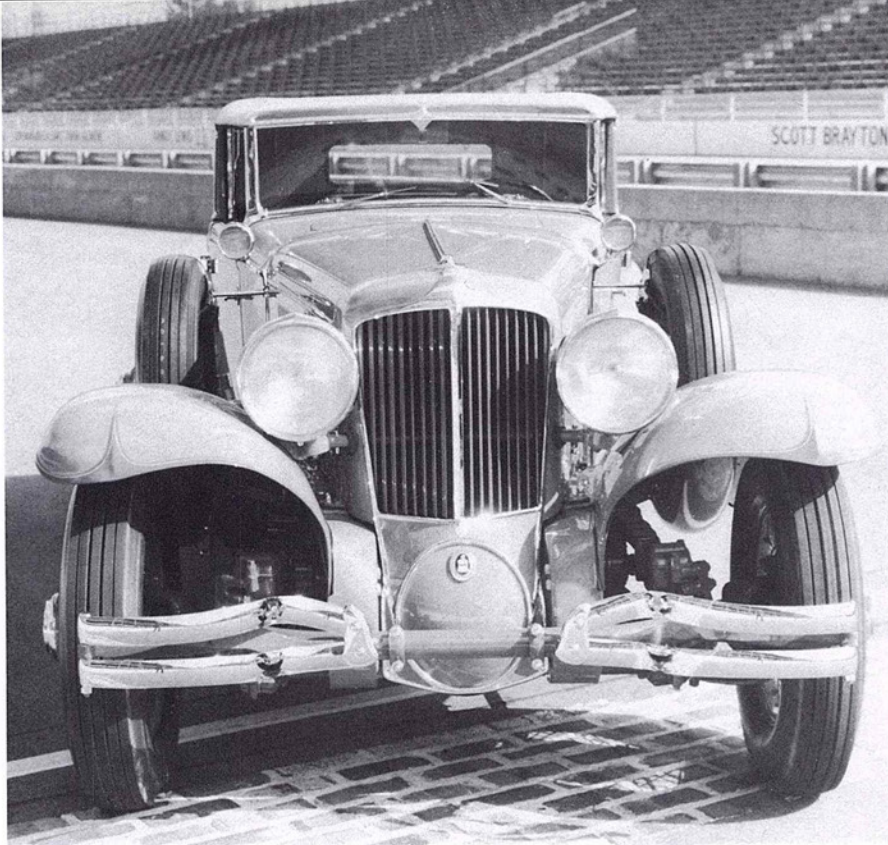
1930 Cord L-29 Phaeton Sedan (door handle detail above)



Owner: Alexander Cameron III of Reading, Pennsylvania



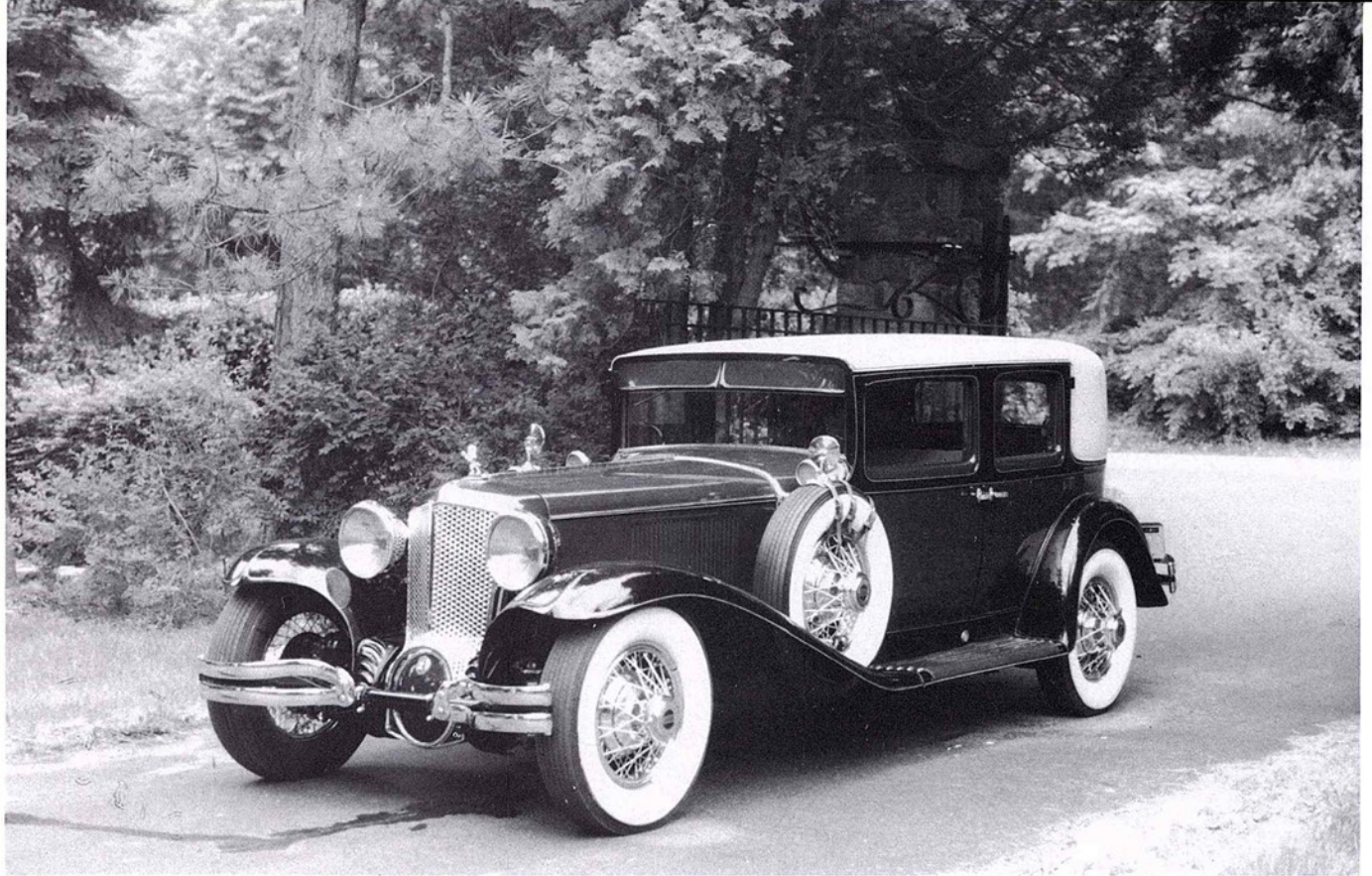
On Memorial Day of 1930 an L-29 Cabriolet served as pace car for the Indianapolis 500. Appropriately, an example of this body style is in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum: "The L-29 is an important addition to our grouping of cars made in Indiana. Harry Miller, famed California racing car engineer had successfully used front wheel drive in Indianapolis 500 competition. Miller, race driver Leon Duray and engineer Leo Goossen served as advisers to Cornelius Van Ranst, project engineer for E. L. Cord, for this vital component. Following the revision of the frame to X-bracing under the direction of Auburn chief engineer Herbert Snow, Van Ranst completed the design and engineering required to mate the Lycoming engine and complete the chassis for both production and custom bodywork. The low profile and beauty of line from E. L. Cord himself, Auburn chief stylist Alan Leamy and associate John Oswald made for a sleek elegance previously unknown."



1930 Cord L-29 Cabriolet (rear view opposite)

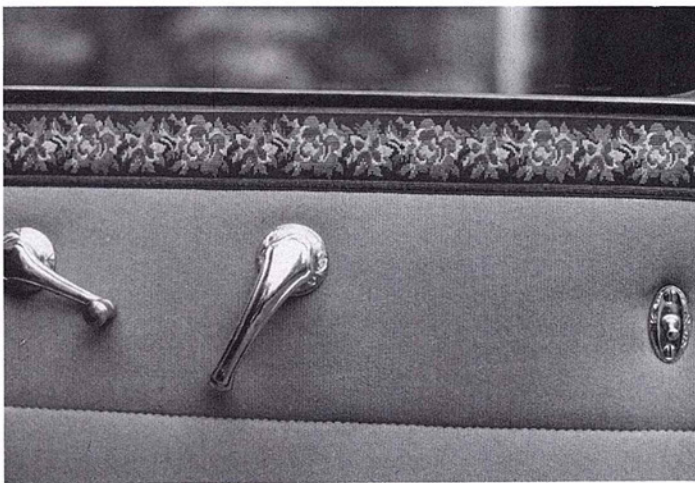
Owner: Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum

Photos: Ron McQueeney

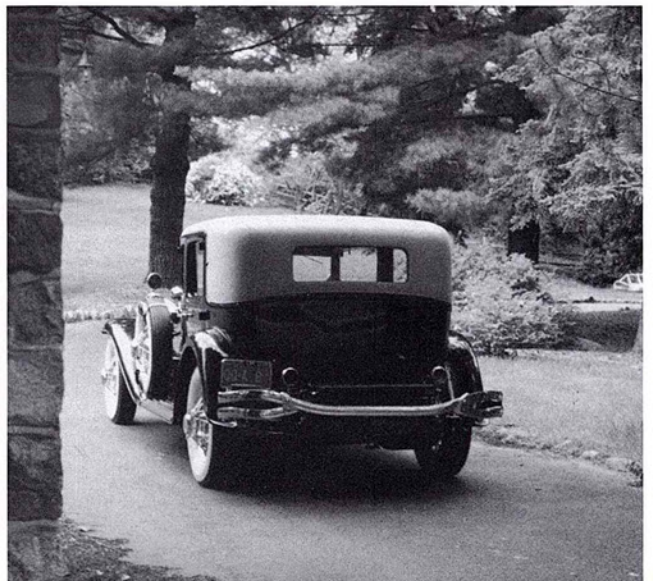
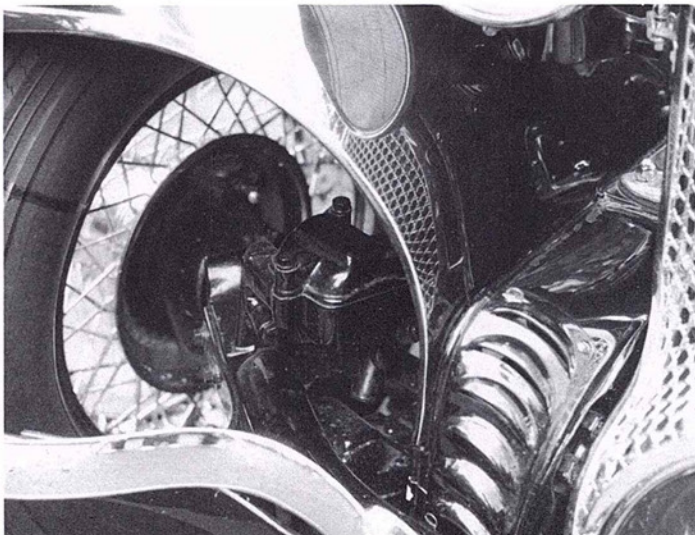


1930 Cord L-29 Brougham

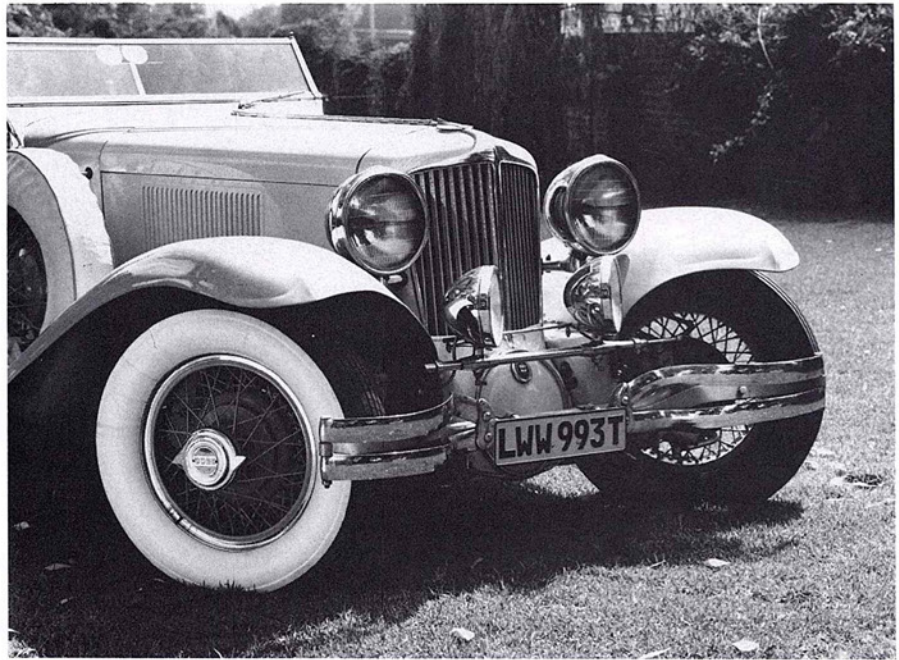
Owner: Dick Greene of Mahwah, New Jersey



L-29 Brougham details. Door hardware and embroidery detail. Front drive spring suspension. Stoneguard and mascot were dealer options. Note the air-cooled inboard front brakes.

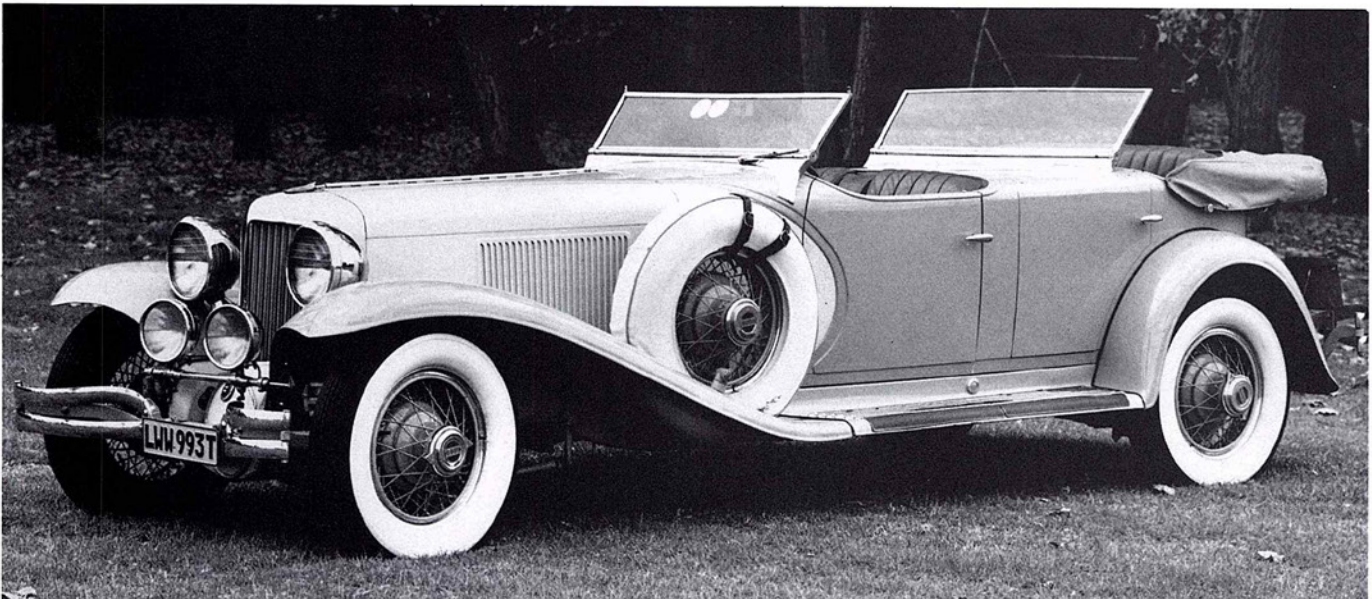
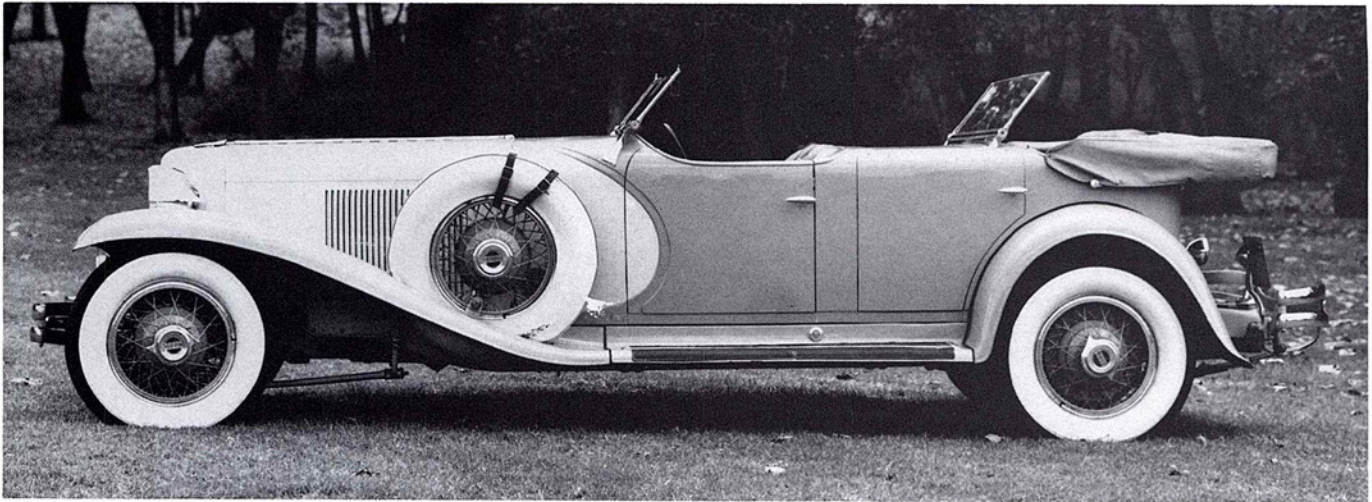


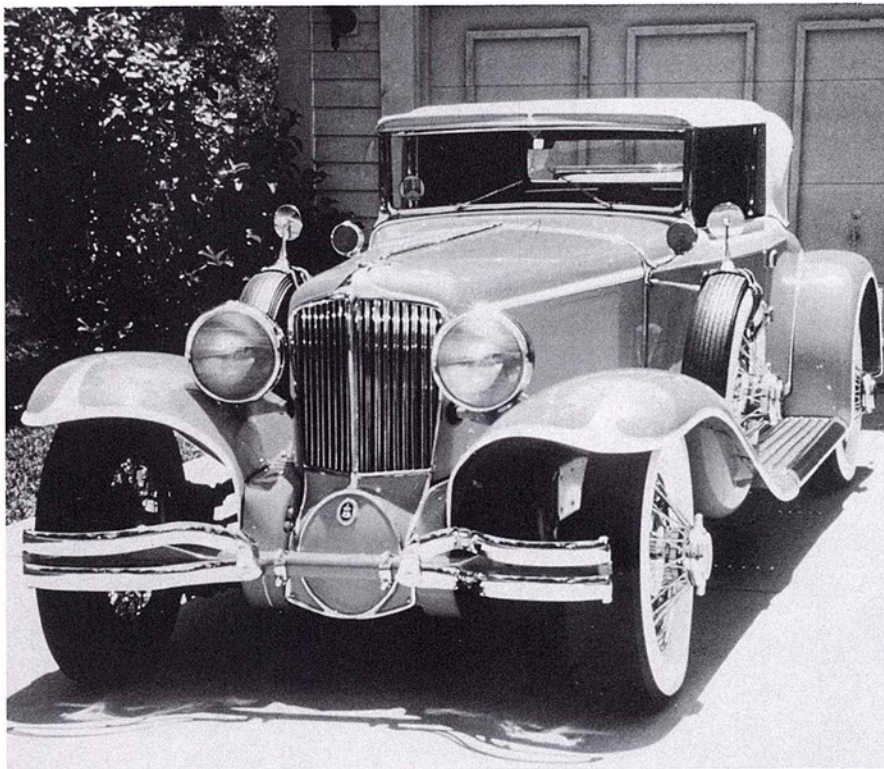
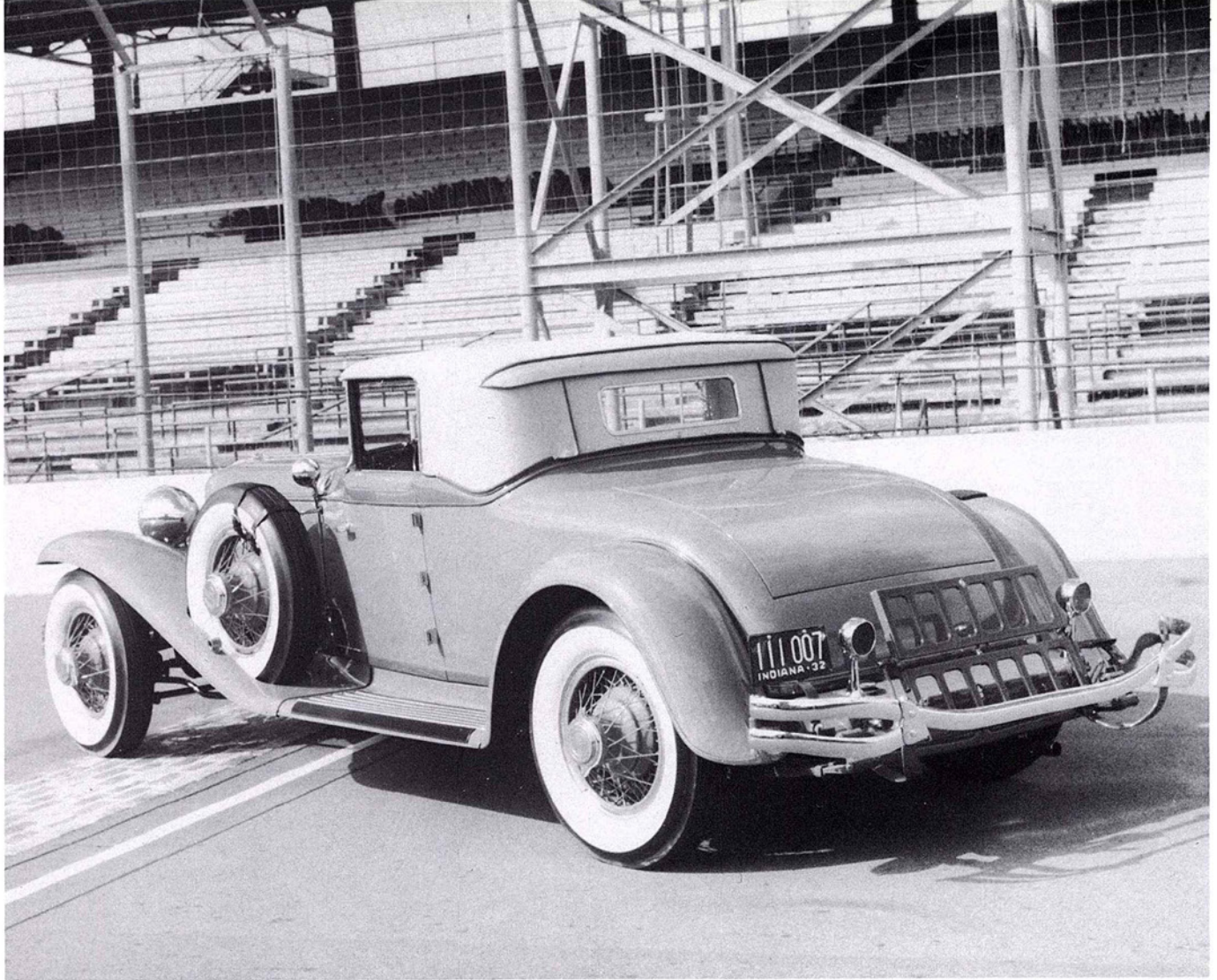
Frank Hayward's L-29 Murphy Dual Cowl Phaeton arrived in South Africa in 1946 (bearing '37 California license number 2-6737) and has been in Frank's garage since 1964: "The only other L-29 known to exist on the continent of Africa is owned by the King of Morocco. Seven examples of my custom Cord were built; only two have survived (the other owned by Dick Greene). The long 144-inch wheelbase (the production L-29's was 137½ inches), the dual cowl and sweep panel of the Murphy custom style designed by Franklin Hershey make this one of the most beautiful and elegant cars on the road. The top gear performance is excellent, the steering light and responsive, the brakes outstanding. This L-29 has won nearly every major rally/reliability trial for vintage cars on the South African sporting calendar. My wife (and navigator) Judy and I have both received the prestigious 'Sports Merit Award' from the State President, which is the highest honor our government can bestow on our old car hobby participants."



*1930 Cord L-29 Dual Cowl Phaeton, Murphy
Owner: Dr. Frank Hayward of Johannesburg, South Africa*

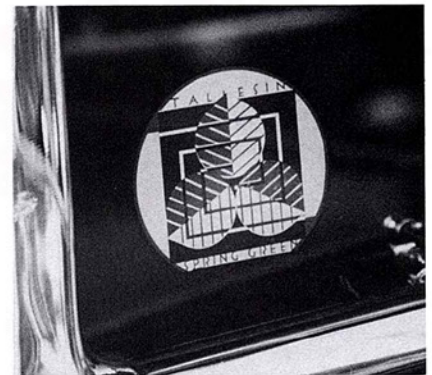
*Note Pilot Ray lamps, which turn with the wheels
and which were popular on Classics during this era.*





1930 Cord L-29 Cabriolet

Owner: Len Weiss of Homosassa, Florida

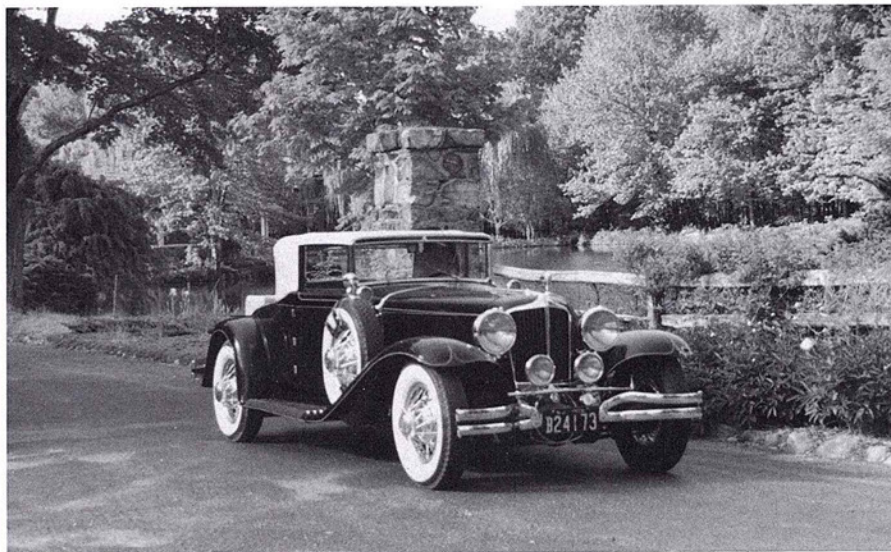
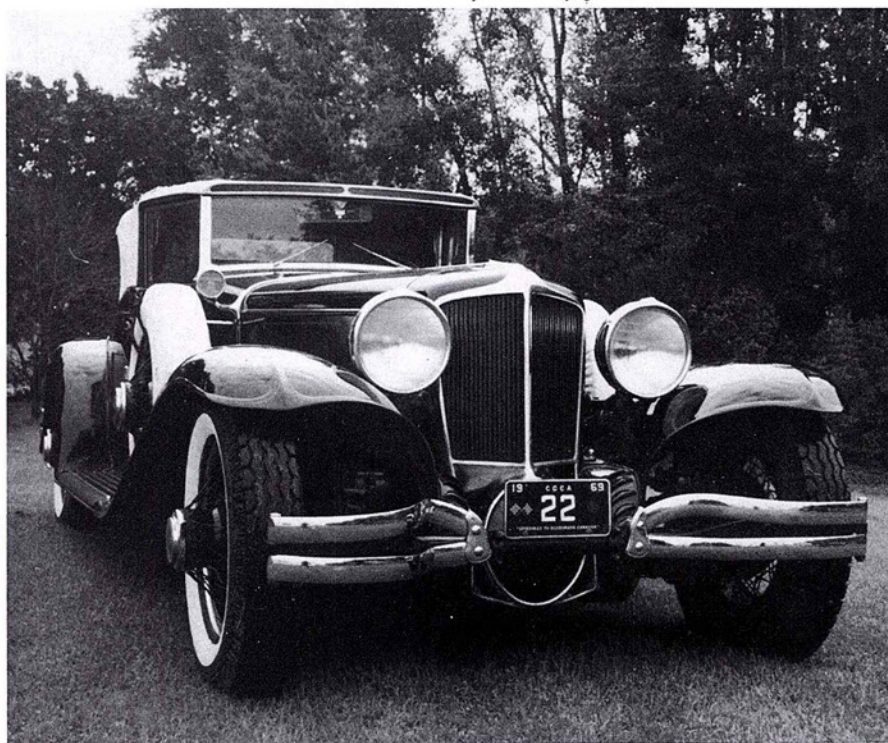


"Frank Lloyd Wright bought this car new and had it until he died in 1959," comments Len Weiss about his L-29 Cabriolet. "His emblem is still on the windshield." In conversations for his autobiography, the celebrated architect used the word "heroic" to describe the L-29: "[It] certainly looked becoming to my houses—the best design from my 'streamline' standpoint ever put on the market. . . . The Cord was an innovator along right lines that changed the whole field of body design for the better."

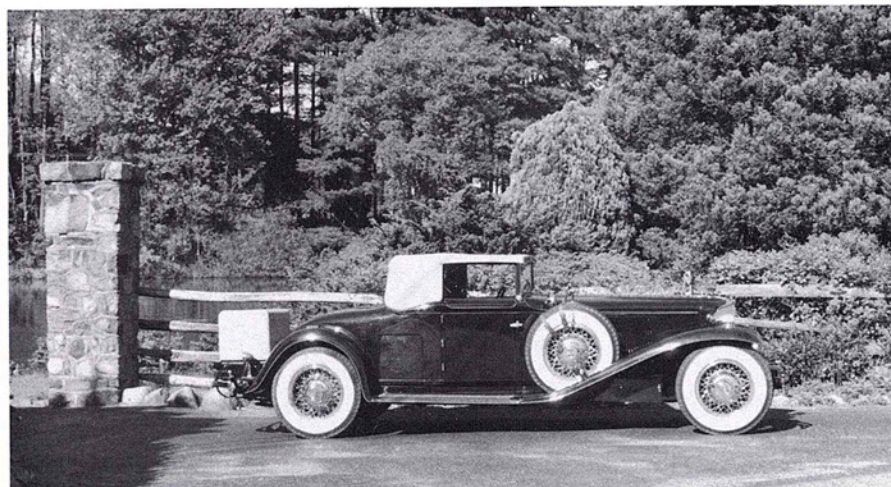
Introduced less than two months before the stock market crash of '29, the Cord did not have the saving grace of time to establish a clientele. Just 2,678 L-29's had been sold by the end of 1930. In 1931 the price was slashed a thousand dollars, but that helped little. Thinking perhaps that more power would, the L-29's engine was bored out to 321.9 cubic inches for 125 hp in 1932.

Bill Locke has owned his '32 Cabriolet for over a quarter of a century: "A landmark car. The engineering innovation of front wheel drive, the styling achievement of lowness and the positioning of the windshield at mid-wheelbase, and the detail of craftsmanship throughout established a standard for the entire industry. The L-29 has it all. Our Cord has raced on dirt roads for movies, climbed the mountains of Pennsylvania, fought flooding rains in Kentucky and plowed through blizzard snows in Indiana. It has pulled heavy floats in 4th of July parades and towed stalled trucks from their distress. And there's more to come. The L-29 has it all."

1932 Cord L-29 Cabriolet
Owner: William S. Locke of West Lafayette, Indiana



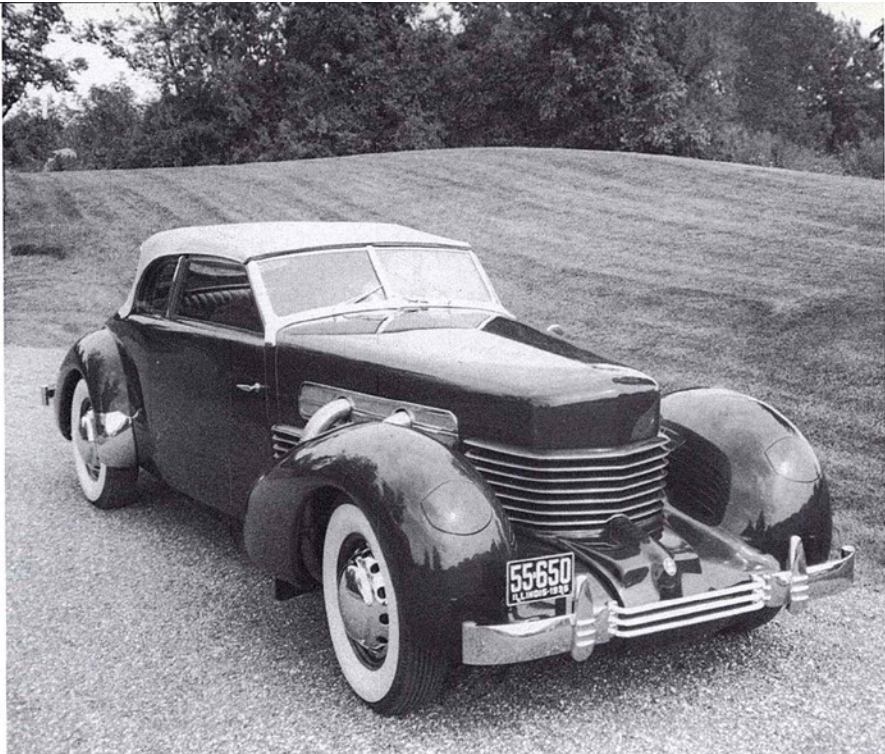
1932 Cord L-29 Cabriolet
Owner: Dick Greene of Mahwah, New Jersey



Dick Greene made two trips to pick up his '32 Cabriolet in 1956: "The car was originally delivered to a well-to-do family in Englewood, New Jersey who sold it in 1949 to a TYDOL service station. A subsequent owner took the car apart and stored it in two places, as it was when I bought it at the age of sixteen. This was my first Classic. It's been restored by me twice. The dual Pilot Ray lamps were a wedding gift from my wife Carol in 1969. Since the last restoration in 1975, I've driven the car about 16,000 miles. For a nearly sixty-year-old automobile, it is a great performer and, with the 53-13 differential, cruises nicely at 65 mph. The L-29 was the lowest Classic produced and set styling trends for the next several years. The Chrysler Imperials of that era were a direct copy."

Imitation was flattering but did not change the L-29's fate. Late in 1931 the car was quietly discontinued after a total production of 5,014 units. Of those, 55 carried custom bodies. The last 335 units produced in 1931 were sold as 1932 models. On January 2nd, 1932, the manufacturing complex in Auburn, Indiana was returned to the production of Auburn automobiles. During the L-29 era, Auburn's had been built in the Cord Corporation's plant at Connersville, some 135 miles away. A few years later, Connersville would see production of a new Cord . . .

By the mid-thirties the Great Depression had taken a devastating toll in the automobile industry, with obituaries routinely being written for firms which had roared profitably through the twenties. Errett Lobban Cord's automotive companies remained alive, but shaky. Sales of his medium-priced Auburn had plummeted, production of his super-luxury Duesenberg was a trickle. A new car, it was thought, might generate sales interest. But what would it be? Ideas were tossed about among Cord Corporation executives, E. L. himself only peripherally involved since aviation and other interests in his far-flung empire were by now absorbing his time. The ultimate decision was for a V-8 engine, front wheel drive, independent front suspension and revival of the Cord name. Time was short. Eleven cars were literally banged together for the automobile show circuit. "Radically different" and "ultra-modern" were among the phrases reporters thought described the new Cord well. The British *Autocar* flatly declared it "the most unorthodox car in the world today." It shall ever remain a tribute to the formidable talent of Gordon Buehrig that, as nonconforming as the body design was, it was universally applauded as looking right. And the same fervor which the L-29 enjoys among those who own the first-



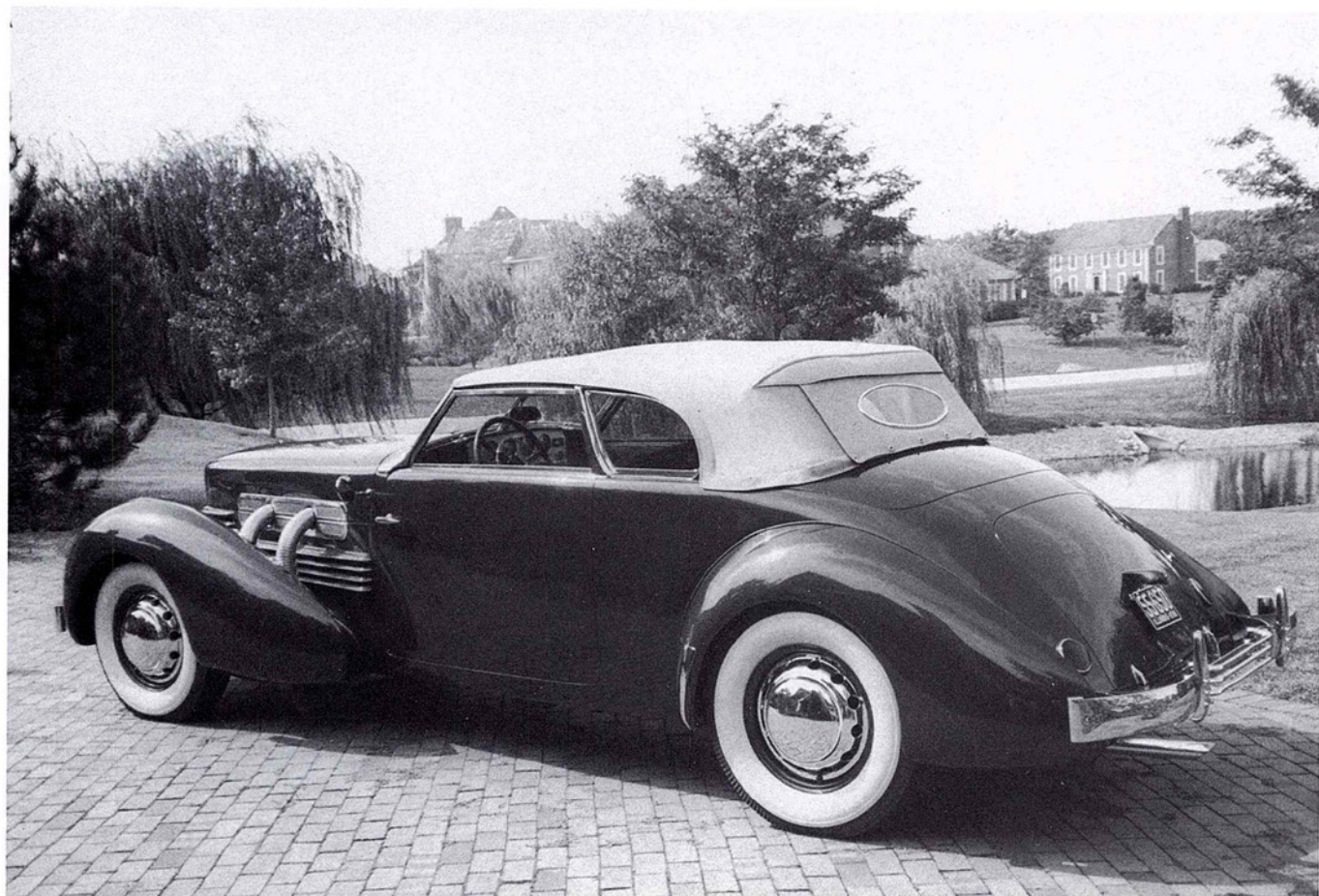
1936 Cord 810 Convertible Phaeton Sedan

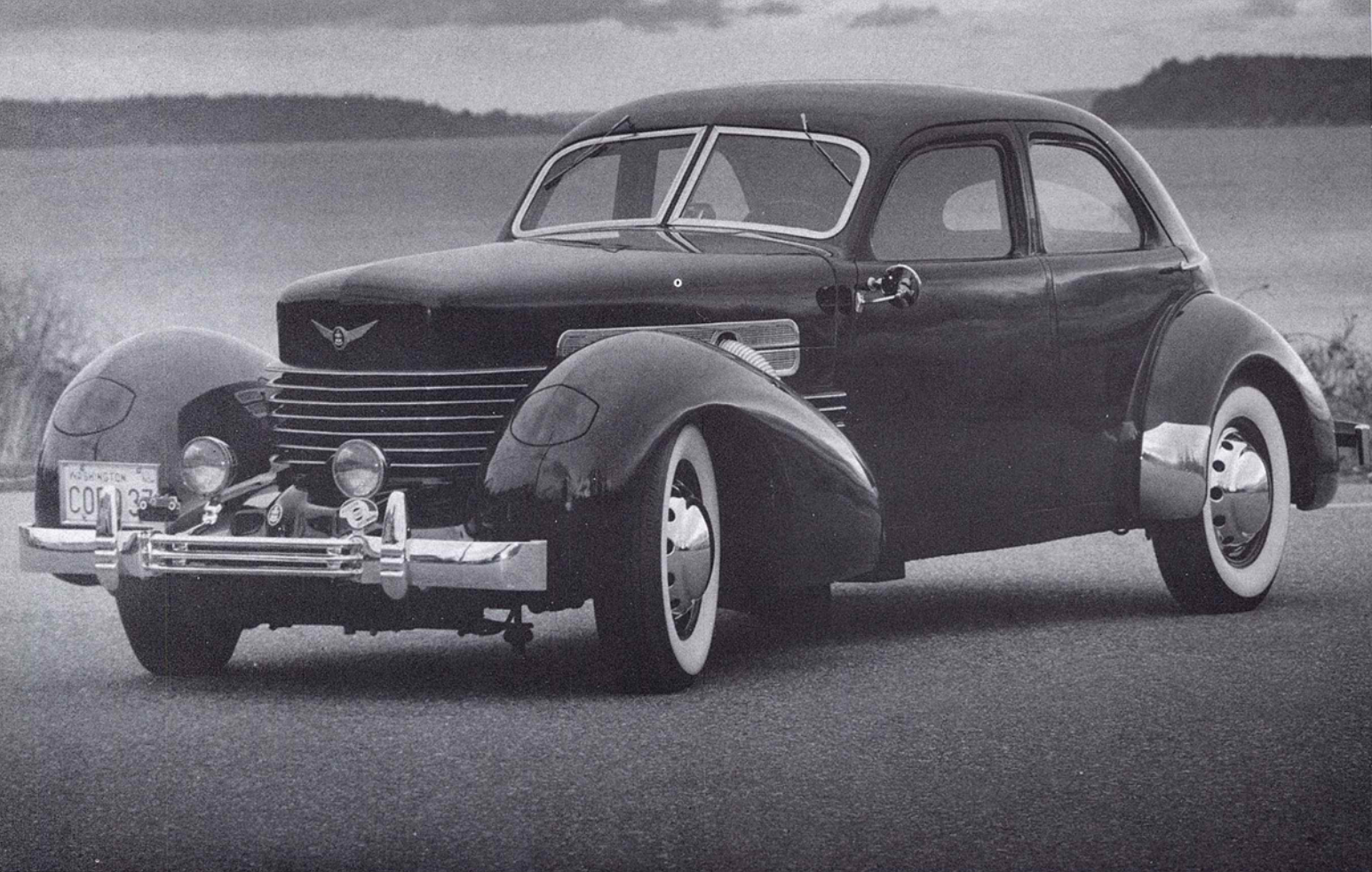
Owner: Paul Bodine of Kildeer, Illinois

generation Cord today is echoed in full measure by those who own an 810 (as introduced for '36) or 812 (as designated in '37).

"Easily the most important car introduced at the New York Automobile Show in late 1935," says Paul Bodine. "I was twelve years old when a family in the next block

bought an 810 Cord. I vowed then that I would have one. It was an absolute styling sensation. Engineering needed some attention due to hasty preparation for the show. Shifter and universals were the major drawbacks. Restored cars today are better than 'factory' in many respects."



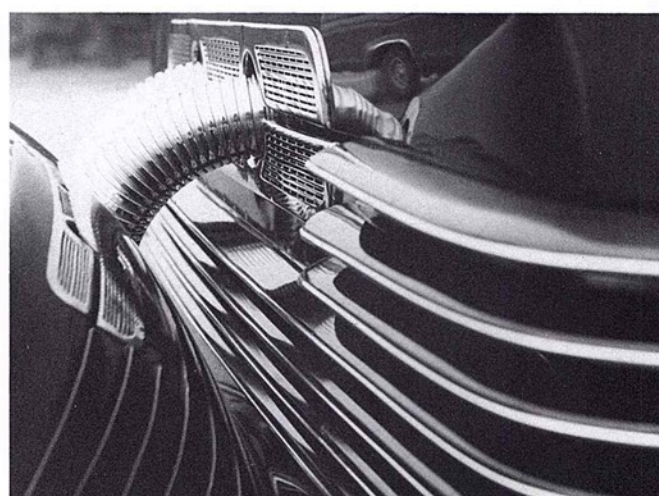
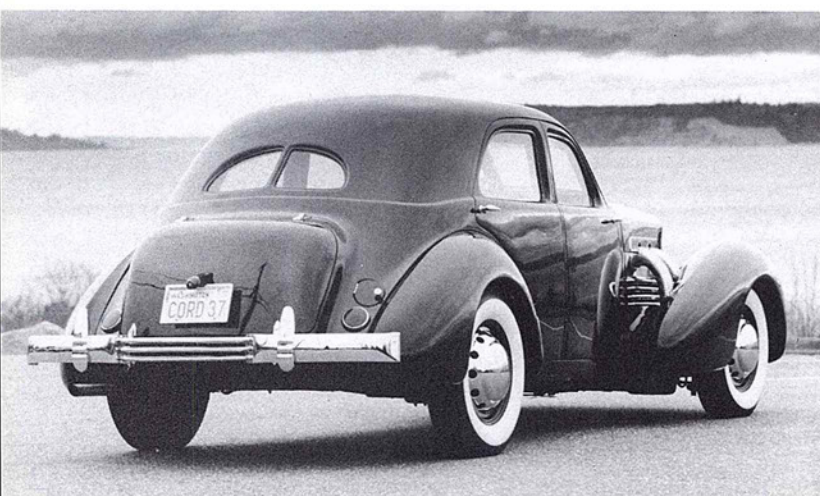
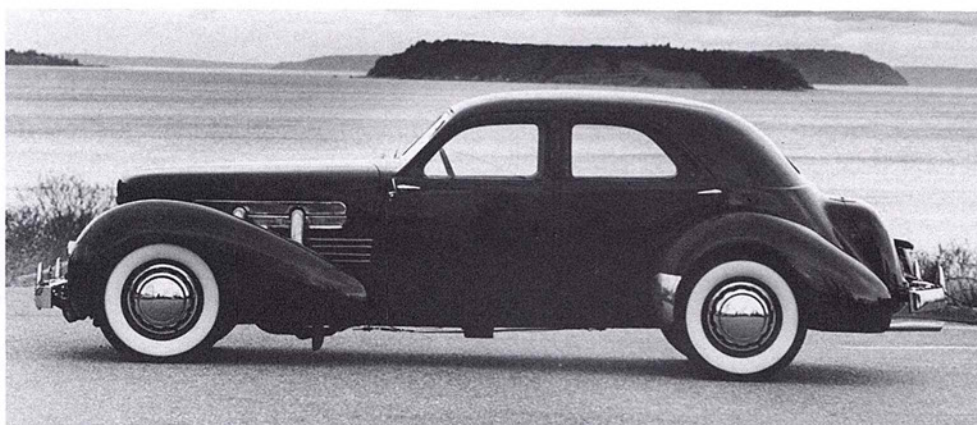


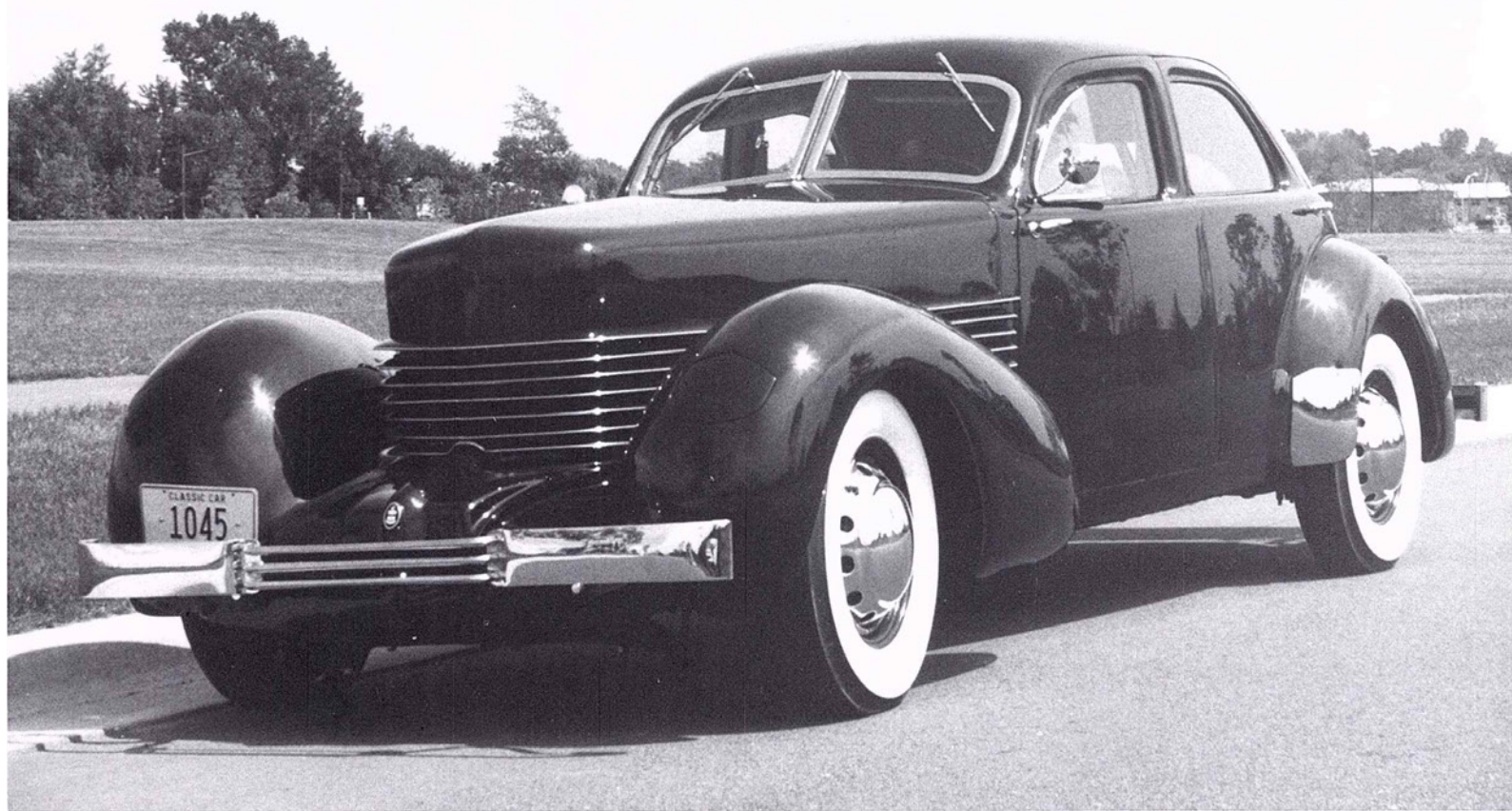
1937 Cord 812 Beverly Sedan

Owner: John C. Dennis of Mukilteo, Washington

Photos: Jim Arrabito

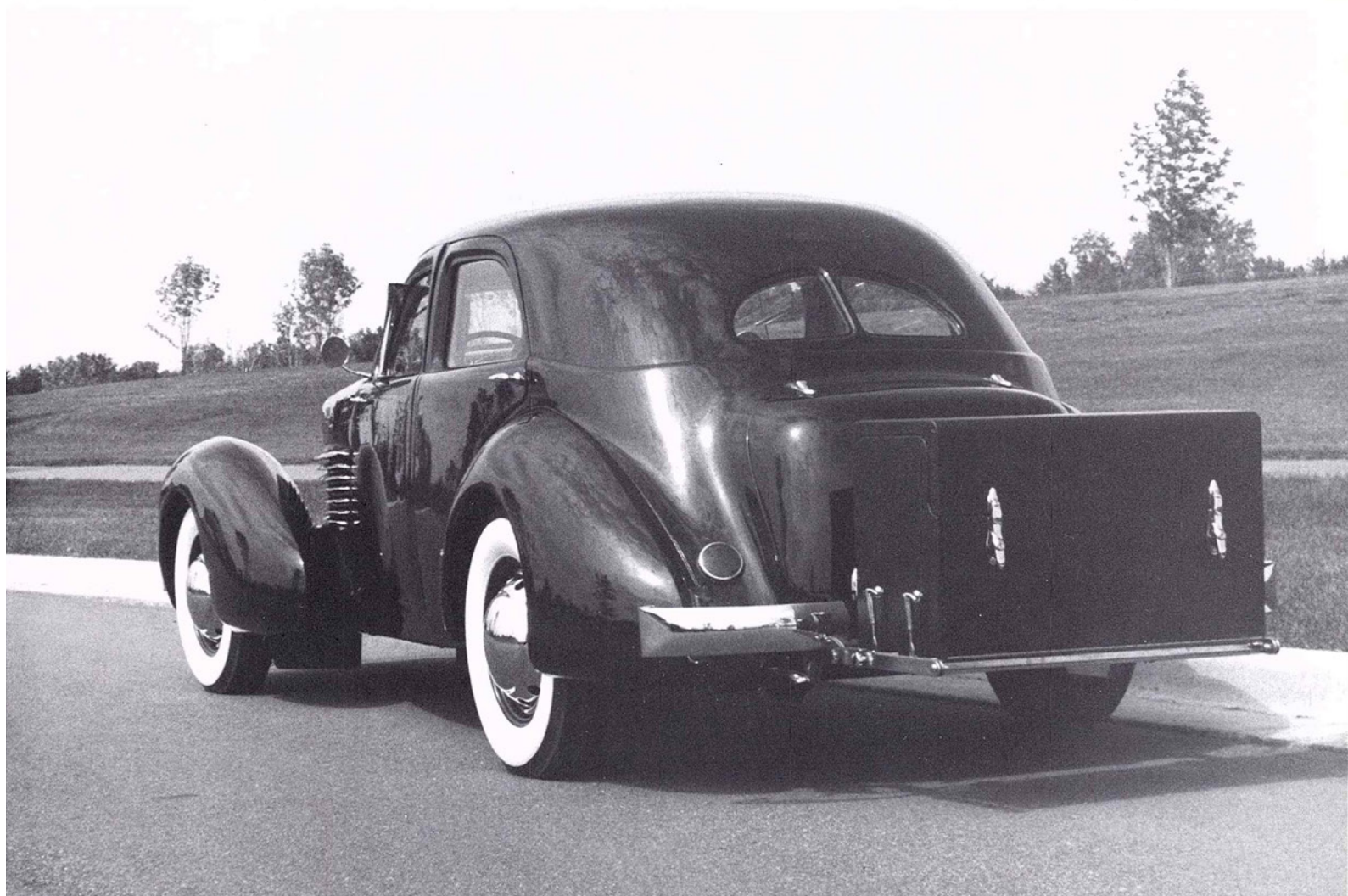
John Dennis continues the Cord rhapsody. "The extraordinary styling makes for a car with instant recognition by the public. The electric pre-select transmission with four speeds forward also makes this car unique. It is a joy to drive on the highway and can keep up with traffic all day long. The most important thing to a Cord owner is to have a transmission that will shift. The unit is complex but if understood and well maintained, the Cord can be a very dependable car. I have had no serious problems with mine over three decades of ownership."





1937 Cord 812 Beverly Sedan

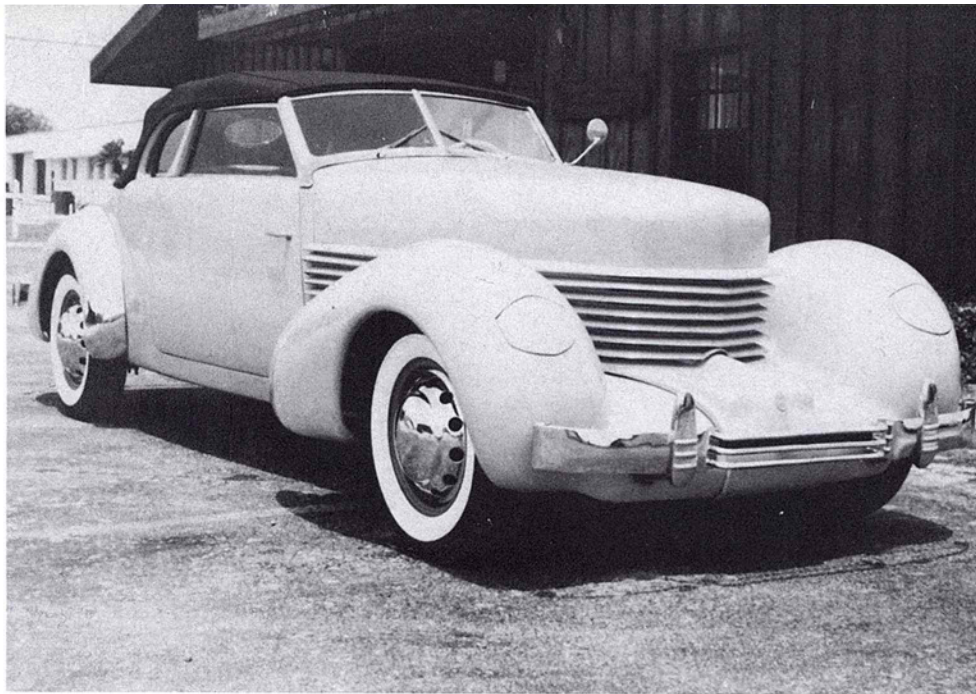
Owners: Russell & Marie Bjorklund of New Brighton, Minnesota



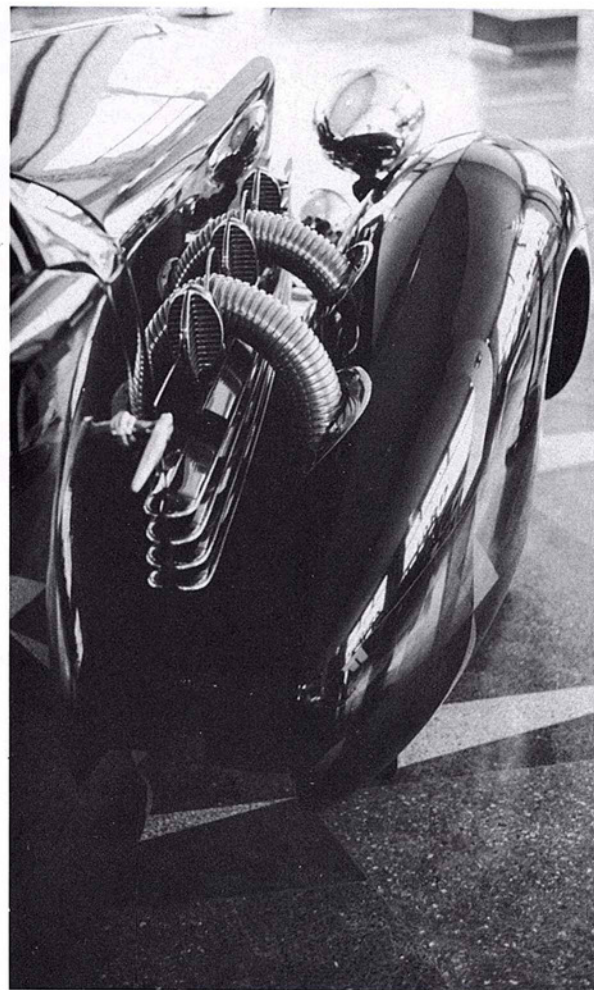
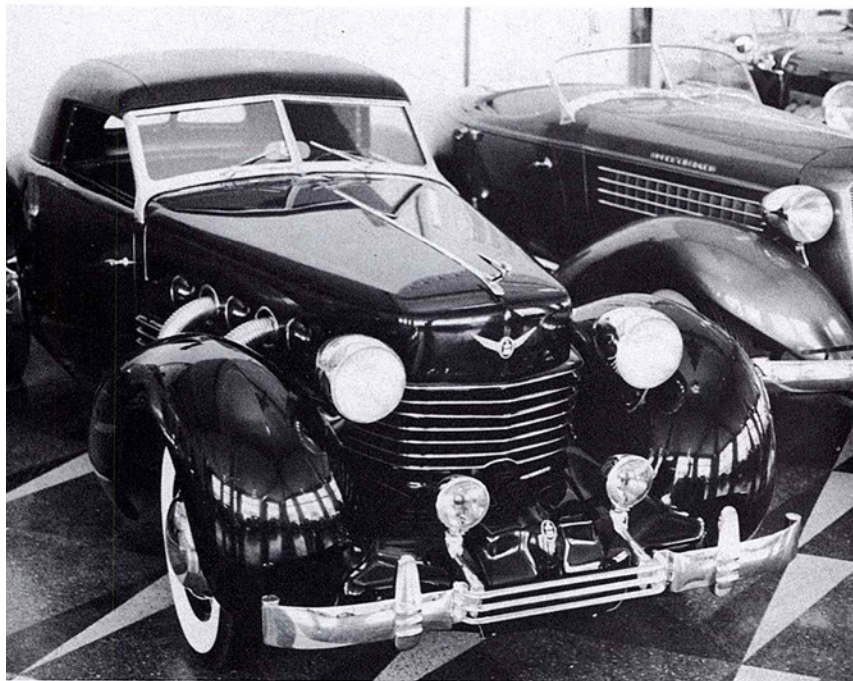
"This is a timeless Classic in sleek form," comments Len Weiss. "Pontoon fenders, disappearing headlights, flush taillight and gas cap cover, concealed hinges, the list of its styling innovations could go on and on."

The Art Deco interior and the aircraft-style instrument panel attracted the Bjorklunds to their 812 Beverly Sedan: "Cord offered options of front door window wind wings and an accessory trunk rack. These are now extremely rare items. Our Cord sports a custom trunk with fitted luggage."

The 812 Coupe in the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum is even more unusual. Possibly the only original Cord of this body style in existence, it was especially built for Robert Stranahan, president of Champion Spark Plug, and includes Auburn headlights, circular louvers and a leather-covered top.



*1937 Cord 812 Convertible Phaeton Sedan
Owner: Len Weiss of Homosassa, Florida*



1937 Cord 812 Coupe

*Owner:
Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum,
Auburn, Indiana*

