



# BUMPER TO BUMPER

## MARQUES GONE BY *Auburn, Cord, & Duesenberg*



The Auburn Automobile Company grew out of the Eckhart Carriage Company, founded in 1875 by Charles Eckhart, in Auburn, Indiana. Sons Frank and Morris began making automobiles on an experimental basis and, in 1900, established the Auburn Automobile Company. In 1903 they incorporated for the purpose of manufacturing horseless carriages. At that time, a single

cylinder, Auburn gasoline engine car sold for about \$1,400, including side lamps and tool kit.

In 1909 the brothers bought two other local carmakers and moved into a larger plant. Auburn automobiles earned a reputation for extraordinary performance and endurance on the race track by 1910, when factory

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### October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Meeting

On the 27<sup>th</sup> we will be displaying our cars at the Nascar Day Festival, Randleman. Cars need to be in place on S. Main St, at Sir Pizza, at 8:30 AM and need to remain until 6:00 PM. The street will be blocked south of Pugh Funeral Home so, enter from 220 Business South. We will hold our meeting at 4:00 PM, at the car display. Be sure to bring a chair.



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superintendent, Melvin Leasure, won the 40-horsepower class stock car race at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, at an average speed of 42 mph. The company was modestly successful until material shortages during world War I forced the plant to close.

In 1919, the Eckhart brothers sold out to a group of Chicago investors that included Ralph Austin Bard, who would serve in the cabinets of Presidents FDR and Truman, and William Wrigley, Jr, the chewing gum magnate. The new owners revived the company but, failed to realize the profits they had hoped for. Auburn crossed over into high style with the Beauty Six, introduced in 1919. The car set a sales record of 6,062 that year however, a bad economy slowed sales every year until 1923, and the company was in trouble.

In 1924 they approached 30 year old Errett Lobban Cord, a highly successful automobile salesman with the Moon Motorcar Company, with an offer to run the company. Cord countered with an offer in what amounted to a leveraged buyout, the deal was accepted.

Cord began by executing the legendary sale of 700 black Auburns, setting unsold on the factory lot, by painting them in bright two-tone color schemes. Cord also cut the price and

launched a national advertising campaign and infused enthusiasm into Auburn dealers. Cord realized that he could not compete with the “Big Three” so, he looked for the right niche for his company. He was quoted as saying, “If you can’t be the biggest, it pays to be different.”

1925 saw more success with the introduction of the lowest priced eight cylinder car in the country at \$1,895 for a touring car. Mid year saw the introduction of the Auburn 6-66 and 8-88, both designs influenced by Cord. Cord was able to pay off his Chicago investors and owned Auburn Automobile Company by November 1925.



1933 Auburn V-12 Salon Speedster

In 1926, Cord partnered with Duesenberg Corporation, famous for its racing cars, and used it as the launching platform for a line of high-priced luxury vehicles. He obtained the financially struggling company by an exchange of stock and got the engineering genius of Fred Duesenberg in the bargain.

Cord bought the passenger car patent and manufacturing rights to the front-wheel-drive designs of Harry Miller in the fall of 1926. Auburn Automobile

Company paid Miller \$1,000 per month for five years, plus a royalty on every front-wheel-drive car sold. Miller was to build the prototype and provide consulting services. He later put his own name on a front wheel drive car, the Cord, later referred to as L-29. Introduced in June 1929 the L-29 was the first American front-wheel-drive production car available to the public. The price ranged from \$3,095 to \$3,295, putting it in the same class as Cadillac, Packard, and Chrysler Imperial. Sales were brisk at first however, when the stock market crashed in October 1929 most of the potential buyers were financially obliterated. Anyone left with wealth was leery of buying an expensive car. Production ceased in December 1931. During the 31 months of production, only about 5,000 cars were built.

The famous Auburn Speedster, with it’s saucy boattail stern, debuted in 1928, with a Straight-Eight engine. However, the stunning Alan Leamy redesign of the 1931 Auburn set an all time sales record. Only one model was offered that year, the 8-98 with eight cylinders and 98 horsepower.



1935 Auburn 851 Supercharged 8

Auburn continued to be a car of innovation and value with the introduction of a new Lycoming V-12 engine, two-speed Dual-Ratio axle and the low price of \$1,425 for a coupe in 1932.

The final body style came in 1934 from Alan Leamy, with all-steel construction. However, sales did not improve and Duesenberg designer, Gordon Buehrig, was brought in to redesign the Auburn line for 1935. Buehrig created some of the most beautiful Auburns ever built and high performance continued with a supercharged, eight-cylinder engine.

The year 1931 proved to be a pivotal year for the Auburn Automobile Company. After a banner sales year, the company lost almost \$1 million in 1932.

The Cord 810 was to be the car to save the company. The company was desperate to introduce the car at the New York Auto Show in November 1935. Every employee in engineering and design worked long hours to meet the deadline, even as the Auburn car was facing extinction. The Cord 810 was a colossal hit, the orders poured in and



delivery was promised by Christmas 1935. However, the car had numerous problems, delaying delivery until

mid February. Many orders were cancelled and those that were delivered had problems such as overheating, noisy U-joints, and shifting problems. The 810 quickly achieved a reputation as a troublesome car. Fewer than 1,600 Cord 810s were built in 1936 and only 1,100 of them sold. The balance were sold as 1937 812s. A total of about 3,000 Cord 810/812s were produced before production stopped in August 1937.



The Cord 810 may never have been produced without a bit of luck. The nearly bankrupt company landed a contract with Montgomery Ward to build kitchen cabinets in its Connersville, Indiana plant. That contract provided the half-million dollars needed to develop the car.

E. L. Cord built cars that became famous for their advanced engineering as well as their striking appearance. Models such as the Model J Duesenbergs, the 1935-1937 Auburn Speedsters, and the 810/812 Cords.

It was not enough. Sales plummeted again in 1936. Cord's automobiles were too expensive for a Depression-era market. Cord manipulated the stock and, under injunction from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to refrain from

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### TRIVIA



In 1915 Willys-Overland was the first automotive manufacturer to set up a financing company to provide retail financing for its vehicles.

In 1923 Ford was the first automotive manufacturer to offer a large scale lay away plan for buying cars. One could lay away \$5 a week to a dealer then pick up the car when paid for.

further violations, Cord sold his shares in his automobile holding company. In 1937, production of Auburns, along with that of Cords and Duesenbergs, ended. In total over 177,000 Auburns, Cords, and Duesenbergs had been produced.



1926 Auburn 8-88 Sedan



1929 Duesenberg Phaeton by LeBaron



1931 Duesenberg Model J



## SHOW SHOTS

*Just a few pictures from this year's show*



Blake Ferree, youngest driver



Donnie Jarrell with his '72 Chevelle

# CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS PART

Can you help Reece Amick identify the application for this steering wheel? The plate contains the following information.

LELAND LOCK  
LELAND LOCK CO., DETROIT, MICH  
MOTOR VEHICLE LOCK  
UNDERWRITERS' LABORATORIES  
CLASS B NO. D233414

At first glance, it appears to be from a Model T however, it has a horn button in the center of the wheel. Model Ts were not known to have the button in the center but, mounted on the side. The patent for this lock was probably filed in January of 1923.





# Automotive History

In 1934, German automaker Ferdinand Porsche submitted a design proposal to Adolf Hitler's new German Reich government, calling for the construction of a small, simple, and reliable car that would be affordable enough for the average German. Only about one in 50 Germans owned cars at the time, and the motor industry had only a minor significance in Germany's economy. Nazi propagandists immediately embraced the idea, coining "Volkswagen," which translates as "people's car," at an automobile show later in the year. Hitler himself hoped the "people's car" would achieve the kind of popularity in Germany as Ford's Model T had in the United States, and began calling the Volkswagen the "Strength Through Joy" car. Porsche received a development budget from the Reich's motor industry association, and began working on the Volkswagen immediately. Porsche completed the first prototype in secret in October of 1935. The simple, beetle-shaped automobile was sturdily constructed with a kind of utilitarian user-friendliness scarcely seen in an

automobile before. On October 22 in 1936, the first test-drives of the Volkswagen vehicle began, and employees drove the VW 3-series model over 800 kilometers a day, making any necessary repairs at night. After three months of vigorous testing, Porsche and his engineers concluded, in their final test verdict, that the Volkswagen "demonstrated characteristics which warrant further development." In 1938, the first Volkswagen in its final form was unveiled, a 38-series model that The New York Times mockingly referred to as a "Beetle." However, the outbreak of World War II prevented mass-production of the automobile, and the newly constructed Volkswagen factory turned to war production, constructing various military vehicles for the duration of the conflict. After the war, the Allies approved the continuation of the original Volkswagen program, and, under the leadership of Heinrich Nordhoff in the late 1940s and 1950s, sales of the Volkswagen Beetle began to take off. In the 1960s and early 1970s,

## Calendar

**October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

Gladys Amick - Birthday

**October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

Bill Wright - Birthday

**August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Zooland Region 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Car Show



sales of the compact Volkswagen Beetle worried even America's largest automakers, as the Third Reich's simple people's car became a popular symbol of the growing American counterculture.



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