

A close-up, low-angle shot of the front of a classic Mercedes-Benz car. The image highlights the large, round, chrome-rimmed headlights on either side of a prominent chrome grille with a fine mesh pattern. Above the grille is the Mercedes-Benz star emblem on a pedestal. The car's body is dark and highly reflective, showing highlights from the ambient light. The background is dark and out of focus.

ART OF THE CLASSIC CAR

PETER BODENSTEINER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER HARHOLDT



First published in 2013 by Motorbooks, an imprint of MBI Publishing Company,
400 First Avenue North, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55401 USA

© 2013 Motorbooks

Photography © 2013 Peter Harholdt

All rights reserved. With the exception of quoting brief passages for the purposes of review,
no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission from the Publisher.

The information in this book is true and complete to the best of our knowledge.

All recommendations are made without any guarantee on the part of the author or Publisher,
who also disclaims any liability incurred in connection with the use of this data or specific details.

We recognize, further, that some words, model names, and designations mentioned herein
are the property of the trademark holder. We use them for identification purposes only.

This is not an official publication.

Motorbooks titles are also available at discounts in bulk quantity for industrial or sales-promotional use.

For details write to Special Sales Manager at MBI Publishing Company,
400 First Avenue North, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55401 USA.

To find out more about our books, visit us online at www.motorbooks.com.

Digital edition: 978-0-76034-415-6

Softcover edition: 978-1-62788-123-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bodensteiner, Peter.

Art of the classic car / by Peter Bodensteiner.

p. cm.

Includes index.

Summary: "Art of the Classic Car showcases the most beautiful
and in some cases rare vehicles of the early 20th century.

Each car is showcased with breathtaking photography
and coupled with explicit, informative prose detailing
the particular history of each model"—Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-0-7603-4415-6 (hc w/flaps)

1. Antique and classic cars. 2. Automobiles. I. Title.

TL15.B57 2013

629.222—dc23

2013008756

On the front cover: 1937 Mercedes 540K

On the back cover: 1935 Duesenberg SJ *Mormon Meteor I*

On the frontis: Jordan Speedway Series Z Ace

On the title page: 1936 Figoni & Falaschi Delahaye 135M
Competition Coupe

Acquisitions Editor: Darwin Holmstrom

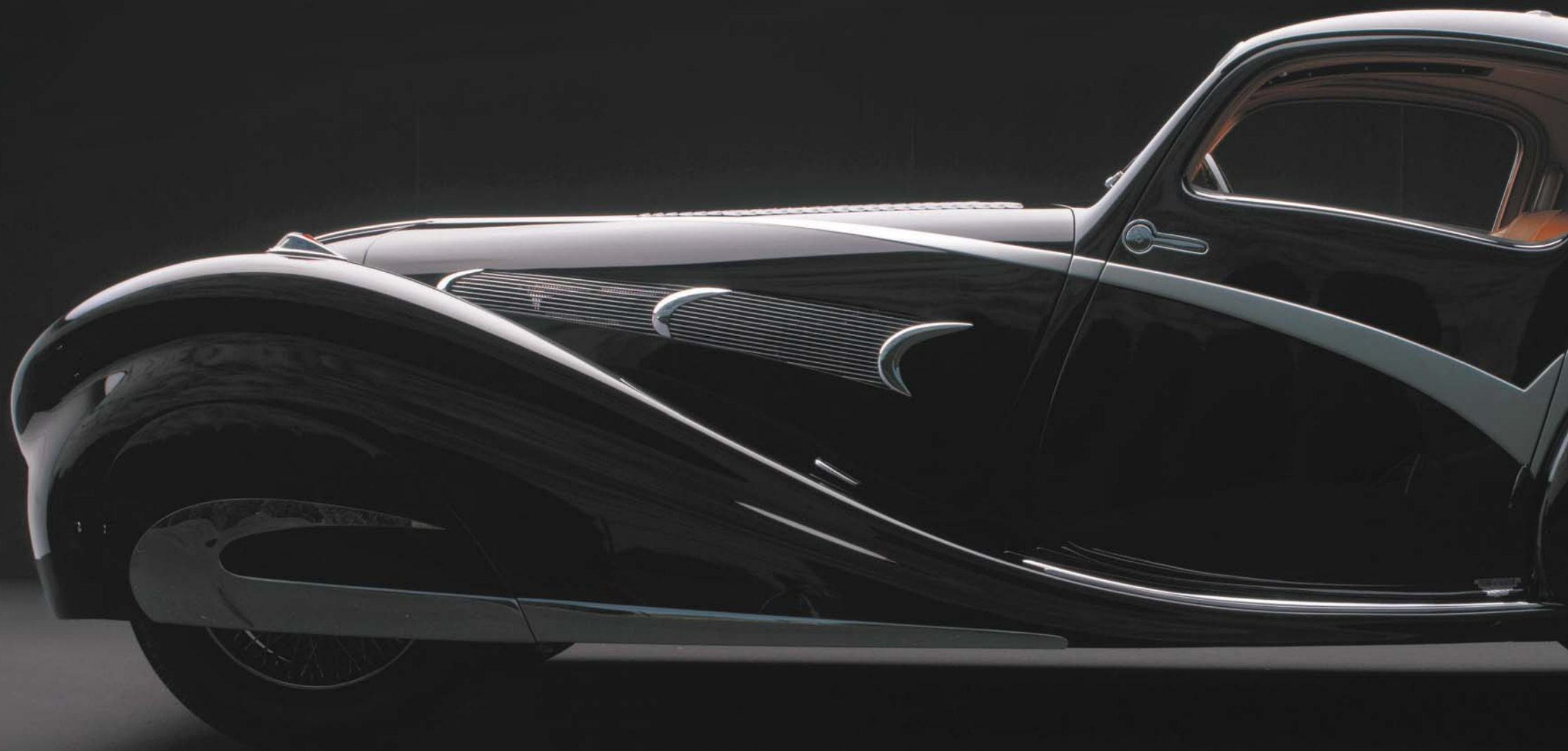
Creative Director: Rebecca Pagel

Designer: Chris Fayers

Cover designer: Simon Larkin

Printed in China

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1





ART OF THE
CLASSIC
CAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
PETER HARDOLDT

WORDS BY
PETER BODENSTEINER



Contents



	Introduction	6
Section I:	Open Cars	8
	1911 Mercer 35R Raceabout	10
	1916 Stutz Bearcat	18
	1934 Edsel Ford Model 40 Special Speedster	26
	1935 Duesenberg SJ <i>Mormon Meteor I</i>	34
Section II:	Convertibles	44
	1929 Cord L-29 Cabriolet	46
	1930 Jordan Model Z Speedway Ace Roadster	54
	1934 Packard Twelve Runabout Speedster	62
	1935 Duesenberg JN Roadster	70
	1936 Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster	78
	1937 Delahaye 135MS Roadster	88
	1939 Delage D8-120S Cabriolet	96

Section III: Coupes	104
1930 Bentley Speed Six <i>Blue Train Special</i>	106
1933 Cadillac Fleetwood V-16 Aero-Dynamic Coupe	116
1934 Packard Twelve Model 1106 V-12 Sport Coupe	122
1935 Chrysler Imperial Model C2 Airflow Coupe	130
1936 Delahaye Model 135 M Coupe	136
1937 Bugatti Type 57S Atalante	144
1937 Delage D8-120S Aérodynamique Coupe	152
1938 Dubonnet Hispano-Suiza H-6C “Xenia” Coupe	162
1938 Alfa Romeo 8C2900B	170
Section IV: Sedans	178
1931 Duesenberg SJ Convertible Sedan	180
1933 Pierce-Arrow Silver Arrow	190
1934 Hispano-Suiza J-12 Sedanca	198
1936 Cord 810 Model C92 Beverly Sedan	208
1941 Chrysler Town & Country	214
Acknowledgments	223

Introduction

What is a classic car? The Classic Car Club of America has its definition, the Antique Car Club of America has its definition, and your insurance company, state, or country may have one as well. In this book, we're not concerned about these—instead, we take a step back, look at a variety of body styles, builders, and countries of origin, and strive simply to deliver a selection of interesting and often beautiful cars, ones that I think any red-blooded car enthusiast should want to know more about. In other words, we are defining “classic” in a broad sense, using the word to indicate cars that are worth remembering years and decades later.

It is true that the majority of these cars were likely built before you and I were born. While enthusiasts

gravitate toward vehicles that were popular when we were young and impressionable, for most of us, none of the cars here fit that description. In any case, if you are already a car enthusiast, the chances are that you have a particular area of interest, and it's likely that you're most interested in more recent vehicles than those depicted here.

Don't be too hasty to disregard these cars, though, even if they seem to be quite different from your favorites. I invite you to read an entry or two in this book, gaze at the beautiful photographs, and see if you can't spark a new automotive interest.

The same motivations that caused engineers and designers to create the cars you already love also drove the men who built the automobiles found in *Art of the Classic Car*. The creators of these classic cars had the same goals as car builders from any era—to make more

power, improve handling, or to make an impactful statement with color and shape. The creativity visible in the cars these early automotive proponents built is just as impressive as that employed in any other era—or even more so, given the technological constraints of earlier times.

Are you a fan of light, nimble sports cars? Check out the Mercer Raceabout for a truly bare-bones driving experience, or the Alfa Romeo 8C2900B for a more elegant approach. Do you like big horsepower? Take a look at the big V-12 engines in the Packard Model 1106 Sport Coupe or the Pierce-Arrow Silver Arrow. Hot rodders will like the Edsel Ford Speedster, built on a modified '34 Ford chassis.

Do you like forced induction? Early auto-makers often turned to superchargers in an era when turbochargers (or more accurately, turbosuperchargers) had

yet to become prevalent. Cars like the Duesenberg SJ and the Mercedes-Benz 540K used supercharging to provide some boost. Lovers of big land yachts should check out what Cadillac was up to in the early 1930s. Racing fans are sure to find some inspiration in the *Mormon Meteor I* or the Stutz Bearcat, cars that achieved a great degree of success in land-speed and circuit racing, respectively.

It's my hope that by studying these earlier expressions of automotive innovation, you will gain a greater appreciation for the history of the automobile. Not only will you enjoy yourself, but you'll emerge having broadened your horizons. Perhaps you'll even pick up some inspiration for a vehicle of your own. If you do, know that you are following in the footsteps—and honoring the legacies—of the creative minds who have come before you.

Section I

Open Cars

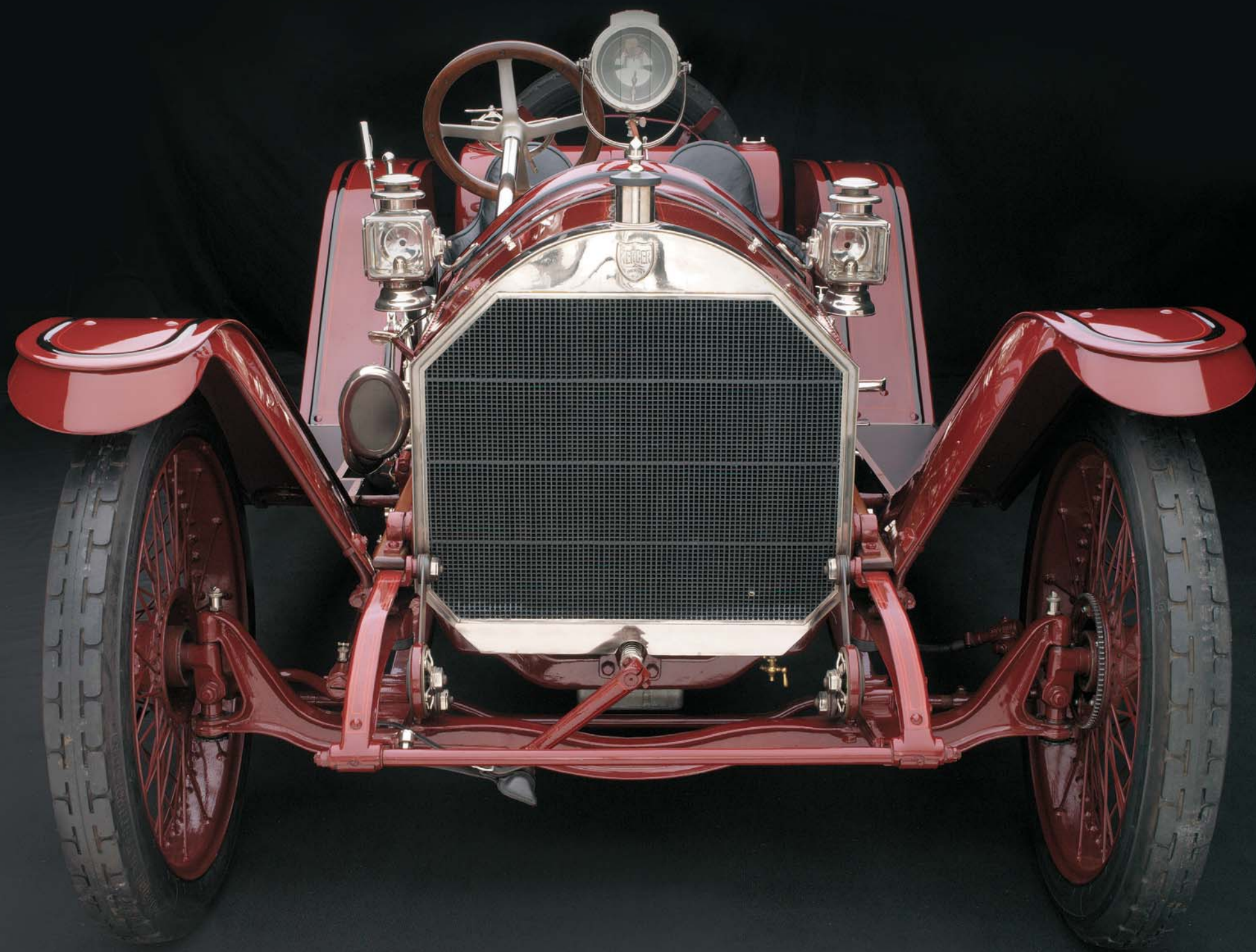
From the beginning, every automobile needed only a few basic components: an engine for power, wheels, some means of transmitting power between the engine and wheels, a chassis to locate all these components, and a driver and perhaps some passengers. Providing shelter or comfort to said humans was a secondary consideration.

Not surprisingly, two of the cars in this book that stray the least from this fundamental collection of parts are in this section and are the earliest cars in the book. The 1911 Mercer Raceabout and the 1916 Stutz Bearcat were among the first cars that one could consider sports cars, eschewing roofs and doors, among other things,

in order to simplify and enhance the driving experience. The other two cars in this section, while newer, do away with a roof altogether for different considerations—outright high-speed racing in the case of the *Mormon Meteor I*, and style with the Edsel Ford's Model 40 Speedster.

It's one thing to drive a car that is open to the elements, but it's another thing altogether to drive one that doesn't provide even the most rudimentary top. It requires a different level of commitment from both its drivers and its passengers. Ultimately, though, we treasure such cars because they discard all that can be frivolous and superfluous and give us instead something real, something raw.



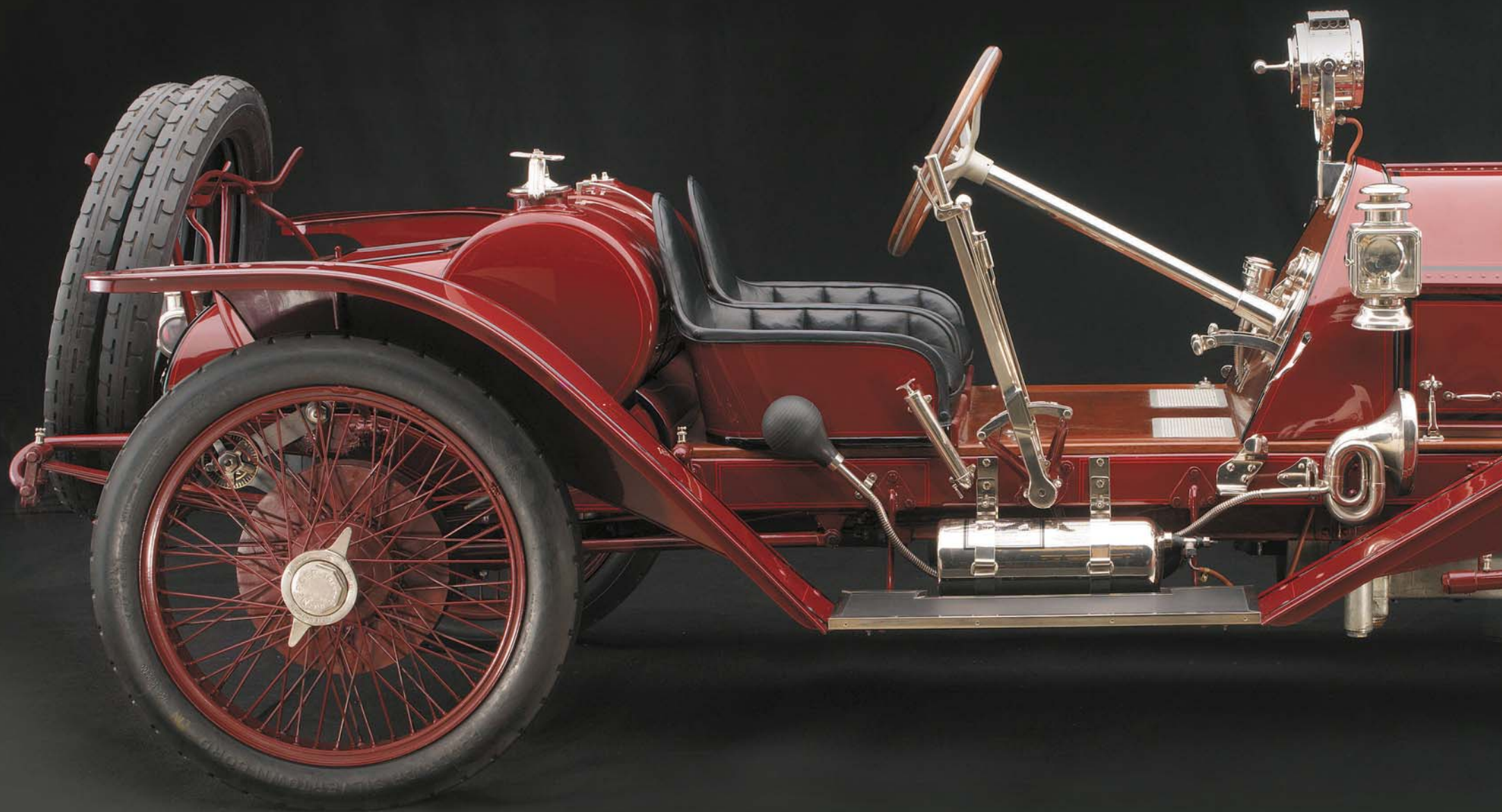


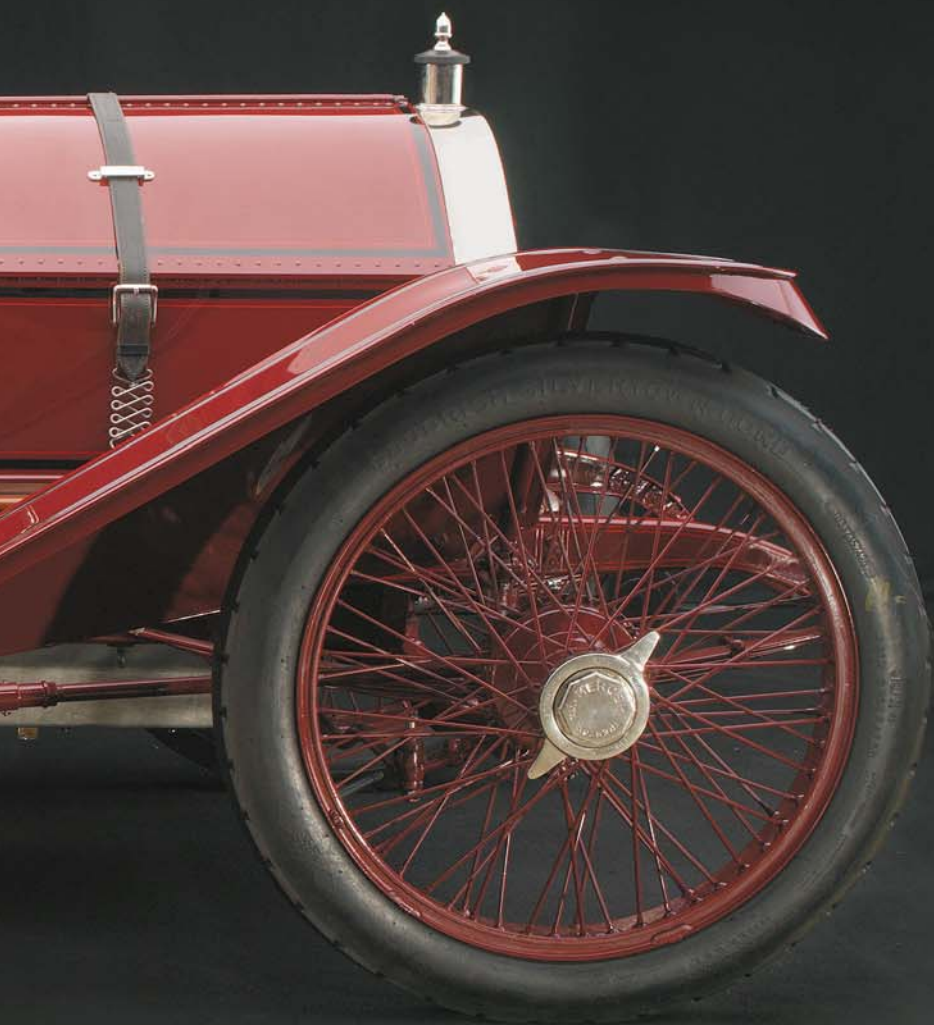
1911 Mercer 35R Raceabout

More than 100 years have passed since this car was built—nearly the entire history of the automobile. Yet here, in the Mercer Raceabout, we see the first glimpse of a philosophy of design that has always created and nurtured the essential passion for driving in those who experience it.

The Mercer sketched the blueprint: light weight, a competent chassis, minimal creature comforts or useless gadgets, two seats, and with a willing engine driving the rear wheels. A host of cars followed the Mercer's lead over the decades after its creation, including the Jaguar XK120, roadsters from the likes of MG and Alfa Romeo, the Datsun 240Z, Mazda's RX-7 and Miata, and today's Toyota GT-86/Scion FR-S/Subaru BRZ triplets.

Like many of the aforementioned sports cars, owners of the Mercer Raceabout could take their autobobiles directly to the





racetrack. After finishing 15th in the 1911 Indianapolis 500, the Mercer team reinstalled their car's headlights and fenders and drove it back to the company's headquarters in Mercer County, New Jersey.

Mercer made do with a smaller engine in a lightweight car. That was not a prescription for victory at a track like Indianapolis, but on smaller circuits and in hillclimbing competition, which rewarded handling over horsepower, the Mercer was a force. Spencer Wishart, one of the top drivers of the era, once drove a Mercer straight from an Ohio dealership to a dirt-track event and won a 200-mile race.

The Raceabout was designed from the ground up to perform. Designers achieved a low center of gravity by placing the engine deep in the chassis, and by giving the driver and passenger low seating positions. The car had no top, no body, and only minimal fenders. The driver sat behind a steeply raked steering column and no windshield to speak of. The external shift column used an H-pattern arrangement to select each gear, another feature that later became typical.



The foot brake was marginal at best, so a hand lever controlled rear drum brakes to add much-needed stopping power. Mercers utilized shaft drive between the engine and rear wheels, whereas most competitors of the day used chain drive.

Modern-day writers repeatedly comment that the car feels remarkably modern and nimble to drive, save for its inadequate brakes. As Ken Purdy wrote in *The Kings of the Road*, “Most antique automobiles are not fast, and this one is.”

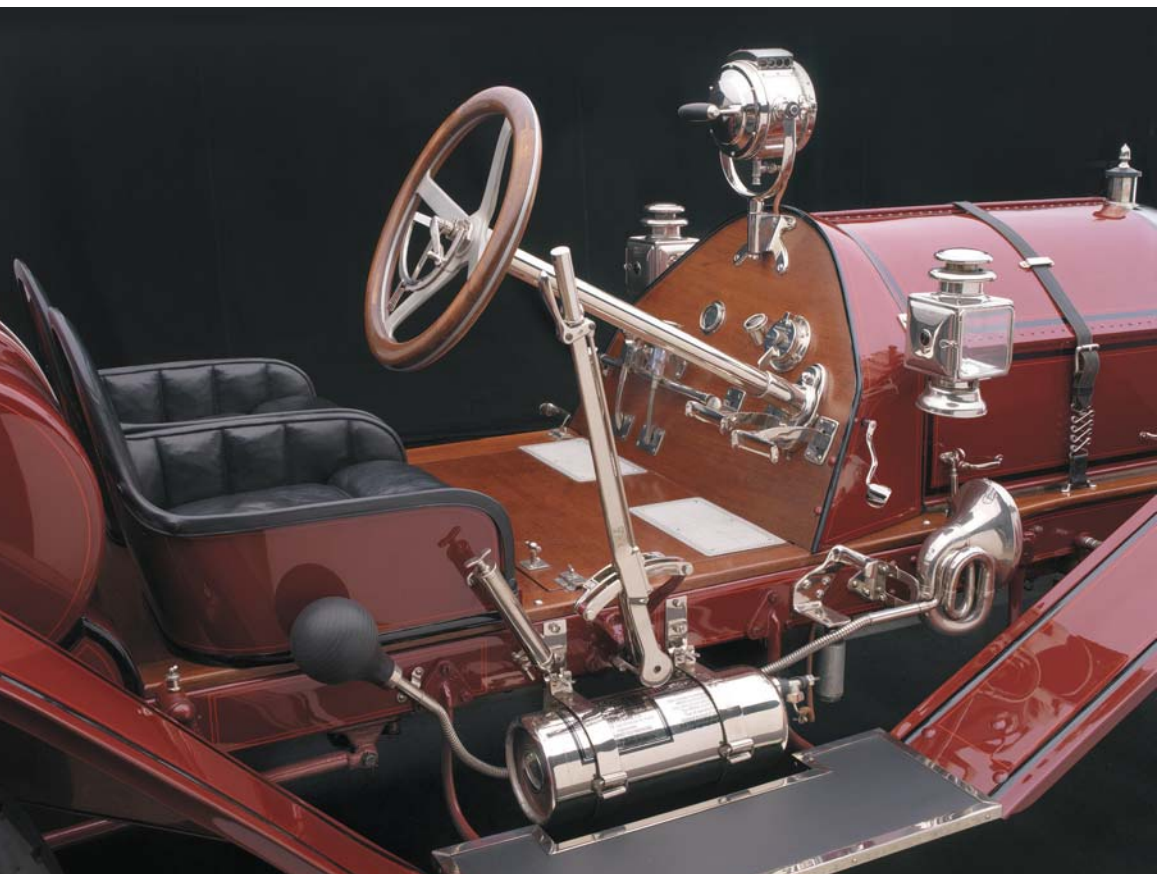
Mercer guaranteed its customers that the car would top 70 miles per hour, a bold claim in the pre-World War I era. Its inline four-cylinder, 4.9-liter engine produced 56 horsepower at 1,900 rpm, but the torquey T-head engine had less than 2,300 pounds of curb weight to carry around. With a little tuning, 100 mph could be reached.

Today the Mercer Raceabout is the most desirable pre-World War II car built in America. They typically change hands at more than \$1 million. They have never been inexpensive, like the everyman sports cars that came after it. When new, a Raceabout cost \$2,250, comparable to the price of a home.

That said, it’s impossible to overstate the importance of the Mercer’s influence. Every time an automaker decides to go back to the roots of what truly makes a car fun to drive, they build another link in the chain stretching back to the Mercer Raceabout.







SPECIFICATIONS OF INTEREST

NUMBER REMAINING

30 to 35

CLUTCH

Steel-steel, oil immersed

TRANSMISSION

Three-speed manual

CARBURETION

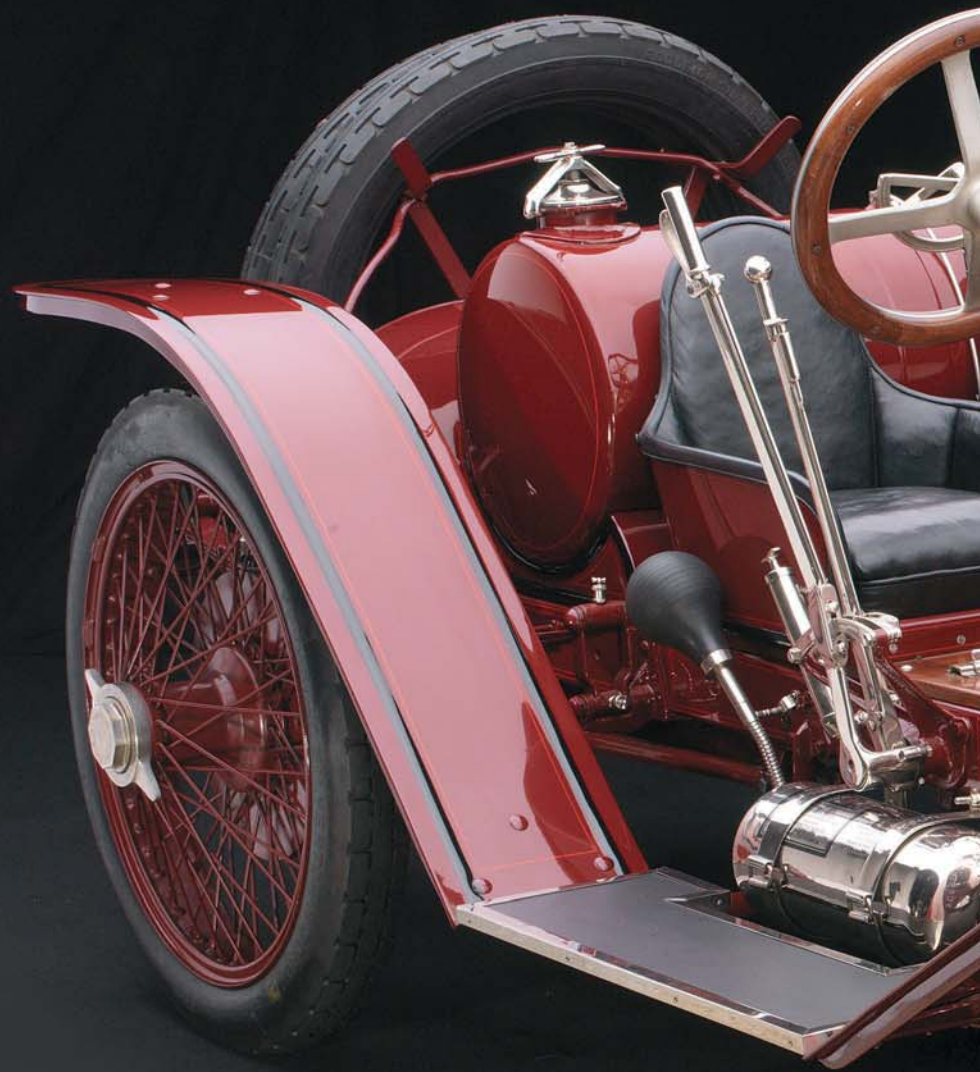
Fletcher or Stewart updraft

IGNITION

Dual, magneto

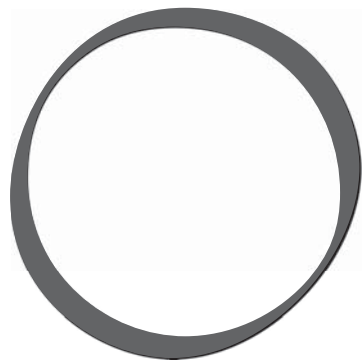
WEIGHT

2,240 lbs/1,015 kg





1916 Stutz Bearcat



wing to its reputation as a favorite of raccoon coat-wearing swells of the Roaring Twenties, and numerous pop-culture references through the decades, the Stutz Bearcat maintains an uncommon level of cultural relevance today, even among those who have no idea what the car actually is.

Stutz Bearcat—the name rolls so easily off the tongue. It serves as a kind of shorthand, as an emblem of a bygone era. That probably accounts for the Bearcat popping up in everything from an episode of *The Simpsons* to a Velvet Underground song.

Unprecedented and widespread success as a performance machine gave the Bearcat its fame originally. After entering his first production car—reportedly built in only five weeks—in the 1911 Indianapolis 500 and finishing in 11th place, Harry C. Stutz adopted “The Car that Made Good in a Day” as his company’s slogan. Stutz gained additional notoriety when





Erwin George “Cannonball” Baker drove an early Bearcat from San Diego to New York in 11 days, 7 hours, and 15 minutes, breaking the previous coast-to-coast record.

The Bearcat delivered a new kind of sporting driving experience to the public, and also had a spirited rivalry with the Mercer Raceabout (see page 10). These two sports cars faced each other often, particularly on American racetracks, and battled for the loyalty of enthusiast drivers.

The Mercer had a significant weight advantage of some 2,000 pounds. The Bearcat had the Mercer beat, if less emphatically, in the horsepower stakes.

This Bearcat, a Series C model, has a four-cylinder engine with 390 cubic inches of displacement—a six-cylinder engine was also available. The cylinders were cast in pairs, and the T-head design featured twin spark plugs for each cylinder. Early Bearcat engines ranged from 60 to 80 horsepower.

