

*Wisconsin Society of
Automotive Historians*

Carhart Chronicle

FALL 2022



**MEETING IN GREEN BAY
THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE; AND
GORDON BEUHRIG'S DUESENBERG STYLE**

**FALL MEETING AND TOUR,
AT NOON,
ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22ND,
AT THE AUTOMOBILE GALLERY,
IN GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN**

As announced in the previous Carhart Chronicle, our Fall meeting on Saturday, October 22nd will be held at the Automobile Gallery, 400 S. Adams St., in Green Bay. There is ample parking on site.



The President has arranged a special conducted tour of the Gallery **to begin promptly at noon**, conducted by Executive Director Darrel Burnett. Mr. Burnett will share details on some of the unique exhibits – the backstories of cars on display – before the membership meeting. The membership meeting will follow at 1:00 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room.

Please see the President's Message and the Agenda at p. 2 of this issue for the important meeting agenda.

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

With the leading item on the agenda for our October 22nd meeting at The Automobile Gallery in Green Bay being the Plan to Increase Membership, it has been taking up some prime real estate in my already overcrowded brain. This is by no means the first time that I have questioned whether our WSAH should get serious about following our mission statement. (Do you know we have a mission statement? Any guesses where to read it?) Judging by the extremely low response to the request for input to the committee assigned to this task, via the questionnaire that was included with the Carhart Chronicle, I wonder if members are satisfied with the status quo. Would most prefer that our organization become simply a social group, with the major effort and decision being who will bring the potato salad to the annual summer picnic? Or...I wonder if more members were involved in making WSAH a more active and interesting organization, they would become active themselves.

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WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT CONT.

Try to think of something that might convince you to get involved. How about serving on a committee? Boring? Too much of a commitment of time and effort? What if the "committee" is a small group of two or three members, or even one? What if it is only a one-year commitment to choose two events/activities/venues for a get-together? As someone who has been involved in the same position for decades, that would seem quite appealing to me. I would truly like to see more members involved and maybe a small, limited timeframe and effort is the way to go. Give it some thought and commit for one year; you might find it more interesting and rewarding than you ever thought it could be.

There are a lot of question marks in those two preceding paragraphs, so I might as well throw out another. Should the Iola Car Show be our reason for existing? I'm betting I already know the answer and I'm betting you know how I feel about it, so this is probably not news: I do not think it should be our purpose, nor should it be our major focus. Like several of you, I enjoy getting together every July, working and socializing and, in some cases, not even being concerned about taking in much of the show. As mentioned over and over, Iola is by far the majority source of our funding (this year especially, as you will learn from the Treasurer's report if you attend the meeting). While volunteering to help at Iola is critical, can be a lot of fun, and nearly covers our yearly expenses, I think it should be considered just that; not a part of our mission, but necessary to participate in so that we can carry out our mission. As a bonus, and as we have discussed before, it can and should be an excellent opportunity to get broad exposure for WSAH and is a recruitment tool that we should be using.

I will mention a bit about three of the other agenda items, without a lot of details. Hopefully we will have time to discuss them in our meeting, or they can be elaborated upon in a later message. Our member George Tesar sent me a message recently regarding something we had discussed decades ago: Establishing a depository (and repository) and research facility for automotive literature. It is likely several members have literature collections and might be at the point where they are considering what they might do when they run out of space, or, the inevitable, when they leave the planet. Ideally, something could be established with an existing facility, such as a college library for example. Something to think about. I also received a letter from Clifford Mishler, who is acting as the Fundraising Chair for the Chester L. Krause Legacy Park in Iola. Many of you know that Cliff was a key part of Krause Publishing and, along with Chet, in founding the Iola Old Car Show. The letter and a brochure describe

plans for the Legacy Park and the various donation levels. The third item is a request from the Waupaca Historical Society, forwarded by our member and SAH President Bob Barr, asking if we would be interested in presenting a program about Wisconsin's automobile history as part of an event they are planning for Thursday, July 20, 2023. I will be contacting the Waupaca Historical Society Director for details.

Finally, after our last Carhart Chronicle was published I sent a group email to members to let you know that Kelly Vanark, wife of our member Greg Vanark, had passed away at the age of 48. She was strong and brave, but cancer won in the end. I knew her for about 25 years, from the time she and Greg were married, and got to know her daughter and two sons. But I am writing this because I want you to know what a very good friend Greg is to me. He and I have worked together, off and on in my shop with upholstery and convertible top projects and more, on a variety of collector cars. Without his help, my '37 Chevy coupe street rod would never have been completed. He is competent at doing everything from rebuilding an engine to designing and building his house, cabinetmaking, and wiring a house or car. Above all, helping people seems to be a way of life for him, as it was for Kelly.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at our October 22nd meeting at The Automobile Gallery with a presentation and tour guided by the Executive Director, Darrel Burnett.

Ken Nimocks

OCTOBER MEETING AGENDA

Plan to increase membership

Establishing a literature depository / research facility

Krause Legacy Park

Presentation to Waupaca Historical Society

Activity/Meeting venues to consider



Upstairs meeting room pictured above Microbus, access through red wall on right – and, no, it's not actually on top of the VW.

MINUTES OF THE JULY 8, 2022, MEETING

Given seating in a private room inside the main Special Exhibit Building at the Iola Car Show, the Wisconsin Automotive Historians were able to conduct a quiet, undisturbed meeting. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. with the following members in attendance: President Ken Nimocks, Vice President Don Gullikson, Treasurer Gary Koehnke, Newsletter Editor Ralph Kalal, Director Don Chandler, and Secretary Dan Manola and members David Tesch, Dan Sharpee, Randy Nimocks, and Terry Nimocks, who rejoined our table display.

The first order of business was our treasurer's report by Treasurer Gary Koehnke. After reading, a motion was made by Randy Nimocks to accept the report and seconded by Don Gullikson. Next a brief version of the minutes from our LaCrosse meeting was read with Ralph Kalal making a motion to accept and Dan Sharpee seconding the motion. Ralph made a motion that we thank our group of volunteers for the selfless dedication we provide the Iola Car Show. A post-show meeting with the staff and Don and Ken will be held to discuss any positives and negatives with the show, as well as our contributions to its operation.

Old Business - The topic which has been previously discussed and bears repeating is our desire to form committees for the various duties which have, in the past, fallen on a very few individuals and spread the duties and tasks more evenly among all the members. It was felt certainly that we really need an increase in the membership who can be counted on to assist in all the various tasks which Iola has asked of us. In past years we felt that Iola would like us to handle more of the day-to-day things which they thought should be done. However, this year and in a few past years, that seems to have come full circle in that Iola has come to need us all the more. Having the table in the Special Exhibit Building and the task of picking and placing all the various vehicles in their prospective spots and roping off the areas is quite time consuming. Wednesday has become a very busy set up day. Ken Nimocks can use as much help as he can muster. We have come to be called upon to assist in unloading trailered vehicles to safely place them in the building. Placing baggies over the fuel caps and disconnecting batteries also takes personnel to achieve these duties. It is also beneficial if we can come to count on personnel who say they can help to show up on the days promised. The alternative is to relinquish what we do at the show and give up our presence and the yearly Iola donation we are given. We would become just the WSAH who attend the Iola Car Show. Ken would very much like to be able to dele-

gate and designate those willing to volunteer to be given all the various duties needed for our continued connection with the show. Members will be asked as to how we might best recruit new members into our group. What type of incentives can we offer besides just membership into the WSAH?

Our next meeting will be either in Green Bay at The Automobile Gallery or at Cross Plains Hill & Valley Show in September. Meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m. without a motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Manola, Secretary

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PLAN TO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP

At the April 23rd meeting, the members directed President Nimocks to appoint a committee to report to him concerning ways to increase membership. The resolution also directed that, upon receipt and consideration of the report, the President make his recommendations, which recommendations are to be considered for adoption by the full membership at the next regular meeting.

The committee report has been received and the President has considered the report and the comments of all committee members. The President concurs in the recommendations of the report in full and recommends it be adopted by the full membership as the plan for increasing WSAH membership.

The recommendations are set out below:

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Meetings should always be held in conjunction with an event that offers members something unique, something not available to the public, and that is worth the member time and driving distance to attend regardless of the meeting itself. Except for the annual WSAH meeting held at Iola, if the meeting is held in conjunction with another organization's function, such as a car show, that organization must offer something unique to WSAH members attending. Holding meetings in conjunction with events sponsored by others, however, should only occur when that event, as a stand-alone, has state-wide or dominant regional status – such as the Appleton show that pulls 1500 cars annually.

At least one meeting per year should be specifically oriented toward it being a family event, one that will be interesting for those who are children (or grandchildren) of members.

Meetings should be distributed regionally through the state, so that driving longer distances to attend is not a burden on any one region.

MEMBERSHIP AND THE PROCESS OF JOINING

Effective with dues year 2023, upon payment of dues the Treasurer should issue the member a membership card bearing the member's name and the WSAH name and logo. Temporary cards should be issued to those who join at events (such as Iola).

People like swag – and swag also identifies the group and advertises it.

Membership in WSAH should entitle the member, upon joining, to a WSAH t-shirt, which should also be included in the benefits of dues for current members for the first year that t-shirts are offered. The t-shirts should specifically refer to the website URL and have a motto, such as Making Wisconsin Automotive History Come Alive, that generally indicates what WSAH does. The t-shirts should be white or light in color (maybe iridescent), and members should be encouraged to wear them to non-WSAH events such as car club meetings, etc., to advertise WSAH. (This, of course, means we need to design and have produced t-shirts in appropriate sizes.)

For renewing membership, existing members should receive another item of swag, such as a mug. The website URL should be on the mug.

Facilitating a potential member to join means making it easy to do so. That means that the person attracted to WSAH should be able to pull out a credit or debit card, join on the spot, and walk away as a member with a new WSAH t-shirt. We need to be able to accept payment via credit or debit card in person and through our website.

WEBSITE

The WSAH website should be updated to be more colorful and modern in appearance. It should have a members only area that allows requesting loan of WSAH library materials and accessing past issues of the Carhart Chronicle. The home page of the website must provide clear details of upcoming events and describe past events to allow anyone curious about WSAH to find out more and then join. The site should overtly welcome all new members in a fashion that makes it clear we're an open and welcoming group. The site should be set up with a program, such as WordPress, that uses a free, easily customized theme and be hosted on a host, such as Kinsta, that loads quickly. The site should have new material added regularly to assure better search engine ranking. Articles from the Carhart Chronicle can be displayed in part, with a link part way through that indicates the balance is only for members and displaying an invitation to join. The members only area ideally should include a place where members can post comments and include a membership directory.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE – EVENTS AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEES

There should be a standing committee of at least three, but not more than five (when membership permits) members – who need not be officers - that concerns itself exclusively with arranging events in conjunction with meetings. The committee should be under the overall supervision of the President. To facilitate communication with the people volunteering for Iola and the Iola event, the position of WSAH Vice-President should be considered *ex officio* the person in charge of WSAH participation in the Iola event.

There should also be a standing committee devoted to soliciting new members. One to three members of the WSAH should be organized as a membership committee reporting to the President. The committee should be responsible for determining events at which WSAH should have an outreach presence, arranging volunteers to do so, and arranging for WSAH membership materials to be on hand.

RELATIONSHIP WITH IOLA

WSAH participation in Iola, while a financial lifeline for WSAH, has subsumed the identity of WSAH to that of the Iola organizers. WSAH sells Iola merchandise, and primarily promotes Iola, at its desk. The WSAH participation in Iola should be regarded as a prime opportunity to recruit members from those who visit Iola. There should be a large banner over the table – JOIN THE WISCONSIN SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS – with the catchy subtitle (such as Making Wisconsin's Automotive History Come Alive) below it. The t-shirts that are to be provided to those who join should be stacked up in prominent view, next to the new brochure that promotes joining – and we should be able to sign up new members and take payment, including credit or debit card payment, at the table.

OTHER OUTREACH

The membership committee should explore events at which WSAH would find it likely that new members can be attracted and determine which events merit having WSAH attend and set up a booth or table to solicit new members. The same equipment used for Iola can be used at other events. However, for other events, WSAH should acquire a folding canopy, table, and chairs so the table can be set up outdoors. The canopy should be large enough to get both WSAH members staffing the table and those visiting the table out of the sun or rain.

BROCHURE AND OTHER ADVERTISING

We need a new brochure. The brochure print should be large enough that it is easy for older persons to read it. The brochure should tie in directly with the revised website. The brochures should also be displayed in all museums with automotive themes including those in Janesville for GMAD and the Kenosha County historical society. Any entity to which we give a donation should be distributing our brochures and we should seek to have the brochures included with any periodic mailings the entity may issue.

Once the website and brochure are set, we should use them as a model for running a quarter page ad in Old Cars Weekly encouraging joining WSAH, if their advertising rates are reasonable. That ad should run for a set time, such as six months, and then be evaluated to determine if the cost is justified. We should also explore inserting such ads in publications from national clubs that have significant Wisconsin membership. WSAH should have an already prepared descriptive article that it can issue as a news release in conjunction with its events and should seek to be featured in Old Cars Weekly and in local publications in conjunction with those events.

DUES

Dues should be increased to \$25.00 per year, effective with 2023.

This increase of \$10.00 per year will cover costs associated with adding members, such as the t-shirts upon joining or mug upon renewing. If we succeed in increasing membership, we will recover more than these costs in ensuing year renewals.

Additionally, the current \$15.00 is too little. People are naturally inclined to think that which is more expensive is worth more. At \$15.00 per year, we are not projecting an image that values WSAH highly as an organization.

Events that are planned by WSAH should be covered by dues. If we hold a meeting in conjunction with another organization's event, either the organization should waive additional cost of WSAH member attendance or that cost should be covered by WSAH.

IMPLEMENTATION

We are the Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians. But history isn't necessarily old. It has been said that history is yesterday's news. We should be focused on automotive history, but appreciate that this is a topic of enormous breadth that can cover many different areas of interest. We need to avoid thinking of automotive history as something exclusively focused on that which is old and proceed on the basis that history is alive and fascinating. We should convey that approach on our site, in our literature, and in the events held in conjunction with meetings. Our emphasis on automotive history is what distinguishes us from other ways a prospective member can spend \$25.00.

Because membership has fallen to such low levels, it may not be practical to adopt in full the structural changes contemplated in these recommendations until we have added members. But that does not mean we wait. We should be looking outside of the current board for members who can undertake event and membership responsibilities. Once we have revised the website and printed a new brochure, we will need to be ready to use these tools to introduce ourselves to those who might join us. We need to begin finding those people from among existing members.

As steps forward,

We should immediately begin developing a revised website and new brochure.

We should budget from current funds for purchase of t-shirts and/or other swag.

We should commence any necessary discussions with Lola concerning WSAH solicitation of new members during the Lola show, so that we have no issues when using the WSAH presence to solicit members at the 2023 event.

We should form the standing committee to develop events in conjunction with meetings within the next three months, so that this responsibility does not fall exclusively on the President.

We should arrange within six months to be able to take credit and debit cards online or on site (such as Square).

We should develop a specific calendar for implementation of the remaining recommendations over the year 2023, so that the plan adopted is fully implemented before 2024.

GORDON BUEHRIG'S DUESENBERG STYLE

The customer was 19 years old. He wrote to Harold Ames, the sales manager at Duesenberg. He proposed to trade in his Model A Ford on a new Duesenberg and included his ideas for how the new car should be designed.

Nothing in the letter suggested that its author possessed the financial means to purchase a Duesenberg, but the ideas expressed intrigued Ames. He walked the letter over to Gordon Buehrig, the Chief Designer at Duesenberg and suggested Buehrig work up a sketch or two send along with a polite response. Buehrig thought the sketches might be the basis for something they could display at an auto show.



Gordon Buehrig

That Gordon Buehrig was working at Duesenberg was, by his own admission, a consequence of his uncanny ability to quit a secure job for one that wasn't. But the parlous financial condition of his employers also meant unfettered freedom to create his designs, individual designs that created automobiles as he envisioned them.

Even though he was only twenty-five years old when he became Chief Designer at Duesenberg, he had been envisioning automobiles for a long time. In his first college years, he had been expelled from chemistry class because his professor discovered Buehrig's notebook was filled with sketches of automobiles, not chemical formulae. Buehrig pursued odd jobs, including Chicago taxi driver,

(until the company discovered he had lied about his age and was only 19, when 21 was the minimum), ultimately landing a job as an apprentice at the Gotfredson Body Corporation, which was then producing automobile bodies for Wills St. Claire, Peerless, and Jewett.

The process of manufacturing automobile bodies in the 1920's was an exercise in mass production, but not in the sense that phrase is commonly understood today. Most automobile companies outsourced body production to specialist companies, such as Gotfredson. Techniques for constructing automobile bodies were those which had been used building carriages, and the process of design was similar. Bodies were constructed with a wood framework that was then covered with panels of steel or aluminum. The design would originate with a sketch and, once approved, the body engineering department would prepare detailed drawings. These drawings – the “body draft” – showed every piece that would be used in construction of the body, the location of each screw, the shape of each part, and the fit of each joint.

From the body draft, the “sample body shop” would mill each wood component. It then constructed a “sample body” – exactly as it would be manufactured in production, except that joints were not glued. This allowed verifying that all components fit properly. That sample body was then disassembled, and each component given a part number. Each wood piece was shellacked and then stored. This became the “master body.”

When an order for that body was received – typically for several hundred – a milling machine would produce individual components in quantity from each component of the master body. Once all body parts had been milled, the master body would be returned to storage and the production parts assembled into the body framework using an assembly jig. They would produce as many as the number of bodies ordered. The wood framework would be covered by the metal panels nailed to the framework. Mouldings covered joints between the panels and covered the nails that secured the panels. These mouldings were typically 1/8 inch aluminum and also secured to the wood framework by nails. So that the moulding nails were not visible, holes were drilled in the moulding with a special bit that created a burr around the hole. The nail was driven deeply through the holes and the burr hammered over the nail, then filed down to a smooth finish that concealed the nail.

With the investment in tooling for a new steel body in the millions of dollars, rather than in the thousands of dollars

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GORDON BUEHRIG CONT.

required to create a master body, automobile and body manufacturers need to be sure that what they were about to produce would be attractive to the public and purchasers. To that end, design no longer could be entrusted to body engineers, as has been the typical practice with wood body design. Now it required individuals with an aesthetic sense and knowledge of specialized techniques developed to allow seeing how an automobile will look, from every angle, long before even a dime would be committed to its manufacture. To be competitive, all automobile manufacturers - regardless of the price range of their products or method of construction - needed to produce automobiles that were attractive, stylish, and distinctive.

Gordon Buehrig had anticipated this need. With his job as Chicago taxi driver ended, Buehrig asked advice from Clarence E. Wexelberg, designer, engineer, and body draftsman at C. P. Kimbell & Co. in Chicago, a local body manufacturer. He wanted to know how to pursue a career in body design. Wexelberg told him to return to school. After that, he suggested Buehrig apply for a position with Fisher Body Co. or C. R. Wilson Body Co., the two largest body manufacturers in Detroit.

Buehrig took the advice. He enrolled at Bradley Polytechnic Institute in Peoria, Illinois, taking courses in art, drafting, metalwork, and woodworking. At the conclusion of the semester, he asked for interviews at both Fisher and C. R. Wilson. Wilson's chief engineer, Walter Jones, was moving to Gotfredson Body Company and offered Buehrig an apprenticeship in their sample body shop. Within six months of starting, he was transferred to the body engineering department. He then found a position as a draftsman in the body engineering department at Dietrich, Inc., in January of 1926.

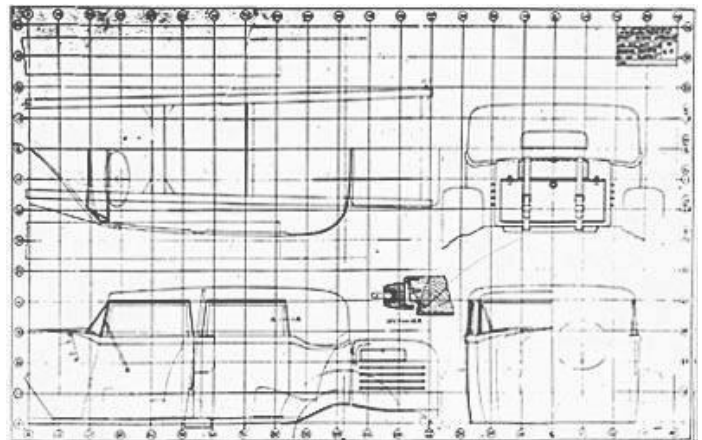
Today, Raymond Dietrich is remembered primarily for his own automobile designs, especially those for Packard. However, Dietrich was originally in the body manufacturing business with Thomas L. Hibbard and Ralph Roberts as LeBaron Carrossiers. With financial backing from Murray Corp., one of Ford's volume body manufacturers, Dietrich formed his own body business, Dietrich, Inc. When Buehrig joined, Dietrich was manufacturing bodies for the most premium of automotive brands: Lincoln, Packard, Franklin, and Pierce-Arrow.

When a classic era luxury automobile crosses the auction block today, we think of these million dollar cars as bespoke, custom built to the individual order of the original purchasers and one-of-a-kind.

With rare exceptions, that's not the way it was.

Most classic era automobiles were series production bodies.

A series production body was manufactured in essentially the same way as the process described above. The automobile manufacturer would anticipate sales and place an order for a specified number of bodies with a body builder, such as Dietrich, Locke, Murphy, Rollston, or Derham. The automobile manufacturer would provide the specifications and design for the body. The builder would do the engineering work and create the needed drawings. It would then manufacture the production run of bodies and store them. When a buyer ordered a new automobile of that brand with that body, the body builder would then finish the body to these specifications and ship the completed body to the automobile manufacturer for installation on the chassis. The buyer would have his new automobile in as little as a month from placing the order. An automobile manufacturer in the luxury field might order ten or twenty bodies of the specified design or, if a higher volume manufacturer, such as Packard, as many as two hundred.



Body Draft for 1930 Duesenberg Beverly

Series production bodies were, nonetheless, expensive. The typical body for a Ford might cost \$45.00. A basic series custom body for a Packard or similar car of the luxury class would run at least \$1,200.00. With smaller production runs, each body would cost even more.

Within three years of starting at Dietrich, Buehrig would become Chief Designer at Duesenberg.

In between these jobs, Buehrig would hold a drafting position at Packard, be one of the first hired at Harley Earl's Art and Colour Section at General Motors - where he would be exposed to GM's new way of designing by creating a full-

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GORDON BUEHRIG CONT.

sized clay model – and then would become the body designer for Stutz, where he designed the Weymann bodied speedsters the company entered at LeMans in 1929. (Weymann bodies were wood bodies covered in treated fabric, made with joints that kept each wood component 1/16" inch apart from the next, thereby avoiding squeaks from the body.)

On June 10, 1929, Gordon Buehrig began his job as Chief Designer for Duesenberg. Off and on, he would remain with Duesenberg, Auburn, and Cord for the next eight years. The automobiles he designed there are among the most prized of the classic era.

Duesenbergs faced direct competition from Bentley, Hispano-Suiza, Isotta-Fraschini, Mercedes-Benz, Minerva, and Rolls-Royce. A step down were other competitors, including Cadillac, Lincoln, Marmon, Packard, Pierce-Arrow, and Stutz, all of which were priced well below Duesenbergs. Yet, the same body manufacturer that produced a body for Duesenberg might also manufacture a body for a these less expensive luxury brands. The difference in the vehicles lay in the Duesenberg's power and performance. At 265 horsepower, the Model J had double – or more – the horsepower of any other luxury brand. (For example, the 1929 Packard Model 626 Speedster produced 130 horsepower from the Packard straight eight engine, the most of any Packard offered that year. Most 1929 Packards were rated at 105 horsepower. Even that figure exceeded the power supplied a Cadillac or Lincoln, both of which produced 90 horsepower from a V-8 engine.)

That difference in power and performance mattered to the buyer in the market for a performance oriented automobile, one the owner would drive and enjoy – an open car or a coupe. But if the buyer were in the market for a chauffeur-driven automobile, he or she was more likely focused on comfort, convenience, and style than on performance. A Lincoln with a limousine body cost about \$5,000 for the completed automobile. Equipped with essentially the same body from the same body company, the Duesenberg would cost \$12,000.

An astute observer could identify the manufacturer of a body by its design elements. When Duesenbergs were introduced at the 1929 New York Auto Show, the sedans and limousines it displayed were almost ignored. The crowds were around the Murphy bodied convertible coupe and the LeBaron bodied phaeton. Yet, Duesenberg needed the sales of closed cars and limousines just as much as it needed sales of dramatic and sporty models.

The solution was to hire Gordon Buehrig to design bodies for Duesenberg – bodies that were unique and unavailable on any other brand.

Buehrig designs ultimately would account for approximately half of Duesenberg's total production.

The key to creating these unique designs was for Buehrig to create the body drafts, so he could specify the exact lines of the body. Other automobile manufacturers let the body builder work from 1/16th scale sketches. It would be the body builder who created the body drafts. That allowed the body builder to construct the design with its own proprietary design elements, leading to these same design elements, such as the pitch of the roof and body "sweeps" (which refers to the radius and lengths of curves in the body) appearing on all the bodies it built, regardless of the automobile brand for which they were built. By specifying these elements in his body drafts, Buehrig insured that the body would reflect Duesenberg's own design. When two or more body manufacturers produced the same Duesenberg design, the only way to identify the builder was to refer to the "body tag" nameplate on the body.



Duesenberg "Twenty Grand" at the Nethercutt Collection, Sylmar, California.

Perhaps the most famous of Buehrig's designs was the "Twenty Grand," officially the Duesenberg Arlington Torpedo Sedan, constructed for the 1933 "Century of Progress" world's fair held in Chicago. The nickname referred to its price: \$20,000. (In 1932, a Ford Model B was priced at \$495 to \$650, depending on body style.) It was displayed with three other automobiles also built specifically for exhibition at the fair under the "Dome of Tomorrow": the "Golden Packard," a reference to its gold plated interior trim, Cadillac's V-16 Aerodynamic coupe, and the Pierce-Arrow Silver Arrow. Though the Twenty

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GORDON BUEHRIG CONT.

Grand was specifically constructed for the fair, it was based upon the 1930 design of the Beverly Berline, which Buehrig had designed as a series production body.¹

After the fair concluded in 1934, the “Twenty Grand” languished in Duesenberg’s inventory until purchased by a previous customer, Shreve Archer, of the Archer, Daniels, and Midland Co., an agribusiness company then as it is now. Archer had the car repainted black and insisted on some minor body modifications. It was ultimately acquired by J. B. Nethercutt and restored to its original appearance, winning Best of Show upon its debut at the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance. It remains on display in perfect condition at the Nethercutt Collection in Sylmar, California.

One of Buehrig’s design triumphs was almost accidental. In preparation for a Chicago auto show at the Drake Hotel, he specified the color and trim on a Tourster that was to be put on display. The colors were to be light green for the fenders and belt moulding and pale yellow – Goldenrod Yellow. When the body arrived from the body builder, the yellow was instead bright yellow – very bright. DuPont had changed the color without changing its name and Buehrig had been referring to an old paint chip.



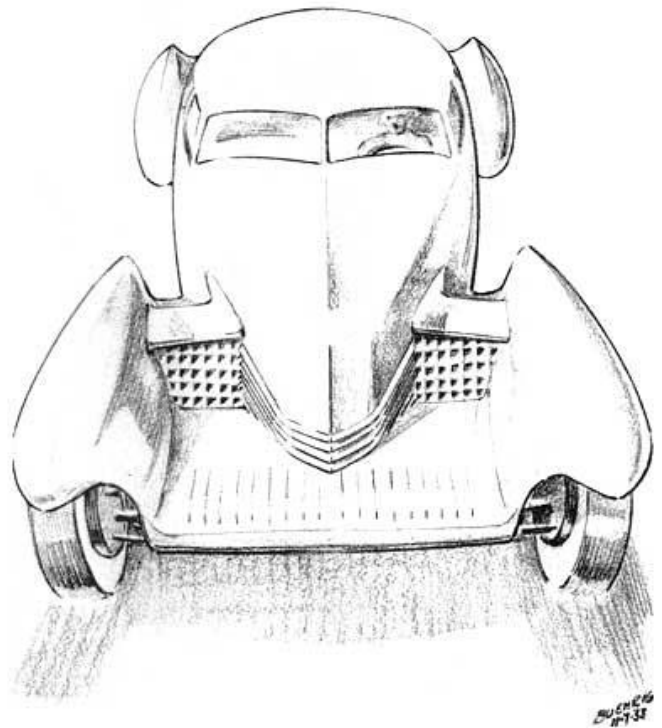
1930 Duesenberg Model J Tourster, body by Derham, owned by Gary Cooper

It wasn’t what they had in mind, but time was short, so they decided to feature it as a “showstopper.” From Chicago, the car was sent to the Salon in Los Angeles. As Buehrig described it, “Gary Cooper walked in, saw it and bought it.”

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1. Berline” refers to a sedan without side windows behind the rear door, which type is a “close coupled” sedan, that typically has a glass partition between front and rear seats that can be lowered. It is not as long as a limousine, so does not have rear jump seats.

Buehrig would leave Duesenberg in January of 1933, concerned with his job security as Duesenberg’s sales had almost vanished. He returned to General Motors.

It was at GM that Harley Earl, the vice-president in charge of design, devised a competition among his studios. Though his fellow designers considered Buehrig’s design of an aerodynamic car with radiators mounted between hood and fender to be the best, it was judged last in the competition. (There is some irony in this situation. The grand prize for winning the contest was an all-expense paid trip to the Century of Progress, where Buehrig’s “Twenty Grand” would be displayed under the same roof as the Cadillac Aerodynamic coupe designed by Earl’s studios.)



Buehrig's General Motors contest design

Buehrig may have lost the competition, but his design would win in the test of time.

Only eight months after leaving Duesenberg, Buehrig returned to it, lured back by Ames to create a new smaller, less-expensive Duesenberg. Ames had seen Buehrig’s GM contest design and liked the distinction it achieved by eliminating the external radiator shell. As it turned out, the project was sidetracked for a time while Buehrig redesigned the Auburn line. But the project was then given a high priority.

The result – directly tracing its design to Buehrig’s contest

GORDON BUEHRIG CONT.

design – was the 1935 Cord 810.

And that 19 year old who wanted to trade his Model A on a new Duesenberg and knew what he wanted in its design?

He didn't trade in the Model A. He gave it to his chauffeur.

That 19 year old customer's name was Marcus "Mark" Jay Lawrence. When he received the sketches, he called Ames and asked how much it would cost. Ames had perhaps investigated the potential customer more closely by now – Lawrence's late father had been a wealthy publisher and manufacturer of veterinary supplies – so he priced the body with body builders. (A one-off body was far more expensive than a catalog custom because all of the work in creating the master had to be absorbed by the price of that single body.) Ames wrote Lawrence and quoted \$19,000.

Lawrence telegraphed back: "Proceed immediately."

The result was the Torpedo Phaeton.

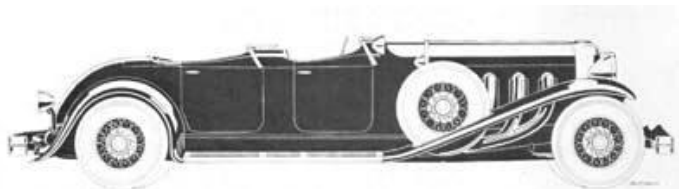


Cord 810 Prototype

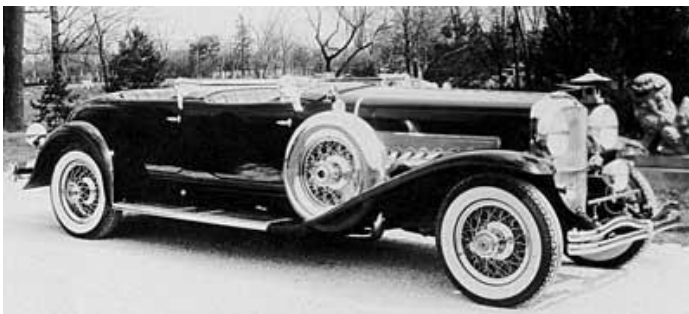
Lawrence had been sleeping with Lira's wife. Lira beat Lawrence to death with the camera he had intended to use photographing the couple in a compromising situation. Lira received a 40 year prison sentence for murder.

Lawrence left an estate valued at \$700,000. However, his wife had previously started a divorce lawsuit and Lawrence had revised his will to leave her only the statutory minimum. The rest of his estate was distributed to his relatives, including his mother. She established the Marcus J. Lawrence Memorial Clinic in Cottonwood, Arizona, in his memory and later donated to establish the Marcus J. Lawrence Memorial Hospital, now the Verde Valley Medical Center.

Gordon Buerig ultimately joined the Ford Motor Company, where he was involved in the engineering – not the body design – of the 1956 and 1957 Continental Mark II. Though one of the most talented automotive designers of the twentieth century, office politics at Ford kept him from designing automobiles and kept him, instead, working in engineering. Buehrig ended his career at Ford specializing in plastics development at a time when this was innovative technology in the automotive industry. Upon his retirement from Ford, he was invited to teach at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, thereby influencing automotive design for generations to come.



Mark Lawrence Torpedo Phaeton Sketch



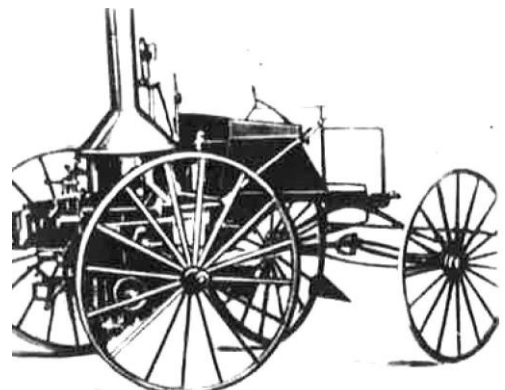
Mark Lawrence Torpedo Phaeton

Both the Phaeton and its owner met violent ends.

Lawrence had established a second home on a ranch in Arizona and developed a reputation as a gambler and playboy. He crashed the Duesenberg through a guardrail in 1937, totaling all but the engine. He wasn't so lucky in 1938. One Ernesto Lira, a prominent sportsman, believed

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WISCONSIN CHAPTER

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
THE WISCONSIN SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS

The Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians (WSAH) is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Wisconsin Historical Society and is a chapter of the Society of Automotive Historians, Inc. Visit our website at www.wisconsin-auto-historians.org to learn more.

The purpose of WSAH is to engage in educational activities and to preserve, advance, and disseminate knowledge of the history of the automobile in Wisconsin, in the United States, and worldwide. Automotive writings are encouraged, as are newsletter and other publications and the development of a library as a repository for these materials.

Society meetings are held three to four times a year, with the established site for the Annual Meeting at the Iola Car Show in July. Other sites vary and include the Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford and the Automobile Gallery in Green Bay. Attendance at the meetings is encouraged for the integrity and continuance of the organization. Dues for WSAH are \$15.00 per year.

Membership in the Society of Automotive Historians, Inc. (SAH) is encouraged. Please access the SAH website at www.autohistory.org for information.

Return this portion, along with a check for \$15.00 payable to WSAH to:

Gary Koehnke, WSAH Treasurer
931 Beta Street
Neenah, WI 54956-1357

I wish to become a member of the Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians:

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Address _____

Phone number(s), e-mail address(es), fax number(s) _____

Automotive Interests _____