



1917 TWIN SIX

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THE PACKARD CORMORANT

A Runabout Restoration

Should a 1917 Twin Six be Restored with its Original or Custom Body?

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In 1998, I noticed that a 1917 Packard Twin Six two-passenger runabout had been advertised repeatedly for many months and, having been interested in these rare cars for awhile, decided to call the owner. She had actually been trying to sell the car for nearly a year and was about 800 miles from me. She assured me that no one had called her in several months, and, since it was the middle of winter, the car would probably be around for a while. I told her that I would come there to look at the car immediately after my return from an upcoming one-week trip out of the country. I also asked her if I could send her a deposit to hold the car until I looked at it, and she assured me that it was not necessary. The day before I returned, someone went there and bought the car. I was very depressed because of the rarity of these cars. I kept looking, and finally, in 2001, I saw a similar car advertised, but it was a four-passenger runabout. I immediately jumped in my car and drove nearly 500 miles, and bought the car.

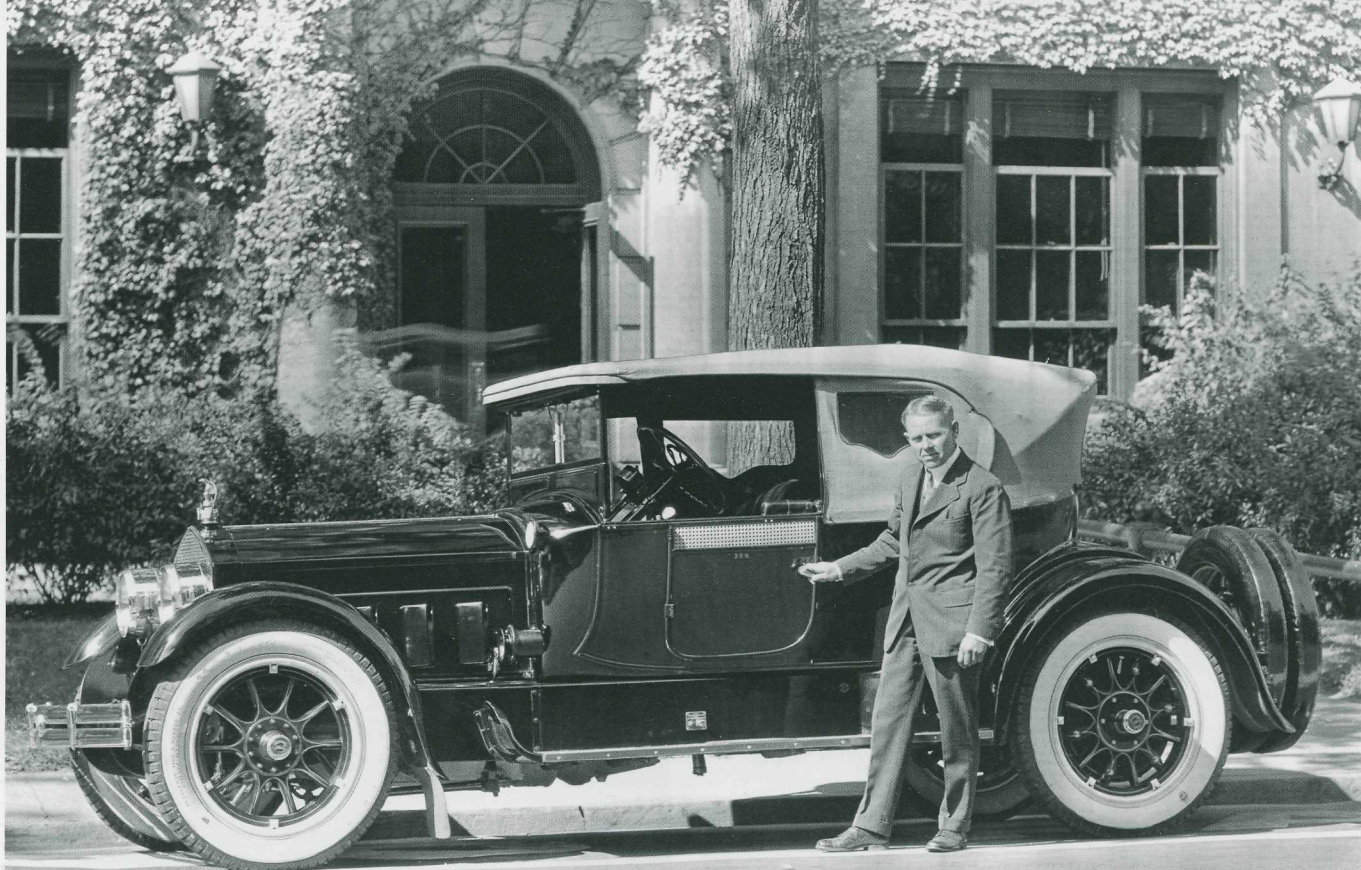
This 1917 Packard, model 2-25, Serial #127423, had a 424-cubic inch, 88-horsepower, V-12 engine, a 126-inch wheelbase and originally cost \$4,100. It was produced in August 1916 and delivered to Mr. J.D. Harding of Chicago. Mr. Harding drove the car into the 1920s and decided, in 1926, to have the car “modernized” by the Kimball Body Company of Chicago. The fenders, hood, top and wind-

shield were altered to give the car a more up-to-date appearance. The two photos shown above are from 1928 and appeared in a Packard factory publication at that time. I also found these identical photos at the Detroit Public Library in the “Packard Kimball” file. One shows Mr. Harding with his car visiting the Packard factory, and the other shows the car on the Packard factory turnstile. Mr. Harding drove the car until his death in the 1940s.

Mr. Joseph Antrim, of Dayton, Ohio, purchased the car from Mr. Harding’s chauffeur in 1950. Mr. Antrim drove the car home from Chicago to Dayton in the winter and had it painted in 1951. One of the photos from 1951 shows Mr. Antrim driving the car home. He painted the car immediately, and did no other restoration on the car other than routine maintenance. The other photo from 1951 shows the car as entered in its first car show.

In 2001, I purchased the car from Mr. Antrim, and became only the third owner of this Packard since it was new in 1917! In 2002, this car was accepted as an entrant in the Preservation Class at the Pebble Beach Concours. I had many interesting comments at Pebble, especially since no one had ever seen or heard of this unusual car before, and talked at length about the car to Phil Hill, a Twin Six lover.

Including this car, I know of only one other four-passenger runabout in existence, and I have been told that



Facing Page and Above — The Twin Six at the Packard Factory in 1928. Below — The Twin Six in 1951.

there may be an additional one, but this is unconfirmed. After returning from Pebble, I decided to have the car restored, but was very torn about what to do. It had a beautiful, documented unique custom body, although the body was not entirely from 1917. Should I keep it as is, or return it to its original configuration? I opted to find the correct 1917 parts and, with the help of several Packard enthusiasts, I was able to locate everything that I needed. The restoration was completed in 2003, and the car then appeared exactly as it did in 1917, with the standard Packard body. After the restoration, I drove the Packard about five times a week, and, at one point in the summer of 2004, drove this car exclusively for twenty straight days, rain or shine.

By 2005, I became interested in early Marmons and sold the Packard at Hershey, replacing it with a Marmon Model 34 speedster. I hope that I don't offend the Packard people, but, although the Twin Six was a delight to drive



and beautiful to look at, the Model 34, a six-cylinder car which was about the same price new as the Packard, and was introduced in the same year as the Twin Six, has superior acceleration, braking, stability, steering and ride.

The Packard now resides at The Automobile Driving Museum in El Segundo, California, where it can be enjoyed by many visitors.