

DUESENBERG

THE CAROLE LOMBARD STORY



American actress Carole Lombard had many claims to fame.

Carole has been recognised by the American Film Institute as one of the greatest stars of all time and was the highest-paid Hollywood star in the late 1930s. She was married to Hollywood heart-throb Clark Gable, and was the very first owner of this Duesenberg.

Lombard made her film debut at the age of twelve when she was cast as a tomboy in *A Perfect Crime* (1921).

Her career really took off in 1934 when she starred in the film *Twentieth Century*. In 1936 Carole achieved critical acclaim and an Academy Award nomination for her role in *My Man Godfrey*.

By the late 1930s Lombard was earning around \$US500,000 a year which at the time was five times the salary of the President of the United States. It was this level of income which allowed Carole to indulge in one of her passions - the purchase of beautiful motor vehicles.

LOMBARD MEETS GABLE

After a failed marriage to actor William Powell and relationships with the likes of Gary Cooper, Lombard fell for Clark Gable, who was still married to oil heiress Rita Langham.

At the time MGM was trying to sign a reluctant Gable to play the role of Rhett Butler in *Gone With The Wind*. The story goes that to sweeten the deal MGM boss Louis B. Mayer agreed to pay the money required to settle a divorce agreement with Langham.

Carole Lombard and Clark Gable married on March 29, 1939 during a break in production on *Gone With The Wind*.

AN UNTIMELY DEATH

Not long after the US entered World War II, Lombard travelled to her home state of Indiana for a war bond rally with her mother and Clark Gable's press agent Otto Winkler.

Lombard was able to raise more than \$2million in defence bonds in a single night. Tragically all three died when their plane crashed on the return trip to LA.



A LOVE OF CARS

Both Carole Lombard and her husband Clark Gable were huge fans of the Duesenberg motor car.

According to Duesenberg records Carole bought this very Duesenberg brand new in 1934.

The cars are very valuable. In 2011 a 1931 Duesenberg Model J long-wheel base coupe sold at auction in the United States for \$US10.34 million putting it in the top five highest prices ever paid for a motor vehicle.

In 2012 a 1935 Duesenberg Model JN convertible coupe owned by Clark Gable was put up for auction but was passed in at \$6.4million.

The connection between the entertainment industry and Duesenberg brand continues in the US today with talk show host Jay Leno owning 16 of the cars.



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EVOLUTION OF THE DUESENBERG

The Duesenberg story is a story of two immigrant brothers and a dream to build the finest automobile in the world.



Friedrich and August Duesenberg were born in Lippe, Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1884 with their widowed mother and four older brothers and sisters.

They were raised on a farm in Rockford, Iowa. A few years after leaving school the pair teamed up to open a bicycle shop but it wasn't long before they moved into the automotive business.

In 1906, the brothers received financial backing from lawyer Edward R. Mason and they began building a lightweight 2-cylinder Mason automobile.

In 1909 the company was bought by Senator Frederick Louis Maytag but the relationship was shortlived and in 1911 Maytag decided his future lay in washing machines not cars.

By 1913 Fred and Augie had moved to St Paul, Minnesota and established the Duesenberg Motor Company specialising in racing cars and powerboat engines.

The "Duesenbird"

The famous "Duesenbird" radiator ornament was designed by Gordon Miller Buehrig who is an integral part of the Duesenberg story.

A young man going places fast, Buehrig was appointed chief body designer for Duesenberg at the age of just 25 years. He became good friends with both Fred and Augie Duesenberg and spent three years living at Fred's home. The art deco inspired "Duesenbird" radiator ornament is regarded as one of the all-time great designs of its kind.

After the collapse of Duesenberg Buehrig continued working as a designer for a number of companies including Ford. In the late 1960s he took up a job as a tutor at the Art Centre College of Design. Buehrig was named one of the 30 most important men in the history of the automotive industry by the Society of Automotive Historians. He was responsible for some of the most enduring classic body designs to come out of the United States.



The Duesenberg name started to be noticed when Eddie Rickenbacker, the famed World War I fighter ace, drove a Duesenberg to a 10th place finish in the 1914 Indianapolis 500.

Duesenbergs would go on to win the 'Indy 500' in 1924, 1925 and 1927. The brand gained international recognition when American Jimmy Murphy drove a Duesenberg to win the French Grand Prix.



America's first supercharged motorcar won the Indianapolis 500 in 1924.

Following World War I the brothers moved to Indianapolis and started work on their own production cars. The result was the Model A which debuted at the New York Auto Show in 1920. The Model A did not sell as well as had been hoped and the Duesenberg company began to struggle.

It was then bought by Errett Lobban Cord in 1926. Cord was already producing motor cars under the Auburn brand.

Fred stayed on while Augie left to run a separate Duesenberg company producing racing cars.

E. L. Cord gave Fred free reign to produce "the greatest automobile ever made in the United States". In less than two years Fred came up with the Duesenberg Model J.



Model A Duesenberg

The car was based around a powerful eight cylinder motor putting out 265 horsepower. In the mid-1930s Duesenberg brought out a super-charged version giving 325 horsepower and top speeds reaching 140mph.

Only the rich and powerful owned a Duesenberg. Over the years owners have included Carole Lombard, Clark Gable, Al Capone, Mae West, Howard Hughes, The Duke of Windsor, William Randolph Hearst and King Alfonso XIII of Spain.

Over nine years, a total of 481 Duesenberg Model J motor vehicles were produced.

Unfortunately Fred did not live to see them all. He was killed in 1932 while out road testing a customer's car.

Shortly after Fred's death Augie returned to the company and continued to work there for the next five years.

But by 1937 it was all over. The Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg company was closed and with it one of the greatest chapters in the history of the American automotive industry.



RESTORATION OF THE DUESENBERG

This car arrived in Wanaka in 2011. It had been partly restored in the United States by its former owner who had had the car since the early 1950s. The vehicle has undergone a "body off" restoration in Wanaka which was carried out in two parts. The body was removed and underwent panel, paint and upholstery work while the chassis and motor were restored separately. The two parts then finally came together allowing the finishing work to take place.

While the vehicle was in extremely good condition when it arrived there were still some parts missing which had to be fabricated locally. This included most of the windscreen frame, the wing mirrors, the hood bows and irons along with the seat base and frames. The paint finish is an original Duesenberg colour scheme of red and black.



Once the body was removed work could start on the running chassis. This is about half way through the chassis renovation.

New seats had to be made from scratch. The restorers were insistent on using springs in the seats as per the original. The new upholstery was finished off in high-grade red Italian leather. Work carried out by Bevan Garland from Upholstery Alley.



The motor was in good working order but did need some adjustments. Here the cam settings are being checked.



While the car was mostly intact when it arrived in Wanaka some parts were missing and had to be fabricated locally. These parts were made by Barry Morgan of Performance Engineering.



The body was stripped down to the bare metal by Lee and the team at Rodz and Restos in Wanaka. Some features on the original bodywork had been filled with lead to produce a smooth finish. The lead had to be melted before being removed to restore the original look.



The stunning paint job is complete and now work starts on setting the hood bows and irons. All woodwork constructed by John Martin from Designs N Wood.

The restoration work was overseen by Robert Duncan in Wanaka and was carried out by the following local craftsmen:

Engineering
Panel & Paint
Upholstery
Woodwork
Chroming

Performance Engineering - Wanaka
Bods & Restos - Wanaka
Upholstery Alley - Wanaka
Designs N Wood - Cromwell
Shiny Bits - Geraldine

Barry and Jason Morgan
Leo Martin
Bevan Garland
John Martin
Geoff Andrews



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DUESENBERG MODEL J



J-107, the first ever Duesenberg J built

The Duesenberg Model J has been described as the greatest car ever made in the United States.

In the 1930s it was regarded as the fastest, most flamboyant and technically advanced motor vehicle in the world.

There was nothing quite like it and the Duesenberg J was the first American car to go head to head with the best European cars when it came to luxury and engineering.

There were only 481 Duesenberg Model J cars built. They were manufactured between 1928 and 1937. It is a testament to the value and quality of these cars that there are still some 378 remaining in the world today.



Model J chassis assembly of Duesenberg Inc

The Duesenberg J was released as a running chassis only. The cost at the time for the chassis and motor was \$US8,500 rising to \$US9,500 by the end of 1936.

Customers then chose from a catalogue of coach built body designs. There were some 40 different designs to choose from. The bodies cost anywhere between \$US7,000 and \$US20,000.



To put this in perspective the average physician in the US at the time was earning less than \$US3,000 per year. At the time when the first J model Duesenbergs went on the market you could buy three Packards or 60 Fords.

Some owners purchased two bodies, a summer body - roadster or Phaeton - and a winter body - normally a four-door hard top sedan. The factory could change the body over in a matter of hours.

While the exquisite design and luxurious features of the car attracted many customers, others were drawn by the sheer power of the motor.

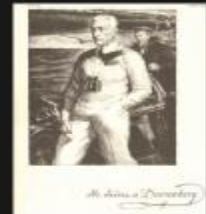
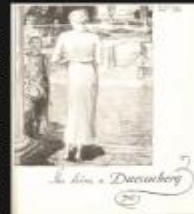
The Straight 8 motor developed 265 horsepower and 320 horsepower with a supercharger fitted. Its nearest rivals at the time, the V16 Cadillac and V12 Packards, put out 175 horsepower.

Advertising for the Duesenberg J pulled no punches. Advertisements described it as "The World's Finest Motor Car". They talked about a "new concept of motoring that could not be obtained from any other car".

One series of advertisements did not feature the cars or anything about the vehicles, rather they depicted men and women partaking in pursuits such as sailing, shooting or going to the theatre.

THIS CAR

This Duesenberg J was manufactured in 1934 and carries a Le Baron "sweep panel" dual-cowl sports phaeton body. One of 9 made. The Le Baron has been described as the "quintessential Duesenberg" design.



According to Duesenberg records this car was sold new to Hollywood star Carole Lombard in 1934. It was then owned by the same American owner from the early 1950s until 2011 when it changed into New Zealand ownership and began the journey to its new home in Wanaka.

IT'S A DUSEY

Ever wondered where the saying 'It's a Dusey' came from? The phrase was first coined in the late 1920s and reflected the awe with which the American public regarded the Duesenberg motor car.

A 'Dusey' is regarded as something excellent or extraordinary - just like the Duesenberg.

