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At What Point Should An Unrestored Car Be Restored?

By Richard Lentinello, Hemmings

Unrestored collector cars, because of their irreplaceable originality, are fast becoming the preferred type of car that enthusiasts, collectors, dealers, auction houses and museums want to possess. But if a car's untouched originality reaches a point where its condition looks so inferior and flawed that it no longer represents a legitimate realism to the way it was first assembled, then it needs to be restored - at the very least for posterity.

What's the deciding factor in preserving a car's originality? While tarnished chrome, faded factory-applied paint, shabby upholstery and delaminated glass can be desirable attributes of unrestored original automobiles, determining when that originality needs to be replaced and restored requires a well-thought-out assessment of the car's condition. Each day there are fewer and fewer original collector-quality automobiles left in this world, so we need to do our best to preserve those that remain and avoid restoring them for the sake of making them perfect.

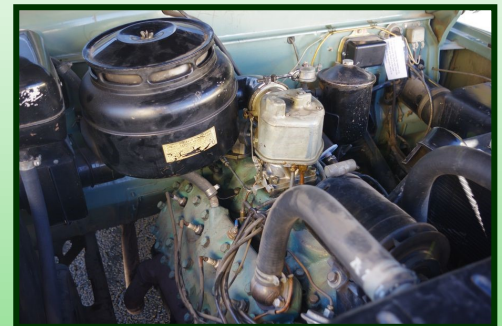


Original collector cars should be considered nothing less than highly prized automotive artifacts. They are important, transportation objects of great historical significance, and provide a look-back into the world of automobile manufacturing of years gone by. They are our only glimpse into the past, thus affording us the wonderful opportunity to study firsthand the way manufacturing techniques were carried out during all of the different decades and periods of automobile production. We can see how the assembly line workers applied the paint and inspection marks, how the upholstery was stitched, carpet was bound, wood was

cut, shaped and joined, and which types of fasteners were used for specific applications. The same is applicable to all a car's mechanical parts including engine, transmission, differential, suspension and electrical systems. Better than shop manuals, an unrestored car is existing proof to the way automobiles used to be built, and are the only true guidebook that restorers can use to ensure that the cars that they are restoring are rebuilt in the most accurate, factory-correct manner. Original automobiles such as these should be cherished.

Consider this: If a painting by Monet or a stained-glass panel by Tiffany shows their age, those precious works of art aren't repainted or re-leaded, they're just cleaned. So then why should well-preserved old cars be repainted if their original finish is still in respectable condition? After all, once that factory-applied paint is removed and the car is repainted, then that car can no longer be called an original collector car. Refurbished, yes, but certainly not an original.

While it's remarkable for cars built during the late 1940s and 1950s to have survived without being trashed or restored, imagine just how special it must be for cars that were produced in the 1930s, '20s and teens to retain today everything that they were first assembled with all those decades ago. For a car to have survived substantially more than a half-century and still retain its original paint, interior, engine, instruments and most of its mechanical components is a testament not only to the manufacturer's engineering methods and build quality but to all the previous owners who treated it with care, provided steadfast maintenance and worked hard to preserve its originality with great respect.



Even more amazing are the cars of the muscle era to have remained in top-notch shape after participating in street wars, drag strip competition, and hard driving day in and day out. After all, that's exactly how most owners drove them.

The most extraordinary survival characteristic of any pre-war-era automobile has got to be the body finish. Compared to today's highly durable urethane enamels and base coat/clear coat urethane systems cars from this period were painted with nitrocellulose lacquer, which was a very delicate paint finish. Lacquer is extremely brittle, and unless it was cleaned and polished regularly it slowly lost its shine over time. And the more it was polished to retain that shine, the thinner and thinner the paint became. This is why on most pre-war cars, especially those of the brass and nickel eras, if they had never been repainted in almost every example you will see traces of the primer below the topcoat showing through. This mostly occurred along the tops of each fender and along the edges of the hood. But don't look at these cars as derelicts or being uncared for, instead, think of them as rare time capsules of Detroit's past manufacturing techniques.

So the question remains: What's the deciding factor in preserving a car's originality? Along with the above photos, here are a few examples and explanations why originality is worth keeping even when it shows some age.



Original Survivor: 1939 Lincoln - Zephyr V12

By Adam Clarke, Barn Finds

When it was initially launched in 1936, the Lincoln-Zephyr was one of the most stylish, sleek and aerodynamic vehicles offered by an American manufacturer at that point in time. The brainchild of Edsel Ford, the Zephyr was also a true sales success for the company, and in 1939, a total of 21,000 vehicles across seven separate body styles rolled out of the Lincoln factory. This car is a 4-Door Sedan, and it is said to be a true survivor. It is also an elegant classic that needs a new home. If you think that this new home could be yours, you will find the Lincoln located in Meadows of Dan, Virginia. The owner is asking \$22,500 for this luxurious beauty.



Henry and Edsel Ford, while father and son, were also complete opposites. It is extremely difficult to explain how extreme these differences were, so it is probably best to consider their respective “babies” to gain true insight. For Henry, it was the Model T, a car that was all about function, with few concessions to comfort or style. It was tough and utilitarian and

designed to transport its occupants in a certain amount of comfort from Point A to Point B. For Edsel, the Lincoln-Zephyr was the ultimate expression of his passion for style and sophistication. Here was a car that was sleek, with advanced aerodynamics, a plush interior, and a V12 engine under the hood.



Even today, more than 80-years after it rolled off the production line, the 1939 Lincoln-Zephyr looks unlike any other automotive offering of the day. This Zephyr wears its original paint, which I believe is Avon Blue. It isn't perfect, with a few scrapes and marks to be

seen around the vehicle. However, these marks are relatively minor, and the vehicle remains extremely presentable. The panels are impressively straight, and this is a classic that has never experienced any rust issues. It is clean and solid, with all the steel being original Lincoln steel. The external trim and chrome continue the elegant theme, and is in very good condition, while the same appears to be true of the vehicle's glass. When it comes to styling, the front of a Zephyr is a firm highlight for me. The prow-like hood and beautiful chrome grille are both elegant but draw attention to what were very advanced automotive aerodynamics in the 1930s.

The interior of the Zephyr has been treated to a full retrim in pale blue, and it presents extremely nicely. Everything from the seats to the door trims, the carpet, and the dash are essentially flawless. The vehicle also features a clock, and the relatively rare Lincoln hot-air heater. The only aspect of the interior that will require attention is the steering wheel, which has deteriorated noticeably over the past 81-years. This isn't the end of the world, because there are several companies that offer reconditioning and recasting services, and the workmanship and quality of these are so good that it is impossible to differentiate a reconditioned wheel from an original. It is also well worth the effort to keep an eye out on eBay, because nice original wheels do pop up on there from time to time, and sometimes the prices on these items can prove to be very reasonable.

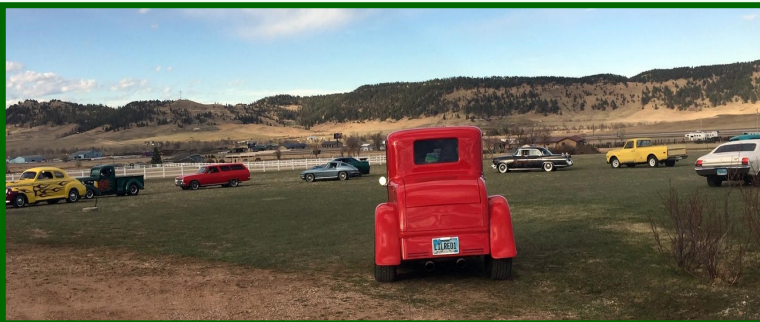
In keeping with Edsel Ford's love of sophistication, under the hood of the Lincoln-Zephyr, you will find a 267ci, 75° V12 engine, producing 110hp. This power finds its way to the rear wheels via a 3-speed manual transmission. Edsel was also a person interested in engineering improvements, and to that end, the 1939 Zephyr saw the introduction of hydraulic brakes in place of the previous cable-activation. The good news here is that the Zephyr is in sound mechanical health. That beautiful V12 runs smoothly and quietly, with no smoke or overheating issues. The vehicle also rolls on a brand-new set of Denman wide whitewall tires. This is a classic that is ready to be driven and enjoyed immediately.

The 1939 Lincoln-Zephyr has always left me to ponder some "what-ifs" for the company. Here was a car that was Edsel's passion, and that not only was stylish and aerodynamic but offered buyers a 12-cylinder engine when its direct competition could only muster 8-cylinders. If Edsel Ford had survived beyond World War II when domestic vehicle production in the USA recommenced, just what innovations would his fertile mind have brought to the table? We will never know, but this car offers its buyer the opportunity to own a car that was designed and built when this man was at the peak of his powers at Lincoln. Opportunities like that don't come along every day, and that makes this a classic that is well worth considering if you dream of owning the best that the American automotive world had to offer in the 1930s.



Photos of the Counts Cruise on April 7th

We had an awesome social distancing cruise this Tuesday. Drove up to Steve's place, then back to Jim's place. It was nice to see a few folks, get the cars and trucks out, and enjoy the beautiful evening. I've attached a few pictures to the email that my wife and daughter took. Skip and Anita...nice of you to join us.



THE 8th STREET CRUISE - APRIL 10, 2020

Reported By Dick Towne

Counts of the Cobblestone members who grew up in Rapid City, like myself, a graduate of Rapid City Central High School in 1975, fondly remember Cruising 8th Street. Summer nights meeting friends, drag racing on top of the hill, the old Martins Auto Supply store, where Perkins sits now. A & W Drive-In with car hops, the arches (both the Golden Arches of McDonalds and the wooden arches that were at the corner of Fairmont and Mt. Rushmore Road which was a favorite turn around, among other activities) and patiently waiting to turn 18 to legally drive up to the "Busted 5" for an ice cold 3.2 beer. Ahh, the memories!

That is what made Friday night, April 10, 2020 a great time, the "Cruising the Corona" as suggested by Sargent Garage, was a huge hit, an excellent turn out of all makes and models of hot rods, muscle cars, motorcycles and wide open for everyone's enjoyment. Cars cruised 8th Street well into the evening and were very well behaved from what we witnessed. If there was a police chase, please share. The Blue Mach I that I witnessed trying to "beat his time to the bridge" should have gotten some attention from local LEO's. So, to continue to pay homage to cruisers everywhere, we should continue this tradition.

Editor's note: Visit the Black Hills Rod Run Facebook page to see a host of photos and videos of the event. Like the page to receive notifications of new postings.



CLUB MEMBER'S RIDE by Bob Dunfee

This is my 1980 Trans Am Turbo WS-6



From the factory, this was equipped exactly like the Turbo T/A I owned in my early twenties, except for the addition of a rear window defroster on this one. I bought this to be a driver right on a year ago, but a minor engine fix grew into a complete rebuild, re-wire, new interior project.

This car still sports the WS6 4-wheel disc brakes and non-variable ratio steering box, however after that things get weird. The Powerplant is now an aluminum head, roller valve-train, 455 bored to 465 cubic inches.

Fuel comes in from a single Quick Fuel 950 and burn gases exit out a full 3-inch exhaust system with cutouts.

The 465 drives a posi 3.73 rear end through a modified reverse manual valve body Turbo 400. Big springs in the back, frame connectors, and traction bars will hopefully keep this thing going straight. Drag shocks are on all four corners, but the sway bars are still hooked up so it can carve through a canyon.

The interior features a carbon fiber dash insert, custom faced gauges, 6-point roll bar, custom bucket seats, and controls for the trans brake, line lock, NOS and NOS bottle heater, LED interior lighting, and a few secret features.

New silver/gray carpet contrasts with the restored door panels and plastics. A vintage crushed velvet headliner sets the vibe, enhanced by an Infiniti stereo system.

I'm doing the final assembly on the interior now. If I can just get the wipers to work, I'm ready for summer.