Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum

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News and Notes from the Deco Philes

Board Changes

Response to the February call for Board members has been heartening. Most of the Board vacancies have been filled, but there is still a critical need for one or more volunteers to spearhead fundraising efforts.

The following new members have joined the Board:

Megan Searing—Secretary
Terry Echeverria—Publicity Chair
Melva George—Deputy Publicity Chair
Carl Spataro—Deputy Legal Counsel
Laurie Burras—Design Chair
Karen Sherwood—Deputy Ball Chair
Colleen Lauwow—Deputy Ball Chair
Karen Purifoy—Deputy Programs Chair

Janet West has moved from Deputy Programs Chair to Deputy Membership chair. As the new Deputy Programs Chair, Karen Purifoy will assume responsibility for preparation of Streamlines.

Monthly Cocktail Hour(s) Planned

Several members have suggested a more informal opportunity to meet and get to know ADSW members than is generally afforded by structured programs. In response, we are experimenting with what we hope will become a monthly informal cocktail hour. The initial meeting will take place in the lounge of one of our long time corporate sponsors, the Carlyle Suites Hotel. Please join us and help plan future get togethers either at local bars or at members homes.

Membership Cards Issued

Laminated membership cards have been mailed to all members. If you did not receive your card, or if there is an error on your card, please contact Jim Linz or Janet West.
Botanical Gardens Eyed as Site for Preservation Ball

Ball Chairman Harland Stine is keeping a close watch on the progress being made in restoring the U.S. Botanic Gardens on the Mall. The building, constructed in 1933, has been closed for over 3 years while undergoing a complete restoration. One of the oldest botanic gardens in the United States, the current building was one of the first large buildings in the U.S. to use aluminum for structural support.

As the restoration, which includes dismantling and replacing the aluminum structural supports, nears completion, ADSW is pursuing the Botanic Gardens as the site for this year’s Preservation Ball and Fashion Show. Stay tuned for further details.

National Register Nominations Near Completion

The Preservation Committee, in concert with the D.C. Preservation League, is nearing completion of its work on applications to place the D.C. National Guard Armory, Municipal Center, and Recorder of Deeds Building on the National Register of Historic Places. The Committee will meet at DCPL on July 17th to finalize the submissions.

Corcoran Offers Bus Tour To Falling Water/Kentuck Knob

The Corcoran is sponsoring a bus tour to two Frank Lloyd Wright homes in Southwestern Pennsylvania—Falling Water and Kentuck Knob. The all day trip will take place on Wednesday, July 17th. The fee—$130 for Corcoran members and $150 for the general public—covers the bus, entrance fees, lunch, snacks, and sherry.

Upcoming Programs

Programs Chair John Freedman is working on a number of events for late Summer and the Fall, including a tour of Historic Terminal A at Reagan National Airport for those unable to make the sold-out tour last November. Other programs will include a program and visit to an Art deco theatre and the annual bus tour. John is also looking for a volunteer to prepare a program on the Sixth World Congress held last April in Tulsa. If you attended the conference please give John a call.
AT LAST: SILVER THEATRE RESTORATION COMMENCES!

By Richard Striner

The long-awaited fulfillment of the Art Deco Society's preservation crusade in Silver Spring, Maryland is now commencing. The restoration of the Silver Theatre/Silver Spring Shopping Center complex -- on hold for more than a year -- is now beginning in earnest.

Long ago (back in 1984) our campaign began and the owners of the theatre/shopping center complex responded savagely by sledgehammering the Art Deco ornamentation of the Silver Theatre. Through years of advocacy, fighting, strategizing, and negotiating, the Art Deco Society and its civic allies succeeded in making restoration of the complex the legislated policy of Montgomery County, Maryland. With massive financial assistance from the State of Maryland, the Silver Theatre is about to become the new home of the American Film Institute. The adjacent Shopping Center will serve as the gateway to a multi-block, low-rise retail center that is being developed by Foulger-Pratt, in partnership with the County.

Preliminary restoration work on the theatre began several years ago: the roof was fixed and the decorative terraced chimney destroyed by the owners in 1984 was rebuilt brick by brick. The work was then put on hold because of complications in the leasing of the Shopping Center.

But now, everything is back on track. On May 3, Montgomery County gave Foulger-Pratt the order to proceed with restoration of the complex. The complete construction plans have been officially signed and approved.

Completion of the theatre restoration is scheduled for July 2002. The Shopping Center restoration will be completed in late 2002 or in early 2003.

All of this preservation work is doubly protected: not only is the complex listed on Montgomery County's Master Plan for Historic Preservation but a permanent preservation easement will be held by Maryland Historical Trust (a protection required by law when state financial assistance is given to a

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preservation project like this one). Visit Silver Spring this summer and fall, and watch the vandalized features of the Silver Theatre made new again before your eyes. This was the vision that kept us committed to our task through a long, grim war of attrition. This was the day that we committed ourselves to bring about — however long it took.

18th Annual Exposition of the Decorative Arts

Sunday, June 10th

Ernst Community Cultural Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Annandale, VA

(located on Route 236, Little River Turnpike, just West of the Beltway)

Early Buyers 8:00AM–9:00AM
$15 Admission

Regular Show Hours 9:00AM–6PM
General Admission $10
ADSW Members $8
(ADSW members please bring your membership card)

Free shuttle bus available from the Vienna Metro Station
Nathan C. Wyeth and the "Greco Deco" Style
Part Two: The Municipal Center

By Linda Lyons

Editor’s Note: This is the second in a series of articles based on Linda Lyons’ Presentation “Art Deco and Art Moderne Municipal Buildings: The Work of Nathan C. Wyeth, Municipal Architect 1934-1946” delivered at the conference "Preserving Municipal Architecture: Two Centuries of Building by the City for the City."

Nathan C. Wyeth

This series focuses on three buildings constructed between 1939 and 1942, all designed by the District of Columbia’s municipal architect, Nathan C. Wyeth. The Municipal Center, now known as the Henry J. Daly Building, is the subject of this article. The Recorder of Deeds Building, at 515 D Street NW, was featured in the March 2001 Trans-Lux; the D.C. National Guard Armory, at 2001 East Capitol Street SE, will be featured in the September 2001 issue. Together, the three buildings constitute a treasure of

Rendered elevation from the office of Nathan C. Wyeth, showing the eastern building of the pair of buildings designed for the new Municipal Administration Offices. To the left is the Old D.C. Court House. (Pencil Points September 1939.)

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the Art Moderne style in this city, even as they differ significantly from what we usually think of as typical examples of Wyeth’s work. Wyeth was best known for his accomplishments in the traditional, and often monumental, Beaux Arts style.

So what do we find in the Municipal Center: a skillful adaptation of Classical idiom to Art Deco sensibility - or vice-versa? Certainly this cubic form is reminiscent of a Greek temple. Windows are grouped vertically to suggest pilasters or columns and the whole is ornamented with incised geometric designs at the cornice, recognizable string courses, and fluted piers with bas-relief capitals on the portico. Yet on this building we also find machine-age aluminum worked to excellent decorative effect in corrugated swell-front panels, stylized plant motifs, and sunray and thunderbolt patterns. I should mention also, that much was made of the building’s state of the art mechanical systems when it opened.

In February 1935, the Washington Board of Trade indicated that it would support either of the two “schemes” shown in this sketch for development of the proposed Municipal Center. Under the scheme on the left, the Old Pension Building would have been demolished and the Municipal Center constructed on the site. Under the scheme on the right, the Municipal Center would be constructed at its present location on Indiana Avenue. Both schemes, however, envisioned the demolition of the Pension Building, now the home of the National Building Museum and, in 1935, the home of the General Accounting Office.

The building also contains typical New Deal art that depicts the benefits of government services to the people in the form of two outstanding ceramic friezes in its courtyards. To the east is Hildreth Meier’s “Health and Wel-
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fare,” which portrays the public health and welfare benefits offered to the citizens of the nation’s capital.

In the west courtyard is Waylande Gregory’s “Democracy in Action,” in which life-size figures depict the functions of the D.C. Police Department, Fire Department, and Department of Motor Vehicles. It was not without controversy when its design was first revealed because of one scene showing policemen in the act of grabbing a criminal by the neck and hitting him with a club. However, artistic freedom prevailed, and the frieze is unchanged.

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Exterior to the building we find some sculptures that are not so well known. At the northwest corner of the building is the Police Memorial Fountain, rendered in John Joseph Earley's unique polychrome mosaic panels - very much of the period. In the vast plaza that separates this building from the courthouse to the west, are two sculptured panels depicting Urban Life that are modest in scale and had some difficulties in execution. To the east of the steps up to Indiana Avenue are classical figures representing commerce, sanitation, hospitals, and courts sculpted by John Gregory. To the west is a panel that was only completed and installed in 1978 because of damage to the stone when it was being carved by Lee Lawrie. It symbolizes light, water, and transportation.

Some things never seem to change - although maybe they have lately. On the left below is a *Washington Star* photo of "Auto License Buyers" of March 30, 1943, with a photographer's note saying that it was made shortly after 10 a.m. On the right is "Motorists waiting to pay tickets & buy tags," March 29, 1976, captioned "Motorists wait in line outside the Municipal Center and inside to pay their outstanding tickets so they can purchase new tags."
The ocean liner Queen Mary has spent more years docked in Long Beach, California, than it did crossing the Atlantic. It's still renting out rooms (it's now a 365-room hotel) and you can also take a tour.

The exhibits on the liner's history were closed for a major overhaul when I visited in April, but everything else is open. Some of the rooms that are preserved for display, such as the barber shop and nursery, are also being renovated but you can still look at them (through glass). There's also a new exhibit that displays artifacts from the ship's archives.

I was surprised to discover that the Queen Mary isn't floating in Long Beach harbor. It sits on an artificial reef.

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Presumably that puts less wear and tear on the ship. Not having much experience on any kind of ship, I hadn't even noticed the lack of any motion until I glanced down and saw the pile of rock on which the Queen Mary rests. The water is murky enough that the rocks are often not visible.

One of the most interesting displays is on the art of the Queen Mary. Some of the original art didn't survive and is represented by period photos. In other instances, you can see the original artwork in the exhibit (as well as scattered throughout the ship, of course). The exhibit describes the ship's decor as being conservative but still art deco.

The style wasn't the only thing that was modern about the

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ship's art. The materials often were, too. One of the artifacts on display is Sigmund Pollitzer's panel from the "History of Transportation" mural, made of sandblasted and silvered wire glass, the sort of thing you'd see on a gym door. A photo represents Maurice Lambert's relief panels, done in anodized aluminum.

More than 80 percent of the ship's original decor is intact, a crew member told me. Considering that the Queen Mary was in service until the 1960s, it's surprising that so much of the original art deco interior remained intact.

The hotel portions of the ship are off limits to visitors, but you can see much of the rest of the Queen Mary. You can wander the halls and imagine you're at sea in the 1930s, headed for London. You can see a broad range of facilities, from the bridge to the captain's quarters to the radio room.

While I could see the Queen Mary from my hotel room in downtown Long Beach, it's only when you get up next to it, and roam it from end to end, that you appreciate its size. It is over 1,000 feet long, with 12 decks. One of the more interesting
statistics the brochures provide, at a time when periodic blackouts are hitting California, is its fuel consumption when underway: 13 feet per gallon.

The new exhibit of items from the ship's archives covers many aspects of the ship. It has everything from upholstery samples to towel bars to fans. The display on the first-class bathrooms shows that the tub had four faucets, for cold and hot fresh and salt water. (It doesn't explain why anyone would want to bathe in salt water.)

The lounges and restaurants aboard are still used for dining, many with their original deco decor. Like many hotels, the Queen Mary rents large rooms for receptions and conferences. The wedding chapel is also intact, and the ship's management promotes it for weddings. The chapel's brochure indicates that, for a fee, a ship's officer can perform a non-denominational wedding service in a captain's uniform.

A separate exhibit is the "Ghosts and Legends" tour, a multimedia event that takes a tongue-in-cheek look at the various legends associated with the ship. It might scare little children,
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but it's mostly done for laughs. You do get a look at some of the interior portions of the ship, including some of the engine rooms, although everything is festooned with fake cobwebs, funny lights, fog, etc.

Statistics posted at the ship's medical office showed surprisingly few deaths, deliberate or otherwise, on board during the Queen Mary's career. However, hundreds died in an accident involving the ship during World War II, when it was a troop transport.

The Queen Mary and her escort ships were following zigzag courses as protection against U-boats. The Queen Mary was faster than her escorts, so they were supposed to stay a little ahead of her.

At one point an escort ship turned into her path and the Queen Mary couldn't avoid a collision. The escort ship was cut in two and more than 300 men on board died. The Queen Mary was under strict orders not to stop for anything, because the Nazis had put a huge bounty on her, so it continued on while the other escort ships dealt with the consequences (the Queen Mary suffered minor damage). This incident gets big play in the ghosts tour.

Before the tour began, one of the ship's employees told me that, several years earlier, a tabloid television show had sent a reporter and a "ghost hunter" to do a segment on the Queen Mary. They were filming at the pool, the scene of some rumored apparitions, and the ghost hunter saw something during the interview. She told me that the ghost briefly appeared on the tape. Oddly, they don't show you this tape during the "Ghosts and Legends" presentation.

While the Queen Mary is visible from downtown Long Beach, it's a long hike from the downtown hotels. You'll need to drive, take a cab, or a free shuttle bus.

For information, call (562) 499-1699 or look at their website, www.queenmary.com.
Czechoslovakian Art Glass

By Joe Mattis

The colors are vivid. The shapes include bowls, pitchers, fan vases, baskets, flower frogs, candleholders, three-handled pieces, and powder jars. The textures have a wide range: smooth, glue-chip rough, threaded, even caged. The patterns, which accentuate the brilliant colors, have names such as flame, drapery, spider web, teardrop, zigzag, and flower.

With those credentials, it's no surprise that Czechoslovakian Art Glass has caught the eyes of collectors. The time period overlaps the Art Deco era, making Czech glass a wonderful addition to Deco collections.

Although much information has been lost or buried because of the Wars in Europe in the 20th Century, collectors do not let that deter their desire to collect the glass.

Numerous factories—both large and small—created Czechoslovakian Art Glass. Today, researchers are combing through records to put together a more complete picture of how, by whom, and where pieces were made. Czech glass has been heavily researched in the past 5 years. While there is still a lot unknown, a great deal of information has surfaced thanks to an

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increase in the number of people interested in collecting it, along with better communication with museum curators in Europe.

History aside, collectors focus their attention on the pieces, the designers, the glass blowing process, the quality, and the richness of the color. They are particularly interested in the production during the Art Deco period. Well known designers are Josel Hoffmann, Michael Powolny, Kolo Moser, and Dagobert Peche.

Each piece of Czech Art Glass is hand-made. That accounts for not only the great variety, but also the numerous inconsistencies, as well as its mysteries.
Czech Glass Timeline

1300  Southwest Bohemia began producing glass

1400  At Chríbska, Glass Hut began producing glass; still in operation

1660  Glass workers formed guilds

1815  Josef Meyer founded glass works

1862  Company called Mayr's Neffen; inherited by Josef Taschek & Wilhelm Kralik

1877  Kralik died; inherited by sons; continued operation until 1922

1880  Economy world-wide good; glass widely exported by Novy Bor and Kamenicky Senov.

1890  U.S. imports foreign glass in volume; Arts & Crafts movement/Jugendstil/Art Nouveau. Galle using nature is universal: flowers, fish, etc. Iridizing popular.

1900-1940  Glass baskets produced


1920  Spelling changed to Czecho-slovakia.

1916-1930  King Tut's tomb major influence on design. Art Deco movement develops.

1939  Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. Glass factories shut down.
LOST AMERICA
By Jim Sweeney

You may have noticed the May Smithsonian magazine cover story on Berthold Steinhilber's stunning twilight photos of western ghost towns. Another photographer, Troy Paiva, does similar photos of abandoned buildings and structures out west. His focus is the commercial architecture of the 20th century, especially Art-Deco.

His web site, www.lostamerica.com, offers a good look at his work, plus links to other venues for his work, such as web sites on drive-ins and night photography.

Paiva works at night, with bright lights to spotlight his subjects. He uses tungsten-balanced film, which is intended for indoor use. This gives his images eerie colors. He works with slide film; he has found that print film just doesn't work well for this sort of photo. (He offers advice on night photography on his site.)

Many of his photos are taken along Route 66 and other old roads in the California and Nevada desert. One of his photos is an abandoned restaurant along Route 66 near Amboy, California. It has a roadrunner on its sign. In Las Vegas, he found a storage lot for a neon sign company. Some large signs from now-gone casinos are on that lot.

Paiva often prowls the old roads that were bypassed by the interstates. One of his favorites is U.S. 60 between Wickenberg and Interstate 10 in Arizona. Here he found a deco cafe next to a motel in Salome.

Another of his finds is an abandoned deco gas station, made of rounded stone and concrete, with a tower. It sits next to its newer replacement in Olanche, California.

While many of his subjects are buildings, he also does old planes and cars, both subjects that are found in abundance in the desert southwest.

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He makes his living as a freelance designer/illustrator. The web site includes examples of his graphics work, too. While he has put up a web site of these photos, he says he doesn't consider himself a photographer.

Like many photographers who focus on abandoned commercial structures, his work has an undercurrent of sadness, a sense of loss over the bypassed buildings, towns, and roads.

Paiva says in his web site that he plans to do a book on his images, but he hasn't found a publisher yet.

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**COCKTAILS AND LAUGHTER... AND WHAT COMES AFTER...**

**NOBODY KNOWS**

(Neel Coward)

**When:** Friday, July 20, 2001; 6-8 pm

**Where:** The cocktail lounge at the Carlyle Suites Hotel, 1731 New Hampshire Avenue NW

**Why:** Idle chatter. A chance to meet other Decophiles in an informal setting.
ROUTE 66

by Jim Sweeney

What do 66 and 75 add up to? A big party.

Route 66 is 75 years old this year, and celebrations and events are planned along its entire eight-state length.

A big event is planned July 20-22 for Albuquerque, N.M., with up to 100,000 visitors expected. That is supposed to be the official celebration of the anniversary, but many more events are in the works. The president of the New Mexico Route 66 Association told the Albuquerque Journal recently that a million people may visit the various segments of Route 66.

Route 66 ran 2,400 miles between Chicago and Santa Monica, California. The road was decommissioned by the federal government but segments remain as state roads, frontage roads along interstates or local roads.

The romantic image of Route 66, partly due to a 1960s song and a television show of the same era, has helped keep the road alive in popular culture. And not just in America; the Albuquerque Journal reported that 90 members of a Norwegian Route 66 group were expected at the July event.

Route 66 has become a marketing device for many tourist attractions, and a symbol of freedom, automobile culture and a more innocent time. Today, Route 66 is even the name of a brand of women's clothing.

Deco Destinations:
Auburn, Indiana

Every Labor Day weekend, a small town in Northeastern Indiana plays host to one of the most spectacular Art Deco events in the world—the annual Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival. The Festival, started in 1956, now attracts crowds estimated at 300,000 to Auburn to witness the Saturday parade of some 250 Auburns, Cords, and Duesenbergs through the streets of the normally quiet town.

One need not wait until September, however, to enjoy the Art Deco splendor available in Auburn. Since 1974, Auburn has been the home of the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum, perhaps the most spectacular automobile museum in the world. It is worth a trip to Auburn just to see the building—the original Art Deco factory showroom carefully restored with its Italian glass chandeliers and bold geometric-design terrazzo floors once again displaying America’s finest automobiles.

The Building

The limestone and art brick structure was designed by the Fort Wayne, Indiana firm A.M. Strauss and Associates in the Art Deco style. The building, commissioned in the Fall of 1929, was completed in only one year at a cost of $450,000. Included in the new headquarters building was an ex

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pansive L-shaped showroom with 18-foot plate glass windows, three-tiered Italian glass chandeliers, four-color terrazzo floors in a stunning geometric design, and brightly painted ceiling friezes.

When it opened, the showroom paid homage not only to E. L. Cord’s automobiles, but to other parts of his transportation empire. On display were a Stinson monoplane powered by a Lycoming aviation engine and a Dodge speed boat powered by a Lycoming marine engine. Cord owned both Stinson and Lycoming.

The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

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The Company

The Auburn Automobile Company was established in 1900 by carriage builder Charles Eckhart and his sons Frank and Morris. The company produced its first prototype for display at the February 1903 Chicago automobile show and began production shortly thereafter.

Although the company was moderately successful and moved to larger quarters in 1909, growing disagreements between sons Frank and Morris threatened the company’s future. The death of patriarch Charles Eckhart in September 1915 only heightened the company’s problems. Slow sales attributed to the economic conditions created by World War I led to closure of the Auburn Automobile Company in 1918.

The company was acquired in 1919 by a group of Chicago investors. Although they initially had some success in reversing the company’s fortunes, sales plummeted in the early 1920s and the Chicago investors sought a way out of what was turning out to be a financial disaster.

That’s when Errett Lobban (E.L.) Cord entered the picture. Cord had almost single-handedly turned the Chicago distributorship of the Moon Motor Car Company into the small automaker’s most successful, accounting for over 60 percent of the company’s total sales. His recipe for success was styling—he dressed up the otherwise bland Moon design with chrome trim and custom paint accents. At one time, he sold over 5,000 Moons in a 6-month period.

One sale, however, stood out from the others. Cord sold a Moon to Ralph Bard, one of the Chicago investors who owned the Auburn Automobile Company. Bard sought Cord’s help in restoring AAC to profitability. Although the investors offered Cord an impressive salary and an upper management job, Cord had other plans. He insisted on total management control over the firm and an agreement that when the company returned to profitability, its profits would be used to buy out the current owners, giving Cord ownership of the company.

The Chicago investors, faced with the prospects of a bankruptcy filing, reluctantly agreed to Cord’s terms in the Summer of 1924.

The speed with which Cord returned the company to profitability is truly amazing. Prices were chopped to dispose of remaining stock. More importantly, he immediately started visiting dealers and suppliers to ex-
plain how he was going to restore the company to profitability through
daring new designs. He quickly convinced suppliers to make design
changes and provide favorable credit terms to help return the company to
profitability.

When a newly restyled Auburn incorporating many of Cord's styling ideas
was introduced in January 1925, it was an instant hit. Sales exploded and,
by November 1925, Cord paid off the Chicago investors and owned the
company.

**The Man**

Errett Lobban Cord was born in Warrensburg, Missouri on July 20, 1894.
He was named after the minister who performed his parents marriage cere-
mony—Rev. Isaac Errett—his mother—the former Ida Lobban—and his
father—Charles Cord.

Cord quit school at age 15 to pursue his two main interests—the accumu-
lation of great wealth and cars. He was successful at his first job, as a used
car salesman, but was not satisfied just selling cars. He took a job pumping
gas and doing auto repair work in order to gain after hours access to the
shop. There he began buying used Model T Fords and refitting them with
sleek new bodies. He also modified the engines to improve performance.
His new creations, nicknamed “T-Speedsters” were popular and Cord was
able to sell them at a hefty profit.

Cord tried a series of auto-related business ventures during the teens, but
none brought him the wealth he so desired. Leaving his family behind in
Los Angeles, Cord moved to Chicago in the summer of 1919 to seek his
fortune in new car sales. Quickly establishing himself as the dealership’s
top salesman, Cord sent for his family. After briefly returning to California
to run a gas-fired home heater business, Cord returned to Chicago to help
market Moon Motor Cars in the Chicago region, turning it into the company’s
primary market.

After acquiring the Auburn Automobile Company in 1925, Cord went on
the build a transportation empire. In 1926, he purchased the struggling
Duesenberg Automobile and Motor Co. from August and Fred Duesen-
berg and set out to build the best car in the world. The following year, he
entered the field of aviation, first by buying his own airplane, followed by
his own air field. In 1928, shortly before Lindbergh’s solo flight across the
Atlantic, Cord purchased the Stinson Aircraft Company.

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Scarcely a year later, he formed the Cord Corporation to manage his growing group of transportation firms. And, in 1930, he formed his own airline—Century Air Lines—to operate an hourly passenger ferry service out of Chicago.

When Aviation Corps, the parent of American Airways, quietly purchased controlling interest in Century Air Lines, Cord quietly began buying Aviation Corps stock and, by late 1932, owned controlling interest in American Airways.

Cord continued to expand his transportation empire in 1933, adding taxi and shipbuilding companies. Twice, in 1932 and again in 1934, Cord graced the cover of Time magazine.

Cord’s empire began to fall apart almost as quickly as it was assembled. The taxi company had links to organized crime and the Securities Exchange Commission was breathing down Cord’s back. At a 1937 hearing, Cord consented to a federal order to stop “illegally manipulating” his companies’ stock. After selling his interests in the companies, Cord moved to Los Angeles.

Cord’s new business interests included mines, broadcasting, oil wells, and livestock. He even served for a while as a Nevada state senator in the mid-1950s.

Cord died on January 2, 1974, only 9 months before the Art Deco masterpiece he erected in Auburn, Indiana was reopened as the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum.

The Cars

Immediately after assuming control of the Auburn Automobile Company in mid-1924, E.L. Cord set his sights on the January 1925 New York Automobile Show. In six short months, he managed to restyle the Auburn into a model that took the show by storm. He added rounded radiator shells, and distinctive two-color paint schemes.

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Although incremental changes kept Auburns in demand for the next three years, a new body style was introduced in 1928 that put Auburn in the forefront of modern automotive design.

The following year, however, was the most significant for the automaker as it introduced two revolutionary new designs. First, the massive Duesenberg Model J was introduced, each vehicle equipped with a custom body built by hand. The car was also packed with power and mechanical innovations. Duesenberg had to share the spotlight with the radically different front-wheel drive Cord introduced that same year. The cars were an instant sensation and, despite the stock market crash later that year, the company struggled to keep up with demand.
The deepening depression soon turned the tide of public opinion against luxury cars, however, and sales dropped sharply. AAC and its subsidiary Duesenberg continued to develop and introduce new luxury car models until 1936. But, after E.L. Cord lost control of the company in a hostile takeover in August 1937, the new owners quickly decided to close the troubled automaker. On November 11, 1937, the company closed and the building soon came under the jurisdiction of a bankruptcy court.

### The Building Declines

The bankruptcy court sold the building to entrepreneur Dallas Winslow in June 1938 for the meager sum of $25,000. The Auburn Automobile Company was added to a growing list of failed companies whose products Winslow’s company would repair, supply parts for, or totally refurbish. The Administration building became the center of the Winslow empire. Winslow’s repair business thrived and, in 1943, the space in the middle of the U-shaped building was closed to provide additional storage space.

Among Winslow’s repair ventures was the establishment of the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Company to provide replacement parts for the automobiles of E.L. Cord. Although the business originally relied on the vast stock of replacement parts acquired through the bankruptcy proceedings, the company eventually moved into rebuilding engines and finally into full scale restoration of Auburns, Cords, and Duesenbergs.

Although Winslow’s businesses thrived, they were not kind to the once glamorous showroom. Heavy machinery was bolted to stylish terrazzo floor. Nevertheless, the building continued in use until 1960 when Winslow decided to sell his businesses and retire. The rights to the Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg names and the blueprints for the cars were sold to an Oklahoma school teacher.

The Administration Building was closed and remained unused until after Winslow’s death in 1963. As part of the estate settlement, the building was leased to several businesses. During the 1960s, it saw service as a garment warehouse, motorcycle repair shop, and fiberglass camper manufacturing facility, among other things.

Throughout the 1960s, the building continued to deteriorate despite its continued use. Gaping holes were torn in the terrazzo floors as new busi-
nesses, with new machinery, moved in and out of the building. The colorful frieze paintings that adorned the showroom walls became covered in grime and the elegant Italian glass chandeliers were thrown into storage or destroyed. So significant was the deterioration of the building that townsfolk began talking about putting the building out of its misery.

The Rebirth

It was the almost cult following for the Auburns, Cords, and Duesenbergs once sold in the stunning Art Deco building that, in the end, would lead to its restoration. In 1952, a New Yorker named Harry Denhard started the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Club to help bring owners of the classic cars together. Four years later, the fledgling group met for the first time in Auburn, Indiana. Thus began one of the nation’s largest and most respected gatherings of antique automobile collectors—the annual Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival.

As the Festival continued to grow in popularity, an antique and classic car auction was added in 1971 with a portion of the proceeds being donated to the festival organizers. As auction proceeds grew, festival promoters established a not-for-profit group named the Auburn Automotive Heritage, Inc. with the express purpose of establishing a museum. Although many options were considered, including encasing a single car on the courthouse lawn and building a new “pole barn” museum along side nearby Interstate 69, in the end it was decided to buy and renovate the Auburn Automobile Company’s Administration building.

In January 1974 Auburn Automotive Heritage purchased the building for $105,000 and immediately began the careful restoration of the historic building. The terrazzo floors were repaired, the ceiling reliefs carefully repainted, and the chandeliers rehung. As a result of nearly 40 years of neglect, 11 of the 22 original chandeliers were lost or damaged beyond repair. Restoration experts created 11 new chandeliers and refurbished the other 11. In only 8 months, and at a cost of only $108,000, the once proud showroom was restored to its former glory. It once again played host to 33 of America’s finest automobiles during the September 1974 Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival.

Restoration of other parts of the building continued and today the entire Administration Building has been restored. As a result, visitors can now see the design studios where famed industrial designers Alan Leamy and

(Continued on page 28)
Gordon Buehrig created the distinctive styles of the Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg automobiles. On display are many pencil and pen and ink drawings by the designers as well as mock ups of some of their designs.

The huge L-shaped first floor showroom is filled with classics built between 1925 and 1937 by the Auburn Automobile Company. Most are valued well in excess of $1 million. Upstairs, additional galleries display cars (1) made by the Auburn Automobile Company, (2) linked to the city of Auburn, (3) made in Indiana, including Studebaker, (4) produced by competing luxury car makers such as Packard, Lincoln, and Cadillac, and (5) of special or historical interest. Many of the cars are on loan to the museum so there is a constantly changing display.

The Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum is open daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s days). It is located in Auburn, Indiana, about 20 miles north of Fort Wayne and 35 miles south of the Indiana Toll Road (I-80/I-90) near the intersection of I-69 and State Road 8. For information about the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival visit their website at www.acdfestival.org.
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Coming Attractions

ADS W Events
June 10—Exposition of the Decorative Arts, Ernst Community Center, Annandale, VA; 9 am to 6 pm (Early Buyers 8 am—9 am)
July 17—Preservation Committee Meeting, 7 pm
July 20—Cocktails in the Carlyle Suites Lounge, 6-8 pm
August—Tour of Historic Terminal A, Reagan Washington National Airport (tentative)
September—Art Deco Theatres (tentative)

Watch for further information on these events in the July Streamlines or check the web at ADSW.org.

Other Events
July 18—Bus Tour to Fallingwater/Kentuck Knob sponsored by the Corcoran, 7 am to 10 pm. Call 202-639-1770 for details

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