

# WHY PAINT IT BLACK?

Prior to the Classic era automobiles were mostly a functional means of getting from one place to another. Mechanical considerations dictated style. Few automobile companies employed custom designers. There were exceptions such as Locomobile, in 1916, who had a complete custom design department under the direction of Frank de Causse with interior design by Elsie de Wolf. Packard and several of the other luxury motorcar companies hired outside designers. With the exception of Locomobile most of these custom cars were painted in black, maroon, dark green, deep blue and gray. The Locomobile Company recognized color as an enhancement of design and a statement of individuality and offered a wide assortment of colors on special order including yellow, orange, coral and a wide variety of varying shades of the basic colors in two-tone effects.

It was not until around 1927 that the auto industry realized that de Causse, back 10 years earlier, had shown that color was almost as important to individuality as design. Custom coachbuilders had a new styling tool at their disposal.

Choosing the right color for your car is a difficult decision to make in the restoration of a Classic. The original color is not always the color that pleases you or even enhances the design of the coachbuilder. It only indicates the personal taste of the first owner who might have been color-blind or who only drove his car at night.

In 1928, in conjunction with Cadillac and LaSalle, the Fischer and Fleetwood Body Divisions of General Motors displayed a group of automobiles at the Custom Body Salons in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco of color schemes that quickly caught the fancy of the viewing public. These special displays were promoted as "Color Creations from Nature's Studios". The opening statement in an elaborate color

brochure passed out to potential customers at these showings stated -- "Nature, master artist, does not draw lines. She works with masses of color. It is the one skill she never relinquishes, the one that never fails her. Forms crumble, Motion comes to rest. Sound sinks to silence. Color alone abides. It may fade - it does not vanish." Pictured is a LaSalle roadster in Ravine Yellow with Ledge Orange fenders and trim. A LaSalle in light and dark orchid with wheels and undercarriage in Sylvan Green. A Fleetwood Cadillac Town Cabriolet in Rose Coral with black fenders and undercarriage. The other featured cars are just as unique in color.

Lincoln also put out a special catalog a year earlier utilizing special colors. They used designations as Oriental, Egyptian, Roman, Gothic, etc. to allude to the special color and interior treatment.

Color brochures of Packard, Pierce Arrow, Stutz, Lincoln, Cadillac, Chrysler, Buick and all the others showed models with two-tone paint combinations (and sometimes the color of the wire wheels added a third color). There are many today who state flatly that these cars only existed in the brochures and that the cars the public bought were still in basic black, maroon, red, dark blue, dark green or gray. True the greatest percent were probably of the somber colors but color could be had at a small extra cost. What company would picture a car of a special color and then tell you that you couldn't have it? These were the days when almost all companies gave special consideration to the purchaser.

In 1929, shown at one of the salons was the personal car of Mr. Judkins, a noted coachbuilder. It was a Lincoln Coupe-Phaeton for five passengers. The entire body was painted in Burmah Rose with the chassis in deep maroon.

In 1930 at the Chicago Salon, LaGrande exhibited a Cord L-29 Victoria coupe with the lower body panels and window reveals in a light brown, the



remainder in dark Capucine set off by flame striping. The flame color was also used for the chassis.

The salon show articles in the Classic era abound in descriptions of startling color combinations. Maybe your car wasn't one of the cars exhibited at the salon but if you were the original purchaser you could have ordered it that way. I'm sure many did.

Before you decide on a color and to keep to authenticity, check around for paint manufacturers' sampler books with paint chips in the era of your car. They are still around. Some of these books are elaborate and show paint chips of multiple color combinations plus striping. Your modern paint dealers can match these chips. This way your car can have flash and individuality with dignity. Color can ruin a Classic as easily as it can enhance it. There are many once beautiful Classics that are hideous because an owner attempted to make it too outstanding. As with a beautiful lady, too much perfume and makeup can make her seem something else, but a little in good taste is rather nice.

by Dr. Winfield Krafka

(Please turn to p. 17 for an article on color by F.D. Willoughby)

## HELPFUL HINTS IN SERVICING

After filling the gas tank on your Classic car you may find that you are plagued by a slow but steady drip of gas on the side of the gas tank where the filler neck makes its entry to the tank. Don't panic and envision having to drop the tank to repair the leak. Usually this type of leak is due to the rubber elbow or rubber joint connecting the filler neck to the tank deteriorating or the clamps are loose due to the drying out and loss of elasticity in the rubber connector. Check this joint and you will have probably located your leak. Take the measurement of the outside diameter of the filler neck. Also measure the length of the rubber connector. Get a length of Neoprene rubber of suitable size from "House of Rubber" or a dealer in rubber goods. Also get a pair of modern hose clamps of the proper diameter and you are ready to cure the leak permanently.

First disconnect battery, put out any cigarettes and open flames in area. Place a large pan under the connection and with a screw driver remove the old clamps, drain off any gas that may be standing in fill pipe. Remove old rubber sleeve. Clean both fill pipe junction point and pipe coming out of the tank, free of old rubber deposit. Place clamps on the pipes, slide the Neoprene rubber sleeve in place; replace clamps and tighten up. You have just cured a dangerous problem. Happy motoring.

by Dr. Quentin Krafka

