



Newsletter July 2025

"Moving Forward"

"Wagons, Ho!" - The American Station Wagon

The Forney Museum is proud to present our "Wagons Ho!" exhibit. With 24 classic American station wagons on display, there is so much to see – and something for everyone! While not considered a flashy design, the utilitarian station wagon helped define the mid-20th Century automotive experience.



For example, come see this 1955 Buick Century Estate Wagon, shown to the left. Built at a time when Buick was emphasizing power and prestige, the Century lineup featured the same powerful 322 cubic inch "Nailhead" V8 engine found in the Super and Roadmaster models, delivering an impressive 236 horsepower. This car is on display courtesy of Jay Reinan of Salida, Colorado.

Or check out this rare 1948 Packard Standard Eight Station Sedan, seen at right. Combining the upscale comfort of a sedan with the versatility of a station wagon, this classic "Woodie" station wagon is powered by a 288 cubic inch inline-8 engine producing around 135 horsepower. This Packard is on display thanks to the generosity of Jon Kanas of Longmont, Colorado.



Make sure you come to the Forney Museum between now and September 7th to experience the history of these amazing 'people haulers' in our current exhibit, "Wagons Ho!"

Special Feature

A highlight of the “Wagons Ho!” exhibit is this 1966 Cadillac Fleetwood prototype station wagon. Cadillac commissioned this Fleetwood-based six-passenger station wagon from Hess & Eisenhardt in 1965. H&E had long specialized in commercial vehicles, such as limousines, hearses and ambulances, many of them built on Cadillac platforms.



Cadillac wanted to attract potential station wagon customers who were looking for more luxury. H&E produced about 20 of these limited edition wagons in 1955 and 1956, but they were expensive and Cadillac ended the experiment in 1956.



In 1960, Cadillac and H&E tried again with a new prototype for the New York Auto Show, but garnered little interest. So six years later, this 1966 wagon – also built for display at the New York Auto Show – was the final attempt.

Built on a Cadillac Fleetwood chassis, this vehicle sports a 429 cubic inch engine producing 340 horsepower. Power, luxury and all that cargo space!

With less than 31,000 miles on the odometer, this wagon was donated to the Forney Museum in 1977 by the Colorado philanthropists Arthur E. and Helen K. Johnson.

This Month in Transportation History

July 13, 1898 - The San Francisco Ferry Building was officially opened. With its distinctive arched arcades, and 245-foot clock tower, this famous landmark has withstood several major earthquakes such as in 1906 and 1989. At one time the Ferry Building was the second busiest transit hub in the world – after Charing Cross railway station in London – and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1978.

July 23, 1903 - The Ford Motor Company delivered its first automobile to a Dr. Ernst Pfenning, a Chicago dentist, who had paid \$850 for a brand new Ford Model A (predecessor to the later 1928-31 Model A). Within a year over 1,750 Fords had been delivered to customers all over the country, setting Ford Motor Company on the path to success that would be cemented four years later with the debut of the Model T.

July 9, 1910 - A Wright biplane piloted by Walter Brookins broke the world’s altitude record, reaching a height of 6,175 feet in the skies above Atlantic City, New Jersey. This record-setting flight

was in the air for more than an hour, and marked the first time an aircraft had flown above one mile in altitude, much to the delight of the crowds of spectators in the city below.

July 12, 1916 - The first transcontinental trip by a commercial truck left Seattle. Driven by William Warwick, and sponsored by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, the 1½-ton GMC truck delivered one ton of Carnation evaporated milk cans to a customer in New York City. The record-setting journey came to an end in New York City on September 19, covering a total of 3,710 miles.

July 13, 1919 - The first two-way crossing of the Atlantic by air was completed by Major Herbert Scott of the British Royal Air Force. Departing from Scotland on July 2 in the military airship R34, Scott landed on Long Island in New York on July 6. Starting July 10, the R34 completed the Atlantic crossing again, landing in England on July 13. The flight also marked the first time anybody had flown across the ocean from east to west.

July 11, 1936 - The Triborough Bridge in New York City was officially opened to traffic. Connecting Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx, the structure is a complex of three long-span bridges that crosses the East and Harlem rivers, as well as the Bronx Kill Strait. More than 15,000 guests and dignitaries were on hand for the opening ceremony, led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was among the first to cross the new bridge.

July 12, 1957 - President Dwight D. Eisenhower became the first current U.S. President to be flown in a helicopter while in office. Eisenhower boarded the Bell H-13J on the South Lawn of the White House, and was flown over 62 miles to Camp David, in Maryland.

July 17, 1962 - U.S. Air Force Major Robert M. White piloted a rocket-powered X-15 aircraft to a record-setting altitude of 59.6 miles above the Earth. The 10 minute flight began with a bomber dropping his aircraft over Nevada. Reaching a top speed of 3,784 miles per hour, White became one of the few people to fly into what is considered space without a conventional spacecraft, earning him the unusual USAF rating of "winged astronaut."

July 20, 1969 - A global audience watched on television as Apollo 11 Astronaut Neil Armstrong took his first step onto the moon. The first person to step foot on a body beyond the Earth, as he stepped onto the moon's surface he proclaimed, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Forney Speaker Series

On **Sunday, July 27th at 2PM**, the Forney Museum will have a special presentation of "Women in Aviation." Led by our Education Coordinator, Jennifer Holm, this talk will delve into the stories of the pioneering women who shaped the history of flight. From early trailblazers through to the modern day, this presentation will explore the challenges and triumphs of these amazing women, and the lasting impact they have left on our skies.





Free with admission, these presentations offer a fantastic opportunity to learn about the lesser known sides of history. So come join us Sunday, July 27th at 2 PM, for “Women in Aviation” and learn all about these early days of flight. We’ll see you there!

Make sure you don’t miss the rest of our ongoing monthly series:

August 31st we will have Carl Enger, Collections Manager at the Forney Museum and a former steam locomotive mechanic, presenting an in-depth look at the history and development of steam locomotives, concluding with the iconic Big Boy. This informative session, followed by a Q&A, offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into the engineering and impact of the machines that helped drive America's growth. We invite you to join us for this engaging exploration of steam power and innovation.

September 28th we will be hosting David Fisher, the Executive Director of the Transportation Institute, as he gives his presentation “Transportation Dynamics.” This will be a look at the forces that shape how we move, a fascinating exploration of motion, mechanics and innovation.

We look forward to seeing you then!

Independence Day Weekend

The Museum will offer special Discount Days to celebrate the July 4th holiday, all weekend on Saturday, July 5th and Sunday, July 6th. All adult admissions are discounted to \$13, and child tickets are available for only \$5! As always at the Museum, children under the age of 3 get in for Free! Don’t miss this opportunity to check out all the Museum has to offer for a special low price, and celebrate our nation’s birthday with us at the Forney Museum!



Forney Vehicle Spotlight

1905 Franklin Type A Runabout

The Franklin story begins in 1901 with automotive engineer John Wilkinson, who had recently completed two prototype cars with air-cooled engines for the New York Automobile Company. After completion of those prototypes, the company failed to pay the young engineer, who left with a proven design turning over in his mind, and a couple of unique automobile prototypes. Wilkinson next met with Alexander Brown, a well-known and reputable investor in upstate New York, and in a moment of inspiration Brown introduced Wilkinson – and his car – to Herbert H. Franklin.



Franklin was a former newspaper publisher who at that time was manufacturing die castings in Syracuse, New York. Wilkinson took Franklin for a ride in one of his prototypes and Franklin came away from that test drive convinced that the H.H. Franklin Company should go into the automobile business. With Alexander Brown as an investor, and after a legal battle that ended with the New

York Automobile Company being absorbed by Franklin, the Franklin automobile was born.

The very first Franklin was sold in 1902 for \$1,200, and about a dozen more were produced that year. A runabout design, this first Franklin featured the signature air-cooled four-cylinder overhead valve engine, mounted transverse to the body, and featured throttle control, float-feed carburetor, two-speed planetary transmission, full elliptic springs and a wooden frame. With no need for a radiator and cooling system, the Franklin was able to cut about 200 pounds, resulting in a comparatively light 1,100 pounds. For 1903 the wheels were changed from wire spokes to a wooden artillery style, but many other features of the early Franklin would see no change for decades – if at all!



The full-elliptic suspension, which provided a far more comfortable ride than competitors' offerings, so reduced tire wear that the tires on a Franklin were rated good for 20,000 miles. As a consequence of this unprecedented reliability the company did not offer detachable rims as standard equipment until 1922. The Franklin wood frame also endured until 1928, and the air-cooled Franklin engine utilized overhead valves until the final Franklin left the factory in 1934.



In fact, Franklin had a reputation for innovation and technological development throughout its existence, and was the industry leader for air-cooled cars. In the years before the invention of antifreeze, an air-cooled car had an advantage in cold weather over water-cooled models. Consequently the Franklin was popular for those who needed a reliable all-weather year-round automobile. However,



the air-cooled engine limited the size of the cylinder bore and the area available for the valves, placing an upper limit on the power output of the early Franklin models. It would be 1921 before the company solved that problem by changing the fan to blow cold air across the engine, rather than sucking hot air out as on prior models.

Another technological innovation was the use of aluminum body panels to reduce the weight of the car. This design principle was behind the industry-leading introduction in 1915 of lightweight aluminum pistons. So much aluminum was used at the company for production of their automobile, that it is believed Franklin was the largest user of aluminum in the world during their early years.

The innovation and unique design did not stop in the years after the production of this car, but continued to be a byword of Franklin until the very end. The 1906 model year saw the introduction of the distinctive, round barrel-hood. With the introduction that year of a front-mounted and gear-driven ventilation fan to exhaust built up heat from the barrel, the Franklin continued to excel in all weather conditions. That year also saw the industry-leading introduction of a shaft drive through the springs. It is noted that the company's engineering budget, as



a percentage of income, was among the highest in the industry. High quality with less weight was a guiding principle, and helped Franklin carve a place for itself at the forefront of the American automotive industry in the early 20th Century.



With the introduction of a six-cylinder engine on some barrel-hood models, Franklin was set up to compete for the decades to come, but this 1905 Type A Roadster exemplifies the culmination of the original prototype Franklin design. Similar to the original 1903 model the 1905 Type A featured the same full-elliptical leaf

spring suspension, wooden frame, brass lamps and wood-spoke artillery wheels. This 1905 Runabout also has a surrey top, and sports multiple compartments for storage.

The engine on this model would have been the same transverse-mounted, air-cooled, inline overhead-valve 4-cylinder engine as on the original Franklin, with the same throttle control and float-feed carburetor. This would have provided about 10 horsepower, and combined with the light weight of the vehicle would have reached a comparatively speedy 30 mph. Shaft-driven, a 4-speed planetary manual transmission would have transferred that power to the wheels.



When new this vehicle was listed at \$1,300, which is equivalent to over \$48,000 today. This would have been a bit more than the Ford Model F, which listed at \$1,000, but significantly more of an investment than the Ford Model S (\$700) or the Oldsmobile



Curved Dash Runabout (\$650). With less maintenance, and year-round operation many people found this a satisfactory value tradeoff.

The years that followed were kind to Franklin. By 1914, the company was exclusively producing air-cooled sixes, and the company had begun to produce the Franklin sedan, with the company staying at the vanguard of the new body style throughout its run. Some successes in endurance and reliability racing cemented Franklin as a

dependable all-weather vehicle to the discriminating public. By the mid-1920s,

however, an alliance of Franklin dealers came to Syracuse to demand a new car design, and preferably one that wouldn't look so weird! Herbert Franklin was persuaded to



attempt a new design with a conventional front end, but John Wilkinson was offended by the concept of a false radiator and conventional hood styling and resigned from the company in protest – ironically, 1925 saw the introduction of a new Wilkinson-designed car, sold under his own name, that had a water-cooled four-cylinder engine with a conventional radiator and hood design.

The new Franklin design was finally provided by J. Frank de Causse, from New York City. Released as the Series 11, among the new body styles was a low and sporty “boat-tail” speedster. It was another irony that the company that had championed the sedan was the first manufacturer in the country to produce what would come to be considered the flashiest body design of the era.



No less a personage than the racer, Cannonball Baker, was a fan of the new style, taking a

Franklin on extended endurance runs around the country. Perhaps the most famous devotee of the Franklin was the American aviator Charles Lindbergh, in whose honor Franklin would release the Franklin Airman model in 1928. 1930 saw further



innovations with the debut of the Franklin Pirate model, but the effects of the stock market crash and the ensuing Depression were beginning to be felt at the company. From production of over 14,000 in 1929, the factory produced only 2,000 cars in 1932.

A banking syndicate had taken financial control of the company, and pushed to introduce a new V-12 model, to compete with the other luxury brands that sought greater power and prestige at a time when the American consumer was simply asking for affordability. Although generating more than 100 horsepower, these new Franklins were expensive, large, heavy and clumsy compared to the cars that had made the company famous. Another new design was sought quickly, and in the end

Franklin resorted to buying cars from Reo and replacing the engine, hood and badging



with their own. This move, animated by desperation to pay off debts, echoed throughout many of the smaller, independent automobile manufacturers in America at this time, with similar end results. By 1934, Franklin produced only 360 cars, and these would be the last ever built.

Debts caught up to Herbert Franklin, and the banks in charge of the company by this point declared Franklin insolvent and the books

closed for good. Legend has it that on the last day in his office of nearly three decades, Herbert Franklin simply got up, took his hat from the hook and walked out the door, leaving everything behind and never looking back. Although the company was no more, the name and assets were sold and air-cooled engine production continued as Aircooled Motors of Syracuse. Interestingly, many Franklin engines were built for use in aircraft, and most early American helicopters would have been powered by a Franklin air-cooled engine. Aircooled Motors, the last company to manufacture the Franklin engine, declared bankruptcy in 1975, and all of its designs were sold to the government of Poland. From such unique and innovative beginnings there is now nothing left but a few survivors such as this 1905 Franklin Type A Runabout, which can be seen on display as part of the permanent collection of the Forney Museum of Transportation.

Featured Volunteer

The Forney Museum's featured volunteer for June is Lance LaCerte!

Born in Los Angeles, California, Lance grew up in nearby Santa Monica engaging in the typical beach pursuits of body surfing and skateboarding. He moved to Denver in 1981 to pursue his doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Denver, which led to a rewarding career of over 35 years in private practice.



Lance describes growing up riding bicycles and motorcycles, and how the skills he learned out of necessity and curiosity then, are the same skills he brings to his work for the Museum, where he helps lead the volunteer team restoring the Museum's

collection of motorcycles and bicycles. A fan of European cars, Lance currently keeps a prized 1970 Rover 3500S and 1970 Citroën DS21 Prefecture at home. Lance has brought his passion for unique European vehicles and two-wheelers of all kinds, along with an attention to detail learned from his clinical work, to his volunteer work for the Museum.

An invitation to join the former Forney Book Club brought him to the Museum, and introduced him to our volunteer opportunities and the team. Lance has been instrumental in upgrading our current bicycle display. He says, "one of the most rewarding aspects of volunteering at the Forney is the satisfaction gained by bringing many of the neglected two-wheelers back to varying degrees of their former glory. I believe it really enhances the public's experience when they visit."

We are grateful for Lance's selfless dedication and passion for history. Thank you for everything that you do for the Museum!

Volunteer Birthdays

7/10 - Bill Fleming

7/18 - Michael Ferreira

7/12 - Cindy Peterson

7/23 - Lance LaCerte

The Museum needs YOU!

Anyone interested in volunteering or donating please reach out to us at the museum or email volunteer@forneymuseum.org

Memberships

Become a Forney Museum Member TODAY! We have memberships in many different levels to fit your particular needs, with options available for as low as \$50, the right membership for you can be purchased in the museum gift shop or online at forneymuseum.org. Memberships are good for one year and make great gifts, so help support the Forney by buying a membership today!

General Museum Needs

We are putting out the call for several items that are needed here at the museum. If you see anything in this section that you think you would be able to donate to the

museum to help us with our operations please reach out to our Assistant Director, Dan at asstdirector@forneymuseum.org, or call the museum at (303) 297-1113.

- 1) Diesel pickup in running, serviceable condition
- 2) Enclosed trailer (20-foot or longer) to transport Forney Museum vehicles safely & securely
- 3) Modern tire changing machine in working order
- 4) Modern wheel balancing machine in working order
- 5) Late model minivan in serviceable condition

Thank you to everyone who has already donated!

The Forney Newsletter team is:

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Special Thanks to all of our readers!