

Early American Automobiles

Automobile Bodies Built in Merrimac, Ma.

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J.B. Judkins Co.
1899-1942



1898 Columbia
Columbia Automobile Company, Hartford Ct.
1899-1912

The History of the Merrimac Automobile Builders has been copied and edited from [Coachbuilt](#).

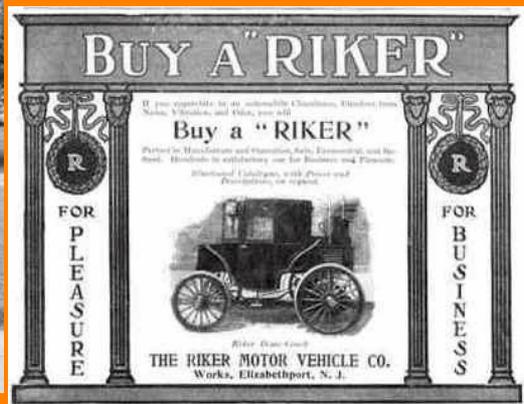
In 1898, Flandrau & Company, New York distributors for the cars built by Colonel Pope's Electric Vehicle Company in Hartford, Connecticut, ordered twenty bodies for these new vehicles. The driver sat in a little open "balcony" behind the tall, glass-enclosed passenger compartment and steered using an early steering wheel.

This was Judkins' first attempt at automobile bodies, but using the same high standards of craftsmanship as in their horse-drawn carriages and even similar lines - they turned out excellent bodies. The structural framework of the existing horse-drawn closed bodies was fully adequate to meet the needs of the new vehicle. The type of joint and method of reinforcement were altogether commensurate and in fact the early automotive bodies were almost exact duplicates of the brougham bodies Judkins built for horse-drawn carriages. Many of these twenty bodies were mounted on the chassis at the Judkins plant. These cars left the plant completely ready to run except that the heavy storage batteries were not installed until after the cars reached New York.

Note: This is from my personal research on Riker Cars



1899 Riker Demi-Coach
Riker Electric Motor Vehicle Co. NY, NY
1894-1901



Both items were copied from [KC Studios](#) web site

The Columbia Taxicab and the Riker Demi-Coach are identical and were made in the same year. Because Currier, Cameron, and Co. of Amesbury was making bodies for his runabouts, he was very familiar with the coach work of Judkins in Merrimac and when Judkins began building bodies for Columbia, Riker also ordered the same bodies for his automobiles.

For the next fifteen or twenty years, they built carriages and automobile bodies simultaneously, but in 1910 the last Judkins

carriage left the shop. It is interesting to note that this is just about the same time Brewster made their last horse-drawn carriage. The beautiful coaches remaining in stock were stored in barns waiting vainly for buyers. Finally, when the space was urgently needed for motor car body operations, they were sold in a block at a price far lower than the cost of their solid rubber tires.

By 1910, Judkins had built bodies for Locomobile, Peerless, White, Morse, Winton, Alco, Stevens-Duryea and others. A few of the bodies were open, but most were closed styles, custom designed and tailored for individual clients on large, expensive chassis such as Peerless, Pierce-Arrow, Mercer and Renault.

From 1921-1939, Judkins produced a total of 5904 custom and series-built-custom bodies for Lincoln, more than any other custom body builder, although Brunn was a close second.

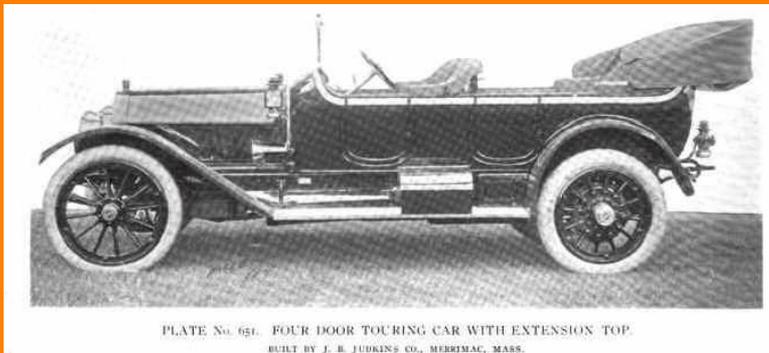


1931 Lincoln Model 31
Lincoln Motor Co. Detroit, MI
1917 to date

Not all of Judkins' business, though, had to do with Lincoln. The company also built bodies throughout the teens and twenties for Cadillac, Duesenberg, Lincoln, Locomobile, Marmon, Mercer, Packard, Pierce-Arrow, Stearns-Knight, and Winton.

During the early years of the Depression, Judkins built a fair number of Lincolns and an occasional body on Packard or other chassis, but their volume was nowhere near the 500 per year averages they enjoyed during the previous decade.

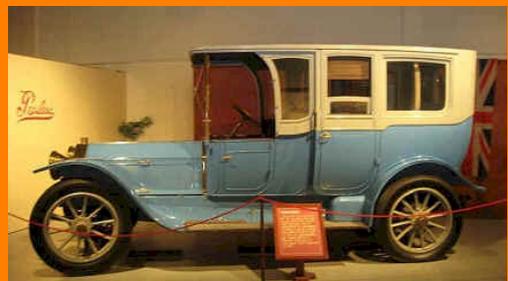
However, by 1934, the volume was insufficient to pay the firm's expenses, so they contemplated entering the aluminum casket business, but found that their competition was so firmly entrenched that they didn't stand a chance of breaking into that market. The next products they developed were more successful. Starting in 1934, they started manufacturing aluminum house trailers and sales demonstration trailers alongside their automobile bodies.



1912 Body



1908 Locomobile Model L Type 1 Limousine
Locomobile Co. of America, Bridgeport, CT
1899-1929



1912 Peerless Limousine
Peerless Motor Car Co. Cleveland, OH
1900-1931



1909 White Six Passenger Touring
White Sewing Machine Co. Cleveland, OH
1900-1918



1910 Winton Model Model 17
Winton Motor Carriage Co. Cleveland, OH
1897-1924
Gray and Davis head lights and side lights



1910 Morse Limousine with chaffeur Cover
Easton Machine Co. South Easton, MA
1902-1914



1912 ALCO Touring
American Locomotive Automobile Co. Providence, Rhode
Island
1905-1913



1924 Cadillac Type V 63 Opera Coupe
Cadillac Automobile Co. Detroit, MI
1902-Date



1922 Duesenberg Model A Coupe
Duesenberg Motor Co. Indianapolis, IN
1920-1937



1924 Cadillac Type V 63 Opera Coupe
Cadillac Automobile Co. Detroit, MI
1902-Date



1922 Duesenberg Model A Coupe
Duesenberg Motor Co. Indianapolis, IN
1920-1937



1910 Marmon Model 32 Touring
Nordyke and Marmon Co. Indianapolis, IN
1902-1932



1916 Mercer 22-72
Mercer Automobile Co. Trenton, NJ
1910-1931



1927 Pierce Arrow Model 80
The George N. Pierce Co. Buffalo, NY
1901-1938



1929 Stearns-Knight Model J-8
F. B Stearns Co. Cleveland, OH
1899-1930



1917 Packard Closed Body Limousine
Packard Motor Car Co. Detroit, MI



1929 Duesenberg Five Passenger Coupe
Duesenberg Motor Co. Indianapolis, IN
1920-1937

1898-1955



1922 Packard Coupe, Twin Six
Packard Motor Car Co. Detroit, MI
1898-1955



1932 Lincoln Coupe Model KB with a Judkins Body Tag
Lincoln Motor Co. Detroit, MI
1917 to date
Probably the last body made

Merrimac Body Company 1920-1934

A subsidiary of J.B. Judkins Company

In 1919, J.B. Judkins received a large order from Mercer that consisted of mostly open bodies. As Judkins' plant was set up to build closed bodies and couldn't fit in the 200+ order in their already busy production schedule, a decision was made to set up another plant across town to fulfill it. At that time, Stanley L. Judkins, was helping his father, Frederick, in the day-to-day management of the family's body building business. It was decided that Stanley would run the new concern, and William Jeffrey, an experienced Amesbury body man, and John Marshall, a forty-two-year-old Scotsman who had settled in Merrimac in 1917, were hired to assist him in setting up the new plant. The former Jackson Hard Fibre Plant was outfitted for body production and the new firm officially entered into business in January of 1920. Close to 100 craftsmen were eventually employed at the new plant by the time production was in full swing.

Open cars were still popular and Merrimac received large orders from a number of manufacturers who included DuPont, Flint, Franklin, Locomobile, Mercer, and Rolls-Royce. They also did a lot of custom work for many of the same Boston luxury car dealers who also did business with Judkins.

New England's Packard dealers provided Merrimac with some business during the twenties as well. A number of four-door sedans, coupes and limousines were built for Packard chassis as well as a roadsters, phaetons and landaulets. A number of Cadillacs were known to have been bodied as well as a handful of high-end European imports.

But Merrimac's largest customer was the Springfield, Massachusetts automaker, Rolls-Royce of America – whose products are commonly known today as Springfield Rolls-Royces. At its inception, Merrimac became part of the firm's Custom Coachwork Division and from 1923 to 1927, supplied them with over 420 bodies "in the white" (unpainted and untrimmed) - mostly open touring cars and roadsters, although a few coupes and town cars were built as well. Merrimac's most popular Rolls-Royce body was the Pall Mall five-passenger touring car, with 200 examples. Next popular was the the "Oxford" seven-passenger touring with 77, followed by the "Mayfair" town car with 70 and the "Piccadilly" roadster with another 70. Well over 50 surviving Silver Ghosts and Phantom I's still carry their original Merrimac-built bodies.

Merrimac built a number of limousine and convertible coupe bodies for Locomobile Chassis in the mid-to-late twenties. The convertible coupes were built in a small series of about 25 for the Model 8-80's custom body program and the limousine bodies were built in even small numbers for Locomobile's last long-wheelbase senior chassis. After Durant moved his low-priced Flint Automobile's assembly plant to Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1926, Merrimac reportedly supplied them with touring car bodies as well.

Several hundred touring car and roadster ("Sport Runabout") bodies were supplied to Syracuse, New York's Franklin Automobile Company during 1928 for their new Series 12-A chassis. Although they had a long-standing relationship with the Walker Body Company in nearby Amesbury, for reasons unknown – possibly the closing of Buffalo, New York's American Body Co., an earlier supplier of touring car bodies – Franklin gave Merrimac the order. The Merrimac-bodied Sport Runabout came equipped with a rumble seat and an attractive boat-tail and is highly prized by collectors today. Merrimac built a handsome dual cowl phaeton for Franklin's custom body program in 1931. Two exist, the first, a replica, is in Thomas Hibbard's Arizona Franklin collection and the original resides in George Staley's Norwich, New York's Northeast Classic Car Museum.

Merrimac is best known today for their gorgeous bodywork that graced the DuPont automobile from 1927-1931. Designed by duPont's G. Briggs Weaver, they built a number of different styles, most of which were open. The most famous duPonts, the "LeMans" style speedsters – both two- and four-seat versions - were all built in Merrimac's shops. Over 120 bodies were produced for E. Paul duPont's luxury car, making Merrimac their largest body supplier. At least 19 Merrimac-bodied duPonts are known to exist - most are open tourers and speedsters, but also included are a sports sedan and very rare DuPont town car.

Although few if any new bodies were built by Merrimac after 1931, they kept busy painting and refurbishing existing bodies for their most loyal customers. A number of customers commissioned them to modernize their existing vehicles, and several older bodies were remounted on newer chassis. In their final years they mounted a Pierce-Arrow roadster body to a Rolls-Royce chassis and even converted a Rolls-Royce limousine into a roadster. Still under the control of John Marshall, after 23 years in business, Merrimac closed its doors in 1934. Luckily, over 90 Merrimac bodies exist today in the hands of

their appreciative owners, and it's not uncommon to see one at some of the larger Northeast auto shows during the summer.



1920 Mercer Touring Series 5
Mercer Automobile Co. Trenton, NJ
1910-1925



1923 Locomobile Touring 48 Series
Locomobile Co. of America, Westboro, MA
1899-1929



1924 Packard Single Eight
Packard Motor Co. Detroit, MI
1898-1955



1925 Flint Open Touring
Flint Motor Co. Flint, MI
1922-1929



1925 American Rolls-Royce Phantom
American Rolls-Royce, Springfield, Ma.
1923-1930



1926 Franklin Series 11 A Touring
H.H. Franklin Mfg. Co. Syracuse, NY
1901-1934



1928 Dupont Open Touring
du Pont Motor Car Co. Wilmington, DE
1915-1932



1929 Franklin Convertible Coupe
H.H. Franklin Mfg. Co. Syracuse, NY
1901-1938



1929 Dupont Model G Four Passenger Speedster
du Pont Motor Car Co. Wilmington, DE
1915-1932

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