

THE FLYING LADY



187TA

1935 Phantom II Continental Drophead by Binder

Rubén Verdés (FL)

187TA at the beach, Amelia Island
(Owner: S. Wolf).

Larry Glenn



The latest chapter in the life of this 1935 Phantom II Continental was written on the field at the 2009 Amelia Island Concours d'Elégance where it won Best in Class, "European Classic Pre-War (1924–1935)." On February 22, 1935, 187TA was ordered by Albert Hillaert of Paris. It was specified as a "short" chassis with a "Continental type" wheelbase. It is the last Continental in the late TA series, and all P II production ended after the production of a few dozen cars of the UK series. The car received one-off coachwork from Binder of Paris (1902–1938), body #5869, a three-position drophead coupe. Known for many arresting designs on everything from Delahayes to one of the six Bugatti Royales, Binder put some 170 bodies on various Rolls-Royce chassis. 187TA was fitted with Marchal lamps, Ace discs in black with chromium peak bands, speedometer in kilometers and fuel gauge in liters. The coachwork was richly appointed, sporting generous amounts of Thuja wood (an aromatic tree

from Morocco). The mascot was ordered as "Untarnishable" (this means not a brass or bronze casting, nor silver plated, but chromium plated). It was originally a kneeling type whereas photos in later years show a standing mascot. This particular car was ordered with a front bumper only. Upon completion of the car, guarantee #8880 was issued on July 27, 1935 and delivery took place on August 26, 1935.

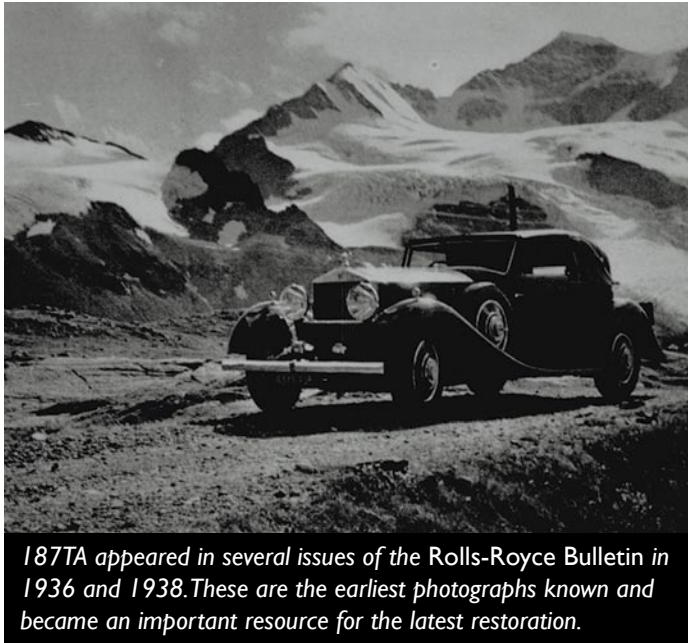
Little is known about the first owner and what is known was obtained verbally by the third owner (Nic Petroff) from the second owner (Ralph Stein) along with how he came to own the car.

Ralph Stein, the second owner, was a writer, cartoonist, and illustrator. He wrote many books on various subjects, from *The Pinup From 1852 to Now* to *The Great Inventions* and several books on automobiles. Born in New York City, he began his career as a photographer and was promotional art director for *The*

New York World Telegram. During WW II he was a staff cartoon editor, writer, and photographer for *Yank*, the Army weekly. After the war he continued to write and illustrate. Fans of comics may recall that he wrote and illustrated the Popeye comic strip with Bela Zaboly from 1955–59. Though his automobile books covered many marques, he clearly had a passion for Rolls-Royce, demonstrated by the cars he owned and by his membership in the RROC. He attended the 1954 Springfield Meet with S184PM, a Springfield P I Brewster Riviera (FL54-4, pp. 147, 148), which was later owned by John Utz (FL05-1, pp. 7588–90). He also appeared in *TFL* as owner of 187TA, first at the 1959 meet in Kent, Ohio (FL59-5, p. 401, with pictures in FL59-6, p. 407, there listed erroneously as 118TA). Finally, it was listed in *Bazaar* 61-4, p. 534, at \$3,450. No longer black, it appeared in both pictures with its new French grey paint, with a kneeling mascot, and without its Ace wheel discs.



Raymond Gentile's book *The Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental* lists five Continental chassis that received coachwork by Binder. They are 35JS, 15RY, 79RY, 187TA and 41GX, shown here. This 1930 chassis first received coachwork by Kellner of Paris before, in 1934, Binder rebodied it as a dhc with pontoon fenders and a boattail. Note the door handles are the same as on 187TA.



187TA appeared in several issues of the *Rolls-Royce Bulletin* in 1936 and 1938. These are the earliest photographs known and became an important resource for the latest restoration.



found right on spec. New shackle pins and kingpins were made and installed. The entire front suspension was overhauled. The rear axle crown wheel and pinion were checked and found in perfect order. A new worm gear was made from scratch and installed in the steering box as part of a complete rebuild of the steering gear. By the end of the second year of restoration, the chassis had been painted and the front and rear axles been reinstalled together with all wiring and related conduit; the overhauled Bijur system had been also put back in place.

The next phase of the restoration started with disassembly of the engine. The cylinder head needed repairs due to corrosion appearing around the water holes; this was done via heliarc welding. New forged pistons were installed. One of Herb Wuesthoff's camshafts was fitted.¹

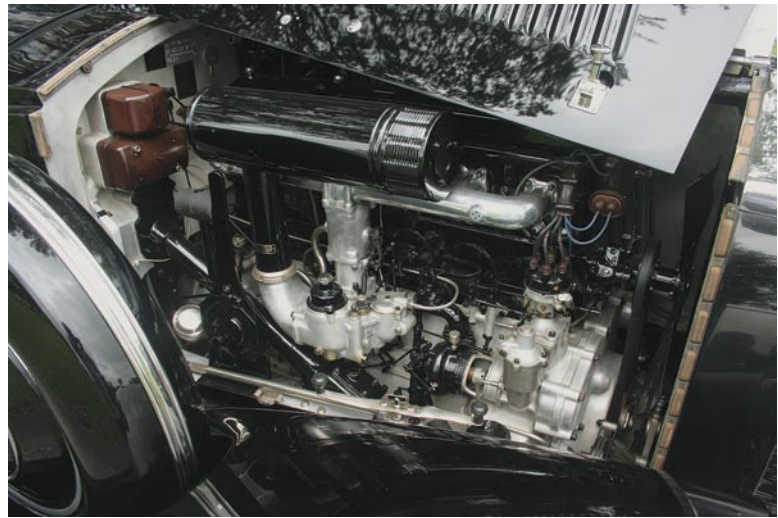
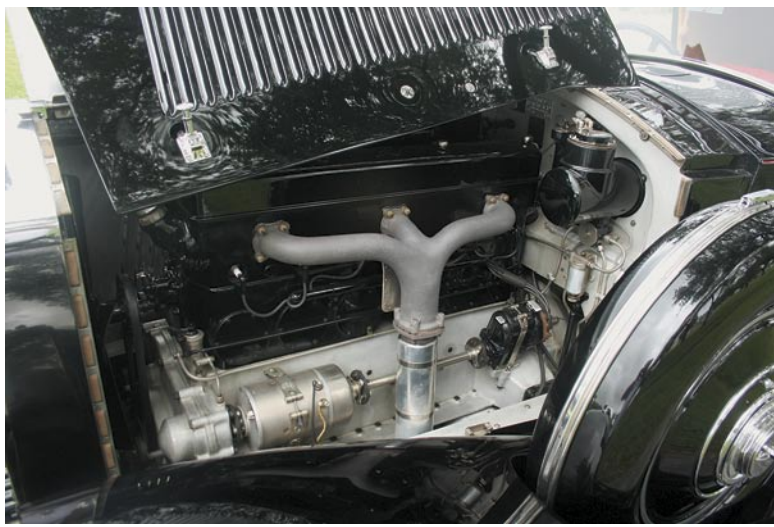
While the engine work was going on, the brakes and servo were rebuilt and the gearbox was disassembled for inspection and repair. The gearbox had one shifter requiring some welding to compensate for wear. All of the instruments were sent out to be checked and cleaned. The instruments still have their original faces; only the water temperature gauge required any readjustment. The radiator was cleaned out and no replacement core was deemed necessary. The carburetor was cleaned and the float needle reseated and replaced. The three jacks were reinstalled, one in front and two in back. The starter and generator were sent out for overhaul as was the magneto. The exhaust headers were found to have a slight bow at the mating surface with the cylinder head; this was removed by planing the flat.

After three and a half years, a seat from a Mercury Monarch was mounted to the chassis and test drives began. Many adjustments were carried out as a result of these runs. The carburetor, servo motor, engine, brakes, and steering were all fine tuned at this time.

After the chassis was finished, work began on the body. The work on the body presented no particular technical difficulties but there were legal problems. A contract had been worked out whereby a restoration firm was to carry out the body restoration. With only one quarter of the work completed and payments of \$5000 over the agreed amount for the total job, a lawsuit was brought seeking redress. This delayed the project for nearly two years because no work could be done while the suit was pending. Eventually Petroff got back about \$15,000 and the body and fenders were turned over to another operator



From its previous restoration, the most notable changes—guided by the *Bulletin* photos—are the fender sidelamps and tail lamps, the spotlamp, the license plate configuration and holders, the coloring of the wheel discs, and the addition of a cover for the spare wheels.



and the work continued. There was very little rust anywhere on the coachwork except for the meeting place between the fenders and the running boards. The rusty metal was cut out completely and new pieces fabricated and welded on. The car was originally black, so this color was selected for the exterior. New Connelly leather of the same bright red hue as the original was installed. The mohair material was thought to be a problem, but Nic learned of a small firm still making it in a small shop in Stuttgart, Germany² and was able to acquire some.

The freshly restored car. The "TA" series received ten modifications, the last five implemented with 101TA. Overall, there were five modifications to the engine and carburetor.

After seven years the car was finished. Nic said that throughout the restoration many photos were taken before anything was taken apart. The original nuts, bolts, and other fasteners were used to reassemble the car. He believes it is one of the most original P IIs in existence. New Michelin tires were mounted and sights were set on its first concours: the 1990 Meadowbrook Concours. Later that year it appeared at the RROC Annual Meet and Pebble Beach (taking 2nd place in its class), taking many awards along the way. After many years of enjoyment thereafter, the car was sold in 2007 to current owner Steve Wolf (FL), a dealer in classic and collectable cars in Boca Raton. The selling agent was Vantage Motorworks who had



The interior features Thuja wood.

been commissioned to perform a fresh restoration of the car, utilizing photos from the 1930s. Since the early years of the car, fender-mounted sidelamps and tail lamps had been changed, the spotlamp near the driver's A pillar had been removed, a license plate enclosure had been added to the rear tail, and there was no toolkit.

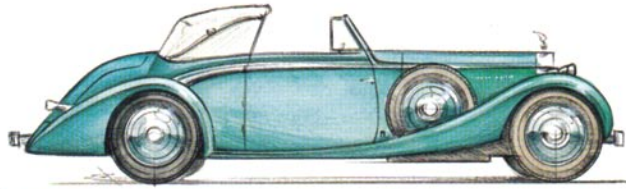


The lights, plates and style of the backside of 187TA restored to its appearance in the 1930s.

The car was on track to be shown at Pebble Beach in 2008. The engine, chassis, and interior were all redone. All the wood came off and was refinished, along with the door panels. The original French license plates were painstakingly re-created from scratch to match the originals. The same type of Marchal fender lights and the extended tail lamps were obtained from sources in Europe. The old tail license plate holder was removed and the body repaired, as the French plates were to be mounted on the tailings. A complete P II toolkit was purchased and fitted to the car in two cradles within a hinged enclosure. The same spotlamp with its Carl Zeiss lens was mounted and the Ace wheel covers were painted so that they would be, once again, "black with chromium peak bands & ribs" as specified on the original order.

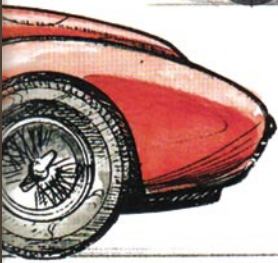
The completed car took 2nd in class at Pebble Beach in 2008 and 1st in class at the 2009 Amelia Island Concours.

IV. LES MAÎTRES LES CONCURRENTS CARROSSIERS



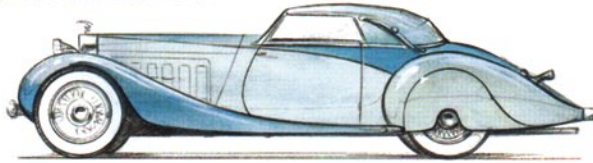
40 1934. ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM II
CABRIOLET (HENRI CHAPRON)

LE CARROSSIER FRANÇAIS TRANSFORMA SON STYLE À CET
IMPOSANT CHÂSSIS - ON RETROUVE DES
MOTIFS SOBRES ET DES LIGNES ÉLÉGANTES ET PURES,
HABITUELLES CHEZ ROLLS-ROYCE.



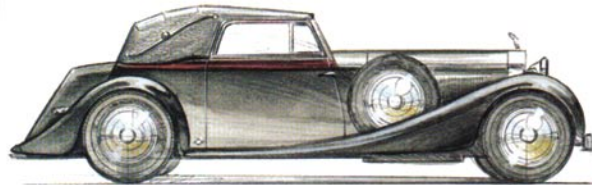
41 1935. HISPANO-SUIZA 30 CV K6 CABRIOLET (SAOUTCHIK)

TOUT L'ART DE SAOUTCHIK S'EXPRIME DANS LES LIGNES ÉLÉGANTES
DE CE MODÈLE. IL NAQUIT SOUS LA FORME D'UN COUPÉ QUI AVAIT ÉTÉ
COMMANDÉ PAR UN AS DE LA GRANDE GUERRE.



42 1935. ROLLS-ROYCE
PHANTOM II CONTINENTAL
CABRIOLET (BINDER)

UNE AUTRE CRÉATION ISSUE
D'UN ATELIER DE CARROSSERIE
FRANÇAIS. LES LIGNES SONT
ICI PLUS RIGIDES QUE
CELLES D'HENRI CHAPRON ET
DE CE FAIT PLUS PROCHES DU
GOÛT ANGLAIS.



After seventy-four years, 187TA continues to attract enthusiastic and thoughtful owners. May the next seventy-four years be just as the first.

1. Nic had met Wuesthoff at the Monterey Meet in 1979 and learned of his work on improving the design of the original P II camshaft. Herb was having trouble getting the project started and Nic offered to help by providing billets to make 14 new camshafts. Being an executive with the largest steel company in the country placed him in a unique position to render this help. He found out from one of his company colleagues when there would be a run of the particular type of leaded steel needed and arranged for a little extra to be prepared. The 14 billets were so heavy that the freight charge out to California would have sunk the project, so another form of help was provided too. The steel company had pre-fabricating facilities to help out customers and these were used to hog out the camshafts so that only the absolutely essential weight for the unfinished cams was actually shipped. The shafts were finished in California. Nic kept six of them. Keeping two for himself, he gave two to John McComb [OH] who in turn provided them to Dick Solove [OH] and Herb Boss, and the remaining two were split between Colin Black [S. Africa] and John Donner [UK].

2. Nic was taking a trip on the famous Mississippi riverboat Delta Queen at the time and met a German tourist who told him about the shop in Stuttgart. Following up he found that the entire production was spoken for by Mercedes for use on some of their special models.

Some of this material was first published in the Pacific Northwest region's newsletter *Hose Clamp*, vol. 21-1, Jan/Feb 1992.

187TA was invited to appear at the Louis Vuitton concours in 1998.

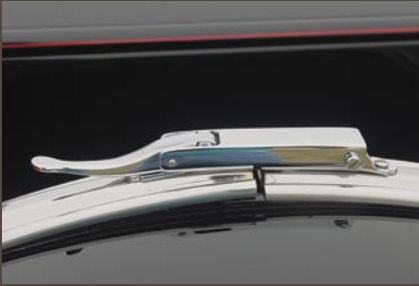


The rub & buffing and detail side of restoration:
(I) wood refinishing; (above) a French license
plate in progress and (below) completed.



The toolkit sits under the top lid in a hinged box with guides that have spindles on either end to secure the box in place. Inside, all the tools are secured onto two trays, one above the other.

Photos this page: Larry Clemm



Detail of the clocking clip for the sidemount wheel covers.



On the coachplates Binder spelled his first name with a "y".

One-off model of 187TA by Jean Paul Thévenet. See p. 9272 for more examples of his work.



André Blatze