

A BRIEF HISTORY OF 1930 ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM II 137GN: by John Peirson.

In October 1929, Rolls-Royce sold a chassis to Rootes Ltd for a Mr J.A. Wattie of Enton Green, near Godalming, Surrey. By June of 1930 a Thrupp and Maberly body had been placed on the chassis, and presumably the car was delivered soon afterwards to Mr Wattie. In about 1933 Mr Wattie moved to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, with the car and with his chauffeur, Alf Welland.

When Mr Wattie died, in December 1939, the car had to be sold. The depression had hit British Columbia very hard, and there was no market for a big luxury car like a Rolls. The car was stored for a time, then placed with a car dealership, National Motor Co. in Victoria.

The above is fairly factual, what follows is more speculative. The story, as best I can understand it, is that the price was reduced and reduced until finally it got down to \$500, whereupon the superintendent of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway, a branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway, bought it. He had the railway wheels fitted, with the intention of using the car as his personal transportation on the railway. However, he heard that his boss from Montreal was coming to inspect his business and decided that a Rolls-Royce might cause problems, so he hurriedly sold the car to Mayo Singh.

Mayo Singh is a famous, highly respected, person in the Indian community in British Columbia. Mayo Singh had arrived in Canada from India in 1906 and found work with the Canadian Pacific Railway. He gained experience in mill work on the mainland and soon had his own lumber business on Vancouver Island. He died in 1955. His business included a short railway line, the Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Co tracks. The Rolls-Royce was used on the tracks, but not very often. His son recalls going one way very nicely, but then having to return home very slowly in reverse gear all the way, because there was no way of turning around.

Mayo sold the car to a Mr Doug Holman. The railway wheels were removed and Packard wheels of a suitable diameter were installed, but once again the car was not driven very much. The car was put up on blocks in a garage near the house. When the house caught fire, the car was pulled by a tractor off the blocks to safety, but as the car moved over the blocks they rolled beneath the fenders, causing much re-shaping.

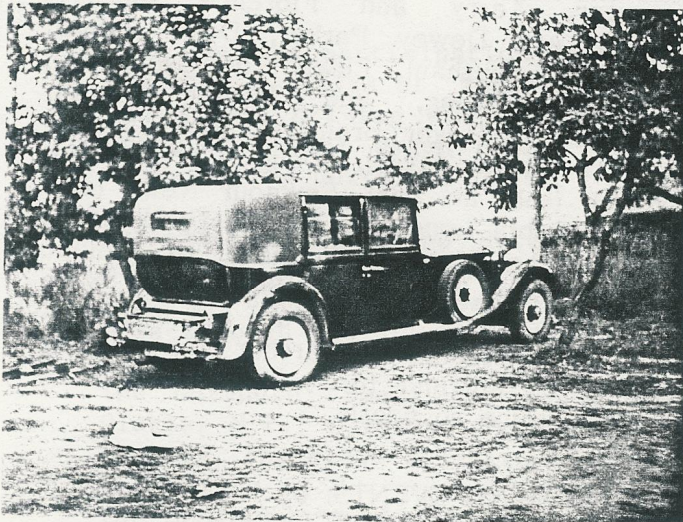
A subsequent owner was Hank Remple, a vintage car enthusiast. He bought the car for \$250 and managed to get it running. He drove it for a year, but then parked it for four. He sold to a friend in Calgary. I saw the car in Calgary in 1989, in the ownership of John Chorny, with a restoration job in the initial stages. I believe John owns the car still.

There were probably other owners of the car. The big logging magnate H.R. McMillan was mentioned by one person, a Mr Humber and a Bill Lloyd by another. When I first looked into the history of the car, many of the players were still alive, but their stories did not altogether mesh. I tried hard to determine the name of the E&N Railway's

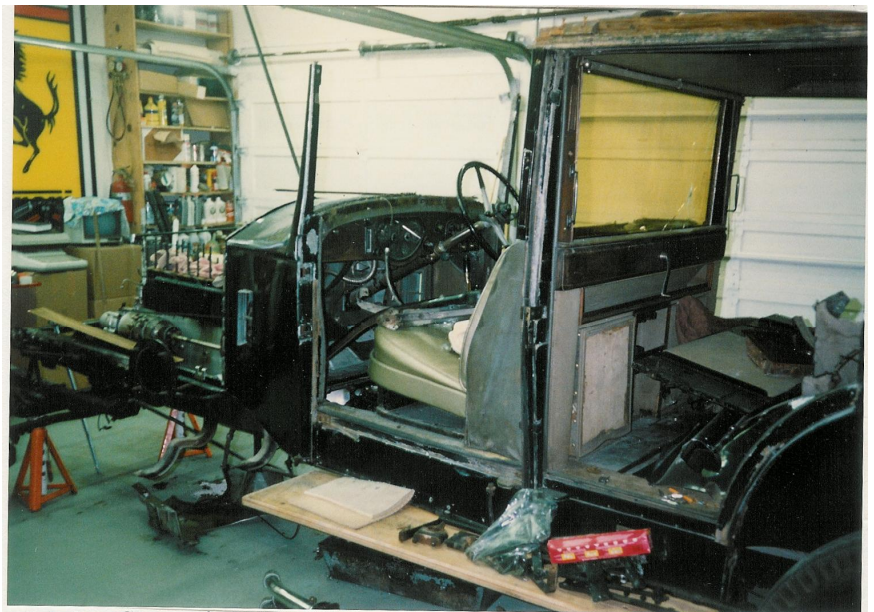
superintendent, but no-one seemed to know. A Mr J.A. Kennedy was apparently the superintendent from 1930 to 1948, so maybe he was the man.



137GN on the Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Co tracks near Chemainus, B.C.
Photo by Elwood White in 1946.



137GN before restoration, with Packard wheels to replace the railway wheels (Bill Small photo).



John Chorny's 1930 Phantom II 137GN under restoration.