

REHAB OF EDISON SITES BEARS FRUIT AS ESTATE REOPENS TO VISITORS

His name is synonymous with ingenuity, recalling a time when the nation emerged as the world-wide leader in a golden age of technology. Thomas Edison, one of history's most prolific inventors, did much of his work at his laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey. Today it is preserved—along with his home, Glenmont—as a national historic site.

While the complex of industrial brick buildings doesn't appear much different from others of the era, Edison's facility, sometimes referred to as "the Invention Factory," was a remarkable place indeed. It was here that the inventor's fertile imagination met the practical world, and where devices he visualized became reality.

A multiyear effort to rehabilitate the once-neglected site, making it more accessible to the public, is bearing fruit as the Edison estate recently re-opened for visitation. Great strides have been made in the laboratory buildings as well, where work is continuing. The project, started in 2003, is a partnership between the National Park Service and the nonprofit Thomas A. Edison Preservation Foundation. GE, a descendant of Edison's original electric lighting business, donated \$5 million; a pair of grants totaling \$500,000 from the NPS-

ously on the same idea. Once a device was done, Edison quickly patented it. All the resources for manufacture were present on site. In fact, much of the factory machinery was conceived and created in the Edison labs. He turned out products at an unprecedented rate. Out of West Orange came the motion picture camera, the phonograph, sound recordings, movies, the alkaline battery, and a



Far Left: Building 11, Edison's place for experiments and special projects. Left center: The inventor with an early version of the phonograph.

administered Save America's Treasures program went toward improving storage conditions for the park's enormous collection of documents and artifacts. Restoring the 21-acre site is expected to cost over \$12 million. Lack of funds, age, and water and insect damage all contributed to earn Edison's home and laboratories a place on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of most endangered places.

Thomas Edison moved to West Orange in 1886. Glenmont, his 29-room Queen Anne mansion, was a wedding gift to his new bride, Mina. It was located in one of the first planned residential communities. Edison's laboratory complex, which was less than a mile away from his house, was finished the following year. It was convenient to rail service and Hudson River traffic, and perhaps most importantly, just an hour away from the offices of the New York bankers and investors who would finance his work.

The Edison laboratories, originally comprised of five one-story buildings, housed a machine shop, a library, experiment rooms, and individual chemistry, physics, and metallurgy labs (at the park, they are collectively referred to as "the lab"). Edison submitted freely to his wide-ranging curiosity and imagination. The only requirement he imposed on research was that it had to have practical, marketable value. "I always invented to obtain money to go on inventing," he says in Matthew Josephson's *Edison: A Biography*.

His approach was to bring an idea to specialists to develop a prototype and work the bugs out. Once performing flawlessly, it was turned over to the factory part of the complex for production. Edison employed over 200 scientists, machinists, craftsmen, and laborers, who he divided into small teams, all working simultane-

diagnostic tool known as the fluoroscope, predecessor of the X-Ray.

The diversity of the work helped keep the business afloat. It saved Edison from having to rely on a limited number of products. Older, proven ideas funded more innovation. Perfecting the alkaline battery was trying and expensive, kept alive by proceeds from the phonograph. Edison's fusion of business and technology was an early model for modern research and development. The formula

Right: Glenmont, Edison's New Jersey home.



ALL PHOTOS THOMAS EDISON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

would be improved upon and used with increasing frequency as America rose to its place as the undisputed leader in technological innovation.

AT ITS PEAK, THE MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS OCCUPIED 21 ACRES OFF Main Street in West Orange. It was an enduring local presence, with generations following each other to work in the big brick buildings. In the end, however, progress outstripped even Edison. He couldn't "keep up with the modern world he had helped to create," says a National Park Service history. By 1930, the place was no longer a hotbed of innovation. Only seven people worked in the labs. The factory still turned out batteries and dictating machines, but the glory days were gone. Edison's son Charles sold the company to McGraw Electric in 1959. McGraw continued some manufacturing in West Orange, but by the early '70s, it had moved to the Midwest, and the corporate presence was just a memory. By that time, the house and lab were in the possession of the National Park Service, which, while much of Edison's West Orange disappeared in the wake of urban renewal, set about trying to preserve the legacy.

through the plants and said, 'If you have any brothers or sisters, ask them to come in for an interview.'" Today, while local leaders see economic advantage in heritage tourism, some residents view the history differently. When Edison departed, the "carefully crafted family image" departed with him, says NPS ethnographer Rebecca Joseph. Adds Mike Agar, who led the study, "From the viewpoint of the town, it wasn't a museum. It was a closed factory." Residents saw the park as a reminder of abandonment by the McGraw Company, which moved the operation out. Agar says, "It went from being a patriarchal organization—with all the good and bad that entails—to more of a formal kind of labor-management antagonistic entity."

TODAY, AS THE REHAB MOVES FORWARD, THE PARK SEEKS TO TELL ALL SIDES of the story. The most immediate issue, however, was protecting Glenmont from fire, says Superintendent Maryanne Gerbauckas. Fire officials estimated the old house could burn down in a little over 10 minutes. "Now we have fire detection and suppression for the first time," she says. Glenmont also got an updated electrical system; the greenhouse, potting shed, and barn have been



EDISON EMPLOYED OVER 200 SCIENTISTS, MACHINISTS, CRAFTSMEN, AND LABORERS, WHO HE DIVIDED INTO SMALL TEAMS, ALL WORKING SIMULTANEOUSLY ON THE SAME IDEA. ONCE A DEVICE WAS DONE, EDISON QUICKLY PATENTED IT. ALL THE RESOURCES FOR MANUFACTURE WERE PRESENT ON SITE.

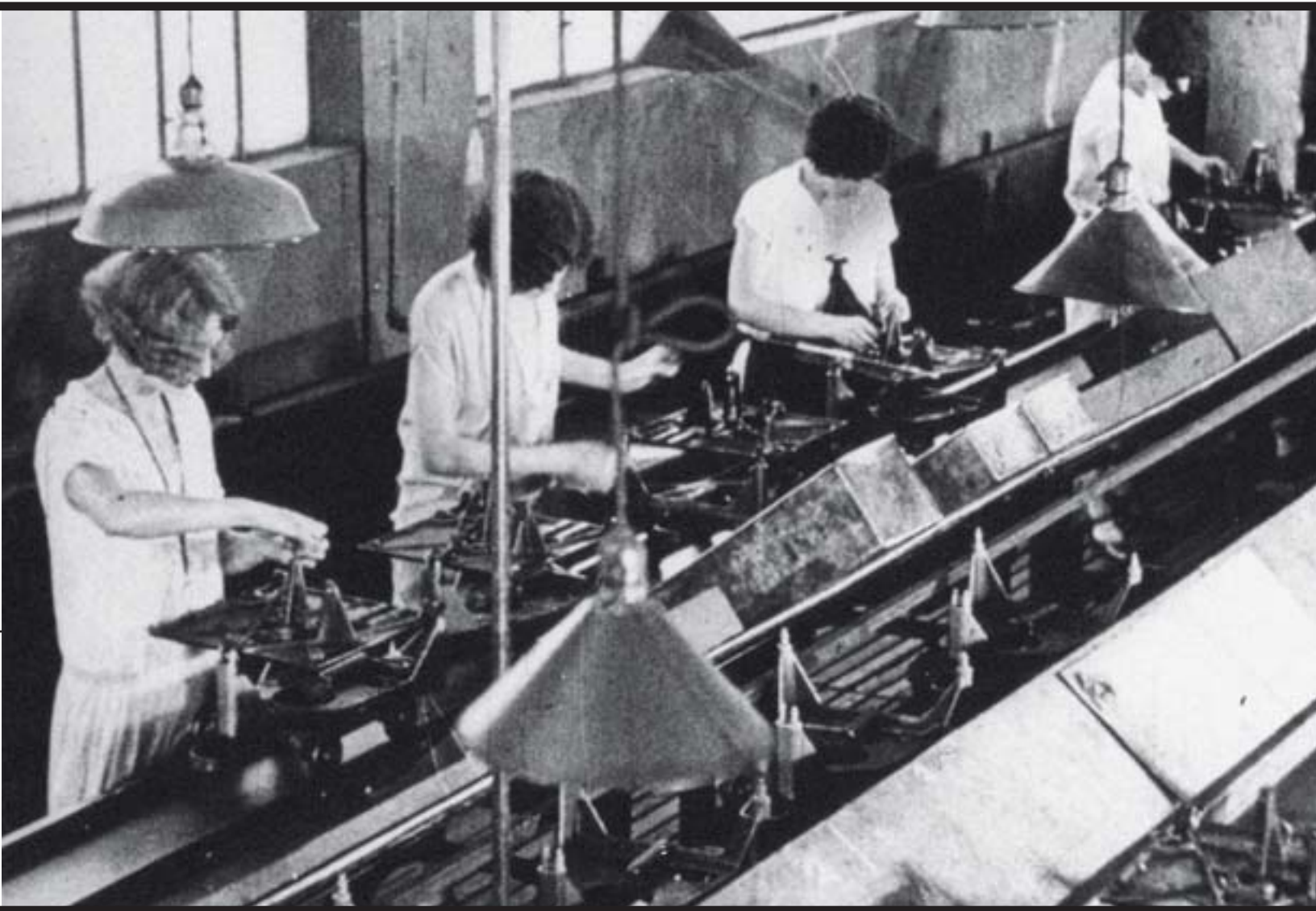
Above: Inventions forever linked with Edison's name: the phonograph and the light bulb.

In 44 years at the West Orange labs, Edison earned an esteemed place in the history of technology. Of his 1,093 patents, about half were developed there. While the National Park Service naturally celebrated the Edison phenomenon, it was evident that it carried a profound social impact as well.

To investigate the human dimension to the story, the National Park Service contracted an ethnographic study of former employees and their descendants. In field interviews, the company's pervasive presence was clear. Many locals worked there, in some cases entire families. "[Edison] wanted to keep the families," says one respondent who followed his father into the factories. "They went

rehabbed, too. Another aspect of the renovation is the return of Building 11. The small structure, a simple wood frame building unlike others in the complex, was where Edison called quick meetings with his engineers and scientists—"muckers," as he called them—or when a sudden project came up that needed room for experiment. Building 11 was disassembled in 1940 and shipped to the Henry Ford Museum in Michigan, where it sat unused until recently. The park and its partners got the building back, and it's now very close to its original home among the brick edifices.

The greater part of the work to be done is in the laboratory, much of it for climate control. Leaking roofs, deteriorating mortar, poor drainage, and the generally wet environment of old masonry buildings make for a major rehab job. The park holds more than 400,000



Above: Sometimes father and mother, sister and brother worked for the Edison company, whose family image departed when its corporate descendant moved the operation out.

artifacts and 5 million pages of paper, including Edison's letters and lab notes. There are early phonographs and sound recordings, radios, motion picture projectors, lighting equipment, prototype batteries, telephones, and assorted spare parts. The previously inaccessible third floor will become exhibit space with floor-to-ceiling displays. The phonograph collection has its own HVAC system and special lighting.

"The best thing about this is the access," says Gerbauckas. Since the park was established, tours were restricted to the first floor. She recalls early tours where guides would indicate inaccessible areas,

remarking that although fascinating things were kept there, they unfortunately could not be seen. A new elevator will take visitors where they can more fully experience the Invention Factory. "That means a great deal to us," Gerbauckas says.

For more information, visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/edis or email Superintendent Maryanne Gerbauckas at maryanne_gerbauckas@nps.gov. The park is the focus of a lesson plan—part of the Teaching with Historic Places series produced by the National Park Service—which can be used to teach students about industrialization, the development of science and technology, and social change at the beginning of the 20th century. Go to www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/25edison/5edison.htm.

OBJECTS OF LIFE

WEB EXHIBIT CHRONICLES THE STORIED PAST OF THE NEZ PERCE

For thousands of years, in the vast open spaces of the Northwest, among its rivers, mountains, and valleys, the Nez Perce lived freely. Today, the tribe's ancient presence and its more recent—and tragic—history are commemorated at Nez Perce National Historical Park, a collection of 38 sites scattered throughout a traditional homeland in what is now Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana. The park's museum holds over a million objects in its collection, an incomparable document of Nez Perce history and culture.



THE CLOTHING, ORNAMENTS, TOOLS, BAGS, AND BASKETRY—AND THE STORIES they represent—are the focus of a new online exhibit produced by the park and the museum management program of the National Park Service in consultation with the tribe.

The collection, like the park, is a narrative of the Nez Perce experience, the objects invested with a meaning that transcends form and function. From the tribe's perspective, the artifacts are a living part of the culture. They express what it means to be Nimiipuu, as the Nez Perce call themselves.

The Nez Perce homeland encompassed about 13 million acres around the Snake, Salmon, and Columbia Rivers. The diverse ecosystem ranges from shortgrass prairie to sagebrush steppe, from mountain forests to river valleys. The Nez Perce were keenly attuned to the land, structuring not only their practical existence but also their social and ceremonial lives around the seasons. While they were not nomadic, they did move to predetermined areas on a well-thought-out schedule. In early spring, the women went up to the prairies to dig root foods such as camas bulb, wild carrots, and Kous. In August, when the salmon headed upriver to spawn, families moved en masse to the water. The Columbia River basin was one of the richest sources of salmon in the world. In high summer, every-

one migrated to the higher elevations, gathering the resources just coming into season and hunting the big game that frequented the heights. Autumn brought a return to the valleys and preparation for winter, in which large quantities of meat, fish, roots, and berries were dried and stored.

A section of the exhibit titled “Seasonal Rounds” describes this aspect of Nez Perce life. Objects include intricately woven bags, cradleboards used to transport infants, and beautifully designed baskets.

WOMEN WERE IN CHARGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD, NOT ONLY EXPERTS IN LOCAL flora but accomplished artisans as well. Their extensive knowledge of the plant world informed Nez Perce cuisine and shaped daily life. Deftly made bags of cornhusk and hemp, and utensils fashioned of bone, mountain sheep, and bison horn, evidence how their knowledge and skill influenced tribal life. The extended family was critical to survival too, part of a system of mutual support. Grandparents were not only teachers, but also the keepers of the past, handed down to new generations in stories.

Above: Items from the park's collection demonstrate Nez Perce artistry. Right: A woman's dress made of wool and felt, decorated with shells and glass beads.



ALL PHOTOS NEZ PERCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK/NEZ PERCE MUSEUM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Left: A war bonnet with eagle feathers, a symbol of leadership and honor. Right: Josiah Redwolf, the last survivor of the Nez Perce war, about 1970.



UNLIKE MANY TRIBES OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS, THE NEZ PERCE DID NOT HAVE A FORMAL HIERARCHY OF CLANS AND SOCIETIES. THERE WAS RESPECT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AS WELL AS A HIGH VALUE PLACED ON THE COMMON GOOD. THIS TOLERANCE WOULD HAVE UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES WHEN MISSIONARIES ARRIVED IN THE 1830S.

The exhibit showcases Nez Perce style and craftsmanship in the collection of traditional clothing worn by men and women, and the various implements used to perform tasks. Beaded moccasins and leggings, decorated dresses and shirts, hats, and headdresses are all on view. The elaborate adornment was done with elk teeth, shell, glass beads, porcupine quills, feathers, paints, and dye.

UNLIKE MANY TRIBES OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS, THE NEZ PERCE DID NOT HAVE a formal hierarchy of clans and societies. There was respect for the individual as well as a high value placed on the common good. This tolerance would have unforeseen consequences when missionaries arrived in the 1830s. In the Nez Perce worldview people were seen as part of the larger world. There was no notion of domination or ownership of the land. It followed that Nez Perce spirituality was intensely personal. Many people searched for *Way-ya-kin*, one's guardian spirit, which could help them on life's journey. The quest for *Way-ya-kin* often involved a solitary sojourn into the mountains in hope of finding this spirit, which could bestow special skills or powers to aid the seeker throughout life. *Way-ya-kin*, if it could be found, was a serious and personal thing, and was never to be discussed with others. Objects associated with this belief, and other spiritual practices, are also part of the exhibit: drums, headdresses, flutes, talismans, whistles, and rattles, many used in Nez Perce rituals.

The Northwest was part of a trade network that extended from Mexico to the Canadian sub-arctic, and from the Pacific Coast onto the Great Plains. For the Nez Perce—and for Native Americans in general—trade was about much more than the exchange of goods. Through marriages, alliances were cemented that provided access to certain trade items, mutual support in times of strife, and use rights for hunting, fishing, and gathering. Cultural exchange, both in infor-

mation and ideas, was reinforced by trade. Due to their location in a country laced with rivers, the Nez Perce were centered in this trade system. When horses arrived from the Spanish colonies in the early 1700s, the tribe took to them readily and soon became the legendary riders and breeders of popular lore.

IN THE WAKE OF LEWIS AND CLARK, A STEADY STREAM OF NEW VISITORS CAME to Nez Perce country. The first to come were Christian fur trappers, whose rituals the tribe observed with curiosity. In 1836, the Spaldings and Whitmans came to bring Christianity to the tribes of the Oregon Country. When they arrived, they found an atmosphere of openness among some Nez Perce, developing a small but fervent following. Others resented both the ideas and presence of the missionaries. The missionary movement was seen as a way to assimilate Indians into Euro-American society, part of the larger idea of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion. To better communicate Christian ideas to the tribe, Spalding came up with a written version of the Nez Perce language, publishing Bible tracts on a press he imported from missionary contacts in Hawaii. Though unknown at the time, the seeds of the long, painful saga of dispossession and exile had been planted.

The collection reflects the increasing contact with white culture: forged steel hoes and axe heads; a broad-brimmed black hat. There is also a flintlock rifle, indispensable for hunting, but by the second half of the 19th century used for an altogether different reason.

In time, a rift developed among the Nez Perce. On one side were the Christian converts; on the other those who preferred the old ways. By the middle of the century, the U.S. government was aggressively seeking western land, and in 1853 split the Oregon Territory and made Washington (and northern Idaho) a separate territory, appointing a governor and sending representatives to negotiate with the tribes.

In the Treaty of 1855 the tribe ceded five million acres to the United States, keeping seven million acres to live on, as well as fishing, hunting, and gathering rights to all their traditional land. In exchange, the government was to provide schools, a mill, a carpenter shop, a blacksmith, and annual annuities.

TWO COMPANIES OF CAVALRY WERE SENT IN RESPONSE, FINDING THE NEZ PERCE IN WHITE BIRD CANYON. THE ARMY, UNPREPARED AND OUTMANEUVERED, SUFFERED ONE OF ITS WORST LOSSES SINCE THE CIVIL WAR.

Five years later, gold was discovered on Nez Perce land. Thousands of illegal prospectors and squatters flooded the area, and soon the tribe was pressured to sign a new treaty, losing nearly all of the land kept under the 1855 treaty. Now only 750,000 acres remained.

Band leaders who would lose their traditional homes under the new treaty refused to sign and the tribe splintered into “treaty” and “non-treaty” factions. For the next 13 years, the non-treaty Nez Perce lived on acreage that remained free, but with a great deal of resentment. It was an uneasy time, rife with uncertainty, perpetually stoked by encroaching settlers.

In the spring of 1877, the U.S. government made a decision on the non-treaty Nez Perce. The Army issued an ultimatum: move to the reservation or face war. The Nez Perce complied, but some young warriors sought revenge against certain settlers who had killed and mistreated Nez Percés earlier. Two companies of cavalry were sent in response, finding the Nez Perce in White Bird Canyon. The Army,

surprised at Big Hole, today a national battlefield. They headed for Canada but few made it. The Nez Perce surrendered at Snake Creek, near the Bear Paw Mountains in northern Montana. Chief Joseph spoke the immortal words, “I will fight no more forever.” Most of the captured were sent to Indian Territory in Oklahoma, though they were eventually allowed to return to a reservation in Washington.

IN 1887, CONGRESS PASSED THE DAWES ACT, WHICH GAVE THE PRESIDENT authority to divide reservation land into individually owned plots. Liberal reformers believed this would bring prosperity. The effect, however, further disrupted the traditional way of life. Unallotted lands were considered surplus available for sale to non-Indians. Speculators jumped at the opportunity.

Unaccustomed to living on parceled territory, the Nez Perce nonetheless weathered the allotment period. In 1934 Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, and the tribe recouped some of the land. Today, on a reservation in northern Idaho, they work to preserve the salmon runs and the places where traditional root foods grow, part of a wider effort to maintain tribal ways. There has also been a revival of the Nez Perce language and traditional art forms. The park’s research facility, located in the visitor center at Spalding, Idaho, includes archives and a library dedicated to the study of Nez Perce history and culture. The collections include manuscripts, maps, periodicals, reports, and audio and videotapes. There is also a database of approximately 4,000 digital images.

The Nez Perce online exhibit, a powerful evocation of a poignant chapter in the history of the American West, is slated to launch in late October. Go to www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/index.html. The park’s website is at www.nps.gov/nepe.



unprepared and outmaneuvered, suffered one of its worst losses since the Civil War. After the encounter, one soldier said, “I have been in lots of scrapes, but I never went up against anything like the Nez Perce in all my life.”

After White Bird Canyon, the die was cast. There were battles at Cottonwood and Clearwater. The fighting continued through the summer, with the Army pursuing the Indians across Idaho. They crossed the Bitterroot Mountains into Montana, where they were

Left: Nez Perce tepee circa 1901 and one today. Right: A vest edged with smoked deerskin, decorated with glass.



AUTO LEGEND

HOME OF 'APOGEE OF STYLE' BECOMES A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

They have been described as “rolling sculpture.” The high-end, high-style automobiles that came out of Indiana’s Auburn Cord Duesenberg factories are world renowned for their classic, innovative design. At a time when Detroit’s titans were amassing market share and power, the small boutique car manufacturer played the role of iconoclast, following its own vision.



ALTHOUGH EACH LINE WAS DIFFERENT, THE CARS WERE INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE. A PROTOTYPE DRIVEN CROSS-COUNTRY FOR A ROAD TEST—WITH ALL BRAND IDENTIFICATION INTENTIONALLY OMITTED—ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD ATTENTION NONETHELESS. “THEY TRAIL US UP SIDE STREETS, COUNTRY WAYSIDE FILLING STATIONS, AND LITERALLY STAMPEDE THE CAR,” RECALLED ONE OF THE DRIVERS.

THE AUBURN CORD DUESENBERG FACILITY IN AUBURN, ONE OF THE FEW INTACT remnants of the independent American auto manufacturers of the first part of the 20th century, recently became a national historic landmark. Although no cars have been built there since 1937 and the factories are gone, the showroom, administration building, parts department, and Cord L-29 Building—named after one of the company’s most notable offerings—are largely untouched. They were built with a flair that seemed to surround everything connected with the automaker. The sleek Art Deco styling, suggesting unimpeded forward motion, dominates. The showroom is ornate and imposing; the parts department features a barrel vaulted roof. Automobile legend aside, the architecture itself gives powerful witness to an era.

Since 1974, the showroom and administration building has been occupied by the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum. It is the only car museum whose exhibit space is a showroom from the period it commemorates. The NHL nomination calls it “12,000 square feet of Art Deco splendor.” In 1994, the National Automotive and Truck Museum moved into the parts department and the Cord L-29 building.

Far Left: Detail, 1935 Auburn speedster. Near left: Clay models in a design studio. Right: Rolling sculpture, a 1937 Cord.

IN THE 1920S AND ‘30S, AUBURNS, CORDS, AND DUESENBERGS REPRESENTED car manufacturing’s apogee of style and engineering. Although each line was different, the cars were instantly recognizable. A prototype driven cross-country for a road test—with all brand identification intentionally omitted—attracted widespread attention nonetheless. “They trail us up side streets, country wayside filling stations, and literally stampede the car,” recalled one of the drivers. Everyone wanted a look at “this sleek low creation.” At a 1935 auto show, people stood on the running boards of other cars to see over the heads of the crowd gathered around the latest Cord. The company produced many firsts: the first front-wheel-drive passenger car, the first one-piece hood opening from the front, the first model without an exposed vertical radiator shell, and the first open-and-close headlights. Detroit kept an eye on Auburn, where experimental car bodies were shielded by frosted glass windows to discourage corporate espionage. Still, most of the innovations found their way into the mass market.

ALL PHOTOS AUBURN CORD DUESENBERG MUSEUM EXCEPT MICHAEL FURMAN RIGHT AND FAR LEFT





Left: The showroom. Below: Gary Cooper and his 1931 Duesenberg, with a custom hood ornament designed by a French sculptor.

THE FACILITY BEGAN AS THE AUBURN AUTOMOBILE COMPANY IN 1903, an outgrowth of the local carriage and wagon trade, an old tradition that by 1890 was one of the state's top five industries. In the 19th century, a flood of German immigrants, many of them skilled woodworkers, found employment in the business. They populated the first auto assembly lines, since the new mode of transport was nothing more than an internal combustion engine on a wagon frame.

This is precisely what Charles Eckhart and his three sons were doing as the new century dawned. The Eckharts, who ran a wagon building business in Auburn, were tinkering with a self-propelled carriage. The idea was hardly new. At that early date there was an automobile trade magazine called *The Horseless Age*, and its reporters watched the Eckharts and related their progress. The operation managed to build 25 automobiles in 1903. The next year, the Eckharts erected a pair of big two-story structures behind the wagon business, and this was the beginning of the company.

Eckhart senior died in 1915 and the family sold the business shortly afterward. The new owner, a Chicago investment banking firm, spent a great deal on capital improvements in anticipation of big sales. But the plan ran into trouble with tough economic condi-

Cord's marketing was straightforward. He asked customers and dealers what they liked and what they didn't. He invited mechanics to look his cars over and prospective drivers to take a ride. Cord figured that a good product would sell itself. Auburns were high-end specialty vehicles, but Cord pitched them with a regular-guy delivery. Ad copy read, "These cars are built by a home-owning group of workmen in Auburn, Indiana . . ."

BETWEEN 1910 AND 1920, THE AUTO INDUSTRY RESEMBLED THE DOT COM boom. The frenzy to get in on the action produced two groups of automakers. Henry Ford and others went for mass production and economy of scale. Their inventory was limited but dependable, but the profit on each sale was relatively small. To make this approach work, they relied on standardization, mechanization, speed, and control over their workers.

The other group, independent manufacturers like Auburn, bought parts from suppliers, stored them in big warehouses on site, and had teams of seasoned machinists build the cars by hand. The price was high but so was the quality.

Cutting edge factories at Ford, Buick, and Oldsmobile manufactured their own parts and filled the ranks of management with col-



THE COMPANY PRODUCED MANY FIRSTS: THE FIRST FRONT-WHEEL-DRIVE PASSENGER CAR, THE FIRST ONE-PIECE HOOD OPENING FROM THE FRONT, THE FIRST MODEL WITHOUT AN EXPOSED VERTICAL RADIATOR SHELL, AND THE FIRST OPEN-AND-CLOSE HEADLIGHTS. DETROIT KEPT AN EYE ON AUBURN, WHERE EXPERIMENTAL CAR BODIES WERE SHIELDED BY FROSTED GLASS WINDOWS TO DISCOURAGE CORPORATE ESPIONAGE.

tions after WW I. With the help of marketing guru Roy Faulkner, Auburn turned its fortunes around. One of his ideas was to cater to a segment of society steadily gaining more power and independence: women. Promotional literature depicted them driving down the road in the latest Auburn models. Faulkner had other good ideas as well, and the company thrived into the mid-'20s, when the service and parts building was built.

VISIONARY INDUSTRIALIST E.L. CORD FIRST LAID EYES ON THE PLACE IN 1924, when he bought an interest. The company now covered over 18 acres. Cord figured that it wouldn't take much to increase output to 100 cars a day. He moved a backlog of cars by sprucing them up with nickel plating and two-tone paint. The profits helped launch his plan.

lege educated engineers and managers. On the assembly floors of the independents, senior craftsmen ran things and the system tended to be more collegial than hierarchical. This allowed for more experimentation, evidenced by a wider range of models.

Detroit's chief rival was Cleveland, with Indianapolis a close second. In part because of its history of carriage manufacturing and in part because of its well-developed rail system, Indiana was a hub of the industry. Independent companies thrived there, producing famous makes such as Stutz and Marmon.

Within two years, E.L. Cord completely took over the company. The 34-year-old CEO began expanding his empire. Output doubled. A new line emerged—the Cord—and the company acquired

Below: Clark Gable with his 1935 Duesenberg convertible. Right: The entrance to the showroom and administration building.

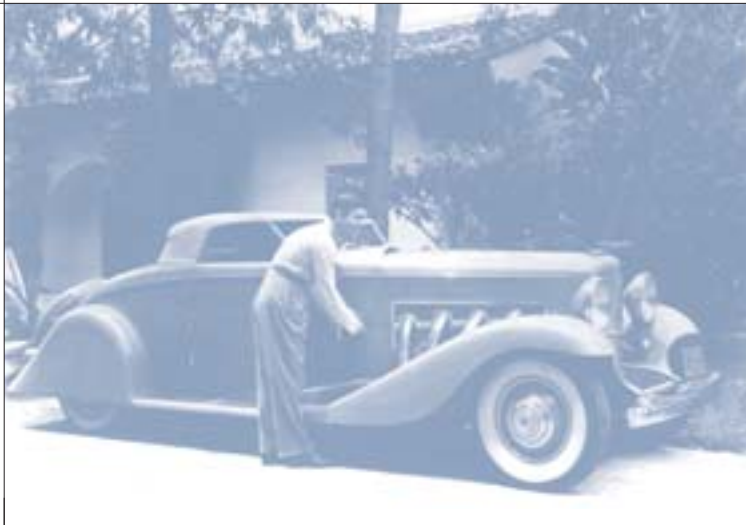
the Duesenberg Motors Corporation, which had gone bankrupt. Of the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg trio, the Duesenberg became the deluxe item, the absolute best the company had to offer. Along with the Cord, it was at the forefront of the auto aesthetic, experimenting continually with new curves and lines, taking on dramatic new looks and astonishing consumers. The cars were the testing grounds for the fertile minds of company engineers. In 1929, the Cord L-29 rolled off the assembly line—using front wheel drive. The technology had been used in tanks and taxicabs, but never before in a passenger car. Today, the building constructed specially for its development is part of the national historic landmark. The company branched into racecars, not only for the publicity but because it was a natural outlet for research and development.

As sales skyrocketed, dealers opened in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, and a host of other cities around the world. Still, in many ways, the increasingly eclipsed Auburn was most critical to the company. While generous spending fueled the Cord-Duesenberg legend, the consistently selling Auburn paid for it all.

inventory of spare parts. For an extra \$25,000 he bought the administration building. He ran a parts and service business for the vehicles still on the road. The 1950s brought a wave of nostalgia for the cars and a restoration boom. Winslow stayed in business supplying parts to enthusiasts. As the Auburn Cord Duesenberg legend grew, there was increasing demand. Winslow began doing restorations at the old facility, employing local people who had worked at the company during its heyday.

IN 1951, THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART NAMED THE CORD 810 ONE OF THE greatest car designs of all time. Far and wide, Auburns, Cords, and Duesenbergs are listed in all-time “best” lists and are commonly considered among the top classic cars ever made. A 2003 Art Deco exhibit at the Victoria and Albert Museum of Art in London included a Cord. At a classic car auction in California in 2004, a Duesenberg went for \$4.5 million.

Today, stepping into the old buildings, one is able to imagine the sense of style, the electricity, and the aura of creative genius that must have prevailed. The showroom floor, triangular terrazzo tiles



TODAY, STEPPING INTO THE OLD BUILDINGS, ONE IS ABLE TO IMAGINE THE SENSE OF STYLE, THE ELECTRICITY, AND THE AURA OF CREATIVE GENIUS THAT MUST HAVE PREVAILED. THE SHOWROOM FLOOR, TRIANGULAR TERRAZZO TILES IN WHITE, GRAY-GREEN, AND OXBLOOD, IS NOT THE SIGHT ONE NORMALLY ASSOCIATES WITH THE HISTORY OF THE AUTO INDUSTRY, NOR IS THE PHILIPPINE WALNUT IN THE OFFICE SUITES, OR THE MULTITIERED METAL LIGHT FIXTURES.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION WAS HARSH FOR BOUTIQUE AUTOMAKERS. Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler could offer decent cars at low prices. Independents like Auburn Cord Duesenberg were suddenly relics of the Roaring Twenties. E.L. Cord moved to Beverly Hills, spending less time on the affairs of the company. As the Depression deepened, sales died off rapidly and new management took over. The company made extra money stamping metal kitchen cabinets for Montgomery Ward. It began to move a substantial amount of its investment out of the automobile industry with its eye on the next big thing: aircraft.

The end came in November 1937. Dallas Winslow, a Detroit businessman, offered a bankruptcy court \$85,000 for the remaining

in white, gray-green, and oxblood, is not the sight one normally associates with the history of the auto industry, nor is the Philippine walnut in the office suites, or the multitiered metal light fixtures. But it is details like those that speak volumes about this particular history, one that will be preserved in perpetuity among America’s most cherished places.

The national historic landmark nomination for the Auburn Cord Duesenberg facility can be viewed at www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/designations/samples/in/auburn%20cord.pdf. The museum is online at <http://acdmuseum.org/>. For more information, contact Gran Roberts, the museum’s director of marketing, at (260) 925-1444, email granr@acdmuseum.org.

