

Title: Get your kicks on Route 141: The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection at Hagley Museum and Library

Presenter: Emily Cottle, Project Archivist/Cataloger for the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection at Hagley Museum and Library

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Abstract:

In January 2010, Hagley Museum and Library was donated the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection. This collection contains 700 cubic feet of transportation memorabilia, primarily automotive. The collection contains tens of thousands of trade catalogs for makes and models from around the world, including many short-lived automakers.. Color and upholstery samples, company histories, photographs, press kits, and annual reports help round out this singular collection, along with promotional ephemera such as postcards, buttons, and lanyards, as well as model cars and hub caps.

Books and magazines also make up a significant portion of the collection. The books include specific company histories, reference works, as well as books on other modes of transportation, such as planes, trains, boats, and blimps. The magazines include company serials (i.e. *Ford Magazine*) as well as large runs of general automotive titles (i.e. *Road & Track*, *Motor*, *Antique Automobile*).

In December 2010 Hagley Museum and Library was awarded a Council on Library and Information Resources Hidden Collections grant to support the processing of this important collection. The three-year processing project began in February 2011 and is expected to conclude by early 2014.

The collection is officially closed until processing is complete, with the exception of the books, which are available for use now at the library. In the meantime, please visit our [project blog](#), which provides weekly articles about the project methodology and highlights unique or interested items in the collection. The blog also includes a link to the Hagley digital collection, which contains over 600 Vinson items and continues to grow each week.

“The Z. Taylor Vinson Collection: 3 Years and 3 Types of Outreach,”
Delivered by Kenton Jaehnig at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference
Spring Meeting, April 25-27, 2013 in Erie, PA

Good Morning. My name is Kenton Jaehnig and I am the Z. Taylor Vinson Project Archivist at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware. I feel honored to have been chosen to give a presentation at this morning’s session, **Advancing the Front Line: Innovative Outreach**. I would like to use this opportunity to share with you the innovative outreach that is being carried out as part of the project I am currently working on.

Advanced outreach for archival collections that are not yet open to researchers is nothing new. However, Hagley is taking advanced outreach to a level rarely seen in the archives field. Ever hear of a truly comprehensive multi-year outreach campaign for a single archival collection that has not yet been opened to the public? Such an outreach campaign is being carried out for the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection, a large and very significant collection of automobile literature that is currently being processed at the Hagley Museum and Library and is scheduled to be open to researchers in February 2014.

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss and analyze the outreach campaign for the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection. I intend to do this in the following manner:

1. First, I will provide an overview of the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection Project.
2. Secondly, I will discuss the reasons behind Hagley’s decision to embark on such an extended and comprehensive outreach campaign for the Vinson Collection.
3. Thirdly, I will identify and describe the outreach methods used to promote the Vinson Collection and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.
4. Last of all, I intend to analyze the degree of success Hagley has experienced thus far in its outreach campaign for the Vinson Collection.

Z. Taylor Vinson, the collection's creator, was an attorney and an automobile enthusiast. Born in Martinsburg, West Virginia on July 7, 1933, Vinson graduated from Princeton University in 1955 and earned his law degree from the University of Virginia in 1961. After practicing law for O'Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles, California and for the International Finance Corporation in Washington, D.C., he joined the newly formed U.S. Department of Transportation in 1967 as a senior attorney for the department's National Highway Traffic Administration, a position he held until his retirement in 2003. At the U.S. Department of Transportation, Vinson played an instrumental role in the drafting of federal safety regulations requiring the installation of high-mounted brake lights in the rear windshield of automobiles, which first took effect in the 1986 model year. Near the end of his career, he was involved in the drafting of new federal safety regulations regarding tires.

Vinson started collecting automobile literature at a very young age. In his autobiographical manuscript *A Collector's Life*, he stated that he received his first piece of automobile literature, a 1938 Ford trade catalog, when he was 4 ½ years old. At the age of 7 ½, he started collecting in a more proactive manner by having his parents take him to Huntington's "Automobile Row," where he gathered automobile literature from the dealerships located there. As he got older, he obtained huge amounts of automobile literature from additional sources, including, but not limited to, automobile manufacturers, fellow collectors, memorabilia dealers, auto shows, and auctions. Over time, Vinson collected so much material that he added a wing to his home in Alexandria, Virginia to house it in, which he called his "Autotorium." In addition to his collecting activities and service with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Mr. Vinson also served a term as President of the Society of Automotive Historians and a stint as editor of the *SAH Editor's Review*. Z. Taylor Vinson passed away on October 25, 2009 and his family deeded his extraordinary collection to Hagley in January 2010.

The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection is very large, containing over 700 cubic feet of materials. Dating from 1893 to 2010, the collection's focuses is mainly on automobiles and is international in scope. Over 1,900 automakers, large and small, well-known and obscure, are represented in the collection, including present day companies such as Ford, Honda, and Mercedes-Benz, and defunct concerns such as Duesenberg, Nash, and Studebaker. The collection's contents consist mainly of printed materials published and distributed by the automobile companies, which include, but are not limited to, trade catalogs, general publications, press kits, dealer advertisements, and accessories catalogs. Numerous other material formats pertaining to automobiles are found in the collection, including color and upholstery samples, photographs, books, serials, clippings, and artifacts. Also preserved in the collection are Vinson's manuscript files, which document his service with the U.S. Department of Transportation. The collection also holds a small amount of material pertaining to other forms of transportation, including buses, railroads, ships, spacecraft, airships, airlines, and airplanes. A very small amount of material pertaining to non-transportation subjects is found in this collection as well.

Funding for the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection Processing Project is being provided by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) through their Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives program. The processing of the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection is being carried out under the supervision of Max Moeller, Hagley's Curator of Imprints. Work commenced on the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection in March 2011 under the very capable direction of my honored predecessor, Project Archivist/Cataloger Emily Cottle. When Ms. Cottle left Hagley for another institution, I assumed the position of Z. Taylor Vinson Project Archivist in July 2012.

The first issue I would like to address is why Hagley decided to institute such a comprehensive multi-year outreach program for the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection. The main reason for

this is because it was conceived by Hagley as a key part of the Vinson Collection Project from the outset, and at Hagley's instigation, it was written into the CLIR Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant. The outreach program was conceived by Hagley's Library Director Terry Snyder, who made it a central part her very ambitious and ultimately successful grant proposal for the processing of the collection, which was accepted by CLIR in 2009. According to the terms of the grant formulated by Ms. Snyder and accepted by CLIR, Hagley is required conduct an outreach program for the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection throughout the length of the project. This outreach program must consist of the following four elements:

1. Hagley must hold Information Days three times.
2. Hagley must promote the use of archival methods for printed materials at conferences and through articles.
3. Hagley must create and promote a web-based resource on automotive research
4. Hagley must advertise the Vinson Collection through social media.

It was with these specific stipulations in mind that Hagley set about establishing an outreach program that would run for the entire length of the project. The first outreach activity for the collection was conducted in April 2011.

Although the outreach program for the Vinson Collection is largely prescribed by the terms of CLIR grant, there are also a number of other reasons why Hagley chose to embark on such a long-term and comprehensive outreach campaign. One reason is because the Vinson Collection is considered to be one of the most significant and comprehensive transportation collections in existence today. Because its contents provide an unusually in-depth documentation of the world automobile industry, researchers can learn much about many facets of the automobile industry's history and development, including, but not limited to the design, construction, and marketing of motor vehicles. By studying

materials found with the collection's contents, one can also learn much about the automobile's social, economic, and cultural impact.

In addition to being a highly significant and comprehensive collection, Hagley is of the belief that there is a very large potential audience for the collection and anticipates that it will be heavily used. Because the automobile is such an important and popular part of our everyday lives, Hagley believes that the Vinson Collection will be of great interest to the general public. At a smaller and more specialized level, it is thought that the collection will be of great interest to students and scholars of a number of disciplines, including, but not limited to, automotive history, business history, technological history, and cultural history. Even before it was donated to Hagley, the Vinson Collection was already well-known to automobile enthusiasts and many members of that community are eager to access it. With such a large potential audience for the collection and its potential for heavy use, it makes eminent sense to promote the collection long before it is opened to the public.

Next, I would like to discuss the methods being used to promote the Vinson Collection. Since March 2011, Hagley has developed and implemented an extensive long-term outreach program. Three different types of outreach activities are used to promote the collection:

1. On-site outreach
2. Off-site outreach
3. Online outreach

All three types of outreach are designed to comply with the terms of the CLIR grant. Each one of them has their advantages and disadvantages. But taken as a whole, all three types of outreach play an integral role in the promotion of the collection.

On-site outreach activities are those conducted within the confines of the Hagley grounds. In order to participate in these activities, potential patrons must visit the Hagley Museum and Library.

Since March 2011, two methods of on-site outreach have been used:

1. Hagley Car Show Booth
2. Information Saturdays

The Hagley Car Show Booth was first used in August 2011. It is carried out in conjunction with the Hagley Car Show, an annual event in which vintage automobiles from all over the United States are displayed to the general public. The car show is a large one, attracting over 600 vehicles and up to 5,000 visitors. The Hagley Car Show Booth mainly involves setting up a table manned by project staff, in which color photocopies and duplicates of Vinson Collection materials are put on display. At the Vinson Collection Booth, project staff members interact with visitors, answer questions about the collection, and hand out printed information regarding the collection. Announcements advertising the collection are broadcast over the public address system throughout the course of the car shows as well.

Information Saturdays constitute the other on-site method of promoting the Vinson Collection. First held in October 2011, Information Saturdays are intended to give the general public a sneak peak at the collection before it is officially open and allows visitors to see how an archives collection is processed. This method involves putting collection materials and preservation supplies such acid-free boxes and folders on display. It also involves project staff members interacting with the public, answering questions about the collection and the methods being used to process it, and handing out printed information about the collection.

Taken together, the on-site outreach activities have both their advantages and disadvantages. On the upside, the car show booth and Information Saturdays help to make visiting patrons aware of the Vinson Collection and allowing them to view a few selected collection materials. It also provides a

human touch by allowing project staff members and members of the public to interact. Patrons are encouraged to ask any questions they may happen to have about the collection. Project staff get the opportunity to educate patrons about the collection and to do what they can encourage to them to use the collect when it opens.

On the down side, because both the Car Show Booth and Information Saturdays are conducted only once a year, their reach is limited to people who actually attend these events. Both of these on-site methods also have the misfortune of competing with other activities going on at the same time. At the Hagley Car Show, the project booth competes with the cars on display and other show festivities. On Information Saturdays, we must compete with the other attractions at the Hagley Museum and Library and other weekend activities going in the Wilmington metropolitan area.

Off-site outreach activities are those conducted outside the confines of the Hagley grounds. They involve the project archivist giving presentations on the Vinson Collection to the general public at varying locations, which typically consist of a paper and a Powerpoint presentation. Since March 2011, three presentations have been given on the Vinson Collection:

1. In April 2012, my predecessor Emily Cottle gave the presentation “Get your kicks on Route 141: The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection at Hagley Museum and Library” at the Society of Automotive Historians Ninth Biennial Automotive History Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
2. In May 2012, Ms. Cottle gave the presentation “The Z. Taylor Vinson Collection: Documenting the History of the Automobile Industry from 1891 to 2010” as part of the Historic Autos of Winterthur lecture series at the Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware.
3. Today, I am giving this presentation to you here the MARAC Spring Meeting in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Off-site outreach activities for the Vinson Collection have much to recommend them. They are highly portable and can be given anywhere and anytime. Off-site outreach activities are very flexible

and can be tailored for specific audiences. Emily's presentations were aimed at automobile historians and enthusiasts interested in the collection's contents, while today's presentation is aimed archivists interested in the outreach issues it poses. Off-site outreach also provides a human touch by allowing the presenter and the audience to interact. Presenters can educate the audience about many different facets of collection, including, but not limited to, the collection's contents, methods used to process it, and any other issues the collection may pose. Members of the audience can ask any questions they might happen to have.

Off-site outreach methods also have a number of disadvantages as associated with them. Because off-site presentations for the Vinson Collection are one-off affairs, the number of people they reached is limited to those who actually attend them. Nor do they give much opportunity to see actual materials from the collection. Due to time and resource limitations, Hagley staff can only hold a limited number of off-site presentations.

The last type of outreach activities being conducted for the Vinson Collection Project is online outreach. This involves using the Internet to publicize the collection and events associated with it on Hagley's webpage. Since work commenced on the Vinson Collection, two methods of online outreach have been used:

1. The Z. Taylor Vinson Collection Digital Online Archive
2. The Z. Taylor Vinson Collection Blog

The Z. Taylor Vinson Digital Online Archive, which was launched April 2011, is the oldest of all the outreach methods being used to promote the Vinson Collection. Based on a ContentDM platform, the online archive is used to make small number of select collection items fully viewable to researchers online. It contains electronic surrogates of over 700 items (mainly trade catalogs), which are scanned into the database in their entirety. Both archives database and the images found within it are keyword

searchable. Images of items can be zoomed in and out by researchers for better viewing. The online archives accessed either through Hagley's website and Hagley's Facebook page.

The other online outreach method, The Z. Taylor Vinson Collection Blog, is an electronic weekly column written by project staff members. Launched in September 2011, the blog is based on a WordPress platform. Viewers have a choice of either subscribing to it or accessing it on Hagley's website or Facebook page. Typically consisting of 500-600 words of text and images of items from the collection, the blog frequently highlight individual items or groups of materials found in the collection and to educates readers about them. The blog is also used to keep readers up to date on the progress of the Vinson Collection Project and to discuss the methodology used to process the collection. Last but not least, the blog is used to promote events associated with the Vinson Collection, including the Hagley Car Show, presentations, and Information Saturdays.

Online outreach methods have much to recommend them. Because both the blog and the online archives are in cyberspace, they can reach a very large audience and can be viewed by people all over the world at any hour of the day. Online outreach also allows varying degrees of researcher access to materials from off-site. Researchers can view the items in the online Archives in their entirety. To much lesser extent, researchers can also use images of collection items on the Vinson Collection Blog, which are usually augmented by pertinent historical information in the text. The online outreach methods also allow a limited amount of interaction between project staff and researchers. Both the blog and the online archive allow researcher to make electronic comments and project staff are able to reply to researcher/viewer comments.

Although online outreach methods definitely have their advantages, they pose their share of disadvantages as well. Due to resource and time constraints, project staff can only put a relatively amount limited amount of information about the Vinson Collection online. Although the blogs are

posted weekly, they only permit the use of a very small amount of text and images. The online archives permits researchers to use collection materials off-site, but due the sheer size of the Vinson Collection and the limited amount of disk space, only a limited number of items can be scanned into it. Last of all, not all researchers are comfortable with electronic technology. Many researchers prefer to work with the actual items and others feel more comfortable accessing the collection with the personalized assistance of staff members.

Lastly in this presentation, I would like to analyze the level of success Hagley has experienced with its long-term and multi-faceted outreach program for the Vinson Collection. Overall we feel that the outreach program has been a successful one. The degree of success varies between the different types of outreach, but each method has played an important role in promoting the collection.

Quantitatively, the on-site activities outreach methods reached the fewest number of people. But in terms of quality, both the car show booth and Information Saturdays proved effective. Although these two methods attracted a rather small number of people, those who did stop by were pleased, even excited, to learn of the existence of the Vinson Collection and expressed great interest in it. Visitors also expressed their delight at learning that the collection soon will be available to them. As required in the project grant and encouraged by the patron responses we received, both the car show booth and the Information Saturday will be held again in 2013.

The off-site outreach efforts have been even more successful than the on-site methods. Quantitatively, the off-site presentations reached more people than the on-site activities. Qualitatively, they have thus far left a very positive impact. Emily's presentations were well-tailored for the audiences of automobile scholars and enthusiasts she presented them to. As a result, her outreach efforts were well-received by her audiences, who expressed great interest in the Vinson Collection. Members of these audiences also let it be known that they are eagerly looking forward to accessing the

collection when it opens. As for this morning's presentation to my fellow archivists, its reception and impact remains to be seen. Here too, due to the grant requirements and because we are encouraged by the results of these efforts thus far, we plan on continuing to give presentations until the conclusion of the project.

The most successful of the Vinson Collection outreach activities are those conducted online. Quantitatively, both the online archive and blog reached easily reached more people than the on-site and out-site outreach methods combined. According to statistics compiled by Hagley, the Vinson Digital Online Archive received 24,522 hits by 4,455 visitors between April 15, 2011 and February 28, 2013. The Vinson Collection Blog received 26,747 hits by 11,808 visitors between October 1, 2011 and February 28, 2012. As far as quality is concerned, we are particularly struck by the number of repeat visitors to both the online archives and the blog. We also received a handful of comments from visitors to the online archive and blog, of which a large majority of positive. Both the online archive and blog will be continued until the end of the project. The online archive will remain online after the collection is opened to the public.

To sum everything up, we at Hagley believe that the comprehensive and multi-year outreach campaign for the Z. Taylor Collection has been successful one. Admittedly, methods have proven more successful than others, but each method contributed to the overall success of the outreach campaign. We are constantly seeking to improve our outreach methods and along the way, we are learning valuable lessons regarding advanced outreach campaigns for future projects. The final test of the effectiveness of the outreach campaign will be the number of researchers accessing the collection when it is opened to the public in February 2014, which is something that remains to be seen. However, we at Hagley are confident that we have succeeded in keeping the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection

well-publicized, which will go a long way in encouraging researchers to visit Hagley Museum and Library to use the collection when it opens.

The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection

Auburn Heights Invitational Historic Auto Display, September 18, 2013

Collecting has long been a popular hobby and pastime. The list of items that people collect is endless and some collectors spend a lifetime building extensive collections of objects that fascinate them. In 2010, the Hagley Museum and Library, located in Wilmington, Delaware, became the recipient of a large collection that is best described as a historical treasure. The collection described above is none other than the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection, one of the most comprehensive and significant transportation collections in existence today.

This extraordinary collection was assembled by Z. Taylor Vinson, an attorney and a lifelong automobile enthusiast. Born in Martinsburg, West Virginia on July 7, 1933, Vinson graduated from Princeton University in 1955 and earned his law degree from the University of Virginia in 1961. After practicing law for O'Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles, California and for the International Finance Corporation in Washington, D.C., he joined the newly formed U.S. Department of Transportation in 1967 as a senior attorney for the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a position he held until his retirement in 2003. At the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Vinson played an instrumental role in the drafting of federal safety regulations requiring the installation of high-mounted brake lights in the rear windshield of automobiles, which first took effect in the 1986 model year. Near the end of his career, he was involved in the drafting of new federal safety regulations regarding tires.

Vinson started collecting automobile literature at a very young age. In his autobiographical manuscript *A Collector's Life*, he stated that he received his first piece of automobile literature, a 1938 Ford trade catalog, when he was 4 ½ years old. By the age of 7 ½, Vinson was collecting in a more proactive manner by having his parents take him to Huntington's "Automobile Row," where he gathered automobile literature from the dealerships located there. As he got older, he obtained automobile

literature from many additional sources, including, but not limited to, automobile manufacturers, fellow collectors, memorabilia dealers, auto shows, and auctions.

Why did Mr. Vinson spend a lifetime collecting automobile literature? In his autobiography, Vinson summed up his reasons for collecting and how they developed over the course of his life:

Automobile sales literature can be appreciated on a number of levels. For me, the first appeal was to the imagination: at an age in the single digits I could fantasize myself behind the wheel of a convertible or in the back seat of a chauffeured limousine. Later, when I started to save literature instead of cutting them up, the thrill was in the accumulation. Over time, more subtle reasons emerged: the beauty of the items as examples of the printer's art, the recordation of advancing technology, the depiction of the changing attitude of society toward women and blacks, the variations in the appeal to the prospective purchaser caused by good or bad economic times.

Armed with such a multifaceted love and understanding of automobile literature, Vinson went on to enjoy a collecting career that lasted sixty years, and accumulated an astounding amount of material in the process. Eventually, his collection became so large that he built a climate controlled addition to his home in Alexandria, Virginia to store it in, which he called his "Autotorium." Z. Taylor Vinson passed away on October 25, 2009 and his family deeded his extraordinary collection to Hagley in January 2010.

The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection is very large, containing over 700 cubic feet of materials. Dating from 1893 to 2010, the collection's focus is mainly on automobiles and is international in scope. Over 1,900 automakers from all over the world, large and small, well-known and obscure, are represented in the collection, including present day companies such as Cadillac, Mercedes-Benz, and Rolls-Royce, and defunct concerns such as Cord, Packard, Reo, and Stanley. The collection's contents consist mainly of printed materials published and distributed by the automobile companies, which include, but are not limited to, trade catalogs, general publications, press kits, dealer advertisements, and accessories catalogs. Numerous other material formats pertaining to automobiles, including color and upholstery samples, photographs, books, serials, clippings, and artifacts, are found in the collection as well.

As he developed his collection of automobile literature, Vinson focused on a number of collecting priorities. His first priority was trade catalogs for Contemporary Makes Sold in the U.S. from 1941 onwards. Beginning in 1947, while attending boarding school, Vinson established a second priority of collecting trade catalogs for Contemporary European Makes from 1947 onwards. In 1971, after becoming aware of a number of American automobile manufacturers that he had never heard of, he started focusing on U.S. Makes from 1933 to 1942. Later in his collecting career, Vinson became very interested in French and German automobile publications. He was also fascinated by materials published by Czech automakers. Trade catalogs published by Durant Motor Company and U.S. Motor Company were of interest to Vinson as well.

Not only is the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection large and varied, it is also of extraordinary depth. The collection's contents provide an unusually comprehensive documentation of the world automobile industry. By studying the collection's materials, researchers can learn much about many facets of the automobile industry's history and development, including, but not limited to the design, construction, and marketing of motor vehicles. The collection also presents a unique opportunity to learn much about the automobile's social, economic, and cultural impact.

Although the collection consists mainly of automobile literature, it does not lack for other fascinating materials, most of which pertain to transportation. Of particular interest are Vinson's manuscript files, which document his career with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and his contributions to automobile safety in the United States. The collection also holds a small amount of material pertaining to other forms of transportation, including buses, railroads, ships, spacecraft, airships, airlines, and airplanes. A very small amount of material pertaining to non-transportation subjects, including items documenting Z. Taylor Vinson's life, are found in this collection as well.

We at Hagley are presently in the process of making the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection available and usable to researchers. This project is being funded by a grant from the Council

on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) through their Cataloging Hidden Special Collection and Archives Program. At the present time, the collection is officially closed, but will be opened to researchers in early 2014.

Although the collection is presently closed to researchers, it is possible to get a sneak peak at collection. The Hagley Museum and Library maintains two web-based resources for the collection: The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection Blog and the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection Digital Archive. The Vinson Collection Blog is published on a weekly basis. It features individual collection items and reports on the latest developments regarding the collection. The Digital Archives contains digital images of over 700 items preserved in the collection, including, but not limited to trade catalogs published by Cadillac, Packard, Reo, and White. Both web resources can be viewed at the Hagley Museum and Library's website at <http://www.hagley.org/>. Last but not least, on September 28, 2013, Hagley will be presenting an exhibit on the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection at the Auburn Heights Invitational Historic Auto Display, which will feature a sampling of individual collection items.

We at Hagley hope that you will attend the Auburn Heights Invitational Historic Auto Display and take in all of the featured attractions there. While you are at it, by all means visit Hagley online to stay tuned for the latest developments regarding the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection. We will also look forward to seeing you when the collection opens in early 2014.

Kenton Jaehnig is the Project Archivist for the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection at Hagley Museum and Library.

LIST OF ITEMS FOR THE AUBURN HEIGHTS MUSEUM EXHIBIT

Catalogs for Makes Represented in the Show

1. 1914 Stanley Steam Car Range
2. Ca. 1926-1927 Packard Six
3. 1929 Packard Straight 8 Speedster
4. 1912 American Underslung
5. 1930 Cadillac V-12 and V-16
6. 1930 Marmon Eight-79
7. Ca. 1929-1930 Pierce-Arrow Series Eighty

Catalogs for American Performance Cars

1. 1964 Pontiac GTO
2. 1958 Studebaker Golden Hawk

Duplicate Catalogs for Various Makes

1. 1931 Oldsmobile Six
2. 1931 Packard Eight
3. 1965 Renault R-8 Deluxe
4. 1936 Plymouth Deluxe
5. Ca. 1939-1941 Hupp Skylark
6. 1960 Saab 96
7. 1946 Lincoln
8. 1971 Dodge Scat Pack

GAME DINNER SPEECH, January 25, 2014 :
duPont Motors

Hello, and thank you for inviting me to speak this evening. I'm looking forward to the dinner, but first I have to earn my meal. I was **asked** to speak about automobiles in the 1920s. My choice was obvious: how could I **not** focus on the story of **duPont Motors**?

Eight minutes is hardly enough time for me to tell the story of du Pont Motors in any detail. I would guess that outside of this room, most people are unfamiliar with this make of automobile. Maybe that's true for some inside this room, too. Looking back, the periodical *Automobile Quarterly* justly claimed, however, that duPont Motors built "one of the finest automobiles to ever grace the American roadway." The story of duPont Motors takes place largely during the 1920s. Originally supplying marine motors to the US Navy, **E. Paul du Pont** decided that he wanted to shift gears (pun-intended) and build a high-quality luxury car. So in 1919 he recruited talent from other local automakers like Biddle and Mercer, forming a team of experienced men to make his vision a reality. Now this was a great time to found such an enterprise, given the prevailing optimism and economic prosperity in the United States that followed the end of the Great War during the **1920s**. People could stop focusing on the world's troubles and get on with their lives. **Jazz** music blossomed. **Flappers** redefined the notion of the modern woman. **Businessmen** created record profits and unprecedented industrial growth. Those who had the means therefore had money to spend, and what greater status symbol is there to buy other than a luxury automobile?

The **Model A** was the first car turned out by duPont Motors. It sported a four-cylinder engine and was built entirely in-house. It was priced from \$4,000 to \$5,600 and came in four different body styles. Seen **here** is the Model A Roadster. Sales were low, but this was expected for an exclusive and customized product. The duPont was never intended to be a mass-produced

vehicle. The periodical *Automotive Industries* reviewed the Model A when it debuted and declared that “The stern simplicity of the duPont is apparent at a glance; at the same time, sturdiness, strength and stamina are unmistakable.” So it was a **strong start** for duPont Motors. Before any customer took delivery of one of his autos, E. Paul du Pont himself would test the car **personally** for a week to ten days to ensure that it attained his high standard of quality.

The Model A was followed during the 1920s by successive automobiles that would each try to improve upon the last. **The Model B** is considered another first generation automobile from duPont Motors, and between the two models eighty-eight custom vehicles were built. The **Model C** was the first upgrade to a six-cylinder car that was introduced by duPont Motors in 1923. Twenty-eight variations on the **Model D** were built, which was followed by—wait for it—the **Model E. Eighty-three** Model Es were built, so it is surprising that I could not locate a single vintage photo. On the other hand, only two **Model Fs** were built, so the lack of photos in this instance is understandable. But all of these models represent a steady succession of high-quality, custom automobiles with a variety of body styles and coachwork by firms such as Merrimac and Waterhouse that increasingly made a name for duPont Motors among an exclusive clientele. Production was moved from Wilmington to a larger facility in **Moore, PA**. Sales rooms were opened in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and even Los Angeles.

But, the crowning achievement for duPont Motors was the fabulous **Model G**, which was introduced in 1928. The **Model G** was the first duPont to sport an eight-cylinder engine and was available in twelve different body styles. The list price for the Model G five-passenger sedan was \$4,500. To put that in perspective, a new Ford Model A could be had for only \$500. But the duPont Model G caught the imagination of well-to-do consumers, comprising more than half of all the models ever sold by duPont Motors. Former World Heavyweight Champion Jack

Dempsey can be seen here in his Model G. Actor and humorist **Will Rogers** bought one as well. And actress **Mary Pickford** bought one for her husband, the actor **Douglas Fairbanks**, as a birthday present. **This** is the speedster that she purchased for him.

Adding to this celebrity momentum, the company sought to gain attention by breaking into the racing circuit. A special four-seat speedster based on the Model G was entered in the famous 24-hour road race at Le Mans, France in 1929. It completed only twenty laps, however. In the hope of gaining further publicity, another **duPont Motors special** based on the Model G was entered in the Indianapolis 500 in 1930. Charles Moran, Jr. was tapped to drive and he started out strong. The car brushed the wall on the 22nd lap, however, and had to retire from the race.

Just as the company was experiencing so much notoriety with the Model G, the **stock market** crashed. Seeking to consolidate, E. Paul du Pont purchased the **Indian Motorcycle Company** in 1930 and moved his duPont Motors engineering department to the Springfield, MA location. Hopes were high in 1931 that the new **Model H** would capitalize on the success of its predecessor, but the first three turned out to be the last three cars ever made by duPont Motors. Times had changed. The company fell victim to tightening budgets as luxury consumers sought to weather the ongoing effects of the Great Depression. **Ford's** profits on economy car sales enabled its Lincoln brand of high-end automobiles to weather the downturn in the economy, so it could live to sell luxury cars another day. **Chevrolet** sales did the same for Cadillac. But duPont Motors had no such protection. E. Paul duPont hoped to resume production of automobiles once the economy improved, but ultimately it was not to be. He passed away in 1947. Only 537 duPonts were ever built.

Now, my introduction to duPont Motors came in 2008, when I received a **phone call** from someone looking to sell me something. This happens with some regularity, since I do purchase

new acquisitions for the library. Anyway, this gentleman claimed to have a wonderful 12-page portfolio containing color images of Model G cars from the DuPont Motors Company, published circa 1928. It was **ours to keep**...all he asked in return was a modest fee of **\$10,000**. That works out to about \$833 per page. It is also about **twice** as much as a Model G car cost back in 1928.

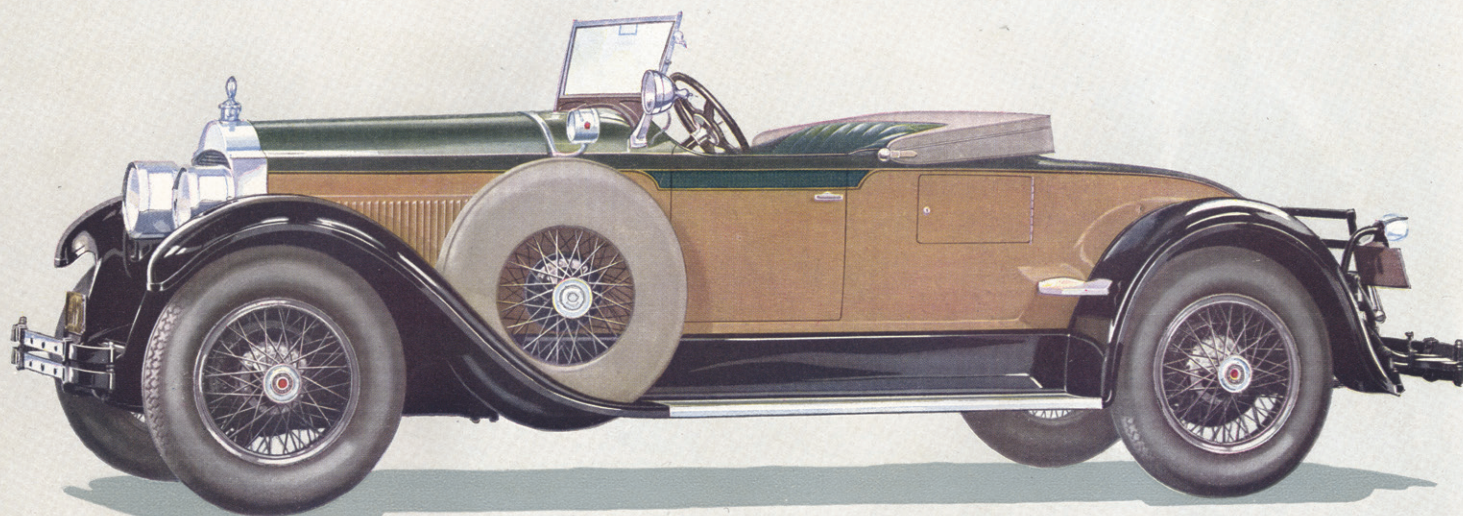
I did some research on this **portfolio**, after confirming that we did not have a copy of it in the library. I saw reproductions of the images from it, however, and it is indeed beautiful. Even though it wasn't **my** money, I could not bring myself to spend \$10,000. So I passed on the opportunity, but it was a calculated risk. You see, I had learned of a potential donation that would be made to Hagley from a fanatical collector of automotive sales literature. I **really** hoped that this collection would contain another copy of the portfolio.

That donation arrived much sooner than I expected. Just a year later in January of 2010 Hagley Museum and Library was the beneficiary of a bequest from the Estate of Z. Taylor Vinson. An **enormous** and **amazing** collection of automotive sales literature was packed up in Arlington, VA and delivered to our Hall of Records. The very first thing I did was to search for duPont Motors literature, and sure enough, the portfolio was included! Sample images Model G body styles are shown here, including the **Sedan**, the **Town Car**, the **Club Sedan**, and the **Phaeton**. So for the record let it be shown that I saved Hagley a lot of money.

Now this is an anecdote of just one single item from the **Vinson Collection**, but as I mentioned, the collection as a whole is **massive**. It documents the international output of over 1,900 different automobile manufacturers, duPont Motors being only one example. The collection can satisfy the needs of enthusiasts to learn details about a given make or model, while also providing ample context for academic historians looking to understand the history of the global

automotive industry. I'm pleased to announce here tonight that, thanks to a 3-year CLIR Hidden Collections grant, this collection is now fully processed and open for research.

Given the extent and potential of this and other collections, it was decided that an exhibit should be staged to promote Hagley's strength in automotive history. The exhibit will be called ***Selling the Car***. We are well along in the planning of this exhibit and are currently soliciting bids from design consultants. The collections here at Hagley will allow us to provide a **truly unique** perspective on the history of automotive sales in this exhibit, which is slated to open in the Spring of 2015. I hope all of you will be as excited as I am to see the results. Thank you.



THE
RUNABOUT



TWO
PASSENGERS

Z. Taylor Vinson Collection

Hagley is in the middle of processing one man's seventy-year obsession with transportation. The Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection consists of 700 cubic feet of memorabilia, including trade catalogs dating back to the 1890s, books, magazines, press kits, photographs, posters, model cars, and much more.

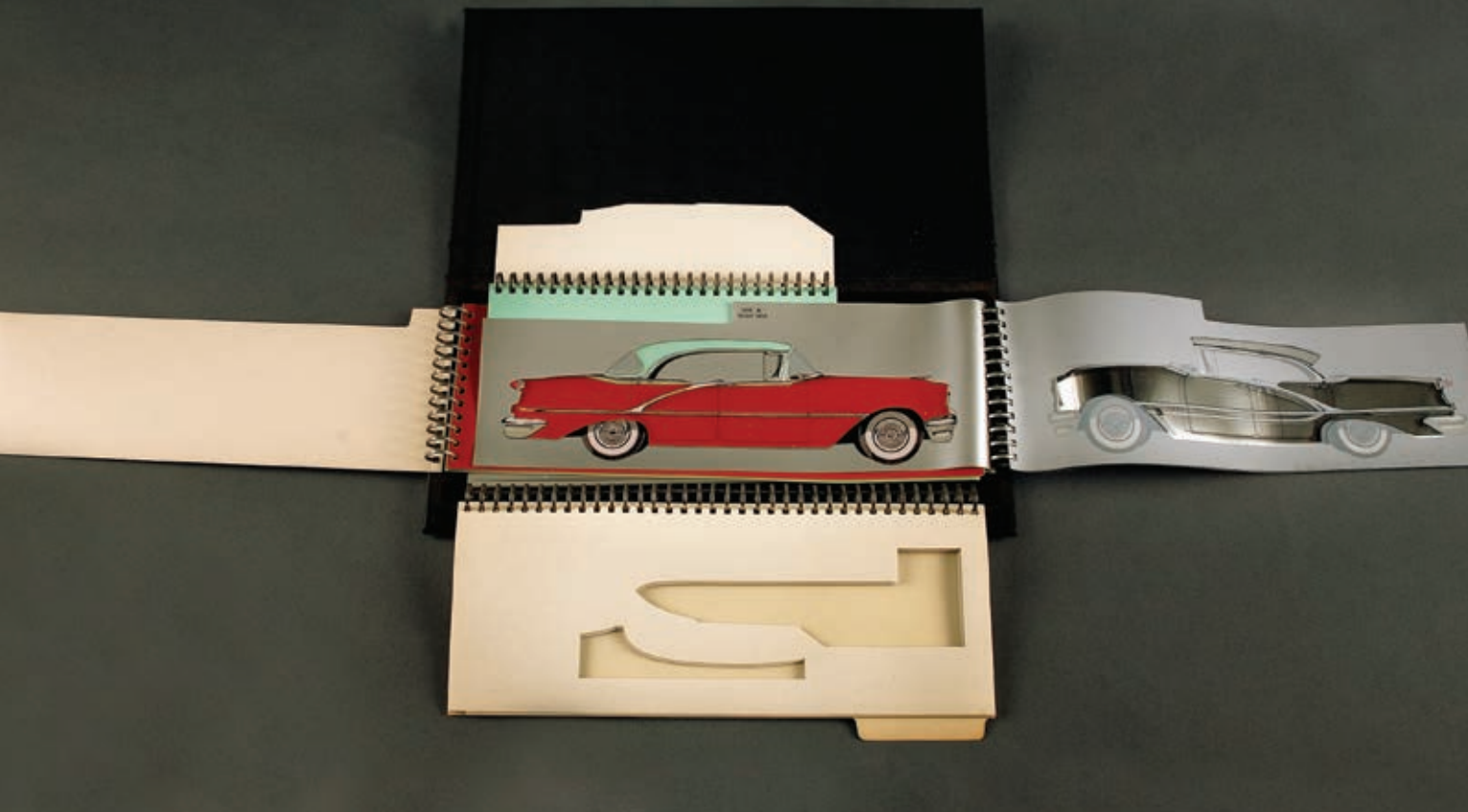
Mr. Vinson was president of the Society of Automotive Historians (SAH) from 1993 to 1995 and editor of its *Automotive History Review* from 1995 to 2009.

In April, Emily Cottle, Hagley's project archivist and cataloger for the Vinson Collection, will present her work at the Society of Automotive Historians' Ninth Biennial Automotive History Conference in Philadelphia,

Pennsylvania. Conference attendees will also visit Hagley Museum and Library for a behind-the-scenes look at the collection.

The majority of the collection is closed until cataloging is complete in 2014, but researchers can already take advantage of more than 800 books from the collection, which are available in Hagley's online catalog. Follow our project blog at vinson.hagleyblogs.org. Also visit the Z. Taylor Vinson Digital Collection, which contains more than 400 items and will continue to expand as the project moves forward.

Advertisement for a Packard Six, the two-passenger "Runabout," 1928, from the Z. Taylor Vinson Transportation Collection.



This unique piece in the collection allowed potential car buyers to view their desired automobile in various body styles and colors.

Z. Taylor Vinson Collection

The finding aid is available on the Hagley website. For information, please contact us via Ask Hagley at www.hagley.org.

Automotive Collection Opens

Hagley is pleased to announce that the Z. Taylor Vinson Collection is now open for research.

This collection consists of more than 700 cubic feet of automotive memorabilia and documents covering 1,900 international automobile manufacturers from 1893 to 2009. Processing of this massive collection was recently completed thanks to a three-year Council on Library Information Resources (CLIR) Hidden Collections grant.

Zachary Taylor Vinson's personal and professional life revolved around automobiles. He was born July 7, 1933, in Martinsburg, West Virginia. As a young child, Vinson became enamored with automobiles. At the age of seven he had his parents drive him down "Automobile Row" and wait while he ran

in and out of each showroom collecting the latest sales literature. Vinson grew up, of course, but he never outgrew his passion for automobiles. He continued to collect automotive sales catalogs while working to become a senior lawyer with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration when the new U.S. Department of Transportation opened in 1967. Vinson held that position until his retirement in 2003, but he continued to collect until he passed away in 2009. Vinson always intended that his collection would find a home in a repository where researchers could freely access the material. Vinson had a long-standing relationship with Hagley Museum and Library, and his estate accordingly donated his collection to Hagley in 2010.