



DELAGÉ D8-120

1937





The Mistress

Remarkably tuned and known for its exceptional handling, —the 8-cylinder D8-120 was easily maintained and effortlessly driven.

Early twentieth century car connoisseur David Scott-Moncrieff once opined: “One drives an Alfa, one is driven in a Rolls, and one buys the girlfriend a Delage.” His remark reflects the era in which the Delage D8-120 was introduced—when there was a tantalizing sexiness to luxury cars that made them seem almost illicit. Indeed, the Delage was driven by sportswomen with high quality taste, but

beneath its bonnet, the D8-120’s V-8 engine—forged from Louis Delage’s experience on the track—also caught the attention of road-savvy gentlemen with an eye for style.

Compared with other leading marques of the time, Delage stood out as a provider of exceptionally smooth, easy-to-handle, and potent automobiles. The D8-120s winning combination of power and effortless control was well received by Delage clientele who wanted a luxury option less physically demanding than the



hefty steering provided by other marques. Unfortunately, the economic situation made it difficult to sell the sturdy chassis, and the company's assets were soon sold to the Delahaye firm.

The D8-120's elongated form presented coachbuilders with a new opportunity to explore exaggerated vehicle architecture. The result was some of the most elegant, refined, and classic coachwork of the era. Chassis 51760 was delivered by classic French coachbuilder Henri Chapron as a four-seat cabriolet with a three-position top. It was from the model's second series and thus had a lower, lighter chassis than its predecessor. The beautiful cabriolet made it to the big screen in the 1951 classic *An American in Paris* starring Gene Kelly and Nina Foch. The car was given a makeover for the film that included taillight modifications and a new green paint job—Chapron himself was involved in the alterations. In the film Gene Kelly is chauffeured around the City of Light in the Delage with Nina Foch. The car was returned to its current color after Peter Mullin purchased it in 1987.

Chassis 51760's early history was colorful, as it was reportedly appropriated by a French general of the Vichy government who was a German collaborator.

In 1946, after the war's end, the general sent the car to California but was unable to obtain a visa for himself, so he went to Argentina and sold the car to RKO Studios. In Hollywood the car's graceful and conservative styling earned it a role in the 1951 classic *An American in Paris*. The film's producers commissioned certain changes to the car's design, including taillight modifications and a new green paint job. The car's original French coachbuilder, Henri Chapron, was involved in the alterations.

When the movie was completed, the car returned to Los Angeles, where it was acquired in 1955 by Thol "Si" Simonson, a member of the RKO Studios production team. He took the car in lieu of the \$15,000 in severance pay he was owed by RKO. Simonson drove the Delage around California before putting it up for auction in 1987, at which time Peter Mullin bought the car. The D8-120 is now owned by the

Mullin Automotive Museum.



PROFILE

Coachbuilder	Chapron
Chassis number	51760
Profile type	Touring
Body type	Cabriolet
Number made	66
Acceleration	0
Top Speed	175

BODY | CHASSIS

Front brakes type	Hydraulic
Rear brakes type	Hydraulic
Front suspension type	Independent transverse leaf-spring with upper control arms and lever-action shock absorbers
Rear suspension type	Live axle with semielliptical leaf springs and lever-action shock absorbers
Length	17' 8"
Height (Ground line to highest roof)	5' 1"
Width	5' 6"

ENGINE

Engine number	51760
Type	Inline
Number of cylinders	8
Displacement	4500
Distribution	Overhead camshaft
BHP at 4000 RPM	115
Gearbox	Cotal pre-selector
Number of gears	4
Overdrive	0



