

WINTERTHUR



Winterthur Press Release

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Winterthur Acquires Rare 1927 Rolls-Royce

Stylish, stunning automobile epitomizes design and craftsmanship, has belonged to only one family.

Winterthur, DE, March 15, 2019—A rare 1927 Rolls-Royce Phantom I Pall Mall phaeton S 123 PM was recently given to Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, a gift that allows the institution to show how motoring guests of founder Henry Francis du Pont would have arrived on his estate in its heyday. The historic vehicle joins Winterthur’s Phantom I Ascot, S 379 FM. Both vehicles tell the story about the design and craftsmanship of luxury vehicles of their era. Both cars will be on view at Winterthur events this spring.

The American-built Pall Mall had been in the du Pont-Lunger family since it was ordered by Philip Francis and Elizabeth Braxton du Pont in 1926 and delivered in 1927. It has been in operation ever since. It was most recently registered by David Lunger, grandson of Philip. It may be the only Phantom to have remained in the same family for so long. The car was moved from its home in Fairville to Winterthur in 2014 because Winterthur could provide suitable storage as well as the skill and knowledge to preserve it. David gifted the car to Winterthur in December 2018.

“The Phantom represents craftsmanship at its very best. It is on par with any object in the Winterthur collection,” said Gregory J. Landrey, chair of the Winterthur committee that oversees care and use of the vehicles. And, it tells the story of the family that owned it.”

The vehicle was restored in the 1960s by Wendling Brothers of Macungie, Pennsylvania. Aside from receiving new paint and leather, it has changed little. The owner’s manual and registration cards have been retained since new, and there are additional records with the Lunger

family that have yet to be examined. The toolbox contains a complete 1927 Rolls-Royce tool kit in its original doctor-style canvas bag. The low mileage of 23,600 is believed to be accurate.

The car's exterior is maroon with red accents and pin striping. The fenders are black over red wheels with chrome rings. The interior is upholstered in brown leather. The dash, trim, and a cabinet are made of mahogany.

The guests of H. F. and Ruth Wales du Pont, family and friends alike, traveled to Winterthur by rail or automobile. Those who took to the road often arrived in luxury automobiles like the 1927 Rolls-Royce Phantom. H. F. and Ruth Wales du Pont owned more than 40 personal luxury vehicles throughout their lives. Beginning in 1959, they owned three Rolls-Royces, including a Phantom V in 1960. The Phantom I Pall Mall dates from the American country-place era, when H. F. was implementing his vision for Winterthur. With the Ascot, the Pall Mall will help bring the 1920s and 1930s to life for visitors.

“The Phantom represents as English form, but American craftsmanship, so it puts American history in a global context,” Landrey said.

The Rolls-Royce Phantom I series was built at the Springfield, Massachusetts, Rolls-Royce of America, Inc. facility. The plant began operations in 1921 with the production of Silver Ghosts, then transitioned to building the New Phantom in late 1926. Fewer than 1,300 Phantom chassis were assembled in the Springfield plant before production ceased in the early 1930. The Springfield-built Silver Ghosts and Phantoms are the only Rolls-Royce chassis ever built outside of the United Kingdom.

To secure superior coachwork in the United States, Rolls-Royce contracted with several coachbuilders, including Hibbard & Darrin; Murphy; Smith Springfield; Derham; Rolls-Royce Custom Coach Work; Merrimac; and Brewster. Brewster was purchased by Rolls-Royce of America in 1926 and served as the primary coachbuilder for Springfield Phantom Is. It produced 821 bodies. Winterthur's Ascot Phantom I is a product of the Brewster firm. The Pall Mall coachwork for the S 123 PM was crafted by Merrimac of Merrimac, Massachusetts, rather than Brewster. Merrimac was a high-quality, low-volume firm that specialized in open cars. It made 58 bodies for Springfield Phantom Is. Winterthur's Pall Mall is one of few surviving Merrimac-bodied Springfield Phantom Is.

The high profile of the Pall Mall coachwork is traditional and quintessentially English. Having become dated by the late 1920s, the last Pall Mall body was produced in 1928. It gave way to the sleek, low, and more American-styled Ascot/Derby line represented by the Winterthur Phantom I Ascot, S 379 FM.

The du Pont family has been enamored of high-end automobiles since the beginning of the automotive era. Alfred I. du Pont owned the second automobile in Delaware and, with his cousins P. S. du Pont and T. Coleman du Pont, was responsible for building many of the early roads in the region. H. F. was also an early player in the “horseless carriage” phenomenon, having owned an automobile as early as 1903. The du Pont Registry is today the primary marketplace for luxury automobiles and is managed by a member of the du Pont family in Florida. Several du Pont families of the region are recorded as owning Phantom Is, and guest registers from Winterthur show that ten families who visited there owned Springfield-built Rolls-Royces.

Winterthur’s Ascot is displayed regularly at car shows and events such as the Radnor Hunt Races and the annual Hagley car show. It won Best of Class at the 2016 St. Michaels Concourse d’Elegance. “People just gravitate to it,” Landrey said. “They want to understand it. It is just a captivating object—across gender, across age.”

Both the Pall Mall and the Ascot will be on view at Winterthur’s annual Point-to-Point races on May 5 and at the Winterthur Invitational Car Show on June 1.

ABOUT WINTERTHUR

Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic gardens, and research library for the study of American art and material culture—offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year. General admission includes a tour of some of the most notable spaces in Henry Francis du Pont’s former home as well as access to the Winterthur Garden and Galleries, special exhibitions, a narrated tram tour (weather permitting), the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens, and the Enchanted Woods children’s garden.

Winterthur, located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1, is closed on Mondays (except during Yuletide), Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Museum hours are 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Tuesday–Sunday. \$20 adults; \$18 for

students and seniors; \$6 for ages 2–11. Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883, 302.888.4600, or TTY 302.888.4907, or visit winterthur.org.

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