

2019 HOLIDAY GUIDE

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The A. W. Huffman Jr. Collection

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JOHN FARRALL

Polished concrete floors, brick walls, steel ceiling beams and careful use of signage keep the scene calm.

Many of us have obsessions for a particular car model or brand of vehicle, but few of us have the time, money or drive to create a world class car collection on the scale of the A. W. Huffman Jr. Collection in Granite Falls, North Carolina. I had the opportunity to visit the collection along with other members of the Classic Car Club of America and the Cadillac & LaSalle Car Club.

The 30,000 square foot main exhibit areas and 2,000 square foot restoration shop support the over 100 vehicles. The focus is on Lincolns, and they have one of the largest collections of Lincoln Zephyrs in the world. There are examples, some of them unrestored, of every model year the Zephyrs were produced from 1936 to 1942, and I was told they all run. There were some very unique cars in the collection. The original owner of their 1939 four-door convertible was Carol Lombard, the highest paid star in Hollywood in the late 1930s.

We were very fortunate to have Al and Lee Huffman, sons of Mr. Huffman, as our hosts for the tour. A. W. Huffman founded Huffman Hosiery Mills over 75 years ago to manufacture and market socks and is still in business today. Mr. Huffman was always fascinated with mechanical devices which helped him with his manufacturing business as well as his car collecting hobby.

Mr. Huffman's first "collector vehicle" was actually a fire truck, a 1914 American LaFrance, which he purchased to have at his factory in case of a fire. It is still in the collection. This vehicle was the first mechanized fire truck in the nearby town of Hickory, North Carolina. His son told me they used to play on the fire truck as kids. His Dad once told him that fire trucks were great to collect; since they were well engineered, the fire departments always took meticulous care of them, and when it was time for a new truck, they were highly depreciated. There are 13 fire trucks in the current collection from Ford, Mack, Nash, GMC and American La France. The newest one is a 1964 Mack fire truck.

Back to the Zephyr's. The name was derived from the Greek word, "Zephyrus" or "God of the west wind." The most famous use of the name was the Zephyr trains of the 1930s, but the original streamlined concept for the car was developed by John Tjaarda of Briggs Manufacturing Company. Tjaarda was a leader in the *Streamline Moderne* design movement popularized at the 1934 Chicago World's Fair.

Edsel Ford had 24-year-old E.T. Bob Gregorie, credited for the Zephyr's iconic streamlined rear hinged hood and grill, reengineer much of Tjaarda's original design to accommodate a front engine and to make it suitable for production. The Lincoln Zephyr was introduced in 1935 as a 1936 model with the last Zephyr being produced on February 10, 1942 as car production stopped to support the war effort. Total production of the Zephyr models was over 180,000 units.

The car was powered by a small, 12-cylinder engine with 110 horsepower and a top speed of 90 mph. The Zephyr was the first Ford production car with an all steel roof and a unitized body. In 1940, the Lincoln Zephyr Continental, a convertible, was introduced. This was the first time the name Continental appeared on a Lincoln.

Other Lincoln models from the 1950s, '60s and '70s include a 1954 Lincoln Capri four-door sedan and a 1960 Premiere two-door coupe with 36,239 original miles. In total there are 44 Lincolns in the collection. Some of the "modern" examples include a 1976 Lincoln Continental Mark IV with only 9800



The only known 1969 Continental Convertible.



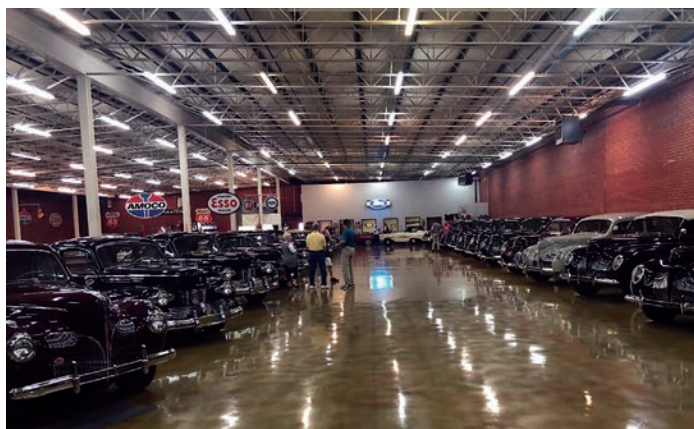
A great display depicting a service scene with a classic Buick is a great decision.



original miles, and a gigantic 1973 Lincoln Limousine.

My favorite of the modern Lincolns was the 1969 Continental four-door parade car. This car was owned and maintained by Ford Motor Company and used for special occasions on the East Coast. It was used as a secret service car, celebrity car and, most interestingly, as the lead vehicle in the ticker tape parades for astronauts of the Apollo 8, 11, 13, 14 and 15! The car is equipped with fender mount flags, flashing spotlights, concealed siren and extra red lenses. Documentation from Ford showed that this car had been updated by them from a 1966 to 1969 trim by Ford, so it is the only known "1969" Lincoln Continental Convertible in the world.

Anyone who really loves cars has a tough time sticking to



one make or model. Mr. Huffman was no exception. The oldest car in the exhibit is a 1919 Buick four-door Touring. The range of cars included Ford Model Ts, a 1931 Graham Paige, a 1937 Packard 120, a 1973 Jaguar XKE V-12 convertible, a 1969 VW Beetle "Herbie" clone, a 1948 Ford four-door woody wagon and a 1973 De Tomaso Pantera.

What started with an old fire truck grew to a world class collection of Lincoln Zephyrs. The Huffman family have been wonderful stewards of these cars for many years, their efforts helping to preserve the history of these beautiful and significant automobiles. | GSM

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