

The Courier-Cadillac Prototype

However You Slice It, This Former Seville Is Unique

by West Peterson

In the mid to late-1980s, Robert Maidment of Suffolk, England, was fascinated with the Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster. At the same time, a tattered unrestored specimen surfaced in an old creamery in England and sold at auction for a reported £1.6 million (roughly \$2.56 million). Well out of his price range,

Maidment set about to build his own retro classic, with the idea of building a short run of around 50 examples.

Using a 1978 Cadillac Seville as a starting point, Maidment was hell-bent on using as many of the Cadillac parts as feasible. Little did he know he'd be spending every

evening and weekend for two years acting as general contractor for each aspect of its construction. The result is probably one of the best looking 540K type creations built.

In order to obtain the lines of the classic era, it was necessary to move the radiator, engine and cowl back by more than two feet. "For an authentic vintage look, the radiator must sit between the front wheels, not way in front of them as on modern cars," Maidment stated. Upon doing so, of course, many more modifications must be made; from the steering column to the drive shaft, alterations were bountiful.

The sweeping body work was created by Gary Pitney at G.P. Panelcraft of Bracknell, England. Again, using as many of the Cadillac parts as possible, the rear doors were used and hung backwards after filling in the leading



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Robert Maidment of Suffolk, England had this special body built using as many parts from its 1978 Cadillac Seville donor car as possible.



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The Maidment Cadillac was built as a prototype for a short run of 50, however, production plans have been scrapped. We consider the car to be one of the best looking neo-Classics ever built.

edge that originally curved around the wheel well. Even the top was salvaged, although a few kinks and bends later to make it look just right. It was decided to build a "coupe" rather than a full roadster in order to retain structural rigidity. The final results are graceful, without the

heavy header panel over the windshield one normally sees on retro classics.

Inside, the Seville interior is evident. The dashboard was cut in the middle and shortened six inches. The power seats, door panels, steering column all reused and retrimmed, providing the same comfort found in the original Cadillac. Maidment spent a lot of time paying attention to

detail, ensuring that all the delicate lines remained in proportion.

Mechanically, as much time was spent making the car work properly as was spent making it look proportionately correct. On the road, Chris Snowdon (a professional driver at the Goodwood Motor Circuit) reviewed the car's handling. "The car is very impressive. It handles like the current Bentley Brooklands which is essentially a Bentley Turbo R without the turbocharger, with sports suspension and dampers, and that is quite a comple-



The interior is all Cadillac. The dashboard was sectioned by six inches in order to fit in the narrow body. Even the convertible-looking top utilized the original Seville's metal—although with a few extra kinks.



New Information Unearthed On Cadillac Cofounder

by West Peterson

What does this Neo-Classic Cadillac have to do with automotive history? During the building of this unique car, owner Robert Maidment of Suffolk, England, was looking through a book on the history of Cadillac. It was there that he chanced upon a unique spelling of the name Faulconer, his wife's maiden name. Through some geneology research of his own and from Jim Faulconer of Dayton, Ohio, Maidment was able to ascertain that Robert C. Faulconer (Martyn Leland's partner back in the United States) is the great granduncle of his wife. What's so unique about that? Very little is known about Robert C. Faulconer's history.

It is well-known that the fate of the manufacturing company of Leland & Faulconer was due to Henry Martyn Leland and his penchant for precision. Leland & Faulconer, of course, were instrumental to Oldsmobile's success and, more importantly, the major building blocks that formed Cadillac Motor Car Company. What Leland needed in 1890, however, was financial backing and a good business partner, and that came about through a man named Robert C. Faulconer. It is known that Faulconer is the one who put up \$40,000 of the \$50,000 capital that was needed to establish the company. It has also been written in Maurice Hendry's book *Cadillac*,

Standard of the World—A 70-year History that Faulconer was a "lumberman from Alpena, Michigan."

With so little information on Faulconer, it is Leland who is given all the ink when describing the company's success during its infancy, building high quality, precision gears for bicycles and engines, and on through its contract building engines for Oldsmobile.

In 1902, Leland persuaded the directors of the distressed Detroit Automobile Company not to liquidate and sell its inventory. He went on to show them an engine—one that Oldsmobile refused—in which he had designed and built that was far superior and more reliable than anything else being built. They agreed and gave Leland a leading role in the reorganized company.

The initial agreement stated that Leland & Faulconer would build engines, transmissions, and steering gears, while the Detroit Automobile Company—soon to be renamed Cadillac—would build chassis and bodies, and assemble the whole works. In 1905, Cadillac stockholders bought all stock from Leland & Faulconer except for Leland's shares. It was Leland who would become the general manager, and his son, Wilfred, as assistant treasurer under William H. Murphy, and the 400 employees at

Leland & Faulconer were now working for the new company, Cadillac Motor Car Company.

Robert Faulconer is mentioned little in the history of Cadillac, perhaps because Faulconer was considered a "gentleman" and the all important businessman of the company he and Leland had formed. It is surmised that Leland and Faulconer were good friends, and both were considered very religious, perhaps tying the two to common ground.


The new information learned is that before the title of "timber tycoon," Faulconer was already considered a wealthy man being born November 11, 1845 in Middlesex (now part of London), England, as the eldest son of an English squire. Faulconer came to the US around 1870, perhaps to find his own success. His ties to England as a country gentleman were not as strong as his love for a woman he met in Detroit, however, as he married Elizabeth Emmons, the daughter of Judge H.H. Emmons, in 1872.

Moving to Alpena, Michigan in the mid to late-1870s, Faulconer retained the position of secretary/ manager of the Mason Lumber Company, later renamed to Huron Lumber Company. At the time of his partnership with Leland in 1890, not only did he retain his titles at Huron Lumber, but he retained his 300 State Street address in

ment. It is beautifully neutral on the circuit, handling Goodwood's ultra-high speed corners feeling nicely balanced with only a hint of reassuring understeer when you really push hard."

Executives at Mithril Racing, Ltd., in Sussex, England, enthusiastically report-

ed that the car looked like it could literally have come out of the shops of Mulliner-Park Ward. We agree. When hearing of this project, we were expecting some sort of kit car. The quality of design and mechanical attention to detail are impressive. As for the commercial aspect of building up to 50

more, that idea has long since been dropped. In fact, Maidment admits that had he known how much work would be involved in putting this project together, he would never have started. But then, as the saying goes, "you can't reach the fruit if you don't go out on a limb." 

Alpena until 1897 when he officially moved back to Detroit. (The house currently at 300 State Street was built in the early 1900s.)

In 1905, soon after Falconer sold his shares of the company, he moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts. He died at the age of 62, two years later. Not even Falconer's direct descendants were aware of his involvement with Cadillac, or Leland for that matter. It is thought that the main reason of Falconer's anonymity since his death is because of the fact that (1) he died soon after the sale of his Leland & Falconer company and (2), he had six daughters at a time when women were not included in business discussions. Hence, his children were probably not aware of his associations, let alone his grandchildren.

On the other side of the pond, his two brothers had no interest in automobiles, in fact, just the opposite. William Rudston Falconer is well

recorded for his enthusiasm for coach-and-fours, and Arthur Cholmly Falconer was interested in horses. One day, maybe more information will surface regarding Robert Falconer

and his contributions to Leland & Falconer Manufacturing, and the Cadillac Motor Car Company. At least now we know where his origins lie.



Henry Martyn Leland (left) in a meeting with his partner Robert Falconer. Information regarding Falconer's history has just recently been unearthed by a series of coincidences.