



Larz Anderson Auto Museum

# Great Garages

## LARZ ANDERSON AUTO MUSEUM: 'AMERICA'S OLDEST CAR COLLECTION'

Written by David M. Brown

Larz and Isabel Anderson began their love affair with the automobile before the turn of the century, prior to the introduction of Henry Ford's revolutionary Model T. In 1899, soon after they married, they purchased an 1899 Winton Phaeton Runabout, a true horseless carriage, and through 1948, the New Englanders purchased at least 32 additional new cars and carriages.

As the cars became obsolete, they didn't sell them but retired the vehicles to the Carriage House. By 1927, the couple had opened it for tours of their "ancient" vehicles.

This became what is today's "America's Oldest Car Collection," The Larz Anderson Auto Museum, in the original Anderson Carriage House on the ground of the Weld Estate, now Larz Anderson Park, in Brookline, Massachusetts.

When Isabel Anderson died in 1948, she bequeathed her Brookline estate, including the mansion, Carriage House and land to the town of Brookline and stipulated that the motorcar

collection be called the "Larz Anderson Collection." Fourteen of these original 32 vehicles remain in the collection.

"For over 85 years, the Larz Anderson Auto Museum has been supporting the community through a variety of educational programs, exhibits and lectures," says Sheldon Steele, the museum's executive director.

Since 1927, for example, the Carriage House has hosted lawn events and other automotive activities. The museum currently programs 25 car shows annually.

"The Lawn Event season grew out of a Sunday-afternoon tradition begun by the Anderson family, who would open the doors to the Carriage House so that the general public could admire their growing collection of American and European cars," he says.

Today, the Larz Anderson Auto Museum hosts events almost every Saturday and Sunday, May–October. "Our Lawn Event season features events from every marque and era.



1899 Winton Phaeton Runabout

Italian, German, British, American, custom, tuner, alternative fuels, trucks, hot rods and European motorcycles will all be on display at different times throughout the season," Steele explains.

He and Joseph Price, the museum's education manager, recently opened the doors of the Carriage House for *Highline Autos*. They also opened the doors of time.

•**1899 Winton Phaeton Runabout** — The Winton Motor Carriage Company was established by bicycle maker Alexander Winton in 1897 in Cleveland, Ohio. He was a pioneer of auto manufacturers in the United States and hand made and assembled each auto piece by piece.

"On their many trips overseas, Larz and Isabel saw these new and wondrous machines rumbling down the streets of France, and they became intrigued, which led to the purchase of the Winton," Price says.

This Winton is one of 100 built in 1899 and is designed with details similar to other contemporary automobiles, with a steering tiller, buggy springs and a small-cylinder engine under the rear deck of the automobile. Price: \$1,000.

"This 'horseless carriage' exemplifies the museum's

ongoing tradition of preservation and represents the beginning of a remarkable era that would change the way people worked and lived all over the world," he says.

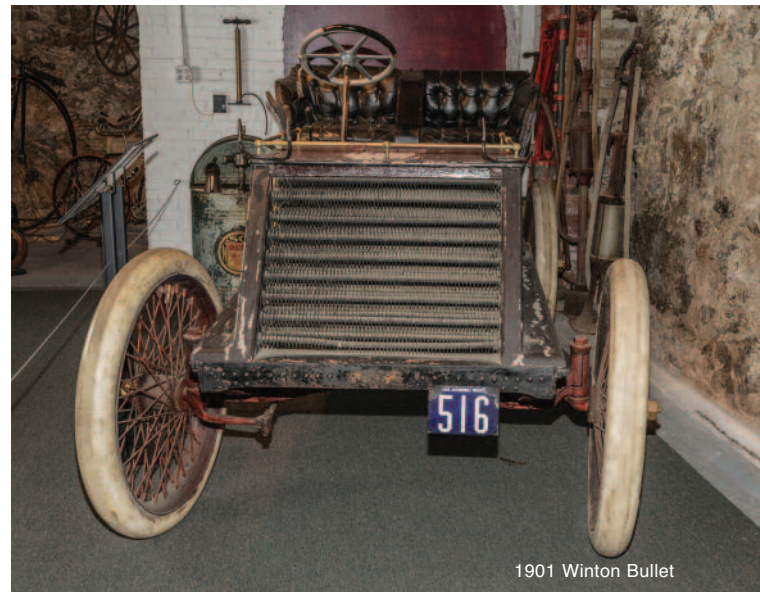
•**1901 Winton Bullet** — Featuring a 40-horsepower, two-cylinder opposed gas engine, the Winton Bullet was the first production race car offered to the public, in 1901. Only four of this particular Winton model were produced; one of these automobiles was purchased by the Andersons and is the last surviving one.

In the early years of the automobile, races were held to test their strength and resilience. Alexander Winton raced his Bullet against Henry Ford's "Sweepstakes Ford" in the World Champion Sweepstakes on October 10, 1901. "In the end, this 10-lap race proved that Ford's automobile was the better car, beginning his fledgling legacy in the automotive industry," Price says.

Larz Anderson used this car to compete in the first race meeting of the Massachusetts Auto Club in 1901. "Completely original, the Winton Bullet is an amazing example of automotive engineering and ingenuity during the early 20th century," he says.



1899 Winton Phaeton Runabout



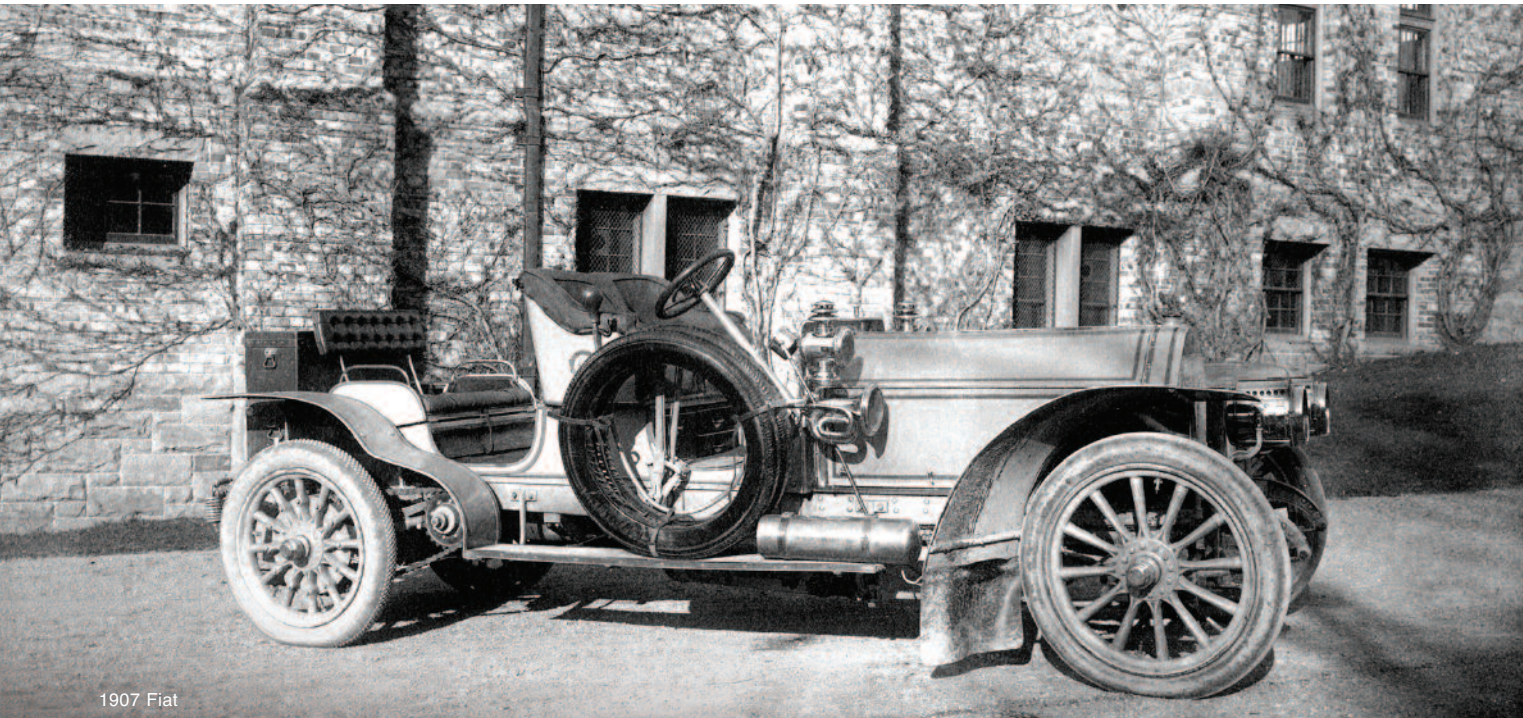
1901 Winton Bullet



1900 Rochet-Schneider



1908 Bailey Electric Phaeton Victoria



1907 Fiat

•**1903 Gardner-Serpollet** — The first and only steam vehicle that the Andersons purchased, this car primarily saw the road for long-distance trips until they purchased this Charron-Girodo-Voight in 1907.

The car had interchangeable summer and a winter bodies. With only six existing in the U.S., this is considered one of the most highly-regarded and sought-after steam cars ever.

Leon Serpollet was France's greatest champion of steam vehicles; he produced a steam-powered tricycle in 1880. Eventually, Serpollet teamed with American financial backer Frank Gardner to create Gardner-Serpollet.

In the rear of the vehicle, This Gardner-Serpollet has a flash boiler system which had been developed by Serpollet in the late 1890s, significantly improving steam transportation.

This car also had a two-cylinder gasoline engine and a chain drive. "In order for the Andersons to keep this complicated machine running, they had to employ a skilled chauffeur to operate and maintain it," Price says.

•**1906 Charron-Girodo-Voight** — The 1906 CGV was the Andersons' grandest, most famous and most expensive automobile. Purchased while they vacationed in France, the car was nicknamed the "Winniepocket," after the Andersons' vacation home in New Hampshire. Here he also attended the Phillips Exeter Academy.

The Andersons would drive it to New Hampshire as well as to their other residence in Washington, D.C. The car contained different amenities found in houses, thus increasing

the luxury of the automobile. The rear seat became a bed, and under two smaller seats was a wash bin and a toilet. Isabel also installed a pseudo-drawing room for herself.

Fernand Charron, one of the first garage owners in Paris, became a Panhard et Levassor dealer in 1897, and he started an automobile company with Girodot and Voight in 1901. Costing an extraordinary \$23,000 to build, this automobile boasted a 90-horsepower 4-cylinder engine.

The company sold 150 in 1902 and 265 by 1904, employing 400. By 1906, it was acquired by an English manufacturer, which sold 753 automobiles as CGVs.

Beginning in 1906, the CGV became the first fully armored car, and 12 to 13 of them were produced and used over a 40-year period, even by the Russian Imperial Army.

•**1907 Fiat** — Fiat was founded on July 11, 1899, and the 60-hp model was introduced in 1904 and remained in production until 1909.

Powerful and bold, this was the supercar of its time. The 11-liter, 6-cylinder had 65 horsepower. Only 86 were manufactured. The Andersons purchased it while they vacationed in Europe and shipped it to New York to be re-bodied by the Hol-Tan Company.

•**1908 Bailey Electric Phaeton Victoria** — The second of the two electric cars owned by the Andersons, this was Isabel's favorite car. Electric cars were advertised as automobiles specifically for women because they were almost "self-driven." This benefited Isabel, the first woman in Massachusetts to get a drivers license. However, as it was for many affluent women at this time, a footman's seat was in the rear of the car for her convenience.

The Bailey Electric was manufactured in Amesbury, Massachusetts, an area with many carriage companies by 1853. Colonel Edward Warren Bailey created the Bailey Electric; he took over his father's carriage company in 1887. Bailey is also known for inventing window glass channel,

which prevented windows from rattling while driving.

In 1888, 15,000 automobiles were shipped from Amesbury alone. The Bailey was \$2,000 to \$2,600 to purchase and cost a cent per mile to drive.

Thomas Alvin Edison said that it was the most suitable car for his battery. This was first electric car to travel 1,500 miles from Boston to New York City to Chicago, going 21.5 mph. "In all that time, the car did not require any repairs or replacements — a great feat for any car at this time," Price says.

The Larz Anderson Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and closed Mondays and most major holidays. See [larzanderson.org](http://larzanderson.org).

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Larz and Isabel Anderson