

1934 Packard
Model 1101 Eight
Dietrich Convertible Victoria
A Job Done Right





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Photos by Webb Needham

When I first met Bob and Janora Tittel in about the year 2000 it was at a car show in Colorado Springs, and I stopped to admire their 1929 Packard 4 passenger coupe. Bob told me about the restoration process, and I was immediately taken by the level of dedication, and the fact that no detail was too small to be overlooked. As we talked, Bob told me that actually this restoration on the 1929, was only practice.... The car which was really his dream to restore, was sitting in their garage, and was the one where this practice restoration of the 1929 Packard would really pay off! The car? A 1934 Packard Standard 8, Semi-custom Dietrich Convertible Victoria. I just couldn't believe that Bob and Janora had this car in Colorado Springs, and yet I had never seen it. Some months passed by and I found the chance to stop by their home and see the car. The '34 sat in the back of their garage, looking very original, which it was, and very complete and solid. During this visit and many more,

I got to know more about the car. Actually the Tittels are only the second owners of the car, if you discount the dealer that they purchased the car from. The car was originally purchased in Washington State, by a lady named, Mary Bourque, who apparently moved to Pasadena, California in 1943, as the Tittel's have the title for the car after the 1943 move; see photo. Presumably the car was owned until her death in the 1970s. Bob and Janora bought the car in 1978 from Howard Vigen - Vintage Vehicle Sales in Willmar, Minnesota. Bob actually did take the car on a test drive before purchase, but decided that a total restoration was really needed.

The car came home and sat in the garage while the restoration of the 1929 was completed. Many projects would happen before the '34 restoration got started. There was everything from the complete restoration of a 1950 Mercury convertible, to an Austin J40 pedal car. All of these done with a dedication to quality and detail, while the '34 Packard sat patiently waiting in the back of the garage.

Finally in 2006, Bob and Janora decided to sell their business and retire. I know at this point, Bob was just

not sure whether he should start on the restoration of the Packard or not. He had other cars to use and enjoy, a 1950 Mercury convertible to finish sorting out, gas pumps to restore etc. so it would have been a safe thing to say, that maybe a big restoration project wasn't in the cards and retirement would be more leisurely. Still, there was something about this convertible Victoria, and Bob's lifetime dream of seeing it on the show field.... I think the decision was made by Janora; the car should be restored, and Bob needed a project - they should go ahead and do it! I know that Bob was frustrated with how long it had taken to restore the 1929, and working in the garage by themselves, everything just took time. The Tittels decided to go visit Mark Clayton in Castle Rock, Colorado and see if an arrangement could be made with the restoration, where they could do parts of the restoration themselves and Mark could help keep things moving more quickly. The decision was made to proceed in 2009, and Bob and Janora really had a new career for the next five years. The car was moved to Mark's facility in Castle Rock, Colorado and Bob and Janora began the daily commute from Colorado Springs to





Beautiful wood veneers



Lifting the body off the frame



Restored tub

work on it. Far from being a leisurely retirement, disassembly began and lots of parts cleaning. Janora became master of the sand blaster, working all day blasting parts, cataloguing parts and photographing pieces that were to be sent out for plating etc.

On one of my trips to California, I was going to be in Pasadena, so I asked Bob and Janora for the address of the Packard's original owner. I thought it would be fun to see where she lived and maybe the garage where the car originally lived. A little hunting, and I found the house, and sure enough, around the side of the house, an old garage where this particular car must have spent nearly 40 years of its life. So, now you know the real answer: The little old lady from Pasadena didn't drive a Super Stock Dodge, but actually a Packard Convertible Victoria! During the restoration, Bob, Janora and I made another trip (together this time) to California to visit Madera Concepts, where the interior veneered panels were being re-done in correct Carpathian Elm. We received a fantastic tour of the facility and saw their beautiful work and stock of rare veneers. The trip also included stops at the Nethercutt Collection, Mullin Museum and Hearst Castle, so we got to see some of the best of California. The veneer work on the interior turned out truly stunning and is reminiscent of sitting among particular fine furniture.

The accompanying photographs will show you some of the details of the restoration. After disassembly and cleaning, work began on the body, which, while very solid, still required some effort. Door skins were removed and body work performed, some body wood replaced, fenders straightened, as well as the top of the body tub around the back where the convertible top attaches. At this point, the question still remained about the color. I know Bob and Janora debated about what would be best. Janora was adamant, it should not be any shade of green! At one point black was the decision, but later Janora decided that a deep red, almost like a Bing cherry would look the best. It's a very deep color that shows itself well in the sun. Janora then choose an unexpected subtle lavender color for the pinstripe, which draws you in like a perfect painting.

The Tittel's also made a journey to the Detroit Public Library to do some research on the Victoria, in order to get a few details correct. They were able to get some original factory photos showing engine bay finishes, pinstripe details etc. As it is a standard eight, instead of a super 8, there are differences in finish and details. While normally a standard 8 would have a chrome grill shell, the Tittels discovered that it could be ordered with a painted shell, and so it was decided that the shell would be painted body color, a nice finishing touch. The car originally had painted wheels, but Bob decided that the car would look particularly good with



Restored chassis



Engine reinstalled, most reassembly completed



Car being judged

chrome wire wheels and black wall tires. Six newly made chrome wheels were ordered from Don Sommers. The dark red paint, and black tires are really set off by the chrome wire wheels, making a subtle and elegant combination.

The Packard 1101, is the standard 8, 136 inch wheel base, and it's unusual to see the convertible Victoria on the standard eight chassis. You would be more likely to see a super eight or a V-12 with the convertible Victoria body, and in fact some people suggested that the car should be restored as a super eight or V-12, but Bob felt the car should stay as it was built. The standard eight engine is 3.19" x 5" bore and stroke for 5.2 liters, or 320 cubic inches and produces 110hp. A mere 7,000 Packards of all types were built in 1934, the great depression being in full force at that time, so a '34 Packard is already a rare car, even before we get into discussion on convertible Victorias specifically. The original sale price of \$3,243 meant it was not easily affordable in the height of the depression.

You will notice that the car is known as a "Dietrich" convertible Victoria, in the case of this car, the Dietrich title is interesting and it's good to understand a little history of the custom body building that was happening at the time. It seems that Waterhouse may have been the first custom body maker to create the convertible Victoria style (on the Packard chassis and other luxury makes as well) however many other custom body designers followed suit. Due to the stock market crash in 1929 and following depression, Ray Dietrich had been forced to close up his own coachbuilding firm, Dietrich Inc, however the Murray body company continued to build the Packard convertible Victoria bodies with the Dietrich body tag, presumably paying a royalty to Ray Dietrich on each one. So, in 1934 these convertible Victoria bodies were known as a semi-custom, and built by Murray for delivery to Packard. I have been able to dig through information that Bob compiled on the '34 Packard Convertible Victorias and from correspondence with others who have kept production records, it seems that perhaps 75-80, 1101 standard eight convertible Victorias were built in 1934 and that perhaps 11 or so survive today. Both the original production number and survivors are not definitive, and there may be better numbers compiled. This particular car has the Dietrich body number tag (Body 727) under the passenger seat, and matching number on the fire-wall plate.

Finally in 2014 the Packard reached a point at Clayton Restorations where the car came home to have some details finalized. The upholstery and top were done by Auto Weave in Denver, Colorado. Side mounts were installed, final buffing done, brake adjustment etc. Also in the late summer of 2014 there was another little project I had the pleasure to be involved with. The making of new rear ashtray's in brass.

