

RUMPLER'S W-6

Ancestor of the streamlined rear-engined car



The enclosed model had a longer wheelbase than the original Rumpler shown on the lower right corner of the next page.

IN 1915 Dr. Rumpler, a well known German aeronautical engineer, drew up plans for a very advanced type of automobile, and the grotesque but efficient creation on these pages was the result. The first conception (see line drawing) was an open 3-seater, and at least one 5-passenger open model was actually constructed. The fully enclosed model shown here, however, appears to have been built a few years later, about 1920. Vernon A. Jarvis, owner of the Carriage Cavalcade Museum at Silver Springs, Florida, found this rare gem hidden away on an estate, and after restoration the Rumpler made its debut in California, where it created a sensation.

The original design premise was based on the theory that a tear-drop shape would be more efficient, giving better economy and top speed with less horsepower. Accordingly the driver was seated amidships in the "bow," with accommodations for two passengers behind. A boat-shaped frame of considerable depth (over 12") was used, and the engine placement just ahead of the

rear axle resulted in a very long machine. To reduce this length somewhat, the designer chose a W-6 type engine, consisting of three banks of two cylinders each. Valve actuation appears to have been by pushrods, and the displacement was just under 2.8 litres (169 cu. in.). All four wheels were independently sprung, the rear end being the "swing-axle" type.

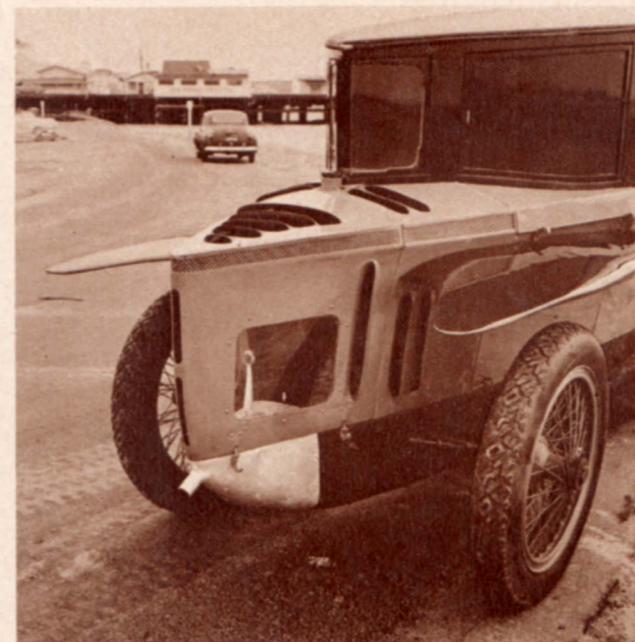
To prove the efficiency of his design Dr. Rumpler staged a demonstration in which his car and normal types of the same era were driven over dust-covered roads to observe the formation of dust-clouds eddying behind the respective vehicles. Of course the conventional cars raised great swirls, but it was claimed that the only dust raised by the Rumpler consisted of small plumes from the rear wheels. Further tests were run on a drum-type dynamometer, which indicated that at 60 mph, the Rumpler lost only 24.5% of its total available power due to wind resistance compared to 33.0% on a conventional design. Mercedes thought the idea so interesting that they built a racing car along identical lines. Powered by an

unsupercharged, 2-litre, dohc engine, it achieved 127 mph. (Reference: S.A.E. Journal, June, 1931) Since Dr. Porsche was Mercedes' chief engineer at the time, it is quite evident that this car influenced his thinking and subsequent designs.

The term "Drop Car" has been applied to this car, but no one seems to know whether the name refers to the tear-drop shape or to the possibility of attaching the complete car to the underside of a Zeppelin, for carrying passengers gondola-style.

Mr. Jarvis disclaims any responsibility or knowledge as to how the original powerplant was replaced by a very old American Continental "Red Seal" unit, but, original or not, the engine purrs along nicely. Brakes are something else, and a brief ride down Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles was a harrowing experience for both driver and passenger.

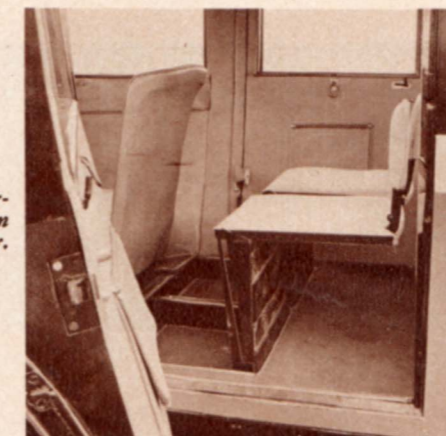
This truly fantastic vehicle, which might be described as a forerunner of the "revolutionary" Tucker, now reposes at the owner's Museum in Florida for all to see. ●



Stern view emphasizes boating aspect. Air-foil rear fenders act as air entrance ducts.



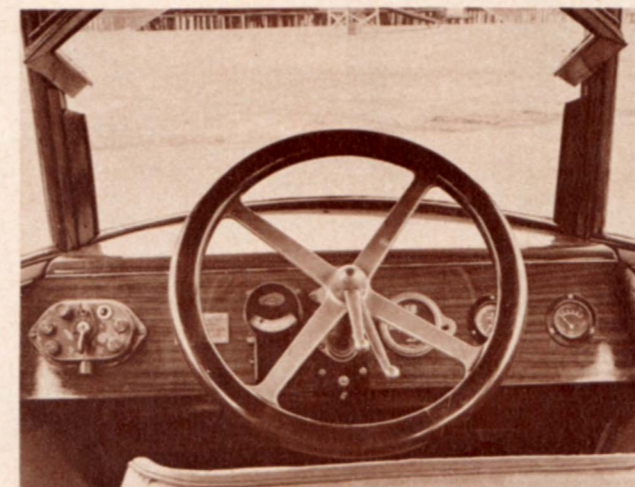
Who says curved-glass, wrap-around windshields are new? This one is over 35 years old.



Two extra seats allow four persons to be carried in addition to the centrally placed driver.

photography: Poole

The driver enjoys good visibility and has no reason for doing any one-armed driving.



The original 1915 open Rumpler has cantilever leaf springs for each wheel, carried the spare tires under the floor.

