


CLASSIC DRIVER



1904 Maxwell Model H

Lot sold	USD 76 420 - 89 156 GBP 60 000 - 70 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1904	Condition	Used
Number of seats	2	Location	
Drivetrain	2wd	Fuel type	Petrol
Lot number	221	Exterior colour	Other
		Engine number	H238

Description

1904 Maxwell 16hp Model H Twin-Cylinder Side-Entrance Tonneau

Registration no. BS 8511

Engine no. H238

Financed by Detroit sheet metal manufacturer Benjamin Briscoe and East Coast plutocrat J P Morgan, ex-Oldsmobile and Northern engineer Jonathan D Maxwell built his first car - an advanced twin-cylinder design with water cooling, mechanical inlet valves, two-speed planetary transmission, shaft drive and right-hand steering wheel - in 1904. The twin proved an enormous success; a four-cylinder model joined the line-up for 1906 and Maxwell expanded from its Tarrytown, New York base, opening factories in Auburn, Indiana and Rhode Island. Sound engineering was complemented by a series of headline-grabbing publicity stunts that helped boost sales, none more successful than a transcontinental trip from New York to San Francisco undertaken by a team of four lady drivers in 1909. The following year the firm sold over 20,000 cars, a total exceeded only by Ford and Buick. From this high point Maxwell went into decline. Briscoe's ambitious expansion plans proved disastrous; most of the factories were sold off and Jonathan Maxwell moved production to Detroit. Hit hard by the post-WWI depression, Maxwell merged - unsuccessfully - with Chalmers and acquired a new president in the person of Walter Percy Chrysler, whose new marque would rise from the Maxwell-Chalmers ashes.

The car offered here is one of Maxwell's larger five-passenger 16hp tourers, the Model H, which is powered by a 3¼-litre engine driving via a three-speeds-plus-reverse gearbox. Other noteworthy

features include hand and foot clutches, and port/starboard lights. It is recorded that a pilot run of these cars, designated 1905 models, was built in 1904.

The Maxwell belonged to C Bayard Sheldon of Illinois when it was dated 1904 by the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain in June 1970, the dating committee noting the owner's claim that this was the 69th Model H assembled. The car was awarded Dating Certificate No. 1214 and its enthusiastic owner shipped it to the UK the following year to take part in the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run. It is no stranger to important events, as evidenced by a dashboard plaque indicating participation in the New York to San Francisco Transcontinental Reliability Tour in 1968 and the North Island Rally in New Zealand in 1973.

The right-hand drive five-passenger tourer body (stamped with the number '102') features side-entrance doors for the rear passengers, an innovative feature in its day that allowed passengers to alight direct onto the sidewalks rather than onto the road, as would be the case with a rear-entrance design. Finished in green livery with yellow coachlining, the car features a red chassis and wheels, and is furnished with matching buttoned upholstery. It is equipped with Atwood Manufacturing brass kerosene oil lamps and, for the more portly driver's convenience, has a 'fat man' hinged steering wheel. Ride comfort is enhanced by coil springs assisting the damping of the front semi-elliptic leaf springs.

In October 2008 the Maxwell, at that time forming part of a significant overseas private collection, was offered at Bonhams' New Bond Street Sale (Lot 312) where it was purchased by the current vendor. Works carried out since then include removing the engine, which was line-bored and treated to a general overhaul; fitting a new exhaust by Les Thomas; replacing all five tyres and tubes; and installing a period windscreen (easily removed). Taxed until September 2015, this long-legged Maxwell has a proven record of participation in the more demanding Veteran motor tour and would be one of the more powerful cars eligible for the VCC's 'Creepy Crawly'.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1793

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