

# CLASSIC DRIVER



## 1930 Minerva AK

Lot sold	USD 0	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1930	Condition	Used
Lot number	122	Location	
		Exterior colour	Other
		Car type	Other

### Description

While the term “barn find” is appropriately used here, it does not fully convey the once-in-a-lifetime discovery this automobile represents. Not only an automotive time warp, it is a rare example of a revered marque, fitted with unique custom coachwork, still in original condition.

Minerva was Belgium’s premier marque, producing luxury automobiles for royalty and titans of industry. One feature setting the Minerva apart from its competition was the use of the Knight sleeve-valve engine, a design that was said to ensure longevity and silent operation. Left to the owner’s whim was the selection of coachwork.

Hibbard & Darrin was an obvious choice, as its two American designers operated the Minerva agency in Paris in the early 1920s. By 1926, Thomas Hibbard and Howard A. Darrin moved into body design, gracing quality chassis for marques such as Rolls-Royce, Duesenberg, and Hispano-Suiza.

The generous 149.5” wheelbase provided the ideal platform to showcase the coachbuilding pair’s most innovative design, the dual-windshield, barrel-sided convertible sedan. Beauty in detail abounds: the trademark Hibbard & Darrin tapered B-pillar surrounding trapezoidal side windows, the three-position top, the imposing body with the coachbuilder’s trademark extremely narrow panel gaps, and the subtly peaked “spine” dividing the rear panel of the coachwork. The open design also provides enclosed comfort with the top in place. With the top lowered, rear-seat passengers are protected by a sporting, steeply raked rear windshield.

Correspondence found with the Minerva documents its fascinating history, beginning in the 1940s when its first recorded owner, Wisconsin attorney Webster Woodmansee, listed it for sale. Edwin Winter Mead of Norfolk, Connecticut, purchased the car in July 1948, as a companion to the 1928

Minerva limousine he owned. Original letters exchanged between Mr. Mead and Tom Hibbard are included in the sale.

The next sale involved a rather unusual transaction. John W. "Hawkeye" Hawkinson had been a car lover from a very early age. Born into wealth, he was a descendent of Amos Whitney, co-founder of the American aerospace company Pratt & Whitney, but had dedicated himself to a simple life, making his home on a remote farm in upstate New York. Apparently smitten with the Minerva's design, Mr. Hawkinson made a down payment on the car in December 1959, with the balance to be paid over time. After each few payments he made, Hawkeye would remove a part from the car, such as the clock, carburetor, or radiator mascot, and take it home for safekeeping. It was not until 1974 that the final payment was made, and Hawkeye took delivery of his prize. He carefully stored this car as the centerpiece of more than two dozen other collector cars on his property until his passing in 2016.

Still in largely original condition, the Minerva displayed 62,310 miles when it was removed from long-term storage in early 2017. The story of John Hawkinson and his life, as well as the emergence of the Minerva from the Hawkinson farm after 40 years of storage, are chronicled in the 2017 season-opening episode of Chasing Classic Cars. In the episode, Wayne Carini and a friend marvel at the contents of the barns scattered about Hawkeye's farm, as well as the simple, uninsulated home he occupied on the picturesque property.

Once in the new owner's care, the sleeve-valve straight-six engine was initially turned by hand, and before long was returned to running status; otherwise, the car remained undisturbed. The color scheme – thought to be original – of a straw tan exterior with green trim is retained, and the green leather in the driver's compartment is complemented by tan cloth in the rear. Accompanying the car is an original owner's manual, tool kit, and original ownership correspondence covering some 70 years of the car's life.

Rarely does such a rare and unique automobile in original condition come on the market, let alone carrying such a remarkable story. Its fascinating history is now ready for the next chapter to be written by its new owner. Only that fortunate individual will determine the Minerva's future: to preserve it in its original condition or to restore it, unlocking boundless potential at any concours.

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