

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 1927 Minerva AF

- Lot sold  
USD 0
- **Year of manufacture** 1927
- **Lot number** 143
- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Car type** Other
- 

### Description

#### PROVENANCE

Drew Lewis, Lederach, Pennsylvania (acquired in 1998)  
Current Owner (acquired from the above in 2009)

#### EXHIBITED

Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance®, Pebble Beach, California, August 2000 (Second in Class)

#### THIS CAR

In 1903, Sylvain de Jong, a manufacturer of bicycles and motorcycles in Antwerp, Belgium, established his new automobile company as Société Anonyme Minerva Motors. A major development took place in 1908 when the company obtained a license to produce engines in the Charles Yale Knight sleeve-valve design. From that point until the end of production in 1939, all Minerva cars would feature sleeve-valve engines.

As the firm hit its stride, Minerva cars were popular among Europe's elite as well as with the wealthy and famous in the US. Minervas were legendary for their build quality, advanced engineering, and craftsmanship, and were comparable in many ways to Rolls-Royce's benchmark Silver Ghost. Sharing the ingenious cantilevered rear leaf-spring suspension with the Rolls-Royce, the sophisticated Minerva was also on par with the smoothness of its ride, its ease of maintenance, and, due to the sleeve-valve engine, its quiet operation.

This Minerva Sport Sedan, with its deeply V-shaped windshield and dramatic blind rear quarter – one of just two in this body style – is likely the car that was pictured on display at the New York Auto Salon at the Hotel Commodore in 1926. It also made an appearance in the 1937 film *A Damsel in Distress*, starring Fred Astaire.

By the 1990s, this Minerva sat disassembled in the Pacific Northwest, where an owner named Mr. Radford had planned to restore it. Following the passing of Mr. Radford, the car was acquired by Drew Lewis, a noted antique and classic enthusiast and a former US secretary of transportation. Mr. Lewis entrusted the car to leading Minerva authority Steve Babinsky of Lebanon, New Jersey, for a complete restoration to show standards. After completing the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance®, the Minerva made its concours debut in

2000, earning a class award at Pebble Beach and achieving a Senior Grand National Award with the AACA.

Finished in a deep green with long-swept fenders in black, the beautifully proportioned LeBaron coachwork features a low top with a high beltline, dramatically minimizing the height of the windows, and is perfectly accented by correct Willocq-Bottin Supralux headlamps and aluminum wheel covers. The divided interior is finished in light cognac leather with matching carpets and headliner, and the spacious rear compartment features two occasional jump seats. Jaeger gauges are mounted within a deep-set polished aluminum dash, and the individual windscreen panels tilt open for ventilation.

In 2009, the AF-Series Minerva joined the consignor's respected California collection, and it has since been displayed in a museum setting while being treated to expert care. Today, the surviving Minervas stand as a testament to the Belgian firm's quality and the ingenious design of its sleeve-valve engine. This outstanding example will surely impress its next fortunate owner.

Gooding & Company

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