



## SALISBURY CONCOURS d'ELEGANCE

A Celebration of the Art & Design of the Automobile

### 2012 Salisbury Concours to feature Forgotten Fiberglass cars



Craftsmen developed the Glasspar G2 roadster body in 1951. At least one Glasspar will be featured in the Salisbury event.

*Des Moines, Iowa* – The Salisbury Concours d'Elegance—regarded as Iowa's most prestigious annual automobile display—is proud to announce the “Forgotten Fiberglass” class, which will showcase some of the world's first fiberglass-bodied automobiles at this year's September event.

Fiberglass, or “glass wool”, was developed for commercial purposes in the 1930s. Several years passed before anyone considered it for a replacement to the horseless carriage tradition of building wooden body skeletons skinned with steel. That happened in 1941 when Henry Ford's research and development team formulated an indestructible body material from soybeans and hemp. A world war delayed development while futurists predicted a peacetime world of speed and plastic.

When the war ended, The Big Three returned to traditional prewar designs and techniques. So a number of automotive entrepreneurs began to hand-craft their own sleek and slippery automobile bodies using fiberglass. The racy new American roadsters graced the covers of popular hobby and trade magazines. Their badges carried the names of Glasspar, Kellison, La Dawri, Kaiser, Skorpion, Victress, Woodill and others. Initially, buyers assembled their cars but several ready-to-run models were offered later.

“All of these companies started in small garages, and most of them stayed there,” explains Florida college professor Geoff Hacker, who is largely responsible for attracting the cars to the Salisbury Concours.

Hacker is a noted automotive researcher, author and leading authority on early fiberglass cars, which he says were creations of “young, hard-working, talented men who wanted to build the sports cars that American auto manufacturers didn’t offer.”



**The Salisbury Concours “Forgotten Fiberglass” class will include this 203 mph Victress S-R1, a world speed record car.**

Among the fiberglass craftsmen were business partners William 'Doc' Boyce-Smith and Merrill Powell, of North Hollywood, California. Together, they established the Victress Manufacturing Company where they produced an aerodynamic fiberglass roadster body called the S-1A. Guy Mabee purchased a body to be installed on a road racing chassis. It was outfitted with a Chrysler Hemi engine and piloted at the Bonneville Salt Flats to a top speed of 203.105 mph. The press dubbed the Mabee Special 'the world's fastest sports car'. It was used, abused and eventually forgotten on a ranch in Mexico until its discovery in 1983.

The fully restored 1953 Victress S-1A ‘Mabee Special’ is just one of nearly a dozen forgotten fiberglass cars that will take center stage at the Salisbury House and Gardens, along with a 1954 Kaiser Darrin.



The 1954 Kaiser Darrin was noted for its pastel colors and distinctive sliding doors that disappeared into the front fenders.

Henry J. Kaiser owned the company that built Hoover Dam, and his wealth was compounded by building Liberty transport ships for the United States Navy. After the war, he produced a line of Kaiser mid-priced automobiles designed by custom car stylist Howard “Dutch” Darrin. Today, the most desirable was the last, the 1954 Kaiser Darrin fiberglass-bodied convertible. Distinctive styling elements included a three-position folding top, doors that disappeared into the front fenders, and a small, uniquely shaped grille. Only 435 Kaiser Darrins were made.

Chevrolet introduced the world’s first mass-produced fiberglass car in 1953—the Corvette. Soon after, the lesser known manufacturers were all but forgotten—until now.

Be sure to place The Salisbury Concours Weekend on your calendar, September 7-9, 2012. If you own a vintage automobile of distinction, why not exhibit it at the show? To apply, visit [www.SalisburyConcours.com](http://www.SalisburyConcours.com) and click on ‘APPLICATION’ near the top of the page.

If you don’t have a collectible car, come anyway! There’s plenty to see and do. To purchase tickets for any of the Concours related events, please visit [www.salisburyhouse.org](http://www.salisburyhouse.org).

### **2012 Salisbury Concours d’Elegance Weekend Itinerary**

#### **Friday Evening, Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>**

[Gatsby Gala](#) is the annual fundraiser for the Salisbury House Foundation, a 1920’s themed party that is a festive kickoff for the Concours weekend. Flapper dresses and zoot suits encouraged!!

### **Saturday Morning, Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>**

[5<sup>th</sup> Annual Heartlands Driving Tour](#) to Ames and the Myers Automobile Collection, then on for lunch and a tour of The Hemken Museum Collection in Williams. Open to all, a vintage motor vehicle is not required to participate in the Tour.

### **Sunday, Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>**

[Salisbury Concours d'Elegance](#) See 125 vintage automobiles and 25 motorcycles, each selected by invitation only.

Exhibitors are treated to a private banquet at the Willis Auto Campus on Saturday evening and the Awards Buffet on Sunday evening after the close of the Concours. The only costs to exhibitors for the Concours Weekend are the optional Gatsby Gala and the Driving Tour, both of which raise funds for the educational programs and the restoration of the Salisbury House and Gardens.

### **2012 Salisbury Concours d'Elegance Traditional and Feature Classes**

**The BMWs:** celebrating pre-WWII BMWs such as the iconic 328 Roadster and the postwar sporting transition.

**The Cadillacs:** commemorating generations of America's "Standard of Excellence" for luxury automobiles.

**The Exotics:** a gathering of classic and contemporary front-engine/rear-wheel-drive exotic automobiles.

**The Forgotten Fiberglass:** low production, fiberglass-bodied automobiles from the 1950s and 1960s.

**The Porsches:** from the "people's car" to supercars and the lovely 356s, 911s and much more.

**The Studebakers:** milestone cars from the teens through the 1960s, featuring designs by designer Raymond Loewy.

**The Vintage Motorcycles:** from inception thru the 1970's, including original condition, restoration, competition and period-modified models.

**The Salisbury Classics:** prestige automobiles of luxury and elegance, designed, built and driven during the same era (1923-1953) as the Weeks' residency at the Salisbury House.

**The Antiques:** early historic automobiles that experimented with innovations in engineering and design, from inception through 1922.

**The Collectibles:** open to all marques of innovation and distinction not represented by a feature class, manufactured between 1923 and 1960.

For questions about the Salisbury Concours d'Elegance, please contact Katie Wengert at Salisbury House & Gardens, 4025 Tonawanda Drive, Des Moines, Iowa 50312. Email: [kwengert@salisburyhouse.org](mailto:kwengert@salisburyhouse.org). Phone 515-274-1777.

Salisbury House & Gardens is grateful for the support of our volunteer planning committee and for the sponsors who make this event possible:

