

Collectible Cars

Roger White:

They're here because of-of-a-a kind of Doomsday thinking or, uh, Noah's Ark, that some- someone needs to preserve these objects. We don't try to collect one of each type of car, but rather we collect cars that represent important turning points in design and usage, and also, uh, the-the experiences of Americans with mobility, what mobility means to Americans.

Roger White:

What we have in this building is a fabulous collection of vehicles that began way back in 1899. We now have a total of 217 vehicles. There are seventy-three cars, uh, ranging from, uh, uh 1894 to 1997.

Roger White:

The two vehicles, uh, that you see were selected in a poll online by, uh, 24,000 voters. The National Museum of American History hasn't done a-a- special car display in a while. These two cars will go, uh, into one of our lobbies on the first floor near the transportation hall near America on the Move.

Roger White:

The 1948 Tucker Sedan was introduced after World War II at a time when Americans were eager to buy consumer goods again. Uh, at the same time, uh, th-there were many, many ideas about redesigning cars from scratch to make them better. And, uh, put the two together, and you have Preston Tucker's dream of a-a mass-produced car that would be entirely different from other cars.

Roger White:

This one has a rear engine, um, has a-a very spacious interior because of the, uh, the placement of the engine. It has numerous safety features, and it has a rubber suspension.

Roger White:

Unfortunately, Tucker was only able to produce fifty-one of these before financial difficulties caused him to end production.

Roger White:

This is a 1929 Miller race car. Harry Miller is not exactly a household name, but he was the premier builder of race cars in the 1920s. To compensate for the smaller engine in this car, uh, Miller added a supercharger, and the front-wheel drive lowered the entire profile of the car to make it run a little faster. The, uh, body is made of aluminum, which of course is lightweight. So, uh, put all that combination together, and the twelve cars in-in this class were unlike any race cars that had been seen.

Roger White:

I get that question asked a lot: "What's your favorite vehicle?" I-I actually don't have one. Uh, uh, I think it's a great privilege to be the custodian of these seventy-three cars, and, I-I learn from them all the time. Um, I just can't choose a favorite. Th-they're all, uh, they're all wonderful.

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