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## Mystery Galore

Has the Stolen James Bond  
Aston Martin DB5 Been Found?



NEW REVIEW

**The Archaeological Automobile: Understanding and Living with Historical Automobiles**

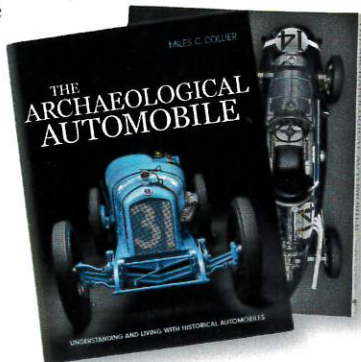
by Miles C. Collier, 392 pages, Collier Automedia, 2022, \$149.95

Miles Collier is well known to SCMerS, having appeared in print on these pages countless times. He is also the guiding light of the Revs Institute in Florida, an organization whose resources have benefited us all. A prolific writer of articles, this is his first book.

Collier approaches the automobile as a cultural artifact, evolving from highly individualistic machines of the past into the digital devices of today. Use of the word “archaeological” in the title is apt. In six distinct chapters, he traces history, what makes a car collectible, and advocates the restoration and preservation of our cars, including the gathering, restoring and future responsibilities as caretakers of the legacy. Every aspect is discussed through the eyes of a scholar intent on preserving every detail. Many questions are asked, with most left for your judgment after a thorough examination of his persuasive text.

This book is a heavy volume in every sense. At nearly 400 pages of high-quality paper, it weighs in at over five pounds. It is best read in an easy chair when you have plenty of quiet time. This is intense reading. While the most serious among us might manage to make it cover-to-cover, mere mortals will want to digest a sub-chapter at a time and reflect on all the lessons to be learned.

To get you started, this month we are publishing an excerpt from the book in “Collecting Thoughts,” starting on p. 42.



COLLECTIBLE CLASSIC

**The Grand Prix Car**

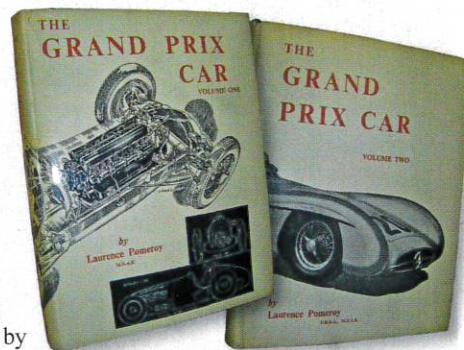
by Laurence Pomeroy, Motor Racing Publications & Temple Press, 419 pages, 1949

During World War II, the British automotive press faced a dearth of interesting reading matter. To fill the pages, *The Motor* published a series of articles from 1939 to 1947 titled “Milestones of Speed” by Laurence Pomeroy, supplemented with phantom cutaways by illustrator L.C. Cresswell.

These were gathered and published with supplementary material in a 419-page book as *The Grand Prix Car* in 1949. This tome quickly sold out but was republished in 1954 as two volumes totaling 611 pages. The content was restructured so the new Volume Two does not connect to the original volume.

So what’s inside? Pomeroy picked up in 1906 (near where Gerald Rose had left off his documentation of earlier racing, *A Record of Motor Racing, 1894–1908*). This comprehensive study of Grand Prix racing continues through 1953, when the formula changed. Three areas are covered: the races are documented; cars are described in technical detail and supplemented with phantom views, pen-and-ink drawings, and photographs; and a study is made of the relative merits of the state of the art and performance of each era. Cresswell is, unfortunately, given scant credit for his stunning art.

If your interest is here and budget allows, get both volumes of the 1954 edition. Expect to pay about \$200 each, from the usual used book sources. There is no better source of documentation for this era of Grand Prix racing.



**NEAT STUFF**



**E-Racing, Vintage-Style**

Base Performance Simulators has been building high-end e-racing sim rigs since 2010, and a new partnership with Brabham Branding offers a vintage-styled take on this modern racing technology. Three limited-edition sim rigs are styled after your choice of three iconic Brabham Formula One cars: a 1978 BT46B “Fan Car,” 1983 BT52 as driven by Nelson Piquet, or the 1966 BT19 that Jack Brabham himself drove to his third world championship. £24,990 (\$33,356). [www.base-performance.net/Brabham](http://www.base-performance.net/Brabham)



**Happy 60th, MGB**

The classic MGB was the entry point for many budding sports-car enthusiasts, and it’s still a treasured collector car all these decades later. A new limited-edition print from Sports Car Art beautifully illustrates the little British drop-top in three views, just in time for the model’s 60th anniversary this year. Prints on archival paper are available in signed or unsigned (and framed or unframed) format, and brushed aluminum or large-scale dye-sublimated versions are also offered. From \$279. [www.sportscarart.com](http://www.sportscarart.com) ♦



# What Makes an Automobile Collectible?

An excerpt from Miles C. Collier's new book, *The Archaeological Automobile*

By Miles C. Collier

**"T**hat's a really valuable collector automobile." Or, "This car will be a very important addition to a collection."

What do we really mean when we make such judgments? Whenever we go to shows, auctions, tours, and races, we hear these remarks. But have you ever wondered what goes into making a car important or valuable, or for that matter, desirable? Further, when we hear such statements, who is being referred to that would find this automobile so valuable, desirable, or important? Does the remark refer to the speaker alone, or does that judgment encompass a few connoisseurs with rarified and esoteric tastes, or does it refer to the general body of "car people" everywhere?

What constitutes value and what are the building blocks of value? Is value the same as monetary price? What is the link between desire and value? How much of the value, importance, and desirability equation is based on arguably objective criteria, and how much is the sheer emotion and passion that a specific automobile might raise in the hearts of the viewer?

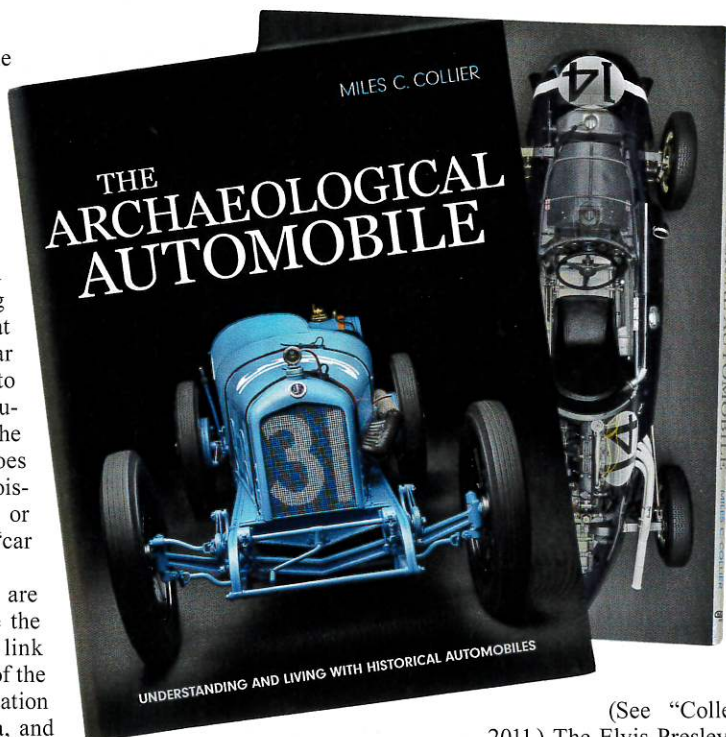
**"Value" has two meanings: one is monetary price and the other is uncoupled from the price mechanism where value is an historic, cultural, or personal judgment.**

There are probably as many individual incentives on behalf of collectors as there are collectors. Clearly, one collector's desperately desired masterpiece may arouse no answering response in the breast of another. Yet despite this, both collectors may agree that the automobile in question is both valuable and important. But one finds it desirable and the other does not. Is this something we can simply ascribe to a matter of taste or can we identify elements that make our ability to predict such a divergence of desire possible?

Let's begin with the concept of value. "Value" has two meanings: one is monetary price and the other is uncoupled from the price mechanism where value is an historic, cultural, or personal judgment. While some culturally valuable artifacts are very valuable monetarily, they need not be. Indeed, some may not have any monetary value at all because they are intangible, excessively common, or have passed their functional utility as "transients" and have become "rubbish" (See Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*).

**Historic value** is created by one or more of three factors. First, the automobile functioned as an actor in an important historic or cultural event; second, it was owned by a noted celebrity or historic figure; and third, it was present at an historic event.

We define the "automobile as actor" as being a necessary part of



Miles C. Collier  
Photo ©2021 Shawn Blair

the action, starring in a popular film, for example. Consider the James Bond Aston Martin DB5 in the film "Goldfinger." Being the winning automobile in an important race, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, for example, is another route to historic significance as actor. Embodying transformative technology as did the 1997 Toyota Prius, the first mass-produced hybrid vehicle, is a third automobile-as-actor category.

Second, ownership by a famous, celebrated, or infamous person commands value. The Porsche 911S Steve McQueen used in his film "Le Mans," and subsequently bought for personal use, is a good example.

(See "Collecting Thoughts," November 2011.) The Elvis Presley BMW 507, or even Hermann Goering's armored Mercedes-Benz 540 K Special Roadster, the "Blue Goose," are further examples. Celebrity, as distinct from historic importance, is the most volatile value driver. It often burns hotter than historic importance, but as the popularity of the celebrity often wanes, it is all the more volatile. Does anyone today care about Clara Bow's 1927 Cadillac?

**Certainly, the boundaries of historic and cultural significance can be somewhat permeable. Illustratively, we might cite the significance of the 1964½-model-year Ford Mustang as an automobile of great cultural value.**

Third, historic value accrues to the object's presence at an historic event, a genuine Indianapolis pace car, or the Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow bullet-ridden V8 Ford. (This car exists at Whiskey Pete's Hotel and Casino in Primm, NV. It was reputedly purchased for \$250,000 in 1988.) Consider as well that Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, were assassinated in a Gräf & Stift touring car now in the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum in Vienna. This was the proximate cause of World War I. Clearly, these various events inhabit different realms of significance, but the greater the notoriety or celebrity of the owner or the importance of the event in which the car participated, or at which it was present, the greater the historic value.

**Cultural value** is a slightly different phenomenon because it is not connected to an identifiable person or event, but rather to the values of society. According to Paul Ingrassia, "[such cars] defined large swaths of American culture, helped to shape their era, and uniquely reflected the spirit of their age" (*Crash Course: The American Automobile Industry's*





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In my family, we have an heirloom of my father in the form of his 1933 MG PA/PB racing special that he drove in Automobile Racing Club of America (ARCA) races in the 1930s, and ultimately at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1939. ... For my family, it evokes the lost presence of my father. While modestly historic, the car's preciousness lies within my own psyche.

*Road from Glory to Disaster*). Certainly, the boundaries of historic and cultural significance can be somewhat permeable. Illustratively, we might cite the significance of the 1964½-model-year Ford Mustang as an automobile of great cultural value. "The term 'Pony car' soon entered the automotive lexicon to define small, sporty, and fun-to-drive cars. The Mustang was the original." The radical 1959 Austin and Morris 850 Minis represent a car where both technical and historic value contribute to its cultural value. Able to perform almost instantaneous maneuvers at high speed, the Mini's sheer performance was of an order never contemplated in a "charwoman's car" (Gillian Bardsley, *Issigonis: The Official Biography*). As the icon of "Cool Britannia," the Mini defined British pop culture of the Swinging Sixties. Its cheeky personality made it the darling of London's fashionable set: ultra-slender fashion model Twiggy; The Beatles; the Aga Kahn; Lord Snowdon; Peter Sellers, and Christine Keeler. Anyone who was fashionable had one. Anyone who aspired to being fashionable bought one.

**Personal value:** Historic, technical, and cultural value are generally accessible. Collectors and car-conscious people have an appreciation of these values as they apply to a given make and model. Yet there is also an idiosyncratic value that exists at the personal level, sometimes at the level of nostalgia and self-referential memory, or sometimes due to some other kind of personal attachment. Whether a valuable family heirloom or a lost-and-now-rediscovered possession from the past, these cars are enshrined in personal desire. As such, their value lies only with that one person or with that small group of people whose connection to the car is for some (sometimes unfathomable) reason of great importance personally and individually. Such cars may also have some or none of the other objective values discussed above. Personal value accrues to the object only in the heart and mind of the person with this special relationship.

In my family, we have an heirloom of my father in the form of his 1933 MG PA/PB racing special that he drove in Automobile Racing Club of America (ARCA) races in the 1930s, and ultimately at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1939. Family lore says that while he sold the car before going to Le Mans to fund the trip, he kept his eye on its circumstances ever after. Indeed, he drove it as a guest driver at the 1950

Bridgehampton road races, where he won with it in convincing fashion. My mother was finally able to buy the car back after my dad's death in 1954. Suffused with *mana*, it has been a symbolic member of our family ever since, despite a brief tenure in Austin Clark's Long Island Motor Museum in the 1960s. For my family, it evokes the lost presence of my father. While modestly historic, the car's preciousness lies within my own psyche. (Freund, *Objects of Desire*.)

Monetary value is quite something else. The Citroën 2CV is socially important, but hardly valuable. Monetary value might best be thought of in appraisal terms. It is the price at which a willing seller and a willing buyer, both aware of all the relevant facts, agree to a purchase and sale at a given time. Supply and demand, time constraints, and the sheer emotionality of the market, or of the buyer or seller, influence the actual monetary value of a transaction and can result in a transaction price different from the appraisal value. It is useful to recognize that rarity, per se, does not confer value. Rarity, the sheer lack of availability of any given commodity, has no force and effect if there is no demand. There is a plenitude of automobiles that exist in very small numbers and command no price whatsoever.

My favorite valueless car is the Ford Maverick. It was sold between 1969 and 1977 in the U.S. as an "import fighter." I remember a friend of my boss at Foreign Car Service on Church Street in Greenwich, CT, showing up with a spanking-new red 1969 Maverick. As a rapidly developing car snob or, perhaps more charitably, an evolving connoisseur, I recall Roger's new Maverick as a car of such depressing dullness that its effect on me was the equivalent of the bore who corners you at a cocktail party. All you want to do is get away. I haven't changed my view since. (The Maverick was introduced as the successor to the declining Falcon badge. Available in such seductive colors as Anti-Establish Mint, Hulla Blue, Freudian Gilt, and Thanks Vermillion, this car achieved well-deserved obscurity after 1977.) A clean, low-mileage, original Maverick today is, quite possibly, considerably rarer than the 39 Ferrari GTOs. (Ferrari built 33 250 GTOs and three 330 GTO prototypes in 1962 and 1963. In 1964 three additional cars with new Series 2 coachwork were created; simultaneously, four Series 1 cars were updated to Series 2 configuration as well.) Collectors worldwide are hardly pining for a reference-grade Maverick. However low its supply, demand for it is even lower. Rarity is a factor that supercharges value. It is part of the supply/demand equation and operates as a multiplier of price where there is measurable demand. Clearly, multiplying zero by some factor still gives only zero, and so it is for rarity. ♦

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MILES C. COLLIER is a prominent collector and the founder of the Revs Institute in Naples, FL, which houses a collection of over 100 historical, exceptional automobiles as well as an extensive archive. For more on The Archeological Automobile, please visit [thearchaeologicalautomobile.com](http://thearchaeologicalautomobile.com), or find it at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).