

1953 PACKARD CLIPPER SPECIAL

1953 Packard Clipper Special, 4-door sedan, body/style 2692

Owners: Bernie and Janice Taulborg Collection

Original cost: \$2,588.00 (In 1953: average car cost \$1,650; average household income \$4,000; average home cost \$9,550; cost of a gallon of gas: 20 cents)

Number made: 23,126

Engine, etc.: Series 2601, 8 cyl., in-line L-head; 288 cid, 150 hp; 122 in. wheelbase; 3,715 lbs.

The Clipper was introduced in the early 1940's. It was stylish, elegant, and durable. The body was designed by the legendary Howard "Dutch" Darrin.

Jet plane hood ornaments were featured. Equipment included twin horns, sun visors, horn ring, front and back bumper guards, jack and tools, turn signals, glove box light, and clock.

In 1942 the federal government ordered car manufacturers to cease production and turn their efforts to war production. Packard began producing aircraft and marine engines, ambulances, and military vehicles. More than 60,000 engines were produced by Packard during the war.

After decades of being considered one of the most lavish and opulent manufacturers in the American automobile industry, Packard found itself in trouble after World War II. It was hanging on for dear life in a nation that had almost changed overnight.

"Living life" became the mantra going into the 1950's. The world had come out of a long depression of destruction and death and it wanted to enjoy life all over again. This meant excitement, adventure, and having fun. Packard did not represent fun – it represented stuffy-shirts and luxury that screamed "do not touch!". Before the war, millionaires were pleased to be chauffeured

around. After the war, millionaires were more likely to want to drive the car than let the chauffeur have all the fun.

In reality, Packard had to change but it had spent so many years mingling with the apparent elites of society that it didn't really know how to change. Packard's cars were so well made that they lasted a very long time and it had few repeat customers since they didn't need to buy another vehicle.

George Mason, president of Nash, approached Packard about a merger in the early 1950's but Packard was not interested. (Nash merged with Hudson Motor Car, forming American Motors in 1954.)

In 1952 James Nance was elected president of Packard and in 1954 merged Packard with Studebaker in an effort to diversify its product line and tap into Studebaker's larger dealer network.

Unfortunately, the stuffy tradition returned in 1954. This ultimately hurt Packard more than it helped when Studebaker sales dipped dramatically.

By June of 1956 production of Packards ceased.

Source: Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1946 – 1974. John Gunnell. Rev. 4th ed. Krause Publications, 2002.

<http://www.conceptcarz.com/vehicle/z10004/Packard-Clipper-Deluxe.aspx>
http://uniquecarsandparts.com/lost_marques_packard.htm (History)

See

also: <http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Packard/1953%20Packard/1953%20Packard%20Owners%20Manual/dirindex.html> (Original 1953 owner's manual)
<http://www.oldcarbrochures.com/static/NA/Packard/1953%20Packard/1953%20Packard%20Brochure/dirindex.html> (Original sales brochure)