

# The Little White House NEWSLETTER



Roosevelt's Little White House - 706-655-5870 - 401 Little White House Rd. - Warm Springs, Ga. 31830

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## FDR And His Automobiles

Arthur Carpenter once said that everyone in Meriwether and Harris Counties knew FDR by the fact that he had driven to their dooryard for a chat. He knew their joys and their hardships. This was long before Roosevelt re-entered politics.

Polio had robbed Franklin Roosevelt of some of the most important things in his life. Mainly, it stole his political career, so he thought. He was encouraged to retire, stay at Springwood, and become a gentleman farmer. His mother, Sara, wanted nothing less than to take care of her boy. For three years, he tirelessly sought a cure for his polio and on the off chance that a rundown resort in Georgia offered hope, he came to Warm Springs.

During his first visit, he was driven through the countryside, visiting and meeting with the locals. There was not much else to do, after his swimming sessions were over. In this time, he felt remarkable. His paralyzed limbs were showing signs of gaining strength and to him, this was exhilarating. For the first time in years, he was happy. He was also bored and the rides in the evening helped relieve some of his boredom.

Within a couple years, he purchased the springs, properties, and other farms creating the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation. He brought in blacksmiths to help with brace making, crutch building, and wheelchair fabrication. These same craftsmen also fashioned an odd set of driving

controls, made mostly from tractor parts and attached them to a Model T for FDR to drive. Roosevelt, with his engineering mindset helped with the designs until he had what he wanted.

In the 2005 HBO movie, *Warm Springs*, FDR is seen driving up to the depot to pick up Eleanor and Louis Howe. Howe asks him “*When did you learn to drive?*” to which Roosevelt laughingly shouts, “*Last Tuesday!*”

FDR would go on to drive a number of specially equipped automobiles, two of which are in the museum here at Warm Springs.

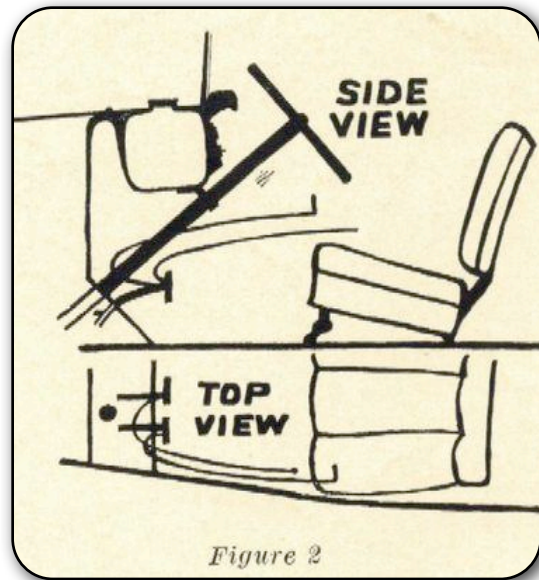
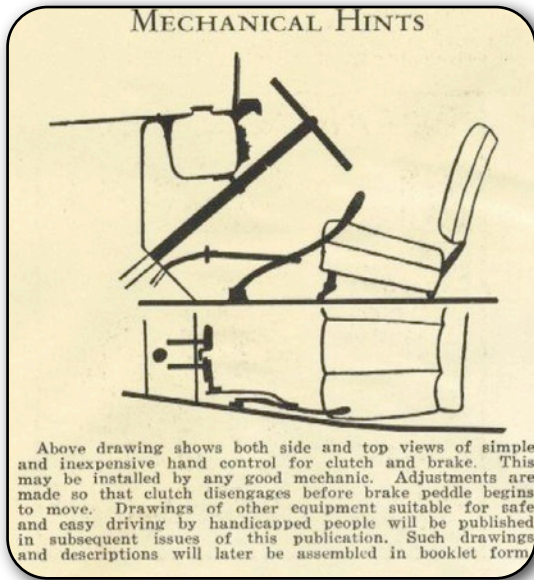


Mr. Roosevelt enjoys driving

## FDR Inspires Others With Disabilities

In the late 1920s, FDR acquired a Model A Ford. He would drive this automobile everywhere he could. It is not known where he got the car, or how much he paid for it or anything. But it was priceless to Franklin. He now had the freedom of being able to simply go. Whether he wanted to go to a store and get a Coke or drive to Manchester and speak before a group of people, the car made this possible for him.

Patients at the Foundation saw him driving, and they also wanted to drive. His happiness provided hope to dozens of polio patients who thought they would never enjoy the "open road" again. The diagrams below show basic views and tips for working these new types of hand controls. This information was published in the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation newsletter, *The Polio Chronicle*, in 1933,



FDR inspecting his cattle farm



Governor Roosevelt in front of his cottage



Dedication of the new 9 hole golf course



A meeting of friends in Warm Springs

## THE 1932 PLYMOUTH

In 1932 Governor Roosevelt purchased a sporty 1932 four-door convertible Plymouth PA Phaeton. He would log hundreds of miles in this car, hold dozens of press conferences and visit the countryside of Georgia. The press eagerly waited for him to get behind the wheel and follow the Governor and later President to wherever he wanted to go.



Colorized postcard in front of the Little White House



Roadside press conference in Warm Springs



Riding with government officials



Dedicating the new Flag Pool in Warm Springs



## FDR Drives at Hyde Park

FDR carried his love of driving to his home in Hyde Park, NY where he was often seen on the roads of Hudson Valley. He drove a 1933 DeSoto and later a 1936 Ford Phaeton Convertible. One other noteworthy feature was the President's automatic cigarette dispenser. This ingenious device not only stored his cigarettes, but also delivered them into his hand already lit and ready to smoke!



FDR in his DeSoto with Francis Perkins



A man, his dog, and his DeSoto!



1936 Ford Phaeton Convertible



Equipped with hand controls and automatic cigarette dispenser



FDR inspecting Top Cottage

## Riding Mr. Roosevelt

As much as Franklin loved to drive, his political career changed his routine of being able to drive. But now he could “ride” anywhere as he was being chauffeured.

A pair of 1938 Cadillac’s were built for FDR and nicknamed the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. They served Presidents Truman and Eisenhower after Roosevelt’s death.

The Sunshine Special was a 1939 Lincoln four door convertible with a twelve cylinder engine. It was modified with bullet proof tires, 1-inch thick glass, armor plating and compartments for pistols and other weapons to protect the president.



The Sunshine Special



1939 Packard



PRESIDENTIAL CAR, a Cadillac Limosine belonging to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was given a washing here in 1941 by Warren Askew at his service station on Greenville Street. Because of a water shortage that year, special permission had to be obtained from city officials to wash the President's car. Roosevelt was in nearby Little White House at Warm Springs for a Thanksgiving visit.

Washing the Queen Mary on Greenville St.



1936 Pierce Arrow



The Queen Mary

## FDR's Last Personal Automobiles

In the spring of 1938, as new Ford Phaeton convertible, with a V8 engine. Although the odometer reads 64,000 miles, it is highly doubtful that FDR drove it that much. Staff from the Foundation drove the car for Roosevelt's friend Basil O'Connor to Atlanta often. The other treasure in the Museum is the 1940 Willys. It was a birthday gift from Willys Overland of Toledo, Ohio and presented to him by his brother in law. Interestingly enough, Willys received the contracts to build Jeeps a short time later.



FDR's 1938 Ford at the Bump Gate



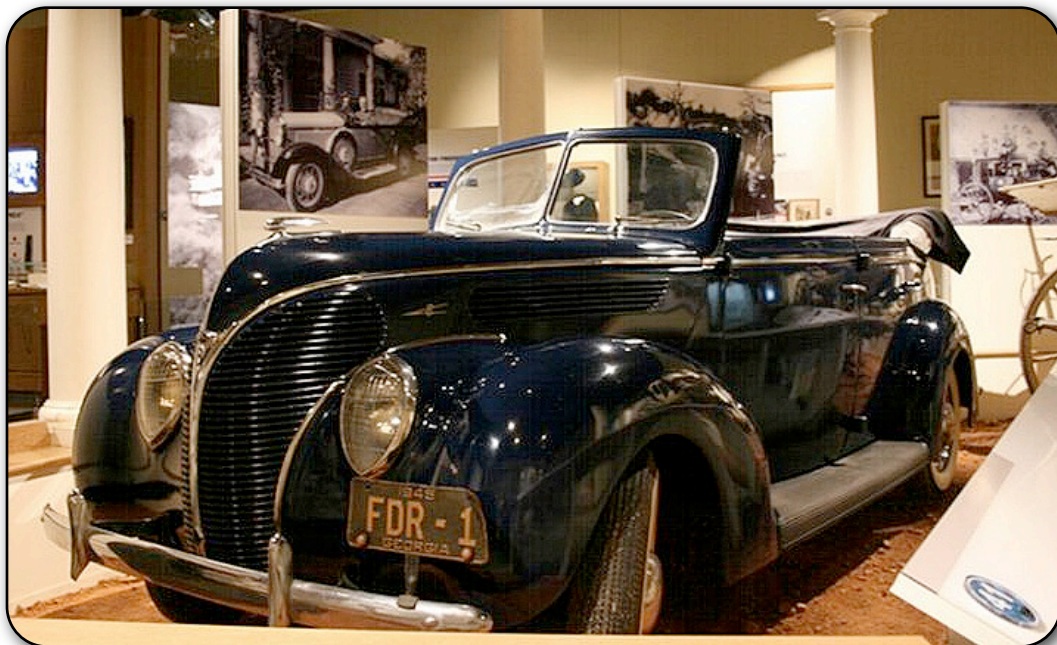
Ready to hit the road



The Willys with it's top on



The 1940 Willys in it's new home



The Ford complete with 1945 plates