

Nash-Healey



MARCH 2011

NEWSLETTER

**IN THIS ISSUE , WE WILL
FOCUS ON THE
INTRODUCTION OF THE
1952 NASH HEALEY WITH
IT'S BOLD NEW PININ
FARINA DESIGN**

This picture is from the 2005 United Postal Service Sporty Cars Design. The 1952 Nash Healey was one of the five cars used for the series.



1952 Nash Healey

A spectacular example of a 1952 belongs to Dwayne Ashmead of Salt Lake City, Utah. As it often the case, this car exhibits many one of a kind features. Dwayne has shared his story with us.



The Nash Healey was produced from the summer of 1950, until August, 1954. During that period, production was temporarily suspended in March of 1951, following the completion of the first 104 cars by Pannellcraft in England. At that point Nash asked the Italian coach builder, Pinin Farina to redesign the car and subsequently produce the new bodies following Nash's approval of the design. After almost a year hiatus, in January of 1952, production recommenced. Nash shipped the mechanical parts, including the engine and transmission, to England where Healey installed them in a ladder frame and suspension of his own design to form a rolling chassis. This rolling chassis was then shipped to Italy where the redesigned body was manufactured and installed by Pinin Farina.

A prototype of the Italian designed Nash Healey was entered in the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in the summer of 1951. It was awarded the "Reserve Grand Champion" which was the highest honor of the event at that time. Called the Nash Healey Spyder, the car was subsequently introduced to the public at the Chicago Auto Show in February, 1952.

This particular car is the 24th car bodied by Pinin Farina in 1952 which makes it a very early production car. While manufactured in 1952, it was first titled as a 1954 model when it was sold to a Nash/American Motors Corp. (AMC) dealer. When compared to later production Nash Healeys, this early production car has several unique features that may have been common to those first cars, but were discontinued or unavailable in the later cars. For example, the uprights, or bumper guards, on the bumpers are boxed in rather than being the open shells that are seen on most of the Nash Healeys. The wire wheels are not sourced from Nash and are not Nash hubcaps. Instead they

are actual Nash Healey wheels that were designed for racing. Instead of a big "N," the words, "Nash Healey", are stamped into the center of each wheel. And finally, the hood contains louvers that provide an escape route for the hot air created in the engine compartment. I suspect that the louvers were put in the hood at the time of production of the body because the hood and the louvers appear to have the original undercoating still on the underside of the hood. (To the best of my knowledge this Nash Healey has never been restored.) Alternatively, the louvers may have been put in at the time that the V-8 engine in this car was installed. It is the V-8 in this car that truly makes it unique.

Edmund Anderson, who was the chief stylist at Nash and later at AMC, was a great enthusiast of the car. He owned two Nash Healeys which he continued to "beef up just a little more." Anderson's motivation for increasing the 125 horsepower of his Nash Healey came from his membership in the Sports Car Club of America where he raced in many events with considerable success. He installed a supercharger on one of the cars (which George Mason, president of Nash, duplicated in his personal Nash Healey). Anderson installed a Hudson Hornet Twin H racing engine in his other Nash Healey but later, when Mason was negotiating with Packard to include that company under the AMC umbrella, Anderson replaced the Hudson engine with a 327 cid V-8 that had been designed by Packard.

Prior to his untimely death in late 1954, as indicated above, George Mason intended to merge Studebaker, Packard, Nash and Hudson into a single company called American Motors, Inc. While Nash and Hudson were merged on May 1, 1954, Studebaker and Packard were not included in that initial fold. Negotiations with Packard broke off shortly after Mason's death. In his

original merger master plan, Mason intended to install Packard designed V-8's in all of the AMC cars requiring V-8's rather than spending AMC between Packard and AMC continued, in anticipation of the consummation of the merger, AMC introduced the Ambassador "Special" which was powered by a Packard designed V-8. The motor was known as an Ambassador Special V-8 throughout the AMC organization even though it was actually designed by Packard.

This same Packard designed V-8 was used earlier by Edmund Anderson in his Nash Healey. Based on Anderson's experiences, Nash developed a set of instructions for other Nash Healey owners to convert their cars to V-8 power using the same engine. Most of these conversions were performed by Nash dealers. Concurrently, several Nash Healeys underwent V-8 transplants in the United States before being sold by the Nash/AMC organization. The United States was moving into an era where V-8 power was demanded by our owners and AMC appeared to believe that perhaps by offering the V-8 powered Healeys, Nash's lagging inventory could be moved. Based on its serial number, this car was in the group of cars that was assigned to receive the factory V-8 conversions. If my car was actually modified by the factory prior to selling it, that would help explain why the car was not titled until two years after it was produced in Italy. While placed in the Nash inventory in 1952/3, the car wasn't sold due to the state of the United States economy and the car's high price. Thus, it became one of the cars selected to receive a V-8 engine. The six cylinder engine initially installed by Healey in England, was removed and replaced with a Packard designed V-8.

The Packard designed engine is reported to be capable of developing 208 (or 190 or 240, depending on the source consulted) horsepower at

R&D dollars to develop a new engine. Neither Nash nor Hudson had a V-8 of its own. In 1955, while talks 4,200 rpm. The overhead valve engine has an 8.25:1 compression ratio. It is mated to a Nash designed 3-speed transmission with a Borg Warner overdrive. Power is transferred to the rear wheels by a conventional Nash designed torque tube.

While actual documents proving that this particular car was modified by the factory prior to its initial sale do not exist, there is no doubt that Nash/AMC had a hand in its modifications. The technical Service Manual, published in 1953/1954 states, "The Nash Healey is truly a fine sports car and is designed as such, but it should not be considered as a competition car to be used for racing purposes. It is suggested that the factory be contacted for information pertaining to modifications for racing." Those modifications included installing a V-8 engine and Nash Healey designed wire racing wheels, both of which appear on this car.

To date, no attempt has been made to ascertain if, or when, this car was raced. A previous owner, whom I interviewed, reported that this car was one of three cars that formed a Nash Healey racing team and was the only one of the three to have a louvered hood. That claim has not been verified by me.

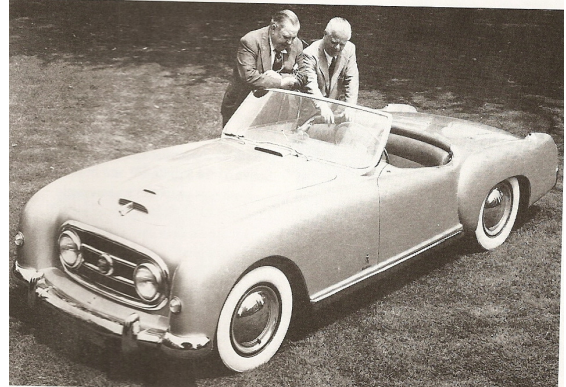
Even if this Nash Healey was once raced, it is no longer on that circuit. Instead, it is used for touring and pleasure driving. From time to time it is invited to participate in car shows where it is admired by many even though it is not a show car in the true sense of the word. When the car shows are over and the trophies collected, my Nash Healey returns to the storage facility that it shares with approximately fifty other cars in the H. DeWayne Ashmead collection and waits for its next road trip.

1952 Nash Healey

The all new Pinin Farina bodied Nash Healey was introduced at Pebble Beach in 1951. It was awarded the "Reserve Grand Champion" at this meet.

Production of the 1952 began and the difficulties involved in building a three country car began with horrendous transportation costs. The 1952 Nash Healey went on sale in February at a price of \$5858.

The new design was mostly steel, with only the hood, doors and deck being made of aluminum. The early 1952's (about the first 110) continued with a 234 cid engine and horsepower of 125@4000. The last 40 of the 150 produced had a 252.6 cid engine and horsepower of 140@4000 . The body and interior of the new Nash Healey was beautiful. The top went up and down by hand and the side windows were removable in true roadster fashion.



FROM:

Public Relations Department
Nash Motors Division
Nash-Kelvinator Corporation
Detroit 32, Michigan
2552

FOR RELEASE FEBRUARY 13, 1952

AND THEREAFTER

NASH MOTORS ANNOUNCES 1952 NASH-HEALEY SPORTS CAR DESIGNED BY PININ FARINA

Chicago, Feb. 13 -- Nash Motors today unveiled its new 1952 Nash-Healey sports car, featuring original hand-built body styling by Pinin Farina, world famous European custom body designer.

A production model of the new sports car will be shown for the first time at the Chicago Automobile Show (Feb. 16-24), according to R. C. Doss, vice-president in charge of sales. It will be late Spring before cars are available in sufficient quantity for delivery.

"Nash Motors' new 1952 sports car combines the superb styling skills of Pinin Farina with American engineering and Donald Healey's British road racing chassis," Doss said. The brisk lines of its hand-built body and richness of interior appointments are unexcelled by any custom sports car available today. To top it off, the new car has the reliability and easily serviced mechanical features of Nash Motors' improved Ambassador power plant and other moving parts."

Engine and major mechanical parts are manufactured by Nash Motors in the United States. Chassis with "trailing link" front-end suspension are made by the Donald Healey Company, Warwick, England. Pinin Farina's famed custom body plant at Turin, Italy, hand builds the sleek custom bodies.

Low-slung and racy in appearance, the new Nash-Healey is characteristic of Pinin Farina designs, surfaces of which are curved and subtly blended, never joined in sharp edges.

(more)

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Front fenders rise above the hood line and continue through the door panels. The distinctive lowered hood affords an excellent view of the road.

Flowing front to rear lines are accentuated by trailing rear fender fins, which add sweep to body styling. Rear fenders, rising slightly above the rear deck, are a molded part of the body, forming an eye-pleasing curve around the wheels.

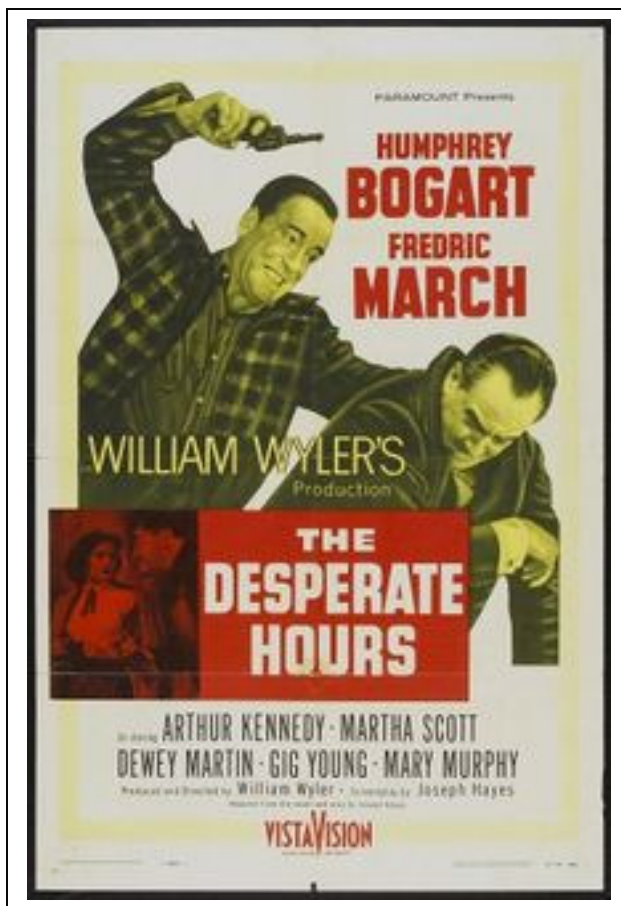
The wide, lower hood provides a balanced frame for a clean-cut grille, creating an outstanding impression of power and beauty. Headlights are set in a racing air scoop grille. Gracefully rounded front fenders extend forward of the grille line.

Power plant of the Nash-Healey is the "Dual Jetfire" Ambassador six-cylinder, overhead valve, 125 horsepower engine. Equipped with an aluminum cylinder head it has a compression ratio of 8:1:1. Engine has two British S. U. horizontal carburetors working in conjunction with an oversized "Sealed-In Iso-Thermal" intake manifold. Its seven-bearing crankshaft is 100 per cent counterbalanced.

A major mechanical feature of the new sports car is its chassis, using the famous Healey "trailing link" front-end suspension which provides outstanding road holding and "cornering."

Each front wheel is mounted on a "swinging arm" pivoted far ahead of the wheel centerline and cushioned against a coil spring. Coil spring suspension is also used at rear wheels. All four wheels have direct acting aircraft type shock absorbers mounted in towers attached to the chassis frame. It has torque tube type drive.

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Based on the novel and play by Joseph Hayes, which in turn was inspired by an actual event, [The Desperate Hours](#) is the prototypical "family-trapped-by-criminals" drama. Escaped convicts [Humphrey Bogart](#), [Robert Middleton](#) and [Dewey Martin](#), seeking an appropriate hideout until they can make contact with their money supply, deliberately choose the suburban home of [Fredric March](#) and his family. The cold-blooded Bogart wants no trouble with the police, and he knows he can cover a family with children into cooperating with him. The convict orders March, his wife [Martha Scott](#), and their children [Richard Eyer](#) and [Mary Murphy](#), to go about their normal activities so as not to arouse suspicion. Young Eyer, upset that March won't lift a hand against Bogart, assumes that his father is a coward. The authorities are alerted when March, at Bogart's behest, draws money for the convict's getaway from the bank. Pushed to the breaking point, March begins subtly turning the tables on the convicts. The film was slated to co-star Bogart with his old pal [Spencer Tracy](#), but this plan fell through when the two actors couldn't agree on who would get top billing. *Desperate Hours* was remade in 1991 with [Mickey Rourke](#) in the Bogart role. ~ Hal Erickson, Rovi



FEEDBACK

The article on the differences in the early and late-production 1951 Nash-Healeys is fascinating, and I saw things there I was not aware of.

I have the very last-produced of the 1951s - the 104th - and I did notice some differences not mentioned in the article.

The later-production cars (at least, in my case) have a chin spoiler under the front bumper. I don't believe these were present on early examples. Other, more knowledgeable members can say more than I, but the bumper supports on my car protrude through the spoiler. I believe that, on earlier cars, they simply extend forward from the frame.

Also, the dimensions of the car varied all through production. The later ones have a higher front fender rise than early ones. If you were to put an early production model next to a later one, bend down and get a profile view, it would be obvious that the later model curves upward more. I was told this was to eliminate a slight tendency toward tire-rub. I suspect it was done rather for aesthetic reasons. Also, I believe the bottom rear of the body on my car is deeper - extends lower beneath the bumper - than on early specimens. My car has steel doors on aluminum body. Is this the case throughout production? I don't know.

Years ago, a friend sent me diagrams of his early-production car with precise measurements taken all 'round; width, fender height, door and deck lid measurements and so on. There was not a match anywhere between the two cars.

I believe, too, that glove-box door shapes changed over the span of first-year production, and there might even have been some slight instrument-panel control adjustments. The huge difference in the cockpit is, of course, the pedal placement, as pointed out so well in the article. Also, some people maintain that the convertible top clamps on the windshield frame were changed in later-production cars. I have seen two differing styles of lighted license-plate holders. The obvious differences in rear-deck lock (and the addition of an escutcheon) were noted in the article. I believe the shock towers were covered in different materials over the course of production; the later ones with carpeting. Also, I wonder if some cars had sections of instrument-panel fascia made of aluminum, and others of wood. All were covered in leather, in any case. The problem with definitive answers is in finding any of these cars in original condition - a daunting task.

Here's a question: did anyone ever see a 1951 model with original outside mirror(s)? My window frame is tapped for one, and I believe it did not come from the factory with it. Has anyone seen an original tool-kit that was issued with a '51 (aside from the British-style jack?) And finally, a personal request: anyone know where I might obtain a pair of the semi-toroid "disappearing" ashtrays found on the '51s? Mine were discarded when the previous owner re-upholstered the car (in the worst way possible, too).

Thank you for the swell article! Been waiting for something like it. Mike 10087

UPCOMING EVENTS

2011 GRAND NASHIONAL

July 20 – 23, 2011

Best Western Harbor Side Inn
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Hosted by the Upper Mississippi River Region of the NCCA. More details NCCA Website



RENDEZVOUS ROCKIN 50'S AND 60'S

June 27 – July 1, 2011
Vancouver, Washington

More Details Cascade Austin Healey Club Website

THE NASH HEALEY REGISTRY

The Nash Healey Registry was started in 2008 with the primary purpose of locating and indentifying the actual number of the 506 Nash Healeys built that are still in existence. Our secondary purpose was to establish a means of communication amongst the owners and to assist in the exchange of information . There is no cost associated with the Registry. At this point, we have compiled a list of 359 Nash Healeys believed to exist. We have 103 registered vehicles. If you have not yet registered your Nash Healey, please contact Judy Brookes 780-865-7066 or email jbrookes@moradnet.ca . I would love to add you to the list. If you have not received a roster, you have not yet registered.

Thanks to all of you who have sent me information, pictures, articles and feedback. In the next issue we will focus on the 1953's. Please send me anything you may have to contribute jbrookes@moradnet.ca .

