



1919 Ford Model T Craig-Hunt Speedster

A stash of vintage performance parts will make this a one-of-a-kind racer

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL

The enthusiasm for modifying the Model T is arguably the genesis of the entirety of today's automobile hobby. Probably the most glamorous way to fix up a Ford has always been the race car, and Ford racing exploded after the First World War — with the Model T remaining the dominant chassis in most grass-roots racing up to the mid-1930s.

After a race car, the next best thing has always been to build a high-performance car for the street. A young fellow with a bit of mechanical know-how could acquire a used Ford for not much money, lower the chassis (a lowered car was called “underslung” back then), jettison the bodywork and hop up the engine to have a speedster.

Those with a bit more money could tap into that burgeoning aftermarket and get race-type parts like wire wheels, underslinging brackets, overhead-valve or overhead-cam cylinder heads and even swoopy prefabricated bodywork.

The decline of the Model T as a preferred race chassis, coupled with the sudden onset of the Great Depression, meant the Ford aftermarket quickly changed. The focus shifted to the Model A engine and the V-8.

Old parts are durable, though, so those that weren't actively scrapped have hung around in barns and garages and other hidey holes over the intervening decades. Occasionally, a lucky Model T

enthusiast will stumble upon them and either add them to his or her collection, incorporate them onto a car or in some cases even begin a new car based on some Roaring Twenties goodness.

Steve Lang of Lang's Old Car Parts in Baldwinville, Massachusetts, has been surrounded with Ford Model T's his whole life. He's already got a Model T speedster in his collection with which he's had some highly interesting experiences. Like tends to attract like in the old car hobby, of course, so ownership of that speedster and immersion in the Model T hobby has led Steve to accumulate a fully stocked larder of pieces, both of the era and newer innovations, that he can now select from to build a truly amazing Model T Speedster.

The centerpiece of Steve's build will be an original Craig-Hunt 16-valve overhead-cam cylinder head. The Craig-Hunt “Peugeot-type” head was introduced around 1915 and was eclipsed by competitors in the 1920s. The chain-drive head features enormous valves for high-speed work as it was intended for competition use.

Craig-Hunt also offered a house-label speedster body that some historians believe is a re-labeled Morton & Brett body. Steve has obtained one of the latter as suitable coachwork for the speedster. All of this will go atop an underslung Model T frame along with a streamlined radiator shell — another period aftermarket piece.

Behind the Craig-Hunt equipped engine could go one of several aftermarket transmission setups — Warford and Ruckstell were two