

1930 Dodge Brothers DC8 Coupe Convertible



I first saw the car about 15 years ago in a friend's garage. My friend and buddy bought it in 1985, drove it a couple of times and then decided to restore it. Disassembling seems to be the easy part but reassembly requires your full attention without distractions. Unfortunately he fell in love with the restoration of a '14 Cadillac and the Dodge sat in boxes for 33 years. In a former life the Dodge had been used for hauling fire wood and the back and rumble seat had been removed for easy access. (Gentleness is not the forte of wood cutters.) The motor had been rebuilt (much to my pleasure) and a few

sheet metal parts had been replaced but that's it for restoration. (By the way the Cadillac turned out immaculate.) The assumption was that with the Cadillac being completed the Dodge would be next but no, a 1931 La Salle coupe followed him home and the Dodge was doomed to remain in its boxes.

Realizing that the La Salle was probably going to be his last restoration project he reluctantly agreed to part with the Dodge. And my journey began.



Getting the car home is the easy part, just call the tow truck and they deliver, but the 4 pickup loads of parts, for which I was grateful for, took a toll on the old back. All the rain gutters surrounding the rumble seat were gone and had to be replaced which was the first order of business. I'm a trial and error panel beater so there are always a

pile of nonconforming parts before the final product immaculately appeared. Of course with a 92 year old car nothing is straight and nothing fits the first time or the second time (and I could go on and on times). After much head scratching and pondering on why the gutters and the rumble seat lid didn't marry up, I finely realized the rumble seat lid was wonky (a technical term) by about $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Now half an inch doesn't sound like much but misalignment of that proportion would stick out like a sore thumb. In an attempt to rid the lid of its wonkiness I found out that it doesn't matter how many times you jump on it, the only way to fix it is by separating



the inner and outer then put them on a level surface and weld them back together. I think everything in that back end is a compound curved which meant nonconforming parts galore. With all the parts made, welded and primed the end result was not unpleasing.



Off with the body parts (not mine I hope) as the next to be tackled is the frame. The frame wasn't too bad with the usual surface rust; the exception was that combination of 90 years old leaking oil and gravel which I classify as irremovable gunk. Out comes the fire extinguisher, torch and drip pan and under I go. You have to heat the gunk hot enough to make it soft and scrapable but not that hot to catch on fire while

on your back, under the frame, which of course I didn't jack up high enough. After cleaning the gunk out of my sleeve, hair and off the floor all was good. Next week will be different. I didn't realize that when using an angle grinder with a worn out wire wheel that all those little wire things fly off and stick into your shirt. (And other parts). Next up were the Swiss cheese side mount fender wells. Now my knowledge and experience with an



English wheel is limited to YouTube videos but what the heck more nonconforming parts are nothing new. Yea I know the Lezzes of the world just run it through a shrinker/stretcher then spends 15 or 20 min with the wheel and the part comes out like a new one. I don't have the



same command over that wheel besides it's more fun beating the heck out of it on a sand bag then spending a couple of days smoothing it out. It took a while but I was happy with the result. The motor got a coat of paint next and I adapted a single wire alternator, a modern oil filter, electronic ignition and coil. The motor was supposedly rebuilt 35 years ago so as I had to take the oil pan off to remove some dints and decided to check all the bearings. To my amazement everything was as it should be. Sometimes for peace of mind 35 year old recollections just need to be checked. A new gas tank had been built years ago but after looking through the sending unit hole it



was apparent that all wasn't right. There was a thick layer of tar like gunk all over the end that seems to be resistant to all known solvents. Off with its ends. It was a good thing as the whole inside of the tank was corroded. The tank had been made with galvanized metal but there must have been something in the tank at one time that reacted to and destroyed the galvanizing. Sand blast, new ends welded in, a

coat of tank sealer and we have a new tank. The front splash guard had been abused and needed replacing. I love it when plan "B" comes together (only one nonconforming part this time) as it looks good and amazingly it fit. I decided to take a break from cleaning and constructing and confront the elephant in the room. (Painting) The car was original all black, (according to the build sheet) and was the only known DC 8 coupe convertible that was painted all black. Now according to some people I'm about to commit the ultimate

restoration sin by deviating from original. The car has such beautiful lines that deserve a show off paint job,



so here we go with an off white body and red/maroon fenders and trim. While the cowl was off the fire wall got a coat of body colour (Canadian for color) which will save a bunch of



messing around later. The fenders, splash aprons and anything else I found lying around got a coat of epoxy primer, high build primer then 3 coats of colour. I used an industrial 4 to 1 epoxy paint which is so easy to use it even makes me look good. Now that the gas tank cover is painted the rear part of the body can be put on the frame as well as the cowl. Next on are the doors so the back and front can be lined up and the rocker panels welded in place. It almost looks like a car. Even with plastic walls up my shop is not a



dust free zone so I found a local painter and farmed out the body and hood (bonnet for some) for the white. The next task at hand is the masking and painting of the trim. I had to dig out my 3X magnifying dollar store spectacles to try and follow those elusive trim lines and yes I had a pile of nonconforming masking tape. One of the more painful parts of any restoration is the expense so with

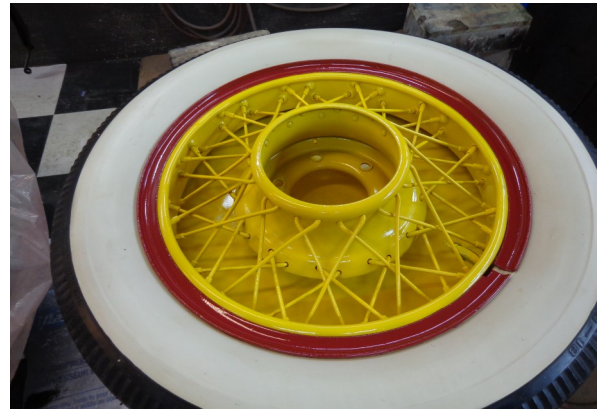


great reluctance it was off to the bank to arrange a second mortgage so I could send off a bunch of parts to be chromed. With all the shinny parts shinny (not the chroming as it took 7 months to get back) it was time to try and put things together without messing up those shinny parts. Rear fenders, splash aprons, running boards and hood all went on without a hitch but I think those unruly, unwieldy front fenders are possessed. I must have used metal shrinking paint on the fronts as the holes didn't line up any more. It must be one of those mystery's of the uni-

verse as to why after dry fitting parts they won't fit when shinny. I'm sure that the invisible alien Leprechaun in the shop that keeps hiding my favorite tools must be responsible so perhaps a shot or two of Irish whiskey will solve my problem (or not). An Australian friend suggested using long threaded bolts and suck them in a little at a time until the unwillingness matches the willing and it worked.



While sitting on my favorite stool perusing the handy work I came to the conclusion that the wheels weren't showing off the car in its best light as red. Off to the paint shop for yellow paint. I didn't realize what an arduous task preparing, masking and painting spoke wheels are. With white wall on both sides and a red retaining ring it must have taken a week to get them finished. On the car with the chrome hub caps I can't imagine any other colour. The wiring harness that came with the car of course had to be modified because I wanted two tail lights and signal lights. I installed an electronic signal light system so I didn't have to modify



the single filament cowl lights and used the former throttle lever on the steering wheel for the turn signal switch. Every thing has been converted to 12v except the horn which I used a 12 to 6v step down converter for. Also for safety reasons I'm using a modern fuse box and a cutout relay for the headlights. With the ridiculously expensive chrome parts back and installed it was time to tackle the top bows. The main bow was too thick to bend and had to be made in pieces but the other one I was going to tackle bending. After a couple of failures



and a couple of YouTube videos I got an acceptable result. Here is a tip that might interest people. I couldn't find the proper size with the proper bend of rad



hose that goes from the pump to the bottom of the rad and those crinkly universal hoses just wouldn't cut it. So one day I happened to be under the kitchen sink (another story) and there it was, a chrome drain pipe with a 90 deg. elbow of the right size. Two pieces of hose, 4 clamps and it looks like new. I also noticed, while I was under there that, that stupid hand spray thing had a flexible chrome covering on it that looked perfect for covering the wires from the headlights and taillights to the fenders.



Now its time to tackle the Mammoth in the room, (much bigger than an Elephant) upholstery. I was surprised how easy the flat panels went together as the nonconforming left overs were minimal. My live in seamstress (Wife) was none too happy with my enthusiastic assumption on how simple the construction of the seats cover would be as it's her sewing machine and talent needed here. The YouTube

videos make it look so easy that all you have to do is put the stuffing in and then sew the top to the backing. Yea as easy as putting your elbow in your ear. Sewing the top to the backing is straight forward but then how do you get the stuffing in a 3 foot long pleat? (its like trying to stuff the meat back



into a sausage.) After the preverbal pondering time I came up with stuffing the stuffing into my shop vac extension tube and stuffing the tube into the pleat, then hold the stuffing (by this time your probably saying stuff it) and pulling out the tube. It worked. My wife will more than likely be talking to me again by next year.

Another friend of mine wanted to tackle the wood graining of the side window and dash trim so not wanting to turn down any kind of free help it was all his. I didn't want admit the fact that not even YouTube could provide the level of skill that I would needed to do it. He put on a tan base coat, 7 coats of wood graining colour, a clear coat and they turned out amazing. I had new glass installed in the door windows



frames so it was time to tackle what should be an easy job. It was my mistake to assume any job is going to be easy as the window channels were bent and needed to be straighten and relining, the one door post leaned in by a 1/4" (which at this point couldn't be fixed) the door latches interfered with the window movement and you can't see in there to find out what's going on. It was just short of an Elephant job. With a light sort' a at the end of the tunnel, the floor mats and sill plates were installed leaving only the convertible top. I think the top is going

to be a major problem and another story as I can't find anyone in the area that is willing to tackle it. They all say "if you bring me the top I'll install it" I guess they don't have the skills to make one from scratch.



According to the Chrysler archives in 1930 there were 728 DC 8 Coupe Convertibles made. All of the open cars made for the domestic market, Coupe Convertibles, Roadsters and Touring were made in the US and shipped out from there. Supposedly there were only 12 open cars of all models shipped to Canada

so this makes this car a rare one indeed. If anyone knows of a 1930 DC 8 Coupe Convertible or has heard of one or even knows a guy that knows a guy that knows of one I would like to hear from you. I would like to try and confirm the speculation that there are only 5 known to still exist today. I cant wait to get it out on the road in the spring.