

Harry Franklin Mathewson purchased the '48 Kaiser in about 1951. The car was purchased from Edgar Kaiser, who was Henry Kaiser's son. Edgar took over the Kaiser machining company in Portland, Oregon. This particular Kaiser was Edgar's personal car while he worked on the West Coast. A wife, Mrs. Sherman, of a customer of Frank's worked as a secretary to Kaiser. She made the connection for Frank and he bought the car. Frank does not remember what he paid for the car, "probably too much," but when it came time to replace the car with another and someone offered Frank \$350.00 dollars, he got irritated and gave the car to Uncle Russell Whaley to store in his garage. Russell stored the car until 1988 when Ross Deane Mathewson, son of Frank Mathewson decided to refurbish the car.

Edgar's Car on Whidbey Island 1948 Kaiser Custom

This vehicle has been a joy for me and my family since purchasing it from Liz Mathewson in April of 1993. This car had been in the Mathewson family since 1953 when Buzz Mathewson purchased it from the Kaiser Regional office in Seattle. I believe that Edgar and his family used the car when they would fly in from their home in Ann Arbor Michigan to Seattle. They would use the car to go to his estate on Orcas Island. Edgar had other business interests here as well that would give him need for a car in Seattle, like for example, the assembly plant that produced Kaisers in 1951.

I have done a lot of investigation to try to prove the ownership lineage of the car since I purchased it. One of the first efforts was to talk to Lindy (H. V.) Lindbergh, who was one of the key engineers in the early development days. I was able to speak to him several times in 1993 in an attempt to see if he had any specific memory of my Kaiser. He did recall a Horizon Blue 1947 Kaiser Custom being shipped to their office in Oakland, but nothing more specific than that. In my conversations with him, he spoke of manufacturing "pop corn" carts and teaching ball room dancing. He was very concerned that I might be a reporter and wanted nothing to do with talking about his time with Henry Kaiser. He said that was the past and he wanted it to remain that way. He did however agree that the description of the 1948 Kaiser Custom that I owned fits the description of what Edgar would own, and that it was like the small fleet of Edgar's cars that he kept on his estate on Orcas Island in the San Juan Islands in Washington State.

I've had the good fortune to meet two of Edgar Kaiser's daughters. One, Carlyn Kaiser Stark of Orcas Island, at a 1995 North-West district Kaiser-Frazer meeting in Poulsbo, WA. While my wife and I were at the meet, I had the occasion to ask Carlyn if she remembered the car that I had on display. She could not say for sure if had been her father's.

It was the 1996 Kaiser-Frazer Owners International show in Portland Oregon that allowed me to gather enough information to conclude for myself, in addition to the Liz Mathewson statement about the car's history that the car had been custom built for Edgar.

It was at that event that I had the opportunity to meet Gretchen Kaiser Gudgell, of Salem Oregon, another of Edgar Kaiser's daughters. After meeting with her, I asked her to come with me to the place where my car was on display. I then asked her, without giving her a hint of my intentions, if she recognized the car. She said, "That's my Dad's car!" Then I asked

her, how did she know. She told me that his car was that color, had dual spotlights and fog lights, all of which are true of my car.

At the same event, I learned more about the car that supported the fact that it was Edgar's car. As the car was being judged, the judges noted several features on my car that are not present in regular production Kaisers of that production year.

One feature is two chrome ash trays on the back of the front seat; a production car has only one. In the trunk, the whole compartment was carpeted; the production Custom had carpet only on the deck not the back or the sides of the compartment. Production Customs did not have spotlights mounted in production, this one has two. There are other tell-tale features that by themselves are not unique, but in total support the conclusion.

The back seat arm rests are larger than standard Kaiser production (like what Frazers had). The window rims are chrome, something not specific to the Custom, but did apparently happen as a function of part shortages in production. This car has an electrical vacuum booster pump to assist with windshield wiper operation.

Features on this car that were available as options are supportive as well (i.e. this car was loaded). Fog lights, signal lights, back-up lights, radio with floor station selection control, heater, vacuum operated windshield washer, leather upholstery matching the car color, carpeted floor, and door panels with leather and carpet. There may be other features that I am just not aware of.

As far as restoration work on the car. The Mathewson Brothers of Renton WA did some work some years before I purchased it. Some body work and they repainted it in its original colors.

Since I've owned the car, I had the engine rebuilt and the engine compartment cleaned up. I have replaced the carpet on the floors and in the trunk, since the original carpet was beyond any kind of restoration. I have also replaced the door threshold pieces with new parts made from original Kaiser dies. The original leather upholstery is in place, even though it has some damage, I believe that it is better to have the original.

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