

Local Search Site Search GO

Jackpot Rewards.com

Giant jackpots of over \$130,000,000

JOIN NOW

- HOME TODAY'S GLOBE NEWS BUSINESS SPORTS LIFESTYLE A&E THINGS TO DO TRAVEL CARS JOBS REAL ESTATE LOCAL SEARCH

HOME / CARS / NEWS

Classic restoration - from the inside

Amesbury's LeBaron Bonney has gained a niche in renewing antique interiors

By Bill Griffith February 24, 2008

Email | Print | Text size

AMESBURY - It's a scene you might imagine taking place during many a car restoration project.

In 1959, Lee Atherton purchased a 1931 Ford Model A Deluxe Roadster and started "fixing it up." He did the mechanical work, then had a local body shop do some metal work and painting.

That's when some workers from the re-upholstering department of the Atherton family's Haverhill furniture shop stepped up. They said they could duplicate the original interior and convertible top.

When Lee displayed the roadster at car shows, other Ford owners not only marveled at the quality of the work, but asked if Lee could have his employees work on their cars, too. It proved key to the partnership of Lee (LeBaron) Atherton and his brother Jack (Bonney) Atherton, a pair of entrepreneurs who had launched a variety of local businesses going back to Cape Cod bicycle rentals in 1938.

From the beginning, they insisted on attention to detail and historical accuracy. "My uncle Lee was a stickler for that," said Steve Atherton, Jack's son and the company's current marketing manager.

Over the years, LeBaron Bonney expanded its Ford interior and top "kits" to include more than 200 models for the years 1928-1954. In 1995, the company purchased Hampton Coach, which specialized in Chevrolets from 1916-1954 as well as other GM vehicles.

Still, the company will be forever linked to the Model A. "Ford made about 4 million of them," said Atherton, "and they were all steel, not metal and wood like many early cars, so more of them tended to survive.

Advertisement

2008 LIBERTY SPORT 4X4 \$259 a month for 36 months with \$999 due at lease signing\*

INSIDE BOSTON.COM

2008 BOSTON MARATHON



See the Photos of the Day from the 2008 Marathon

2008 BOSTON MARATHON



See funny scenes from the streets of the marathon

PARTY PHOTOS



See who partied with Patriot Tedy Bruschi this weekend

RED SOX



eBay AdChoice banner with 'Shop Victoriously' and 'Find Yours' buttons.

The decision to restore an interior can carry a big price tag. A full interior - including upholstery, door panels, headliner, and carpeting - runs between \$1,000 and \$9,000, depending on materials used (leather is far more expensive than vinyl) and the complexity of the model. If the job is done correctly, however, the increased value of the vehicle usually surpasses the money invested in the restoration.

LeBaron Bonney now occupies Amesbury's "Biddle & Smart" building. Biddle & Smart was a major player in the manufacture of carriages - Amesbury was the country's leading carriage manufacturer - and later auto bodies, including Hudson bodies. "I recently received an e-mail from the owner of a 1929 Hudson," said Steve Atherton. "Even though we don't do kits for this car, he bought materials from us and did it himself. He wrote to thank us and say that he felt his car had come full circle because its body had been built here by Biddle & Smart."






The company keeps a relatively low profile, promoting itself mainly through advertisements in collector-car publications such as Hemmings Motor News, and on its website, [lebaronbonney.com](http://lebaronbonney.com).

Generally, it takes about six weeks from order to delivery.

Steve Atherton estimates that three-quarters of the company's customers do the kit installations themselves, with professional restoration shops doing most of the rest.

"When someone advertises a car for sale, noting that it has a LeBaron Bonney interior tells prospective buyers that an important part of the vehicle - usually the final stage of restoration - has been done right," he said. "And, over the years, that's usually come to be abbreviated as 'LB int' or just 'LB.'" ■

© Copyright 2008 Globe Newspaper Company.

 Email	 Print	 Single page	 Reprints	 Share
<b>Your Name</b> <input type="text"/>	<b>Message (optional)</b> <input type="text"/>			
<b>Your e-mail address</b> (for return address purposes) <input type="text"/>	<b>Send</b>			
<b>E-mail address of recipients</b> (separate multiple addresses with commas) <input type="text"/>				
<b>Name and both e-mail fields are required.</b>				

DISCLAIMER: Boston.com does not share this information or keep it permanently, as it is for the sole purpose of sending this one time e-mail.

10 things you didn't know about Jacoby Ellsbury

PLUS...

[Blogs](#) | [Games](#) | [Podcasts](#) | [Puzzles](#) | [Personals](#) | [Movie listings](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Globe Magazine](#)

## MOST POPULAR

SEARCHED

E-MAILED

- [Sandra Bullock crash](#)
- [TV7 GM Arrested](#)
- [Crossword Puzzle](#)
- [Boston Marathon](#)
- [Housing Market](#)
- [Fishing Gear](#)
- [Race Cars](#)

[About this list](#)

D

[MORE IN SEARCH](#) ▶

[Home](#) | [Today's Globe](#) | [News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [A&E](#) | [Things to Do](#) | [Travel](#) | [Cars](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Local Search](#)

[CONTACT BOSTON.COM](#) | [Help](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Work here](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Mobile](#) | [RSS feeds](#) | [Make Boston.com your homepage](#)

[CONTACT THE BOSTON GLOBE](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Manage your subscription](#) | [Advertise](#) | [The Boston Globe Extras](#) | [The Boston Globe Store](#) | © 2008 NY Times Co.

**WESTIN**  
HOTELS & RESORTS

celebrate the two of you

Experience passion with a [Westin Indulge Package](#).

[Indulge](#) ▶

