

# Rare 1940 Packard on Display

Oakland, Maryland



Written by: **Dan Whetzel**  
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

The Garrett County Museum of Transportation is proudly displaying a rare 1940 Packard 160 Super-8 convertible sedan. Only 149 of the cars were produced and sold worldwide making it a desirable one for collectors to acquire and display. The car's appearance in Oakland, Maryland, is the result of Garrett County residents Gary and Jeannette Fitzwater's enthusiasm for the Packard brand and styling.

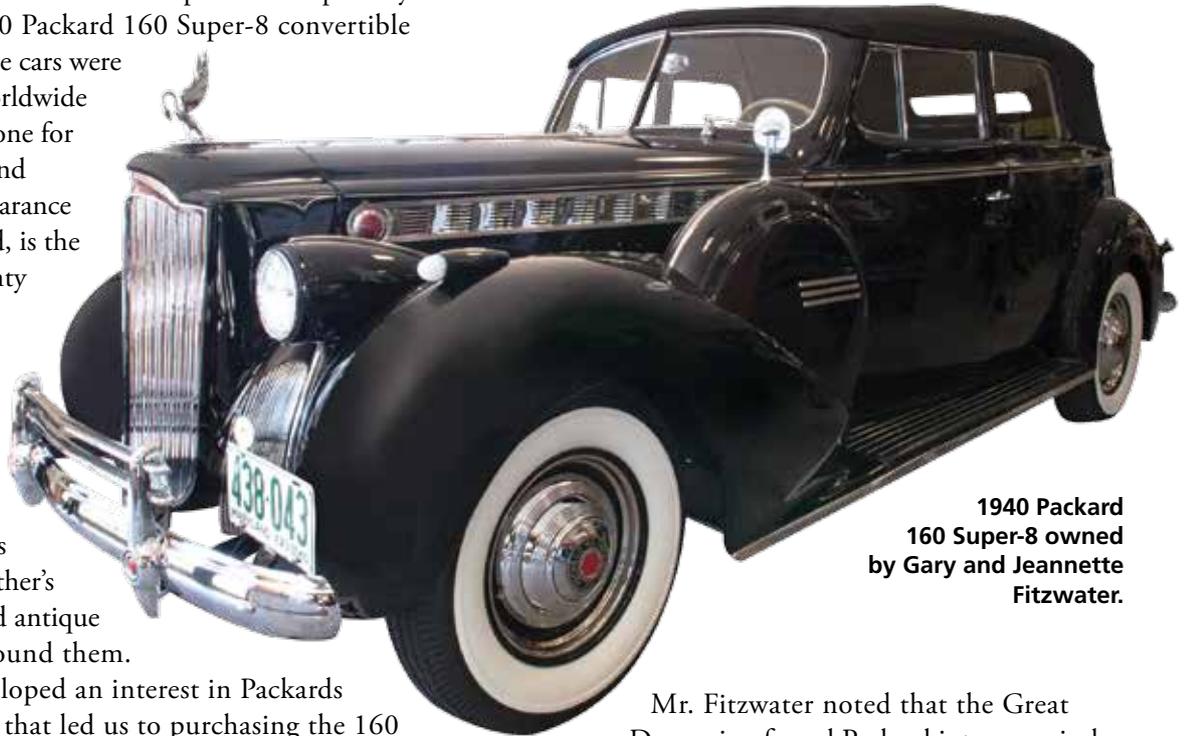
Gary Fitzwater's interest in antique cars originated from his father's hobby. "My father had antique cars, so I grew up around them.

Over the years I developed an interest in Packards and convertibles and that led us to purchasing the 160 Super-8 more than 35 years ago," stated Gary.

The vehicle was found in the collection of Art Brunner, an antique car enthusiast from Pennsylvania who assembled a variety of valuable models. It became apparent to Mr. Brunner that the car collection had outgrown his ability to address the needs of all the models. According to Gary, "Art decided that he wouldn't get around to restoring the Packard, so he sold it to me. It was in terrible shape and could be called a 'parts car.'" With the Packard's arrival in Garrett County more than three decades ago, the quest for a frame-up restoration began.

During the first years of restoration some parts were available to purchase. In the following years parts became scarce or unavailable which required costly and time consuming fabrication processes. Fortunately, another Packard owner permitted parts to be loaned, so work and parts replacement continued as time permitted.

Why was the Packard chosen for the project? "Packard was an aesthetically beautiful American car and at the time they were considered to be a premium brand," recalled Gary.



**1940 Packard  
160 Super-8 owned  
by Gary and Jeannette  
Fitzwater.**

Mr. Fitzwater noted that the Great Depression forced Packard into a survival mode because luxury cars were not selling. The auto maker decided that a more affordable car needed to be offered, so Packard introduced a smaller "Junior" model that augmented its already established "Senior" line up. Sales of the smaller models outpaced the luxury line but ultimately at a cost. Packard's downsizing eventually killed the brand which previously catered to the luxury car buyer. Packard became just another car and eventually ended production in 1958.

The Fitzwater's project concluded more than a year ago. Now the superb Packard may be enjoyed for its original driving purposes and showing at major events. The Super-8 has already garnered first place prizes in shows at Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Boca Raton, Florida; more shows are planned.

Jeannette and Gary Fitzwater generously agreed to display the vehicle at the Garrett County Museum of Transportation where visitors are welcome to enjoy the convertible sedan, one of less than 20 to survive. The museum is located on Liberty Street, Oakland, Maryland; 301-533-1044.