

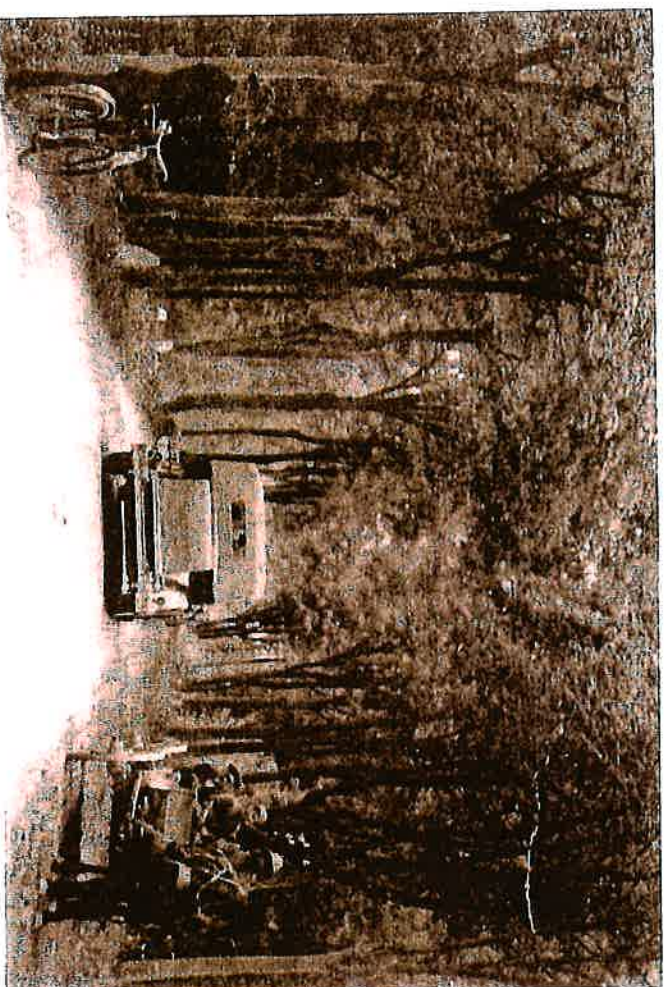


1934 Twelve, 1108 Dietrich Convertible Sedan

MISS LOUISE BOYD was 32 years old in 1920 when her father died, leaving her \$3 million and the family estate in San Rafael, California. He also left her without a relative in the world. She was healthy and active, intelligent and pretty—she could do anything in the world. It may have been momentarily stunning.

So Miss Boyd traveled. In August 1924, she visited Spitsbergen on the coast of Norway as part of a tourist cruise. The view was of frigid cliffs of packed ice, and the other passengers probably responded to it with a draught of hot bouillon and a call to the deck porter for more blankets, but Louise Boyd was transfixed. "Cold? Yes, of course," she would say of the Arctic. "But there's unearthly grandeur about it, and I love it."

Two years later, Miss Boyd was ready to outfit and lead her first expedition to the north, to Franz Joseph Land (north of what was then Russia in the Arctic Ocean) to study its geography, plants, and animals. She would sponsor and lead seven more expeditions, and her planning was so meticulous that no injury or crisis ever befell her crews. In fact, in 1928, she was near Norway in a chartered ship, the *Hobby*, when the explorer Roald Amundsen went down in a plane searching for his colleague Umberto Nobile, who had himself gone down in a dirigible. Miss Boyd placed the *Hobby* at the disposal of the international rescue effort and ultimately cov-



Miss Boyd's Packard, on the road in rural Poland, 1934

ered 10,000 miles at sea in the course of the search. Nobile was found, but Amundsen never was. Louise Boyd was honored for her efforts with Norway's Cross of St. Olaf and France's Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, medals that she wore on her gowns at public functions in later years.

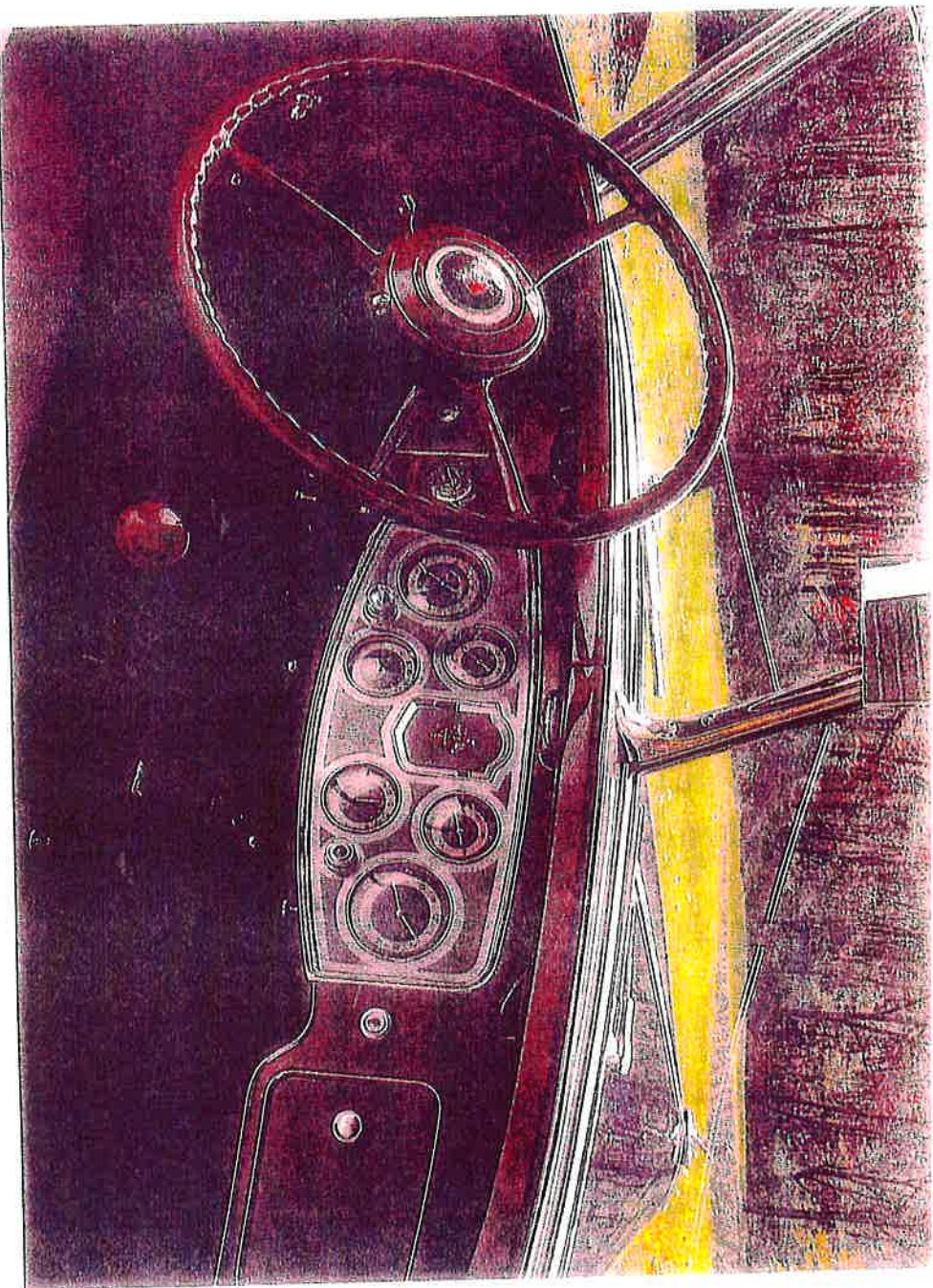
"At sea, I don't bother with my hands, except to keep

them from being frozen," she once said. "But I powder my nose before going on deck, no matter how rough the sea is. There is no reason why a woman can't rough it and still be feminine."

Louise Boyd had only a high school education, but her accomplishments soon gained her the respect of the scientific community. "She possessed a freedom that too many of us are afraid to exercise," her minister said of her. In addition to writing two books on the Arctic, Miss Boyd investigated magnetic radio phenomena in Greenland for the National Bureau of Standards during World War II.

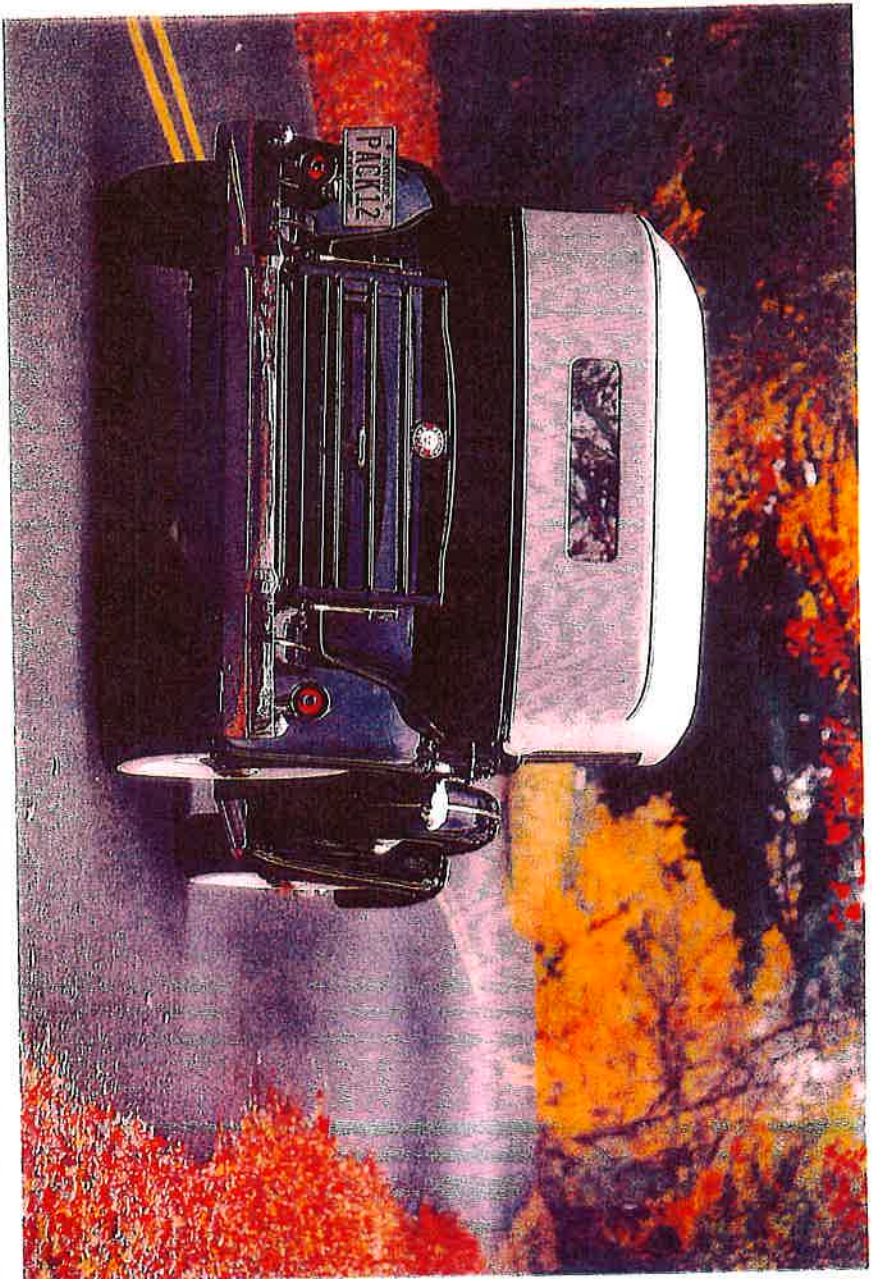
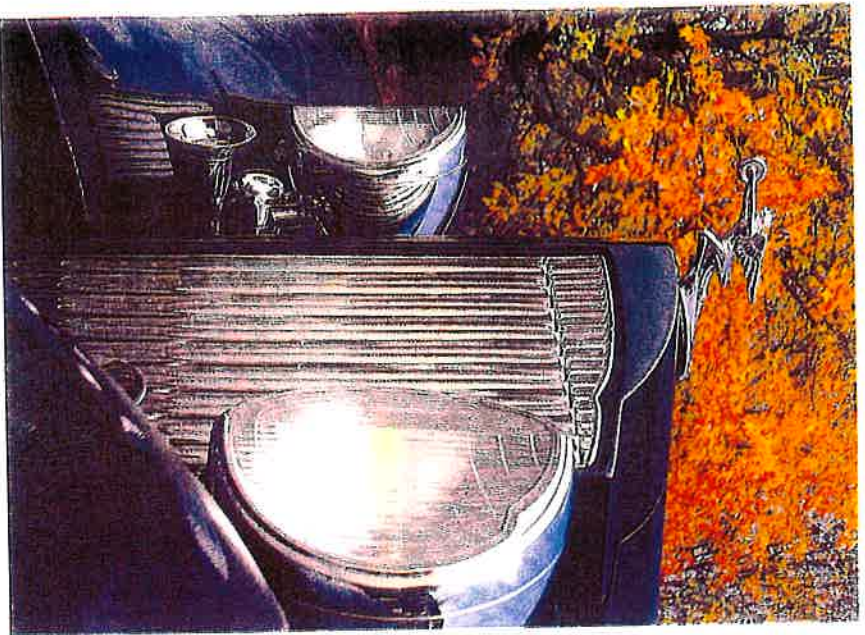
In 1934, Louise Boyd was appointed a delegate of the United States government to the International Geographical Congress in Warsaw. At the request of the American Geographical Society, she extended her stay in order to make a photographic study of rural Poland, an effort which resulted in the 1937 book *The Countryside of Poland*.

In 1935, Poland had 0.7 motor cars per 1000 people; Ger-



many had 11.9 and Sweden 22.6. In fact, the number of cars in Poland decreased from 1931 to 1936. Roadlife was dominated by pedestrians and conveyers. Women would commonly walk barefoot and carry their shoes, except through towns. To study the peasant, however, Louise Boyd opted against assumption of local habit. Instead, she traveled to Poland with her new 12-cylinder Packard convertible sedan, with custom coachwork by Dietrich. She might as well have brought it to King Arthur's Court.

At a cost of \$6555, the convertible sedan by Dietrich was one of the most expensive styles offered by Packard on a series 1108 chassis. To make it easier to work in the back, Miss Boyd specified a division window between the front and rear and reading lights for the rear compartment. The vee windshield and the long line of the de Sakhmofsky false



hood gave the convertible sedan a stately demeanor. It did not become part of the wind; it sliced through it.

Along with the Packard, Miss Boyd brought her chauffeur, Percy R. Cameron, who had been driving her family since 1912. He started out driving a horse and buggy; then graduated to the Boyds' Locomobiles and Miss Boyd's Packards (her last car was a 1951 Packard formal sedan, customized by Ray Dietrich).

From August to October, Louise Boyd, her traveling companion, and Percy Cameron covered 6300 miles throughout Poland. Cars were so scarce that horses stired at the sight of the Packard. People, on the other hand, were drawn to it in droves, proving that Dietrich could be as much a hit in Łódź as in Los Angeles. In the larger cities, garages could be rented overnight. "My automobile, being a Packard," Miss Boyd recounted, "was frequently found to be too long to permit the [garage] door to be shut."

At the eminent monastery of Lavra Poczajowska, the

monks wore black robes and hats "like widows' bonnets," with veils down the back. In the ancient tradition, they had shoulder-length hair and thick beards. Louise Boyd and her party stayed at the monastery because there were no inns; nor, indeed, was there a garage. The Packard was parked in the churchyard at night, and a monk slept in it, on guard.

Between journeys, Louise Boyd devoted herself to San Rafael and to her home, Maple Lawn, famous for its renowned gardens. She gave big parties and small ones, themselves renowned for her famous Calhoun punch. There are those in San Rafael who are still talking about a certain reception that she gave in honor of Nelson Eddy.

Through a series of financial mistakes, Miss Boyd lost her fortune and Maple Lawn in 1962. Friends from better days provided for her last years in a nursing home. She died in 1972, but no tombstone or memorial to her death stands, just a grand tribute to the life of her: a place in Greenland called "Miss Louise A. Boyd Land."

