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My wife and I spent the [first week of September 2005 in Bar Harbor, Maine](#) and were just across the street from this car all week. This is sad in several respects to me in particular. My grandfather, [Lafayette G. Payne](#) was the first Ford Dealer in the State of Tennessee, putting cars together for Henry Ford around 1914/1915. They were shipped by rail to Lone Mountain, Tennessee where they were assembled in a small garage.

My father, Al G. Payne used to tell me of how he drove cars from Detroit to Lone Mountain when he was 12 years old. Although I have found no proof that the Payne's of Lone Mountain had direct contact with Henry Ford I believe there must be a connection since Ford was sending Model A's to Lone Mountain well before the 1920's. I have found much about Ford's contributions to Lincoln Memorial University which did not start until around 1926 and from what I have gathered Henry Ford never actually made a trip to Claiborne County. Following is an account of his contributions to L.M.U.



Payne Ford in Lone Mountain stood where the large Payne Brothers store was built.

Assistance to LMU by Henry Ford began in 1926 when he contributed implement repair shop equipment amounting to \$1272.26. In January 1927 Stanley Rudman, Pres. of D.T.&I Railroad, owned by Ford, and his wife visited LMU and arranged to give them \$4,326.53 worth of material consisting of tractors, an automobile, and Estry organ, farm equipment, fertilizer, a Radiola, and Victrola. In February 1927 Ford bought the use of a 200 acre farm owned by Lon Overton, the consideration being \$40,000.00 plus \$451.98 expenses. This property was conveyed to the University in 1933. LMU in 1936 received a new school bus from Ford, who by then had disbursed about \$50,000.00 in their behalf.

Now, it is my opinion that most of the farm implement equipment along with the car, bus and tractor all came from Payne Ford but I can't as of yet prove that.

Former County Historian John Kivette wrote a short article in the [Claiborne Progress](#).

Years later my father was part owner of Payne Ford Motor Company but gave his interest to his brother John Howard "Tom" Payne, an engineer with Ford Motor Company in Chicago after he was forced to return to Tennessee having been infected with [amebic dysentery](#) on a trip to New Orleans for Ford in the late 1950's. I never have and never will go to New Orleans for that reason.



My "Uncle Tom" was very good to me allowing me to go on trips to [Worlds Fair in 1964](#) and Tampa / St. Petersburg, Florida in 1965. I also drove the very first 1966 fastback 2+2 ordered by Paynes for my Aunt Mildred Bumgardner in the 1965 Tobacco Festival in honor of our good year of football. But sadly an era of Ford has ended as did our Payne Ford Motor Company soon after the [1984 Knoxville News-Sentinel article](#). Please continue to read all about what was Fun, Fun, Fun.....

Fun, fun, fun: Last T-bird ever made arrives at MDI

Saturday, September 03, 2005 - Bangor Daily News

ELLSWORTH - It's a sleek, silver convertible with leather seats, the last Ford Thunderbird ever built.

It was delivered Friday afternoon to a Ford family estate on Mount Desert Island.

The two-seater was a special collectors edition, one of only 1,500 made by Ford Motor Co. in 2005, the year the company is retiring the nearly 50-year-old model.

"People are saying, 'I can't believe it's the last one,'" said Dave Gould of Dave Gould Ford, which took receipt of the fancy ride early Friday morning. "Everyone knows it will be worth a ton of money someday."

The car's intended owner was Josephine Ford, the only granddaughter of company founder Henry Ford. But the 81-year-old heiress, who owned a summer home in Seal Harbor, died June 1, 2005, at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Before her death, Ford owned 18 percent of the family stock. Known as "Dody" to her friends, she was a philanthropist to many art and education organizations and was a supporter of Acadia National Park, according to information on the Ford Web site.



The car instead went to her daughter, also named Josephine, who could not be reached Friday.

Josephine Ford's Thunderbird, which has a 290-horsepower V-8 engine, was custom-made and is considered priceless, but other limited edition models have sold for close to \$50,000, Gould said. A 2005 Ford Thunderbird averages 20 miles per gallon.



Since its debut at the Detroit Auto Show in 1954, the Thunderbird has become an important part of American culture, featured in songs and movies through the years. The Beach Boys sang about the "T-bird" in 1964, Suzanne Somers slipped behind the wheel of one in the 1973 film "American Graffiti," and Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis took one on a cross-country crime spree in the 1991 movie "Thelma and Louise."

"They are an icon of the '50s," said Dave Machaiek, curator at the Owls Head Transportation Museum. "It was considered a friendly, comfortable American sports car,"

The Thunderbird, he said, was Ford's sporty response to Chevy's muscle car, the Corvette. They were popular as two-seaters from 1955 to 1957 but became progressively larger after 1958.

The company returned to its two-seat design in 2002.

The museum, located in Owls Head just outside of Rockland, is home to a 1955 Thunderbird with black-and-white seats. The museum also displays the prototype of the 1964-style Ford Mustang,

which is on loan from the Detroit Historical Society.

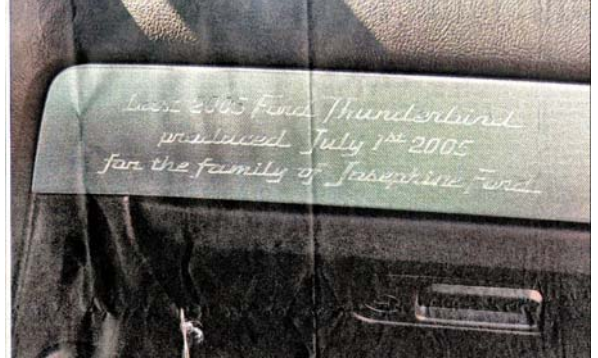
Josephine Ford's T-bird is fitted with a unique inscription above the glove box listing the July 1, 2005, production date and identifying her family as its owners.

Having the car, the last of its kind, should be something special, Machaiek said.

"It's the end of the era," he said.

BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY WENDY FONTAINE

An inscription on the dash of the last Ford Thunderbird ever made reads, "Last 2005 Ford Thunderbird produced July 1st 2005 for the family of Josephine Ford."



Last Thunderbird made makes it way to Maine

September 3, 2005 - Boston Globe

ELLSWORTH, Maine --The last Ford Thunderbird ever built was delivered to a Ford Estate on Mount Desert Island on Friday.

It is not thought to be Skylands, on Mount Desert Island in Seal Harbor Maine, summer home of Edsel B. Ford. For it has recently become an occasional home for a new Downeast vacationer, Martha Stewart. Just hours after Martha Stewart was freed early Thursday from her house arrest, she apparently joined the hordes of people heading north to Maine for Labor Day weekend. A 12-bedroom, pink-granite summer "cottage," Skylands was built by automobile scion Edsel Ford in 1925.

The sleek, silver convertible was one of 1,500 special collector's editions made by Ford Motor Co. this year. It rolled off the production line in July.

"People are saying, 'I can't believe it's the last one,'" said Dave Gould of Dave Gould Ford, which took receipt of the car Friday morning. "Everyone knows it will be worth a ton of money someday."

The car was made for Josephine Ford, the granddaughter of company founder Henry Ford. But the 81-year-old heiress, who owned a summer home in Seal Harbor, died June 1 in Detroit. ([obituary](#))



The two-seater car instead went to her daughter, also named Josephine. An inscription on the dash reads: "Last 2005 Ford Thunderbird, produced July 1st 2005 for the family of Josephine Ford."

The custom-made car has a 290-horsepower V-8 engine, and is considered priceless.

The Thunderbird, one of Ford's most celebrated nameplates, first went on sale in 1954 and soon became part of the American culture. The Beach Boys sang about the "T-bird" in 1964, Suzanne Somers drove one in the 1973 film "American Graffiti," and Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis took one on a cross-country crime spree in the 1991 movie "Thelma and Louise."

The Thunderbird went through numerous design changes over the decades before going on hiatus in 1997.

The redesigned 2002 Thunderbird got off to a roaring start when it was brought back into production, but the flurry died down almost as quickly as it emerged. After sales fell to just 11,998 last year, 33 percent fewer than in 2003, the company announced it was retiring the car this year.

Dave Machaiek, curator at the Owls Head Transportation Museum, said it's special for the last T-bird to be in Maine.

"It's the end of the era," he said.

The museum, located in Owls Head outside of Rockland, is home to a 1955 Thunderbird with black-and-white seats. The Thunderbird was Ford's sport response to Chevy's muscle car, the Corvette, Machaiek said.

"They are an icon of the `50s," he said.

On the Net:

Ford Thunderbird: <http://www.fordvehicles.com/cars/thunderbird/>

<http://www.portholeauthority.com/thenewtbird/2005/2005tbird.html>

<http://info.detnews.com/joyrides/story/index.cfm?id=277>

<http://www.detnews.com/2003/specialreport/0306/09/f22-187459.htm>

<http://info.detnews.com/fordmemories/lettersindex.cfm>



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