

Researching Packard Patents: An Introduction

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An article on patents held by the Packard Motor Car Company in the summer 1995 edition of the *Packard Cormorant* written by Robert J. Neal had long been in my “future reference” file. With my retirement the time became available to pursue the subject of patents issued by the United States Patent Office for designs related to our 1951 Patrician and 1953 convertible.

A visit to the U.S. Patent Office web site quickly evidenced that it would not be possible to use the “USPTO Patent Full Text and Image Data Base” for research related to patents issued before 1975. The pre-1975 patents are not accessible in this database unless you already know the actual patent number you are seeking.

To access the pre-1975 patents at the United States Patent and Trademark Office I would have to visit the Public Search Facility, United States Patent and Trademark Office, 600 Dulany Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, Telephone (571) 272-327. Residing in adjoining Arlington, Virginia made this an easy task.

For a first time visitor the entry process was straightforward and easy. One stops at the security desk where you temporarily surrender some form of personal photo identification in order to receive an electronic SMART card to be used to gain access to the Search Facility. Stop at the General Information Desk and complete a one-page form in order to be registered to conduct research. You are issued an “On-line Access Card” which contains your individual research number.

Proceeding to a service desk a staff member assists you: a) in occupying one of the many computer work stations; b) taking you through the process of logging on and establishing your own password; and c) providing much assistance in starting your research work.

At each step in the process everyone I encountered was most helpful. It didn't hurt to mention that both of my in-laws were career U.S. Patent Office employees and that my son worked for the architectural firm who designed the relatively new U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

THE INITIAL RESEARCH

After a brief discussion of what I was interested in, the staff member assisting me recommended entering “Packard Motor Car” in the research box since the company would likely be the “Assignee” for most of the patents. She took me through this process on the computer and it quickly produced a list of 682 patents issued to “Packard Motor Car.”

THE FIRST 682 PATENTS

Since this was my first visit, I scanned the entire list of 682 entries to initially become acquainted with what was included in the list. The first computer screen for each entry includes: a) the first page of the issued patent; and b) the first page of the accompanying drawing(s). They are listed by date of issue beginning with the latest, January 19, 1965, (Patent Number 3165946) through the earliest, January 1, 1920 (Patent Number 1339496).

The scan indicated that the individual patents could be categorized in a number of headings – mechanical parts, mechanical systems, tools, painting devices, testing devices, engines, transmissions, airplane engine related, interior lighting fixtures, interior door and window handles, electrical systems, exterior trim elements, fenders, bumpers, wheels and designs for built and un-built cars. Except for a few examples of “cars of the future”, there were only a very few overall automobile model designs in this listing. Among these is Patent Number “Des. 175,845” for the 1953 Packard Caribbean convertible.

I was successful in finding a number of patents issued for individual parts used on the 1951 and 1953 Packards.

Not every patent listed in this initial search has a title that readily describes exactly what the patent is for. The patents of specific interest in relation to design elements of cars where labeled “Motor Car” on this list. The car design patents can also be identified by their having the letter “D” (for “design”) before the actual patent number.

A printout of the numerical listing of all 682 patents made at the US Patent Office Search Room allowed me to use my home computer to revisit individual patents.

One can also enter individual names – inventors, patent attorneys, corporate executives -in their USPTO computer search system and locate all of the patents listing this individual in the patent. For example entering the name “Richard Teague” on the search page produced a list of patents with his name associated with his design work for Packard.

FILING AND PRINTING FINDINGS

While working in the Search Room one has the capability to browse individual entries and “Tag” them in a separate file for easy retrieval. They remain in your personal file for retrieval in your next visit.

One can print out information at your work station. In order to print out information at \$. 25 per page, you have to establish a personal cash account by visiting the Cashiers Window and provide a sum of money in order to establish an account.

THE ACTUAL PATENT RECORDS

The patent records one can view consist of two parts.

The first part consists of black and white line drawings, often done in perspective, that illustrate what is being protected by the patent. For the 1951 and 1953 design patents of specific interest to me, the sheet also includes:

- The patent number.
- The name of the designer.
- The month, day and year the patent was granted.
- The patent title.
- The date that the patent was filed.
- The name of the attorney filing the patent.

The drawings are accompanied by a written description of the patent. This page includes:

- The patent number.
- The patent title.
- The designer’s name, city and state and the assignor.
- The patent’s classification category.
- The date that the initial application was made for the patent and the serial number assigned to the application.
- The term of the patent.
- A general written description of the item followed by descriptions of each drawn view of the patented item.
- A listing of cited references to the patent.

PRINTED ANNUAL EDITIONS

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office produces printed annual editions of all patents issued in a given year. I looked at one edition - “1953 Index of Patents, U.S. Patent Office”. Page 526 has a heading “Packard Motor Car Company, Assignee: See –“ and

then lists fifteen individuals named as the inventors. One then has to look up the individual name to find the individual patent number.

GOOGLE PATENTS

The staff person assisting me noted that “Google” now has a useful search service related to pre-1975 patents and suggested I might wish to investigate this from my home computer.

Go to www.google.com/patents and enter “Packard Motor Car” in the search box. Interestingly, in contrast to the list obtained at the US Patent Office Search Room, the listings provided at this site begin with patents issued in 1903. If you know the patent number you can also enter it into the search box.

This site is much easier and more flexible in its use than the computer search process at the US Patent Office Search Room.