

McCormick Place

TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2013

➔ Move Over, Detroit



Are we ready for a new industry in South Florida? As we speak, a Dania Beach firm is building a horseless carriage, a type of vehicle that

only goes back a hundred years or so. That was a time when it took awhile to come up with a better name for the machine that replaced the horse-drawn carriage. But a horseless carriage is what is taking form in Dania Beach, where Jason Wenig's Creative Workshop is building an entirely new car.

Wenig has gotten pretty well-known for restoring classic cars. He's been featured in a number of publications, including *Gold Coast*. We're even quoted on his website. But this project has taken him to the serious big time - New York - which is where he started out. His firm has been selected to build the prototype of an electric vehicle, but here's the catch. If he does it to his usual standard, his new car will be hard to tell from classic luxury cars that go back more than a century. As reported in Sunday's *Sun-Sentinel*, the car is based on a 1909 Pierce-Arrow (pictured above) and a Packard of similar vintage, but unlike those famous cars it will not have an internal combustion engine. It is being purposely built for use in New York, as a replacement for horse-drawn carriages that escort tourists around the city, including in Central Park. The organization that hired Wenig thinks a replica from that era will capture the nostalgia of the times without the hazards (and fertilizer left in their wake) of horses in a busy city. And it's electric to reduce pollution.

Wenig says his car will not be an exact reproduction of the original cars. He explains:

"My favorite mark was the Pierce-Arrow. But this car represents a genre, a seven-passenger touring car of 1909. We can look back on these great iconic ideas and combine them into our own entity. There are so many panels to fit, and figure out how the frame integrates into the body. And how to make it legal for modern roads."

And build something strong enough to stand up to constant use.

Wenig, who gave up a successful marketing career in the Big Apple to open his restoration business in 2001, is also an automotive historian. He points out that although the Pierce-Arrow had an internal combustion engine, at one time there were more electric cars than gas. World War I ended that.

"The war put a stake in the heart of the electric vehicle," he notes.

The company's contract is for \$450,000. That seems attractive, but Wenig calls it "a mid-sized project, almost at cost. Another bigger company might have doubled the price."

However, if the prototype is successful, dozens of cars may follow. That could create a space problem for the company, which operates out of a former granary near the FEC Railway tracks.

Sidecar:

Building a car from the ground up has precedent in South Florida. As Jason Wenig observes, auto racing legend Briggs Cunningham had a plant in West Palm Beach where he built his race cars, and later some 25 street machines.

Posted by [Bernard McCormick](#) at [10:44 AM](#)

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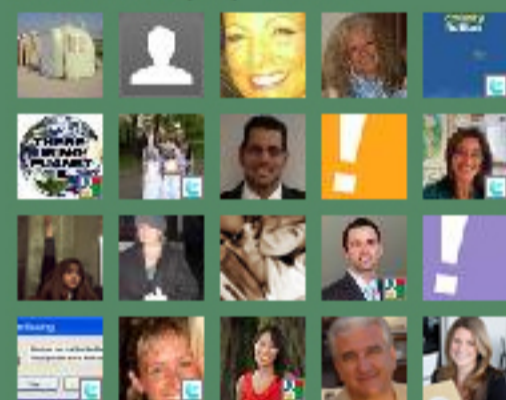
Bernard McCormick is the publisher of Gulfstream Media Group, which operates the flagship magazine *Gold Coast*. A graduate of La Salle University in Philadelphia, he wholeheartedly roots for the Explorers in basketball and fervently roots against Temple, St. Joe, Villanova and some Ivy League school... oh, Penn.

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