

# Of Goats, Sheep and Teddy Bears

By Jim Schild

Part of any good Classic Car restoration process is the research involved with identifying and locating sources for the proper materials used when the car was originally built. One of the more interesting materials was that found on the rear compartment floor of our original 1940 Packard Custom Super Eight 180 Seven-Passenger Sedan. Since the original owner of this car (Now owned by Gerald and Sharmon Perschbacher in St. Louis) was carpet man, Henry Hartenbach, we assumed that whatever was on the floor was something that he installed. We learned later that this floor covering was called Silky Crushed Mohair in the Packard catalog description and was one of the details that differentiated the Packard 180 from the 160 and was very special.



*Rear Compartment of a 1938 Packard Brunn Cabriolet showing the Silky Crushed Mohair floor covering.*

I did not really know what this type of Mohair was as I generally associate Mohair with the directional short nap upholstery used on seats and sidewalls in lesser automobiles of the 1930s and 1940s. This material was something altogether different and looked more like dense animal fur and had a glossy sheen to it. It was made from the fleece of the Angora goat which originated in Asia Minor near Ankara, Turkey (which had originally been called

Angora) at least 2,500 years ago. Mohair became a popular resource in the 19th century. The first Angora goats were imported into the United States in 1849, and today, South Africa and the United States are the largest producers of mohair.



*An Angora Goat in its natural state.*



*Silky Crushed Mohair similar to that used on the rear compartment floor of Classic Limousines and Town Cars . The color is like that used in the 1940 Packard 1808.*

With further research and talking with friend Sylvia Keller, she told me that she recognized it immediately. It is the same material used to make Teddy bears and it is actual Mohair. A visit to a Teddy bear shop in St. Charles confirmed this and through that information I was able to contact the manufacturers of this material and order samples. Most were similar but less dense. One of the responses turned out to be the very same manufacturer in England that produced this carpet material for the Classic Cars.



*Another close up study of the texture and depth of Silky Crushed Mohair similar to that used in the rear compartment of Classic Limousines and Town Cars.*

While studying more about Silky crushed Mohair I learned that it was not only used for a full rear compartment floor covering in Packard limousines and town cars, some used it combined with lamb's wool mouton as an overlay. An example was the rear floor of our Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith H.J. Mulliner limousine which came with standard Wilton Wool Velvet type carpet attached to the floor as in the driver's compartment. In the rear compartment an additional overlay was installed over the Wilton that had the silky crushed Mohair in its center surrounded by a wide border of Mouton, providing a very soft and plush appearance. Many Classic Era high quality formal limousines and town cars such as Packard, Pierce-Arrow, Cadillac, Rolls-Royce and others used this configuration for their rear compartment floor. All three of these materials are very stain and moisture resistant.

Mouton, more popularly known today simply as "Lamb Skin" or "Sheep Skin" is already well-known and available from U.S. suppliers who make custom throws for cars such as Rolls-Royce. Mouton is French for sheep. In the fur trade, Mouton refers to an extremely select pelt of a lamb that has been treated to offer some remarkable properties.

Virtually all sheep that are raised for meat in the USA are processed as lambs at about one year old. The pelts of all these lambs are used for shearling. The pelts that are of the very highest quality, less than 1% of all pelts, are selected for processing into Mouton. Mouton was originally developed as an alternative to wild furs such as beaver and seal.

There are several steps in the creation of a Mouton fur. First, the lamb must grade out to 'Mouton potential'. Only one in one hundred lambs will have the dense, soft, and uniform fleece necessary for Mouton. When the raw pelt is shipped to the tannery, it is graded again, and about 15% of the Mouton candidates are rejected at this point. Acceptable pelts are tanned, and then treated to make the wool fibers relatively water-resistant and straight,

and extremely soft and glossy. The fleece is also sheared to a uniform length of 5/8-inch (1.6 cm) and dyed. A favorite color is a rich brown, but black, tan, white and gray are also available.

After learning that I could have this Silky Crushed Mohair material available again for the owners and restorers of these Full Classic limousines and town cars, I placed ads in the appropriate club magazines stating that I could have this material made available. Surprisingly, I found that most owners of these cars had no idea what it was and that it was supposed to be in their cars. It is hard to describe without actually seeing it. I would have had to purchase about \$16,000 worth of the material to have it made and I would need pre-orders, it seemed like it could not be done at that time.

If you sincerely appreciate the plush and luxurious interiors of Full Classic Limousines and Town Cars then you might want to look into the application of these wonderful carpet and overlay materials.



*The original Silky Crushed Mohair and Mouton bordered overlay as used in the rear compartment of our Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith H.J. Mulliner Limousine. The remainder of the trim in this commercial livery model is tan Connolly leather seats and West of England cloth on the headlining and sidewalls..*