

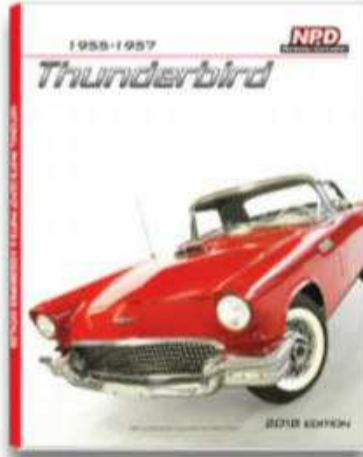
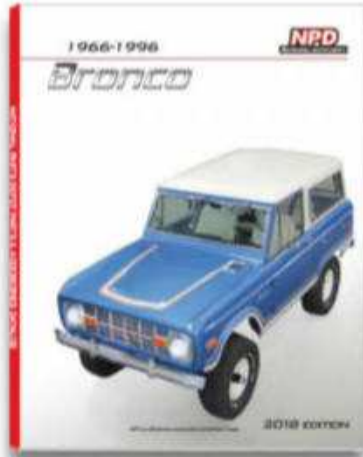
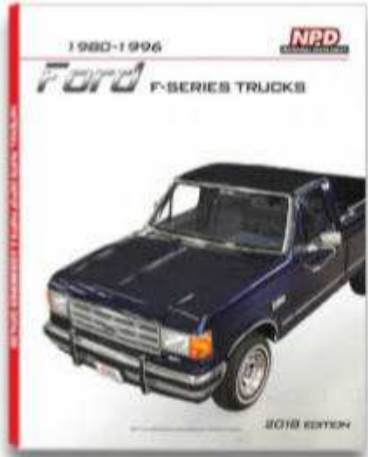
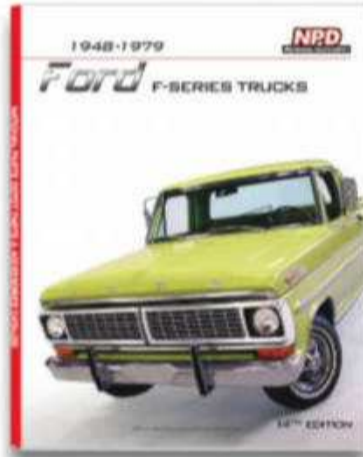
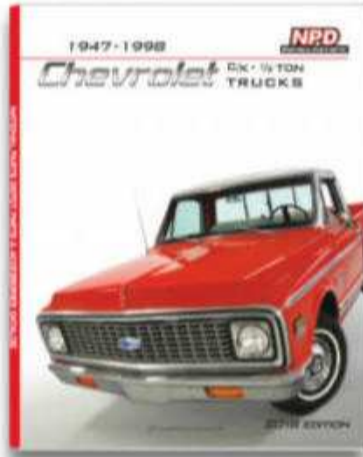
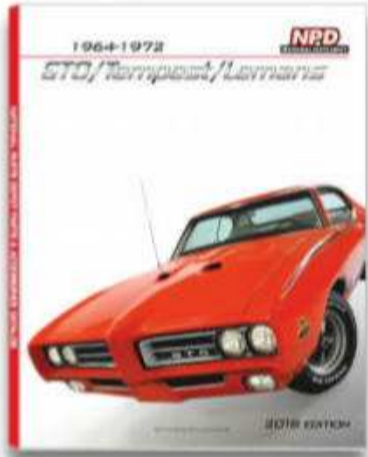
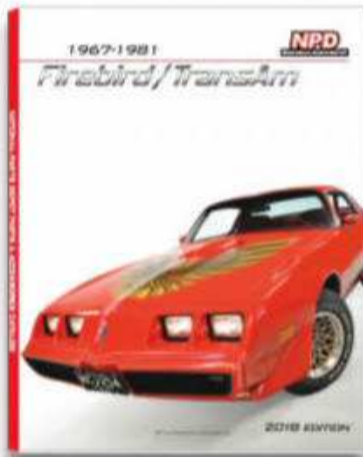
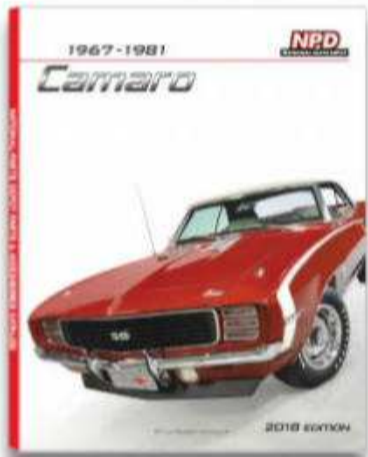
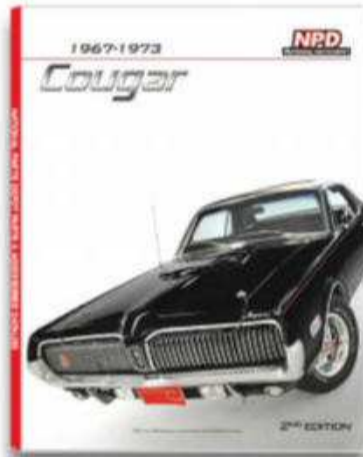
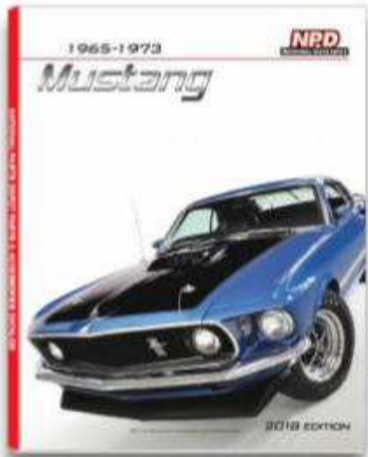


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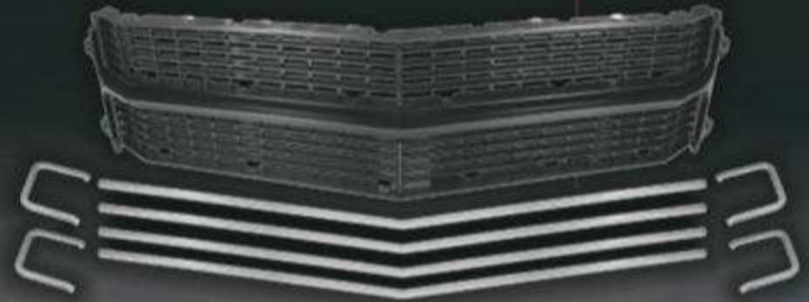
1969-72 Chevelle & El Camino Rectangular Mirror



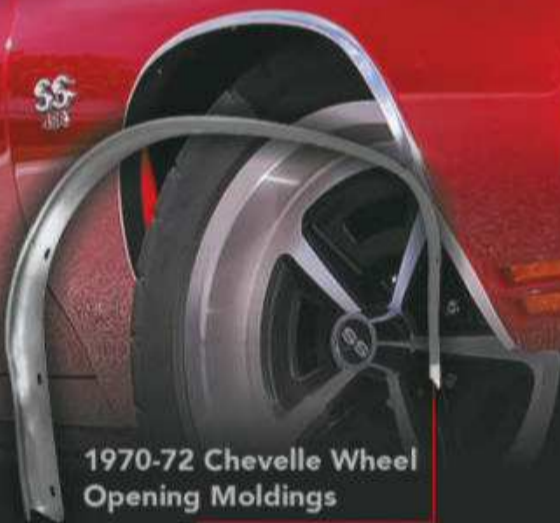
1970 Chevelle & El Camino Headlight Bezels



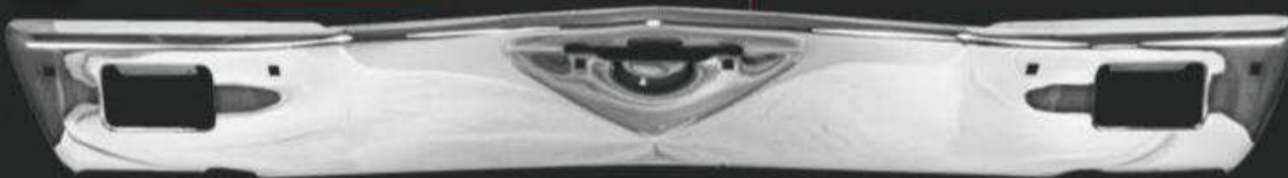
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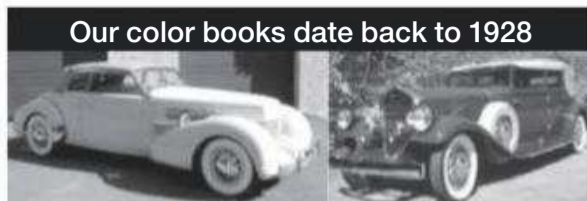
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To find out what happened to the Patent Wagen, visit [grundy.com](http://grundy.com) and read the full story on our blog, Grundy Garage!

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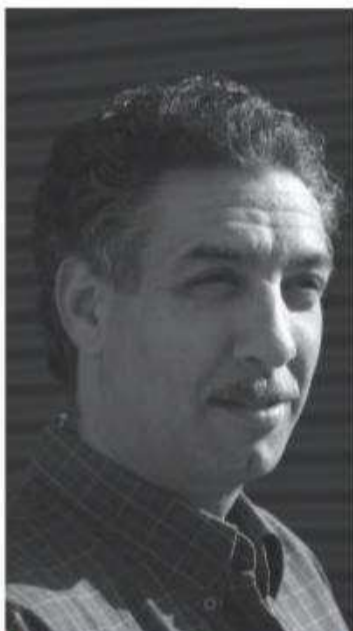
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## History of Automotive Design

This month's History of Automotive Design feature is one that I have been wanting to showcase for many years. While, due to the limited confines of this magazine, "Body Styles" is by no means a complete compilation of the various types of pre-World War II automotive coachwork, it is nevertheless a useful condensed guide to some of the more popular kinds. With so many different terms used throughout the years to describe body styles, it can be confusing as to which is which. So, to help set the record straight, I asked *HCC* contributor Walt Gosden to write this article, as few automotive historians know coachwork as well as Walt does.

Back in early May, I traveled down to Long Island to photograph the green 1950 Plymouth Special DeLuxe Convertible that was the Driveable Dream feature in *HCC* #167. Then, on my way back home to New England, I made a detour to Floral Park, Queens, to visit Walt. Still recuperating from his open-heart surgery months earlier, Walt and I had a nice time talking about Classic cars and the type of automobilia we both collect, and we tossed around ideas for future History of Automotive Design articles; this month's feature was the result of that meeting. While technology such as Skype certainly has its advantages, there's nothing like a face-to-face meeting for brainstorming.

The History of Automotive Design feature has been presented in every issue of *Hemmings Classic Car* since the magazine made its premier back in October 2004. When I used to read *Special Interest Autos*, my favorite feature was always The Coachbuilders series that was written by founding editor, Michael Lamm. Learning about the companies that crafted custom bodies and seeing their beautiful designs, always captivated me like no other old-car stories. Brewster, Judkins, Rollston, Willoughby; these are just some of the talented companies that fabricated many of the greatest and most significant American Classics. To learn more about them and the cars they crafted is intriguing.

Admiring the coachbuilders' designs

always makes an interesting read, but what really seems to grab everyone's interest is the "what could have been" cars. Forward-thinking concept cars and unique prototypes top just about every reader's list of most interesting automobiles, including mine. Seeing the 1953 Starfire X-P Rocket and the 1954 F-88 Oldsmobile show cars that Pat Foster wrote about in *HCC* #169 were the perfect "what if" kinds of cars that dreams are made of. Can you imagine how great it would have been if Oldsmobile got the green light to produce that F-88? That sweet-looking sports car

certainly would have given both the Corvette and the Thunderbird a serious run for their money.

Owning an automobile with a coachbuilt body has always been my ultimate goal, especially if that car has a body crafted by Carrozzeria Touring



Pininfarina-designed Cadillac Jacqueline

or Vignale, my two favorite coachbuilders. I particularly appreciate the Italian-built bodies that adorned Cadillacs, particularly the Pininfarina-built 1961 Jacqueline (shown above). Its clean style and perfect proportions, combined with the ever-durable and powerful Cadillac powertrain, make the Jacqueline one of my favorite Cadillacs. It's a true coachbuilt-Classic of the early postwar era. And let's not forget the Allanté, another collaboration between Cadillac and Pininfarina. If ever there was an Italian-coachbuilt car that was affordable to buy, the Allanté is it.

If you have a particular request for a future History of Automotive Design feature, please let us know, and we'll see if it will be possible. The main issue, of course, is always the procuring of the proper photographs and illustrations, which, in many cases, are nearly impossible to find. In other instances, no reprint rights are available, or the cost is too prohibitive to purchase what's needed, which is why we aren't always able to publish the historical articles that we want. But we'll certainly give it ye olde college try...👁️

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## National Corvette Museum Wish List

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## PCH Reopens

**HIGHWAY 1 IN CALIFORNIA, KNOWN NATIONALLY AS THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY,** has fully reopened after 18 months of roadway closures caused by massive mudslides. The shutdown caused a lot of economic turmoil along the famed corridor, not to mention massive detours for many West Coast car clubs. The reopening on July 20 was celebrated with a convoy of 80 cars representing eight decades going back as far as 1934. The drive began at Laguna Seca Raceway with a lap for each of the cars, then made its way through



ANGIE PAPPAS

the \$54-million repaired area that was buried under the mudslide over a year ago. The final stop was at Morro Bay, for a sunset beach barbecue. The beautiful and picturesque 665-mile road is the longest state route in California. For more photos of the event, visit [media.visitcalifornia.com](http://media.visitcalifornia.com).

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**IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO PLAN FOR TOURS, AND THE** Vintage Motor Car Club of America has released some highlights of its schedule for 2019. The annual Heritage Tour will take place in the Dayton, Ohio, region from June 23-28, and the Orphan Tour in Western Colorado, October 21-25. A regional tour from Independence, Missouri, to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will take place April 14-19, and it's being dubbed as the Lewis & Clark Tour. The big tour for the club, though, will be their 38th-annual Chrome Glidden Tour, which will be based around Gonzalez, Texas. Some highlights include Painted Churches, Fayette County Courthouse, Shiner Brewery, and Caldwell County Jail Museum. The Chrome Glidden is scheduled for March 31-April 5. Be sure to visit [www.vmcca.org/2019-national-tours](http://www.vmcca.org/2019-national-tours) for up-to-the-moment information.



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**2500 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL**

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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ITEM 60363/69730

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**SUPER COUPON**

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

**CLICK-TYPE TORQUE WRENCHES**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**LIFETIME WARRANTY**

- Reversible

DRIVE	ITEM
1/4"	61277/63881/2696
3/8"	61276/63880/807
1/2"	62431/63882/239

Item 239 shown

COMPARE TO HUSKY \$84.97 MODEL: H2DTWA **SAVE 88%**

**NOW \$9.99**

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LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 1/10/19\*

**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

**2 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

- Boom extends from 41" to 61-3/4"
- Crane height adjusts from 73-5/8" to 89"

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COMPARE TO TEQ \$239.99 MODEL: 1404PV **SAVE \$60**

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**1/2" COMPOSITE PRO EXTREME TORQUE AIR IMPACT WRENCH**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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COMPARE TO SNAP-ON \$599.95 MODEL: PT850 **SAVE \$469**

ITEM 62891

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**COMMERCIAL QUALITY HEAVY DUTY WELDING STORAGE CABINET**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NOW \$259.99**

COMPARE TO BLACKSTONE \$458.63 MODEL: 805383 **SAVE \$198**

ITEM 63179

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LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/10/19\*

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**AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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COMPARE TO \$9.99 **SAVE 50%**

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LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 1/10/19\*

**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

**MECHANIC'S ROLLER SEAT WITH DRAWERS**

- 350 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NOW \$49.99**

COMPARE TO PERFORMANCE TOOL \$89.99 MODEL: W85025 **SAVE 44%**

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LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 1/10/19\*

**PITTSBURGH** SUPER COUPON

**18 PIECE SAE AND METRIC T-HANDLE BALL END HEX KEY SET**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NOW \$12.99**

COMPARE TO HUSKY \$32.10 MODEL: HTHKSM14PCN **SAVE 59%**

ITEM 63167/63166/96645 shown

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LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 1/10/19\*

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**8", 5 SPEED BENCHTOP DRILL PRESS**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

**NOW \$49.99**

COMPARE TO BUFFALO BLACK \$110.95 MODEL: DP5UL **SAVE \$60**

ITEM 62520/60238 shown

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LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/10/19\*

**Bunker Hill Security** SUPER COUPON

**WIRELESS SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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COMPARE TO FIRST ALERT \$28.99 MODEL: SFA600 **SAVE 65%**

ITEM 61910/62447/93068 shown

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## Argentine Dream

**SOMEWHERE EAST OF COLBY, KANSAS, WHERE THE FARM ROADS ARE NUMBERED AS WELL AS lettered,** a family of three stopped for lunch at a small café and posed for a couple of pictures. Altogether a fairly typical scene, save for the fact that they drove from Argentina and likely had more than the American heartland to see before they headed back.

Other than the make of the family's car (a Lincoln), the details of the family's trip—their itinerary, the time period, even their names—are lost to history. The photos, however, remain, but even their provenance is murky. All Jim Meister of St. Joseph, Michigan, could tell us was that a friend gave them to him many years ago. The backs of the photos give us the name of the town and (presumably) the names of the couple who took the photos: John and Grace McGee of Nampa, Idaho. The Lincoln appears to date to the mid- to late 1920s, though the fashions worn in the photos suggest a much later decade.

And with that, we'll hand this mystery to you; does an Argentine trip throughout the United States ring a bell for anyone out there?



## RE: Great Sectioning

**A COUPLE YEARS AGO (SEE LOST & FOUND, HCC #147),** we posted a photo of a trailered sport custom that reader Steven Thompson spotted near the Grand Canyon in the late 1990s. Unsurprisingly, sport-custom and fiberglass-car enthusiast Geoff Hacker has since not only determined its origins, but also purchased it and put it on display.

Built by Detroiters Walter Omelenchuk in 1954, the custom started out as a very early 1947 Frazer, then it was chopped, sliced, diced, and wid-

ened into Mr. O's vision of something low, sleek, and eye-catching. The flathead straight-six remained, but Mr. O added a couple more carburetors to give it a little more pep.

Geoff bought it from Kaiser collector Mike Barker, who bought it from a junkyard in Marine City, Michigan, but there's a big decades-long gap in its history that Geoff hopes to fill by speaking with Mr. O's family. In the meantime, the car's on display in the Sarasota Classic Car Museum in Florida.

## Phantom Hawk

**WHEN JOHN YASENKO OF NEBO, ILLINOIS,** found this Cheetah-proportioned custom several years ago and went to title it, he had to call it something; Phantom Hawk just seemed appropriate to him.

"Early Ford guys have told us it is built upon a shortened original 1934 Ford chassis," he wrote. "Studebaker guys identified 1954 Studebaker parts. All other panels are hand beat and fabricated, and were not formed by a novice by any stretch of imagination. It had a hood scoop that was removed a long time ago.

"As close as we can figure, from original traits of the build, it used an original Ford flathead engine and front '34 Ford wishbone axle assembly. The removable cowl transmission floor hump actually looks like a Ford flathead transmission bellhousing? The body is bare but complete; no engine, transmission, suspension, nor interior. This rare build was entirely painted red, top and bottom, when constructed, and had a white and aluminum trimmed interior, with full Stewart-Warner gauges."

The car's too unique to have gone unnoticed until John found it. Who knows more about it?



Recently discovered a unique or noteworthy classic car? Let us know. Photographs, commentary, questions, and answers should be submitted to [Lost & Found, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201](mailto:dstrohl@hemmings.com), or emailed to [dstrohl@hemmings.com](mailto:dstrohl@hemmings.com). For more Lost & Found, visit [blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found).





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The watch's handsome steel blue dial seamlessly blends an analog watch face with a stylish digital display. It's a stopwatch, calendar, and alarm. Plus, the **Blue Stone** resists water up to 30 meters, making it up for water adventures.

A watch with these features would easily cost you thousands if you shopped big names. But overcharging to justify an inflated brand name makes us blue in the face. Which is why we make superior looking and performing timepieces priced to please. Decades of experience in engineering enables Stauer to put quality on your wrist and keep your money in your pocket.

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**Time is running out.** Originally priced at \$395, the **Blue Stone Chronograph** was already generating buzz among watch connoisseurs, but with the price slashed to **\$69**, we can't guarantee this limited-edition timepiece will last. So, call today!

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## Dingman Results

**RM AUCTIONS WRAPPED UP THE SALE OF** the Dingman Collection earlier this summer with more than \$7 million in sales and \$3.9 million of that in vehicle sales. Michael Dingman, longtime Ford Motor Company director, had amassed an impressive collection of Ford products and memorabilia; 37 vehicles found a new home. Among them were this 1937 Lincoln Model K Convertible Victoria by Brunn that was first owned by Eleanora Randolph Sears, who was a four-time women's doubles tennis champion and one of the best all-around athletes of her time. The Lincoln had all the styling cues of the era and had some unique features such as white rubber running boards. The Full Classic sold for an impressive \$184,800. Complete results from the Dingman Collection are available at [www.rmsothebys.com](http://www.rmsothebys.com).



DAVID BUSH/RM SOTHEBY'S



WORLDWIDE AUCTIONEERS

## Huge Hudson Haul

**ELDON HOSTETLER'S LIFELONG COLLECTION OF HUDSONS WAS SOLD** earlier this month after the Hostetler Hudson Museum based in Shipshewana, Indiana, was forced to close down due to decreased attendance and rising debts. Worldwide Auctioneers had 69 vehicles cross the block featuring every kind of Hudson you could think of. Final sales reached \$7.2 million with an additional \$300,000 in memorabilia. The big sale of the day was Herb Thomas' 1952 Hudson Club Coupe NASCAR stock car, which sold for a Hudson record-setting \$1.27 million. The car served as Thomas' primary race car in 1952 and 1953. He finished second in 1952 only 106 points behind winner Tim Flock, and returned to win it all comfortably in '53 for his second NASCAR Championship. A full list of results is available at [www.worldwide-auctioneers.com](http://www.worldwide-auctioneers.com).



## AUCTION PROFILE

**CAR:** 1958 BUICK SUPER RIVIERA  
**AUCTIONEER:** MECUM AUCTIONS  
**LOCATION:** HARRISBURG, PA  
**DATE:** AUGUST 2, 2018  
**LOT NUMBER:** T6  
**RESERVE:** NONE  
**AVERAGE SELLING PRICE:** \$15,000  
**SELLING PRICE:** \$15,950

**BUICK SAW A LOT OF CHANGES IN 1958, AS** did everything else that was produced by General Motors. The vaunted ventiports were nowhere to be found, and the complete redesign was an attempt to revive sales for the fledgling Super line that was now reduced to just two body styles. With an excessive amount of ornamentation and chrome, the new Buicks were received with mixed reviews. This car was one of 28,460 four-door sedans produced that year.

This Super Riviera was finished in two-tone mauve and white exterior and was powered by the 300-hp



MECUM AUCTIONS

364-cu.in. V-8 and Dynaflo automatic transmission. The car was largely original with a nice presentable interior boasting its original AM radio. It also sported power steering and power brakes with the finned drums that had become standard for 1958. This Buick is a perfect example of Detroit's excess, and the increased influence of Jet Age design. It sold for spot on its average value, making both seller and buyer happy.





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HMN STAFF

## Orlando Magic

**THE LEAKE AUCTION COMPANY HAS** announced that it will have its first-ever auction in Orlando, Florida. The sale will take place December 8 with an estimated 250 vehicles crossing the block without reserve or minimum bids. The auction will be held at the Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers' 200-acre site, and consignments are now being accepted. Visit [www.leakecar.com](http://www.leakecar.com) for more information, and also keep an eye out for them in Dallas this month.

 View and search through thousands of upcoming auction vehicles in one place at the Hemmings Auction Showroom, [www.hemmings.com/auctions](http://www.hemmings.com/auctions).




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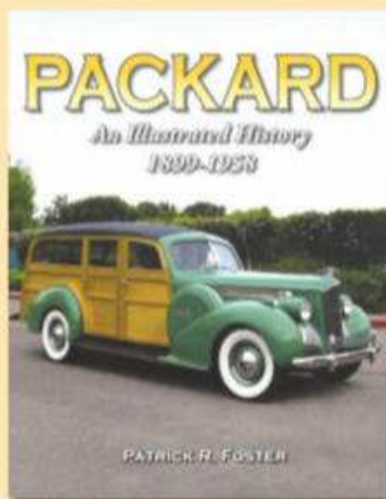
Few automakers have been as daring as Chrysler has been at various times in its history, and one of this Detroit firm's most famous experiments of the mid-1960s was the Turbine car. A four-wheeled symbol of the jet age powered by Chrysler's fourth-generation A-831 turbine, this Carrozzeria Ghia-bodied coupe caught the country's attention. A total of 55 examples—each painted metallic bronze—were built, with 50 of them designated as test vehicles that were loaned to 203 American drivers between 1963 and 1966; all but nine were eventually destroyed. Noted designer and artist Jim Gerdom has created a beautiful rendition (item DF-9824) of the 1964 Chrysler Turbine, and is selling 1,000 signed and numbered prints of it. These colorful prints, sized 12 x 24 inches, can be ordered from his website or Etsy shop, DesignFactoryArt.Etsy.com.

## Ask The Man

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For nearly 60 years, the Packard Motor Car Company was an envy of the automotive industry as one of America's most prestigious makers of fine cars. And yet, the fascinating history of this independent marque is not often explored in print. *Hemmings Classic Car's* own columnist, Pat Foster, has remedied that oversight with his latest book, *Packard: An Illustrated History 1899-1958*. This generously sized, 126-page softcover (ISBN 9781583883464) has more than 200 well-captioned black-and-white and color illustrations that take the reader from the turn of the last century through the coach-built Classics of the 1930s, to Packard's Studebaker-dependent last days, a span in which cylinder counts ranged from one to 12. Pat takes readers through each model year—or Series, in Packard-speak—finishing with a chapter celebrating this company's show cars of the 1940s and 1950s. This book offers an excellent, clearly presented historical overview, and deserves a place in every car enthusiast's library.



## New or Old

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WWW.GARAGEART.COM • \$29.95-\$69.95

The United States Rubber Company, founded in Connecticut in 1892, was once a major player in automotive tire manufacturing in America. That company would later become Uniroyal, merge with BFGoodrich, and ultimately become a property of Michelin. The automobilia experts at Garage Art have newly recreated a vintage US Tires advertising sign, and thought outside of the box to offer it in two finishes: Satin appears fresh-out-of-the-box, while Vintage has a pleasingly aged, distressed appearance. This classic-looking vertical sign is available in three sizes—8 x 24, 10 x 32, and 13 x 41 inches—and each size is available in either finish. Every sign is made to order, and will ship in 14 to 21 business days.

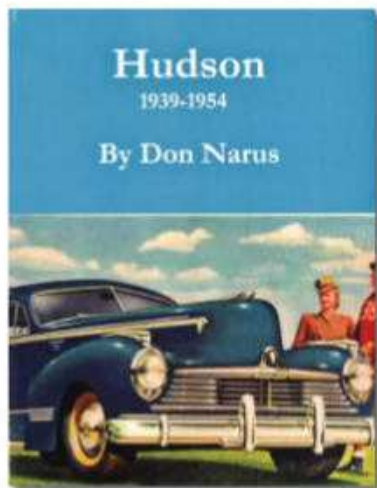


## 1962 Pontiac Grand Prix

800-718-1866 • WWW.DIECASTDIRECT.COM • \$79.95

The Grand Prix was big news for Pontiac in 1962, as this sporty, upscale hardtop represented a new market for GM's youthful division. Ertl Collectibles has rendered the most exclusive 1962 Grand Prix variant—a 405-hp, 421 Super Duty-powered example painted Ensign Blue over black—in 1:18-scale form, as part of its Auto World American Muscle series. Our sample (item AMM1122) is number 450 of 1,002 pieces, and it offers lots of curb appeal, with iconic eight-lug wheels and a realistic undercarriage. Traditional pale blue paint marks the Trophy V-8 that is topped with dual carburetors and chrome air cleaners, and the trunk opens to reveal a mat. The interior features flock carpeting, adjustable front bucket seat-backs, and a detailed instrument panel, complete with this model's trademark tachometer mounted to the center console. This officially licensed model will surely please any postwar-Pontiac aficionado.





Hudson

1939-1954

By Don Narus

## Hudson History

DLNARUS@YAHOO.COM

WWW.LULU.COM

\$22.95

With the recent introduction of *Hudson 1939-1954*, automotive historian Don

Narus has added another title to his impressive list of primers. This 138-page softcover (ISBN 9781387423958) deals with that venerable firm's immediate pre- and postwar model line, including truck styles and the popular models of the Step-Down era, and wraps up when this automaker became part of American Motors. This book does include the compact Jet, but the limited-production Italia is only noted in passing. In typical fashion, Narus has filled this edition with more than 200 black-and-white advertising illustrations and photos (quality varies), and the specifications charts ending each chapter are helpful. It's a handy reference for neophytes interested in learning more about American independent automakers.

## Sit and Spin

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Creepex has reinvented the creeper with their new FastBack Pro. With 7-inch wheels at waist level, you can apply pulling force when needed and raise the end of the creeper to pass over obstacles. The tires provide traction and are capable of passing over objects ranging from tools to air hoses. There are two levels of ground clearance, ultra-low or 3-inch off road. It's not just mobility that's been maximized, however, the ergonomics allow for comfort with the bucket-shape body shell, headrest, double bearings in each wheel, and 500-pound capacity. Removable parts trays attach to the wheels with magnets so you can bring fasteners with you. Plus, it comes with detachable magnetic work lights, one on each side. Video demonstrations are available on Creepex's website.



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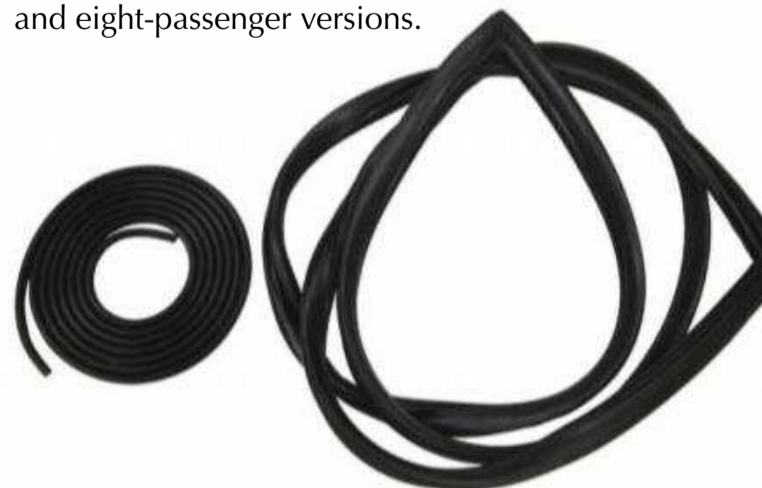


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## Alvaro Krotz

**ALVARO KROTZ WAS BORN, AS** he liked to put it, “in a log cabin in northwestern Ohio during the Civil War.” That was November 3, 1864, to be exact. Not much is known about his early life, but we can assume that, like his contemporaries, he became interested in the advancing technology of the late 19th century—namely steam engines, electric power, and telephony.

Despite his humble origins, Krotz graduated from what is now Valparaiso

University. His earliest efforts were dedicated to the improvement of wheels, bearings, and other aspects of vehicles, and it was natural that his attention would soon be drawn to the automobile. He applied for his first automotive patent in 1897, at the age of 32, and by 1899 he had successfully constructed electric automobiles to his own design.


Krotz did not limit his talents to the nascent automotive sector, as he

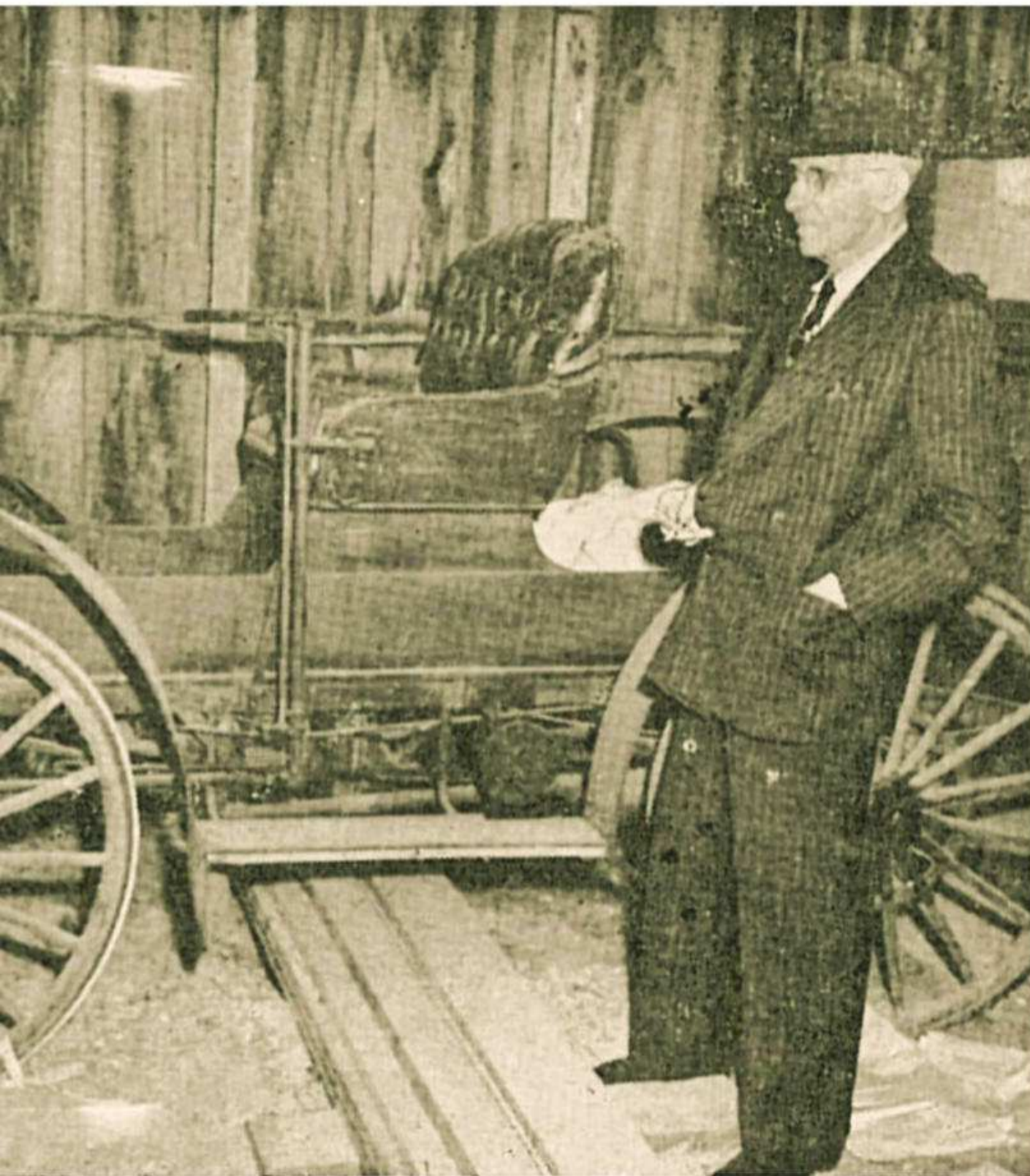
also oversaw building the Springfield, Ohio, electric streetcar system in 1897. At the time he was making his home in Springfield, he also designed a storage battery and a complete electric car for a Cleveland jeweler named A.T. Willard—Willard’s battery-making assets would eventually be acquired by the manufacturer of Exide batteries.

A trip to France in 1900 exposed Krotz to European innovations in the automotive field, and when he returned, he brought home several pieces of French technology that he incorporated into a gasoline automobile he designed and built for the Grant Axle and Wheel Company.

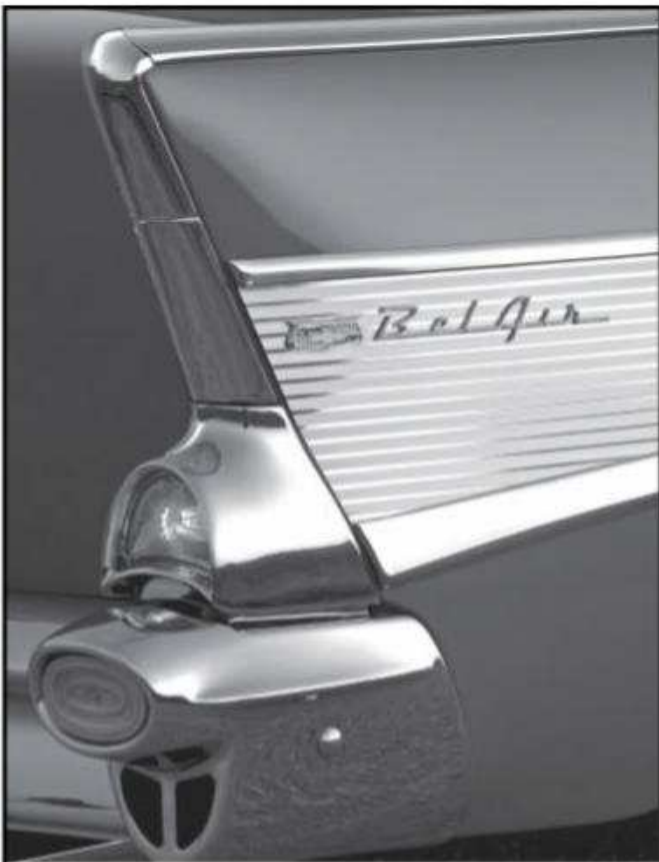
In 1903, Krotz completed what he seemed to consider his biggest accomplishment—creating a machine that could cut treads into tires, or has he termed it, create “mutilated” tires. This innovation was sold to the Kelly-Springfield Tire Company.

Like Henry Ford, Krotz wished to build a reliable car that anyone could afford. Starting in 1906, he began work on a prototype for a new gasoline automobile, and he had it on the road by 1907. In 1908, he produced another 12, which caught the eye of Chicago catalog retailer Sears, Roebuck & Company. Photographs produced by Krotz of his machine traveling through sand, mud, and snow, persuaded Sears that this was the car that it could market to its customers. In the autumn of 1908, just as the Ford Model T was coming on the scene, Krotz and Sears signed a contract.

In a building in Chicago, Krotz oversaw assembly of his car, now dubbed the Sears Motor Buggy, with parts provided by outside suppliers. The story of the Sears is more fully set out in a feature beginning on page 64 of this issue. After Sears discontinued carrying the cars, production continued for a few months under the Lincoln brand—unrelated to the luxury-car maker founded by Henry Leland. By that time, however, Krotz had moved on to other things, including designing farm implements for General Motors. 







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fan. This car represents an important decision by our friends in Flint to keep a name alive while preparing to introduce a much more advanced version of its flagship cruiser.

A second reason is Buick's engineering and build quality, which is why Buick is still with us. Buick owners were and still are among the most loyal in the industry, and for good reason. I see more 20- and 30-year-old Buicks on the road as daily drivers than just about any other American make. The 1977-'78 Riviera's shared components also aid in upkeep.

The third reason is Buick styling, which was always well executed. Yes, even though I call this Riviera a Buick LeSabre in a tuxedo, that isn't a bad thing. The 1977-'78 Riviervas were substantial, good-looking cars.

By the way, those recent Buick commercials, where they say, "That doesn't look like a Buick," drive me nuts. There is absolutely nothing wrong with looking like a Buick.

Wouldn't you rather have this Buick Riviera? ☺

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## Class of 1959

*The last year of the '50s saw some dramatic repositioning from the biggest of the Big Three and independents alike*

BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE AUTOMAKERS AND THE HEMMINGS ARCHIVES

Life, it is said, is what happens while you're making other plans. As late as mid-1956, the 1959 model year was supposed to be a season of carryovers and facelifts for just about every American car company, lacking anything new or newsworthy. It wasn't for Detroit's engineers and stylists being lazy; it was the calm before the storm of the new-for-1960 compacts went all-out against the imports and beat 'em back across the ocean. While gearing up for the dawn of a new decade, and the crucial new models that were intended to shape those years, Detroit was also prepping to say goodbye to an era. Model year 1959 was the last year that things stayed simple, when volume car companies (other than Ford and Chevrolet, which had specialty cars in the Thunderbird and Corvette) were able to get away with offering versions of a single passenger car in their lineup.

Coupes, sedans, wagons, convertibles... Detroit's collective engineering wisdom and might concentrated on a single basic car for each marque each year. Leave it to the stylists to determine how much chrome was on the high-line version, and to the engineers to figure out how much oomph was available. Consider: In 1959, your Plymouth could be a Savoy, a Belvedere, or a Fury or a Sport Fury; despite ever-shuffling trim and running gear, it was all the same basic body and chassis beneath. Some marques had multiple model lines, like

Oldsmobile, but the only significant difference between an 88 and a 98 was a four-inch splice in the frame rails and a couple of hundred bucks in price. Options, colors and styling were near enough to identical. And this plan was going to see Detroit float through 1959 unimpeded, a last hurrah as engineers hunkered down on the new 1960 compact models.

But, the best-laid plans of mice and Detroit product planners gang aft-agley. Two unforeseen issues threw a wrench into all of those tidy five-year plans, and they became crucial in 1959: how the industry would recover from the recession of 1958, and the launch of GM's last-minute, all-new full-size models.

We'll start with GM's new B-, C- and D-bodies. Their genesis can be traced clear back to mid-1956, when GM's styling bosses collectively freaked out over sneak-peaks of Mopar's longer-lower-wider "Forward Look" 1957 models; they made GM's own upcoming '58 lineup look positively frumpy by comparison.

What was worse, GM's all-new '58s were already locked in by late 1956—there was nothing they could do. Or was there? Rather than suffer a three-year cycle of outdated styling and limp through 1960, GM did the sort of bold thing that only GM had the guts to do in those days: it broke out a clean sheet of paper and sought to out-longer, out-lower, and out-wider the





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PONTIAC  
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Forward Look Mopars. An all-new body and chassis were on the docket. The program was to get the 1959 models in shape for the fall of '58 throughout 1956 and '57. This also meant that GM's A-body, which underpinned Chevrolets and Pontiacs for decades, disappeared. The B-body became GM's standardized platform starting in 1959. No time to rationalize so many chassis in a crash program like this one.

All of the big Chevrolets (Biscayne, Bel Air, Impala) used a 119-inch wheelbase. Over at Pontiac, the Catalina and Bonneville wagon rode a 122-inch wheelbase, while the Star Chief and all non-wagon Bonnevilles rode on 124 inches. Buick and Oldsmobile shared a pair of wheelbases—Invicta, LeSabre, and both 88 series (Dynamic and Super) rode a 123-inch-wheelbase B-body, while the Electra and Ninety-Eight rode a 126.3-inch C-body chassis. Cadillac rode an exclusive 130-inch wheelbase, save for the Series 75, which rode on a majestic 149.75 inches. To celebrate the new models, Buick gave its cars all-new names. Out went Century, Special, Limited, and Roadmaster, and in came Invicta, LeSabre, and Electra.

A full variety of coupes, sedans, convertibles, and wagons were available across the board. (Chevrolet even added a pickup variant, called El Camino.) All marques, even Cadillac, were available with the new Vista-Roof. The idea with the flat-top was to let as much light into the cabin as possible while still offering the protection and security of a steel top. This meant true hardtop construction (which GM had pioneered in 1949), thin pillars, and front and rear glass that wrapped around a full 90 degrees; all contributed to an airy-feeling cabin, despite marginally diminished headroom, thanks to 1,711.8 square inches of outward visibility. Keep in mind that this style was in addition to the standard four-door body styles each marque had at the time—some with solid B-pillars, some true hardtops, none with the wraparound backlite and roof overhang that the Vista-Roof models had.

And all of this planning was going on while America suffered the recession of 1958, a short-and-nasty economic hiccup that really did a number on Detroit. Twenty-percent unemployment around the Midwest, tumbling GDP, and halved steel production all affected the auto industry. Cars from healthy brands sold poorly (most of them), new brands such as Edsel were hobbled out of the gate, and independent marques like Packard were consigned to the dustbin of history. In 1958, Lincoln and Continental were marketed separately;





DE SOTO ADVENTURER  
CONVERTIBLE

for 1959, they were counted together, and sales still slipped 11 percent. Edsel, on the heels of its disastrous 1958 launch, saw a 29-percent year-to-year drop. De Soto's sales fell 10 percent in the same time frame. (Edsel would be gone by the end of 1960, followed by De Soto.) If the recession of '58 continued into 1959, GM could be badly hurt by its investment.

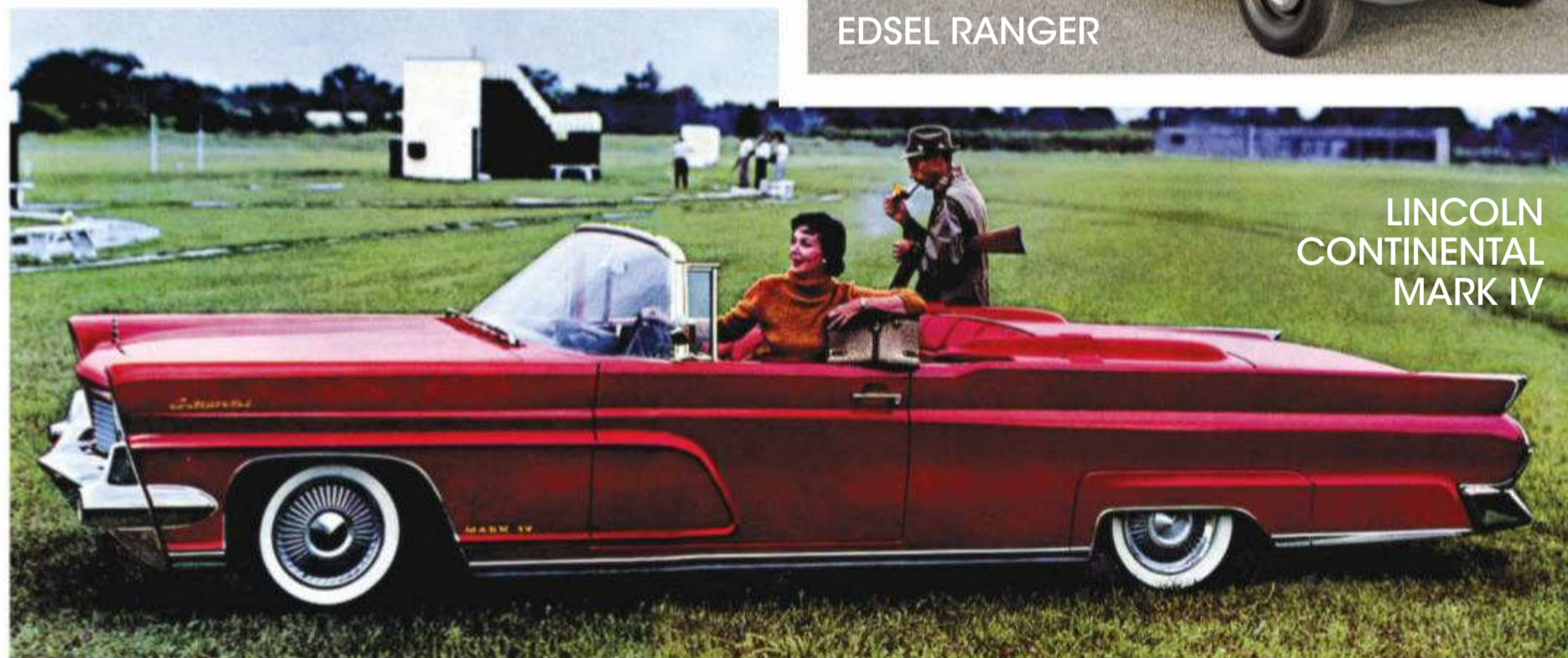
GM needed its new cars to be smash hits, and for the most part, they did well. Chevrolet retained first place in the sales race, jumping 22 percent to 1.462 million cars. Pontiac blew up, nearly doubling its output to more than 383,000 cars and jumping from sixth to fourth in the annual sales tally. Oldsmobile, improving sales by 23 percent (to nearly 383,000 cars) slid to fifth overall, thanks to Pontiac's strength. (It was close: Fewer than 500 units separated Pontiac and Oldsmobile in 1959.) Others failed to gain their former robust sales strength: Buick sold 44,000 more cars in 1959—a 16-percent bump over its dismal '58 year—but tumbled from fifth to seventh in the overall sales race. It's not that Buick did badly (it would be hard to think that, with more than 285,000 cars sold); it's that everyone else did so much better. Cadillac retained its 10th-place spot while selling 15-percent more cars, topping 142,000 for 1959.



MERCURY  
PARK LANE



EDSEL RANGER



LINCOLN  
CONTINENTAL  
MARK IV

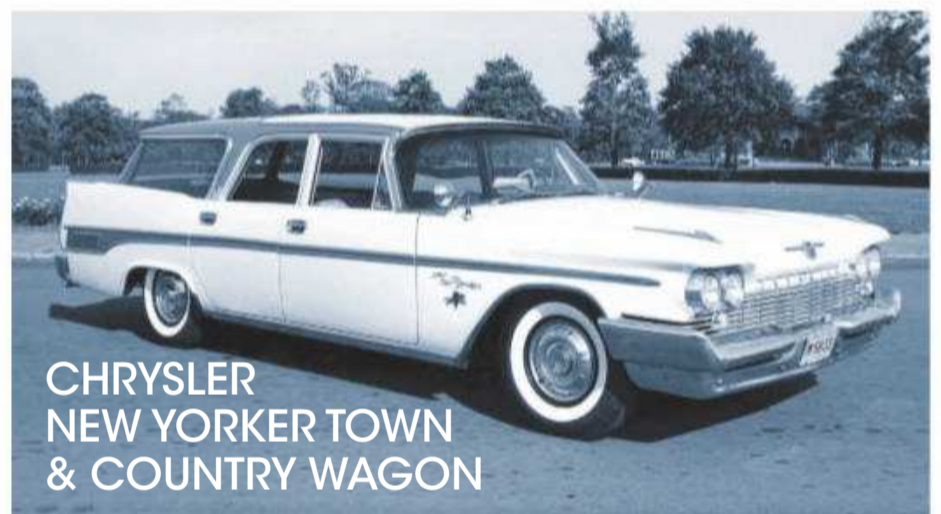


## PLYMOUTH FURY



The good news wasn't limited to the General's divisions. Ford retained second place in 1959 and sold nearly 50 percent more cars than the year before (1.45 million, barely 11,000 units shy of toppling Chevy for first place). Plymouth retained third, though improved its sales by just four percent—roughly 15,500 units. Dodge remained in eighth place, improving by nearly 20,000 units and 13 percent. Mercury kept ninth place secure by improving by 17,000 cars and 12 percent. Chrysler sold 6,000 more cars (a gain of 10 percent) but slipped from 11th to 12th in the overall count. Similarly, Imperial sold 1,100 more cars—a seven percent gain, but it also slipped on the overall sales chart, from 16th to 17th.

Development on the 1960 model year compacts started in mid-1957, ahead of the '58 recession, but the failures of 1958 may have helped justify Detroit's decision to get small. The steady onslaught of import cars (primarily Renault and Volkswagen, although a number of British marques contributed), combined with a 31-percent year-to-year drop in car sales, surely helped popularize the push for the compacts that were due in 1960. As a stopgap measure, adopting the "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" approach, some carmakers briefly caught import fever. These captive imports were made overseas by in-



CHRYSLER  
NEW YORKER TOWN  
& COUNTRY WAGON

ternational divisions of the Detroit companies, and were surely meant to compete against Rambler as much as the imports. Buick dealers sold German Opels, while Pontiac vended British imprint Vauxhall. Ford offered its European Consul/Zodiac/Zephyr line in the States as well. Most of these were dropped after the American wave of compacts arrived for 1960 and '61.

It wasn't just imports eating the Big Three's lunch. Adding a station wagon model to the new-for-'58 Rambler American lineup helped the marque jump to sixth in the 1959 production race. This more than doubled its sales over 1958 (the only marque to improve in the recession year), and was fourfold the brand's 1957 sales. Rambler was the closest thing America had to a home-grown import car, in size and intent; the combination of low price, overall economy, and reliability was apparently irresistible to the budget-minded. The rest of the industry surely marveled at the notion of smaller cars, bereft of the latest gadgets and styling tricks, capturing the imagination of the American public.

But while the compact Rambler could have been seen as an outlier, a new entry from another American independent suggested that the compact-car trend was a vital new category with a huge upside. For the second time in a dozen years, Studebaker was able to beat the Big Three to market, and was very successful in doing so. (Recall the all-new postwar 1947

## FORD GALAXIE SKYLINER





FORD  
THUNDERBIRD



Studebaker models beating the Big Three's 1948-'49 models to market.) Offering two engines (straight-six or V-8 power) and three body styles (coupe, sedan or two-door wagon; convertibles and four-door wagons arrived for 1960), the compact Lark gave perpetually down-on-its-luck Studebaker something to crow about.

Studebaker sales surged from 14th to 11th in the annual production figures, nearly tripling its 44,759 sales numbers for 1958, up to 126,156 for '59. Studebaker confirmed what Rambler, in the preceding year, had only hinted at: Small cars were the right idea for America, and beating the Big Three to market by a full model year amounted to a coup for the South Bend crew. Rambler and Studebaker did well enough that the Big Three had to be of two minds: pleased that it looked like their investments in compact cars would pay off, and annoyed that development lead times couldn't bring them to market any faster to take advantage of a hot segment.

IMPERIAL CROWN  
SOUTHAMPTON



No, the compact Lark didn't sell as many cars outright as GM's five divisions did. Lark didn't make the money that the others did. But Studebaker's proof of concept, the right hook that followed Rambler's left jab in its compact-car one-two punch, meant that in the long run, the Lark was probably a stronger indicator of the future. GM's new 1959 models were a reaction to two-year-old models by the guys across town; the Lark pointed the way toward a compact future.

Yes, life is what happens while you're making other plans. And 1959 is what happened while Detroit was planning for 1960—the year everything *really* changed. 🐦

RAMBLER REBEL CUSTOM  
CROSS COUNTRY WAGON











# Bat-Wing Beauty

*One of the most distinctively shaped cars of the late Fifties:  
the 1959 Chevrolet Impala convertible*

BY TERRY SHEA • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN





The interior of the 1959 Impala is awash in high-quality leather-grained vinyl upholstery with color-keyed, striped-fabric centers, and armrests fitted front and rear; the driver-focused instrument panel with readily visible gauges is pure automotive sculpture.



When design and style giant Harley Earl retired from General Motors in 1958, he left a parting gift for generations to admire: the 1959 models. Longer, lower, and wider than previous efforts, the 1959 models from all of GM's divisions proved a high-water mark for several years. From "flat-top" four-door hardtops with expansive wraparound backlites across all of the lines to the massive, era-defining fins on the Cadillacs, the final designs created under Earl's aegis resound to this day.

Fortunately, despite some similarities in scale, GM had the resources and market share in 1959 to create distinguishing features for each division. While the designers took Cadillac on the high route—literally—with its tall tailfins, the guys who penned the Chevrolets went in the other direction, not 180 degrees, but 90. With its flopped-over tailfin look, the 1959 Chevrolet line had its own distinctive appearance. For some Chevy fans, that look trumps the Cadillac's iconic design.

Henri David, of Old Saybrook, Connecticut, is one such Chevrolet fan. Henri's appreciation for classic Impalas goes back to 1958, when his mother bought new a convertible with a 348-cu.in. V-8 under the hood. Henri and his brother did that Impala no favors with the way they drove it. "My brother and I went through three transmissions drag racing it," Henri says, matter-of-factly. "It had a Turboglide automatic, and with the 348 engine, the transmission was not strong enough to take it."

His father, none the wiser for his sons' antics with the Impala, became "discouraged" and traded it in. But that 1958 Impala wasn't even Henri's favorite Impala on his street.

"My neighbor had a '59 Impala convertible," Henri recalls. "His was a 283, three-speed on the column with overdrive. It was black, red interior, white top—a car that I never got over. For years, I sort of flirted with trying to find a nice 1959 Impala, but I really wanted stick-shift with overdrive, which is the most rare of those cars."

Though his on-again/off-again search bore no fruit, a chance glance in the corner of the restoration shop working on an old woodie of Henri's did yield results. Spotting a covered car in the corner during a visit in 2002, Henri recognized the shape of a 1959 Impala convertible. Intrigued to peek under the cover, he had one thing he was looking for... and he found it. "I lifted up the canvas and opened the door," Henri says, "and I immediately saw a three on the column with overdrive, and my heart skipped a beat." Acquired from the original owner as a personal project for the restoration shop owner, the Snowcrest White Impala with a red interior was not for sale. But Henri wasn't deterred. Even restoration shop owners have stalled personal projects, and a couple of months later Henri made a deal on a handshake that included him hiring the shop to complete the limited restoration work required on the otherwise original Impala.





The 283-cu.in. small-block V-8 was removed to be cleaned and refinished during restoration, but has otherwise never been apart. Though the two-barrel V-8 is rated at 185 hp, it's enough to move the big convertible with aplomb.



Despite being a local Connecticut car, the Impala had no rust at all, so the floorpans, lower body extremities, and frame were all solid. The interior, too, with its distinctive gauge pods and patterned seats, was just about perfect. The “restoration” that Henri signed up for with Manchester Motorcars (now no longer in business), amounted to a very thorough refinishing of the paint and a new convertible top, along with a few other minor touches.

With the days of drag racing his mother's 348 Impala well behind him, Henri had discovered just the Impala he was looking for: 283-cu.in. V-8 with the three-speed overdrive transmission, the color combination, and a great degree of originality. Henri was also not alone in loving the 1959 Chevrolets. Then, as in many years before and many years since, Chevy was the top-selling make in the U.S., the division finding new homes for 1.46 million cars, besting Ford by a little over 11,000 units in 1959.

Across all Chevrolet models for 1959, buyers could choose from a lineup that included a wide range of powerplants, from the solid reliability of the fuel-sipping 235.5-cu.in. Hi-Thrift straight-six, which produced 135 hp, to a variety of V-8 engines. At the high end were four different 348s: the Turbo-Thrust 250-hp version with a four-barrel and 9.5:1 compression; the Super Turbo-Thrust 280-hp model with three two-barrel carburetors and 9.5:1 compression; the Turbo-Thrust Special

with 11:1 compression and a four barrel; and, finally, the Super Turbo-Thrust Special with three two-barrel carburetors and 11:1 compression.

Four versions of the 283 small-block could be found in the Impala for 1959. The lineup included two versions of the Rochester fuel-injected engine: a 250-hp version with 9.5:1 compression and the Ramjet Special V-8, a 290-hp model with 10.5:1 compression. The Super Turbo-Fire 283 with a single four-barrel and 9.5:1 compression produced an advertised 230 hp. Finally, the workhorse V-8 for Chevrolet was the 185-hp Turbo-Fire 283, with 8.5:1 compression and a two-barrel Rochester carburetor, which is how our feature car was delivered in 1959 and how it still rolls today.

Transmission options in the 1959 Chevrolet brochure included a pair of automatics in the Turboglide and Powerglide, and three manual-shift options: a four-speed, a three-speed, and, finally, a three-speed with overdrive, the last of which was exactly the gearbox Henri wanted. “It really gives you five speeds forward, because your overdrive works in second and third, and it makes the car quite fast, even with the stock 283 engine,” Henri explains.

With the Biscayne as the entry-level Chevrolet and Bel Air occupying the mid-range models, the Impala filled its role as the sportier and more luxurious Chevrolet for 1959, a role highlighted by the many crossed-flag emblems found on and



in the car, from the flanks at the front of the quarter panels to the steering wheel center cap to the front of the hood. About that hood emblem. Impalas with six-cylinder engines had the word “Chevrolet” across the leading edge of the hood, while 283-equipped cars got and added the chrome chevron above, and, finally, 348 models had the crossed-flags emblem, found elsewhere on the car, above the chevron. Henri’s car does not currently have the chevron, which he believes may have never been installed.

That rejuvenated look included removing all of the original finish from the body. With such a clean example, there was no need for body filler. “There wasn’t any bodywork to be done—it was just paint,” Henri says. “There wasn’t a scratch or a dent on the whole body.

“They stripped it down to the bare metal, and the lady that had owned it happened to come by the shop,” Henri continues. “She was 92 at that point and she thought we were turning it into a hot rod because she saw her car outside the paint booth with absolutely no paint on it. They put on an epoxy primer and then the original color, the Snowcrest White. She passed away, unfortunately, before the car was finished. We had her son look it over, and he was thrilled that it looked just like new.”

Henri had the shop replace the convertible top as well as the carpet. But beyond some basic mechanical work more akin to maintenance, little else was needed. “We took the engine out to paint it and to clean up the engine bay, that’s all,” Henri says. “We didn’t take the cylinder heads off. We didn’t take the valve covers off—nothing!” Overall, the project took less than a year.

Not having driven the car before its restoration, Henri’s first experience turned out to be everything he had hoped for. “Oh, it felt like a whole new world,” Henri says of that first

drive, and every one since. “The transmissions, particularly in the ’59 model, but all Chevy standard-shift transmissions, have a beautiful whine to them; we put on some non-stock ’59 mufflers—they’re not Hollywood mufflers but the engine has a very deep, rich tone—and when you go up through the gears, it’s a symphony of an engine working—and the sound, with the top down, it is just lovely. Even with the top up, it’s lovely. The 1959 model was lower and wider than the ’58 cars, so it will corner like a go-kart. It’s wide, it’s long, it’s heavy, but it’s very nimble.”

In addition to having been the owner of a Chevrolet dealership in the 1990s, as well as longtime aficionado of Chevys, Henri also maintains a small, but somewhat diverse stable of vintage collector cars, including Plymouth and Ford woodie wagons, a Rolls-Royce, and a highly accurate Cobra reproduction. With a discerning eye for automotive design, he sings the praises of the lines of his Impala: “When you stand back and look at it, she really has her best face with the top down because they were designed as convertibles. There’s a real wow factor to that line, especially when you see the sculpturing under the fins and around the taillamps. Compared to today’s cars, it’s just so exciting. Every year they started with a clean sheet of paper. Look at the total difference between a 1958 and a ’59 model. You get too many eggheads in corporate and they try to homogenize things to save money, and it doesn’t work.”

Well, the 1959 Chevrolet Impala convertible definitely works for Henri, and his car has become popular, with invitations to prestigious events and plenty of appreciation from just about everyone he encounters with it. “It’s a thrill to drive it,” he says, “and people stop, blow horns, wave. It really draws a crowd. It’s a real head turner.” 🏎️







“When you go up through the gears, it’s a symphony of an engine working—and the sound, with the top down, it is just lovely.”



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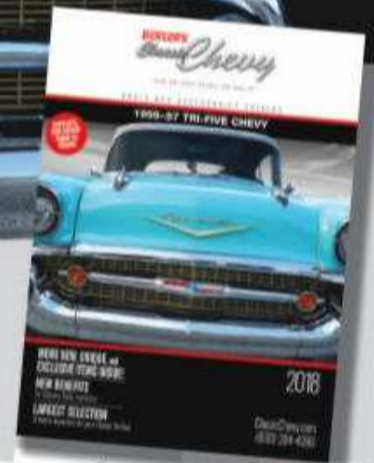


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# Ornate Oldsmobile

*An economical compact with an air of luxury*

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH



**T**he last letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega, translates as “great O.” Arriving for 1973, Oldsmobile’s Omega was one of General Motors’ compact cars that satisfied the “N-O-V-A” acronym of Nova, Omega, Ventura, and Apollo. Given its upscale appointments, and the fact it was an Oldsmobile, the Omega was the “great O” of the X-body quadruplets.

Offered in two-door coupe or hatchback, or four-door town sedan, the 111-inch-wheelbase compact was equipped with the standard Chevrolet 250-cu.in. straight-six or the optional

Oldsmobile 350-cu.in. V-8. All told, more than 60,000 Omegas were produced that first year.

Minor styling updates came for the 1974 model year, and a





sporty S package for two-door Omegas was added to the options list. With the country in the throes of the OPEC oil embargo, and the resulting fuel rationing and price hikes, Oldsmobile's sophomore compact sold 50,280 units.

Redesigned topside and re-engineered underneath for 1975, the exterior styling was squared up and the severely sloping roofline was retired for a more formal and European look. When developing the new X-body, the sedans received meticulous attention to detail, as did the coupe and hatchback.

The precise handling that European sport sedans were known for also took precedence over a soft boulevard ride.

Though the same wheelbase was retained, the chassis now shared certain component designs with the F-body Firebird and Camaro, which improved handling and parts interchangeability.

Most powertrains carried over, but the new Oldsmobile 260-cu.in. two-barrel V-8 replaced the 350 two-barrel option. The Omega Salon debuted, and the dealer brochure likened it to a European Grand Touring car. Despite all the newness, but likely due in part to an economic recession, sales dipped to fewer than 42,000.

More annual styling refinements followed for 1976. The luxurious Brougham and the sporty and striped SX (for the





Over the years, a sheet covered the seat whenever the Omega was driven to keep the white vinyl upholstery clean. Though not shown here, accessory gauges were added to the instrument panel.



two-door) were added to Oldsmobile's compact lineup, the base Omega was called the F-85, and the Salon and the Omega S package were dropped. Chevrolet's 105-hp one-barrel 250-cu.in. straight-six remained standard, and it came with a three-speed manual transmission except in California, where the 50-state-available three-speed automatic was required.

Oldsmobile's 110-hp 260 two-barrel V-8 shared the same stipulations with the 250, except a floor-shifted five-speed

manual with overdrive was optional for it in all states. The extra-cost 140-hp Oldsmobile 350 two-barrel V-8 wasn't available in California, but the 155-hp Olds 350 four-barrel V-8 was 50-state legal, and both engines required the three-speed Turbo Hydra-Matic. Omega sales rebounded to just over 58,000 for the U.S. Bicentennial year.

Don Helfenstein, currently of Prescott, Arizona, was a Southern California-based upwardly mobile professional in 1976, who worked in the automobile industry and was in search of an economical yet stylish commuter car.

He was enamored with the "3-box" styling of the imports that were prowling the streets at the time, but his budget was better suited to a Detroit-built model. After considering and testing compacts from Ford, Chrysler, and GM, the X-body emerged as the clear front runner for its European-like styling and handling according to Don, but which one to pick?

Having just endured the first oil crisis of the decade, he wanted a six-cylinder engine for economy, but still desired some performance. He noticed that when comparing the odd-fire 231-cu.in. Buick V-6 that was standard in the Skylark to the 250-cu.in. Chevrolet straight-six, which was standard in the other three X-bodies, the V-6 ran rougher, had a timing chain as opposed to a gear drive, and had less torque at lower rpm, so he chose the straight-six. Don preferred the front-end styling of the Oldsmobile over the Nova and Ventura because, "It looked more like a Cadillac Seville," he explains. It also didn't hurt that the Omega Brougham was marketed as, "Oldsmobile's answer to expensive European luxury sedans."

He ordered a 1976 Omega Brougham four-door sedan through Bob Curtis Oldsmobile in Torrance, California, on February 17, 1976, and specified the FE2 suspension, 3.08 axle that required the high-capacity radiator, Anti-Spin rear, AM/FM stereo, power steering, and the economy gauge.

Don preferred vinyl upholstery for easy cleanup and white for a cooler cabin on hot days, but the Brougham's standard interior was velour. Luckily, he was able to get the white vinyl as a special order. He recalls that the dealer had to speak with the Oldsmobile zone office to get the Turbo 350 transmission that he wanted approved. Don says that the Turbo 200 transmission came with the 250 at the time, but he felt it wasn't going to be reliable enough.

It took eight weeks for the special-ordered Omega Brougham to be built at the Van Nuys plant. When it arrived, Don noted that the hood paint had bubbles and sand in it, the front doors had dents that required repair and repainting, the left rear door was hung improperly, there was a dent in the cowl, and more sand and







According to its owner, with more than 115,000 miles and 42 years of service on the Chevrolet 250-cu.in. six-cylinder engine, its carburetor hasn't even required a rebuild yet.

bubbles were in the paint in the trunk weatherstrip channel.

When he brought the lengthy list of factory flaws to the dealer's attention the response was, "What do you expect, a Rolls-Royce?" "This is why GM lost its dominance in the industry," Don believes. "Its employees just didn't care."

The hood and front doors were repainted, and the rear door was realigned, but the cowl dent and poor trunk channel paint remain. Don notes that the dealer-repainted areas never matched the rest of the car and all three have since cracked, whereas the rest of the car's original finish has fared much better over the years except for some thinning at the edges.

Don drove his Omega daily from 1976 to 1989 before it was relegated to pleasure-cruising duty. "Mechanically it's been great," he says. In all these years and over 115,000 miles, aside from typical maintenance, the car has only required a new brake

master cylinder, front brake pads, rear wheel cylinders, and a water pump. The rest remains original, including the rear brake shoes and the entire exhaust system!

He credits GM, but his maintenance regimen must also be recognized. Don says that when the Omega was driven daily the oil was changed every 2,000 miles, and fluids for the transmission and rear-end every 10,000 miles. The brake and cooling systems were also flushed and refilled each year. "I use distilled water in the cooling system when I flush it instead of tap," he says, "and I change the brake fluid every year to reduce the chance of moisture and sediment ending up in the system."

Accruing that much mileage and owning the Oldsmobile for so long has provided Don with detailed insight as to how it behaves on the road. "It will do an honest 100 miles per hour at sea level," he says. "The driving position is very good, and vis-



Still sporting original paint and the dealer-repainted areas from when new, the slight color mismatch between the front door and the rest of the body is evident. The Super Stock wheels and the raised white-letter radials were added later.



Oldsmobile





I ordered the car with deluxe wheel covers, but changed to 14 x 6 Super Stock wheels. They were supposed to be body color, so I painted them gold. I noticed over the years that the paint wore off on the decklid of other cars like mine due to people slamming the decklid with their hands on it, and also by key scratches, so I decided to add a handle from a Datsun F-10 hatchback to the decklid. The mechanicals, including the exhaust system, are still in great shape. I would love to cosmetically restore my Omega, but the cost of paint alone is more than the worth of the car.

ibility is perfect all the way around, but entering and exiting can be tough on an older guy. Rear seat space is compromised when the front seat is all the way back."

The original warning lamps are all still functional, and this car was factory equipped with a "Hot" engine warning lamp that was changed to an older-style dual hot/cold GM temp sender. Don says the lamp glows red up to 114 degrees of coolant temperature and then again if it goes over 246 degrees. "If it had been up to me, I would have designed the car with gauges and idiot lights," he says, "and I would have preferred a round speedometer instead of the sweep-style. I've found the fuel-economy gauge to be very helpful, though.

"The six-cylinder engine has been reliable, and it runs well. In 1975, the cylinder head and intake manifold became integral in design, and the new runners provided a better torque curve. The transmission is perfect now but when it was new, because of emissions the engineers wanted to get the car into high gear right away, so the trans would upshift to high gear by 18 mph at part throttle. I installed a Turbo 400 vacuum modulator, which increased the upshift road speed to 22-25 mph."

Only a week into ownership, Don swapped in Trans Am coil springs and a 1.25-inch anti-sway bar and Koni shocks up front, as well as a 9C1 police Nova high-effort variable-and-quick-ratio steering box. The factory FE2 rear leaf springs and anti-sway bar

remain, but the latter pulled out the link brackets early on, so Dan had to weld reinforcement plates into the floor on each side to better retain them.

The Omega's ride is, "controlled with no bottoming," he says. "With the Koni shocks it's on the firm side, so it doesn't float at all. I've had the car on a test track, and it was quite a handler for what it is. It has great balance and recovery, and feels neutral. It doesn't have enough power to wag the tail. Steering is perfect with the 9C1 box, as it has lots of road feel. Sheriffs loved the 1975-and-up RWD X-bodies because they handled so well. And with the front discs and rear drums, it brakes quite competently, even when stopping from 100 mph. High pedal effort is not a problem, even without power assist."

Don reports that when his Omega was new, he ran it on a flat-pavement test loop and got 32 mpg at 55 mph. He also states that fuel with 10-percent ethanol added will increase fuel consumption by 4 mpg in his experience.

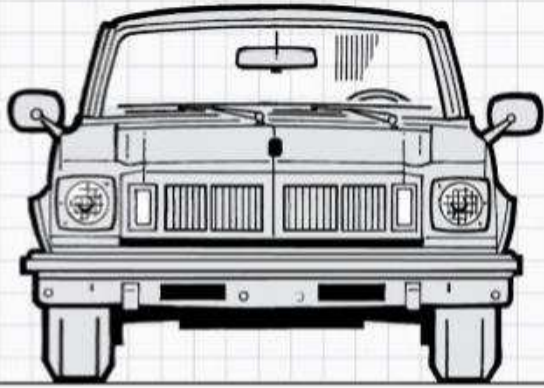
The rear-wheel-drive Omega soldiered on through 1979 before being downsized and changed to front-wheel drive for 1980. Don says of his 1976 Oldsmobile, "I knew that I liked the Omega Brougham when I first saw it in the dealer brochure, and my opinion hasn't changed. It's been very dependable and does what it was designed to do." You can't ask for much more than that from the "great O." 🏆



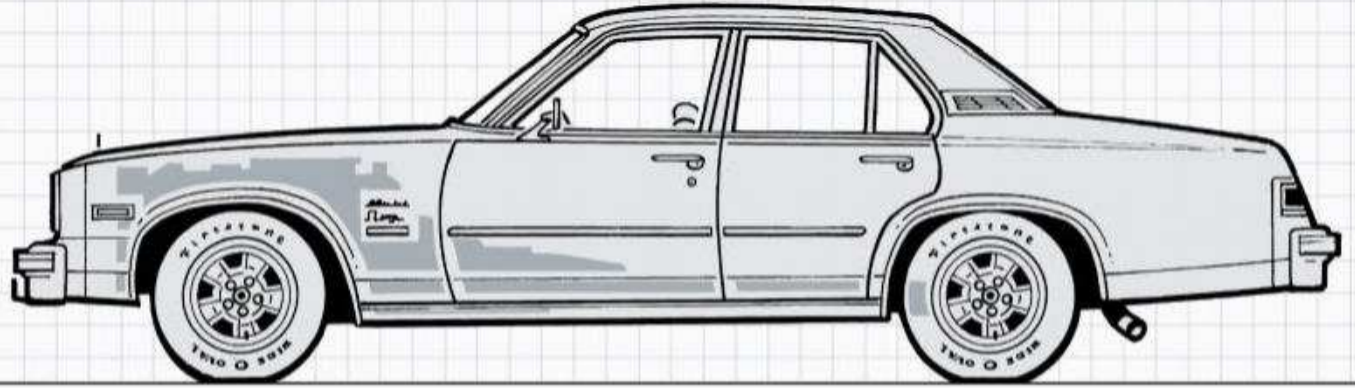


# 1976 OLDSMOBILE OMEGA BROUGHAM

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS,  
THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO ©2018 HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR



61.3 inches



111 inches

## SPECIFICATIONS

### PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$3,703.60
OPTIONS (AS PROFILED)	Automatic transmission (required in CA); AM/FM stereo; power steering; economy gauge; FE2 suspension; Anti-Spin rear; 3.08 axle, high-capacity radiator

### ENGINE

TYPE	Chevrolet straight-six; cast-iron block and cylinder head
DISPLACEMENT	250 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	3.875 x 3.53 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	8.25:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	105 @ 3,800
TORQUE @ RPM	185 lb-ft @ 1,200
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic cam and valve lifters, 1.75-ratio ball/socket stamped-steel rockers, gear-to-gear cam drive
MAIN BEARINGS	Seven
FUEL SYSTEM	Single-barrel carburetor, mechanical pump
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Pressure; gear-type
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	12-volt HEI ignition system
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Single; with catalytic converter and muffler

### TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Turbo Hydra-Matic 350
RATIOS	1st 2.52:1 2nd 1.52:1 3rd 1.00:1

### DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	10-bolt, Hypoid drive gears, Anti-Spin differential
GEAR RATIO	3.08:1
DRIVE AXLES	Semi-floating

### STEERING

TYPE	Recirculating ball; power assist (currently high-effort, variable-ratio, quick-ratio 9C1)
RATIO	Variable 16:1 to 13:1
TURNING CIRCLE	38.1 feet

### BRAKES

TYPE	Hydraulic; front disc, rear drum
FRONT	10.88-inch vented disc
REAR	9.5 x 2.0-inch drum

### CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Welded and bolt-on steel body panels, partially unitized, front sub-frame
BODY STYLE	four-door sedan
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

### SUSPENSION

FRONT	HD; unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, hydraulic shocks, anti-sway bar
REAR	HD; solid axle, leaf springs, hydraulic shocks, anti-sway bar

### WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	14 x 6-inch steel with wheel covers (currently Super Stock)
TIRES	E78 x 14 (currently 225/60R14 RWL Firestone Firehawk)

### WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	111 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	199.6 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	72.9 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	54.3 inches
FRONT TRACK	61.3 inches
REAR TRACK	59.0 inches
SHIPPING WEIGHT	3,283 pounds

### CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	5 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	14.6 quarts
FUEL TANK	21 gallons
TRANSMISSION	N/A
DIFFERENTIAL	3.5 pints

### CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	0.42
WEIGHT PER BHP	32.26 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	13.13 pounds

### PRODUCTION

1976 Omega Brougham	
four-door sedans	7,578

## PROS & CONS

- + Upscale styling for a compact
- + Economical driver
- + Simple and reliable powertrain
- Not highly valued today
- Not very powerful
- Build quality lacking in some areas

## WHAT TO PAY

**LOW**  
\$500 – \$1,000

**AVERAGE**  
\$2,000 – \$3,000

**HIGH**  
\$4,000 – \$5,000

## CLUB CORNER

### OLDSMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA

P.O. Box 412  
Eaton Rapids, Michigan 48827  
517-663-1811  
www.oldsmobileclub.org  
Dues: \$40/year  
Membership: 6,400

### NATIONAL ANTIQUE OLDSMOBILE CLUB

121 North Railroad Street  
Myerstown, Pennsylvania 17067  
928-636-2405  
www.antiqueolds.org  
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Membership: 1,300





## My First Car

**T**hough time can dim the memories of even the sharpest among us, a few things in life are so cherished that one never forgets them: your first love, your first kiss, and, for us car-types, your first car. Actually, I think I've forgotten the first two, but I'll never forget my first car.

I got my driver's license the month I turned 16. It was summer, and I signed up for a class at a driving school downtown, where I learned the rules and regulations of motoring. However, it was my father who actually taught me how to drive; twice as it turned out.

It was 1969. The Old Man had recently acquired a 1955 Packard Clipper for free and, perhaps deeming it expendable, used it for my driving lessons. First time out, I learned about the immense power of vacuum-assisted brakes when I panic-stopped and almost put us through the windshield. It took weeks to learn how to drive with some degree of smoothness, but eventually I did. Once I received my driver's license, it was time to talk to Dad about getting a car.

Typical teenager, I assumed my father would buy me a new Mustang or something equally cool, but that wasn't in the cards. In fact, Dad wasn't going to buy me anything. If I wanted a car, he told me, I had to buy it with my own money, but he'd help me find the right one. "How much money do you have saved?" "\$25," I answered. A soft-spoken Yankee, he allowed that wasn't a whole lot of money, but he'd see what he could do. Notably, he didn't ask me what sort of car I wanted and didn't take me with him when he went looking for one.

In short order he returned with a rusty, dusty 1961 Rambler American 220 series two-door sedan, in its time the cheapest American car you could buy—and it looked like it too. I was underwhelmed.

You may find this hard to believe, but I was barely familiar with the brand. All I knew about Ramblers was that our neighbor, Old Man Clark, drove one and was so...umm...frugal he shut the engine off at each traffic light. Kids called him a tightwad.

The little Rambler cost exactly \$25, and had rust on top of the rear quarter panels and on both

rocker panels. It had dull black paint, and its red front-seat cover looked like Santa Claus' suit. Dog-dish hubcaps, black tires, and black rubber floor covering completed the look of poverty. Power—if it can be termed that—came from an anemic flathead straight-six bolted to a three-speed stick with non-synchro first gear. Even the radio was basic: an

AM with dial tuning—no pushbuttons!

Because of the manual transmission, Dad had to teach me to drive again, this time enduring abrupt takeoffs and stalls as I learned the intricacies of driving a standard.

Despite it all, I loved that car. It was freedom, it was escape, and, with a front seat that folded down into a bed, it was an excellent make-out parlor. And in the time-honored tradition of teenagers

everywhere, I began to "fix 'er up." There was no money to wring any sort of performance out of the engine, so I concentrated on appearances. My brother, Dave, was working in a garage where they painted cars as a sideline, and they let him paint my car for practice; all I had to do was pay for the green metallic paint I chose. The tires were bald, so a set of whitewall retreads were installed, along with black stretch seat covers. It never occurred to me to do anything about the plain hubcaps. I was pretty naive, to say the least.

I didn't know anything about cars, so when the oil light came on after a few months, I ignored it. For weeks. The fact that the light was red didn't make me wonder if it was important. Finally, at dinner one night, I mentioned it to my dad. He sighed heavily and asked if I'd checked the oil. I said no, it hadn't occurred to me. He sighed again—even louder this time—and allowed that we better check the oil after dinner.

The oil didn't register on the dipstick and we ended up adding 4 quarts. After that, Dad sat me down and explained the "Facts of Cars" to me, how you had to service them and check different fluids from time to time. (He never got around to explaining the Facts of Life and, I confess, I'm still a little unsure of them.)

I kept that little Rambler only for a year; but my love for it has never dimmed. 🏎️



I didn't know

anything

about cars,

so when the

oil light came

on after a

few months,

I ignored it.

For weeks.







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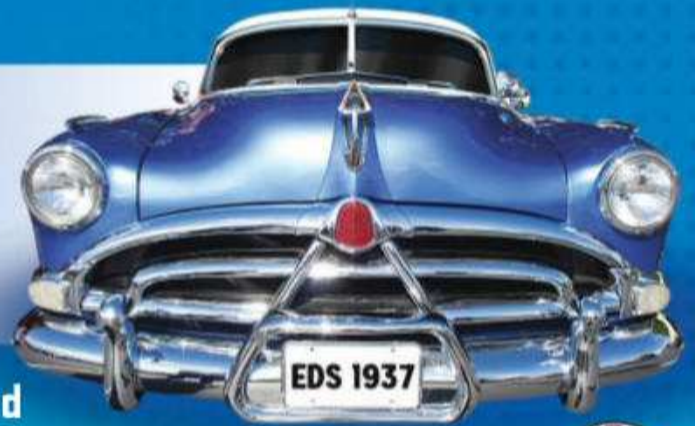


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First, the term 'Classic.' It wasn't first used by the CCCA. The generally accepted first usage was by *Motor Trend* writer Eugene Jaderquist...

//

## When Did the Term "Classic Car" Really Begin?

When *Hemmings Classic Car* was launched 14 years ago it brought forth a cry from some of the old guard at the Classic Car Club of America (CCCA). They believed such use of the term "Classic" was incorrect, since they had defined a "Classic car" in their club's bylaws.

When Richard asked me to write about "Classic" automobiles, I decided one of my first columns should explain the CCCA's definition for readers who might not know about the CCCA. Now, since *HCC*'s circulation has risen considerably since those early days, I decided to revisit this topic for newer readers.

For openers, I should state that it was impossible for the CCCA to protect the term "Classic." I recall one member who noted every time he saw "classic" used in describing an automobile, it made him think of the carnival game "Whack-a-Mole." The term was everywhere.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I'm a 53-year CCCA member, former national board member, and national president. I wasn't there in the beginning—1953—but I have watched the club evolve for most of its duration.

First, the term "Classic." It wasn't first used by the CCCA. The generally accepted first usage was by *Motor Trend* writer Eugene Jaderquist, who in 1949 used the term "Classic" in an article. It's worth noting that Jaderquist believed open cars were the true Classics. He referred to closed cars as "tankers."

During the 1950s, *Motor Trend* published two handbooks, *Classic Cars and Antiques* in 1953 and *Classic Cars and Specials* in 1956, edited by H. Wieand Bowman and Robert Gottlieb, respectively. Both books contained definitions of "What is a Classic?" as well as "What is a Special Interest Car?"

In July 1953, Gottlieb, then *Motor Trend's* editor, asked his readers for a definition of a Classic automobile. First prize was an unrestored 1930 Lincoln LeBaron convertible coupe (worth about \$500 in 1953). The winning entry came from Lewis Markley of Ardmore, Oklahoma, who wrote an eloquent definition that would stand up today.

At about the same time, the CCCA was formed. The club announced its purpose as well as

a definition of a Classic car: "...for the development, publication and interchange of other information for and among members who own or are interested in fine or unusual foreign and domestic motor cars built between 1915 (originally 1925) and 1948 and distinguished by their respective fine design, high engineering standards, and superior workmanship..." The statement went on to promote camaraderie and preservation and restoration of these cars.

The CCCA established a list of Accepted Classics, but almost immediately began a process, which continues to this day, of reviewing what is and what isn't a Classic. The club's classification committee, which I once chaired, is responsible for this. For example, the 1927-'33 La Salle is considered a Classic, but the post-1933 La Salles are not.

Perhaps the most significant decision the club made was extending the Classic Era back to

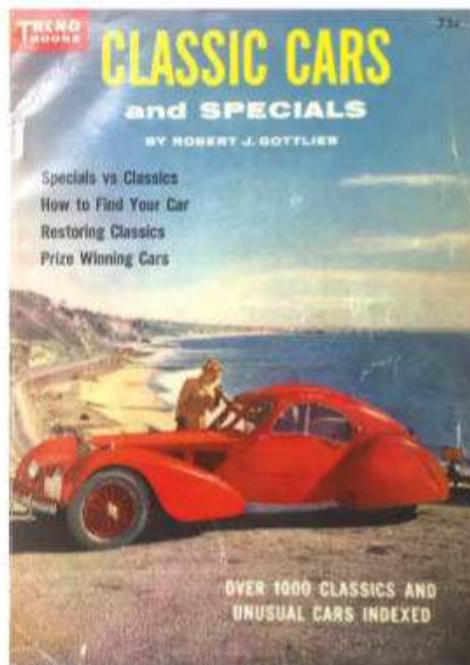
1915. The first step was accepting pre-1925 cars that were virtually identical to their post-1925 counterparts. The second step was going back to 1915, as long as the car measured up to CCCA Classic standards.

In addition, automobiles such as the more expensive offerings from Nash, Studebaker, Gardner, and Haynes, were added in recent years. The club also included a series of cars previously excluded, such as the Buick 70 and 80 series. (A complete list of CCCA Approved Classics is on the club website: [www.classiccarclub.org](http://www.classiccarclub.org).)

The same factors that affect any car's value today affect Classics as well—for example, cost when new. A 1923 Locomobile that sold for \$9,600 new will not sell today for anything close to the price of a 1928 Auburn speedster that sold new for \$2,195. And to take it a step further, a 1957 Chevrolet convertible can bring more than the Locomobile.

I'm glad the CCCA was created to give a home to these early luxury cars, which, at that time, were essentially used cars. The "real" antiques were Brass and Nickel Era cars. In 1953, a 1939 Packard Twelve was a 14-year-old car, usually in the back row of a used car lot. In fact, those big Classics were sometimes used as tow cars for early antique cars!

In the end, I suppose it comes down to your definition of a "Classic." For me, they will always be the great cars built between the world wars. 🚗





# SMS AUTO FABRICS

All American Cars 1930-2000

Cloth & Vinyl  
Wool Broadcloth  
Leather  
Door Panels  
Headliners  
Embossing  
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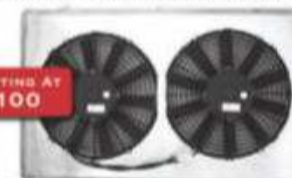
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 ordinary  
 aging  
 motorized  
 device, were  
 it not for the  
 people.  
 //

## Make a Little History

If asked to state one aspect of this hobby that I cherish most, my answer is always the delightful way it introduces us to other fervent car owners and their ownership stories. Let's be honest. An old car would be just that: simply an ordinary aging motorized device, were it not for the people. I was reminded of this during my recent trip to Buffalo, New York, in August.

Let me back up to September 2014 when I met cousins David Kaplan and Lee Singer at our annual Concours d'Elegance. They had earlier offered to bring three vehicles built by the Playboy Motor Car Company: the rear-engine prototype, car #94, and car #102. Having attained a basic knowledge of the Buffalo-based automaker in my youth, seeing rare survivors from Louis Horwitz's company was a bucket-list item.

We talked about the cars, the company, and the people who made it all a reality, as well as those who carry forward the legacy. Each of the roughly 20 roadworthy cars that remain of the 99 made have their place in history, but #102 was special. It was the last and was left unfinished in 1949. Had it not been for David's passion for the marque, it may have remained that way.

As the weekend concluded, we agreed to meet again to bring the story of #102's completion to this title, perhaps during a proposed Playboy Motor Car Reunion. As the calendar flipped to 2018, David and Lee reached out to me with the news I had been anticipating for three years. The Reunion was to be a reality, a perfect opportunity to witness another slice of Playboy's history and photograph car #102.

Rather than follow David to our shoot location upon arrival, I ditched my transport and rode in the Playboy, noting its comfort and handling, and how the wind flowed around the cabin. I listened to the low murmur from the mighty little Hercules four-cylinder—it being quieter than I expected—as we talked about the upcoming Reunion. Two days later, I arrived at the Reunion early. The duo had brought together 15 Playboy cars from across the country—the largest gathering of the make since 1948—a



combined seven of which they own. Getting the seven to center stage, though, was going to be a challenge. Short on drivers, David asked if I could assist.

I replied without hesitation, and to my surprise he handed me the keys to #102 with simple instructions: Turn the ignition on, set the manual choke, depress the gas pedal once, and hit the starter button. As the Hercules jumped to life and settled into a fluid idle, I immersed myself in the situation I was placed in. The door was lighter than I remembered, yet felt and sounded solid as it latched shut. Legroom was plentiful, and the bench seat was set at the perfect height for driving posture; its springs, cushion, and vinyl working uniformly to provide ample support. Vision of all horizontal compass points was unobstructed.

It had been a decade since I manipulated a column-shift manual transmission, so I depressed the clutch and ran through the forward gears, memorizing the minimal effort and distance its gates required. Once underway, its other traits came to light, such as the manual steering system that didn't require the arm-over-arm-over-arm effort during slow turns. Braking required little forethought as the system was more than adequate for city streets. The suspension was smooth and mitigated body roll while cornering, and throttle response was instantaneous, with enough torque to maneuver out of congested areas with ease.

The Playboy also offered something else. Designed to be a second car, a platform for the quick trip to the corner store or short city commute, 70 years later it reaffirmed that utilitarian simplicity can enhance pure driving pleasure. Look beyond its intent and you find there was no need to turn on the radio or yearn for other plush extras. Its light and cheery attitude at any speed was enough to bring forth a smile, and make one drop an arm on the sill and enjoy the warm summer breeze. What's important to remember, though, is that history isn't reserved for the rare, utilitarian classic car. As you read about Playboy #102's completion elsewhere in this issue, ask yourself how many chapters you've added to the story of your vintage treasure this summer? 🏁





*the car's information on its base for the very practical purpose of helping to keep them standing upright.*

## THE "MOST CHROMED MODELS"

article in *HCC* #165 caught my attention because it dealt with a subject that was of some interest to me quite awhile ago. Not only have I owned a 1958 Buick Caballero Station Wagon, but I was privy to some interesting information many years ago from a person who had some first-hand knowledge of that year of manufacturing (which I assume to be true considering the source).

My brother-in-law was an excellent car designer for General Motors back in the 1970s, and he, after hearing that I had found this Buick sitting in a barn for many years (plus my mentioning all the chrome polishing I was now faced with), related to me that there were actually two schools of thought back then from two different competing design departments for the application of the chrome trim for that year. As the deadline approached for the completion of the design, they could not seem to agree as to which style would be used, so, by working together, they finally blended both chrome designs into what we see today... Thus the preponderance of shiny metal. The cooperation between those two departments is commendable, but it sure caused the car owners a lot more work.

Ken Francis  
*Apple River, Illinois*

## I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED YOUR

article on the "Cars of the Fabulous Fifties" in *HCC* #165. Those were my high school and college years, so many of those cars occupy favorite spots in my memory.

I was surprised to find the omission of the Lincoln "Y-blocks" in the section on "The Most Powerful Engines." Ford Motor Company's development of its first overhead-valve 317.4-cu.in. V-8 resulted in America's first over-200-hp engines. While they were soon surpassed by Cadillac's 330-cu.in. V-8s with 210 hp, nonetheless the Lincoln Capris of those years took on all comers, and swept the Carrera Panamericana Mexico in 1952-'53, finishing first through fourth, and most likely would have done it again in 1954, had it not been for tainted fuel. Bill Vukovich crashed, and one by one the remaining team's cars retired with holed pistons from detonation. Two privateers who had not received the bad fuel took an additional two Lincolns

## RICHARD, WHAT A RICH TREASURE

you've discovered at the NB Center for American Automotive Heritage. Please continue mining Nicola Bulgari's impeccable collection in order to bring them before the eyes of grateful *HCC* readers.

I believe that I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Bulgari's 1940 Nash Ambassador Eight convertible coupe in the unrestored state at Hershey in October 2013. That's the year that Hershey was inundated with 10 inches of rain over three days. The Nash looked incredibly downtrodden at the time, with a tarp and its sagging convertible top doing their best to keep several gallons of water from inundating the car's interior. It was a heartwarming relief to see the car in its beautifully restored condition in *HCC* #168. I'm left to wonder what it looks like with its top up. The three-quarter rear view of the car provided just enough evidence of the beautiful wind-split that bisects the trunk lid, a stunning feature of cars in the Nash family of vehicles during this period.

Pete Costisick  
*Anderson, Indiana*

## THE DETROIT UNDERDOGS COL-

umn in *HCC* #168 brought back memories of 1974, when I spent a couple of months in Bolivia. It seemed that at least 90 percent of the cars there were of two types: either early '60s Czechoslovakian Škoda Octavias or Studebakers, mostly Larks. The Škoda, with its high ground clearance and somewhat inverted and angled rear wheels, was considered to

have been better for the rough, unpaved roads that comprised most of Bolivia's road network. But the Studebakers, including a small number of Commanders, were preferred for their greater power and smoother ride. As a result, they were generally more expensive for equivalent levels of age and condition. I don't know for how long this continued, but thanks for activating the memory vault.

Marc Russo  
*Brooklyn, New York*

## WHILE OGLING THE BEAUTIFUL

classics in the Gettysburg Experience article in *HCC* #168, I couldn't help but notice that many of the cars featured had a fire extinguisher under their front wheels. I have never seen (or maybe noticed) this before. Now, I am sure there is a logical reason for this, and I am confident they aren't being used as wheel chocks. Is there a rule that when showing a car there must be an extinguisher kept handy? Or is it just common sense?

Ed Bonuccelli  
*Fort Bragg, California*

*Ed, many shows do indeed urge owners to put extinguishers in front of their vehicles so that they are clearly available for anyone passing by to use should they notice a fire. Placing them ahead of the front wheel keeps the extinguishers accessible, yet out of the paths of spectators, and ensures neatness on the field. Some events, like the Hemmings Concours d'Elegance, request owners place them behind the placard containing*



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**RECAPS LETTERS**

into first and second. I think that the stories of those races and the Southern California hot rodders, Bill Stroppe and Clay Smith, who tuned and managed the cars, would make a great story for your excellent publication. Many thanks for your efforts!

Dr. L. Roger Tennyson  
 San Mateo, California

**I REALLY ENJOYED PAT FOSTER'S** column "A Shocking Discovery" in *HCC* #168. And on the same subject, I would like to recommend a really interesting book, *Powering The Dream*, by Alexis Madrigal. A fleet of electric taxis in New York in the 1890s? Solar water heaters in California, also in the 1890s, and in Florida in the 1920s and '30s? It's all in this book. It just goes to show that there is nothing new under the sun!

Steve Gillmer  
 Vancouver, Washington

**I REALLY ENJOYED THE "AFFORDABLE Luxury"** article in *HCC* #165, featuring the 1941 Dodge Luxury Liner. I have been a subscriber since *HCC* #36 and have never been disappointed in the well-written and photographed articles. I have always enjoyed reading about and viewing cars of the 1940s and '50s era, and this article did a great job of highlighting both exterior and interior features of the Dodge. The interior was particularly stunning in its fine workmanship and detail.

The first car I remember was my father's 1948 Chrysler Windsor. It was a black four-door and was his first new car. I always thought it was a 1949 model until I later discovered the major body change in 1949. It turned out that the car was apparently registered in 1949 and therefore referred to as a '49!

Our family did a lot of back-road camping that required our Chrysler to travel over many rough dirt roads in mountainous West Virginia. A major benefit was the roomy seats that could serve as a bed on camping trips (it beat the hard ground under the tent!). One of my father's favorite stories was when he took my grandfather on a ride shortly after he purchased the car. They came to a very steep hill in town, and grandfather looked over at him and said, "Do you think we will be able to get up this hill?" Of course, they did, and while we owned the car, it climbed many, many

hills. Thanks for your superb magazine on classic American cars.

Roger Shannon  
 Viera, Florida

**REGARDING BOB PALMA'S** excellent insight into the demise of the American convertible in the late 1960s and early '70s [*HCC* #168], he comments on the possible reasons for the U.S. "big four" abandoning this body style. While all of his considerations probably contributed—conservative buyers, factory air conditioning, and manufacturers' cost are all legitimate—I would add the interstate highway system. Above 50 mph, most convertibles are not very comfortable. I recently met a car guy like myself, who owns a 1966 GTO that he bought in Ohio and drove to New England with the top down. The car ran great, but he was exhausted. He said that future road trips will be with the top up.

Pictured is our 1952 Chrysler Windsor that I drove from Woods Hole on Cape Cod to my home in Scituate, Massachusetts, about 60 miles. Next time I'll go with the top up.

Paul Murphy  
 Scituate, Massachusetts



**ON THE COVER OF *HCC* #166 IS** the image of the most elegant vehicle I had ever seen in my early days of automobile appreciation, the 1969 Riviera. A memory wafted back from one specific summer day of that year.

Fresh out of high school, working my first full-time job, I was pumping gas at the Texaco station on Travis Air Force Base, near Fairfield, California. Filling tanks, checking oil and coolant levels, and scrubbing bugs off windshields earned me \$2.10 per hour, 10 hours a day, four days a week. There were 12 pumps, four on each of three islands. Two attendants in Texaco shirts and black bow-ties, served at each island. Gas was 27-cents a gallon for regular, 29-cents for Ethyl.




Airmen came to the station in 1955, '56, and '57 Chevys with mag wheels and lifted rears, late '40s Fords with baby moons or chrome reverses, and the occasional Rambler or Studebaker with oil 2 quarts low and as thick as syrup in their pans, and primer-gray as their primary color. Sergeants did a little better with their more recent Fairlanes, Galaxies, and Impalas. Officers drove new Cadillacs, Continentals, Corvettes, and Thunderbirds waxed to the same high shine as their patent leather shoes. Regardless of a car's make, model, or year, everyone got the same basic service, but the brass got extra.

One morning the first, and only, Riviera rolled in at my island. I expected a uniform with eagles on the collars to step out, slip me the keys and a credit card with instructions to fill the tank, check the fluids, air up the tires, clean the glass inside and out, empty the ashtrays, then move it to a shady spot while he shopped at the beverage store next door. Yes, Sir! Those were the days of really full service.

Instead, out stepped a two-stripe airman. "Just a dollar's worth, please." It was two days before payday, he was down to his last buck and just needed to get to his station today and tomorrow. Six pump-jockeys swarmed the car like flies on sugar. We figured he was spending probably three-fourths of his pay to possess that beauty, and were glad to show him our appreciation for his sacrifice. More likely, we just wanted to get our heads under the hood and get our eyes and nostrils full of that gorgeous interior.

The airman's Riviera got four gallons of gas and Four-Star, Top-Brass treatment—ashtrays, air pressure, and all. Rarely, if ever, has a dollar delivered so much in goods and service.

Rus Stolling  
Fresno, California

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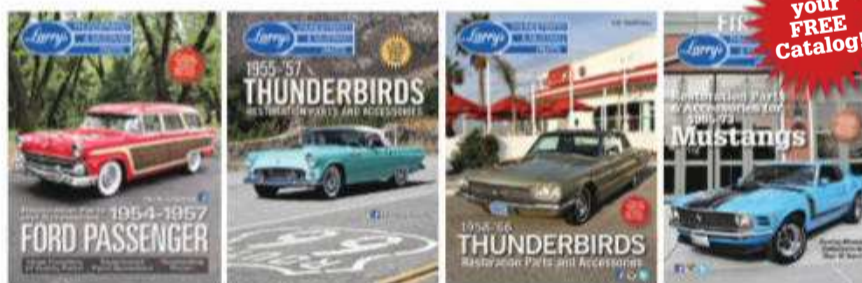


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## Restoring Old Cars

BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

**T**aking an old car, truck, or motorcycle that's worn, rusty, and totally disheveled looking, and transforming it back into the way it was first built, is truly one of the greatest pastimes one can partake in. Restoration, be it an old car, house, or piece of furniture is pleasurable, and oh-so rewarding.

But let's face the truth, restoring old cars is a monumental endeavor, which can be overwhelming if not done correctly. From the start, you need to identify the type of restoration you want to do. Will it be a body-on or body-off restoration? Will it be a high-quality rebuild for street use, or do you seek a concours-quality restoration of the highest caliber? Deciding up front what you want your car to be is imperative, because all the numerous jobs that encompass the entire project will be greatly affected by that decision.

The easiest cars to restore are those that are often referred to as "catalog" cars. The most popular models are Camaros, Chevelles, Corvettes, Falcons, Mustangs, Novas, GTOs, and Firebirds. Because they are so popular, thousands of body parts have been reproduced, all of which are easily bought via catalogs. Being able to purchase parts doesn't make the actual restoration work any easier, only that it lessens the time-consuming burden of finding the components needed to complete the project.

The most problematic issue is not so much the work itself but being overwhelmed by the sight of seeing thousands of parts scattered all over your garage floor. But if you plan ahead and do everything in carefully choreographed stages, your interest level will be maintained, and the project will have a greater chance of reaching completion.

If you don't have any experience doing body

and paint or engine building and upholstery, don't let that discourage you from enjoying the restoration experience. Contract those jobs out to known experts who you can trust (get references beforehand) as this will then allow you to concentrate on the car's disassembly and reassembly.

Prior to disassembling the car, be sure to take lots of photos from every angle, inside and out, with numerous details taken up close, so later you will know just how everything was originally assembled and connected. Then, once the body returns from the body shop all painted like new, you can enjoy the tasks of rebuilding the brakes and suspension, installing the new interior, and bolting it all back together. That's the fun part.

So, how long should it take to restore a car? The question really depends on the condition of the car when you start, and how easy or difficult it will be to find the needed parts. The amount of time that you can spend working on the car will greatly affect the progress, too, as well as your bank account. The more work you can contract out, the faster the process will go, but so too your budget.

Regardless of the time and money that you will invest in a restoration, when it's completed that proud feeling that you will get when you're able to take your restored pride and joy for its first ride will all be worth it. 🏁

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# Restoration 101

*Basic hints and in-depth tips for your at-home restoration project*

BY MATTHEW LITWIN



ROBERT BECK

Since the October 2004 debut of *Hemmings Classic Car*, a section of this magazine has been dedicated solely to vintage vehicle restorations. More than 140, in fact, spanning all species of the hobby: from Full Classics to economical compacts, stately sedans to fire apparatus. Despite the diversity of subject matter, there are several commonalities shared among these profiles: time, energy, budget, and of course the basic process that has returned each subject vehicle to as-new or better-than-new glory.

We've had the privilege of talking to those who have experience in this field of work—from novices to experts—all of whom were willing to share what they've learned while undertaking what are sometimes epic efforts. As this publication enters its 15th year of circulation, let's briefly

review some of the start-to-finish basics.

Almost unanimously, it's been highly recommended that one starts with a vehicle that is as complete and rust-free as possible. As the project unfolds, this saves time and money in terms of parts hunting and metal repairs. If you're keen on restoring a rare vehicle—one considerably less common than a Ford Model T or Chevrolet Bel Air, for instance—take the time to carefully evaluate all its needs while formulating a more accommodating budget and an expanded calendar.

Once the project begins with disassembly, be diligent with your organization. It's easy to lose track of both large and small parts. Labelled shelving helps address these concerns in general, while the bag-and-tag system will keep critical nuts, bolts, shims, and small trim items together and near the components they originated from. Zip

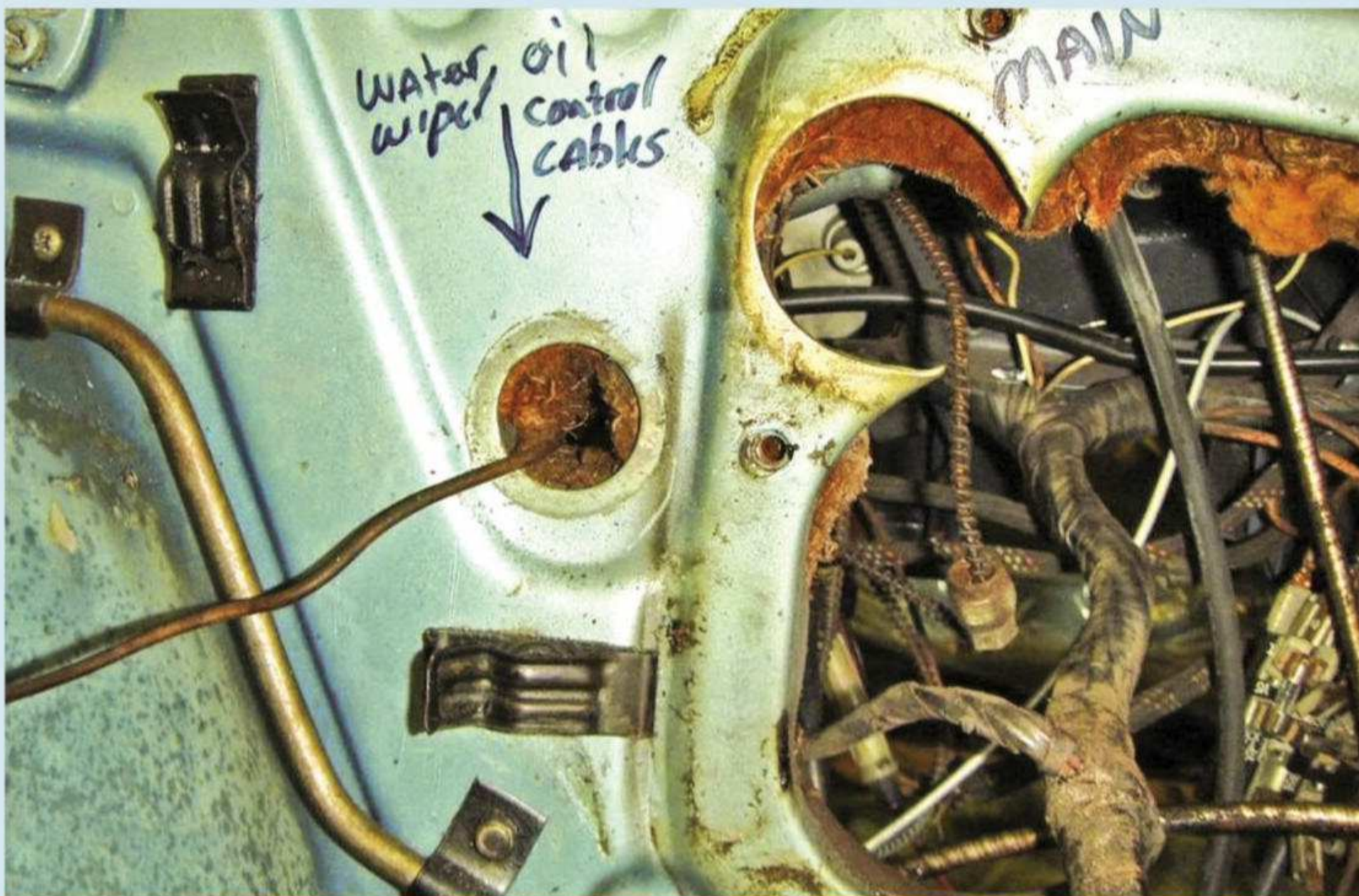
ties help keep corresponding brackets from being separated as well.

Be mindful to work within your abilities. If you're uncomfortable working a welder, take the time to hone your skills on scrap metal while still devoting time to something you find easy, such as a carburetor rebuild. Don't feel pressured to do it all yourself; there's no shame in having an experienced specialist examine the transmission or rebuild the engine. Also, don't rush important steps, such as allowing body filler, primer, and paint to cure before moving on to the next phase. Patience is also required while reassembling the vehicle, especially when it comes time to reinstall fragile or rare trim. These basic steps, combined with following in-depth tricks of the trade, can help ensure that your own restoration effort is a successful adventure.



Body tags may be helpful in identifying a vehicle's original color by name, but not necessarily by hue. The difference between Medium Ivy and Medium Lime, for instance, is subtle. Rather than media blast multiple layers of paint off the body at once, several restorers have taken an archeological approach, as Hank Kehrley demonstrated during the restoration of his 1931 Buick Cabriolet (issue #163). Knowing that his car had been repainted at least once prior to taking ownership, his careful sanding exposed not only the factory Capitol Maroon and Lorenzo Gray two-tone combination, but also the corresponding pinstripe color and pattern. Polishing brought forth a sheen that helped him match new paint perfectly.

HANK KEHRLEY



THOMAS BROWN

A critical first step in any restoration should be documentation. The digital age has assisted this part of the project greatly, in that cell phones have the ability to take incredible high-resolution photographs. With the aid of a marker or a grease pen, notating the number of shims a door or fender required at the factory will save time during reassembly. The same strategy applies to the routing of electrical or hard lines through firewall cutouts, as veteran restorer Thomas Brown demonstrated on this 1953 Buick Skylark (issues #90 and #91). Recently, a new app for smart phones was created to help maintain an organized list of your parts inventory, the details of which we'll discuss momentarily.





ANDRÉ FITZBACK

André Fitzback's epic restoration of his rare, Canadian-built 1953 Pontiac Pathfinder De Luxe was detailed in a four-part series, beginning with issue #143. His years of experience brought forth an organizational tip pertaining to electrical wiring. It's easy to disconnect and remove sections of the main wiring harness, but remembering those same connections later is often difficult. Connecting the wrong wire to a newly restored instrument or accessory could lead to a catastrophic failure. Attaching simple circular tags that document proper connections can save several hours during reassembly. The tags can also be easily transferred to a reproduction wiring harness after checking for build accuracy against the original.



GAVIN RUOTOLO

Convertibles built via the once-prevalent body-on-frame method offer a different challenge from those faced with sedans. Due to the lack of structural rigidity that a fixed roof provides, the convertible's supporting frame was usually constructed with a reinforced frame to help keep the body from twisting. That stability needs to be replicated prior to separating the body from the frame, especially if you plan on removing the doors. To do so, it's highly advisable to temporarily weld a simple web of square or round tubing within the door frame before lifting the body onto a rotisserie, as Gavin Ruotolo demonstrated on his 1961 Imperial Crown convertible (issue #110). Return the doors one side at a time, which also helps prevent twisting.





GAVIN RUOTOLO

For more than half a century, hardwoods played a large role in the auto industry in both decorative and structural capacities. Despite the natural material's benefits, it often deteriorates over time due to several factors, which can pose problems for restorers. This is the sill frame and floor to William Sipko's 1925 Overland Roadster (issue #166), which exhibits ample damage. Sections of the original structure were saved and used as a pattern to create new pieces; two new floorboard sections can be seen. If the original wood is on the verge of turning to dust, some resourceful restorers have poured two-part epoxy glue over the disintegrating fibers before removing the material from the car, making its use as a pattern an easier task.

One should never assume for a moment that once rust has been eradicated from body panels, patch-panel welds have been ground smooth, and the metal has been sealed against moisture, that everything will fit back together perfectly. Corrections are easier to achieve prior to the application of costly paint, so a common practice is to take the time to reassemble the body and test fit each piece of trim. By employing this tactic, Ronald Liska discovered that a prior owner had altered the leading edge of the hood belonging to his 1934 Ford Cabriolet (issue #155) which left a sizable gap between it and the grille. An extension had to be welded to the hood and massaged into factory-replicating form.



RONALD LISKA

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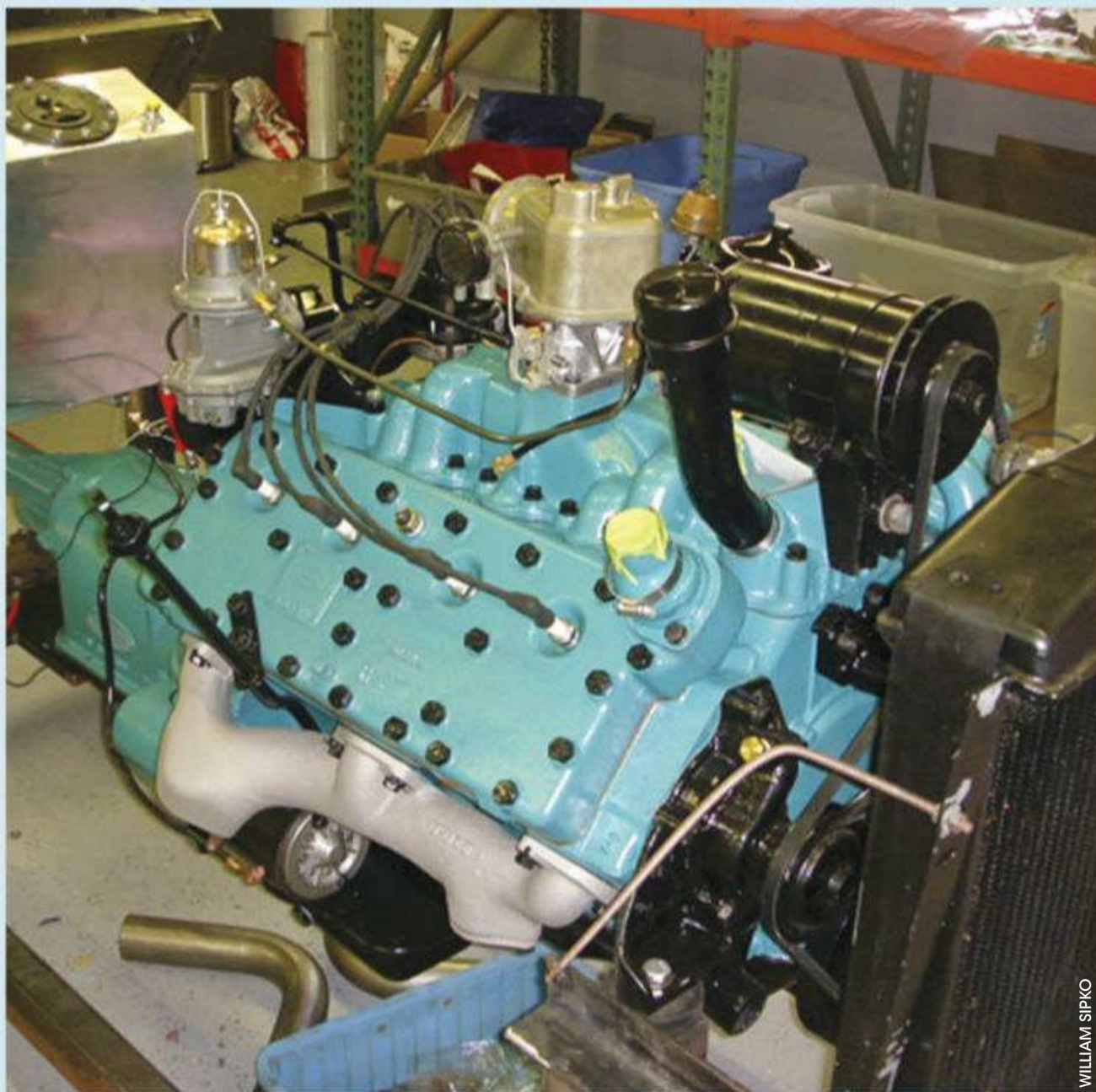
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HARVEY MORAN

If you find yourself waiting for something like primer or paint to cure, other aspects of a project can always be moving forward, such as restoring an instrument panel as a subassembly. Harvey Moran paused to take this in-process picture of the reassembly of his 1940 Buick Special's dash (issue #160). Although the radio would have to wait for a later date, the engine gauges and optional clock have been secured to the panel, which already exhibits new woodgraining and engine-turned appliques. Prior to its installation within the cabin, he also connected new wiring to each gauge. Performing this advanced work on a clean workbench saved him the uncomfortable effort of making those connections under cramped conditions later.



WILLIAM SIPKO

Whether you've rebuilt a car's engine and/or transmission yourself, or hired an experienced specialist to perform the task, many at-home restorers have followed the lead of professionals by first securing the units to a store-bought or home-fabricated stand. William Sipko took this approach to test the 337-cu.in. Lincoln V-8 that was due to be reunited with his 1952 Muntz Jet (issue #151). Had an issue developed during the test, it would have been easier to address by removing the unit from the stand rather than the chassis, which also helps avoid damage to the finish of the latter. Some restorers have gone one step beyond by fitting the entire restored drive system (engine to differential) on a temporary jig for a thorough test.



Nearly all restorers use a simple trick while sanding and/or wet-sanding the final coats of high-build primer. Let's first address wet-sanding, which when done with a fine grade of sandpaper, provides a superbly smooth surface for paint. The "trick" is the application of a feather coat, or dusting, of a contrasting color prior to sanding. As the body surface is sanded, as is seen here on this 1923 Detroit-Electric (issue #148, #149) the "dusting" is removed from the subtle high points on the body, exposing low points. More filler, or more sanding, eliminates the low points, producing a uniformly smooth surface. It's a time-consuming process, but the reward is clearly visible as soon as paint is applied and polished.

RYAN MAHONEY



TOM WHITE

The subassembly approach to any restoration can, and does, extend beyond the dash. This is the freshly painted left-front fender from a rare 1958 De Soto Adventurer convertible owned by Tom White. After a two-decade delay, Tom and his boys at Whitehall Restoration picked up the project and returned the car to its factory-built glory (issue #156), expedited in large part to the subassembly tactic. Years of experience helped them determine the exact location and alignment of the car's side trim, and while it was on the saw horses they went ahead and wired up the dual-headlamp electrical system. It would have been virtually impossible to accomplish after the fender had been bolted to the car due to the inner fender design.

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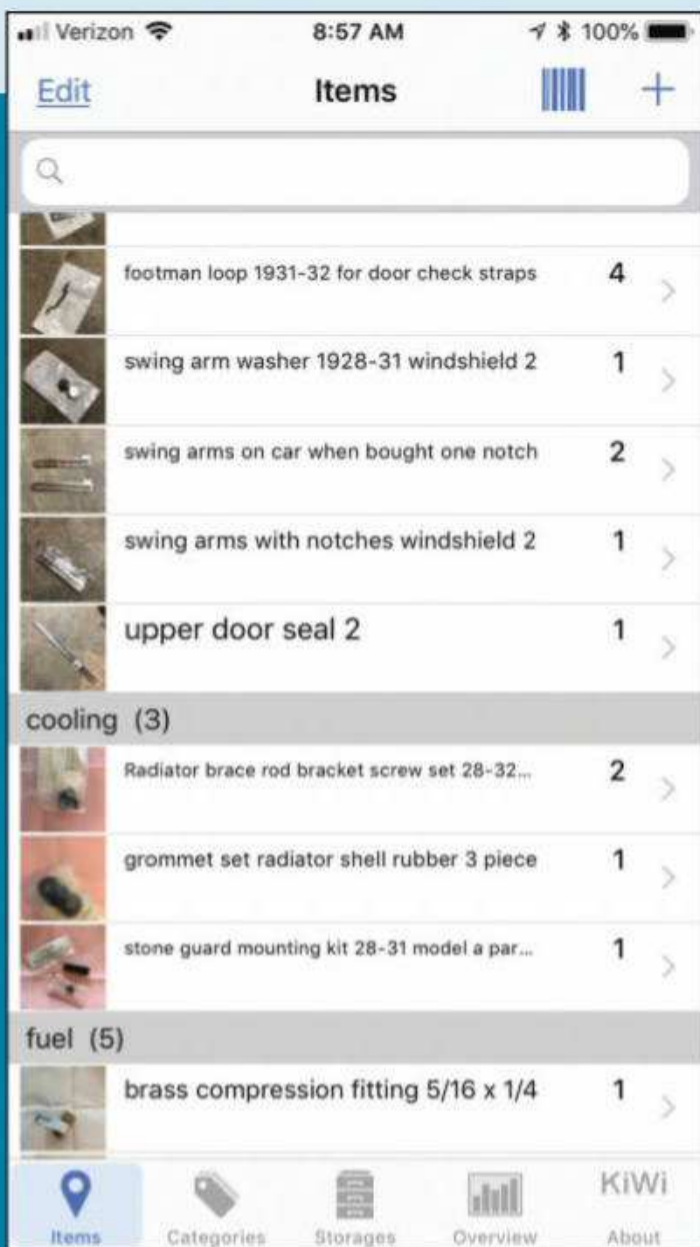
JOHN COTE/WHITEHALL RESTORATIONS

Unit-body cars require a different approach to chassis restoration than those that were built atop a separate frame design. Some of the most famous unit-body cars are those from the Mopar camp, which often feature a separate front subframe under some models, as seen in this photo from #159. The front subframe serves as the foundation for the front suspension system while cradling a variety of engines. Restoring these individual front-end parts as a single component, and then mating it to the chassis, was the earliest form of the subassembly restoration process that continues today.

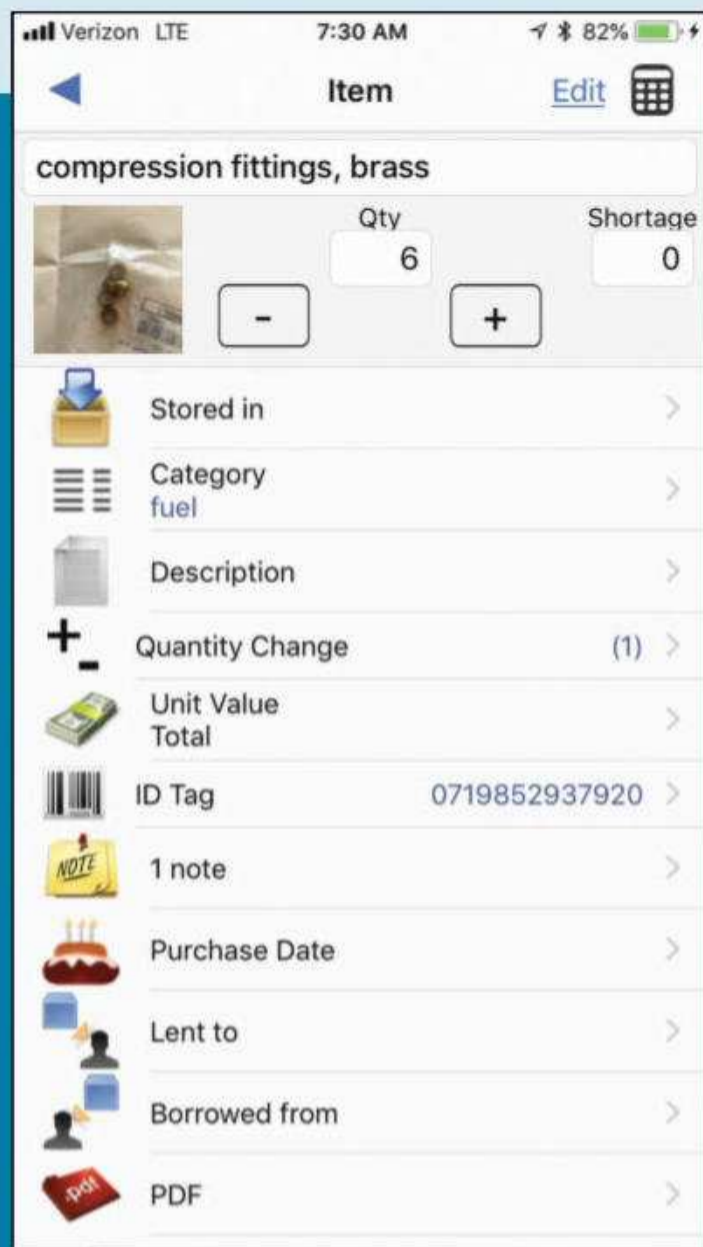


RON THRESHER





When it comes to restoration techniques, one would think that all of the procedures and tips are age-old and perfected. Not so. The digital revolution has yielded several improvements over old methods. *HCC* Managing Editor Dan Beaudry recently discovered a smartphone app called *Items & Storage* by Kiwi Objects (\$4.99 in the Apple App Store). Just one of several similar apps currently on the market, *Items & Storage* allows you to easily log and track your parts inventory, recording quantities, descriptions, notes, and storage locations. Use your smartphone's camera to take reference photos and even scan in part-number barcodes. It takes less than 30 seconds to create a record, and is far quicker to search and easier to modify than conventional paper-based inventories. There's even a "Lent to" function so you don't have to worry about remembering which of your buddies borrowed a particular tool.



Car show spectator's eyes always fall upon two aspects of a restoration: paint and upholstery. If the body prep is done right, careful painting, wet-sanding, and polishing will bring forth a perfect shine. The interior also requires time and patience, and the process for making upholstery installation flow smoother is the top-down method. Like countless others, Ron Thresher did just that in his 1933 Buick Model 57 sedan (issue #82), when he started with the headliner. Side panels followed, and by starting at the top it was easier to keep the material uniformly taut, especially when it came to trimming material for window openings. Seats, reupholstered earlier, as well as side bolsters, will then help hide seams and excess material.

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## Six-Decade Saga!

*Abandoned 1948 Playboy hardtop convertible is restored to its intended glory*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN • RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DAVID KAPLAN

**W**ithin the first few weeks of 1949, the Playboy Motor Car Corporation's assembly line was shut down. Despite best efforts of company founder Louis Horwitz (HCC #127) and his closest colleagues, attempts at raising funds intended to propel the company into full-scale automobile production had been thwarted by the nervous atmosphere surrounding the investigation of another start-up company: Tucker Corporation.

Sitting on the Tonawanda, New York,

plant floor was car #102. It was, like its 94 predecessors (the prototype and two station wagons excluded), a compact car, one designed to be a "second car" for America's growing families that would have been affordable to buy, easy to work on, and economical to operate. Capable of accommodating three people, the Playboy's other selling point was its folding hardtop: a two-piece roof that could be manually retracted into a compartment behind the bench seat, without hindering trunk capacity.

Car #102 was special, however. It was to be one of the first regular-production examples, featuring 33 design changes that differentiated it from the pre-production models. It was never completed, though. When work stopped, it was left in gray primer on the line, abandoned mid-build. Doors had been hung, but there were no locking mechanisms keeping them in place. Its gauges had been installed, but not the radio, or any electrical wiring for that matter. There was no interior to speak of. The engine





and transmission were in place, but not directly bolted to the unit-body chassis. Its hood and decklid were resting on the body, but hinges had not yet been manufactured, and the top section of the cowl had yet to be fabricated. Trim didn't exist. It was a time capsule in the making, which was exactly how David Kaplan found it in the summer of 1989.

Saying that David has intimate knowledge of the Playboy automobile is a bit of an understatement. His grandfather was Louis Horwitz, and at a young age

David discovered much of Lou's company records and promotional material. He immediately immersed himself in the family's automotive legacy, and with assistance from other family members began to piece together the company's real history. Playboy ownership followed, and, by the 1980s, David—along with his cousin Lee Singer and other relatives—had amassed several cars, including the rear-engine prototype. Finding car #102 for sale was therefore a monumental moment for the Williamsville, New York, resident.

"I've been told that when the company was liquidated, everything was purchased for \$50,000, and much of it was moved to a building in Connecticut," David remembers. "That buyer then ran into financial trouble during the Korean War, and the building's owner seized the contents, including car #102. Eventually it, and other material, was bought by former Playboy dealer Donald Moore, who lived in Bellingham, Massachusetts. That's who I purchased the car from. After all those years, the car was exactly as it had





Playboy #102 was initially described as a “time capsule,” and you can see why. Except for some storage dust and decades of moving dents, this is how it was abandoned on the factory floor, save for the extra hood that came with it when purchased in 1989.



One of the first parts removed from the hardtop convertible was the gauge cluster; the only piece secured to the dash panel. Note the mileage is “00000.1” and the red paint that had been applied to the surround at the factory in late 1948.



This is a portion of the Playboy’s unique front suspension system, removed from the chassis as a subassembly. Dry storage prevented rust from invading the metal, which meant most of the components only need to be cleaned and refinished.



A closer look at the rear of #102 reveals multiple cutouts performed by factory employees in 1948; the dents in the decklid came later. Note that the convertible top has been raised, which is in the process of being adjusted for fit and function.



The Playboy’s engine and transmission were removed and rebuilt during the project’s early phase. Featuring a factory custom intake/exhaust manifold, the four-cylinder engine is a 48-hp unit purchased from Hercules. A correct carburetor was added later.



While the firewall had been hand-formed and welded in at the plant, the top of the cowl had never been fabricated. A significant step forward in the restoration was replicating what the factory had in mind, in addition to engineering hood hinges.





The hood has already been protected in primer and massaged to better fit the body, while corrective bodywork has begun on the flanks. Note that the door, which has been realigned, is clamped shut to help maintain the proper contour of body lines.



Several steps are underway in this image. A guide coat is sprayed over the high-build primer to identify high and low spots in the bodywork while block sanding.



Though the two-piece folding hardtop had been tested prior, it was checked once more to help verify smooth operation and fit against the main structure. Each section then received the same filler/sanding/primer treatment as the body sides.



After a final coat of primer, which was then wet-sanded smooth, several layers of basecoat were applied, then topped with a few layers of clearcoat. There was friendly debate about color; however, red—matching factory literature—was selected.



Once the paint process had been completed, the Playboy's final reassembly moved forward, beginning with the steering system, shift linkage, gauge cluster, and optional radio. Decorative dash trim was fabricated and plated prior.



Earlier, the Playboy's 12-inch wheels and folding hardtop had been painted white, as seen here. Peer inside and you'll note that the upholstery is in the process of being installed, joining several pieces of exterior trim already secured to the body.





**Factory literature helped determine interior appointments in production-car cabins, including vinyl seat pattern and piping. All Playboys had three-speed manual transmission.**

been left the day the plant closed.”

Although car #102 returned to the Buffalo region, any notion of a restoration was put on hold as David focused on family and career. He was also keen to commission the prototype’s restoration first. Not until late 2011 was David able to seek a restorer for Playboy #102. After a careful vetting process, he reached an agreement with John Christ, or “J.C.,” then-proprietor of Dusty Roads Collision in nearby Clarence.

Work began in early 2012, with the assessment of the chassis. As David explains, “There were a lot of dents in the body, probably from being moved all over the place, but fortunately it must have been kept in dry storage; there wasn’t a spec of rust anywhere, allowing J.C. to jump right into bodywork. That was more difficult than I envisioned simply because it was still a hand-built car, and nothing lined up. The door gaps, for instance, were immense; nothing had been shimmed.”

The process of properly aligning the

body began with confirming the unit-body’s uniform geometry which, once verified, would allow the completion of the front firewall and cowl. David’s treasure trove of material came through, providing J.C. with factory images and promotional material he could use as references. After the cowl had been fabricated and welded into place, adding structural stability to the chassis, attention turned to fine-tuning the two-piece hardtop’s fit and functionality.

“Although a lot of the Playboys had a Continental engine, they were switching to a Hercules four-cylinder, which was what was in car #102,” David tells us. “J.C. pulled the 48-hp engine and rebuilt it, even though it had zero miles on it. While he was doing that, I had to locate a correct Carter carburetor and had a water inlet pipe made. After the engine was put back together and painted, J.C. reworked the engine mounts so that the block sat in the chassis properly. At the same time, I had the Borg-Warner R10 three-speed (with overdrive) manual transmission inspected

by a facility; the only thing it needed was a speedometer drive gear. Once both units were reinstalled, J.C. could work on the hood and make hinges for it.”

Door alignment followed. Hidden within were the factory windows and regulators, but nary a trace of latches and locks, which had to be engineered into the car. Simultaneous with body alignment, each panel was worked to relative smoothness using a variety of tools, then given a skim coat of filler. A coating of self-etching primer followed, along with a dusting of contrasting paint. The latter may seem odd, but experienced restorers have pointed out that the dusting helps identify high and low spots on the body. This same process carried over to the last panel to receive attention, the decklid, which also required the fabrication of exterior hinges that were later plated.

A final coat of primer sealed the body and, as that cured, work then focused on the suspension and interior seat. The suspension required only mild cleaning, except for new springs and shocks. David tells us that, while replacing the shocks was simply a matter of matching the original units to existing supplies, new springs were made using the originals as a pattern. The interior work included the fabrication of a bench seat, thanks to the aid of an earlier parts car David had in his collection, which was fitted with vinyl upholstery. By then, the body was ready for paint, but not before it looked as though the project was going to stop again, as it had in 1949.

“I met with J.C. one day and he told me that he had to close the business due to some health issues. He had already accepted a new job in an unrelated career, but he wanted to assure me he had promised to finish the project when he took it on and he intended to fulfill that obligation. He worked nights and weekends thereafter to do so.”

The Playboy’s restoration then moved at a slower pace, but this served the car

## owner’s view



**W**orking with John was amazing. He immediately realized [the Playboy’s] place in history, its significance to our family, and that the car was truly special in so many other ways. John treated it like that from the moment it arrived in his shop. He was a one-man show and did it all, but John guided us through each step, making sure to point out things that I never realized when I first bought the car. You could see the dents, and all the cutouts for things like the headlamps and the optional radio in the dash, but I missed other aspects, like the parts of the unit-body chassis that were never finished, the cowl aside. He had all this passion and excitement for the car, and it showed in everything he did to it. John did a remarkable job and we’ve become good friends. It was so rewarding to see this restoration through and it, like the other surviving Playboys, is a tribute to my grandfather’s vision.





well when multiple layers of paint were applied. It's known that J.C. used a basecoat/clearcoat system, but he did not reveal the specifics. The slower pace enabled the paint to thoroughly cure before wet-sanding and final polishing brought out a perfect shine. The color David selected was the same two-tone, red/white arrangement that was seen in promotional material used to demonstrate the anticipated production models.

With the body painted, final reassembly could begin in earnest. The instrument panel was put back together with the restored gauge cluster—the odometer of which still read “00000.1”—and a new wiring harness was fitted. The remaining

upholstery and trim were installed, much of it fabricated based on factory photos or from molds created from the few surviving pieces borrowed from other Playboy owners. This included the grille and dash trim.

In September 2014, 65 years after it was started, Playboy #102 was completed and immediately loaded onto a trailer. David then made the trek to our Hemmings Concours, in Saratoga Springs, New York, where it finally made its debut appearance. “It was a proud moment for us,” he says, as he was joined by his family and cousin, Lee. “Its very first miles, ever, were driving on and off the show

field that day, and to be able to share its significance and history with everyone as a finished car was overwhelming. It's been to a lot of shows since then, especially in the Buffalo region, and every now and then J.C. will stop by to help us maintain its appearance.” 🐾



The 48-hp Hercules engine sits lower in this production car, increasing hood clearance and stability. A correct Carter one-barrel carburetor feeds fuel to the four-cylinder.

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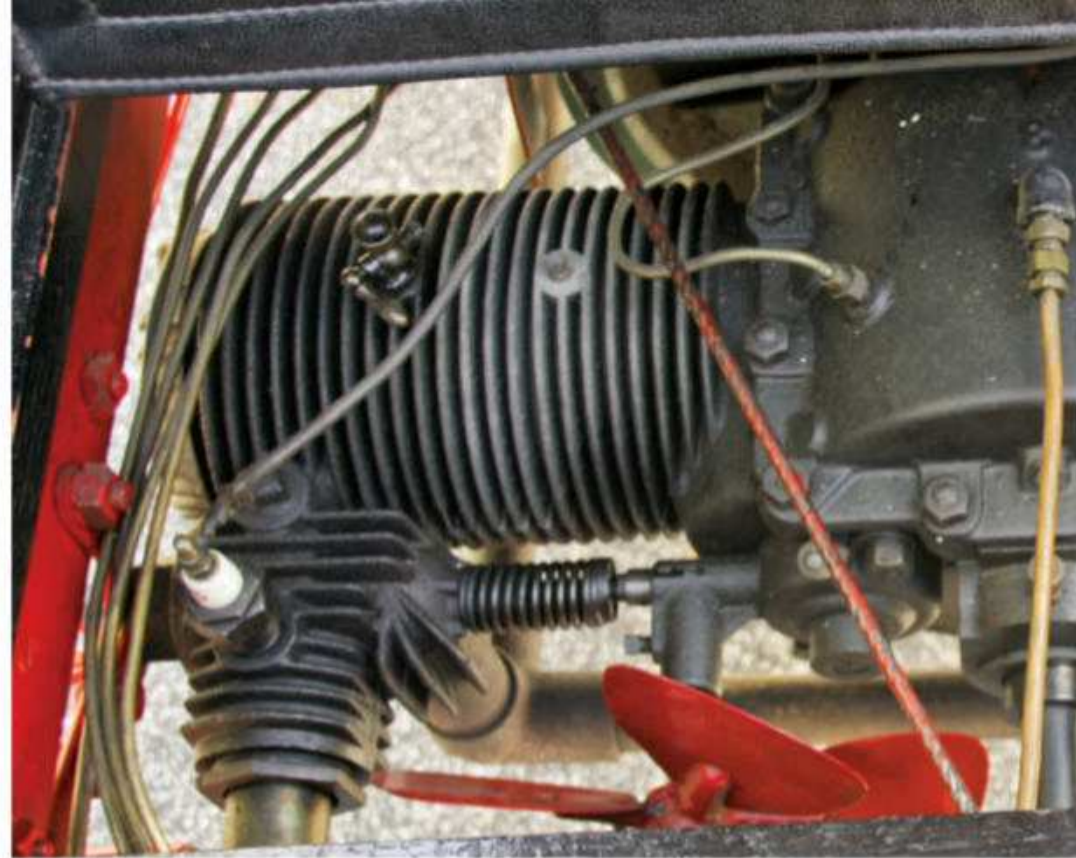


# Back to the Future

*Back in their day, motor buggies like this 1910 Sears Model P were “trailing edge” technology*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL





From its origins in the 1890s, the automobile rapidly advanced from self-propelled vehicle with clear equine origins to something even the most uninformed modern observer would recognize as self-propelled: High points included pneumatic tires, the steering wheel, and the front engine with a recognizable hood (some cars even adopted hoods *before* they adopted front engines—simply because it was required by public taste). In the autumn of 1908, Ford Motor Company produced its first Model T, which was a car very much in the mainstream of styling at the time. This provides a good baseline, then, for comparison with the 1910 Sears Model P Business/Pleasure Car (which everyone just calls a Surrey, after the carriage it replicates) on these pages.

This Sears resides in the collection of the Heritage Museums & Gardens, in Sandwich, Massachusetts. It was purchased in Ohio by the museum's founder, pharmaceutical heir J.K. Lilly III, in 1967. Surviving notes from the transaction quote him as saying, "I can't resist this Sears Surrey with the fringe on top," a clear reference to the Rodgers and Hammerstein production *Oklahoma!*, set in 1906. The film version came out in 1955, coinciding approximately with when restoration of this car was started—maybe a coincidence, maybe not.

The Sears looks utterly unlike other cars of its era except for fellow entrants in its own class—the high-wheeled motor buggy. The first motor buggies appeared in 1907, while Ford was still producing Models N, R, S, and K. Automobiles were the highest technology of their day (though that would soon be the domain of the fledgling aeroplane), and conventional wisdom among the myriad manufacturers at that time was that consumers wanted their styling to reflect that—especially the wealthy playboys who were the earliest adherents of motoring, and their middle-class imitators.

Yet, the automobile had essentially proven itself to be superior to horse-drawn propulsion at this point, so other Americans were starting to embrace it as well. One group that was still undecided was the American farmer, a traditionalist bunch understandably reluctant to part with the horse. The motor buggy was aimed directly at those folks. We would do well to recall at this point that before 1920, the majority of Americans still lived and worked on the farm, so this was a major untapped market at the time. Not surprisingly, implement-maker International Harvester started its own auto-making endeavors with motor buggies.

Makers of motor buggies sought to re-segregate the two elements of the automobile—the engine and the buggy. The engine was tucked out of sight, under the seat, and the familiar flat dashboard was all that stood between the front seat and the road. The mechanical elements were plainly hung beneath the body, and the chain drive was exposed for all to see. Some, like our feature Sears, even rejected that European innovation of 1900, the steering wheel, for the old, familiar tiller control. This kind of conservatism brings to mind another niche product of the era: electric cars.

Of course, you wouldn't open up the Sears, Roebuck & Company catalog (the Amazon of its day and often one of the main sources of supply for the most-rural farm families—you could get everything from hernia braces to houses in there, delivered direct to the nearest railroad depot) and see copy extolling the aesthetic virtues of motor buggies. Instead, the designers championed the supposed practical virtues of a return to buggy design.

While lightweight, simplicity, and cost were true points in favor of the motor buggy, another common claim was patently false—the idea that buggy wheels were somehow superior to pneumatic tires for farm country. Essentially the only element of truth to this last claim was that they couldn't be punctured by horseshoe nails, a common malady of motoring in those days.

Clearly, though, motor buggies were sold on emotion—as have many cars before and since. The 20th century was here to stay, and the automobile was a part of it. A motor buggy allowed farmers to take their first steps into this new world without casting off too much of the familiar all at once. For many Americans, the motor buggy is the missing link between horse and car—even if a family didn't buy one directly, they were popular enough that the exposure made cars a familiar element in country life at last.

That is not to say that motor buggies totally ignored innovation, however. The Sears on these pages, from the penultimate year they were offered, had such interesting features as a Model P engine from the Reeves Pulley Company. The Reeves was a horizontally opposed, air-cooled two-cylinder engine. With a 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch bore





The Model P Surrey rides on an 87-inch wheelbase; its tall wooden wheels are 36 inches in diameter, 1 3/8-inch wide. The two-cylinder Reeves engine (left) is mounted below the seat. All mechanical pieces are lubricated from a single oil tank (above). A simple, brass updraft carburetor (above right) feeds the engine. "Motorgo" brass plate (right) conceals the ignition switch.



and a 4-inch stroke, the twin displaced nearly 107 cubic inches. No rating was advertised, but it made around 14 horsepower. Sears advertised a top speed of 25 mph for its motor buggies.

The Reeves engine was connected to the singular innovation for which Milton Reeves really ought to be known, and that is incorporated into this Sears: a continuously variable transmission, or "CVT" in modern parlance. The Sears uses a friction-drive system. Not unlike certain modern riding lawnmowers, the driver must hold in the clutch pedal to engage the transmission's roller against the engine's flywheel. Gear multiplication was handled by positioning of the roller: Nearer the center yielded more torque for hill climbing, and nearer the outside resulted in higher speeds. For reverse, the roller was moved over center. In theory, this allowed an almost-unlimited number of ratios.

Aside from the comforting, familiar styling, probably the next-biggest attraction of any motor buggy was price. When the Model T debuted for 1909, its prices started at \$825 (destined to drop

dramatically in the years to follow), while the Sears could be had for as little as \$395. But that kind of pricing could only keep motor buggies viable for so long, especially in light of how much more car one got for the money with a Ford.

The Sears may have had a top speed of 25 mph, but that was the *cruising* speed of the Ford, meaning the Ford had much greater flexibility. Likewise, friction drive is easy to operate, but the slippage, wear, and vulnerability of the exposed mechanical pieces make it a weak system in the long run—the Model T's planetary isn't much harder to learn and far more robust. Finally, those buggy wheels with their hard-rubber tires may have been comforting and familiar, but because they were designed for minimal rolling resistance on a horse-drawn vehicle, they really weren't very good for propulsion—pneumatic tires have been a constant for more than a century for a reason. All in all, as one writer put it, "When the Ford agency opened in Gopher Prairie, the motor buggy was doomed." 🐾



Dual chain drive (right, below) features differential action via clutches on the drive sprockets, which disengage when the wheel turns them faster than the sprockets are driven.







# Corvairing in Steel City

*The CORSA club's 48th annual national convention*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

**T**he rolling hills surrounding Pittsburgh came alive July 23-28 with the unmistakable six-cylinder sound of Corvairs. Chevrolet's air-cooled marvels gathered together to take part in the CORSA club's national convention, its 48th year.

With well over 100 Corvairs in attendance, plus several dozen competition-prepared cars that took part in the road-racing competition, there was an endless array of things for everyone to see and do. During this six-day convention there was an auto-cross, concours, rally, Funkhana, economy run, numerous tech sessions, valve-cover races for the kids, and several excursions in and around the city of Pittsburgh. There was even a movie night, and with PNC Park within earshot of the convention site, on Thursday evening, participants were able to take in a Pirates vs. Mets baseball game.

On Monday, at the start of the convention, Pittsburgh International Race Complex was the site of the road racing—a challenging 1.6-mile road course just north of the city. The

concours was held on Tuesday, featuring all the Corvairs' different models; there were classes for both stock and modified cars. At the far end of the hotel parking lot was a sports dome that was packed with vendors selling all sorts of new and used Corvair parts and accessories.

The week ended on a high note, when the host chapter, the Western Pennsylvania Corvair Club, arranged a special all-Corvair display on Art Rooney Avenue overlooking Point State Park, right where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers meet. It was an activity-packed week, which is why Corvair owners look forward to taking part in this yearly festival of all things Corvair.

The 2019 CORSA convention will be held in St. Charles, Illinois, about one-hour west of Chicago. But in order to take part in this truly fun convention, you must be part of the club, so go to [www.corvair.org](http://www.corvair.org) and sign up. If you own a Corvair, or simply admire all that's great about these fantastic cars, you need to join.





Corvairs of all sorts were on display for the full six days. At nearby Pittsburgh International Race Complex, modified and full-bore competition models raced throughout opening day.





Steve Petrelli drove from Philadelphia in his striking '68 Fitch Sprint; the white '69 Monza was driven up from Louisiana by Stephan Spence.



All the way from Benton, Arkansas, came Dan Hill and his 1965 Corsa coupe sporting wire wheelcovers with the three-bar spinners.



The modified class was the most popular, with two of the best cars being this 1965 Monza coupe owned by Marilyn Dewald from Michigan and the red '65 Corsa owned by Ronnie Jenkins from South Carolina.



Ken Moravek made the trip from Ohio in his sporty-looking Goldwin Yellow 1964 Spyder; the beige convertible top was a no-cost option.



Titus Stewart came from New Hampshire with his all-original 1963 Fitch Sprint featuring the correct wheels, mirrors, and front mesh screen.



All the way from Sunnyvale, Texas, came CORSA show director Ray Morales and his finely restored 1961 series 700 station wagon.



Eastern Ohio resident Elaine Harkless drove over in her well-preserved 1961 Monza four-door sedan; the color is Fawn Beige.





Every model Corvair was in attendance, including early and late coupes and sedans, station wagons, Rampsides and, of course, convertibles.



Custom Corvairs were popular too, such as this convertible with yellow headlamps, orange paint and series 500 hubcaps with custom spinners.



Cathy McCafferty drove from eastern Massachusetts in her Cascade Green 1960 model 700 sedan, a very early model with the horn-slot valance.



The indoor/outdoor swap meet was loaded with all sorts of Corvair parts: engines, turbos, and many new reproduction parts and accessories.



All Corvairs were welcomed regardless of condition, including this well-worn model 700 wagon with faded paint and wide whitewalls.



This finely restored 1963 Corvair 95 Rampside looked striking in its original red-and-white color scheme; it's owned by Donald Bele of Pittsburgh.







# Superior Survivor

*Bargain pricing, careful construction, and quintessential late-Fifties charm is what the 1957 Studebaker Commander DeLuxe is all about*

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

**T**hrough much of the venerable company's history, quality and value were Studebaker trademarks. This was still the case in the late 1950s, when the Studebaker-Packard Corporation built the Commander DeLuxe on these pages. Thanks to its considerate owners, the low-mile creampuff here has remained intact and largely unaltered for more than six decades. It's now one of the finest examples extant, and continues to prove those admirable traits are inherent to this much-loved marque.

It was the eye-catching, period-perfect two-tone aqua-and-teal paint, combined with the mileage and overall condition, that sold this Weymouth, Massachusetts, enthusiast on the colorful four-door. John Wingle found the car advertised online, and after a 45-minute telephone conversation with the seller, decided to take the plunge. "I bought the car right then and there. I didn't even see it! The price wasn't bad, these aren't big-money cars, so I figured it was reasonable and worth a shot. I got a really good vibe from the owner; he wasn't trying to pull the wool over my eyes. He'd owned the car for so long, and was very honest with me. I had it shipped to my home, and went out to meet the truck driver. The car exceeded my expectations—it was *that good*."

The Commander was Studebaker's mid-range model for 1957, available in Custom and DeLuxe trims, and slotted below the sedan flagship President, but above the basic Champion and the stripper Scotsman. This independent marque offered a reasonably wide spread of prices and equipment, with the cheapest being the \$1,776 (roughly equivalent to \$15,925 today) two-door Scotsman, and the priciest being the supercharged V-8-powered Golden Hawk hardtop coupe that cost \$3,182, or \$28,535 in 2018 dollars. Our feature Driveable Dream's \$2,295 base price—around \$20,580 today—would be inflated by the addition of a Borg-Warner Model 8 "Flight-O-Matic" automatic transmission,

"Twin-Traction" locking differential, and a set of dealer-installed seat covers.

This 202.4-inch-long, 3,105-pound sedan was amply powered by the "Sweepstakes 259" V-8, a 259.2-cu.in. engine with a 3 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch bore and stroke, 8.3:1 compression ratio, and two-barrel Stromberg WW-6-117 carburetor; it made 180 horsepower at 4,500 rpm and 260 lb-ft of torque at 2,800 rpm. A comfortable ride was ensured by its generous 116.5-inch wheelbase, coupled with the independent coil-spring front and longitudinal leaf-spring/solid-axle rear suspensions. Typical of the day, four-wheel drum brakes—here, measuring 11 inches up front and 10 inches in the back—hid behind 15-inch wheels. This car's original owner chose to forgo extravagances like power assist for the steering or brakes, also opting to motor without a radio, air conditioning, or the four-barrel carburetor and dual-exhaust pairing that increased horsepower by 15.

Those omissions didn't bother John, as this collector is well-known to loyal



**Wide grille, hooded headlamps, "bowtie" shaped bumper, and exterior mirror are some of the Commander's many unique features.**

HCC readers for his unusual-spec, unrestored mid-century American cars that include a 1959 Edsel Ranger (issue #161) and 1960 Rambler Super (#166). "This is a great example of an original Studebaker—it's very solid, very straight, very tight," he explains. "I was really struck by how authentic it is. And because those seat covers were installed right away, the upholstery has never seen the light of day. It has the interior color-keyed rubber floor covering, and there's a little sticker on the dashboard indicating the car has the limited-slip option.

"The only parts not original to this car are the two front fenders," he reveals. "They were replaced in the early 1970s by the second owner, using NOS Studebaker fenders from Studebaker International in South Bend. He told me he replaced them because the original owner would constantly hit the sides of the garage as she drove in and out. They were both banged up, and he wanted the car to be nice, so that's why he had that done. The paint match was excellent; although, if the light hits just right, you can see a slight difference in the color." John also points out the slight fading of the factory-applied paint atop the hood and trunk lid, noting that he's worked to bring back the shine, but won't go as far as a repaint.

In consideration of this Commander spending most of its existence in Pennsylvania, we asked him about the evil "c-word," corrosion. "The undercarriage has a little bit of typical scaling, but no rust, and definitely no rot-through. And there's very little pitting on the chrome. It's not bad at all!" John's had good luck finding solid classics from that state, including a Corvair and, more recently, a 1975 AMC Pacer with virtually no corrosion on it.

"The only thing I can figure out on this particular car is that it was driven so little in daily use through the 1960s, and from 1972-on it was a Sunday car for him, so it was well-preserved. I've seen cars with more miles coming out of Pennsylvania, and they're still in really good shape; it blows my mind!"





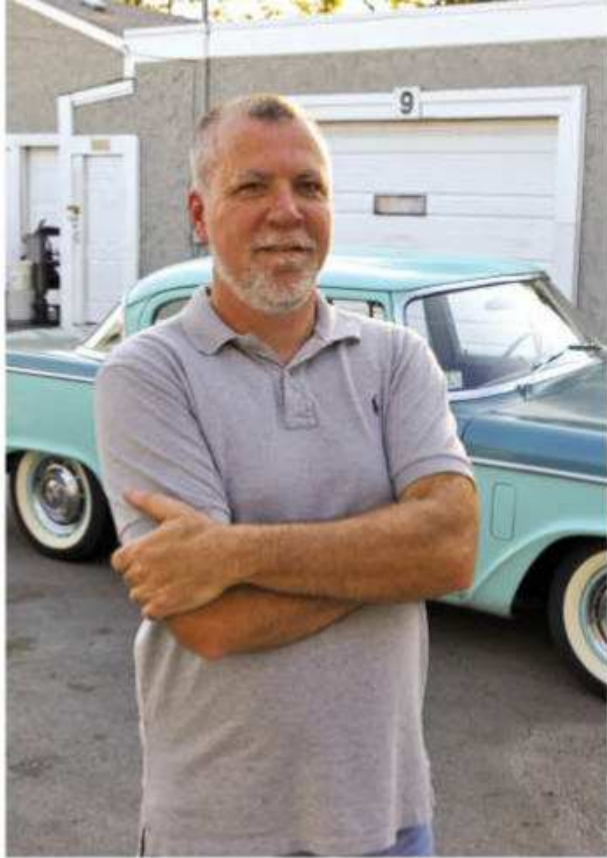
Everything is original, including the upholstery, headliner, and the entire instrument panel; rear seat ashtray fitted to back of front seat; linear speedometer still works like new.

After this DeLuxe sedan was delivered, it required a bit of work to be brought back to top condition: fluids were changed, the engine was tuned-up, and some failing exhaust system pieces were replaced. "It feels almost as if I'd purchased it off a dealer's lot when it was three years old. When you drive it, it's like a recent used car. It's reliable and starts up every time. Of course, there's nothing drawing on the battery because there are no options," John says with a grin.

"The Borg-Warner automatic performs well, with crisp, timely shifts. The car handles and steers very well without power steering—you don't really notice [the lack of] it, and the Coker Classic wide-whitewall radials also help. Of course, it's more difficult for us now to drive a car like that because we're accustomed to power-assist, but if you bought a car in 1957, you probably didn't grow up with power steering. I think power steering would have been a luxury to the original owner. But the manual brakes—they're another story!" he laughs. "You do notice those, and really have to plan your stops. They take some getting used to, but that's not characteristic of a 1957 Studebaker, that's characteristic of any full-sized car of that era with four-wheel drums."

A busy work schedule and large fleet of collectibles mean John only averages between 200 and 600 miles a year in this Commander DeLuxe, but, as he does with his other cars, he's very careful to store this one properly in the off-season. "I regularly use Lucas Safeguard Ethanol Fuel Treatment in this and all of my cars, since ethanol can turn into a gel and gunk up the carburetors. I'll change the oil with 10W-30 Castrol GTX in the fall, and treat the gas with Sta-Bil. I disconnect the battery, and won't start the car over the winter. I keep it under a California





“... the best thing about these cars is that, when you go to a cruise night or car show, you’re going to have the only one there ...”

With its two-barrel Stromberg carburetor, the “Sweepstakes 259” V-8 puts out an impressive 180 hp, providing plenty of off-the-line acceleration; large black metal canister (right) is the air cleaner assembly.

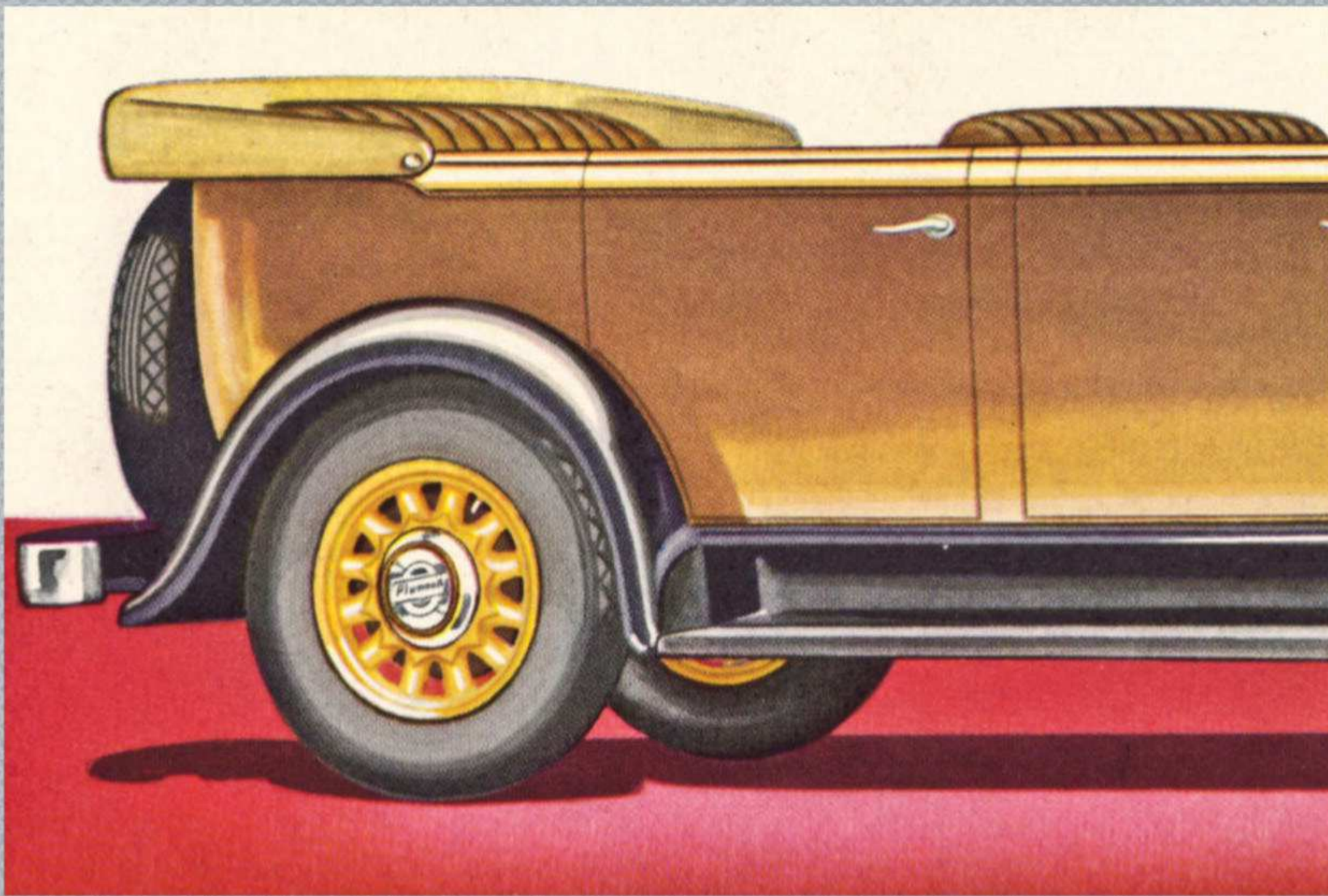
Car Cover, in dry storage, and check on it once a month. In the spring, I’ll hook up the battery, and it usually doesn’t even need a charge—it starts right up!”

That reliability is one of his favorite aspects of owning the Studebaker, but certainly not the only one, he explains. “A car like this is great for someone who wants to get into the hobby but doesn’t have a lot of money. You can get a similar independent—a Packard, Rambler, Nash,

or Hudson—for a lot less than you could if you were looking for an Oldsmobile, Buick, Chevrolet, or Ford of the same vintage. And the best thing about these cars is that, when you go to a cruise night or car show, you’re going to have the only one there; the Mustang and Corvette guys will be mad at you because your car will be drawing a crowd. And you got into it for a lot less money than anyone else at the show, but nobody knows that.” 🐞







## Body Styles

*A glossary of pre-WWII automotive coachwork types*

BY WALT GOSDEN • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

**A**s automotive collectors and historians, it's important to be familiar with the wide variety of terms that have developed to refer to coachwork and body styles over the years. Pre-World War II terms can be especially problematic, as manufacturers, coachbuilders, journalists, and, later, collectors often used different terms to refer to the same things. We hope that the descriptions and period illustrations that we present here will clear up some of the mystery and confusion. Not every type of body style and design is addressed, and I am sure there will be readers who think "they didn't mention such and such," but we have tried to identify as many popular body styles as possible. Bear in mind, some manufacturers used names that differed from the common terminology for certain body types they produced.

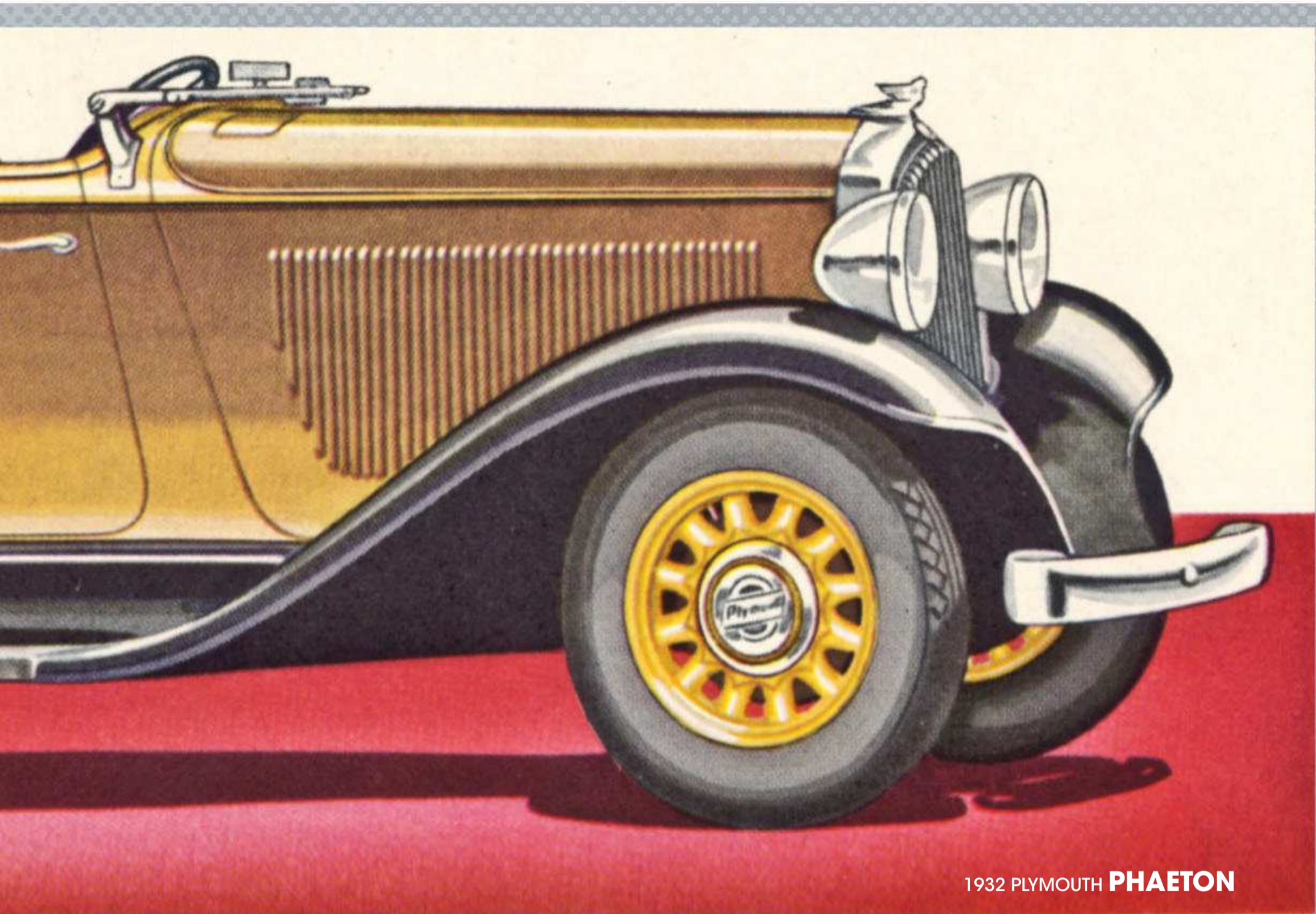
### **PHAETON**

Also known as a touring car; in most instances it has four doors, although two-door versions were also made and offered by Ford in 1931 during the Model A era. All phaetons have side curtains and not roll-up windows for weather protection, and most phaetons have four- or five-passenger seating capacity.

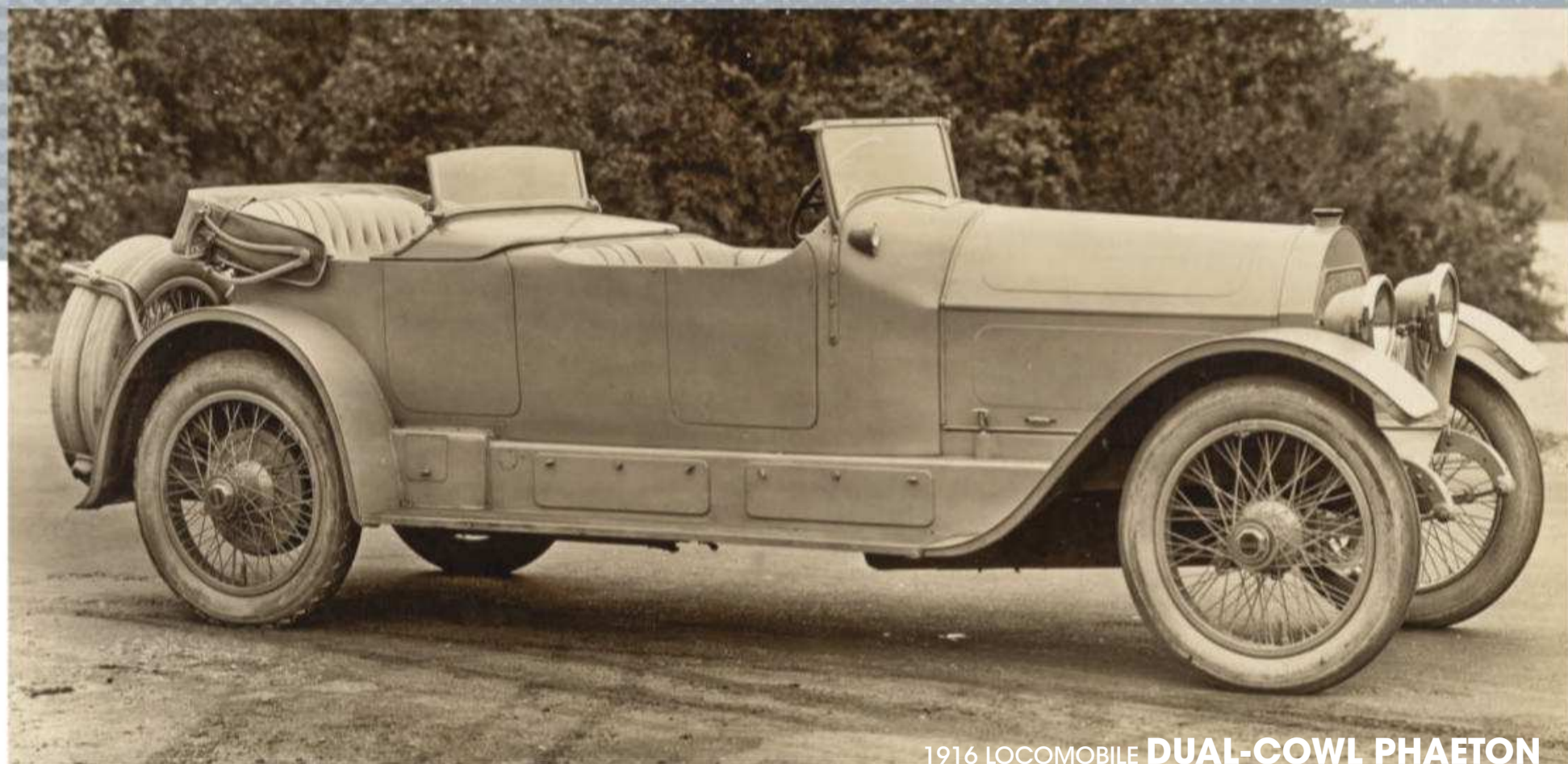
### **DUAL-COWL PHAETON**

This body style has four doors and the same seating capacity as the phaeton, with which it shares most of its body panels, top, and windshield. The second cowl is hinged at the area behind the front seatback and latches into the rear doors. The second cowl has an additional folding windshield that can be secured in the "up" position or laid flat and secured at the lower outer corner of the cast base bolted to the cowl.





1932 PLYMOUTH **PHAETON**



1916 LOCOMOBILE **DUAL-COWL PHAETON**





1925 DIANA **TOURING CAR**

## TOURING CAR

A two- or four-door open car that has side curtains for weather protection. These can be secured by button snaps and rods that fit into the top edge of the body and windshield. Most open seven-passenger body styles were referred to as “seven-passenger tourings” rather than “seven-passenger phaetons” until they were no longer offered as a body style. They fell out of favor in the late 1920s.

## ROADSTER

An open two-door car often equipped with a rumble seat, and side curtains for weather protection rather than roll-up windows. The body style accommodates two passengers or four (if it has a rumble seat), and in most production cars it was the cheapest body style available due to its low production costs.

## CONVERTIBLE (CONVERTIBLE COUPE)

A two-door open body style with roll-up windows in the doors. The top, which wraps down and around the back for increased weather protection, could be lowered on pleasant days, and rather than side curtains that needed to be taken out and stowed, the windows simply rolled down. Depending upon the make of car, this body style either has a rumble seat or a trunk in the rear deck. This was the setup until the mid- to late-1930s, when rumble seats started to be considered archaic and inconvenient to use, especially during inclement weather. When the rumble seat was eliminated, the convertible-coupe body style was redesigned to have a bench seat located inside the body shell behind the front seat. To facilitate entering and exiting the rear seat, the doors were made wider, and the front seatback was divided and hinged to allow it to be pulled forward. The top was extended aft a considerable amount to cover the back seat. Small roll-up windows were added just behind the doors to let more light into the interior. This new convertible-coupe body style, with two interior bench seats and room for four occupants, was a combination that blended the convertible coupe and the convertible victoria, and also added a trunk area for luggage within the body.

## SPORT PHAETON/SPORT TOURING

The addition of “Sport” to these terms was to indicate that they were a step up over the regular phaeton/touring car. This usually meant that spare tires were mounted in the front fenders, often with metal covers painted to match the body or the fenders, and extra accessories were fitted. Rather than make a customer pay for each accessory individually, some of the “sport”-designated open and enclosed cars had a set price for a fully equipped car, loaded with options.

## CONVERTIBLE VICTORIA

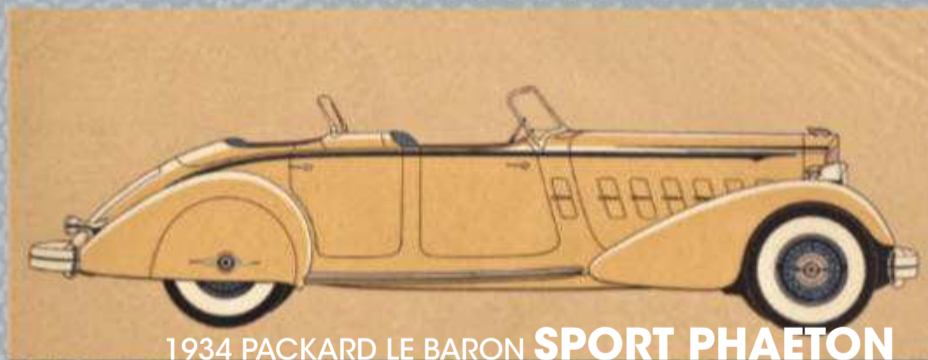
Similar in style up to the windshield/dashboard area as a convertible coupe, the Convertible Victoria has much wider doors, as both front and back seats are all in under the convertible top. Convertible Victo-



1930 PACKARD **ROADSTER**



1934 LA SALLE **CONVERTIBLE**



1934 PACKARD LE BARON **SPORT PHAETON**



1933 LINCOLN **CONVERTIBLE VICTORIA**





1929 PACKARD  
**CONVERTIBLE SEDAN**

rias made in the late 1920s lack the same harmony of style exhibited by the convertible coupe in matching the fender line with the body. In the following decade, the rear portion of the body moved further back, ending midway through the rear fenders. For many of those 10 years, a separate trunk was mounted behind the body on a platform that covered the rear of the chassis. In the Victoria's last configuration, the rear of the body incorporated the trunk and flowed down to follow the fenders, ending at the gas tank cover. Most cars that have the spare tires mounted in the front fenders also have a luggage rack behind the existing trunk. Convertible Victorias have roll-up windows in the doors, and when the roof style changed, small quarter windows were to be found just past the rear door above the beltline in the body on several designs. Both the blind-quarter and quarter-window versions of the Convertible Victoria lasted as long as the body style did, which was into the late 1930s.

## CONVERTIBLE SEDAN

Usually has four doors with roll-up windows, but in the early 1930s two-door versions were also made by several auto manufacturers, especially Chrysler Corporation with its Plymouth, De Soto, and six-cylinder Chrysler brands in 1932. For some convertible sedans on luxury-car chassis, especially Cadillac and Packard, a dividing window was fitted to the back of the front seat. Cadillac offered this on its 75 Series cars up through 1940.

## CONVERTIBLE ROADSTER

A term several auto manufacturers gave to the convertible coupe body style as they attempted to capture the interest of potential customers who were still fond of the old roadster type. The roadster was being phased out as it was deemed somewhat impractical to enclose in poor weather. While the convertible roadster still greatly resembled that body style favored a generation earlier, it had been improved with roll-up windows in the doors.

## SPEEDSTER

A body type that saw several variations in its physical description—even under the banner of the same manufacturer—including the number of people it could hold. The name first and foremost describes a sporty-looking car with open coachwork. It was first used to refer to a two-passenger open roadster, and some examples didn't have doors, a top, or a windshield. By 1930, the Packard Motor Car Company used "Speedster" to brand some of its Model 734s. The Speedster was available in roadster, boattail roadster, phaeton, sedan, and five-passenger coupe body styles. Franklin also offered a model it called Speedster as a limited-production body designed and built by Dietrich Inc. from 1929 to 1932. For the first three years, Franklin offered it in both open and closed four-door body styles. More accurate descriptors would be



1929 STUTZ **CONVERTIBLE ROADSTER**



1922 DANIELS  
**SPEEDSTER**



1926 PACKARD  
**COUPE**

"close-coupled sport sedan" and "convertible sedan," but of course, "Speedster" sounded much better! Jordan called its speedster the Speedway Ace, and it too had a four-door sedan as well as a Convertible Victoria option. Stutz offered a speedster body style with various seating capacities from at least 1926 to 1934.

## COUPE

A body style with a name whose pronunciation has been under debate for decades. Some say "coop," while others pronounce it "coo-pay." I fall into the former category, but think the latter is likely more correct, especially in Europe where the name originated. The coupe is a body style with two doors and a comparatively small greenhouse that was available in at least three configurations. "Three-Window Coupes," as the name indicates, have three windows (not counting the windshield): one in each door and one in the back of the cabin.





1934 PACKARD **VICTORIA COUPE**



1929 CUNNINGHAM **CLUB SEDAN**



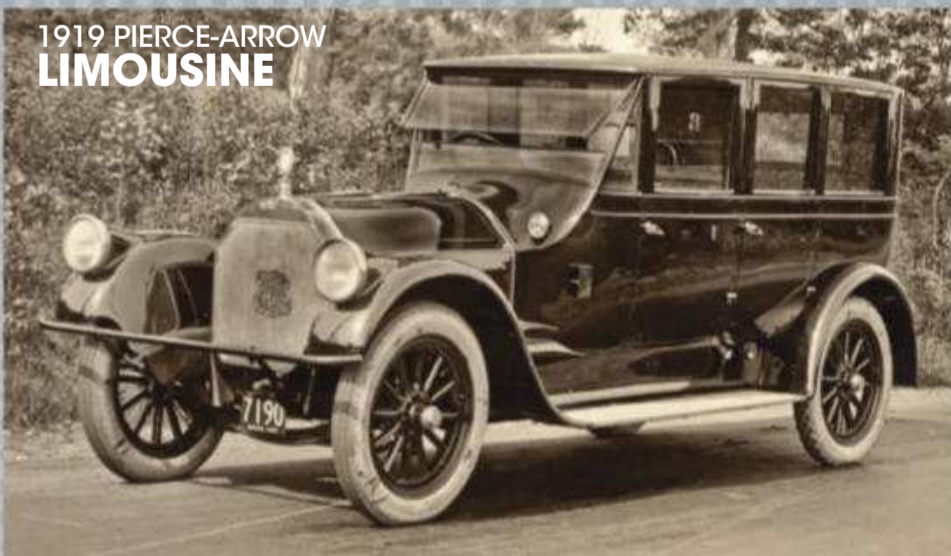
1923 STUDEBAKER **FIVE-PASSENGER SEDAN**



1918 MOON **CALIFORNIA-TOP SEDAN**



1931 FRANKLIN **SEVEN-PASSENGER SEDAN**



1919 PIERCE-ARROW  
**LIMOUSINE**

Likewise, once again leaving out the windshield, “Five-Window Coupes” have five windows: one in each door, one in the rear, and quarter windows on either side between the two. Both three- and five-window coupes were usually available with either a rumble seat or trunk at the rear.

### **VICTORIA COUPE (OR FIVE-PASSENGER COUPE)**

Resembles a five-window coupe but with the roof area extended back, usually to the beginning or middle of the rear fender, to allow more room inside for a rear bench seat to accommodate extra people. The driver’s and front passenger’s seats fold up to allow access to the rear seat. The extended body ends at the gas tank cover, and adopts the curved trunk style of the regular three- and five-window coupes. The five-passenger coupe did not have a rumble seat available as an option like the earlier three- and five-window coupes did.

### **CLUB SEDAN**

Similar in size to a regular five-passenger sedan, these often also share the same chassis. The area behind the rear doors is shorter than on regular sedans (it is close coupled), and there are no small quarter windows for people sitting in the rear seat to look out through. Rather, the quarter panel is blind and usually part of the body stamping that continues around the back of the car to include the rear window. Much of the time, the front doors on club sedans will interchange with the same doors used on the five-passenger six-window sedans.

### **FIVE-PASSENGER SEDAN**

Described by collectors as a “six-window sedan” due to the three windows on each side and to distinguish it from a club sedan, this was not how the factory referred to the body style. By the late 1920s, the five-passenger sedan would become the most popular body style, as demand for weather-beating closed cars increased and prices fell nearer to that of the formerly popular touring and roadster body styles.

### **CALIFORNIA-TOP SEDAN/ CALIFORNIA-TOP TOURING SEDAN**

Popular for about five years after World War I, various makes had their own versions. Essentially, it is a touring car from the beltline down that has a structurally reinforced and redesigned windshield that looks more like that of a four-door sedan’s. With a solid roof that is permanent and does not fold, it could be considered the earliest version of the “hardtop” body style that would become popular in the post-WWII era. The Franklin Company called its version a “demi sedan,” and it utilized removable panel units snapped and bolted into place above the doors, holding the sliding glass windows. Other manufacturers still used side curtains with the fixed roof because, while the solid units gave fairly good weather protection, they were much more difficult to deal with when completely removed. There were usually four to six, and sometimes more, units to store, one for each door and then possibly some filler pieces in the front and back of these.

### **SEVEN-PASSENGER SEDAN**

Usually has a longer-wheelbase chassis than the five-passenger sedan, although both share many body pieces. Seven-passenger sedans also share most, if not all, body panels with the factory catalog model limousine. They usually have larger front doors than the five-passenger models to accommodate the thicker front seatback needed to store a folding jump seat. Seven-passenger sedans were more popular prior to World War II than one might expect as they were used by larger families to transport their broods. Family-type station wagons and minivans with extra seats did not exist yet.

### **LIMOUSINE**

Essentially a seven-passenger sedan with a window partitioning the



front and rear compartments. A microphone was used to communicate between the passengers and the chauffeur. The front seat, door panels, and often the headliner were upholstered in leather, while the rear compartment was done in cloth.

## FORMAL SEDAN

Basically a limousine body shell with a padded top trimmed in fabric or leather. Most often, the trim channel that the top of the division window would normally fit into when raised was not present, and the glass of the window would press into the slightly extra material of the headliner. Formal sedans usually had jump seats, and the entire interior was of the same cloth. Formal sedans did not have leather in the front compartment.

## TOWN CAR

The most formal body style made for a specific use—to take the owners to town to attend the opera, plays, civic functions, etc. It is, in effect, a limousine complete with dividing window where the chauffeur's compartment is opened during nice weather. The top of that compartment could be a solid wood-framed panel covered in sheetmetal and painted the color of the body, or it could be a snap-in canvas panel. Many town cars have both styles of weather protection, with the hard version employed during especially cold or prolonged periods of inclement weather. Town cars usually have elaborate cloth-and-wood trim in the rear compartment to please the owners. Up until WWII, coach lamps were often mounted to the top section of the center body post. Upon leaving their evening formal affairs, car owners would be able to spot their car among all those parked at the curb at a distance by the color of the glass in the lit coach lights. The town car was the most expensive body style one could have ordered. Although some manufacturers did occasionally include an image of a town car in their regular sales catalog, all the town cars were custom built to order.

## LANDAULET/TOWN LANDAULET

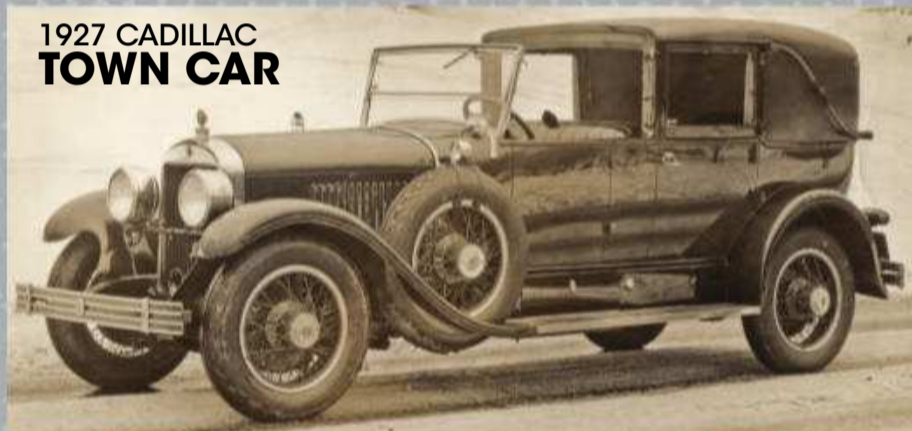
Can vary in description depending on the manufacturer or coachbuilder. In general, it is similar to a town car as it was most often used for formal events and was chauffeur-driven. The front compartment where the driver sits can be permanently enclosed, or like a town car can be opened. While the center of the car has a fixed roof, the top over the back seat can be folded down so the rear passengers are able to enjoy an open-air ride. Some of these folding roofs resemble that of a convertible coupe, while others feature landau irons, which are part of the lowering mechanism, gracing each side.

## STATION WAGON

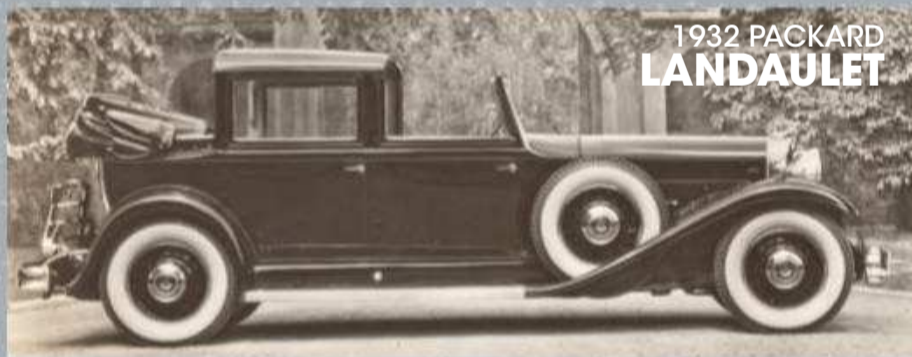
Like the town car, has its function as its name. Station wagons were made to bring people to, or pick them up from, the train station, and the large rear area was used to carry the luggage and parcels. Most station wagons made prior to WWII were made of wood by certain body manufacturers, and 90 percent of the time they were built on passenger-car chassis. Ash and oak were employed for the structural framework, and often birch plywood was used for the flat surfaces of the doors, tailgate, and quarter panels surrounding the rear fenders. Not all station wagons are “woodies,” as they are now called. Some were constructed entirely or partially of metal; however, fewer of these were produced as wood was so prevalent and easy to work with. Most station wagon builders had been designers and builders of horse-drawn conveyances decades earlier, and easily made the transition to “horseless carriages.” 🐾



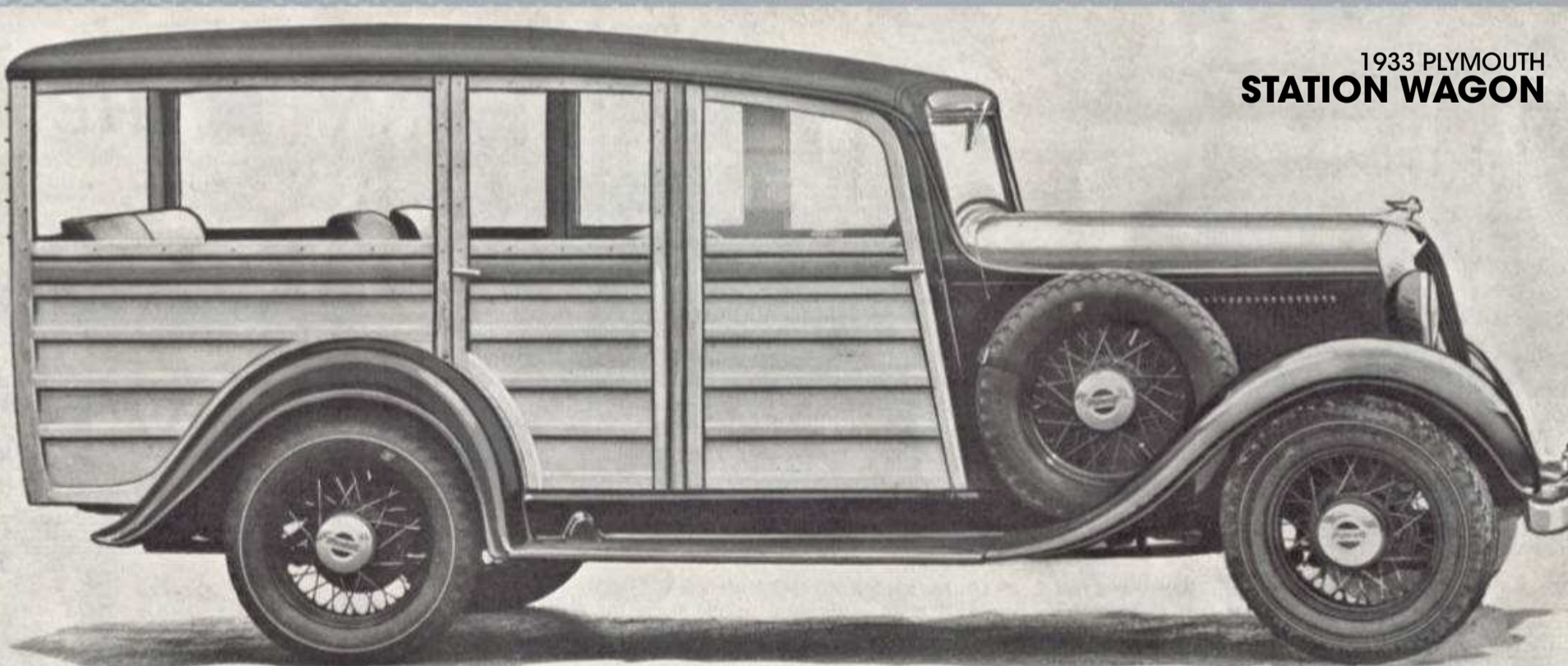
1937 PACKARD **FORMAL SEDAN**



1927 CADILLAC **TOWN CAR**



1932 PACKARD **LANDAULET**



1933 PLYMOUTH **STATION WAGON**



# Briggs Swift Cunningham II

*The ultimate American sportsman brought the best this country had to offer and competed on the world's biggest racing stage*



The Cunningham C-4RK coupe leads a C-4R roadster at Le Mans in 1953, a race which saw the American team finish in third overall, with three cars in the top 10.

COURTESY OF THE REVS INSTITUTE, RODOLFO MAILANDER PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

BY TERRY SHEA • IMAGES AS CREDITED

In April of 1954, Briggs Swift Cunningham II graced the cover of *Time* magazine, a position normally reserved for the likes of a Roosevelt or a Rockefeller. Cunningham's impact on the racing scene in postwar America, and Europe, too, cannot be overstated. His team's professionalism, preparation, and thoroughness ushered in a new era in motorsport.

Born in 1907 to a very wealthy Cincinnati industrialist, Cunningham chose many competitive pursuits, gaining fame racing cars and boats, in addition to having been a skilled golfer and tennis player as a younger man while attending Yale. By his 1954 *Time* cover appearance, he had also established himself in the automobile business, producing Italian-

bodied, Hemi-powered grand tourers and dedicated sports racers in Florida.

Cunningham married his first wife, Lucie Bedford, the daughter of a Standard Oil executive, in 1929. The couple had quite the extended honeymoon in Europe, from 1929 into 1930, time which included attending the Monaco Grand Prix and winning an award at a concours d'elegance in Cannes with a Mercedes-Benz SS that was personally delivered to Cunningham by Rudolf Caracciola, then the top factory driver for the storied German automaker. Rejected by the Navy during World War II due to asthma, Cunningham instead bought and piloted his own plane with the Civil Air Patrol, monitoring the Florida coastline near his Palm Beach home.

When the Sports Car Club of America, founded by Cunningham friends Miles and Sam Collier, sanctioned

its first race in 1948 on the streets of Watkins Glen, New York, Cunningham was there, racing his 1939 Buick with a Mercedes-Benz SSK body to a second-place trophy. By 1962, Cunningham could claim one title as a driver and eight as a team owner at the premier sports car race at Watkins Glen.

Cunningham set his sights on winning the most prestigious sports car race in the world, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, in 1950, the goal to do it with an American car. Frick-Tappet Motors of Rockville Centre, Long Island, created the "Fordillac," a 1949 Ford powered by the then-new



TERRY SHEA





COURTESY OF THE REVS INSTITUTE. TOM BURNSIDE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION





Cunningham's 1950 Cadillacs at Le Mans in 1950: a nearly stock Coupe de Ville and a custom-bodied roadster dubbed *Le Monstre*.

Cadillac OHV V-8 engine, but the French put the brakes on that effort because the Fordillac was not a car from a recognized automobile maker. Not to be rebuffed, Cunningham entered two 1950 Cadillacs, the first a race-prepped, but largely stock Coupe de Ville (nicknamed *Le Petit Pataud* after a puppy in French children's literature) and the other an aerodynamic custom-bodied roadster (*Le Monstre*) built with design and fabrication input from engineers at Grumman on Long Island working on their own time. Both were white, clad in twin stripes that would become the signature Cunningham livery.

While the custom roadster was demonstrably faster than the coupe, a second-lap mishap left *Le Monstre* stuck in a sandbank. Cunningham spent four laps digging it out by hand (the rules prohibiting any driver from receiving any assistance while on the course) and he rejoined in 35th position. The two

Cadillacs ultimately finished 10th and 11th, rather respectable considering the rapid preparation of the cars and the off-track excursion.

After Le Mans, Cunningham took matters into his own hands, buying Frick-Tappet Motors outright and moving its operations from Long Island, New York, to West Palm Beach, Florida. The B.S. Cunningham Co. was established in the car-making business.

Between 1951 and 1955, the company made several different race cars and two road-going models, fewer than 50 cars in total, almost all powered by Chrysler's innovative FirePower Hemi engines. The company completed its first prototype, the C-1, a two-seat roadster, which predated the similar-looking AC Ace by a couple of years. Noticeably larger than the European sports cars it was designed to compete against, the C-1 featured a Cadillac OHV V-8 engine

tweaked to produce 220 hp, clad in a handmade aluminum body over a steel frame. Suspension and braking components were sourced from Cadillac, Ford, Mercury, and other American makes.

The C-1 provided the basis for the C-2R racer, but before production began, Cadillac backed out as engine supplier. Fortunately for the Cunningham Co., Briggs Cunningham had befriended the son of Chrysler President K.T. Keller while at Yale, and Chrysler's then all-new Hemi proved just what the team needed. The Chrysler engine, tuned by Cunningham mechanics with four Zenith carburetors on a custom, log-type manifold, along with other modifications, was producing an impressive 270 hp by the end of the 1951 season. The C-2R set the pace at Le Mans that year with the fastest official practice lap, but only one of the three cars built finished, down in 18th place. Later in the season, the C-2R scored victories for the Cunningham team at the Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, and Watkins Glen road races.

With rules changes at Le Mans, the B.S. Cunningham Co. would need to produce 50 road cars to be considered a legitimate make and, in late 1951, production began on the C-3 road



The last Cunningham built, the C-6R, competing at Sebring in 1955, featured an Offenhauser engine, and not a Chrysler Hemi.





COURTESY OF THE REVS INSTITUTE,  
SMITH HEMPSTONE OLIVER PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

car. Though the first two bodies were completed in Florida, the company brought costs down significantly by outsourcing body production to Carrozzeria Vignale of Italy. The C-3 surely had European flair, but under the hood was the same basic engine as used in the C-2R racers: an all-American Hemi V-8. Cunningham would ultimately produce 20 C-3 coupes and five C-3 convertibles.

Returning to Le Mans in 1952, Cunningham entered three cars: two C-4R roadsters and one C-4RK coupe, designed with the direct input of the famous German aerodynamicist Wunibald Kamm. Briggs Cunningham and his co-driver, Bill Spear, finished in fourth place overall, Cunningham himself having driven all but four hours of the race, an incredible feat.

Cunningham returned in 1953 with the lone C-5R built for the race, along with a C-4R roadster and the C-4RK coupe. The sleeker C-5R was clocked via radar as the fastest car down the famed Mulsanne Straight at 154.8 mph, three miles an hour faster than the speediest Jaguar. Despite the advantage, the Jaguar team, running more fade-resistant disc brakes was able to consistently out brake the other teams, resulting in a one-two finish for the cats from Coventry. Cunningham's C-5R with John Fitch and Phil Walters sharing driving duty, came in a very respectable third place. Overall, Cunningham had three cars in the top 10.



COURTESY OF THE REVS INSTITUTE, GEORGE PHILLIPS PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



TERRY SHEA

**In 1960, John Fitch and Bob Grossman piloted this Cunningham-entered Corvette to an eighth overall finish and first in the 5-liter GT class at Le Mans. (Bottom) The Vignale-bodied, Chrysler Hemi-powered Cunningham C-3 road car.**

Cunningham returned to Le Mans with a car of his own make for the last time in 1955, the C-6R, an even sleeker, lower roadster powered by an Offenhauser four-cylinder engine. The team DNFed during that ill-fated race with a failed piston in the 19th hour, though it was never truly in contention.

Despite Cunningham's failure to win Le Mans, Cunningham race cars and the Cunningham team achieved far better results in other races, including three straight 12 Hours of Sebring wins from 1953 through 1955, with a C-4R, an OSCA, and a Jaguar D-Type. In fact, Cunningham continued racing, with Ferraris, Lister-Jaguars, Maseratis and Corvettes, the latter of which earned the team a class win at Le Mans in 1960. His and the team's final race entry was at Sebring in 1966 with a Porsche 904 GTS.

Cunningham was all but forced to shut down the B.S. Cunningham Co. in 1955 as he was up against IRS rules which considered his business a hobby after not turning a profit for its first five years. He later opened a museum in Costa Mesa, California, which included many of his own cars, along with other vintage racing and collectible cars. The majority of that

museum survives today as part of The Revs Institute in Naples, Florida.

Beyond racing automobiles on land, Cunningham proved quite adept at sailing as well. His exploits on the water began before World War II with world championships won in the 6-meter class. Even as his sports car teams were dominating road racing in America, Cunningham helped finance the syndicate that built *Columbia*, the 12-meter yacht he helmed to a dominant victory in the 1958 America's Cup off Newport, Rhode Island, not once trailing in a four-race sweep of the U.K. challenger *Sceptre*.

Briggs Cunningham II, who passed away in 2003, went to extraordinary lengths to compete on the biggest auto racing stage in the world with a car that bore his own name. By all accounts, despite the expense and the intense competition, he remained a gentleman and a sportsman, and was respected by his employees as much as his competitors. Though his dream of winning Le Mans in his own car never quite came true, his legacy today burns as bright as ever, his achievements lauded and his cars desired, giving evidence that he truly lived the American dream. 🏁



## Roy Lamkin

Quality-control inspector  
Chrysler/Jefferson Assembly

### I APPLIED TO CHRYSLER IN JUNE

1970, right after graduation from high school, and was hired at Jefferson Assembly around the second week of July. At the time, Chrysler was hiring a lot, but I did not know they laid off all the hires 59 days later, before the 60 days when you became a union member. We built the 1970 Newport and Imperial there at the time, but my focus was the Imperial.

Jefferson Chassis Assembly area was on the west side of Jefferson Avenue. When completed, engines, chassis, and bodies with dashboards and radios crossed over Jefferson via a covered bridge to the trim shop on the east side of Jefferson.

If you drove an American car, you could park across the street from the west chassis plant; this was strictly enforced. Only Chrysler owners were allowed to park in the lot near the plant itself. All foreign cars had to park in a remote lot, and, if you were in that lot, you were endlessly teased about not supporting American jobs.

I worked in quality control where, in theory, we inspected all the parts before they went to the assembly line. I remember nearly every minute of this experience and learned about large corporate politics way too early. In the inspection area, we had just about everything we needed to test all parts to specs. The huge surface plate amazed me, and on my first day I

was shown how to use micrometers to check a 1970 Imperial frame to specs.

We had access to all areas of the plant and were never really tracked as to where we were at any given time, as long as the parts were on the line and ready. There were fellas who brought us the parts on forklifts. We tested them over a day or so, and then a worker brought the parts to the assembly line.

We produced about 12 Imperials per week, and I was told there were to be no defects on Imperial parts. I was asked to inspect a new shipment of bumpers. There were about 12 to a skid, six stacked on each side of the skid and steel banded. One particular day, a forklift operator apparently was upset about something and raised the forks above the top bumper, positioned each fork against a bumper, and lowered the forks, scratching every bumper. I applied the required red ball on each bumper to reject the part. About 10 minutes later, the quality supervisor told me that was a week's worth of bumpers and I couldn't tag them all red. I explained they were all scratched. He told me to green tag them so they can be used in production. Then added, "let the dealer fix-em." So, I placed the green sticker half way over the red one. I guess quality only goes so far.

I was asked to test rain-gutter welds. Usually, just a mild twist to make certain the small weld over the rear door rain gutter was strong enough. But there must have been something special with the vendor this day. The supervisor told me to twist them almost in half. As expected,

most of them failed, so they went back to the vendor as failures.

On the chassis side, the bodies were merged with the chassis and engine, all the fluids were topped up, and the engines started for the first time. Those Hemi V-8s opened up and the car screamed toward the radio install. I could have stood there forever just to listen to those engines.

The body pieces were welded by real humans who knew their work. The spot welders were heavy and suspended from a cable to allow their use without having to lift them. The body panels were welded together before the sanding and painting. The tack welder was activated with a trigger pull, and sparks flew everywhere. Most of the employees had a lot of holes in their clothing.

The bodies were painted without any trim and then the vinyl roofs were installed. The chassis would go through a chain link fence area before leaving for the trim plant. Within that fenced-off area, the radios were stacked up unboxed and then securely installed in the dash.

Once body and chassis merged and the radio was installed, the assembly went over the bridge to the trim plant. Once on the trim line, the vehicle was water-leak tested. A worker would put a little wooden milking stool behind the steering wheel and start the engine. These guys knew when they had a big engine under the hood. At this point, the car moved to the water-test area on a conveyor that was just flat, shiny steel plates. It was the perfect surface to peel out. Then the workers





crawled around looking for water leaks. If there were no leaks the car moved on within the trim plant.

After the engine stress test, the cars were on the conveyor and had the door trim and roof liner installed. The car passed areas for all the interior to be installed, bumpers, glass, etc. I got to know the trim manager as I used scraps from there to build my Chrysler plastic models at home.

It was interesting watching them paint the color-matching steering columns. I never did figure out how they got the right column in the right car with the fancy turn signal levers. I also didn't understand how a window lift mechanism worked. Well, one day I got to find out. I had to quality check window lift mechanisms, so I got out the 12-volt power supply and hooked it up to the window motor. Well, I didn't know they operated that fast; glad my fingers were faster than the mechanism.

In our area, we had all the books for all the parts and our prices from the suppliers. ABS was relatively new, and I wanted to know how much all the parts cost. Not including labor to install, I figured it was about \$78 for these particular parts, which, if I remember correctly, was an \$800 or so option.

I also had to test the sequential tail-lamp assemblies. It was fascinating how they worked, but I could test them easily with a 12-volt power supply. Watching the lights flash was fun, but the way they were packaged was incredible. Each assembly, left and right, had its own box and packaging material. What I found amazing was how they were handled at the assembly line. Someone unboxed them in advance on the line, then just stacked them on top of one another, without any packing material, on a wooden skid ready for installation. Ah, yes, I learned quality control seemed to stop before installation.

On the last day, I had to report to human resources to get my check. In the envelope I found a pink slip and a job offer! They asked me to come back and work in the mailroom or the office. It was obvious I wasn't office-personnel material, so instead, I accepted a job offer from the local telephone company. The pay was less than half of what I made at Chrysler, but I was looking for real long term. 📞



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# Oldsmobiles and Yazoos



**I WAS RAISED IN THE SIXTIES IN A** sleepy little central Mississippi town called Crystal Springs. My mother, sister, and I moved there from Texas in 1957 after the death of my father in a car accident that year. Crystal Springs was my mother's hometown, and she had a sister and brother there. It was a wonderful place to grow up.

I was much interested in automobiles and the muscle-car era of that time. In 1963, my mother told me that I needed to "get to work" and she had some ideas about how to go about doing just that. The grass grew good in Crystal Springs and Mama knew folks would pay to have their grass cut, so we went to our small hometown bank and talked with a lady vice-president that Mama knew well.

Yazoo Manufacturing in Jackson built big-wheel Yazoo mowers. These were legendary locally as being fine and tough

push mowers. A new one at Mr. Ates' Standard Station was \$130—a fortune in the day. Mama cosigned for me, and I was in business at the age of 13! I picked up about 10 people's yards, most paying \$1.50 or \$2 per job, but Dr. Little's big yard (three hours of non-stop mowing) paid an incredible \$5!

The fellow next door to us worked as a contractor at the U.S. Air Force radar base located in Crystal Springs. He was a car lover and had a succession of automobiles. One that I liked was a 1956 Chevrolet sedan with 265 "Power Pack," three-speed, and overdrive. He would take me for brief rides, and the car was (to me) fast and fine. One day, he told me he wanted to sell it: \$400. I was interested, but I never even considered that I could be the owner. A few days later, I was pushing the Yazoo down the street and passed his house. I saw the '56 Chevy sitting there, and suddenly it hit me! I had been mowing plenty of yards, and I had \$400. I could buy the Chevy! Actually, I could buy it if Mama would go along with the deal. I was a 16-year-old high school sophomore at this time.

Mama was tired of hauling me everywhere, so she didn't fuss too much. I took the \$400 to the neighbor, and just that quick, I was the owner of a fine blue Chevrolet sedan. This car served me well from 1966 through 1969. I modified it a bit with a 396 engine and Muncie four-speed transmission. It took me through high school and a couple of years of college. My best

buddy had a similarly equipped '55 Bel Air sedan and was going to the same college as me. His father wanted him to have a more dependable car, so a 1969 Chevelle SS was ordered. That was never going to work for me, so in order to keep pace, I was on the hunt for a more modern car. I saw a good-looking 1967 Oldsmobile 4-4-2 on a used-car lot and pulled in. Silver with a 400-cu.in. V-8 and four-speed (no power steering, power brakes, or A/C), that baby was fast! Mama helped me with the purchase, and the dealer gave me \$900 on the Chevy trade-in. Pretty good for a hot rod.

Real life started to intrude on my idyllic car life, but not before I had traded the '67 4-4-2 for a new 1971 4-4-2, with ram-air hood, all power, and A/C. Marriage and two kids came into the picture, and the 4-4-2 was sold and replaced with a four-door Delta 88. But I had been bit by the muscle-car bug, and that evidently is a long-lasting bite. After a 30-year career in the insurance business, I retired and built a garage behind my home for my "new" '67 and '71 4-4-2s.

They weren't my original cars but were very similar. Following my retirement, a friend asked if I could restore his friend's 1961 De Soto. Answering in the affirmative that I thought I could, I now find myself with a growing restoration hobby. My longtime hot-rod buddy has joined me in restoring the same classic cars we loved all those years ago. The story has come full circle, and I'm still trying to honor my Mama's words, "Get to work." 🐞





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## The Firefighting Flivver

*Howe-modified Model T Fords frequently served as early fire trucks*

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

There were some heavy rigs hauling around firefighting gear in the early years of the 20th century built by names like: International, American LaFrance, Mack, FWD, Seagrave, and GMC. But in sparsely populated parts of the country, these big trucks weren't really practical, and they would've required a huge investment for small, volunteer fire companies. So, fire equipment manufacturers (and fire companies) also built lighter-duty apparatus often based on car chassis.

In the pages of history books, we've seen fire "trucks" based on the overbuilt underpinnings of many prewar passenger cars including Cadillacs, Franklins, Locomobiles, Kissels, Hudsons, and Dodges. But those machines all shared one thing in common: They were expensive. Perfect for

emergency service, of course, because of their bomb-proof construction, but equally unaffordable for small, rural communities.

Enter Henry Ford's Universal Car. Reliable? Most of the time. Overbuilt? Um... "Well-built to a price" is more like it. But definitely affordable and infinitely adaptable. Model Ts were like a Swiss Army knife in the hands of enterprising upfitters and were modified for use as portable saw mills, tractors, snowmobiles, and trucks. Including, as was frequently the case in the years leading up to and after World War I, fire trucks.

This beautifully presented 1922 Howe/Model T Ford pumper with a trailer for hoses and gear is currently in the care of the Heritage Museums & Gardens in Sandwich, Massachusetts, donated by Andrew Edmonds. Jennifer Madden, the

museum's director of collections and exhibitions, tells us that it's hugely popular with kids, and though they've never tested the T's water-pumping capabilities, it appears to be ready for action.

In its day, this life and property saver was the pride of the New Portland, Maine, Volunteer Fire Department, serving a population of approximately 850 people. New Portland is roughly 100 miles north of Portland—Maine's largest city—and today its population numbers fewer than 700.

Interestingly, a massive fire was responsible for the founding of this veteran firefighter's former home base: The British burned Falmouth (today's Portland) in 1775 in retaliation for early attacks launched by American colonists. After the Revolutionary War, the residents of

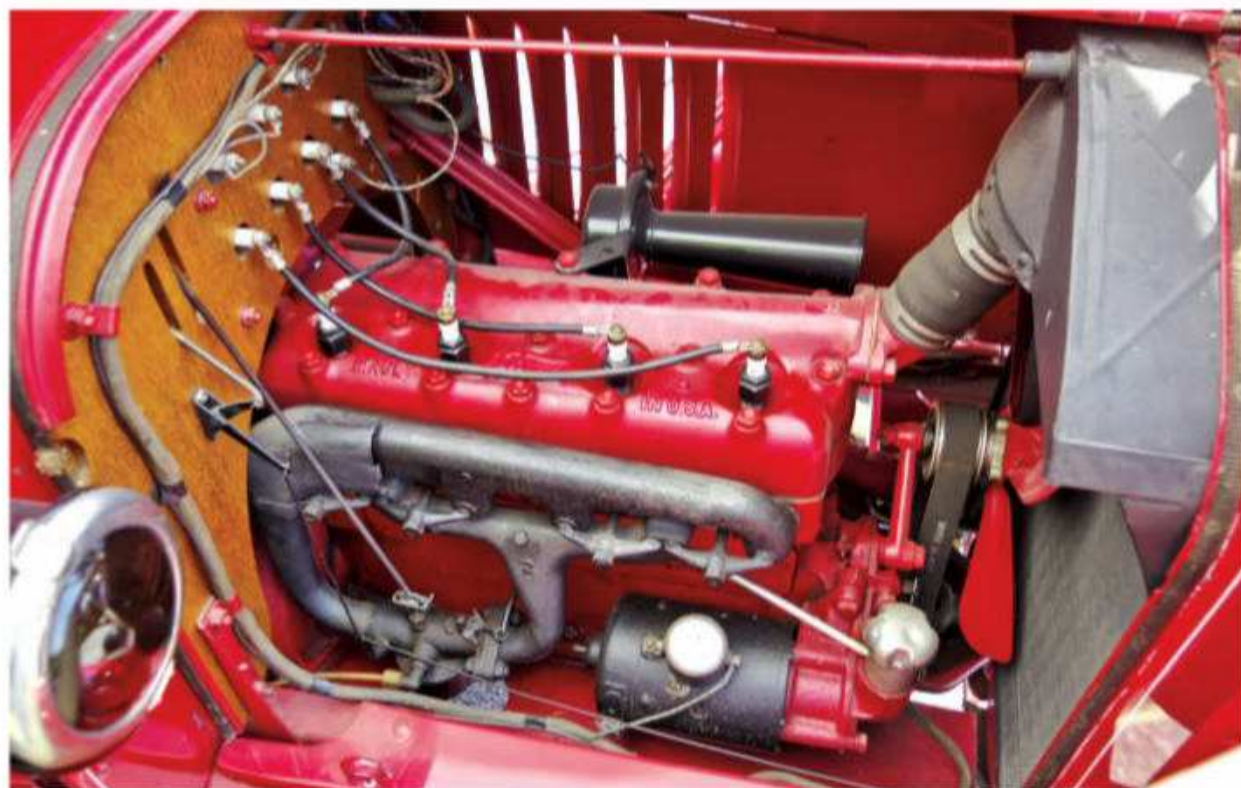


Falmouth/Portland were given New Portland and Freeman by the state as compensation for their losses. The first settlers moved there in 1783, and it was incorporated as a town in 1808. The town is made up of three villages, North, East, and West New Portland. In 1919, a few years prior to our bright-red feature rig's arrival, the buildings along North New Portland's Main Street burned to the ground. Perhaps in the wake of that, local officials figured a new fire truck was a wise purchase.

We're not sure if the Howe Engine Company, later the Howe Fire Apparatus Company, was among the first to outfit a Model T with firefighting gear, but Howe became one of the nation's most prolific up-fitters alongside American LaFrance and others. During World War I, Howe was awarded a contract to build 163 Model T Ford pumpers for the U.S. War Department to fight fires around camps, and some of these later made their way as surplus to municipal fire companies, often serving until World War II-surplus trucks were offered.

Howe Model Ts quenched fires with a three-piston Buckeye Triplex Piston Pump that could move water at a rate of 250 gallons per minute. The suction hose for the pump, draped across the front of the truck during transport, allowed it to draw from a water source if it was available, while a booster tank mounted on the rear of the rig beneath the hose reel allowed firefighters to carry a supply of water.

Howe was a storied name in firefighting apparatus, though it was relegated to history by the 1980s after it was purchased and rolled into Grumman Emergency Products in 1976, thus ending more than a century of independent operation by the Howe family.



Modern fire trucks are equipped with Allison automatics—the T's three-pedal configuration would confound most firefighters. Ford's 20-hp four served double duty as power for the rig when responding as well as for the Howe three-piston pump when it came time to douse the flames.







The suction hose for the pump was looped over the T's hood on a custom rack during transport. At the back of the truck, a fire extinguisher mounted in a neat carrier, the lid of a tool box accommodates spare nozzle tips, while a covered trailer hauls hose and gear.

The company was founded by Benjamin J.C. Howe in 1872 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Its earliest pumpers were horse-drawn and its Horse-Power fire engine, introduced in 1875, used a rotary design pump powered by horses hitched up to the rig, walking in a circle. The 20th century brought gasoline power for Howe's pumps still aboard horse-drawn wagons, but the company was modifying passenger cars into pumper rigs as early as 1905.

Howe's WWI-era government contract in 1917 helped establish the Model T as a platform for its three-piston pump and it continued to sell these rigs after the war to small fire companies for about \$1,800

each. When Ford's one-ton TT truck chassis rolled onto the scene, Howe shifted to building pumpers on these sturdier rigs. Through the 1920s, the company mounted its pumps on a number of other commercial trucks, as well, including REOs.

The now-legendary Howe Defender nameplate arrived in the 1930s. The Defender was a top-of-the-line rig touted as customizable to meet the unique needs of individual fire companies. Gramm and Duplex cabs and chassis were the basis for the Defender, but Howe was also converting Ford, Chevrolet, Dodge, Diamond T, FWD, and Oshkosh rigs into firefighters.

By WWII, Howe was a leader in the industry and was again warded

government contracts for the military. After the war, pent-up demand for municipal firefighting equipment was a boon for Howe, which expanded its offerings to include aerial rigs and heavy-duty airport crash trucks.

Remarkably, Howe's last piston-type pump was built in 1976, more than 100 years after its founder secured the patent. The last Howe-branded pumper truck manufactured was on a C-series cabover Ford chassis in 1980. Following that, parent company Grumman sold firefighting equipment under its own name.

Today, Ford's Model T is heralded as the car that made automobile ownership practical for millions of Americans, but its low price and broad aftermarket support turned it into a platform ripe for modification. Fighting fires was probably one of the last uses Henry Ford had in mind when he introduced his T to the world in 1908, but armed with Howe's three-piston pump, the Lizzie served the U.S. military at war and local fire companies for decades. 🚒





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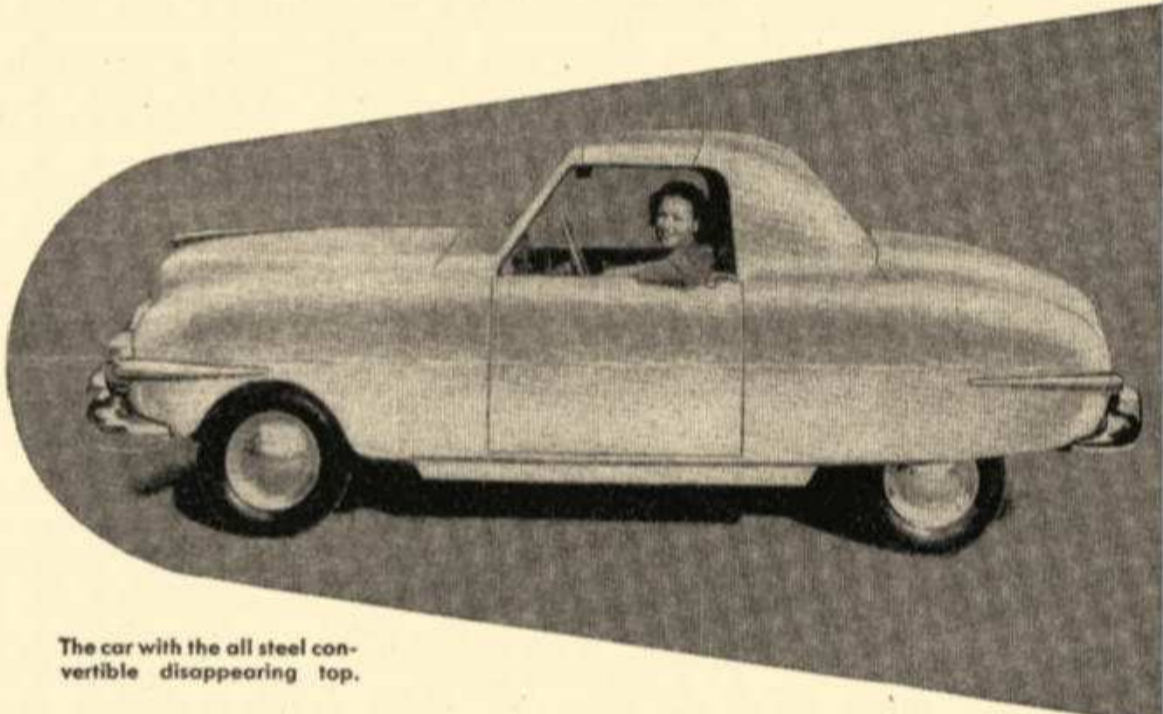
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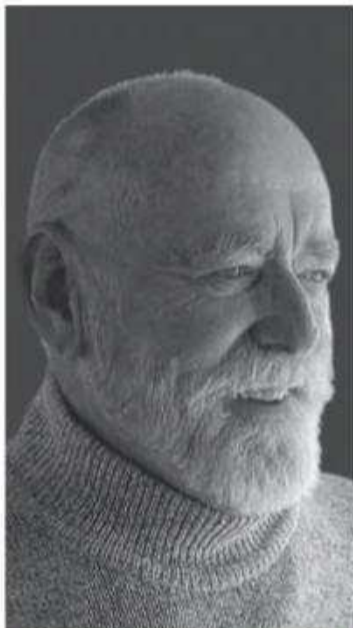
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## Going Out in Style

One of my first memories is Aunt Dolly's 1940 La Salle. This would have been in 1945. I was four years old at the time, but the restrained beauty of that car stayed with me forever. And then, a few years later, Uncle George drove up to a family picnic in a 1947 Cadillac sedanette. It was sleek and stunning, and its big flathead V-8 made the most incredible rumble.

I didn't realize then that under all that magnificent bodywork these cars were almost identical. That's because styling and design were a seductive ruse to sell new cars by making old ones look obsolete. And that's why styling really got into high gear during the Great Depression.

In fact, due to fierce competition and scarce money, industrial design reached its golden age during the 1930s. That's because the auto companies needed ways to make their cars seem new and revolutionary without the expense of re-engineering engines, chassis, and other components that most people didn't understand anyway.

Harley Earl got styling rolling originally when he designed the new 1927 La Salle for Cadillac, knocking off Hispano-Suiza, and it was a hit. So much so that he was able to establish the first in-house automobile design studio at General Motors, calling it the Art and Colour Section.

Shortly thereafter, Henry Ford had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century by his son Edsel and designer E.T. Gregorie just to compete. The "two boxes with a wheel at each corner approach" of the 1920s evolved into the sensuous pointed-prow curvaceous look of the late 1930's Fords and Zephyrs. The visual evolution was startling, though the chassis on these cars were essentially the same as those on Model A's from a decade before.

Styling stopped due to the war. There was just the Jeep, and ugly fatigues everywhere. But soon after the war, a new kind of styling came about—not thanks to stylists—but because of the research done by aerodynamics engineers.

Beauty was the last thing on their minds, though. Drag reduction was what they were after,

and what engineers at Lockheed came up with was the P-38 Lightning interceptor. There was no styling, and yet it was beautiful. Why? Because they had stumbled onto a principle of nature.

Look at sharks and seagulls, and you'll see what I mean. They are beautiful, though they are totally unaware of it. However, they prove a fundamental axiom of modern design, which is: Form follows function.

Earl took his stylists to look at the P-38 and admonished them to "Make it like that." And

that is how the postwar Cadillacs got fins, and bullet bumpers. It wasn't aerodynamics that sold those cars, though. Chrysler had tried that back in 1934 with its Airflow, and it flopped.

It was the look of speed that knocked people off their feet. Soon after, the stylists of the '50s started imitating jet aircraft with sweptback fins, headlamps that looked like engine ducts, taillamps that lit up like jet exhausts,

and chrome strips streaking down the sides of cars. This thinking lasted into the early 1960s, but then European design began making itself felt.

Jaguars, Ferraris, and Alfa Romeos had been showing up at racetracks and blowing the doors off of American cars. They were fast and nimble, but most important, they were beautiful. They were clean, uncluttered, sensuous, and exciting. They had much more sophisticated suspensions and engines, too. And you can forget safety. Ford tried it in the late 1950s, and nobody cared. People wanted fast, fun, and sexy.

In the '60s, Detroit dropped big V-8 engines in intermediate cars making them hits at the drag strip, but it did not make them handle better, and it did not make them more dependable. Adding a few Ferrari styling cues helped sales, though. And then the Japanese invaders did an end run and beat us at our own game by concentrating on reliability, which turned out to be another crucial factor in auto-sales success.

I value reliability, but I must admit that styling has captivated and seduced me for as long as I can remember. I will drive my modern car to work, but I stick with my La Salle and Packards for touring and pleasure cruises. I'll always be a sucker for a pretty face. 🐶



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