



THE YEAR WAS 1907

“There are towns in the East that boast an automobile to every one hundred of the population... Los Angeles, with a quarter of a million people, has an automobile for every eighty persons. It is without exception the banner automobile city of the world.”
– Los Angeles Times / January 23, 1907

Ninety-nine cars were on display opening night at the first Los Angeles Auto Show. Held January 21 - 27 at Morley's Skating Rink on Grand Avenue, the show opened to more than three thousand people, excited and dressed for a party, crowding through the doors in the opening hours.

It was not only the first automobile show ever to take place on the West Coast; it was the largest event of its kind west of Chicago, a pivotal moment in the history of both Los Angeles and the automobile. The year was 1907.

Preparations for the show took place amid a media frenzy that today would be reserved for movie stars arriving at the Oscars. There was a huge parade of gaily decorated cars the night before the grand opening, featuring an appreciable percentage of automobile population of Los Angeles, estimated at 3,500.

At precisely 8:00 pm on that historic Monday evening, Los Angeles Mayor Arthur C. Harper formally opened the show by flipping a switch that sent waves of light pulsing through ten thousand globes hanging from the ceiling.

Forty-six manufacturers were represented, including such names as Maxwell, Peerless, Overland, Pope-Toledo and White, along with more familiar names that have survived into the present era, such as Ford and Cadillac. Two of the cars were electric, the rest gasoline-powered, with 2-, 3-, 4- and 6-cylinder engines ranging in horsepower from 12 to 60.

The two cars that attracted the most attention were both from Los Angeles-based manufacturers. In an era with few roads, the Christman was designed to go where there were none at all. It was a large, heavy, rugged-looking machine with broad tread, large wheels and a body fitted with three seats like an old-fashioned buckboard... arguably the first SUV.

The “durable Durocar,” featured sturdy construction, but was powered by a 2-cylinder, 24 horsepower engine designed for easy cranking so a lady could drive without the help of a man... arguably the beginning of equality of the sexes.

The only foreign car in the show, indeed the first foreign car to go on sale in Los Angeles, was the French-build Darracq, which the company advertised as the “fastest car in the world.”

Famous people were on hand as well, including a young Henry Ford, not yet a world-shaker, but already clearly a rising star. Also present, touting the virtues of his Peerless “Green Dragon,” the car in which he became the first man to drive around a racetrack at an average speed in excess of sixty miles an hour, was the premier racing driver and automotive daredevil of his time, Barney Oldfield.

By the time the show was over – attendance and interest was so high it was extended for an extra day – the relationship between Los Angeles and the automobile had been transformed. Newspapers were already writing about the new trend

of businessmen living in the country and driving into the city for their work. Along “Gasoline Row,” a cluster of more than 50 automotive businesses within a few blocks of the corner of Broadway and Main, salesmen were still marveling at the number of new cars ordered at the show – and astonished at how many of them were ordered by women. Cars were hot and business was booming.

That long-ago LA Times writer who called LA “... the banner automobile city of the world.” not only got that part right, but he also understood the reason and used that knowledge to look into the future – “The reason is twofold. We can use the cars all year because we have the climate and we have them because we can afford it. Los Angeles has entered the automobilist’s galaxy by having an automobile show of her own, the first ever held on the Pacific Coast. It marks an advance in the wealth and prosperity of the Southwest. Perhaps there is nothing in the world’s progress more astonishing and more indicative of the pace at which we move than the development of the automobile. In ten years it has grown from an inventor’s dream into one of the most significant facts of complex modern life.”

**SO IT WAS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO...
AND SO IT REMAINS.**

Three New Rambler Models
At the Show all This Week

We will be pleased to receive our friends and agents at our exhibit at the Auto Show, where we are prepared to show you the goodness of Ramblers—The Cars of Constant Service. At once deliveries are promised and like the Rambler itself we'll make good.

The New Surrey Model with Tilting Body
This Swell New Runabout
Rambler 4-Cylinder Touring Cars

W. K. Cowan
Agent for Southern California
433-434 South Broadway
Los Angeles, California

Arrived at Last!
The Model H '07

Cleveland

The Car Without a Weak Spot

IT'S A BEAUTY AND BETTER THAN IT LOOKS. The Cleveland is essentially the same as the well known Type F '06 model of which there were TWICE AS MANY SOLD IN NEW YORK CITY, (the most critical automobile market in the world) as of any other high grade car.

THE LAST TYPE H CLEVELAND is better where bettering was possible—refined and perfected in little things that go so much for higher efficiency and comfort, but the '06 Car was so satisfactory under service that no radical changes could be suggested.

THE 1907 TYPE H CLEVELAND retains the simple and easy low tension valves and break ignition with imported Simms brush magnets, refined and developed to absolute perfection. No wires, batteries, spark plugs, coils or commutators, eliminating all the most common sources of trouble.

Will arrive by express Monday the 21st model

Woods Electric Victoria

The undisputed sovereign of all electric cars. More than 850 (80 per cent) of all Woods Electric are in daily use in Chicago alone. See us at the show—near main entrance.

LORD MOTOR CAR CO.

1044 So. Main Street, Los Angeles

MORLEY'S GRAND AVENUE RINK
JANUARY 21 TO 26

Grand Ave., between
9th and 10th Sts.

Automobile Show

Under the auspices of the Automobile Dealers' association of Southern California. Most costly display ever on the coast. The social event of the season. Seventy different makes of machines. One million dollars' worth of autos.

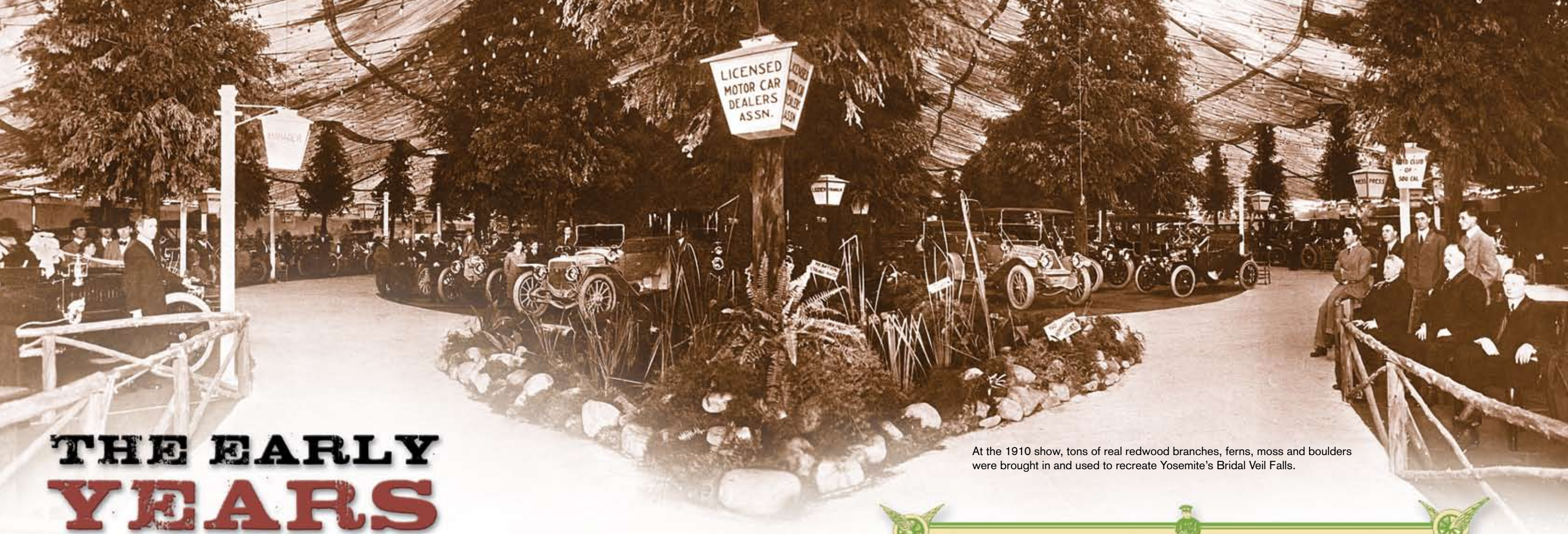
Magnificent Electrical Effects
See Barney Oldfield and His "Green Dragon."

In Attendance:--
Ladies' Venetian Mandolin Orchestra. Royal Hawaiian Sextet. Leading Instrumental Soloists

Grand Opening Monday Evening at 8:00 o'Clock.
Brilliant Electrical Display turned on by **Hon. A. C. Harper,**
Mayor of Los Angeles.

Open Daily Thereafter from 11:00 a. m. to 11:00 p. m.

Vehicle attendant. All Grand Avenue cars stop in front of building. Clean street crossings. All cars transfer. Admission 50c.



THE EARLY YEARS

At the 1910 show, tons of real redwood branches, ferns, moss and boulders were brought in and used to recreate Yosemite's Bridal Veil Falls.

The second LA Auto Show, in 1909, moved to the basement of the Hamburger's Department store and new rules were adopted that strived for uniformity. Green and white was the color scheme and management reserved the right to reject any display that distracted from the overall look.

For 1910, the show again changed venues. To expand, a former football field at Fiesta Park was converted into the show site with tents providing 80,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space. Twenty tons of redwood branches, beds of ferns, moss and potted plants were brought in to create a forest-like atmosphere.

In 1915, the show was called the Broadway Automobile and Flower show, because it was just that. The show took over four floors of a vacant department store building and devoted two floors for automotive displays and one floor for competitive displays of begonias, orchids, roses, water lilies and other flowers. The remaining floor contained accessories, a café and a ballroom for dancing.



1909 auto show located at the Hamburger Department store.

THE SENSATION OF THE SHOW IS

*DO NOT FAIL TO
Inspect our magnificent
DISPLAY OF*

COUPES
VICTORIAS
RUNABOUTS

THE ELECTRIC GARAGE
*The Largest and Finest
Exclusive Electric Garage
on the entire coast*

100 EAST UNION STREET
PASADENA CALIFORNIA

"THE DETROIT ELECTRIC RUNABOUT"

Advertisement from the 1909 program book.

1920's

Automobiles were mostly painted black and still more of a novelty than a necessity in the 1920's. While the city's first traffic light was installed in 1920, on Broadway between 3rd and 7th, the first traffic laws weren't enacted until 1925.

Even so, LA was already a major 'car town' with more cars per person than Chicago or New York – and the Los Angeles Auto Show kept getting bigger. Organizers kept searching for larger venues, moving the show four times between buildings and tents from 1920 to 1930.



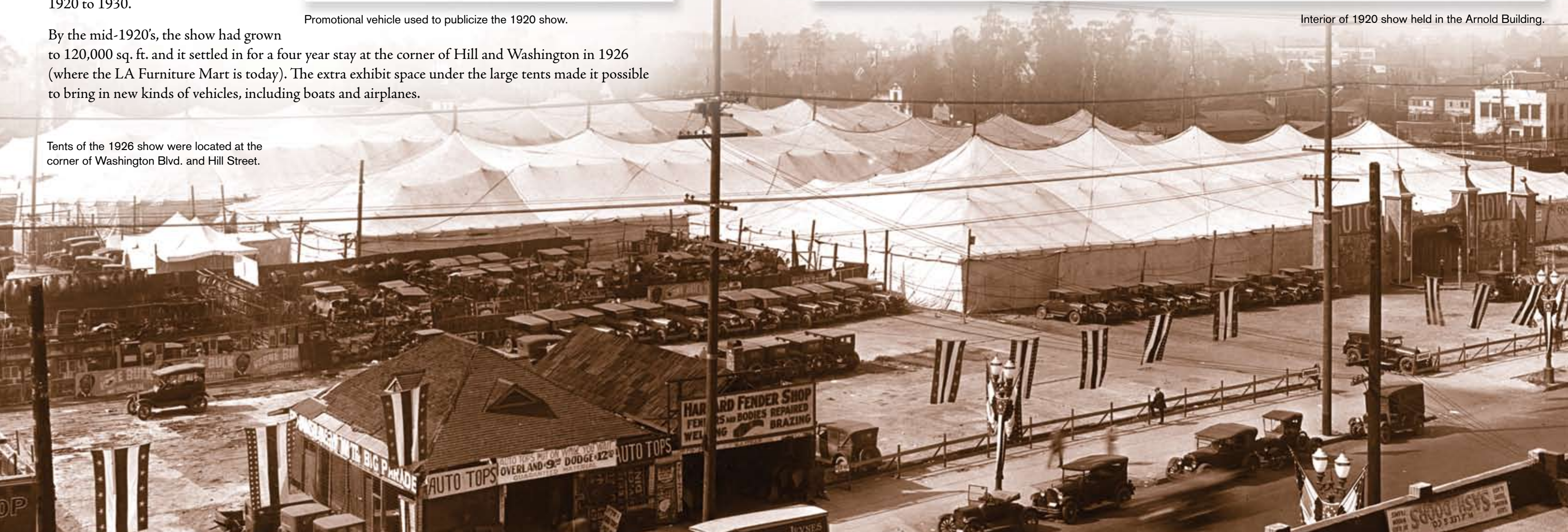
Promotional vehicle used to publicize the 1920 show.

By the mid-1920's, the show had grown to 120,000 sq. ft. and it settled in for a four year stay at the corner of Hill and Washington in 1926 (where the LA Furniture Mart is today). The extra exhibit space under the large tents made it possible to bring in new kinds of vehicles, including boats and airplanes.

Tents of the 1926 show were located at the corner of Washington Blvd. and Hill Street.



Interior of 1920 show held in the Arnold Building.



1929 - THE BIG FIRE

On March 5th, at 4:10 in the afternoon, an electrical short circuit in one of the airplane exhibits started a fire that raced up the draperies and decorations, setting the tents ablaze. In a matter of minutes, the entire show was enveloped in flames and by the time the fire department got things under control half an hour later, more than \$1 million worth of vehicles had been reduced to twisted metal and ashes.

By some miracle, though 2,500 people were at the show when the fire started, no one was seriously injured. But the blackened wreckage proved to be as much of an attraction as the show itself with thousands of cars jamming downtown streets as they drove by for a look. Ultimately profiting from the disaster was the junkyard located on an adjoining lot. When cleanup began, the fence was lowered and the burned vehicles were simply dragged over and added to the inventory.

This might have been the end of another auto show, for that year at least, but show chairman Watt L. Moreland was determined that the show would go on. With the help of a small army of volunteers, and a fleet of tow trucks provided by the Southern California Auto Club, enough cars were found to assemble a new auto show... and one day later the Los Angeles Auto Show, Part 2, opened at the Shrine Auditorium.

The new show, with extensive decorations, live entertainment and a full compliment of vehicles on display, was proclaimed equal to – and in some respects better than – the original.



Spectators view fire from one of the entrances.



A junkyard worker views burned-out vehicles.



24 hours later the show is reopened at the Shrine Auditorium.



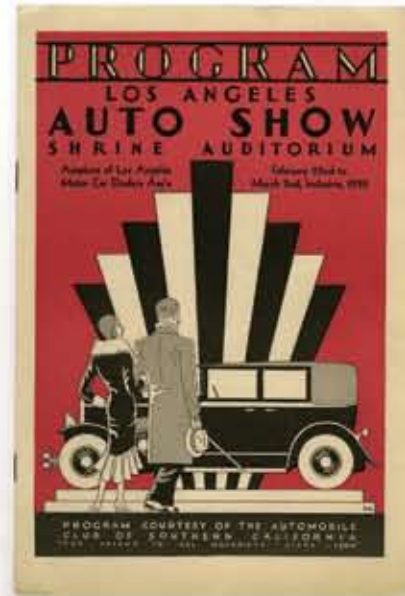
1930's

In the 1930's, the show continued to be popular, despite the Great Depression. In fact, the show may have served as an entertaining diversion from it. At the low point in 1932, vehicle sales had dropped to one-half the sales levels of 1929.

From 1931 to 1935, the show was held at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue in two specially constructed auditoriums (tents). In 1935, President Roosevelt requested all the major auto shows, including Los Angeles, move their dates from winter to the fall so that car sales would boost the economy and provide for a more cheerful Christmas season. Consequently, a second show was held in November at the newly opened Pan Pacific Auditorium.

As the economy improved in the late 1930's, the show continued to grow and prosper until the onset of World War II.

Show-goers wait in line to enter the 1935 show at Wilshire & Fairfax.



Program from the 1930 auto show.



Interior view of 1935 show.



1950's



1955 Chevrolet Bel Air outaway.



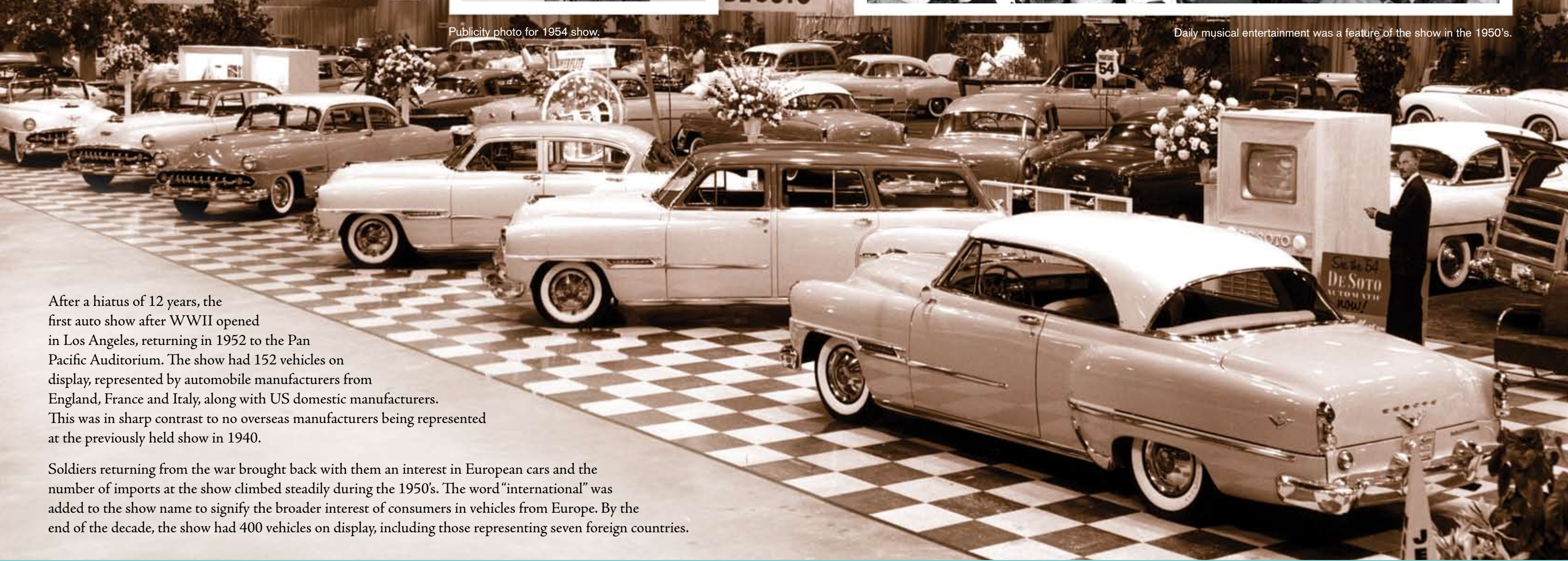
Publicity photo for 1954 show.



Daily musical entertainment was a feature of the show in the 1950's.

After a hiatus of 12 years, the first auto show after WWII opened in Los Angeles, returning in 1952 to the Pan Pacific Auditorium. The show had 152 vehicles on display, represented by automobile manufacturers from England, France and Italy, along with US domestic manufacturers. This was in sharp contrast to no overseas manufacturers being represented at the previously held show in 1940.

Soldiers returning from the war brought back with them an interest in European cars and the number of imports at the show climbed steadily during the 1950's. The word "international" was added to the show name to signify the broader interest of consumers in vehicles from Europe. By the end of the decade, the show had 400 vehicles on display, including those representing seven foreign countries.



1950's



Promotional event at the 1958 auto show.



Post WWII European cars at the auto show.



MOST EXCITING YET !

36th International

Auto Show

PAN - PACIFIC AUDITORIUM November 14 to 23

AUTO
SHOW

The growth of the show further required that tents be erected adding an additional 60,000 square feet of exhibition space at the Pan Pacific to accommodate the increasing number of models and manufacturers. In addition to the expanding product lines of European manufacturers, the 1960's saw the introduction of Japanese manufacturers to the US market. On the domestic side, the 1960's represented the height of the muscle car era and the two vehicles that defined the genre were the Ford Mustang and Pontiac's GTO, both introduced in the mid-sixties.

Manufacturer exhibits continued to evolve with more elaborate presentations, such as cutaway cars, and the ever increasing number of dream or experimental cars of the future that fascinated show-goers.



Concept car on display at the 1968 show.

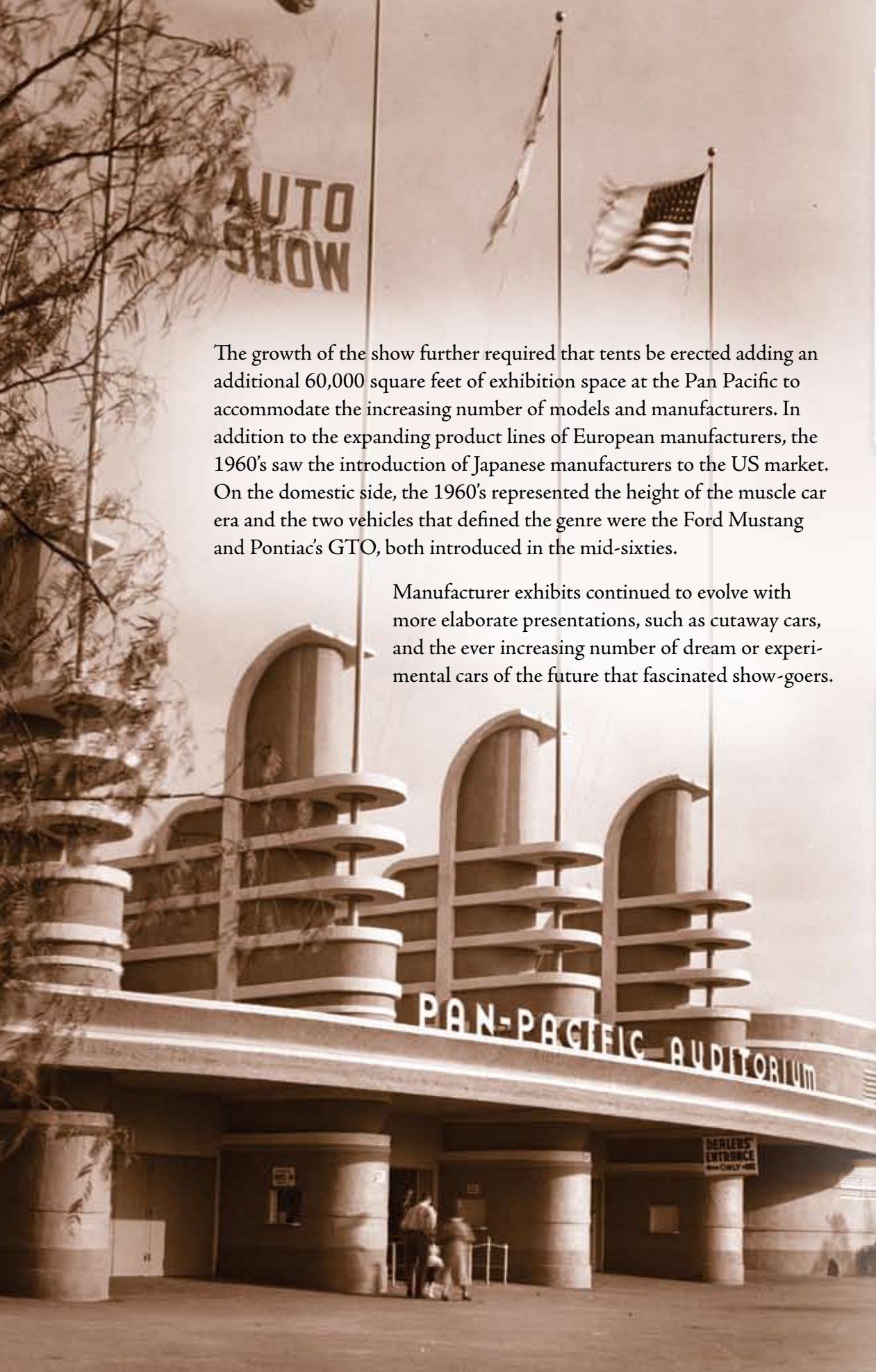


Go-Go girls at the Fiat display during the 1968 show.

1960's



Inside the Pan Pacific Auditorium at the 1964 show.



The Modern ERA



While the development of the Los Angeles Auto Show into an international event started 100 years ago, it is in the last 25 years some of the most significant progress has been made.

The expansion of the Los Angeles Convention Center in 1993 finally provided the show with enough exhibit space to meet the needs of its exhibitors and consumers. Manufacturers increasingly utilize the show to introduce new cars and present concept vehicles attracting several thousand journalists from the USA and around the world. The use of multi-media presentations with cutting-edge technologies enable exhibitors to communicate images and information in a compelling manner that both informs and entertains show-goers.

Now with new fall show dates, the future looks even more promising for the Los Angeles Auto Show. Manufacturers will be increasing their activities with more vehicle debuts, more elaborate press conferences, and more attractive exhibits, all of which will provide journalists and consumers with reasons to attend and enjoy the show.



Manufacturer press conferences have become an important aspect of the show.



Automobile exhibits have evolved to enhance the appeal of vehicles.