Richard and Jackie Hartung

1939 DeSoto

“Extra luxury at no extra cost” was the tag line for DeSoto. While it seems unimportant now, 1939 saw the first headlights that were set flush with the surface of the fender rather than perched in a cone on top. This huge styling advancement was led by Chrysler Corporation. In its advertising, DeSoto successfully tapped the celebrity of famous figures of the time, including Walt Disney (“Hey, Walt, looks like you have another hit on your hands”). He was joined by Myrna Loy, Carole Lombard, Ginger Rogers, and Spencer Tracey, who all drove DeSotos and playing a central role in their advertising.

Marty Watkins

1941 Cadillac Sedan

One of the most elegant cars ever to roll off the GM production line, the 1941 is one of the iconic designs of the century. With its egg crate grill, low sweeping fender line, full-width frontal appearance, and elegant interior and exterior detailing, it was light years ahead of its nearest rivals. The 60 Special shown at the Beth Sholom owes its beautiful color and excellent condition to the careful restoration by owner Marty Watkins.
Jerry Parnes

**1949 Chrysler Town and Country Convertible**

The Town and Country Convertible was one of the most luxurious vehicles when it was introduced in 1945. It was priced from $2,743 in its first year, almost as much as a Cadillac. It had a beautifully appointed leather interior and one of the best looking wood bodies, built of white ash and mahogany. It also featured Chrysler's most potent engine at the time. Only some 8,700 examples were built, making it one of the rarest and most sought-after American classics. (topspeed.com)

Scott Epstein

**1952 Studebaker Commander Convertible**

The Commander was the upscale variant of the Studebaker Starlight coupe. Designed by Virgil Exner (with Raymond Loewy), the car has chic, modern appearance and a host of enviable details and brightwork. The unique interior styling pushed the boundaries of contemporary styling. Priced on the slightly more expensive side of the spectrum, only 1,715 convertibles were built, making them as exceedingly rare today. A Studebaker Commander Convertible was the pace car for the Indianapolis 500 auto race in 1952. (mecom.com)
The immediate postwar years were marked by a pivotal change in automotive styling in the United States. Suddenly everything needed to be "European"—most of all women’s clothes and men’s cars. US automakers competed to produce versions of European sports cars, which the GI’s and other Americans who had stayed in Europe after the war had come to love. But in America there was only one really affordable, obtainable choice: the British-built MG—typified by this stunning 1953 MGTD.

Sam Shipley

1953 Cadillac Series 62 convertible

The 1950-1953 Series 62 Cadillac cemented the brand’s status at the pinnacle of the postwar luxury car market. Known for its “Dagmar style” front bumper guards and tail fins inspired by the P-38 fighter plane, this Cadillac outsold Packard, its nearest rival, and Lincoln and Imperial combined. It may be remembered that a first-year Eldorado convertible transported newly sworn-in President Dwight D. Eisenhower and First Lady Mamie Eisenhower from the swearing-in ceremony to the White House in the 1953 inauguration parade.
Elegantly understated, the Continental Mark II’s advertising touted “the thrill of being conservative.” (Where’s Barry Goldwater when we need him?). At just 30 years of age, William Clay Ford (Henry Ford II’s younger brother) took charge of this special project, overseeing design and engineering. The car combined the best of everything at a “damn the torpedoes full speed ahead” price of 9,966 Eisenhower dollars. It represented a monumental outlay by the Ford Motor Company, which created a stand alone Continental Division and devoted a 1 3/4 year production run to build 3,005 cars.

Steven Mebs
1956 Chevrolet Bel Air Convertible

The 1956 Chevrolet: was made famous by collectors, who have sought the “tri-5 Chevys”—the ‘55,’56, ‘57 models. This handsome trio is prized by nearly everyone—he 1956 is arguably the best looking of the thee, although it is generally overlooked—the frequent fate of the under-appreciated middle child (or model year).
John Posen

1956 Mercury Montclair

The Montclair was the “top of the line” series for 1956. In that year, almost 90% of Mercury production included automatic transmission while only 1% had air conditioning. Mercurys won five NASCAR Grand National races in 1956.

Dennis Milstein

1957 Ford Thunderbird

This was the most successful and many say most handsome of a large group of post-war attempts to duplicate the European sportscars that GI’s craved. The Nash Healy, Hudson Italia, Kaiser Darren, Chevrolet Corvette, and Studebaker Starliner also attempted to compete in this segment…some more successfully than others. The president of Ford, Robert McNamara, killed the two-seater Thunderbird before moving on to the Pentagon in his role as Secretary of Defense and Vietnam War strategist for both Kennedy and Johnson.
The 1957 was this brand's last big model year before it began a gradual sales decline--eventually ending its run in 1961. Priced between Chrysler and Dodge in the corporate hierarchy, the Desoto occupied the upper end of the mid-priced car market. A great example of the Exner era, it perhaps best known for its unique twin tower taillights and loop style front bumper.

The Custom Royal was an entirely new car styled for the late 1950's. It was longer, lower, and wider than any prior car and other cars of the era. Torsion Bar suspension, a powerful Hemi engine, and TorqueFlite transmission provided speed and responsive handling. this Dodge helped the brand move up several notches in the sales race. The car exhibited at Beth Sholom is painted in an attractive and authentic red and white color scheme,
Hank Hallowell

1958 Chrysler Imperial Crown convertible

The finest expression of Virgil Exner’s Forward Look, this is the design that temporarily pushed Lincoln into third place in the luxury car sales race. Just 674 Crown Convertibles were assembled. Originally from Arkansas, this rust-free example possesses the majority of its original interior and is powered by the famous 392 Hemi engine. It is painted Tahitian Coral.

Richard Purvis

1959 Buick Electra 225 Convertible

General Motors was caught totally off guard by Chrysler Corporation’s 1957 “Forward Look” cars, which were revolutionary in both visual impact and engineering. Their answer (delayed by manufacturing lead times) was the all-new 1959 “Linear Look,” best exemplified by this “4 finned” convertible. This model was labeled the “225” because it was a majestic 225 inches from stem to stern.
Bill Abate

**1959 Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner**

(advertisement)

The Ford Fairlane 500 Galaxie Skyliner convertible-hardtop is the epitome of the positive “gee-what-will-they-think-of-next” thinking of the Eisenhower era. Using 610 feet of wiring, 6 reversible electric motors, 4 lift jacks and 10 limit switches, this modern miracle raised and lowered the two sections of the roof in a matter of seconds. Ford sold nearly 13,000 Skyliners in 1959. Originally developed for the 1956-7 Lincoln Continental Mark II, the concept was moved to the 1957 Ford and introduced to TV viewers by America’s first couple: (no, not the Eisenhowers) Lucy and Ricky Ricardo--via TV commercials during “I Love Lucy.”

E.A. Plazek

**1959 Chevrolet El Camino**

(similar car)

In 1952 designer Harley Earl had suggested a coupé pickup---a cross between a pickup truck and a car, but the El Camino was not introduced until 1959, two years after Ford’s similar hybrid, the Ranchero. Like the Ranchero, it was based on an existing platform, the Brookwood two-door station wagon. The highly stylized El Camino sold 50% more briskly than the more conservative Ranchero. It was promoted as the first Chevrolet pickup built with a bed floor of steel instead of wood. (Wikipedia)
John and Dana Regan

1959 Cadillac Coupe de Ville

The 1959 Cadillac is remembered for its huge, sharp tailfins with dual bullet tail lights, distinctive rooflines, jewel-like grille patterns and matching deck lid beauty panels. Engine output was an even 325 hp (242 kW) from the 390 cu in (6.4 L) engine. Standard equipment included power brakes with 15-inch wheels, power steering, automatic transmission, back-up lamps, two-speed wipers, wheel discs, outside rearview mirror, vanity mirror, power windows and two-way power seats. (Wikipedia)

Jim Wood

1959 Ford Custom 300

This Ford Custom 300 Business Coupe is a super rare survivor of a car that emphatically emphasized the importance of thrift and savings. In the Eisenhower era, saving for the future and paying cash for goods and services was considered the attributes of a positive way of life. Personal responsibility included taking proper care of your low-end car. Used for business it was also a thing of beauty - just like this car. Note the roll-up windows, “3 on-the-tree” transmission, and rubber floor mats!
Richard Schickling  
**1960 Studebaker Hawk**

The Studebaker Hawk was the American car industry's first effort at fielding a 5-passenger “family sports/personal car.” Based on a famous 1953 coupe design by the celebrated Raymond Loewy -- winner of numerous styling and design awards, the Hawk was the top-of-the-line Studebaker as the firm neared its extinction in 1964.

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Brian Rachlin  
**1960 Cadillac Deville**

This design was a reaction against what some say was the outrageous, over-the-top styling of the prior model year. After a Nutri-system like diet, the ’60 Cadillac was stripped of nearly all of the 1959 excesses: smaller fins, less and more tasteful use of chrome, cleaner grill, and simpler interior upholstery. This diet resulted in a strikingly beautiful car: gentle flowing lines following the length of the car, from the hood to the refined stacked tail lights. In a world of “less is more” design, many preferred the clean 1960 styling.
This is the seventh generation of the Chrysler “letter series” and one of just 337 originally produced. 1961 was the last year for famed Virgil Exner’s beloved “Forward Look” tail fin design. Best known for its signature canted headlights, matched by canted tail fins, the “G” is powered by a cross ram manifold system providing nearly 400 horsepower. This car was special-ordered by a powerful executive who owned the company that transported new Chrysler Corporation vehicles to their dealer network, and it was thus equipped with a special custom black leather interior.

Dan Vieyra

1969 Volkswagen “Bug”

Five fun facts you didn’t know about the VW Beetle:

1) in 1925, over a decade before the Beetle went into production, an 18-year-old Hungarian student named Béla Barényi created a chassis design that is recognized as the basic foundation for the car.

2) When production began in Nazi Germany in 1938, it was referred to as the “people’s car” (Volkswagen). That year the New York Times described it as a “beetle,” and the name caught on.
3) The Beetle had the longest production run in history, 65 years, beginning in 1938 and ending in 2003.

4) The last Beetle was assembled on July 31, 2003, in Mexico, and it was immediately shipped to Wolfsburg, Germany, and placed in the VW Museum.

5) At the outbreak of World War II, German workers quickly packed and buried the tooling necessary to build the Beetle when its factory switched over to wartime munitions production. Following the war, British soldiers helped surviving factory workers excavate the machinery and put the car back into production in what was then the British Zone of occupied Germany.