

FLAGS 3.0

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A BROOKVILLE CORVETTE CLUB EXCURSION TO



Wow! You Missed It!!



SPECIAL EDITION



So, for some time now, I've been trying to convince everyone that we should do a road trip up to Michigan and take in the **Gilmore Car Museum** in Hickory Grove. It is, without a doubt, one of the pre-eminent car museums in the United States.

Gilmore is spread out over 93 pristine acres about 20 minutes northeast of Kalamazoo. On display in 7 different buildings are almost 400 of the most beautiful cars you could find. And right now until next March, they have a Corvette display in the main building that has 23 fine examples of Corvette covering every year from 1953 up to 2021!

Why stop just at Gilmore. On the way up, we pass another classic car museum – the **Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum** in Auburn, IN. Again, one of the most historic car museums that you'll ever visit. Housed in the original art-deco showroom on the grounds of the original factory, you'll see some of the most historic, classic motor cars from days-gone-by.

Well, after some discussion and a little persuasion, I was able to gather 5 BCC members to make the excursion. On Tuesday, September 14 through Thursday the 16th, we hit both Museums. Gary Chesnut, Dave Ransdell, Don Thokey, Bob Freshour and I set out in the Vettes for Auburn and our first stop – the ACD Museum. Also joining us on the journey was past BCC member Gary Bell who rode along with Bob. Also catching up to us in Kalamazoo was a friend of Dave's – Mike. Mike's story on Gilmore was really funny. You'll scratch your head on this one.

It just wouldn't be a BCC adventure if something didn't go awry during the trip. As you flip through these pages, you'll find out what happened to one of our members very early on in the trip. And, of course, the rest of us took great advantage and some pleasure in his "*lesson learned*" mental lapse.

So, once again, sit back and read all about another great BCC trip. And, for those that were not able to join us or rode the fence, you really missed one fantastic trip. Both of these museums are surely "must do" and definitely should be on your bucket list.

Just ask the guys that made the trip.

A MENTAL LAPSE – IT HAPPENS

Our trip started out uneventful. We met up just west of Englewood and drove the 2+ hours up to Auburn, Indiana. We only had 5 cars in the caravan, so it was relatively easy to keep everyone together.

The first order of business was to stop and have lunch in Auburn before heading over to the Museum. There's an Applebee's right at the main exit in Auburn, so we pulled into the parking lot, parked in a line as we normally do and started to walk towards the front door of the restaurant.

But wait! As Bob climbs out of his car, he seems to be perplexed. He's feeling around his back pockets and has this look of utter disgust on his face. It seems that in his haste to leave the house in the morning, he forgot one critical item – his **WALLET!** Here we are, 150 miles from home and eventually heading into southern Michigan and Bob is – well – flat broke. No cash. No credit cards. No driver's license. Nothing.

Frustration sets in. He tells us that he's embarrassed and that we shouldn't even sit with him. Of course we rally around him and assure him that we have his back. *"Don't worry, Bob. We'll take good care of you and certainly don't worry about the money. You're good for it"*.

Then we go into the restaurant and the fun begins. When we sit down to order, we politely tell our waitress (Bella, a great sport that played right along with us) that Bob is broke. From there, she rags on Bob that he probably only wants to drink water and that condiments are free. She plays it up the entire lunch and has us in stitches. Even Bob.

So, out come the checks and it's time to square up with Bella. Bob gets up and goes to use the facilities. And, of course, we ask Bella to bring a busser's tub and a white towel. Initially, she balks at the idea but, being the sport that she is, out



Uh, you missed a spot, Bob.



Geez, you just can't script stuff like this. Really, it was a fun way to start the trip (Bob was a good sport). Gary Bell ended up bank-rolling Bob for the entire trip. I sure hope his rates aren't too far out of line.

We then hopped in the cars and headed over to the ACD Museum.

THE ACD MUSUEM – A CLASSIC!

When I was working, one of my largest customers was right here in Auburn. Over the years, I took advantage of being in Auburn about once a month. If I've been to the ACD Museum once, I've been there 20 times. If you drive the back roads up to Auburn, you practically drive right by the Museum. It was just too easy to stop.

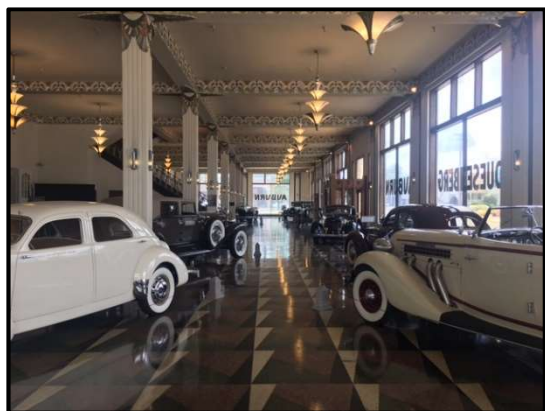
The Museum is housed in the original ACD showroom. Built back in the '20's, it is classic art-deco style design on the inside. Most of the first floor is the original showroom that retains the original inlaid terrazzo flooring and art-deco-relief ceiling. Below is the building as seen from the parking lot across the street.



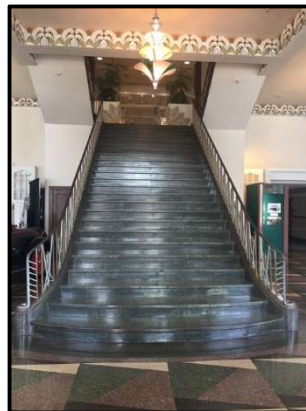
Inside, many of their classic cars (about 25) are displayed on the original showroom floor.



These pictures will give you some idea just how large the first floor showroom is. In the two pictures on the left, I'm standing pretty close to the windows on either end.



In the picture to the right, I walked about half way up the grand staircase (that leads to the original executive offices on the second floor). Note the ceiling height.





In the pictures above, all of those cars reside on the first floor showroom. Just absolutely grand examples of Cord, Auburn and Duesenberg cars. In that lower-left picture, that is a completely original 1929 Cord (I believe) that has never been restored. The placard states that there were only two of these particular coupes built and both survive to this day. In the picture to the lower right, that was Bob's favorite car in the Museum – a boattail speedster. Of course, that Cord L-29 limousine in the picture at the upper left was stunning – both in size and appearance. At the upper right, Dave is standing next to a gorgeous Duesenberg done in tans and browns. Perfect.

There are plenty of beautiful cars up on the second floor in the **Hall of Excellence & Innovation**, too. Check these out.



Bob checking out the Indy car



Original wood and clay Cord models in almost perfect condition almost 90 years later!



Chauffer Rick



This has always been my favorite car at the ACD Museum. It's a one-off recreation of the 1931 Cord boat tail speedster that was shown at the 1931 Paris Auto Show. The original car was lost at some point and never found. The speedster was owned by Paul Bern and legendary film star Jean Harlow.

We then walked outside and wandered over to **NATMUS** – the **National Automotive & Truck Museum**. The Museum, which is just behind the ACD Museum, houses a couple hundred cars, trucks and historic vehicles.



The very interesting thing about this museum is that it is housed in the original manufacturing plant where they built Auburns and Cords. While some of the original building could not be saved, the majority of the buildings still exist today and have been restored in order to house the museum.

What I would consider the centerpiece of NATMUS is a fully restored Parade of Progress Futurliner. Back in the late 40's and early 50's, GM had 12 of these custom-built trucks that toured the country exhibiting all kinds of American ingenuity.



This particular hauler underwent a complete restoration by a group of volunteers between 1999 and 2006. The truck had been donated by a collector and sat at the museum for many years in disrepair. The group of volunteers up in Zeeland, Michigan had the vehicle transported up there and proceeded with the restoration.

The massive 8-wheeled hauler is now permanently located at NATMUS and is periodically trailered to automotive events. The last time I saw it on display was right here in Dayton at the Concours d'Elegance at Carillon Park about 5 years ago. I was actually able to climb up the stairs and sit in the driver's seat.

Some 20 years ago, a small company produced a couple hundred Futurliners in 1/24th scale. If I remember at the time, they sold for about \$300 or so. I passed on buying one. Now, you can't find them to buy and, if you do, they go for extreme sums of money.



There was one of those models on display behind the Futurliner exhibit. The thought of stealing it did cross my mind – ever so briefly.

There were two floors of vehicles on display at NATMUS.



A restored '53 White COE car hauler



An old restored diner



Largest collection of Checker cabs in the world



More really cool pedal cars



Dave's new fifth wheel hauler



To do both Museums properly, you really need to allot 4 to 5 hours total. Plus, if you are a reader of information, tack on a couple more hours. There's just so much to see.

GILMORE CAR MUSEUM – The *pièce de résistance*

The second stop on our Museum tour was the **Gilmore Car Museum** in Hickory Corners, MI. To imply that this was just a stop is deceiving. Gilmore is truly a car enthusiast's *destination*. You'll see why shortly.

Located just northeast of Kalamazoo, the 7 museums of Gilmore are located on 90 pristine acres of private property. There are a few more specialty structures that you can visit and 3 miles of paved road for rides.



The Gilmore was started back in 1963 by Kalamazoo businessman Donald Gilmore who, at the time, was Chairman of the Upjohn Company. It was really his wife Genevieve who had the idea of turning Donald's "hobby" into a museum. So, they opened the non-profit Museum to the public on July 31, 1966 with a modest collection of 35 cars.

Today, the Gilmore Car Museum is North America's largest automotive museum with over 400 vehicles on display and over 190,000 square feet of exhibit space. In addition to the main museums on the grounds, there are numerous vintage structures including the restored and fully-functioning 1941 Silk City Diner, a recreated 1930's Shell gas station, six on-site partner museums and much more.

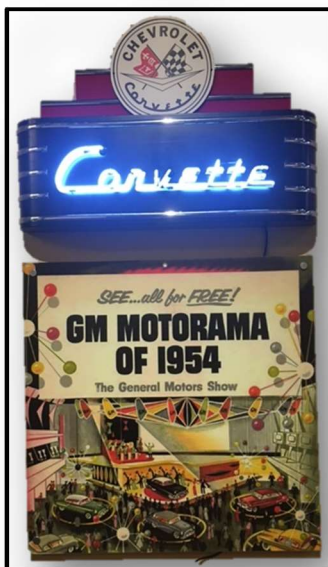
The Museum is open year-round, but the best time to visit is between



April 1st and November 30th. That's when everything is open and accessible to the public. When you visit, the Museum suggests that you allow a minimum of 4 – 6 hours to tour everything. Believe me, it's an all-day event!



One of the main reasons for visiting Gilmore was to check out the Corvette display just inside the main entrance. Until March of 2022, there are 25 pristine Corvettes that form the basis for the Motorama exhibit. Along with Corvettes, there is memorabilia, original signage and the two vehicles that were at the original Motorama back in 1954 in New York.





We then visited the recently opened Classic Car Club of America building. The inside of this museum is completely finished in cedar, so the entire building has that newly constructed smell.

The cars in this museum are simply stunning. Each example is flawless and truly look like they were just built.



The entire interior is all wood construction with vaulted ceilings. Much care was taken in how this building looks and feels. Just appropriate for the type of cars that it houses.



So, in the picture just to the left, I caught Gary in a contemplative pose, listening intently to an audio recording as he stepped on the spot that said "Stand here to begin audio recording".

From the standpoint of a "classic" car museum, this building is absolutely perfect in form and function.



Next up, we tour the Cadillac Museum. This is a recreation of a 1948 dealership that was opened at Gilmore in 2014. Once again, the examples on display are stunning.



Apparently, we did not get pictures of some of the Cadillacs from the 20's – 40's. Guess that means we'll have to go back. L.O.L!

Right next to the Cadillac dealership is a recreation of a 1928 Ford dealership. There's a small theater inside as well as a completely stocked (well, from what I could see) service department.



So, while I'm having a nice conversation with a couple new friends, the rest of the crew takes off in a Model A. I



mean, c'mon! Not to be outdone, my new friends and I are then driven around in an antique London taxi. Two (well, in this case, 8 people) can play that game. I later jumped in the taxi and drove off looking for the guys.



We wandered around the property, checking out this restored 1890's train depot (it housed a huge collection of hood ornaments). Hard to believe there are that many hood ornaments – and I'm sure this is not all that exist (there were cases of hood ornaments located in the Classic Car Club of America building).

In another building, we stepped inside and saw hundreds of restored pedal cars. Had no idea just how prolific pedals cars were, although I remember having one (or two) as a kid.



Have a look at Bob standing next to a Disney one-of-a-kind enlarged move set from the 1967 Disney feature film "The Gnome-mobile". The film featured a 1930 Rolls Royce and also used this movie set in the movie for special effects.

The move set (and the original 1930 Rolls Royce) were personal gifts from Walt Disney to his good friend Don Gilmore. Nice to have friends in high places, huh?

I'm glad that this turned out to be a movie set because I was quite concerned that Bob had shrunk during our tour of the Museum.

Right across the street from the Cadillac and Ford museums sits the Lincoln Museum. This is a reproduction of a 1930's Lincoln dealership.

That's what you will be amazed at as you tour the grounds here. These just aren't museums in the "normal" sense of the word. Almost all of the buildings are reproductions of actual dealerships from an earlier era.

In the picture to the right, you can see me sitting at a bench just outside the Lincoln dealership trying to persuade good-ol Abe to come out of retirement and fix what ails us. Alas, I couldn't get two words out of him. Reminds me of today's government.



We corralled a museum visitor and asked him to take a picture of the seven of us standing in the Lincoln museum.

Gary Bob Rick Gary Don Dave Mike



We headed over and spent some time roaming around the Steam & Brass Era museum. While it appears to be one of the smaller museums, it still contains some marvelous examples of early-year vehicles.

Below, we just couldn't help think of Rick Snider when we saw this old hearse

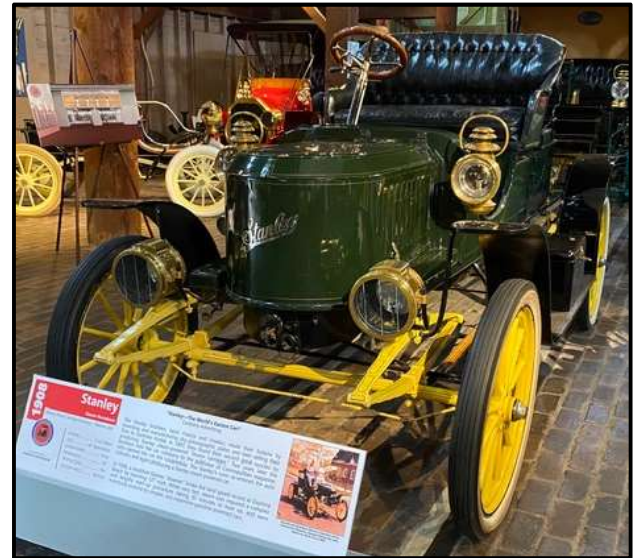


Above, that is recognized as the very first automobile. It's an 1883 Benz. Huge (well, tall) bicycle tires, a steel frame and wood body (what little body there is), a small gasoline engine and a tiller steering wheel. Stop and think about it. This car was developed and driven 138 years ago!!

That's almost hard to fathom.

Another thing to note here is that there will be a new museum built to house the steam and brass-era cars.

Once again, it was projected to open next year, but it has been postponed for at least a year. Look for it to open sometime in 2023.





MUSCLE CAR MUSEUM

COMING 2021



OK. So, the picture that you see above is an artist rendering of what will be a new museum dedicated to the muscle car. As you can see, it was originally scheduled to open this year. At this point, they have yet to break ground. I would imagine that it won't open now until late 2022 or 2023.

But, don't fret! They have oodles of muscle cars on display in the current museum. Have a look.



The '62 Belair 409 – a deceptive monster



There were a lot of pictures hanging on the wall showing all of the actors from the movie American Graffiti. Of course, the one that caught my eye was the one of Suzanne Somers behind the wheel of her light blue Thunderbird. I forgot how many famous actors appeared in that movie.

We arrived at Gilmore around 10:30 in the morning. At 3:00, the cars started to roll in for their weekly Wednesday night cruise-in. We sat out in the parking lot and watched the cars roll in. When all was said and done, there were about 200 cars and trucks that pulled in. Below are some random pictures taken in and around the museum grounds.



While these 17 pages give you a hint at what these museums have to offer, you really must see both of them in person for the total impact. To that end, I'll be planning another visit to at least Gilmore next year and quite possibly another Michigan auto museum. Stay tuned!