ICONS OF THE *American Road*

By Jim Koscs

At first glance, the 1964 1/2 Ford Mustang might appear to have little in common with three Depression-era masterworks: Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg. A deeper look, however, reveals how corporate risk-taking, engineering innovation, and expressive design united these disparate cars as American icons. The 2024 Cincinnati Concours recognizes how these cars have truly earned that descriptor by celebrating the 60th Anniversay of the Ford Mustang and A-C-D with their own classes.

THE EXCITING BUT SHORT-LIVED AUBURN-CORD-DUESENBERG EMPIRE

Errett Lobban Cord veritably defined "ambitious" when, at age 30, he began adding automobile makers to his expansive business empire. He gained control of Auburn in 1925 and, in 1926, bought Duesenberg from its two German-born founding brothers, August "Augie" and Fred Duesenberg. Cord also launched a car with his own name in 1929, the daring front-wheel drive L-29.

Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg would then each launch a new, acclaimed carline. The 1928 Duesenberg Model J seemed tailor-made for Hollywood stars who could afford prices exceeding $15,000 ($340,000 today!) The Duesey's 265-horsepower, 6.9-liter straight-eight engine boasted double overhead camshafts and four valves per cylinder. A 320-hp supercharged version went into about three dozen of the 481 cars made.

Gordon Buehrig, who designed the Cord L-29, also penned many Duesenberg bodies, along with the audacious 1935-1936 Auburn 851/852 "boattail" Speedster and the advanced 1936-1937 Cord 810/812. With its optional supercharged straight-eight, the Auburn promised a 100-mph top speed. The low-slung, front-wheel drive Cord, meanwhile, looked 10 years ahead of its time with its "coffin nose" hood, wraparound grille, and the first hidden headlights on an American car. Just over 2,800 sedans, coupes, and convertibles were made through 1937. About 400 got the optional 170-hp supercharged V8 offered that year.

Soon afterward, Cord sold his auto business and focused on broadcasting stations and real estate. Recognizing the

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Photograph by Gary Kessler

The 1965 Ford Mustang is still America's most popular classic car.



CINCINNATI CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE HONORS AUBURN-CORD-DUESENBERG AND FORD MUSTANG WITH SPECIAL CLASSES.







Photographs by Gary Kessler

TOP: 1927 Duesenberg Model X Speedster. MIDDLE: 1928 Auburn Boatail. BOTTOM LEFT: 1929 Duesenberg hood ornament. BOTTOM RIGHT: 1937 Cord 810.



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Cord 810/812's artistry, the New York Museum of Modern Art included one in its "8 Automobiles" exhibit in 1951.

MUSTANG TURNS 60

After 60 years in production and more than 10 million made, it's time to bid the Ford Mustang a fond ... happy anniversary! Making its public debut at the New York World's Fair on April 17, 1964, the 1965 Mustang established a new segment for sporty compact models, which the automotive media dubbed "pony cars."

A few years before, Ford product planner Hal Sperlich proposed a new kind of car for the young and young-at-heart. Ford Division Vice-President Lee Iacocca convinced skeptical company head Henry Ford II that an affordable compact with the stylish appeal of the automaker's upmarket Thunderbird could be a winner.

Basing the Mustang on Ford's Falcon economy car shortened development time and minimized costs. The Mustang's distinctive design, $2,400 starting price, and a smorgasbord of personalization options fueled "Mustang Mania" across America. By the end of 1966 model production, three Ford plants had built 1.3 million Mustangs.

American racing hero Carroll Shelby made legendary racing-inspired Mustangs, and muscular Boss and Mach 1 models appeared in 1969. The Mustang grew larger for 1971 and smaller by mid-decade, just in time for buyers seeking higher fuel economy. Modern designs and high-performance models help boost sales in the 1980s and 1990s. The all-new 2004 Mustang debuted a retro look inspired by the 1969-1970 model and emphasized high performance, a pattern that continues today.



Photograph by Gary Kessler

TOP: 1935 Auburn 852 SC Speedster. BOTTOM: The Shelby Mustang GT500 is a high-performance variant of the Ford Mustang built by Shelby American from 1965 to 1967 and by the Ford Motor Company from 1968 to 1970.