

The Grand National Roadster Show is a trip through hot-rod history

POMONA, Calif. — Live shows and special exhibits highlight polished hot rods on the sprawling, open-air display building as they vie for America's Most Beautiful Roadster at the Grand National Roadster Show, one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious car shows.

The event began in 1950 in Oakland, and moved to eight buildings on the Pomona Fairplex nearly 50 years ago.

The venerable Coast Auto Club members are the crown of the show, but tens and thousands of people are drawn to the event for a mix of painting, restoration and automobile craftsmanship. Many have no figure wheels that would make a better finish, but



Norman Timko created the Buick Wildcat in the late 1930s. It was readily retained to its original design.

one is not something talked about, while the auto roadsters are the headliner, the real backbone

of the show was found in Building 16 there, 75 custom cars dating from the 1940s to the 1960s, many a living history of the customizer's art. These cars are the building blocks upon which today's industry was founded.

Pioneers such as Sam and George Berni, Gene Jeffries, Spencer Murray, Don Wilford, Vic Robinson, Larry Hrozo, Sam's (retired), Jerry Windward, Steve Moul, Don Finner, Earl Cunningham, Don O'Grady and Tony Finner are but a handful of those who have

been influential in creating and carrying forward the custom car art as we know it today.

Cars in Building 16 included Buick's legendary Buddy Moore Mercury with its gas-tilt windows, tall-dragging stance and fender skirts that hide almost all of the back fins. Acorn's "Oil Mercury" was originally customized by the Ayala brothers and later modified by George Berni. Bob O'Connell's Buick Imperial displayed here offers stark simplicity. The 1934 Buick Wildcat, which

was customized by George Berni and owned by Jack Walker, of course, was included, along with George Malloy's polished 1940 Buick Wildcat coupe.

Some automobile restorations proved to be the most intriguing. For example, John Boyd's "1940 '34 Ford Cabriolet," found after sitting in an Illinois barn for many years in a shedy to how the survivors of time can have a pattern just in an absolute state of art, while 16 lines about the car, after that it appears to have been customized in California in the 1950s.

By highlighting custom cars and show, the 2008 Grand National Roadster Show was a fitting tribute to what has made custom cars such an important part of America's automotive history.

Some of the early customizers were the American equivalent of European car modifiers, and many of their styling innovations were later copied and produced in cars by the Big Three, demonstrating that the car never remains unaltered.

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Donna Wilford's 1934 Ford truck is a spectacular display of craftsmanship.



The Buddy Moore Mercury is owned by Karl McCannick of Imperial, Ill.



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Another interesting car was the



The Red Overcoat 1934 Lincoln Cabriolet was customized several times by Valley Custom in Burbank. It now wears a road restoration.

the customer's 1934 Lincoln Cabriolet. Originally modified several times by Neil Perry and Clayton Jensen's Valley Custom Shop in Burbank, Calif., the customer Lincoln was one of the few custom cars owned by a woman. The car disappeared sometime after 1960, when she sold it, and reappeared on eBay in 2004. Larry Crispinick of WCA Auto Restoration in Chicago is the current owner.

Photograph by Bob Longmeyer