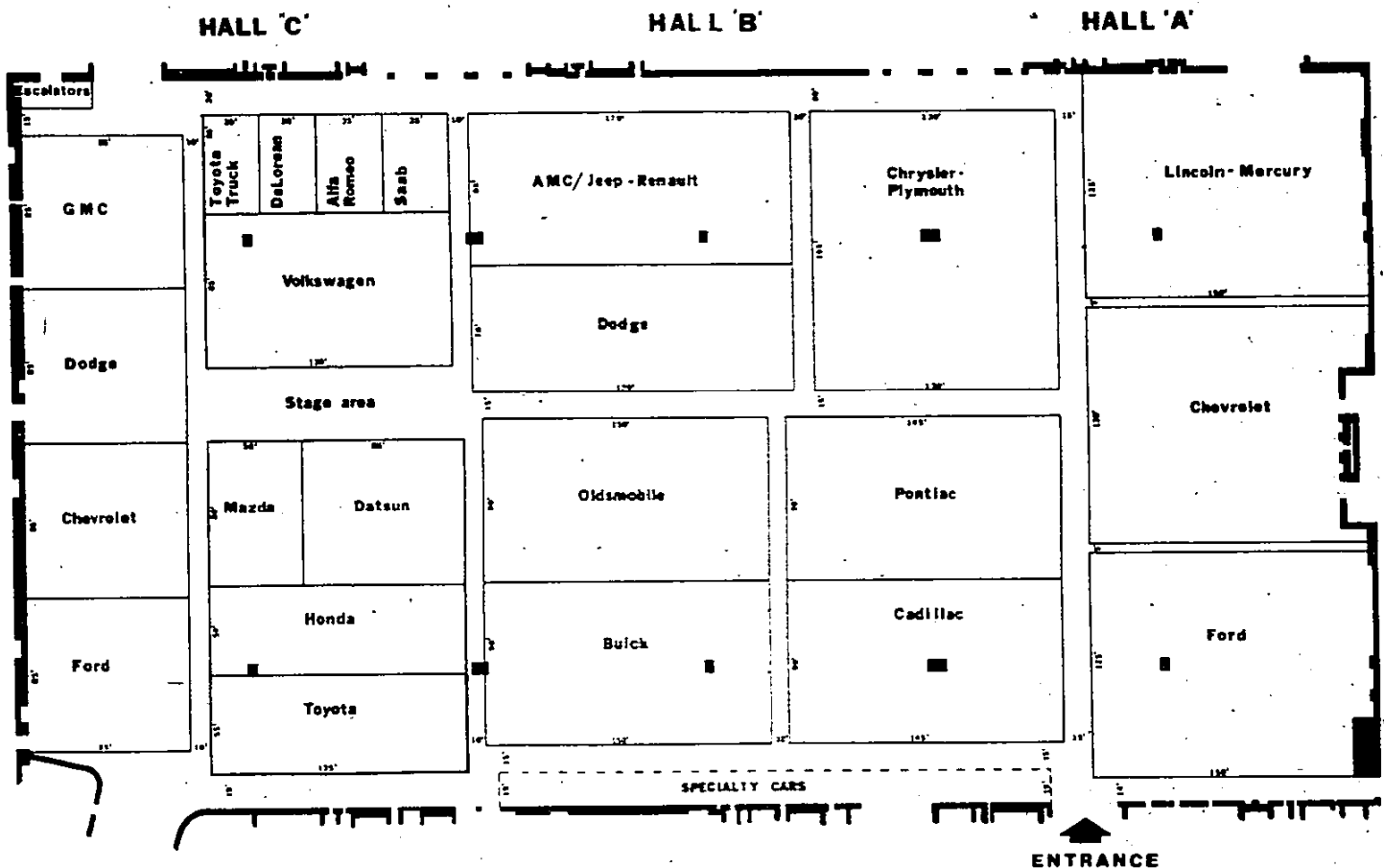




1907 show in beer garden

First auto shows were a bit smaller

This year's Detroit Auto Show begins Jan. 16 in Cobo Hall.

But Detroit's first auto show was held in 1899 in the Light Guard Armory. It was organized by the Tri-State Sportsman's and Automobile Association.

Interspersed among a display of fishing reels, hunting rifles and camping gear were two steam-driven Mobils and two Waverly Electrics.

Detroit was the first city in the country to offer a retail establishment from which automobiles were sold, so Detroit was a natural for the first auto show in the United States.

A CO-FOUNDER of the Cadillac Motor Car Co., William E. Metzger, was the country's first auto dealer. He set up a dealership for steam-driven and electric automobiles on Woodward in 1898.

The first Detroit automobile customer was Newton Annis, a furrier. He bought a Waverly Electric from Metzger in 1899.

Interest in the automobile eclipsed the alliance between sporting goods and automobiles in Detroit. In 1907, the newly formed Detroit Auto Dealers Association (DADA) held its first

auto show. The dealers wanted to hold the show at the Light Guard Armory.

However, the Tri-State sportsmen had exclusive right to use the space, and the auto dealers ended up holding their first show in Beller's Beer Garden, on East Jefferson at the Belle Isle Bridge.

AT THAT 1907 show, 17 auto exhibitors displayed 33 makes of cars in the 11,000-square-foot hall. This year's show will occupy 300,000-square-feet of Cobo Hall.

At that early show, local fire marshalls took no chances with the untried invention: "On account of the restrictions enforced by the Fire Department, no acetylene lights will be permitted to be operated," the rules stated. And to prevent the noise level from reaching a painful pitch, all horns "must have the reeds removed therefrom."

Many of the autos exhibited were built locally, some of which would fade into obscurity: the De Lux, the Wayne, the Detroit Electric. Other makes, such as Maxwell, would eventually be acquired by larger, stronger companies.

BUT MANY of the infant companies exhibiting their wares at the 1907 show — Ford, Oldsmobile, Buick and Cadillac, for example — would go on to become leaders in the industry.

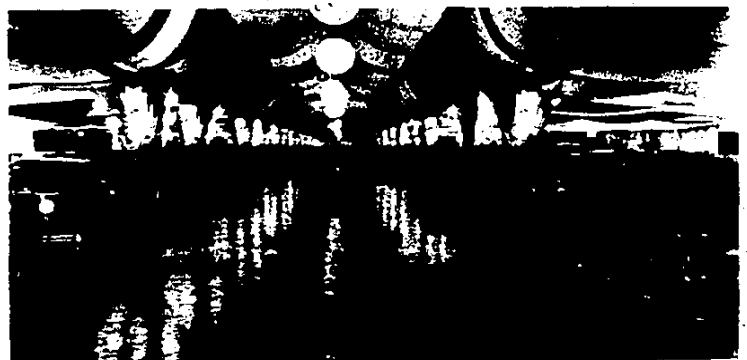
Several locations have been used in the 75 years since the first DADA auto show. One of the early shows was held in a lumber plant on West Fort.

A large dance hall at Riverview Park at the Belle Isle Bridge was another site. Throughout the early 1920s, the show was held at the Billy Sunday

Tabernacle, which stood on the old Detroit Athletic Club's athletic field, then called Grindley Field.

The shows continued on the site in Convention Hall until 1940. World War II and postwar adjustments keep the show closed until 1954, when it moved to the State Fair grounds.

In 1957, when fins and two-tone paint jobs were the rage, the show was held in the Detroit Artillery Armory. It was held there until it was moved to Cobo Hall in 1965.



The Detroit auto show was already a tradition when this picture was taken, about 1926. This show was held in Convention Hall.