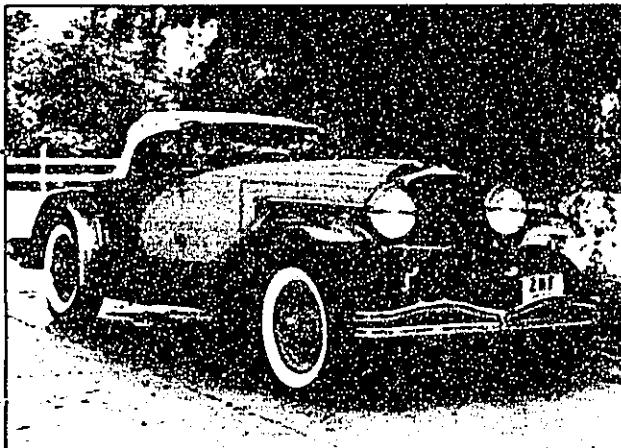


IT'S A CLASSIC

Concours will reflect autos' Golden Age



Star's car: This 1936 Duesenberg SSJ Bobtailed Speedster was specially built for movie star Clark Gable. A similar car was also built for Gary Cooper. This is one of the spotlighted cars at this year's Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance.



HUGH GALLAGHER

The Classic Car Club of America defines a classic car as one built between 1925 and 1948.

"They are the more expensive, unusual, luxury cars of the period — Cadillac, Packard, Rolls. There's quite a list. Also some less expensive cars such as Auburn, Pierce Arrow, Cord," said Brian Joseph, owner of Classic and Exotic Service in Troy which repairs and restores these cars.

This Sunday more than 300 of these cars will be on display at the Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance, one of the three most prestigious concours events in the world. The other two are the Concours at Bagatelle in Paris, France, and at Pebble Beach in California.

These long, richly appointed vehicles with their behemoth engines immediately draw oohs and ahhs from anyone who sees them. They speak of the style of another time and the wealth that could afford that style.

"Cars were being built with little regard to cost. They were interested in

building quality vehicles. A lot of them have interesting, unique engineering," Joseph said. "There were cars for the many and cars for the few with money to squander."

Don Sommer, founder of the Concours in 1979 and a supplier and builder of parts for classic cars, said the Golden Age defined by the Classic Car Club was an age of innovation in styling and engineering.

"There was a drab period between 1912 and 1920. Then auto companies found that styling created obsolescence, which created excitement for new products," said Sommer of Troy.

During the classic period, a car buyer would often buy the chassis from the automobile company and then a body from a coach maker.

"There were a lot of custom coach builders. You could buy a chassis and contract with a body builder and have it built anyway you wanted," said Joseph. "They ended up being unique."

"Also if you were to buy a run of the mill Fleetwood Cadillac, they (Cadillac) would accommodate you and give you what you wanted."

When selecting cars for the Concours

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