

Northern Indiana museum, scenery take you back in time

BY DOUG JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

Become a Hoosier for a long weekend and combine classic cars, downhill sledding, Amish Communities and family dining with scenic touring of gentle rolling hills and hidden lakes.

Start your weekend with a tour of the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum in Auburn, about 35 miles south of the Indiana turnpike on I-69, north of Fort Wayne.

The museum is in a quiet residential neighborhood of Auburn, and is housed in the new car showroom of the old Auburn car company.

Auburn was one of 60 subsidiaries of the Cord Corporation, all owned in the Depression and on through the early '30s by the legendary E.L. Cord. At one time its firms produced Auburn, Cords and Duesenbergs and it is lovingly maintained examples of these three classics that occupy the main showroom of the museum.

The setting is a wonderful old building with big windows and lots of art deco touches including the patterned

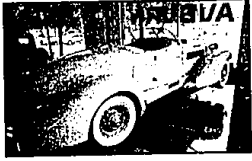


PHOTO BY DOUG JOHNSON

Namesake: Industrialist E.L. Cord put his name on these Cord cars. The front hoods are often referred to as "coffin-shaped."

floors. It's so nice the locals like to hold weddings and parties here in mock-Gatsby splendor.

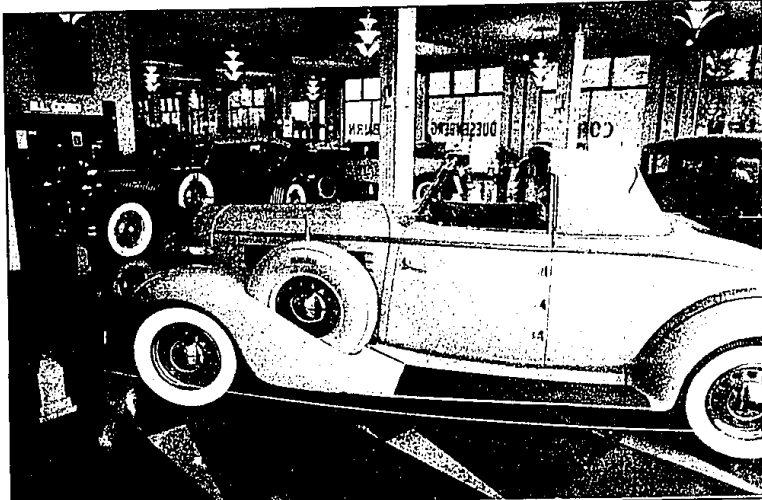
Other ACD museum galleries (there are six total) have other classic cars, ancient Auburns and cars that have "impacted" the industry.

One fascinating floor-to-ceiling map/display outlines the dozens and dozens of car companies that started (and failed) in Indiana, including Auburn itself.

Cord, born a Missouri farm boy, started as a car salesman, was dynamic and clever; he soon owned the company and hired young designers and ordered upbeat paint schemes. No wonder his second career (after industrialist) was politics, as a Nevada state senator.

Auburn hosts a classic car event every Labor Day and last year (2000) celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding Auburn automobile. Like a lot of car firms, the company started first as a carriage maker.

After the stroll back in time at ACD Museum, you might want to think about dinner. One good bet is Das Dutchman Essenhaus, an Amish country restaurant a few miles away in Middlebury. Go on Saturday, as this is Amish and Dutch country and many places, including Essenhaus, close on



Beauties: A beige Auburn with fine pinstriping is among the classics; that's a Duesenberg ("It's a duesy!") in the background.

Sunday.

Also, think about driving around the Amish farms of Shipshewanna and Napoleon. On Sunday you'll see Amish signature horse-drawn black buggies all gathered in clusters around homes for Sunday services.

Another "country" experience is Bonneyville Mill, an operational grist mill surrounded by a small park near Bristol on state road 120. The mill is a great spot for scenic photo hobbyists.

If you have kids or a lot of energy, stop by Pokagon State Park just west of Fremont for a bit of tobogganing on their refrigerated runs. They have been open since Thanksgiving despite the warm weather. The only thing that stops the slipping and sliding is heavy rain or bitter cold (below zero). It's hard to breathe at 40 miles an hour in such cold air.

Pokagon is on Lake James and Snow Lake. A classic state park inn, renovated in 1995, offers 140 rooms and family dining year-round. The inn is still lavishly decorated for the holidays. It will be easy to lose yourself at all of these quiet Indiana destinations that evoke times long past.

If you go...

■ The Auburn Cord Duesenberg Web site is very well organized and packed with pictures and information at acdmuseum.org. The museum is open every day except New Year's, Christmas and Thanksgiving. (219) 925-1444.

■ The Inn (the Potawatomi) at Pokagon can be reached toll free at (877) 768-2928 and directly at (219) 833-1077. Note: The toboggan runs are popular and weekend rooms are scarce.

■ There are many chain hotels at Fremont and Auburn; the Essenhaus has rooms as does Amish Acres at Napoleon.

Grand view:

The central staircase is great for a view of all the cars, or for posing on for wedding pictures.



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