

Humble origin for extravaganza

FROM A MODEST start in Beller's Beer Garden on East Jefferson Avenue in 1907, the Detroit Auto Show has grown into a giant extravaganza featuring more than 500 vehicles and occupying 440,000 square-feet in Cobo Hall.

In the beginning, the newly-formed Detroit Auto Dealers Association held its 1907 show in an 11,376 square-foot hall at Beller's near the Belle Isle Bridge.

In the early show, 17 exhibitors displayed 33 makes of cars. The 1987 show will have more than 50 exhibitors and an almost limitless variety of vehicles, including many on display for the first time.

MANY OF THE CARS at the 1907 show have faded into oblivion, including the De Lux, Wayne, Detroit Electric, Maxwell, Brush Runabout, Waverly Electric and Thomas Flyer.

Other 1907 exhibitors thrived, becoming leaders of the auto industry. Some still hold these leadership positions today. Included in the 1907 show were such stalwarts as Ford, Oldsmobile, Buick and Cadillac.

At the first auto show, local fire officials issued stern orders to assure against any dangers with the new machines.

"ON ACCOUNT OF the restrictions enforced by the Fire Department, no acetylene lights will be permitted to be operated," the 1907 rules said. To assure nobody's hearing would be damaged by high decibel levels, the rules ordered that all horns "must have the reeds removed therefrom."

Detroit's first auto dealer was William E. Metzger, a bicycle merchant who recognized the potential of the automobile.

Metzger sold his bicycle business and sailed to London in 1895 to attend the world's first auto show. He was so impressed by horseless-carriages that, upon returning to Detroit, he co-founded the Cadillac Motor Car Co. and took an active role in the development of the fledgling auto industry.

He became the country's first auto dealer when he set up a dealership for steam-drive and electric autos on Woodward Avenue in Detroit in 1898.

In 1899, Metzger and Seneca G. Lewis, of the Fletcher Hardware Co., Detroit, organized the Tri-State Sportsman's and Automobile Association. Their show at the Light Guard Armory featured two steam-driven Mobiles and two Waverly Electrics on display with fishing rods and reels, hunting equipment and camping gear.

THE FIRST DETROITER to buy a car was Newton Annis, a furrier. He bought a Waverly Electric from Metzger in 1899.

From Metzger's humble beginnings almost 90 years ago, Detroit's auto Dealers Association represents more than four percent of auto and truck sales in the United States.

In the years since the 1907 DADA Auto show, the event has been held in



The 1987 Detroit Auto Show will feature more than 500 new cars and trucks — several vehicles on display for the first time ever — in its nine-day run beginning Jan. 10 in Detroit's Cobo Hall.

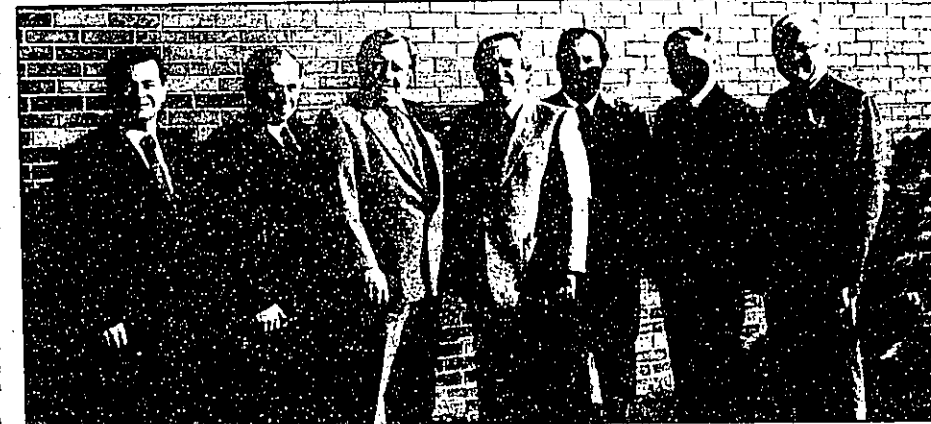
a number of locations.

An early show was held in a lumber plant on West Forest Ave. Another was held in a dance hall in Riverview Park at the Belle Isle Bridge. During the early 1920s the show was held at the Billy Sunday Tabernacle and Convention Hall. Auto shows continued

until 1940 when World War II and postwar adjustments eliminated the event until 1954.

Resumed that year, the Auto show was held at the State Fairgrounds. In 1957, it moved to the Detroit Artillery Armory where it was held until moving to Cobo Hall in 1965.

IN 1985, the Detroit Auto Show used the "Talk of the Town" as its theme. The phrase so perfectly captured the glamour and excitement that attracts more than 400,000 people to the show each year, that the "Talk of the Town" was adopted as the show's permanent theme in 1986.



Planning for the auto show has been the responsibility of this committee of Metro Detroit-area car dealers: Ed Brown (left), Bill Brown Ford, Livonia; Anthony Viviano, Sterling Heights Dodge; George Melton, Melton Honda, Southgate; 1987 Auto Show chairman Dick Scott, Dick Scott Buick, Plymouth; James Causley Jr., James Chevrolet, Mt. Clemens; John Leo, John Leo Oldsmobile-Saab, Ann Arbor; and Daniel Hayes, Detroit Auto Dealers Assn. executive vice president and general manager of the auto show.