

Prominent Packards at the Savoy
A Landmark Exhibit
August 7 – December 1, 2024
Savoy Automobile Museum Cartersville, Georgia
Photos and text by Marty Steiner

The Savoy Automobile Museum in Cartersville, Georgia just launched their “Prominent Packards” exhibit. Featuring 11 beautifully restored examples ranging from 1924 to 1953. This exhibit, one of the Savoy’s four rotating gallery series, was preceded by an impressive evening presentation,

Museum presentations range across the spectrum of format and facilities. At the Savoy, a 300 seat state-of-the-art theater includes a stage area that provides space for a couple of exhibit automobiles in addition to a speaker’s dais. The star of the stage this evening was a 1931 Model 845 convertible roaster loaned by Donald Ghareeb and daughter Elizabeth.

The automobile presentation stage is backed with a massive 18 by 33 foot curved video screen created from 256 computer monitors. This screen itself is a marvel, allowing both “live” and pre-recorded material to be incorporated into a theater presentation. Seated at a speaker’s dais, the presenters, Wayne Carini and host Jay Ward would “converse” with off-site Ralph Marano and Ken Gross “live” on this wide-screen. Packard history and comments about the Packards in this exhibit were discussed.



3538 Wayne Carini (left) and Jay Ward (right) take the stage to open the Savoy Automobile Museum “Tireside Chat” which introduced their upcoming Prominent Packards exhibit. The exhibit opened on August 7 and will remain open till December 1st.

This presentation also included short, live comments by those owners present of five of the loaned Packards. These owners, all Georgia based, in turn described their individual cars supported by wide screen photos of each example. All had personal commentary about the cars role in their family’s history. Approximately 160 Packard aficionados attended this presentation.

The Prominent Packards exhibit includes, in production date order, eleven examples. The earliest, all pre WW II, were loaned to supplement the Savoy’s collection.

In 1966 a pair of young Atlanta doctors in residence, both interested in vintage automobiles, found out about two old cars at a nearby garage. Together they bought this 1924 Packard Model 136 four passenger coupe. It would be 2015, after Dr. Don Lane’s retirement, before any serious restoration was done, and this by his son Mike who had grown up with the car. This car will be featured in *The Packard Cormorant* next year.

The 1930 Custom Eight 740 Roadster was loaned by the Classic Car Club of America (CCCA). Utilizing the straight eight engine and four wheel brakes introduced on the 1924 line, this classic luxury model sold well world-wide in spite of the economic depression of the time. This car won the CCCA’s 2012 Concourse d’Elegance trophy at Pebble Beach.

Selected to represent the entire exhibit on stage at this presentation was a 1931 model 845 convertible roadster. Loaned by Donald Ghareeb of Birmingham, Alabama. It is known as one of

the Packard “consignment jobs”, where bodies by outside custom coach shops were mated with Packard engine/chassis. This car was the winning Packard at the 2018 Pebble Beach Concourse.

Both the 1934 Model 1101 Coupe and 1937 Model 120 Convertible were loaned by Angee McKee on behalf of her father Harvey Knight’s estate. Believed to be a unique example, research shows the 1934 to be an unusual combination of a Super Eight Victoria style body on a standard eight chassis/engine. The 1937 convertible includes a Steve Martin film appearance in its provenance. It is also seen in many family photos including the car’s presenter, Knight’s granddaughter Sarah Tonsmeire, when she was just a child.

Savoy owned examples included two 1941 models. Packard had not entered the station wagon market until 1937. Packard’s styling philosophy had remained simple, change as little as possible. Now, for the first time in response to competition, Packard’s headlights blended into the front fenders. Few other significant style changes were incorporated in their 1941 Woodie Wagon Deluxe 120.

Savoy’s other 1941 is a Super 8 One-Eighty. This was the last semi-custom car from Packard with many models sold utilizing independent coach builder’s designs. Savoy’s example is a LeBaron design and incorporated power windows, considered a modern and luxurious feature of the time.

This to match similar Cadillac and Lincoln features.

In 1948, still chasing the competition and losing ground, Packard introduced its Standard Eight Station Sedan. This was Packard's first woodie model released that utilized steel components with wood paneling added instead of a totally wood-framed body. While described as featuring "free-flowing" design, it drew little positive attention.

In 1949 Packard celebrated its 50th anniversary as the oldest independent automobile manufacturer still in business, but things were not going well. Style changes between the 1949 and 1948 vehicles were minimal, so Savoy's 1949 Super Eight Convertible shared strong similarity with their 1948 Standard Eight Station Sedan.

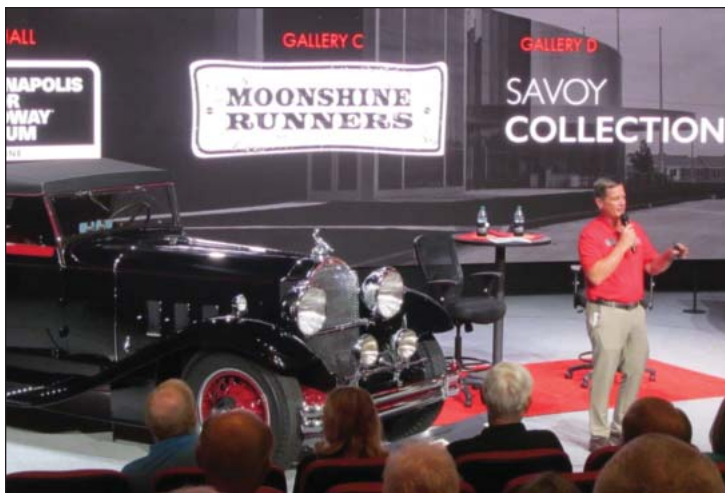
Packard built six 1952 Pan American two-seater show cars. These, true to the car show environment of the time, were considered "concept" cars to test the car buying market. The Prominent Packard exhibit is rounded out by a 1953 Caribbean (loaned by Marion Benson), which incorporated many of the concept designs in a six seat version. Approximately 750 Caribbeans were built from 1953 to 1956.

"Prominent Packards" are in one of four rotating exhibit galleries. A fifth gallery displays Savoy collection examples. It's hard not to be impressed as you drive up the hill towards the Savoy Automobile Museum in Cartersville, Georgia. That impression is surpassed only when one enters these galleries. Other current exhibits at the Savoy are "Moonshine Runners" with seven vehicles used to avoid the law, "Survivors" with five examples of cars over twenty-five years old that are essentially original and the "Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum" traveling exhibit

Part One with twelve examples. The Prominent Packard exhibit continues until December 1st. For updates on these exhibits and more, visit the Savoy online at www.savoymuseum.org.

Cartersville is known as the "Museum City" because it also is home to the Booth Western Art Museum, the largest Western art museum in America, and the Tellus Science Museum. All are Smithsonian Affiliates. Cartersville is about an hour north of Atlanta on I-75. Snowbirds en route south may want to plan a "layover" to visit the Savoy and this family of museums.

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Bruce Patton, Director of Curatorial Services at the Savoy Automobile Museum, welcomes guests and introduces the "Packards – A Legacy of Luxury" evening presentation.



Ralph Marano joined the presentation live on the big screen. Marano is a dealer in classic cars with an affection for Packards having a collection of eighty-five concourse level examples.



Marion Benson described his 1953 Caribbean concept car to the presentation audience as Moderators Wayne Carini and Jay Ward look on.



Cars to be seen in the exhibit were presented on the big screen with commentary by Wayne Carini and Jay Ward.