

Classic Memories—The Long Island Automotive Museum

By Grace Gluck

A Photo of Henry Austin Clark, Jr.'s Long Island Automotive Museum taken sometime in the mid '50s, a time when the collecting of old cars, particularly Full Classics®, was a relatively new hobby. He, and a few like him, such as D. Cameron Peck, set the stage for others to preserve and amass the fine cars that we cherish today.

The Long Island Automotive Museum opened its doors on August 20, 1948 in Southampton, Long Island, NY. It was founded by the prominent automobile collector and writer, Henry Austin Clark, Jr. and featured many unique cars including the Thomas Flyer that won the 1908 Paris-New York race. Clark's objective was to gather as many notable cars as possible for his museum. After 15 years of operation, Clark decided it was no longer financially feasible to keep the museum open to the public, so he decided to reduce his collection to modest proportions. He set the sale for June 22, 1963, selling most of his cars, while retaining a group of favorites for his private collection. The auction attracted collectors with a broad spectrum of interests. Not much was reported about the auction event because that was the way Clark wanted it. He did not want the media frenzy that occurred the year before at the auction of the collection of Wallace C. Bird, also of Long Island. At Clark's auction, no information was reported regarding the names of buyers, the auction was shrouded in secrecy, and now after 45 years when the seller and many of the buyers have died, some information is finally surfacing. Most of the cars were unrestored originals. In the early sixties the hobby was still in its infancy and was far from the big business and multi-million dollar bids of today. A few of the cars (all nc) and their selling prices were: 1899 Panhard et Levassor—\$2,200; 1914 Pierce-Arrow 7 Passenger Touring—\$7,700 (which was an astronomical figure in 1963, thought by many that it would never be worth that amount and that the cars had peaked in value—how wrong



they were!); 1917 Cadillac Victoria Touring—\$2,200; and the bargain of the day was a 1929 Essex Super Six Sedan—\$70.

Clark kept his culled down collection in the Museum for private use until he finally closed its doors in 1980 and sold the remaining cars and collectibles. Today the building still exists, but is in ruins and totally overgrown. 🇺🇸

Information gathered from "Austie's Silent Auction" by Gerald Perschbacher Old Cars Weekly—Oct 1, 2009, "Austie's Auction Redux" by Gerald Perschbacher, Old Cars Weekly—Nov. 5, 2009, and the website and Blog of Howard Kroplick's Vanderbilt Cup Races.