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Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive presents:

The Lives of Automobiles

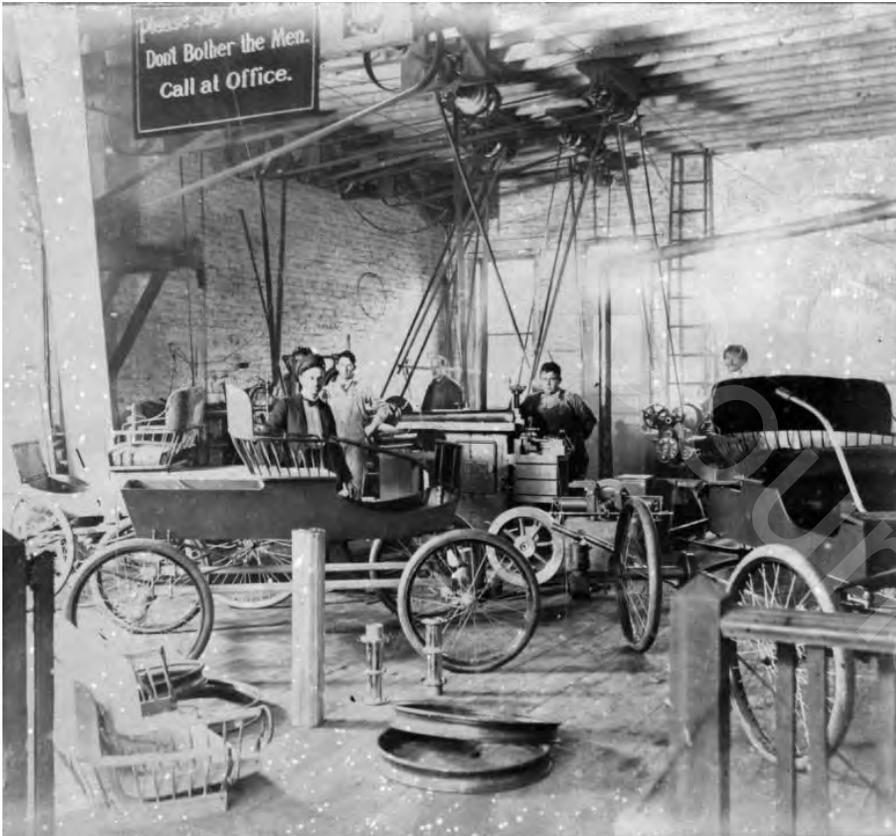
by Thomas Layton

Les Amis (The Friends)
January 2017

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Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History
January 2017



[1] **Gestation.** Whether at San Jose's circa 1900 Osen and Hunt's auto manufacturing business at 69 S. Second Street or at General Motors in Fremont in 1960, the active lives of automobiles start after a short gestation period, from which they are born fully formed.

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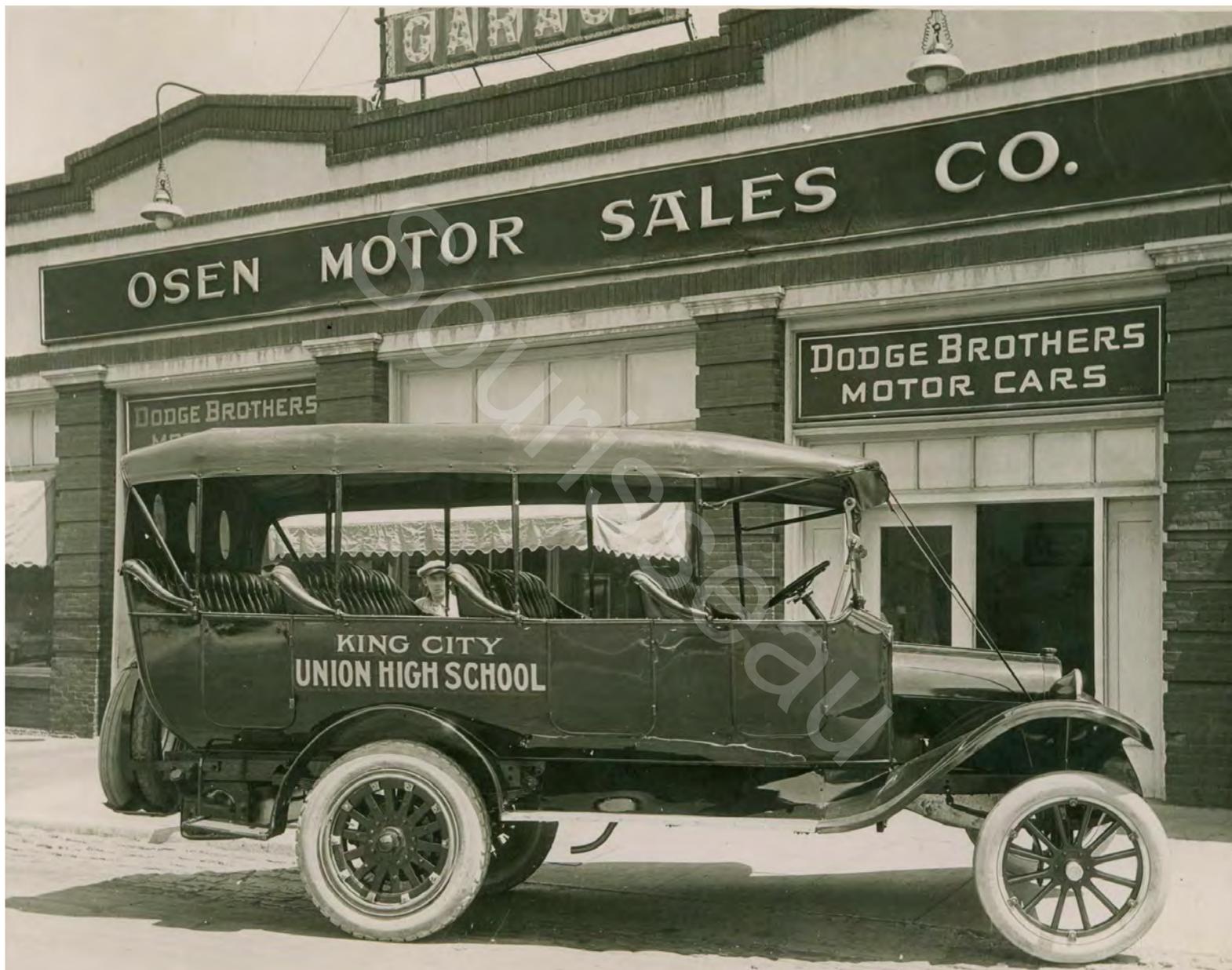
[2] **Cotillion.** For automobiles, there is no adolescence, no finishing school, and no Quincinera. Within days of birth they are offered for public scrutiny with perhaps, at best, a floral display — like this spiffy 1916 Stutz, displayed at the Granger & De Hart showroom at 240 N. First Street, or with a line-up similar to these 1924 Essex autos at the Normandin-Campen dealership at 156 W. Santa Clara Street.



[3] **Love at first sight!** Many an automobile goes home with its very first suitor. Like any blushing bride, it may enjoy a lavish honeymoon replete with patriotic banners — as with the primed and polished autos of this circa 1911 tour group, parked outside the brand new Casa del Rey Hotel in Santa Cruz, just a few steps from the Casino.



[4] **Alternative pathways!** After a short honeymoon, some autos become the well-loved conveyance for every family outing, shown here preserved in this 1922 Kodak moment at Carmel by-the-Sea.



[5] **A life of work!** There were less romantic assignments for others. This circa 1920 Dodge Brothers commercial vehicle was parked in front of the Osen Motor Sales Company at 200 N. First Street and was bound for a life of dignified labor as a King City High School bus.



[6] **Medical treatment!** Medical treatment for well-loved autos was available at modern facilities such as the well-equipped operating room at Osen and Hunt — or for autos with less loving families, at this not-so-elegant repair shop!



[7] **Working class!** For real estate, as well as automobiles, location is a strong predictor of quality of life. These dusty, rural, working-class autos, parked in front of Hollister High School about 1918, engaged in small talk about the wrinkles and blemishes that have prematurely aged their complexions.



[8] **Middle class!** As their people frolicked on the beach, these well-maintained middle-class autos *kibitzed* while enjoying an unobstructed view of Monterey Bay from a spacious parking lot at Capitola-by-the-Sea.



[9] **Lunch time.** These well-kept autos, parked on the Santa Cruz wharf about 1948, mingled with the fishing fleet as their people dined on the fresh seafood at a row of trendy eateries!



[10] **Urban and Urbane.** While their people enjoyed an afternoon performance at the San Jose Civic Auditorium, these American-built autos displayed their flashy chrome grillwork, molded trunks, and a few of those new-fangled tail fins, seen on the stern of the 1957 Chevrolet (1st row, 8th from left). Little did they know that the one and only Volkswagen (2nd row, 6th from the left) foretold the beginning of a foreign invasion!



[11] **Proud of their owners!** Three iconic 1953 automobiles — an Oldsmobile, a Mercury and a Buick — plus a 1952 Chevrolet, gazed proudly at their owners among the five Puentes Brothers, who stood beside an older man (possibly their father) outside the Puentes Brothers' Market at 808 N. 10th Street in San Jose. (Photo by Arnold Del Carlo. Caption help from Jim Salata.)



[12] **When romance fades.** As we grow older, sometimes the romance fades, and trustworthy automobiles were sometimes dispatched to the Normandin used car lot at 405 W. Santa Clara Street. These rejected family members were forced to watch as their people fall in love with 1937 De Sotos and Plymouths!



[13] **A second chance?** The Almaden Motor Company used car lot at 96 Almaden Avenue in San Jose reveals the plight of the divorced and the abandoned, each auto hoping for a new relationship — while parked uneasily beneath a billboard announcing the spanking new 1952 Plymouth!

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[14] **Purgatory and Judgment.** Even after a new relationship and a second marriage, some suffered the accumulated afflictions of advancing age. After twenty short years, these beauties from the mid-1950s were consigned, too young, to the horrors of the wrecking yard. Some were robbed of their parts; others crushed to be melted down — perhaps to find reincarnation as a toaster or a frying pan!

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[15] **The Garden of Youth.** For a few automobiles hidden for decades in garages and barns, there can be salvation and rebirth as primped, polished and pampered Classics, like this beauty, now lovingly restored by the author of this photo album. May that we all could share this fate! (Photo by Bob Bain.)