

About Classics:

Why We Define Classics As We Do & By The Number, by Jon Lee

Why We Define Classics As We Do

Usually the cars recognized as "CCCA Classics" were built in limited production numbers and were quite expensive when new.

As a group, they represent the pinnacle of engineering, styling and design for their era.

While it is desirable to have a sincere interest in these fine automobiles, it is not a requirement to own a CCCA Classic to enjoy membership in the Club.

So how many cars were actually built that CCCA considers to be Full Classics? It's a frequently asked question. Hopefully, this article submitted by CCCA Classifications Chairman, Jon Lee, will shed a little light on the subject.

By The Number by Jon Lee

I think we were on our way, by bus, to "The Hermitage", Jackson's homestead near Nashville Tennessee. It was close to the finish of the Natchez Trace CARavan in September of '96. I had been pontificating on some Classic Car subject (my father always warned me not to do that, else I got in trouble) and the question of total number of Classic Cars built was raised. Naturally I jumped in with the figure of 2.5 million. Soon, Bob Turnquist was at my side asking where that number came from. I replied it was a combination of real numbers and a good degree of conjecture on my part. Bob suggested I do a bit more research and establish some concrete numbers. Well, actually, what he said was this: "I'm giving you this assignment," for which I thank you, Bob. I believe it was Abraham Lincoln who said something to this effect: "All I need is someone to make me do the things I know I should do."

So, here we are. I didn't think this would take much time or effort, and the big Classic producers were fairly easy, but as I went further down the list things got more difficult and some surprises popped up.

I determined that I would first concentrate on American Classics only, at this time. Maybe the foreign Classics will come later. Of course this does include Rolls-Royce of America, but I have excluded Classic Buicks made for export, and commercial chassis wherever I could. There are quite a few entries for which there are no absolute numbers. Good guesses have been put forth by several knowledgeable authors published in the "Classic Car" such as Keith Marvin, Bill Snyder and Karl Zahn. For these efforts I am very grateful as it has made it slightly closer to possible to put these numbers together. Other sources I have listed at the conclusion of the list. The Classic Makes are listed in descending order of production with appropriate notes as we go along. Please don't

assume this is absolute Gospel. I would be very pleased to hear from those of you with more positive information and will present additional information if it is available. As proof positive of my intentions, within a couple of days after I sent the first draft of this to Fred Roe, he returned to me some very interesting and enlightening information which I have included in this, now, updated version. A gentleman by the name of Jerry Falck has provided quite a bit of production information to Bev Kimes that Fred was able to send to me.

So, while this has begun as an interesting assignment from Bob Turnquist, it has begun to grow into a group effort.

Cadillac: 388,980 For a very long time, Packard was considered the top Classic Car producer. Then we, the CCCA, added 92,265 62 series Cadillacs to the list. Not included in the total number are CKD (completely knocked down) units for export, and commercial chassis.

Packard: 336,799 Packard production is fairly well documented. While someone may arrive at a different number, I believe this one to be reasonably accurate .

Auburn: 103,806 This number is not very accurate as the listings for the years 1927,28 &29 are very vague as to the breakdown of 6 cylinder and 8 cylinder models. Of course, only the 8's & 12's are Classics Consequently, I believe this number should be lower than what is shown by 3000 to 5000 units, but I cannot verify this.

LaSalle: 81,715 Adding this figure with the 388,980 Cadillacs and 62,216 Buicks and one sees that General Motors was, by far, the largest producer of Classic Cars at 532,911, plus at least one Maltby tourer body on an Oldsmobile and another on a 60 series Buick along with a few customs on other Buick chassis.

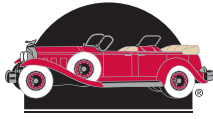
Lincoln: 71,688 There are a few custom body cars not included in this number as the actual numbers produced are unknown. The total of the unknown cars is undoubtedly less than 50.

Buick: 62,216 These figures do not include those units built for export. About 5000 units have been added with the inclusion of the 1940 80 Limited models.

Franklin: 58,676 This is one of the surprises of this list and this number is supported by several different sources. The big question is why don't we see more Classic Franklins?

Pierce-Arrow: 50,603 Pierce is one of 15 Classic Car builders that never built any automobiles during the 1925-1948 period other than Classic cars. It leads the list of "Classic Car only" Manufacturers.

Willys-Knight: 49,387 I have a hard time accepting this number. Many different contemporary sources show this figure, based on serial numbers. Three Classic models, 66, 66A, 66B were produced



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from 1925 through 1930. Total Willys production for this period was 776,005, so the 49,387 Classic number is possible. My question is, how many Classic Willys-Knights have you seen?

Studebaker: 38,403 A very respectable number for a President model produced just 4 years.

Chrysler: 25,995 Thanks to Fred Roe, we can decipher the Fedco serial numbers in order to determine actual series 80 production. 1928 production was split into early and late, 80E and 80L and 1929 Imperial manufacture did not begin until December 1928. All of which has made Model year / calendar year / series production rather confusing. I believe this to be a fairly accurate number.

Nash: 15,940 This is another fairly well substantiated number that seems out of proportion to the limited survival of Classic Nashes. Granted these cars don't have the cachet that Stutz have, but the cars were undoubtedly as good and never had to suffer the indignity of Orphan status.

Stutz: 15,150 This is reasonable estimate from "The Splendid Stutz". Absolute numbers are not known. 93 Stutz are listed in the CCCA Handbook & Roster and just 11 Nash.

Marmon: 14,003 This is an estimate based on several sources. Some Classic models are not well documented and even the '16' production numbers have been discussed for 50 years, ranging from 390 to 500. The number used by the Fred & Jon list is 390. As Fred has recently become a Classic Marmon owner he has done quite a bit of research on Marmon production.

Stearns-Knight: 9,609 With just 7 examples listed in the Handbook, this is another slimly represented Classic.

Reo: 8,769 Serial numbers are not consistent for the Reo Royale and I have had to estimate at several points.

Cord: 6,749 This appears to be a fairly well documented figure.

Peerless: 6,445 1 926 model 69 serial numbers are not decipherable, and 1932 Deluxe Custom 8 serial numbers are open ended. Production of these two models was probably quite small. not included in the 6445 figure.

Hudson: 5,214 1929 Model L only. There are a few other custom bodied Hudsons built between 1928 and 1931 that are not included here.

Wills St.Claire: 3,914 10 Wills St.Claire are listed in the CCCA Handbook.

Locomobile: 2,629 1928 and 1929 figures are only partially represented here. Model 48, 90, 8-88, and 80 production was probably miniscule as Locomobile wound down. 1929 figures are listed in a couple of sources as "A Few".

Graham & Graham-Paige: 2,448 Just 2 Graham-Paiges are listed in the CCCA Handbook.

Kissell: 2,386 This is another estimated number using several different sources. The actual numbers are not determined as is the case with several other of the lesser known Classics.

Rolls-Royce: 1,874 An accepted number from several sources. Springfield Mass. production only, starting January 1925.

Cunningham: 800 Based primarily on Bill Snyder's Classic Car article, this is a "Best Guess".

Duesenberg: 725 It's always a bit scary listing numbers for a very well known make, because someone with more knowledge will show where there is an egregious error. This figure is from Fred Roe's "The Pursuit of Perfection". Let's hope I got it right.

Roamer: 474 Fred Roe has researched this one and although this number probably includes some 6 cylinder non-classic cars it is pretty close to the number Karl Zahm came to in his Classic Car article. 2 Roamers were built in 1929, a coupe and a sedan, and Fred says they both still exist!

McFarlan: 390 Plus the 1928 production, which Keith Marvin believes was all completed by the end of 1927. Jerry Falck quotes as many as 777 but I feel (and Fred Roe also) that these may have been inflated to make the production situation seem less perilous. I suspect that Keith is closer to real life.

DuPont: 386 A compilation of the different series and I believe this to be fairly accurate, but I am willing to listen to the better informed.

Ruxton: 300 An approximate number as actual figures apparently are in dispute.

Brewster: 135 Fred has reminded me that Arthur Soutter, who was there at Brewster, stated this number. Other sources indicate as low as 113 to as high as 500. I would defer to a man involved in service and production over one who was interested primarily in sales- Mr. Inskip, who had quoted 300.

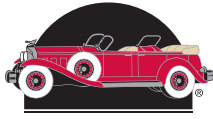
Dagmar: 155 Keith Marvin in his Classic Car Dagmar history had estimated 100. Numbers provided by Fred Roe are: 1925: 93, 1926: 61, 1927: 1

Revere: 27 Many sources indicate production as "less than 100". Numbers we now have are 1925: 21, 1926: 6.

Dorris: 23 To quote Fred Roe "Whether this is production or sales, is my question. Presumably anything built after '23 was assembled from existing parts stocks. This is a fringe area and it probably a moot question whether Dorris or Stevens-Duryea should even be considered a 1925 car at all. Since none of either seems to exist, it's hardly a momentous question."

Doble: 15 This is an estimate based on information by Keith Marvin and Richard Hempel in Classic Car articles.

Mercer: 6 Again, based on information by Keith Marvin and William Locke.



Jordan: 5 Karl Zahm supplied this calculated estimate.

Stevens-Duryea: 3 Keith Marvin has done an excellent job documenting some rather obscure Classic Cars.

Julian: 1 This one still exists, ex-Harrah's, in Nevada still. According to Bev Kimes' book, there are rumors of a total of 6.

Total American Produced Classic Cars: 1,366,843. Give or take a few. Over half, 725,779, are Cadillacs and Packards. 37 other American Classic manufacturers make up the remainder. Of course, all things are relative, and none more than automobile production figures. 1.3 million is not an insignificant number by any account, but in the overall production of automobiles it is a mere drop in the bucket. From 1925 through 1948 U.S. factories produced 61,513,967 passenger cars. That is 45 times more than the total Classic Car output. In 1929 alone, Ford built 1,715,100 Model A's. For the model year 1965, Chevrolet assembled 558,459 Impala 2 door hardtops. That's almost half the total Classic Cars built, and just one body style! I am writing this on March 10. The approximate current production in the U.S. will match the Classic Car total about May 15. That's about 55 days, Sundays excluded, to build as many cars as it took the Classic Car builders 21 years to assemble.

Putting this list together has provided some surprises and reinforced other beliefs. The most important one is that our Classic Cars were, and still are, examples of the best.

Sources:

- 1) The Classic Car, various articles written by Keith Marvin, Bill Snyder, Karl Zahm, William Locke, Richard Hempel,
- 2) Packard, A History of the Motor Car and the Company, Beverly Rae Kimes
- 3) Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805-1942, Kimes & Clark
- 4) N.A.D.A. Used Car Guide, various issues
- 5) Branham Automobile reference Book, Various issues
- 6) The Production Figure Book for U.S. Cars, Jerry Heasley
- 7) The serial number book for U.S Cars, Grace Brigham
- 8) Chilton's Complete Book of Automobile Facts
- 9) Blue Book, National Used Car Market Report
- 10) The Splendid Stutz, Ray Katzell
- 11) Auburn Cord Duesenberg, Do Butler
- 12) Cadillac, the Complete 70 Year History, Maurice Hendry
- 13) Pierce-Arrow, Marc Ralston
- 14) What was the McFarlan, Keith Marvin
- 15) Duesenberg, The Pursuit of Perfection, Fred Roe
- 16) The American Rolls-Royce, Arthur Soutter
- 17) Fred Roe