



December 2025

Newsletter

"Moving Forward"



Holidays at the Forney

The Forney Museum Holiday display is up, and all the lights are shining! With so many events held at the Museum during the holiday season, this display helps bring the festive cheer into our exhibit hall. Huge thanks to Forney Visual Design Director Michael Ferreira for coordinating the display, and special thanks to Forney volunteers Sonny



Swarts and Sharon Robinson for their help.

A special delight every year at this time, this special display is an integral part of every event held at the Museum during the holiday season, as well as providing a unique and striking setting for the Annual Holiday Tea fundraiser held at the Forney every December.

You won't want to miss your chance to take a picture in the Forney Model T dashing through the snow! All this and more is on display from now through the end of the Stock Show in January, so come join us at the Forney Museum for this festive season and share in all the holiday cheer!



70 Years of Thunderbird!

Running through January 26th, 2026, “70 years of Thunderbird!” is a celebration of the iconic Ford Thunderbird from the model’s introduction in 1955 until the end of production in 2005. This exhibit is a showcase for the enduring legacy of this legendary model, with examples from all eleven generations on display.

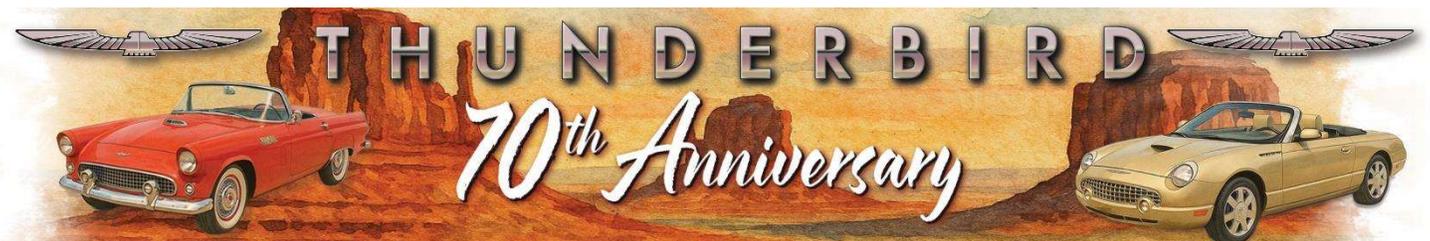
For example, come see the “Peacock Blue” 1956 Thunderbird Hardtop Convertible, seen in the foreground at right, which is on display thanks to the generosity of Steve Fisher and Hayden Cluff of Watkins, Colorado. The last 1956 T-Bird to be delivered for sale in the Los Angeles area, this vehicle has only ever had two owners in the almost 70 years since!



Don’t miss the 2003 Thunderbird “007 Edition” Convertible, as seen to the left. Finished in “Thunderbird Coral” with white hardtop and white leather interior, this limited edition Thunderbird matches the car driven by Halle Berry’s character in the James Bond movie *Die Another Day*. Although the 007 package was purely cosmetic, only 700 were built, making this one of the most exclusive and distinctive of

modern Thunderbirds. This T-Bird is on display courtesy of Steve Hatch of Centennial, Colorado.

With these gorgeous cars – and so much more! – you don’t want to miss this exhibit! So make plans to come to the Forney Museum before this exhibit ends on January 26 next year, and check out “70 Years of Thunderbird!”



Who wants to win a new Corvette?

As part of a very important fundraising campaign, the Forney Museum is holding a sweepstakes drawing for one lucky person to win a 2026 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray! This is an exciting opportunity we are thrilled to offer, and money raised goes to support the Museum. There are also drawings for monthly flash prizes, so if you have already entered then you can enter again for more chances



to win! November saw up to \$2000 in free entries given away, and December will see one lucky winner take home a set of 8 limited edition glass Corvette tumblers – as seen to the left. So raise a glass to automotive history and scan the QR Code to go to the sweepstakes website, or visit the web address www.forneysweeps.org and donate today! All entries to win



the Stingray must be made by May 31st, 2026, so don't miss out and enter today!

This Month in Transportation History

December 2, 1843 - The Alexandria Canal was officially opened to navigation and trade to the Potomac River in the Washington, D.C. area. The canal, connecting Alexandria and Virginia's Arlington County with the community of Georgetown via the Potomac Aqueduct Bridge, ultimately reached a length of seven miles and played a key role in the economic development of the region for decades. Remaining in service until 1886, the canal's route now hosts several important road and railways around the District of Columbia region.

December 1, 1863 - The Ferrymead Railway begins service in New Zealand's South Island. Connecting the city of Christchurch to the suburb of Ferrymead, the 4.4 mile Ferrymead Railway had the distinction of being the first public railway in New Zealand, and the opening ceremony and festivities were attended by many prominent citizens of the then-British colony. Despite the jovial atmosphere and the unique claim of being the first, the Ferrymead Railway was always intended to be temporary until the opening of a larger nearby railroad that would connect Christchurch to the port of Lyttleton. This new railway, which featured a tunnel cut through an extinct volcano, opened

in 1867, and the Ferrymead line shut down soon after. Today, the railway has renewed ceremonial operations as a New Zealand Heritage Railway.

December 13, 1881 - A 207-foot-tall electric light tower was dedicated in San Jose, California. Inspired by the electric lighting system installed in San Francisco, it was decided that a single lighted tower could be an effective means of illuminating the city center, and at less expense than gas lights. Built on a brick foundation, and crowned with a platform holding six large arc lamps, the electric light tower was considered the tallest free-standing iron structure in the world at the time of its opening – and the light was visible 50 miles away in San Francisco! Storms and high winds would topple the tower in 1915, but a 100-foot replica was installed in Kelley Park in San Jose in 1977.

December 19, 1903 - The Williamsburg Bridge, which spans the East River in New York City, was formally opened to the public. The first major suspension bridge in the United States to have steel towers rather than masonry towers, the Williamsburg Bridge at 7,308 feet was considered the longest suspension bridge in the world at the time of its completion. The record was finally broken in 1924 when the Bear Mountain Bridge, also in New York, was completed.

December 9, 1941 - The Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railway accepted the first 2-6-6-6 Allegheny steam locomotive from the Ohio-based Lima Locomotive Works. A total of 60 of these huge engines would be built for C&O by 1948, and used extensively for hauling coal, with some use during WWII hauling troops and supplies. An additional eight 2-6-6-6 locomotives would be produced by Lima for the Virginian Railway in 1945, and both classes of the 2-6-6-6 type are regarded as some of the largest and most powerful steam engines ever built in the United States – at 601 tons, fully loaded, the Allegheny engine was just slightly heavier than the Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 Big Boy, and exceeded only by the Pennsylvania Railroad class Q2 in tractive horsepower! Only two Allegheny engines survive today: one can be found at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan; and one at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

Forney Vehicle Spotlight

1956 Dodge Custom Royal Lancer 4-Door Hardtop

From humble beginnings at the dawn of the 20th Century, when the brothers Horace and John Dodge began building automotive parts, engines and chassis components for the growing automobile manufacturing market in Detroit, the Dodge Brothers Company would grow into a giant. The brothers made crucial early connections in the industry machining parts for Ransom E. Olds and Henry Ford, and an early \$10,000 investment in Ford Motor Company would eventually net the brothers over \$34 million dollars and set them and their fledgling company up for success.





The first Dodge car, the 1914 Dodge Model 30-35 touring car, was marketed as a slightly more upscale competitor to Ford's ubiquitous Model T. Featuring a stronger frame, and more powerful engine, this early Dodge was an indicator of the values that would set the company apart. John Dodge was quoted at the time, "Someday, people who own a Ford are going to want an automobile." And with an early reputation built

on big trucks, this association of Dodge with rugged, dependable power would endure.

World War I saw Dodge trucks and cars used extensively by the U.S. Army and Dodge would remain as the primary supplier of light trucks to the Army until the beginning of World War II. Everything seemed set for Dodge to challenge the very biggest

companies on the market, but in 1920 John Dodge died from Spanish Flu and his brother followed him only some months later, dying of cirrhosis. The company was left in the hands of the brothers' widows, and within a few years they had sold Dodge for \$146 million, which is equivalent to over \$2.6 billion today, to an investment group, who would again flip the company in 1928 to a new player in the American market looking to take on Ford and General Motors: the Chrysler Corporation.



As part of a corporate family of brands, Dodge found itself priced near DeSoto (1928-1961) and below Chrysler in the lineup. This status would stand for years until World War II put a halt to civilian production. Dodge again was a major supplier of heavy and light trucks to the Army, and after the war one of their Army models, the WC-series, was carried over mostly unchanged into civilian production as the Dodge Power Wagon truck.



As production of civilian models slowly ramped up after WWII Dodge released lightly changed versions of pre-war models to capitalize on a rapidly growing market demand, but change was coming for the entire

industry. By the end of the 1940s, Dodge had replaced the old Standard-DeLuxe-Super Deluxe naming style for names like Coronet, Wayfarer or Meadowbrook. By the 1950s, Dodge production was higher than it had ever been, and Chrysler's largest plant became known as the famous "Dodge Main" facility, located in Hamtramck, Michigan.

As the striking visual style of the Coronet Deluxe and Diplomat – the first pillarless hardtop coupe – had become hallmarks of the brand, 1953 saw the introduction of another famous Dodge innovation: its first V8, the "Red Ram" Hemi engine. 1954 would see further innovations, such as the PowerFlite fully-automatic transmission for production models. In 1955, Chrysler Design Chief, Virgil Exner, led the development of the "Forward Look" styling. With



steadily upgraded styling and engine performance every year through 1960, Dodge found an eager market in an America discovering the freedom of freeway travel.

All 1955 models came in three series: the Coronet, the Royal, and the top-of-the-line Custom Royal. Sales jumped 160%, and possibly Dodge could have capitalized further on the demand, except Dodge and Plymouth shared an engine plant, creating a bottleneck in their V8 engine production. Despite the bottleneck, Dodge produced 237,000 V8s out of 273,000 vehicles completed. The stage was set for 1956, and the introduction of a pillarless 4-door hardtop across all three series that Dodge named the Lancer.

Following the success of 1955, Dodge chose to not dramatically restyle their cars for 1956. The front end is very similar to the 1955 model, but the side trim and tail lights were updated, and the rear fenders saw the introduction of fins as was becoming popular in Detroit at the time.

This was also the first year of one of Chrysler's trademark innovations, with a dash-mounted pushbutton selector added for the automatic transmission in place of a steering column mounted shift lever.





With a wheelbase of 120 inches and an overall length of 212 inches, the 3,675 pound 4-door Custom Royal Lancer was an imposing car on the road, along with the popular three-tone color scheme, futuristic chrome accents and sweeping design provided plenty of curb appeal. The Custom Royal Lancer also featured “Custom Royal” and “Lancer” script badging on front and rear fenders along with the V8 emblem, and the flashy Dodge Lancer wheel covers. High-quality

fabric interiors in a two-tone color scheme and a sleek fully-equipped dash layout complete the mid-century modern look. Options included an electric clock and radio, hydraulic power steering and brakes with an independent parking brake, power seats and windows, a heater and “Airtemp” air conditioning, windshield washers and whitewall tires. Some 1956 Custom Royals even featured an optional Highway Hi-Fi automatic record player!

Many engine options were available, including an upgraded V8 “Red Ram,” an even more powerful “Super Red Ram” and the all new “D-500” V8 which produced 260 horsepower! This 1956 Dodge Custom Royal Lancer has a 315 cubic-inch “Super Red Ram” V8 overhead-valve engine with a Carter four-barrel carburetor. This cast iron block engine has a compression ratio of



8.5:1 and a bore and stroke of 3.63 x 3.8 in. This gave the 1956 “Super Red Ram” a rating of 230 horsepower, and with the PowerFlite automatic transmission would have



made for a smooth and very powerful driving experience with a fantastic example of an early Dodge Hemi engine – an engine design that would become a hallmark of the brand, simply offering great power versus a more complicated drivetrain.

While many of Dodge’s most famous vehicle offerings such as the Charger, Challenger, Ram, Daytona or Viper were in the future, Dodge has

been a consistent and prominent player in the performance automotive market. Corporate owner Chrysler has gone through a few ownership changes and mergers, and Dodge is today a division of Stellantis – perhaps best known for pickup trucks, much as in the days of the Dodge Brothers Company over 100 years ago!

This original 1956 Dodge Custom Royal Lancer has been owned by one family since it was purchased new at Bill Waters Plymouth-Dodge in San Francisco, California. Owner Joyce Paavola, the daughter of the original owner and pictured at right with Museum Director Christof Kheim, generously donated her father's Dodge to the Forney Museum in March 2025, where it can be seen on display as part of the Forney Museum Collection. Thank you Joyce!



Featured Volunteer

The Featured Volunteer for the month of December is Brian English. Brian helps the Forney with events both at the Museum and out at car shows, and with an eye for style, he is an instrumental part of exhibit resets and visual design around the Museum.

A Denver native, with family roots in the area that date back to the 1920s, Brian works as a flight attendant for Delta Airlines. Starting with Western Airlines in 1978, he says this experience in public communication and customer service helps when representing the Museum at public events.

While he says the first car that made an impression on him was an uncle's 1955 Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight Hardtop in turquoise over white, his first car was a 1965 Ford Mustang. While he has owned several other classics over the years, such as a 1968 AMC Javelin and a 1975 Mercury Capri, that first car must have made an impression as today he is the owner of a 1973 Ford Mustang as well as a 1961 Ford Falcon.



Brian had known the Museum Director, Christof Kheim, through a car club, and was introduced to the Forney when the club came to participate in the Museum's monthly Dust 'n Shine program. When told of all the opportunities to volunteer, he decided to

give it a try. He tells me that he finds volunteering at the Museum to be a very rewarding experience, sharing his knowledge and his love of classic cars with the public. Thank you Brian, we couldn't do what we do without you!

Volunteer Birthdays

12/3 - Lori Melamedas

12/26 - Joel Klassen

12/3 - Michael Murphy

12/27 - Larry Filmore

12/8 - Rick Nelson

12/28 - Rex Osborn

12/15 - Gordon Johnson

The Museum needs YOU!

Anyone interested in volunteering or donating please reach out to us at the museum or email volunteer@forneymuseum.org

Memberships

Become a Forney Museum Member TODAY! We have memberships in many different levels to fit your particular needs, with options available for as low as \$50, the right membership for you can be purchased in the museum gift shop or online at forneymuseum.org. Memberships are good for one year and make great gifts, so help support the Forney by buying a membership today!

Community Rewards Program

The Forney Museum has joined the King Soopers/City Market Community Rewards Program. For those

unfamiliar with this program, it allows King Soopers or City Market loyalty reward members to link a non-profit or charity to their loyalty card. For every purchase made with that card, King Soopers/City Market will donate a percentage of the amount to the organization you choose. What this means is that you can now support the Museum simply by purchasing groceries, at no cost to you! In fact, with the deals available to loyalty reward members, you can save money at the checkout and raise money for the Museum at the same time!



Please join today by simply visiting <https://www.kingsoopers.com/account/communityrewards> and log in as a member. From there you can search for the Forney Museum of Transportation and enroll. This is a fantastic opportunity, and we are thankful to King Soopers/City Market for their generosity and outreach to the local community.

General Museum Needs

We are putting out the call for several items that are needed here at the museum. If you see anything in this section that you think you would be able to donate to the museum to help us with our operations please reach out to our Assistant Director, Dan at asstdirector@forneymuseum.org, or call the museum at (303) 297-1113.

- 1) Diesel pickup in running, serviceable condition
- 2) Enclosed trailer (20-foot or longer) to transport Forney Museum vehicles safely & securely
- 3) Modern tire changing machine in working order
- 4) Modern wheel balancing machine in working order
- 5) Late model minivan in serviceable condition

Thank you to everyone who has already donated!

The Forney Museum wishes Happy Holidays to everyone and many thanks for your ongoing support. We look forward to seeing you in 2026!

The Forney Newsletter team is:

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Graphics and Design Assistance, Damion Cope

Research Assistance provided by: James Hansen, Jennifer Holm, Damion Cope, Dan Hays

Special Thanks to all of our readers!

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- Your telephone number
- Credit card or other financial information
- Demographic information (e.g. age, size of household)

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Survey Responses

The Museum may invite you to participate in one of our surveys that provide the Museum with valuable feedback about our exhibits and programs as well as information about visitors' experiences, preferences and needs. These surveys may request certain personal information including household and demographic information. Participation in surveys is completely voluntary and you may choose whether or not to disclose this information to us. You may be given the opportunity during the survey to opt in to further communications from the Museum, but your contact information will not be associated with your survey responses or the provided demographic information. The Museum may use third party service providers to conduct surveys or analyze survey data; such service providers will not use your personal information for any other purpose. We will not share any personal information gathered through a survey with other third parties without giving you prior notice and an opportunity to opt out.

Children's Information

The Museum does not knowingly collect personal information from children under 13 years of age. If personal information regarding a child is required for program participation or similar reasons, the Museum will collect this information from the child's parent or guardian. If a child sends an email to the Museum, we will only use that address and any information provided only to respond to the particular inquiry and will not retain or use the information for any other purpose.

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