

ON THE BLOCK

Mom-and-pop dealership in tiny Nebraska town to auction off treasure trove of models and memorabilia

Larry P. Vellequette
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On the last weekend in September, an 80-acre oat field near tiny Pierce, Neb., will become heaven for vintage car collectors.

That Saturday morning, an auctioneer will start selling nearly 500 new and used cars and pickups that have gathered dust in a shuttered dealership for as long as 60 years. Many have fewer than a dozen miles on the odometer.

The vehicles are the unsold inventory of Lambrecht Chevrolet, a mom-and-pop dealership in Pierce that closed in 1996, ending a 50-year run. The town is about 125 miles northwest of Omaha.

Since announcing the sell-off in June, auctioneer Yvette VanDerBrink said she has been deluged with inquiries from as far away as Thailand, Brazil and Europe.

"The hotel rooms are already sold out," VanDerBrink said, adding that she expects between 6,000 and 8,000 people will participate, rain or shine.

The auction list is an eclectic GM-centric mix of automotive hits and misses, several dozen of which have yet to turn a second digit on their odometers and have been stored inside, protected from the elements. Others were taken in on trade decades ago and show much more of their age. They include:

- A 1958 Chevrolet Cameo pickup and a 1959 Chevrolet Bel Air sedan, both with a single mile on the odometer.

- A 1965 Chevrolet Bel Air station wagon and a 1969 Chevrolet Cheyenne, both with five miles or fewer.

- A 1963 Chevrolet Impala, with 11 miles on the odometer, a 1964 version with just five miles recorded, and a pair of 1959 Impalas with just two miles.

The auction list also includes some not-so-great moments in GM history, including a 1977 Chevrolet Vega, 1982 copies of the Chevrolet Cavalier and Citation, and a 1980 Chevrolet Monza, some still wearing their original plastic seat covers and window stickers.

For many, the nagging question is why the cars and pickups were never sold. The answer comes from Jeannie Lambrecht Stillwell, whose parents,



At Lambrecht Chevrolet in tiny Pierce, Neb., some of the new cars to be auctioned are more than 50 years old.

Ray and Mildred Lambrecht, now in their 90s, were the dealership's former operators.

She said her father "knew that one day whatever he stored would be valuable to collectors, so he didn't have a problem keeping them. The new cars that he did not sell were added to Dad's collection of vehicles."

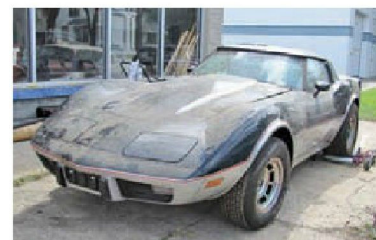
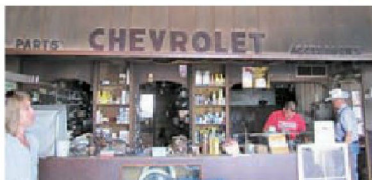
The best vehicles in her parents' collection were stored for decades in a large nearby warehouse while others were kept outside, she told *Automotive News*. Though her parents had many offers over the years, they kept their collection together in anticipation of one big auction.

A GM archivist said the automaker no longer has records of the Lambrecht dealership, which the couple's daughter said started with an annual allotment of just 16 vehicles in 1946 and had just one employee, a mechanic.

In a written history and photographs included with the auction materials, Lambrecht Stillwell said her father is "still fiercely loyal to Chevrolet and General Motors."

She wrote that her father built the dealership after returning from service in World War II, and that it remained largely unchanged until it closed. Photos from the dealership show a single wooden counter for parts and sales where the Lambrechts greeted and did business with their customers.

Photos of the vehicles to be auctioned, as well as a full listing of the items to be sold, are available at vanderbrinkauctions.com **AN**



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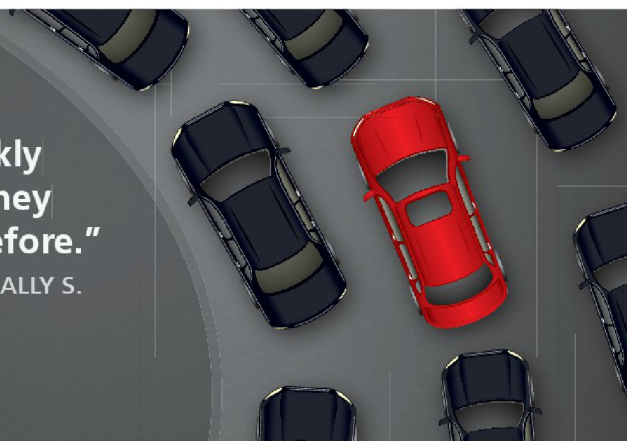
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Automotive News

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