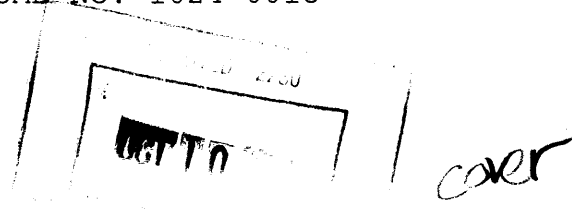


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form *645-08*

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission  Amended Submission

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A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

=====

Motor Row, Chicago, Illinois

=====

B. Associated Historic Contexts

=====

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Dealerships and the Development of a Commercial District 1905-1936  
Evolution of a Building Type 1905-1936  
Motor Row and Chicago Architects 1905-1936

=====

C. Form Prepared by

=====

name/title Linda Peters, Architectural Historian

street & number 435 S. Cleveland Avenue telephone 847.506.0754

city or town Arlington Heights state IL zip code 60005

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D. Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Chiles / SHPO  
Signature and title of certifying official

10-2-02  
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Nov 21, 2002  
Date

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Motor Row, Chicago, IL  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

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Table of Contents for Written Narrative

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	14-17
G. Geographical Data	18
H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	19
I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	20-23

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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MOTOR ROW

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Motor Row in Chicago, IL  
Cook County, IL

## Statement of Historic Contexts

### Introduction

Chicago's Motor Row District, which roughly centers on South Michigan Avenue between 14<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> streets, is considered to be the largest, intact early motor colony in the United States. Automobile rows had developed in numerous cities shortly after the turn of the last century as car companies sought to create districts where the sale and repair of cars could become a convenient urban shopping experience. The historic name of the district dates to the first decades of the twentieth century. The area was referred to in newspaper articles, magazine stories, and advertisements as Chicago's "Motor Row". Another name, "Automobile Row", appears to date from the 1930s.

The district is anchored by six large auto dealership structures, between four and six stories in height, on several corner lots. These structures are interspersed with smaller showroom buildings, between one and three stories, that were constructed by speculators for use by auto dealers, automotive part companies, and related businesses. The conglomerate forms a continuous frontage, or streetwall, on Michigan Avenue between Cermak Road and the Stevenson Expressway, the city's Near South Side. As a grouping the buildings in the Motor Row District strongly express their historic origins.

South Michigan Avenue has changed from farmland to an affluent residential boulevard to a retail district and finally to light manufacturing and warehouses. It is adjacent to Chicago's central business district, or the Loop, and, as it expanded, it pushed residential neighborhoods further and further out. Following the Fire of 1871, Michigan Avenue was designated as a boulevard, which furthered its development as an extension of the exclusive residential district farther north, facing Grant Park. The street was quickly developed with masonry mansions, rowhouses, fashionable clubs and churches.

The character of South Michigan Avenue, however, began to change rapidly at the turn of the century. In large cities, retail trade crept closer to the homes of its preferred clientele. Additionally the street's reputation hastened its own transformation. It was one of the best-paved streets in the city, as noted in the Standard Guide to Chicago for the Year 1891:

The roadway is level as the top of a billiard table, and the clickety-clack of the horse's feet over the well-kept pavement is music to our ears.

The smoother driving surface of Michigan Boulevard, which was termed "the longest and best automobile course in any city of this country", also became music to the ears of the city's first auto dealers, who began using it as a route to test drive autos. This use also brought to the dealers' attention the street's advantages as a close-to-the-Loop location for auto showrooms and auto-related buildings and offices.

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MOTOR ROW

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Motor Row in Chicago, IL  
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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

Another advantage of Michigan Avenue was its deep 180-foot lots, backing either on Wabash or Indiana avenues. An article in Bricklayer magazine in 1913 noted that the ideal "automobile sales and service building.... should extend the entire length between two streets, preferably a main thoroughfare and a back street of sufficient width to permit automobiles to be operated in both directions." Deep lots fronting on Michigan Avenue also make it possible to create buildings with very large ground floor areas, without obstructing columns. An article in a 1910 issue of Architectural Record highlighted the importance of this new building type as a unique "solution of a utilitarian problem by architects." The author, architectural critic Peter B. Wight, noted that:

On account of their location on a street notable for very good architectural improvements it is natural that the designers should have sought to make them more attractive than purely utilitarian factories and warehouses....It is evident that here we must look for the crude beginnings of a new architecture. And if it can be so called it is not to be praised too highly, neither is it to be condemned rashly, because it is new, if the effort is honest.

The automobile made its first appearance on Chicago streets in 1892. The following year, several models of automobiles were displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago's Jackson Park. Interest was further heightened in 1895 by "America's First Automobile Race" which was sponsored by the Chicago Times-Herald. The winning entry ran the 52-mile, round-trip route from Jackson Park to Evanston in just under eight hours at an average speed of 6.7 miles per hour.

Nonetheless, at the turn of the century, automobiles were still considered playthings for the wealthy, according to historian Robert Bruegmann, who notes there were only 600 cars in Chicago as late as 1902. The poor condition of most street surfaces impeded growth and circulation problems developed in the absence of traffic laws. By 1904, city ordinances were passed in an early attempt to control traffic. Car ownership increased to 4,500 vehicles in 1906-7 and 12,926 in 1910 compared to 58,000 horse-drawn vehicles. With the development of mass production and more reliable cars, the price began to decline and financing became available. By 1920, the number of cars had grown to 90,000 and, just five years later, it had soared to nearly 300,000. In contrast, the number of horse-drawn vehicles had dropped to 18,000. Many of these early automobiles had been sold on Chicago's famed Motor Row.

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MOTOR ROW

Motor Row in Chicago, IL  
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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

**Early Automobile Dealerships and the Development of Chicago's Motor Row (1905-1936)**

At first there was no mass market that organized the sale, service, fuel and storage of automobiles. Bikes were mass-produced, and carriages were sold in showrooms. Most of the early automobiles were sold through them. The Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company built a 10-story building in 1895 at 625 S. Wabash Avenue. Although the Studebaker Building (later converted to theaters and studios and renamed the Fine Arts Building) was constructed to showcase the company's carriage, wagon, and harness departments, Bruegmann says:

[It] almost immediately became the center of the Chicago auto trade as dealers moved into the area, accompanied by parts manufacturers and distributors. From these showrooms the dealers and their prospective buyers would drive the same routes taken by the carriages of the wealthy, that is, down Michigan Avenue and along the grand tree-lined boulevards parallel to it.

The city's first "automobile agent," Ralph Temple, established an Oldsmobile dealership at 293 S. Wabash Avenue (demolished) in 1899, according to Moran's Dictionary of Chicago. However, the first building to be purposely constructed in Chicago for the sale of automobiles was a one-story structure at the northwest corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Michigan Avenue. Built in 1902 for the Barney Sykes' American Locomobile Company (demolished), its main feature was a large band of glass showroom windows.

This first showroom invaded an affluent residential area. South Michigan Avenue was a coherent streetscape of homes, with front yards 20 feet deep, churches, schools and social clubs. Selling one's property to a commercial interest would have incurred the disapproval of neighbors. Wight explains:

It was not easy at first to procure building sites. The property had been held at a high price always for residential purposes; but owners soon yielded to the demand at a higher price than formerly and some tore down their houses and built stores, which were quickly rented. The 'auto' people from all over the city then began to besiege the property owners for more sites and buildings and the natural consequence was a 'boom' in the price of lots.

The intrusions were not only of a different building type. The new dealerships also brought noise, exhaust and the flammability of fuel.

Ten of the earliest buildings were developed by group of four individuals whose investments helped transform South Michigan Avenue into Chicago's Motor Row, which developed into a remarkable and exclusive cluster of buildings to not only sell the early automobile but to service, store and fuel it as well.

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

John P. Wilson (1844-1922) built the Ford showroom for Henry Ford and leased it to the company for its branch agency. His numerous land transactions in the area north of Cermak Road caused him to be referred to, in a 1905 article, as "one of the heaviest investors in Michigan Boulevard frontage." Developer Ferdinand Peck (1848-1924), who built the Auditorium Theater in 1890, lived at 1826 S. Michigan Avenue. The tire showroom building he commissioned in 1911 for the B.F. Goodrich Building at 1925 S. Michigan Avenue was designed with elegant Second Empire styling in order to blend in with the ornate residences on the street. Bryan Lathrop (1844-1916) built four of the surviving buildings in Motor Row. Finally, attorney Alfred Cowles (1865-?) was responsible for developing an impressive row of automobile buildings at 2301-13 S. Michigan Avenue.

In 1905, pioneering auto manufacturer Henry Ford (1863-1947) had built a two-story dealership at 1444-46 S. Michigan Avenue, the earliest surviving building in Motor Row. It was one of the first Ford branches to be built outside of Detroit, MI, where the factory was located and the only extant example of these early showrooms. The company had been incorporated in June 1903, and by 1906 it had built branch stores in Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Kansas City, New York, and Philadelphia.

At a time when automobiles were virtually hand-built with individually machined parts, Ford was revolutionizing car manufacturing by adopting the use of standardized parts and assembly-line techniques. By doing so, according to America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910, he was able to produce "the first low-priced automobile that gave as good or better service than the much more expensive cars of the period." Chicago's contractor Henry Ericsson recalled meeting with Ford to discuss the construction of the branch showroom on South Michigan Avenue in Motor Row. In his memoir, 60 Years a Builder, Ericsson said:

Chicago seemed to hold a thrill for Ford, though I imagine the sight that made the deepest impression upon his mind was the beeves and hogs moving along overhead carriage lines through the packing plants [of the Chicago Stockyards].

In his own autobiography of 1922 Ford, in fact, credits this visit for showing him the potential of the assembly-line process. "The idea came in a general way from the overhead trolley that the Chicago packers used in dressing beef," Ford recalled.

By 1913, thanks to the phenomenal popularity of the Model-T, Ford was producing 202,667 cars a year, compared to the second-place company's total of 37,422 (Willys-Overland). That same year, Ford moved its Motor Row showroom into larger quarters at 39<sup>th</sup> and Michigan Avenue.

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

Henry Ford's original decision to build on Michigan Avenue appears to have been very influential with local developers. Within five years, dozens of new buildings for automotive concerns had been erected in a mile-and-a-half-long corridor between 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> streets (later Motor Row would stretch even further south).

The Buick Motor Co. opened a dealership in Motor Row's second oldest showroom in 1908. By this time Buick had become the nation's leading auto producer, with 8,500 cars, closely followed by Ford with 6,200 and Cadillac at 2,380.

Chicago's first Cadillac dealership dates to 1909, which is when Motor Row experienced its greatest construction boom. Other auto company showrooms built between 1909 and 1912 include those for Cunningham, 2341 S. Michigan Avenue, Fiat, 2347-51 and 2239 S. Michigan Avenue, Locomobile, Maxwell, Pierce Arrow, 2420 S. Michigan Avenue, Premier, 2329 S. Michigan Avenue, Rambler, 2246-58 S. Indiana Avenue and Thomas Flyer, 2255 S. Michigan Avenue. According to The American Car Since 1775, all of these were considered to be among the major auto producers of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Many of the buildings constructed in Motor Row after 1912 were larger-scale replacements for the early showrooms. Five-story structures were built for Packard in 1915 at 2334-38 S. Michigan Avenue and Cadillac in 1919 at 2300-08 S. Michigan Avenue, while two-story showrooms for Cole at 2235 S. Michigan Avenue and Locomobile at 2401-09 S. Michigan Avenue were constructed in 1923 and 1925 respectively. The Hudson at 2222 S. Michigan Avenue and Marmon at 2232 S. Michigan Avenue car companies built lavish showrooms in 1922. At the time, Hudson was the nation's seventh largest auto producer with 64,500 cars.

Within a few years of the development of the first auto dealerships, and corresponding with the increased popularity of the automobile, a new type of commercial district had begun to emerge in cities across the country, the so-called "automobile row." According to Chester Liebs, this new Main Street was:

....lined by walls of buildings whose shop windows, instead of being crammed full of jewelry, clothing, hardware, or groceries, showcased a single product – automobiles. By walking, driving, or riding a trolley down the street, the shopper could survey the latest cars available, while gaining an impression of dealers and the companies they represented from the appearance of their buildings.

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MOTOR ROW

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

A Chicago Sunday Tribune article on February 6, 1910, beneath the headline of "No Motor Row Like Chicago's," noted with pride that:

Chicago has the most imposing automobile row of any city in the country, and claim for a world's record might well be made without much chance of there being any dispute over the assertion. In no other city have the members and agents of cars and the purveyors of motoring accessories grouped together as they have in Chicago, and the result is an imposing "row" in Michigan Avenue, which now is a veritable motor mart with most of the business houses [sic] representative of automobile concerns.

A year later, the Tribune (January 29, 1911) ran an article with the headline, "Changes Are Many Along 'Motor Row:' Now Finest in America." Included was a chart of the 116 "different makes of pleasure cars" that were being handled by Chicago dealers. Virtually all were being sold by one of the auto showrooms located along Motor Row, which then stretched between 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> streets. The article went on to note:

Michigan Avenue has firmly established Chicago's reputation for having the largest motor colony in the country....No other city possesses such a grand "row," such a magnificent collection of buildings devoted to the retailing of motor cars and accessories.

Chicago's Motor Row continued to develop and expand throughout the late 1910s and 1920s, coinciding with the tremendous growth in popularity of the automobile. But by the time of the construction in 1936 of the Illinois Automobile Association headquarters at 2400 S. Michigan Avenue, Motor Row's dominant status in Chicago had already begun to be challenged by the development of new dealerships elsewhere in the city and surrounding suburbs. A few auto dealerships and other auto-related businesses, however, still remain today. Although remnants of "automobile rows" survive in several other large American cities, none appears to be as large or intact as Chicago's Motor Row.

## Early Automobile and Auto-Related Showrooms: Emergence of a Building Type (1905-36)

The earliest purpose-built auto-related showrooms in Chicago were constructed on South Michigan Avenue along Motor Row. They were utilitarian structures that were indebted to commercial retail structures and to stables. Early autos were commonly stored in the latter with their large, round-arched ground floor openings and unimpeded interior spaces. Retail design lent its use of vast expanses of plate glass windows within the principal elevations at ground level while the upper levels had smaller windows. The large display windows allowed the autos to be prominently displayed for the potential customer who



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Motor Row in Chicago, IL  
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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

was either on foot or riding by. The first-known example was an auto showroom building at the northwest corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Michigan Avenue (demolished).

Early auto-related showrooms were typically 2-3 stories and they housed not only the retail space but also a garage, repair shop and offices. The Ford Motor Co. Showroom and the Buick Motor Co. Showroom, constructed in 1905 and 1907 respectively, are examples of these first auto showrooms. A typical prototype had a recessed entry into the showroom. Column rows created open showroom areas, which were frequently double height with a tiled floors. Offices and the cashier were located in the rear of the showroom.

The interior of the basic box was required for sales and support functions, relegating the opportunity for design inventiveness to the cornice and parapet levels, outer building borders and mullion strips. Brick, terra cotta and galvanized metal were used in patterns and finishes designed to attract the customer's eye, although these early examples remained comparatively simple and modest in terms of decorative ornamentation compared to later examples. Signage was sometimes included within the parapet.

In the next decade, the showroom increased in size and complexity. Liebs says these second-generation "multi-story urban auto sales salon" buildings were often constructed of reinforced concrete, which made an ideal skeletal frame for a structure that needed to support large loads, while being vibration resistant and relatively fireproof. Six large-scale auto-related buildings typical of this phase of development in the property type still survive in Motor Row. All were built between 1909 and 1915 and were designed by well-known architects. They are considered fine examples of the type of commercial structures that gave the so-called "Chicago School" of commercial architecture an international reputation for architectural innovation. The prominence of these buildings is heightened by their corner lots, which help to define the character of the district.

A typical interior organization featured expansive showrooms topped by utilitarian factory space that was used for "everything from charging batteries to the final assembly of new cars." A cross-section of a typical multi-story building appeared in the August 1919 issue of Motor Age. It showed such upper-story features as an overhead track, paint drying kilns, stock room, upholstery shop, and sheet metal department. Automobile chases, parts and the assembled product were transported between floors by means of an elevator.

Two good examples of this type of multi-story building are located at the intersection of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Michigan. The Thomas Flyer Co. Building, 2255 S. Michigan Avenue, was originally built as a three-story structure in 1910 before receiving a two-story addition in 1915. The tall windows on the lower stories were designed to feature showrooms, while the smaller upper-floor windows reflect service uses.

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

Across the street is the Cadillac Motor Car Co. Building, 2301 S. Michigan Avenue, 1911. This five-story structure features broad bays of windows and, according to a newspaper advertisement from 1912, was "devoted entirely to serving Cadillac owners and . . . is completely equipped to do any work that any Cadillac owner will ever need done."

During the late-1910s and early-1920s, the auto showroom and auto-related specialty showroom buildings in Motor Row, as well as those across the country, began to grow even more ornate. Dealers began pouring their own money into lavish new facilities. With the growing complexity and competition, owners hired architects to design these buildings.

The Kelly-Springfield Tire Building, 2251 S. Michigan Avenue, 1915, was designed by Alfred Alschuler and features an ornate classical-style, terra cotta ornament, even though its basic narrow-fronted structure remained quite utilitarian. In contrast, the showrooms built in 1922 by the Hudson Motor Co. and the Marmon Car Co. were set on much wider lots. Both feature ornamental terra cotta details, along with elements of the Spanish Revival, a style that was commonly used by designers of auto showrooms—and movie palaces—during the 1920s. The central bay on the Hudson building's facade has a Palladian-style window in the raised central bay with small "H" (for Hudson) medallions. The *AIA Guide to Chicago* notes that the building's "exuberant terra cotta imitates stone in twisted columns and rope moldings." Stepping into these showrooms would have been akin to entering a hotel lobby.

In contrast to the simple, and largely unadorned quality of the early showrooms, these later showrooms typically featured elaborate interiors, often with the rear walls designed as the exterior of a Spanish villa or classical building, much in the manner of a stage set, acting as a background to enhance the automobiles on display. These two adjacent buildings are excellent examples of the type of grand auto showrooms built during the 1920s, a decade when the automobile became a standard feature of American life. During this period, auto showrooms also began to be built well beyond the Loop along many of the city's large commercial streets. Some of the best surviving examples are: 5946 Broadway (1925), 3041 W. Lawrence Ave. (c.1925), 6731 S. Western Ave. (1929), and 5500 S. Lake Park Blvd. (1929).

Despite this trend, Motor Row remained the city's largest concentration of automobile and specialty showrooms until after World War II. A 1933 city guidebook still referred to Michigan Avenue south of 18<sup>th</sup> Street as "Automobile Row," noting that lining either side of the street "are the salesrooms of virtually all American and many foreign motor cars." New construction in Motor Row culminated in 1936 with the opening of the Illinois Automobile Club at 2400 S. Michigan. Its design by Philip B. Maher is a Moderne-style adaptation of the Spanish Mission style, featuring a three-story clock tower. (In the 1950s the building was acquired by the *Chicago Defender* newspaper.)

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

Following World War II, the movement of automobile dealers to outlying commercial streets (e.g., Ashland, Cicero, and Western avenues) escalated, although the new sales buildings often were secondary to the drama of their large-scale neon signs. Still, despite the passage of nearly a century, no other commercial strip in the city—or the United States—comes close to duplicating either the importance or character of the Motor Row District on South Michigan Avenue.

**Motor Row and Chicago Architects (1905-1936)**

As the automobile showroom progressed from sharing sales space with carriages and bicycles, into one-story spaces and finally to multi-storied showrooms, their increasing complexity required an architect's services. Most of the earliest buildings in the Motor Row District were designed by **Christian Eckstorm** (1863-1927), an architect known for his high-quality industrial and commercial work. He designed twelve buildings in the district between 1905 and 1919.

Eckstorm began his architecture career in 1887 with the firm of Cobb & Frost and later worked for Henry Ives Cobb. Eckstorm opened his own practice in 1904. Among his most notable commercial and industrial designs are: the Pugh Warehouses (a.k.a. North Pier Terminal), 365-511 E. Illinois St. (1905-1920); the Harvester Building, 600 S. Michigan Ave. (1907); the Mallers Building, 1 S. Wabash Ave. (1910); the Sherwood Conservatory of Music, 1014 S. Michigan Ave. (1912) and the Garland Building, 101 N. Wabash Ave. (1915).

The designs of Eckstorm's auto showroom buildings were based on retail architecture of the period. The large windows enhance the display of automobiles. The so-called "Chicago School" of architecture emphasized the expression of frame construction with minimal piers and spandrels, allowing the maximization of window openings. The buildings are one- to three-stories tall and faced with dark brick and stone trimming. Ornament, typically classical, is used sparingly and is centered above the entrance or on the parapet.

Among the most distinctive examples of Eckstorm's work in Motor Row are: the Ford Showroom, the district's oldest building, 1905; the B. F. Goodrich Building, 1911, whose Second Empire detailing is similar to that of the Sherwood Conservatory along Grant Park; and the Pushman Building, 1912.

The initial success of Motor Row encouraged the involvement of other prominent local architects, such as Holabird & Roche, Alfred Alschuler, and Albert Kahn, who designed many of the larger scale, more sophisticated auto showroom buildings with more artistic facades that further enhanced the image of the automobile.

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MOTOR ROW

Motor Row in Chicago, IL  
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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

The well-known architectural firm of **Holabird & Roche** helped to transform the appearance of the auto showroom and service buildings in Motor Row with more than half a dozen high-quality designs between 1909 and 1915.

The firm was founded in 1881 by William Holabird (1854-1923) and Martin Roche (1855-1927), who met while working in the architectural office of William LeBaron Jenney, the so-called "father of the modern skyscraper." Holabird had come to Chicago from New York in 1875. Roche was raised in Chicago and educated at the Armour Institute of Technology (now IIT).

The firm was influential in the development of early skyscrapers, especially the architectural movement known as the Chicago School. Among its Chicago designs were: the Tacoma Building (1889; demolished), Pontiac Building (1891), Old Colony Building (1894), Marquette Building (1895), Republic Building (1904; demolished), Chicago Building (1904), City Hall-County Building (1905-09), and the Brooks Building (1910). Many of these structures feature the distinctive Chicago-style window, a large pane of glass flanked by narrow, moveable sash windows. The work of Holabird & Roche, as it pertains to the automobile showroom as a developing building type, is particularly significant. The firm completed many buildings from some of the first examples to later more complex examples.

Much of Holabird & Roche's work employed steel-frame construction, which adapted itself well to the needs of buildings housing auto sales and services. Their first design was for the American Locomobile Co., 14<sup>th</sup> and Michigan Avenue, 1902 (demolished). It was a one-story showroom with plate glass windows with the showroom in the front half and a repair shop in the rear half. Their next designs were small two- to three-story buildings that strongly emphasized the glassy expanses of their facades, which were enframed by ornately detailed brickwork or white-glazed terra cotta, such as the Fiat and Premier showrooms.

Beginning with the Cadillac Building at 2301 S. Michigan Avenue, the firm designed several larger buildings, whose facades are related to its other Chicago School-style designs, employing large windows and minimal amounts of brickwork. The large window openings of these buildings were practical not only for display purposes but for the amount of natural light they provided for auto repairs that required careful hand-machining.

The decorative treatment of Holabird & Roche's Motor Row buildings was more elaborate than those of other firms. On the larger buildings, ornamental terra-cotta plaques with the company's logos are emblazoned on parapets and doorways. The detailed brickwork and terra cotta castings on the Saxon, 2313 South Michigan Avenue, and Cowles, 2311 South Michigan Avenue, buildings are richly ornamental.

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MOTOR ROW

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

Another influential architect on Motor Row was **Alfred Alschuler** (1876-1940). Although only three of his buildings remain, they are textbook illustrations of the type of upscale automobile "sales palaces" from the final era of Motor Row's development.

Alschuler studied architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology and the Art Institute of Chicago. He went to work for Dankmar Adler, Louis Sullivan's former partner, in 1900. In 1903 he formed a partnership with Samuel A. Treat. In 1907, Alschuler began an independent practice that developed into one of the city's largest architectural offices during the 1920s and '30s. The firm produced distinctive designs for a variety of building types, including public buildings, synagogues, retail stores, and industrial buildings. Three of his buildings are the Goldblatt Bros. Department Store, 1613-35 W. Chicago Ave. (1921-28), the London Guarantee Building, 360 N. Michigan Ave. (1922-23), and K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Temple, 1100 E. Hyde Park Blvd. (1926).

A biographical sketch of Alschuler states that "[a]t a time when the city was developing an industrial fringe dominated by otherwise nondescript functional buildings, Alschuler's harmonious and refined designs, and restrained classical detailing, were changing the texture of the city."

Alschuler's Motor Row Buildings are excellent examples of his high-caliber work. In 1915, when he designed a new building for the Kelly-Springfield Tire Co. at 2251 S. Michigan Avenue, most of the nearby buildings on Motor Row had relatively staid brick-and-stone facades. In contrast, the facade of this three-story building features large expanses of glass delicately framed by classically detailed terra cotta.

Alschuler expanded on this in 1922 with the Hudson Motor Car and Marmon showrooms at 2222 and 2232 S. Michigan Avenue, which were three- and two-story buildings, respectively, carried out in a distinctive Spanish baroque style. Their interior showrooms continued the exotic theme through carved woodwork and grand staircases. Under Alschuler's hand, the space became a theatrical setting for selling not only cars but an associated lavish lifestyle.

Motor Row also includes a building designed by **Albert Kahn** (1869-1942), who is acknowledged to be one of the nation's most influential industrial architects of the early-20th century. The Cadillac Warehouse Building at 2300 S. Indiana Avenue, 1919 is the only remaining intact industrial building designed by Kahn in Chicago.

A native of Germany, Kahn immigrated to Detroit, MI, with his family in the 1880s. In 1893, he was appointed chief designer for the firm of Mason & Rice, and in 1896 he established his own practice. By the late 1930s Kahn's firm had a staff of over 600 people, which reportedly was responsible for nearly 20% of the nation's architect-designed industrial buildings during the period.

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Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

Kahn's early work was noted for its pioneering use of reinforced concrete, which he first employed in 1903 for a new manufacturing complex for the Packard Motor Car Co. in Detroit. Kahn recognized that reinforced concrete, due to its low cost, speed of construction, strength, and resistance to fire, was well suited to the automotive industry. His subsequent designs for other factory buildings are widely regarded as important influences on modern architecture.

Kahn designed an impressive three-story auto showroom for Packard in 1919 at the northeast corner of 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Michigan Avenue. Unfortunately, that building was demolished for construction of the Stevenson Expressway.

**Jenney, Mundie & Jensen** was a successful Chicago architectural firm with its lead partner being the highly acclaimed William LeBaron Jenney. The success of the firm may no doubt be attributed to Jenney's accomplishments at the World's Columbian Exhibition and his eventual recognition as the inventor of skeletal steel construction, and thus a founder of the modern skyscraper movement. Jenny certainly influenced both William Bryce Mundie and Elmer C. Jensen, as both were working with Jenney early in their careers, remaining with him throughout his life. William LeBaron Jenney was born in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, near New Bedford, in 1832. A student of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Jenney received his diploma in 1856; he returned to France two years later to study both architecture and art until shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War. Two years after resigning from the Army in May 1866, Jenney opened an architectural office in Chicago, but work was minimal. He subsequently formed the firm of Jenney, Schermerhorn & Bogart. Then for a brief period, 1870-71, Jenney was landscape engineer for West Chicago Parks. In the years following the Chicago fire of 1871, Jenney attained a national reputation as a pioneer of the metal-frame building in Chicago, thus becoming one of the key practitioners of the Chicago Style of the Commercial Style of architecture. William Biyce Mundie had been a draftsman in the office of W.L.B. Jenney from 1884-1891. Jenney took him into partnership, naming the firm Jenney and Mundie; Jenney would have been sixty-nine years old. Among Jenney's other draftsmen was Elmer C. Jensen, a native Chicagoan who had spent two years studying at the Art Institute and joined Jenney's firm in 1885. Both Mundie and Jensen were at least a generation younger than Jenny. Mundie, a native of Hamilton, Ontario, was born on April 30, 1863, and received his education at Hamilton Collegiate Institute. He married Jenney's niece, Bessie Russel [sic] Jenney of Plainville, Ohio, in 1892. Jensen was born on March 18, 1870, and had begun working with the Jenney firm by 1885. In 1905, Jenney retired and left for a visit in California. While dates differ, Jensen was likely made a partner in the firm just before Jenney's death in Los Angeles in 1907, with the firm being renamed to Jenney, Mundie, and Jensen. Among the Jenney, Mundie & Jensen Chicago designs were the Hirsch-Wickwire Building (1911) and the Kesner Building (1912).

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Cook County, IL

Statement of Historic Contexts (continued)

**William Ernest Walker** (1867-1918) began his architecture career with the firm of Henry Ives Cobb in 1892 where he remained for five years. He supervised construction for buildings at the University of Chicago, the Hartford Building and the Yerkes Observatory at Lake Geneva, WI. After serving as the Superintendent of Construction for the City of Chicago Board of Education, he opened his own practice in 1901. He is known primarily for large commercial buildings, such as the warehouses and stables for Marshall Field and Company and warehouses for Hillman, as well as the 8-story Manufacturers' Furniture Exhibition Company at the northeast corner of Wabash Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street. He is also known for his design of fireproof apartment houses, e.g. the 9-story building at 136 Lake Shore Drive which is believed to be the first with a penthouse, and for the Tower Apartments, Walton Place. He also designed the Lake Geneva Country Club, and residences in Riverside, Lake Forest, Lake Geneva and Charlevoix.

**Horatio R. Wilson** (1857-1917) studied architecture in the Chicago office of Charles J. Hull and in 1889 he became a partner with Oliver W. Marble. After Marble's retirement, Wilson ran his own firm eventually becoming partners with Benjamin H. Marshall. After 1900, Wilson established his own firm and designed a number of buildings: Illinois Theater (Chicago), Aurora Elgin and Chicago Railroad Station (Wheaton) and Case Office Building (Racine, Wisconsin). After 1910 Wilson was associated with John A. Armstrong in the firm of H.H. Wilson & Company. This firm designed a number of Chicago buildings including, MacMillan Publishing Company's Office Building and Warehouse (Prairie Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street - 1911), Raymond Apartment House (North Michigan Avenue) and the Surf and Sisson Hotel.

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MOTOR ROW

Motor Row in Chicago, IL  
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### Associated Property Types

Following is an analysis of the two principal property types associated with the automobile in Chicago, the Motor Row district and the automobile showroom.

#### Motor Row District

##### Description

A "Motor Row" is a cluster of automobile and specialty showrooms and related buildings that date from the first three decades of the twentieth century (1905-1936). In Chicago, the earliest Motor Row was clustered along South Michigan Avenue on the Near South Side, principally from 12<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> streets with some properties on Wabash and Indiana avenues which run parallel to Michigan Avenue on either side. The densest surviving cluster of such buildings is located on Michigan Avenue between Cermak Road, 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the expressway, 26<sup>th</sup> Street.

Prior to the emergence of Motor Row, automobiles and parts were sold and repaired in buildings within the Loop commercial district. These structures functioned as bicycle and carriage showrooms. It was not until the commercial district expanded to the south that a coherent grouping of showrooms and related specialty shops appeared along South Michigan Avenue. Developers acquired lots within the formally residential neighborhood.

Zoning laws were not written until 1923. Consequently the twenty-foot front-yard setbacks that the residential street honored were abandoned. The showroom designers utilized every available portion of the lot building up to the property lines. This created a streetwall frontage of continuous showroom windows. Michigan Avenue lots were frequently deep extending the full width of the block to either Wabash or Indiana avenues. Ideal lot configurations permitted views of the showroom interiors along Michigan Avenue with service entrances along the sides of corner lots or at the rear on Wabash or Indiana avenues. Michigan Avenue itself is a wide, four-lane road making it ideal for window shopping either on foot or in a passing vehicle. Its reputation as a smooth and level roadway was well suited for test drives.

##### Significance

Chicago's Motor Row is locally significant as a district under National Register Criterion A in the area of Commerce. Motor rows exemplify the emergence of an urban commercial district devoted to the sales, repair and servicing, fueling and storage of the automobile in the early twentieth century. As a conglomerate of showrooms, they formed an identifiable area within the urban context devoted to all the functions and needs of the early automobile, a significant invention ever since essential to American daily life.



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Associated Property Types (continued)

Chicago's Motor Row also qualifies under Criterion C for architectural significance. As a contiguous arrangement of similar building types assembled along a street(s), it represents a solution and its continued evolution to the problem of grouping many structures with similar functions and the intentional creation of a unique and identifiable district. Each design represents an architectural response to adding to the district and, in so doing, adds to the whole, as well as to the development of this new property type associated with the early automobile.

Registration Requirements

To qualify under Criterion A or C, the district must retain a high degree of integrity and association with the original commercial function and contain the largest extant continuous collection of properties associated with the development of Chicago's Motor Row along South Michigan Avenue between 1905 and 1936. Nationally, as well as in Chicago, motor rows are typically located near the original commercial centers of large cities, and therefore may have been subjected to various alterations over time. The district must, however, retain the majority of its original character. Incidental buildings which were not historically in an auto-related use but date from the period of significance and retain their historic integrity (and therefore their contribution to the historic streetscape) may be considered contributing buildings.

Under Criterion A and C, the district must be a cluster of buildings that retains evidence of its association with the marketing, service, repair and storage of the early automobile. The district buildings must demonstrate the function of automobile showrooms and other auto-related buildings from the period of significance by conveying a sense of their original building shape, mass and/or ornamentation. Alterations should not significantly change the overall appearance the building. The historic use should still be evident when looking at the building, as a whole and as part of a larger grouping. Additional features should include common setbacks and signage that demonstrates a connection to the showroom name. Window alterations are typical in many of the showrooms, especially on the first floor, but should not detract from the significance of the district as long as the overall historic use of the building is still conveyed.

The preliminary boundaries of a Motor Row district are identified in Appendix I.

Early Automobile and Related Specialty Showrooms

Description

Early automobile showrooms and related specialty buildings which remain from the period of significance, 1905-36, are located between 14<sup>th</sup> Street and the Stevenson Expressway, principally on Chicago's historic "Motor Row" on South Michigan Avenue, with some structures on Wabash and Indiana avenues between Cermak Road the expressway. Beginning in the late 1910s and 1920s, a few of these buildings were also constructed elsewhere in the city on some of the large commercial avenues.

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Associated Property Types (continued)

The showrooms are between 2-6 stories in height and constructed of concrete with brick and terra cotta finishes on the principal facades. Showrooms are several bays wide containing large expanses of plate glass on the ground floor with smaller windows on the upper levels. Surface ornamentation is typically relegated to cornice lines, parapets, building edges and mullion strips. The entry is generally recessed and leads to the showroom floor.

Some showrooms extend the full depth of the block, such as from South Michigan Avenue to Wabash Avenue. The rear, or secondary elevation, leads to the service areas. This elevation is less decorated and has large door openings. If the showroom occupies a corner lot, the side elevation will generally also have the service entries. All roofs are flat and may have skylights.

Since the period of significance spans a period of the "Chicago School" as well as eclecticism or period revivals, the showrooms may possess some of these traits. Many of the showrooms have "Chicago School" terra cotta exteriors, while other showrooms are designed in the Renaissance Revival or Spanish Revival styles. The earliest showroom interiors were large, open, and mostly unadorned spaces. At the rear, low partition walls or full-height demising walls frequently separated office and garage spaces from the showroom. Later showroom interiors had column rows with high ceilings, tiled floors and sometimes-elaborate interiors. In such later examples, the rear wall may have a balcony or mezzanine level. The upper floors were large open loft spaces used for offices and the repair and assembly of automobiles.

Significance

Automobile showrooms and auto-related specialty showrooms are locally significant under the National Register Criterion A in the area of Commerce. They are examples of the first automobile dealerships. As showrooms, they introduced the automobile to the general public. As garages and repair facilities, they performed all the related functions to keep the automobile running. Auto-related specialty showrooms were similar in design and function, except the showrooms were used to display auto-related products such as tires.

Under National Register Criterion C, many of the showrooms are significant architectural examples. They exemplify low-rise commercial architecture from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and some of the earliest-known examples of the automobile showroom or auto-related showroom building coinciding with the initial rise in popularity of the automobile and the development of a new property type for its sale, service, storage, and fueling. Many are in the "Chicago School" style, while others are examples of revivalist or other commercial styles. Important architects or architectural firms, such as Christian Eckstorm, Holabird & Roche, Alfred Aischuler, Albert Kahn and Jenney, Mundie & Jensen designed many of them.

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Associated Property Types (continued)

Registration Requirements

To qualify for listing under Criterion A or C, the showroom must retain its association to an early dealership or auto-related manufacturer and its design integrity. If the showroom has been altered, the changes must not eliminate the historic appearance or its association with the historic use of the building.

Under Criterion A and C, the automobile showroom must reflect its association with the dealership or automobile-related manufacturer from the period of significance. It should be associated with Chicago's historic Motor Row or cluster of showrooms built on the city's major commercial thoroughfares beginning in the 1920s, although in either case it need not be part of an extant contiguous grouping. It should be representative of the history and development of the sale and servicing of the early automobile in Chicago between 1905-1936. Its original use may be identified by signage within the surface ornamentation. The showroom building should convey its function by retaining its basic form, mass and/or ornamentation.

The resource should be an example of the early development, evolution or innovation of the property type or of a particular showroom style or significant architect's work. The majority of the original exterior ornamentation should be in place. Interior spaces would have typically had an open display area at the front, with offices and open service areas to the rear. Later examples sometimes had more elaborate showroom interiors, and in these instances, a sense of the open nature of these spaces should remain. The service facilities should be evident from the exterior, generally at the rear of the building or, in the case of corner lots, on side elevations; original service entries should be apparent.

A preliminary list of potentially eligible properties is identified in Appendix II.

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## **Geographical Data**

The corporate limits of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

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### Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The nomination is based on the research and reports prepared for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks for the Motor Row District, a locally-designated Chicago Landmark District consisting of 51 historic structures associated with the early automobile in Chicago which was designated on December 13, 2000, and principally compiled in a report entitled "Motor Row District: Michigan Avenue, Primarily Between Cermak Road and the Stevenson Expressway."

#### General Research

In addition to the above, research was conducted at the Department of Planning and Development, Landmarks Division offices, the University of Illinois and the Arlington Heights Public Library. The following sources were searched:

Subject Indices: Card catalogs and periodical indexes provided information on Chicago history and showroom design.

Chicago Building Permits: Permit research was conducted on most of the buildings to determine real estate transfers, permit dates, ownership, architect of record, and a brief description of the proposed construction.

Chicago Newspapers: Various articles had information about the automobile race in 1895 and the evolution of Motor Row.

Sanborn Maps: The maps identified the buildings and lot characteristics.

Chicago Historic Resources Survey

Commission on Chicago Landmarks research files

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**APPENDIX I**

**Motor Row District**  
**Preliminary Boundary Description**

The 2200-, 2300- and 2400-blocks of South Michigan Avenue between Cermak Road and the Stevenson Expressway, as well as adjacent portions of Wabash and Indiana avenues.

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**APPENDIX II**

**Motor Row District: Building Catalog**  
**Preliminary List of Potentially Eligible Properties**

<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Name and Address</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Architect</u></b>
1.	Ford Motor Co. Showroom 1444 S. Michigan Ave.	1905	Christian Eckstorm
2.	Buick Motor Co. Showroom 1454 S. Michigan Ave.	1907	Christian Eckstorm
3.	Maxwell-Briscoe Automobile Co. Showroom 1737 S. Michigan Ave.	1909	Ernest Walker
4.	B. F. Goodrich Co. Showroom 1925 S. Michigan Ave.	1911	Christian Eckstorm
5.	Locomobile Motor Co. Showroom (No. 1)	1909	Jenney, Mundie & Jensen
6.	McNaull Tire Co. 2120 S. Michigan Ave.	1911	Horatio R. Wilson



# Motor Row District

