

HISTORY



In the fall of 2004, Al Hatch and other car enthusiasts began to discuss the possibility of a car show in downtown Flint that would complement and coincide with the 'Woodward Dream Cruise' in Detroit. Together, they began to take steps that would make Back to the Bricks a reality. When the committee approached Jerry Preston of the Flint Convention and Visitors Bureau about sponsoring the event, he arranged a meeting with the Small Business Owners of Downtown Flint to enlist their support for a bold new venture that promised to revitalize the city, and attract thousands to the area to celebrate the automotive industry and its role in the history of Flint.

With the backing of these two entities, the committee convinced city leaders to grant the necessary permits to close approximately three blocks of the historic "red bricks" under the arches of Saginaw Street for the first Back to the Bricks, scheduled for August 2005. Still, with no operating budget, and no major sponsors, the fledging organization faced a daunting task. Committee member, John Chapin, volunteered the artistic talents of his son Jason, to design the first giveaway, a t-shirt that would market the event to potential participants, and promotional flyers to advertise the "Bricks." Doc Watson of the Hurst Shifter Corporation agreed to underwrite the cost of the t-shirts, and Jeff Giesert, owner of Economy Print in Downtown Flint, volunteered his services to produce the flyers. Stories in The Flint Journal and on ABC 12 News brought additional attention and generated enthusiasm for the project.

Few believed or could have envisioned the success of the new venture. Thanks to corporate sponsors like General Motors, Buick, ELGA Credit Union, and many others, Back to the Bricks has grown from a one-day event with only a few hundred cars and spectators to a multi-day extravaganza. The fun begins with Promo Tours each June to various locales around the Great Lakes. During the week prior to the Bricks, Tune-Up Parties across Genesee County set the stage for the Main Event. Combined, these festive celebrations today attract half a million car enthusiasts and spectators from around the nation and the world.

In 2012, Back to the Bricks unveiled the first of several commemorative statues of important automotive pioneers. Life-size bronze replicas of David Buick, William C. (Billy) Durant, Louis Chevrolet, and Albert Champion stand proudly in GM Automotive Pioneer Plaza in downtown Flint. Statues of Walter P. Chrysler and Charles W. Nash welcome visitors in the baggage claim area at Bishop Airport. A statue of Otto P. Graff stands at the corner of Court and Saginaw Street near the site of his early dealership. A bronze replica of Charles Stewart Mott, local philanthropist, will soon grace the campus of the college that bears his name. The Statue Project plans to honor other historic figures from the automotive industry in the future. For the first time, Back to the Bricks and Buick will sponsor an indoor winter car show, "Chrome and Ice." The inaugural event, scheduled for February 12-13, 2016 at the Dort Federal Credit Union Event Center in Flint, Michigan, will feature a "summertime" theme, complete with sand, palm trees, and entertainment by a California-based "beach boy" band.