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**New Exhibit Spotlights Historic Sacramento Rides**  
*Local Builders Had Wide Influence on Early Hot Rods and Customs*

Sacramento, CA --- The California Automobile Museum's new exhibit highlights the early days of hot rods and customs after the Second World War, with a special focus on legendary Sacramento craftsmen whose designs had national impact.

*Dropped and Chopped*, which runs from January 22 through March 27, features a variety of award winning and legendary cars from throughout Northern California and the stories of the work that went into turning them into mobile masterpieces of a uniquely American art form.

The hot rod and custom scene first emerged after the Second World War. While the hot rodding craze spread nationwide, this new automotive art took especially advanced form on the West Coast, and Sacramento was a hotbed of activity. The Sacramento influence was most strongly felt during the early years between 1946 and 1960.

Sacramento's master craftsmen, including Harry Westergard, Dick Bertolucci, and the Barris brothers (George and Sam), took cars that were already legendary for beautiful design—1936 Fords, 1940 Mercurys, 1940 Chevrolets, and more—and sculpted them into true masterpieces, leaving no body panel untouched as they chopped, shaved, and smoothed the cars to new heights of low, streamlined beauty. Their work also inspired countless individual builders to express their own style

In addition to high style, many of the early rods and customs featured substantial modifications to their factory engines—or swapped for larger, more powerful engines—for go (and sound!) to match their show.

“These cars have always been about personal expression, but now they have an added layer of history as well,” noted Nathan Smith, Curator of the California Automobile Museum. “These cars started out as the singular visions of their builders, but today their speed and style have become legendary and their influence has been felt in so many corners of the automotive world.”

The vehicles in the *Dropped and Chopped* exhibit cover a wide range of styles and all are classic examples of early rods and customs. Among them are:

- A 1940 Mercury convertible sedan first customized for Harold “Buddy” Ohanesian by Harry Westergard in 1945, and completed by Dick Bertolucci in 1949 with a removable hard top custom crafted from the front half of a 1946 Chrysler top, the back half of a 1941 Buick top, and the rear window from an Oldsmobile. The maroon paint color, with Venus Martin no. 9 gold powder added, became known as “Sacramento Maroon” or “Bertolucci Maroon,” due to Bertolucci's frequent use of the color. A factory stock 1940 Mercury

convertible sedan will be displayed alongside this car, showing the extent of the modifications.

- A 1936 Ford Phaeton (convertible sedan) that was modified as a classic “K Street Cruiser” in the early 1950s. An unrestored example of a unique Sacramento custom, designed for cruising downtown avenues on summer weekend nights, still owned by the family of its builder.

This exhibit will be on display through March 27 but the community is invited to attend the grand opening of this exhibit on Saturday, January 22. This event is free for Gearhead members and included with Museum admission for nonmembers. For more information call (916) 442-6802 or visit [www.CalAutoMuseum.org](http://www.CalAutoMuseum.org).

About the California Automobile Museum: This spacious 72,000 square foot museum is home to over 150 vehicles of various makes and models, ranging from the early 1900s to alternative power vehicles of the future. Exhibits recreate the love affair we have with automobiles and provide historical information about the automotive industry. The Museum's mission is to educate and entertain while preserving and promoting the automobile and its influence on our lives. The Museum is located at 2200 Front Street, between Broadway and Old Sacramento with ample free parking. The Museum is open daily from 10am to 6pm, taking the last admission at 5pm and stays open until 9pm every third Thursday. For more information visit [www.CalAutoMuseum.org](http://www.CalAutoMuseum.org) or call (916) 442-6802.