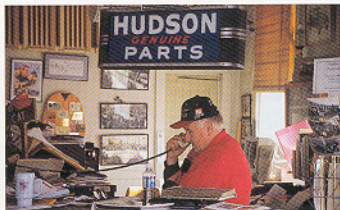


# ...AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

Jack Miller and the World's Last Remaining Hudson Dealership

Story and photos by Chris Richardson





time Longnecker also bought the property, which was still owned by Joseph H. Thompson. By 1933, the senior Miller owned the dealership and its name outright and it remained a Hudson dealer until the end of Hudson itself in 1957. Carl then continued the new car business with an American Motors franchise through the end of 1958. Ailing health and dealing with the pressures of AMC's expansion requirements proved too much of a nuisance, prompting Carl to turn his attention exclusively to used cars beginning in 1959.

The showroom sits within a couple dozen yards of still-active locomotive tracks. As we talk, a train barrels across the intersection adjacent to the dealership. This conjures up considerations of when Dodge cars went on sale at this location in 1916. The very presence of the automobile in this farm community at the time was one of a still-growing acceptance. Steam locomotives were the major forms of transport for goods, with people still utilizing them for their personal travel as well. The automobile was still in its infancy and had only very recently become available to the common man. It was at this corner that you could tangibly witness the upstart automobile and the incumbent train battling for transit prominence.

The dealership sold 1,969 new cars from 1927 through the end of 1958 — Hudsons, Essexes, Ternaplanes, Metropolitans, Ramblers and one Nash, a marque for which they were the only dealer servicing the area in 1957. Jack still has a Michigan dealer's license and most recently sold two used cars and six Hudsons — three '49s, a '37, a '54 and a '47. The name "Hudson Sales and Service" lasted until 1956, when the AMC brand identity team was pushing for their specific recognition at the dealership. Carl politely changed the title to "Miller Motor Sales" to appease the American Motors people. Recently, due to the establishment of an on-site museum, the name has become "Miller Motor Hudson."

The year 1963 marked a reunion of sorts for Jack and the Hudson brand. An acquaintance, Harry Mills, had planned a small gathering of enthusiasts at

Walk through the door and you immediately get the sense that you're about to embark on a small but ever present journey into a slice of the past. This room, this building, has an aura about it. It's not that there are perfectly preserved fabric posters on the walls or parts in their original boxes. It's not even the Hudson-approved accessories that you could have purchased here some 40 or 50 years ago at Hudson Sales and Service in Ypsilanti, Michigan. It's because many of these items have been here for that period of time and never left the premises.

You're looking at the last remaining Hudson dealership on the globe. And Jack Miller, the person most familiar with it, can make a claim that few can make nowadays or that even fewer will be able to make in the future — he has worked in the same location for almost 50 years. Miller began hanging around the place when he was 11 and, just two years later, started his career in the car business.

The building itself was first built by the Ypsilanti Electric Co. in 1892 as a power generating station and later did a stint as Michigan Pressed Steel from 1905 until 1916, when Joseph H. Thompson bought the structure and became Michigan's first Dodge dealer outside the city of Detroit. The additions of the showroom, office, stockroom and rear part of the shop were completed during 1921. It functioned as a Willys-Overland dealer for Scott Sturtevant for a very short period before that business went belly-up.

Jack's father, Carl L. Miller, joined Alex Longnecker as a partner in 1927. Together they turned the facility into a Hudson dealership. At this

