

Period magazines reported that building a car using an available fiberglass or aluminum body took an average of 2000 hours. That's fifty weeks at forty hours a week and two weeks off for good measure to complete a car in a full year. If you use a modern rate of \$50 an hour, labor alone would top \$100,000 before buying your first part.

Car enthusiasts, collectors, and automobile aficionados are beginning to appreciate the importance of these early postwar American sports cars. Handcrafted sports cars have been recognized in classes of their own at concours events held at Amelia Island, Pebble Beach, as well as showcased in museums, magazines, and auction houses too. For these reasons, we call this.....

*“The Greatest American Car Story NEVER Told.”*

See the complete story of “*The Emergence of the American Postwar Sports Car*” on [www.ForgottenFiberglass.com](http://www.ForgottenFiberglass.com)



1960 LeMans Coupe by Strother MacMinn

## The Emergence of the American Postwar Sports Car

*“The Greatest American Car Story NEVER Told”*



Byers SR-100 Sports Car  
Road & Track Magazine: February, 1957



1953 Victress S1A

In the late 40s' and early '50s, if you wanted a sports car in America your options were mostly European. And making this choice meant evaluating a high purchase price, problems with parts availability, and complicated maintenance. It was during this time that a critical phase of automotive history took place - the emergence of the American sports car.

American sports cars, desired by enthusiasts, didn't exist until a number of enterprising young men and small companies began to create them. Many were built using original designs, some were influenced by European styling, but the chassis and drivetrains were almost always American – easy to find and inexpensive to maintain

Sometimes just one car was built, but in many cases five, ten or more examples were produced. And it didn't stop with sports cars – they built their own concept cars, custom cars and hot rods. The only limitation was the imagination to conceive it and the talent to build it – and Americans in the postwar era had an abundance of both. They were driven to achieve and succeed.

These cars allowed enthusiasts to satisfy their desire to own an affordable American sports car. Individuals got their hands dirty and went out and built what they wanted.

For a few short years, handcrafted cars met the need of affordable American sports cars – and they had an impact on the styling and design of what took place in postwar Detroit too.

This was confirmed by **Walt Woron**, founding editor of *Motor Trend* magazine, when he wrote about the topic of handcrafted cars in a November, 1951 editorial titled "**Amateurs are Creating New, American Designs.**" He said,

***"It has been freely admitted by top Detroit automotive designers that many innovations on production cars are the result of watching the developments of these enthusiasts who build their own custom cars, sports cars and hot rods."***

It's been forgotten that over fifty American sports cars were already on the road, both as one-off designs or in limited production by the time the Corvette began appearing in showrooms in the fall of 1953. Early American sports cars bear names that few recognize such as Glasspar, Wildfire, Victress, Meteor, Devin, LaDawri, Kellison and others.

Because these cars were built in small numbers and by many different individuals and companies, their history has been fragmented and difficult to categorize. For these reasons, these cars have been mostly forgotten except by the most dedicated of automotive historians.

Handcrafted American sports cars are often seen as quintessential "**Americana**" – the best of what Americans could do. These cars showed what individuals could achieve when they brought forth their creativity, design, engineering, innovation, tenacity, and handcrafting expertise. But walking this path was not for the faint of heart.



1952 Allied Swallow