

The 37th Annual National DeSoto Club Convention

A Warm, "Canuck" Welcome To "Charming Chatham-Kent, The Classic Car Capital of Canada"
(and home to production of the Gray-Dort, 1915-1925)

Co-Chairs Don Stiles (NDC #6017) and Kevin Stiles (NDC #5893)

You're
invited!



DeSoto greetings from your 2023 convention co-chairs, Kevin and (my father) Don Stiles, and a hearty welcome to the official preview of the 37th Annual NDC Convention in Chatham, Ontario,

Canada, which is being hosted at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites and the neighbouring John D. Bradley Convention Centre from Wednesday, July 26th to Sunday, July 30th, 2023. This is our formal invitation to you and yours to come to Chatham! We sincerely hope to see you make the trek north of the 49th parallel to attend an NDC convention and enjoy, for the first time in 18 years, some of the sights and sounds of America's best friend and partner. I'm paraphrasing, but as President Kennedy said to Prime Minister Diefenbaker in his address to Canada's Parliament in Ottawa in 1961, "Geography has made us neighbours, history has made us friends, and economics has made us partners." That bi-national, famous statement still resonates and rings true to this day, 62 years later.

There are four immediate factors to take into consideration to begin with:

1. First and foremost, we urge you to deal with the most crucial need. If you haven't already done so:

- For non-passport-holding members, DO NOT WAIT to apply for your passport; APPLY FOR IT at your EARLIEST convenience!

- For passport-holding members, CHECK THE EXPIRATION DATE of your passport and RENEW IT at your EARLIEST convenience (if applicable).

Obviously, the SOONER you tend to this quite vital aspect of your trip, the better.

2. A gentle, but firm reminder of the importance to consult with your insurance company to determine whether or not your policy would cover any out-of-country claims. It goes without saying that it's better to be on the safe side, regardless of whether you'd be driving your DeSoto and/or modern vehicle while you're in Canada.

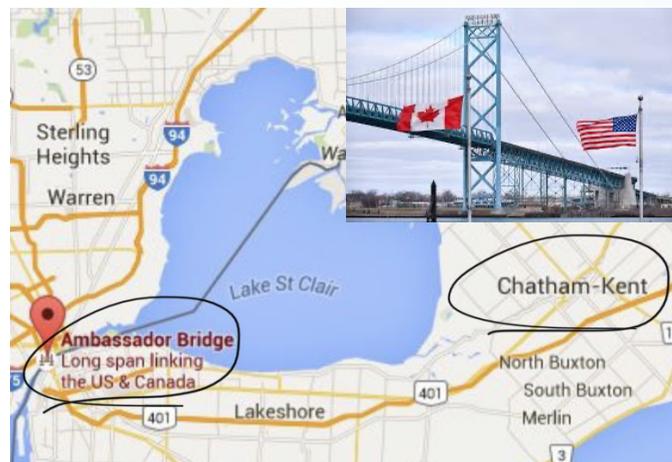
3. Canada has dropped ALL COVID-19-related entry and travel restrictions into the country; this is MOST welcome news! Visitors will NO LONGER be required to show proof of vaccination, be tested, self-isolate, wear a mask, or submit additional health information (even via the federal government's ArriveCAN app, which has become optional). Much can still change over the coming months and this will continue to be monitored going forward. Christine Lane has very kindly been assisting with researching anything related to passports and COVID as they pertain to the border; if you have anything to ask on either of these topics, please email her at ccklane1024@gmail.com.

4. The current exchange rate is quite favourable to our American friends, where it is about 75 cents US to buy 1 Canadian dollar. The exchange rate has been hovering in the low-to-mid 70 cent US range for some time now, so

this is an opportune moment to take advantage of an almost unprecedented offering between our currencies that benefits Americans to visit their northern neighbour. While you'll be able to exchange your US dollars into Canadian funds at a local bank in Chatham, called Scotiabank, a short distance from the host hotel for a daily maximum amount of \$100, it is recommended that you exchange your money prior to leaving the United States, or as soon as you cross the border at customs. An alternate option is for you to use your debit or credit card(s) as you would at home, and/or use them at Scotiabank to obtain your Canadian currency. Note that your credit card may charge a fee for international transactions.

Thank you for your undivided attention to these factors. Be mindful of all this preceding information as you continue reading about what's planned for you at your amazing, no, STUPENDOUS Canadian DeSoto extravaganza!

Upon learning of the eventful, well-attended, and successful convention in Altoona, Pennsylvania in 2022, your 2023 convention team has undertaken the task to continue the process of providing a fantastic experience for our NDC members, this time deep in southwestern Ontario; that's only an hour's drive east of the Detroit-Windsor border crossing, just over the renowned Ambassador Bridge or the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel. Alternatively, you could drive to the less busy Port Huron-Sarnia border crossing over the Blue Water Bridge as well. If any of the crossings out of New York State (Lewiston, Niagara Falls or Buffalo) are more convenient for your travels than Michigan is, then that too can be a viable option.



As with last year, our entire convention preview is contained in this article instead of the customary practice of breaking the preview into at least two segments. With approximately 5-6 months until our convention, we are pleased to provide you with this preview of "Charming Chatham-Kent, The Classic Car Capital of Canada" that awaits you. This preview article includes all of the information and details to assist you with completing your enclosed registration form. Of course, the sooner you mail in your registration form, the better, although you'll have until Monday, June 19th, 2023 for it to be postmarked before incurring a late fee. Simply put, don't delay, book your stay, because the next thing you know it'll be just before

Independence Day!

While my father and I work diligently on the standard itinerary of convention events and activities, our commitment is that you will experience and enjoy everything in the most awesome way, hosting the 37th National DeSoto Club convention with Canadian flair and fanfare. The province of Ontario certainly lives up to the prominent slogan on its license plates of “Yours To Discover.”

Host Hotel: For our 2023 convention, the NDC host hotel will be the pet-friendly Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites, which is located at 575 Richmond Street, Chatham, ON, N7M 1R2, a scenic, pleasant 15-minute drive off provincial Highway 401 at either exit 81 (Bloomfield Road north, 71 kilometres, or 44 miles, from the border), or exit 90 (Hwy 40 north, 79 km/49 mi from the border). The hotel has ample level parking for cars, trucks and trailers, and all club members will park in the rear parking lot; overnight security and a complimentary car wash station will be in place. Along with hotel parking, there will be a designated area for overflow parking at the convention centre that is directly beside the hotel and a very easy, short walk from the hotel. The convention centre will play host for registration and other convention business to be conducted. We have secured a preferred room rate of \$129 CAD, excluding taxes and fees (approximately \$95 USD, and this is “approximately” of course due to the consistently fluctuating nature of our currencies’ exchange rate). This special price includes a hot/cold complimentary continental breakfast daily, starting at 6:30 on Wednesday to Friday, and 7:00 on weekends. There is also a \$15 CAD/night fee if you bring your pet along for the ride. The hotel has booked our discounted rate from July 24th to August 1st to accommodate early arrivals and late departures. Reservations can easily be made by calling the hotel directly at 519-351-1100 (sorry, the hotel doesn’t have a toll-free number), by emailing reservations.hiexc@sunraygroup.ca, or via the link which is posted to the club’s website (found at www.desoto.org/events) is another seamless way to go about tending to this necessity. Regardless of how you make your reservation, please remember to quote the group code of “NAT” to receive the club’s special discounted rate. Book your room early, as the special reservation rate cut-off date is Monday, June 26th, one month prior to the launch of the convention. The cancellation policy is up to 24 hours before check-in.



Wednesday, July 26th: The convention officially starts at the registration area in the foyer at the front entrance to the John D. Bradley Convention Centre, 565 Richmond Street, directly beside the Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites. It’s there that we’ll be open at 9 am and ready to welcome and assist you with your registration check-in, where you’ll view the Gift Basket displays and be able to make donations (this is tentatively to be organized by Cheryl Gallagher; thank you very much Cheryl!), and where you may be able to shop the Club Store. As of the writing of this preview, the status of the store operating



in Ontario remains unclear; however, an update will be provided both online and in a future edition of *DeSoto Adventures* when its feasibility is known. We’ll be available to facilitate all your convention registration needs and answer any of your questions. Please refer to the official Convention Directory for the details of daily events upon receipt. For early arrivals, a list of do-it-yourself tours for visiting local interests will be provided to you, again online and in print, and that also will be available well in advance of the convention’s start to allow you to explore for yourself and take in “Charming Chatham-Kent, The Classic Car Capital of Canada” at its perpetual best.

Our annual Welcome Social will conveniently be held in the convention centre’s beautiful ballroom, starting at 5 pm and staffed with a cash bar, followed by a delicious welcome dinner that will be a standard preordered, pre-paid meal with several options included on the enclosed registration form.

Thursday, July 27th: Our first foray ventures out to visit RM Classic Cars, Inc. in Blenheim, an automotive restoration facility approximately 20 minutes by car (12 km/8 mi) from the host hotel. There, we’ll be provided with a two-hour long free tour of the business.



Upon leaving RM, we’ll leisurely drive the back roads (as we will with all of our driving tours, staying on the less-travelled highways and county roads) northeast to Parks Blueberries, a farm where, as the name implies, blueberries are all the rage. This is about a 30 minute cruise (37 km/23 mi), located to the southwest of Bothwell. It’s here where we’ll enjoy a nutritious, group lunch. Meal selections while there are also made available on the registration form, and lunches will be preordered and prepaid. If your time permits and you feel up to a bit of physical “labour”, you’ll have a chance to saunter out into their fields to pick your own blueberries as well; pricing is always better of course when you do the work yourself, but they always have fresh-picked blueberries ready to sell also.

After partaking in some fellowship and a scrumptious lunch, we’ll continue along our driving tour, entailing a 50 minute cruise (64 km/40 mi) further northeast to Steve Plunkett’s Estate and Collection in London, where we’ll be privy to viewing Canada’s largest collection of vintage cars. In addition, if you’d like to visit a memorabilia collection museum of a wide range of items, including clear vision pumps, vintage signs, model trucks, oil cans and a fully-restored 1919 Ford Model T fuel tanker, heading over to the Dowler-Karn Museum in St. Thomas will satisfy that desire; count on an hour’s drive (87 km/54 mi) east of our lunch stop. There is no admission cost for that museum. If opting for this detour, cruising a half hour (33 km/21 mi) northwest to Steve Plunkett’s will have you join back up with the rest of the gang. There, we’ll enjoy a two hour-long tour of his establishment,





Above: Steve Plunkett's Estate and Collection
Below: Optional Dowler-Karn Museum detour



with the price of admission being a donation that goes towards a local charitable cause close to his heart, but it's not mandatory. The option to stay after this jaw-dropping tour will be afforded to those who want to participate in a further, approximate 2-3 hour-long cruise-in night while remaining at his property (which, in Steve's words, we "don't want to miss"), with burgers, fries and drinks available for purchase in between both events.

You'll need to leave after the tour, however, if you wish to attend and participate in the club's open membership meeting with the trustees that will be held Thursday evening at the convention centre. Whether choosing to re-

main for the cruise-in or not, we'll head back on an approximate 1 ½ hour drive (101 km/63 mi) southwest to the host hotel in Chatham. Upon arrival, the restaurant at the casino next door to the hotel will be open until 11 pm for any of your hunger pangs that need to be quashed. For your convenience, a list of other nearby notable and classy restaurants will be provided for your perusal.

Friday, July 28th: We'll begin our third day together heading southwest for an hour's drive (75 km/47 mi) to the Canadian Transportation Museum and Heritage Village in Kingsville. We'll spend three hours there, oohing-and-aaahing at former NDC member Len Langlois' most impressive and extensive collection of sirens and emergency lights



(definitely one for the history books) among many other exhibits. Len's collectables will be accompanied by switch boards, uniforms and the like from the 1940's up to

the 1980's. This is the only museum of its kind in Canada, being designated solely for EMS-related (Emergency Medical Services) artifacts. At Heritage Village, the early ways of living as a pioneer village are on display to experience and learn of simpler times in southern Canada. A 1950's diner is on the premises, where everyone will be able to grab something to eat before leaving for our other events of the day.



After an engaging, educational, fulsome morning at this venue, we'll travel to one of two museums highlighting the story of the Underground Railroad, in which scores of black people of the time fled to escape slavery in the United States and resettled to begin a new life in Canada. Both locations have very worthwhile exhibits and presentations teaching of this era and come highly recommended for us to visit and learn from. Given that both museums offer much information to be gained, and unknown as to the number of convention attendees at this point, there will be two groups in which the first group will drive for an hour (70 km/44 mi) to the Buxton National Historic Site & Museum situated in North Buxton, and the second group will drive for 80 minutes (114 km/71 mi) to the Josiah Henson Museum of African-Canadian History located in Dresden. After about a 1 ½ hour tour at each museum, both groups will have the time of driving back to Chatham to get a quick break, and then the first group that went to the North Buxton museum will have the opportunity to go to the one in Dresden (a 30 minute drive, 27 km/17 mi), and the second group that went to Dresden first will visit the North Buxton museum (a 20 minute drive, 15 km/9 mi). There will be nominal admission charges for all three



Buxton National Historic Site & Museum



Josiah Henson Museum of African-Canadian History

museums this day, and they are prepaid on the attached registration form.

After the driving tours have ended and we've all returned to the host hotel, your dinner will be of your arrangements, but hold off on the dessert! Yes, it's our ever-popular annual Ice Cream Social, held in the convention centre's ballroom. It's also during this time when we'll hold the clean swap meet while we're filling our faces with ice cream and the goodies that come along with it.

Saturday, July 29th, 9 am – 3 pm: The big day! The annual NDC Car Show will be held on the beautiful grounds of Thames Grove Conservation Area, a picturesque town park on the Thames River, a scant 5 km/3 mi, 10 minute drive northeast of the hotel. The show field will be open at 9 am to begin parking and a local food truck vendor will be onsite to provide food and refreshments to all who are looking to quench their thirsts or quell their growling stomachs. In the event of rain or wet ground, we will default to the paved parking lot at the convention centre beside the hotel.



We're very pleased to have Mark Kubancik return as Convention Chief Judge. Mark has kindly offered to conduct a brief, informative seminar on judging that morning at the show field. Thank you Mark; we really appreciate your continued commitment and service. Please contact him at 502-797-8555 or mark.kubancik@gmail.com if you have any questions. Otherwise, you can reference the judging forms at www.desoto.org/judging. As always, we're looking for volunteers to judge and if you're interested, please either contact Mark or check the box on the registration form.

If you've had your fill of all things automotive thus far (but I think that's impossible with DeSotos), we've arranged to have a charter bus transport you and yours to White Oaks Mall, an hour long excursion returning back to London along Highway 401, where you'll be able to kick back, relax, and spend some quality time shopping away to your heart's content for most of the day. Alternatively, you could drive to the mall yourself. Thank you in advance for supporting the Canadian retail industry!

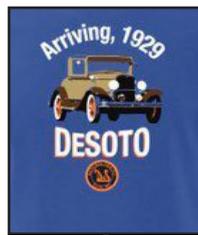
The 2023 National DeSoto Club convention annual Awards Banquet begins with a Happy Hour Social with cash bar at 5 pm, followed by a first-class dinner, the awarding of both our famous Gift Basket Challenge and the highly, and eagerly, anticipated 50/50 raffle drawing and lastly, the awards program itself; all of this is happening in the host convention centre's ballroom. Please join your fellow DeSotoians for a special evening of fine food, fellowship, fun and well-deserved recognition. As with the welcome dinner and the lunch at the blueberry farm, details regarding the preordered/prepaid banquet dinner are included on the enclosed registration form as well. As in the past, the 2024 convention preview and announce-

ments will be held at the banquet on Saturday evening and we wish them much success.

Sunday, July 30th, Farewell Breakfast: As our 2023 convention draws to a close on Sunday morning, please be sure to join us and your fellow DeSotoians by indulging in the Farewell Breakfast, which will be located at the host hotel before you depart for your travels home to await the next convention!

Your 2023 convention team hopes you'll enjoy your time in Chatham, ON; we've been busy planning many exciting, fun-filled and fabulous days for you during your séjour (French for "stay") on Canadian soil in The Province of Opportunity. In particular, if you've never been to Canada before, let this be your first, memorable visit!

On behalf of myself and my father Don, we encourage you to attend and to become a part of Canadian DeSoto history, and truly look forward to spending our 2023 "Charming Chatham-Kent, The Classic Car Capital of Canada" event with you all! It won't be the same without you. It'll be worth the drive to Ontario!!



2023 Convention T-Shirt Design



Left: Don Stiles' 1956 Fire Dome Sedan



Below: Kevin Stiles' 1959 Fire Dome Sedan