

Greenville/Spartansburg Auto Auction LLC, Greer, South Carolina

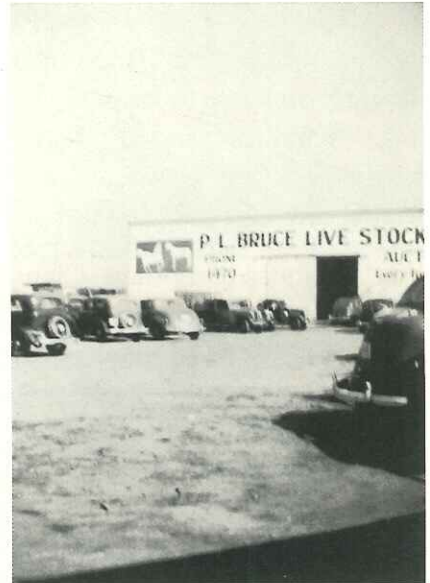
an independent auction

Founded by P. L. Bruce as a retail and wholesale horse and mule business in 1933, P. L. Bruce & Company in Greenville, South Carolina became the second oldest motor vehicle auction in the nation. It held its first sale in September 1938. With his son Tom S. Bruce, Sr. as his partner, Bruce's first sale consigned 42 vehicles (all sold) that were run through a livestock "alley" on their eight-acre Poinsett Highway lot.

"When we started our auction the commission rates were simple—\$5 sale, \$2.50 no sale," Tom Bruce told the NAAA in 1988. "Titles were unheard of. Tag registration slips or a bill of sale were the only documents used in transferring a vehicle. The vast majority of our early consignments were from small wholesalers that would ride a train or bus to points up north, buy a couple of Model A Fords or Chevys and tow-bar them back to South Carolina. When the Yankees found out there was a good demand for used cars in the South, they also started to bring cars down. Sale percentages were very good in those days. Anything under 90 percent was considered a bad sale."

In November 1946, with one lane in a free-standing, 50,000-square-foot frame building, the auction made the headlines of *The Greenville News* which read, "1942 Buick Sells for \$1,550 At [P. L. Bruce] Auction." The Buick was one of 166 cars sold for a total of \$176,492. It made front-page news because this was an important economic indicator for a nation trying to recover from the war years.

Continued on next page



First vehicles sold at auction in this alley (lane).






Your GA - NC - SC - TN AUCTION CONNECTION

Tuesday 7:00 p.m.
30/30 Sale


Thursday 1:00 p.m.
3 Lanes
— DEALERS ONLY —

Saturday 1:00 p.m.
3 Lanes

WEEKLY AUCTION ACTION PRESENTING DEALER
CONSIGNMENTS, REPO'S, FRANCHISE TRADES, FLEET/
LEASE, INSURANCE LIQUIDATIONS

DEALERS WELCOME



Gary Bruce's
GREENVILLE AUTO AUCTION

Est. 1938

Not surprisingly this hot new business drew a lot of competition. As Tom recalled, "There were seven sales within five miles of us in the late 1940s. But it didn't take long for these operators to find out that it took more than a shed and microphone to run a successful auction."

By 1962, a reconditioning facility had been added and in the 1970s, the auction had expanded to four lanes with a modern office and restaurant. The auction also became one of the first seven chosen to sell General Motors and GMAC factory units. In 1979, Bruce's 46-year-old livestock auction was closed and the auction's name was changed to Bruce Auto Auction. By 1984, it became the first auction in the southeast to operate under a fully computerized IBM system. Four years later, again adapting to the rapidly changing times, Bruce Auto Auction began its first fleet and insurance salvage disposal auction.

Gary F. Bruce, Tom's youngest son, purchased the auction from his father in 1989. Two years later Gary also purchased Greenville Auto Auction and incorporated the business into the existing four-lane Poinsett Highway site as the Greater Greenville Auto Auction.

In 1996, Gary went into partnership with Dan W. Beasley, formerly with ADT Automotive and the nephew of Tom Beasley, the founder of Nashville Auto Auction and former NAAA president. The new partners immediately began planning a new facility on 35-acres on Highway 101 South in Greer, South Carolina just five minutes from the Greenville-Spartanburg airport. The new 18,500-square-foot, six-lane, state-of-the-art facility opened September 1997 as Greenville/Spartanburg Auto Auction, LLC. The former auto auction location on Poinsett Highway is now used as a salvage disposal auction and storage facility. The business that began in 1938 with 12 employees now employs 76 people and its Friday consignment sale now averages 600 dealer, fleet/lease and financial vehicles a week.

For his pioneering efforts in the auction industry, Tom Bruce, who still visits the auction, was inducted into the NAAA Hall of Fame in 1985. With four generations of Bruces now employed at the auction it continues to operate under the principles upon which it was founded, "The ability to adjust in a timely fashion to the waves of the economy, and a strong sense of family/partnership support," says Gary Bruce.

