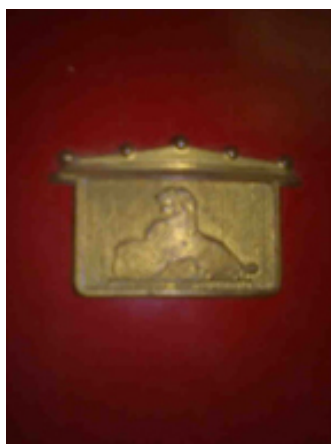


## **GM-H: From Motor Body Builders to Vehicle Manufacturer.**

By Roger Gibbs

The move for Holden's to shift from being a Motor Body Builder to a full Vehicle Manufacturer was a big step, and the natural supposition is that this occurred with the introduction of the 48/215, or FX, in November 1948. Actually it took place some four years earlier.

1944 saw the introduction of Holden's first fully locally designed and tooled complete vehicle, with the outstanding credentials of being a truly zero emissions car. It was the Holden Pedal Car.



*Pedal car*



*FX*

Even the badge on the front was very much an indication of the badge to ultimately appear on the FX, including the 5 little circles above the lion.

In 1944 with the war effort winding down, GM-H was looking towards the introduction of what was to be the Holden. Their dilemma was to keep their skilled staff on hand until the FX was ready for production, as well as keeping their tooling and process facilities utilised, and so they embarked on manufacturing such items as a carpet sweeper and the Holden Pedal Car.

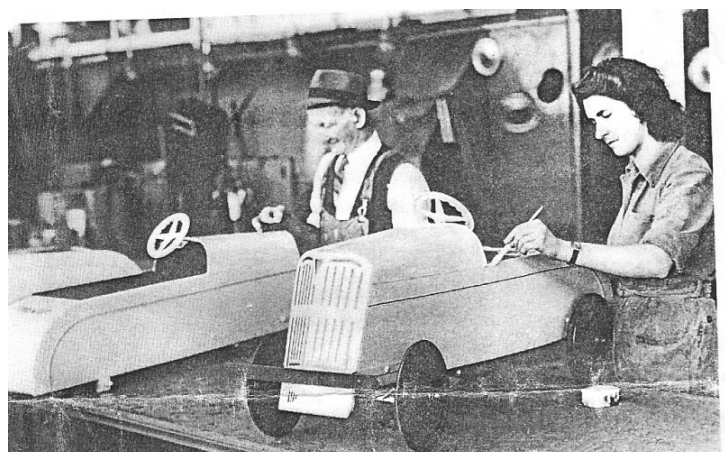
It is said that barely a month elapsed from Model Approval to 'First Vehicle Off Line' - surely a benchmark in the auto industry. There were a number of initiatives that achieved this:

- Judging by its appearance, Styling Department (as it was then called) was left out of the process
- Manufacturing had a heavy hand, decreeing that ideally there should be just one metal fold per panel or at the most two, to minimise tooling costs
- Purchasing had a minimal role, having outsourced the powertrain to the end user
- Forward Model Management were determined to bring the program in on time, such that the Chassis Engineer was still trying to figure out how to get the same camber angle on both front wheels as the first vehicles rolled off the line.



Marketing, in their usual enthusiasm, saw the vehicle through rose-coloured glasses and were excited about the launch campaign.

Again, to save time by eliminating the need for revisions to the Paint Shop, hand painting was used. Shown here is perhaps the up-market 'Holden Special' model, with its fluted grille and a pinstripe down the side.



Just as Holden's were later to draw on *GM Corporate Technology* in bringing out the FX, so with the Pedal Car they were able to leverage the Corporate experience with the Pontiac Silver Streak Pedal Car, which was often used in Dealerships as a promotion (let the kids loose with the pedal car whilst the Salesman finalises a deal with Dad).



being narrowed down.

There is no specific name plate on the Pedal Car, just the Holden badge, and it was simply referred to as the 'Holden'. Having implanted this name so well in the public's mind in 1944, one wonders why the naming of the FX caused so much angst. Here is an internal Holden document, dated some 20 months before the FX went into production, as the name selection was

## GENERAL MOTORS — HOLDEN'S LIMITED

INTER-ORGANISATION LETTERS ONLY

To

Date 26th March, 1947.

From

Subject

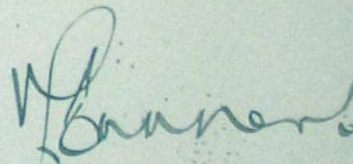
Cont'd:

- 3 -

<u>Place Names</u>	<u>Australia</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Animals- Birds</u>	<u>Aboriginal</u>	<u>Other</u>
Canberra	Austral	Holden	Emu	Wirraway	GeM
Brisbane	Stralis	Cook	Koala	Woorame	GMA
Sydney	Auster	Berton	Kangaroo	Loongans	(1) GMH
Melbourne	Stralis	Phillip		Boomerang	Melwood
Adelaide		Bligh		Canberra	
Perth		Flinders		Woomerah	
Hobart		Dampier			
Darwin		Parkes			
		McArthur			

In order of preference, we suggest:-

GeM  
 (2) CANBRA  
 AUSTRAL  
 GMA  
 GMH  
 (3) HOLDEN  
 MELWOOD  
 EMU  
 MELBA



V. L. Sunners,  
 General Sales Manager.

VLS:MT.

- At this time, the favoured name was GeM, being a play on the 'GM' connection and it being a 'gem' of a car.
- This was followed by 'CANBRA', a reflection of how Australians pronounced Canberra.
- Probably the only other name on the list needing explanation is the 'MELWOOD', which was an amalgamation of the two places of production, MELbourne and WOODville.
- By the pencilled note on the memo, HOLDEN had been moved up from 6<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> place at this time. 'HOLDEN' was ultimately chosen in recognition of Sir Edward Holden, GM-H's first Chairman and grandson of founder J.A. Holden.

So from the humble Pedal Car the iconic Holden was born.