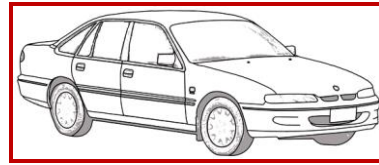


*Bernd Rohrmann*



*A little essay about the history of "Holden" cars*



**09-01-23**

**\$\$\$ The birth of "Holden"**

*The history of the "Holden" company is a bit weird. It was created 1856 by the Englishman James Alexander Holden who had settled in Adelaide in 1852. It was a saddlery. In 1879 his eldest son Henry James Holden basically took over the company. Then in 1885 the German H. A. Frost joined the enterprise, now named "Holden & Frost Ltd". The pic below shows their facilities in Adelaide.*



*Much later, in 1905, eventually an interest in car-production came up, triggered by Holden's grandson, Edward Holden. Industrial facilities in South Australia were extended in Victoria, and finally, in 1936 the headquarter was located in Port Melbourne - see pic below.*



The crucial moment in Holden's history was in 1931, when General Motors (USA) bought it, creating "General Motors Holden Ltd". GM tolerated that Holden maintained some characteristics - yet from then on Holden was not the original Holden anymore!

### **\$\$\$ The main models of Holden cars**

The Holden company has produced cars for 72 years, from 1948 to 2020. Only few were truly "Australian" design, given that Holden was owned by General Motors since 1931.

Here are Holden's main cars:

#### **Holden 48-125-FJ (1948–1956)**



This was the first car manufactured by Holden, fully designed and produced by them. Its frontview was unusual and became symbolic for Holden.



*And their first “ute” followed soon, with an open back section.*

**NOTE:**

*Some documentations of Holden’s cars list “Holden Standard (1948-1968)”. This is for 1948-1956 identical to the Holden 48-125-FJ, and then, since 1956, with the Holden FE-FC.*

**Holden FE-FC (1956–1960)**



*For this much more modern car model also the first “station wagon “ (van) was created.*



**Holden Special (1953–1968)**



*This car was clearly “Americanized”, at least regarding its grill.*

### **Holden Brougham (1968–1971)**



*The Brougham, built only for a few years, aimed at wealthy people.*

### **Holden Sandman (1974–1980)**



*The “sandman” was a fun car, for somewhat alternative people, and for surfers. Its setting was like a sports car, and it had a strong engine.*

### **Holden Statesman (1971–1984)**



*This car was designed as a luxury car. The largest available engine was a V8 5.7l one.*

**Holden Vectra (1997–2006) <based on Opel/Germany>**

*This middle-class car was engineered and produced by the German automaker Opel from 1988 until 2010 (following Opel's Ascona-B), available in saloon or hatchback design, and traded by Holden. It was well-designed, and fast (up to 175 km/h in Europe).*

**Holden Caprice or Statesman (1990–2017)**

*This was Holden's last car, designed to be an "executive" four-doors sedan with a front engine and rear-wheel drive. The largest engine was a 6.0-litre V8 engine of 260 kW. It sold okay until 2015.*

**Holden Commodore (2018–2020) <based on Opel/Germany>**

Here is the last car of the Holden "saga", the Commodore - a fully imported car.

Actually it was the Opel Insignia-B, which was 4.8 m long. The available engines were either 4 or 6 cylinders, operating as front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive, as petrol engines or diesel engines.

Engine size: Mostly small, 1.6 l or 2.0 l. Gears: 6-speed, manual or automatic.



This car was also available as 5-door "station wagon", which fitted the wishes of many Australians indeed well.

Both Commodores were modern and very 'clever' (Opel-) cars - as it seems, the best cars which Holden ever offered.

But they could not last, because .....

### **\$\$\$ The death of "Holden"**

Yes, there were good times - in 2000, Holden's market share was 28%! In 2004, a last outbreak of optimism - a new very modern headquarter in Port Melbourne was set up.



But then sales went down & down & down. In 2005: 15%, in 2019: 4%, that was rank 11 in Australia. In 2020, the final year: 16688 sales only, urghh.

Toyota was now the #1 car company in Australia, followed by Mitsubishi, Hyundai, Mazda, Volkswagen, Kia, Ford, Nissan, Honda, and Subaru.

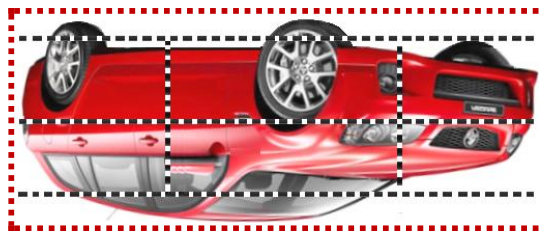
Then the true demise of "Holden" came, inevitably so:

- <> Elizabeth plant closed, thus ending manufacturing vehicles.
- <> Holden imported re-named cars from USA, Germany, South Korea.
- <> Last car of these was the (Ex-Opel) commodore.
- <> General Motors decided 2020 to abandon the marquee "Holden".
- <> One reason - to discard right-hand driven cars completely.

What was the prime factor?

It seems that Australians themselves didn't buy anymore what Holden offered. Even small companies like Honda or Subaru had higher sales. Plus, creating truly own cars stopped in 2017 with the Holden Caprice and the Holden Statesman.

Furthermore, governmental support ended in 2013 when the Liberals said "no", the support by the previous Labour government was the last.



Holden's death is sad. From 1948 to 2017 Holden produced almost 8 million cars, and "Holden" also had symbolic value, demonstrating that a small country (population-wise) could contribute to the fundamental task of creating and producing cars.

Nevertheless, this is dominated since decades by Toyota, Volkswagen and General Motors.

Obviously Australia did/does not have the "cultural power" to maintain what other countries (from big ones to small ones) achieved, like China, India, USA, Russia, Japan, Germany, South Korea, France, Italy, Taiwan, Chechia, Austria.

There are also customer factors deserving consideration: Cars from other countries were cheaper and/or better than Holden, and Australians as a multi-cultural society don't have much desire to "buy local".

So all I can say now is that I wish Holden a peaceful cemetery - byebye!

**P.S.:**

*As a German, I was thinking, what if Volkswagen, rather General Motors, had bought Holden?*

*Because while VW owns many car makers, like Audi (Germany), Bentley (England), Cupra (Spain), Ducati (Italy), Lamborghini (Italy), Porsche (Germany), Seat (Spain) and Skoda (Chechia), it gives these companies quite a bit of freedom.*

**P.P.S.:**

*What was my info? I have inspected quite a few articles, like these here*



<https://www.holden.com.au/>

<https://tomelbourne.com.au/history-of-holden/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holden>

Heavy

Holden

History

