

C H R Y S L E R

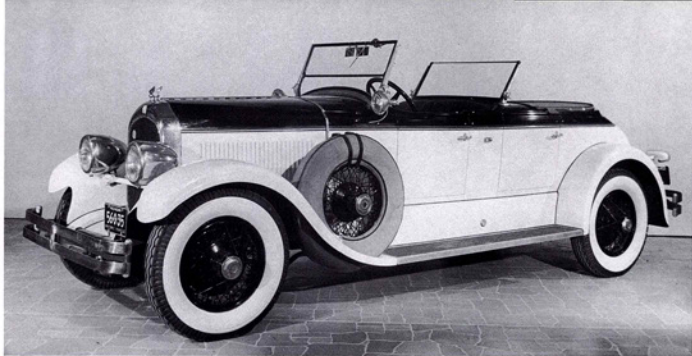


Gazelle hood ornament from Charles Montano's 1933 Custom Imperial, photo by Daniel B. Lyons

Walter Percy Chrysler seemed to always be in the right place at the right time. And he seemed never to make mistakes. "The majority of men pay too much attention to the way stations and not enough to the terminals," he once said, using terminology natural to the son of a Kansas

Pacific Railroad engineer. Working on the railroad was a natural too; Chrysler began as a roundhouse sweeper for the Union Pacific and by 1910 was Pittsburgh plant manager of the American Locomotive Company when General Motors beckoned with the Buick presidency. Though the job meant a cut in salary by half, Chrysler didn't hesitate. He liked locomotives but

he loved automobiles. Less than a decade later, he left Buick with a comfortable kitty of \$10 million from GM stock. Another door opened: Willys-Overland's Chase National Bank offered Chrysler a cool million dollars a year to set that faltering company on the right road. That job done, he took on a similar salvage operation for Maxwell which had recently been merged, none too happily, with Chalmers. The stage had been set. In 1924 the first Chrysler was introduced; by mid-1925 Chrysler Corporation succeeded Maxwell. Walter Chrysler had help, of course, most importantly in the "Three Musketeers"—Fred Zeder, Owen Skelton and Carl Breer who had engineered a marvelous car. A six-cylinder high compression engine, four-wheel hydraulic brakes, aluminum pistons, oil filter, air cleaner, full-pressure lubrication and tubular front axle had never before been combined in a volume-produced automobile. By 1927 Walter Chrysler had moved his company up from the bottom rung of the industry ladder (32nd place) to fourth. And among his recently introduced model lines in 1926 was a Chrysler called Imperial, designed to compete with Lincoln and the like. . . .



1927 Chrysler Imperial Series E-80 Sportif, Locke

Owner: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan

Part of the Imperial's appeal was its prowess. From 288.7 cubic inches, 92 hp was developed; Chrysler's L-head six had more horses than the engines of some luxury manufacturers boasting two more cylinders. And the top-of-the-line Imperial's look was distinctive—at least to Chrysler—with its famous fluted hood patterned after Lawrence Pomeroy's design for Vauxhall, which pleased everyone except the British company. Chrysler didn't catalogue customs in '27, although some—like the Henry Ford Museum's Locke Sportif—were individually produced.

Nineteen twenty-eight saw major changes. The Chrysler engine was bored out to 309.6 cubic inches. But more dramatic was the new compression ratio, raised from the former

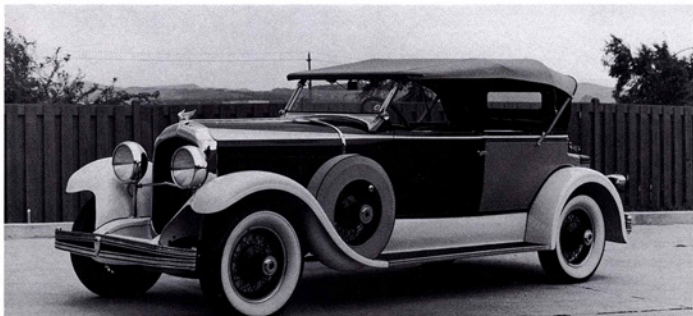
4.7:1 to 6.0:1 and resulting in a power increase to 112 hp. And from three wheelbase lengths in '27 (120, 127 and 133 inches), the Imperial chassis stretched to one of 136 inches. Now Walter Chrysler went catalogue custom with offerings from LeBaron, Locke and Dietrich. Ray Dietrich later recalled the many "Saturday afternoons in the two-bit lunch room where Walter and I ate frankfurters washed down with beer and discussed new design programs."

The new Locke offering for '28 happened serendipitously. Working for the New York City custom house at the time was John Tjaarda (later responsible for the pacesetter Lincoln Zephyr). The Dutch-born Tjaarda had designed a jaunty two-door phaeton for his own use; Locke

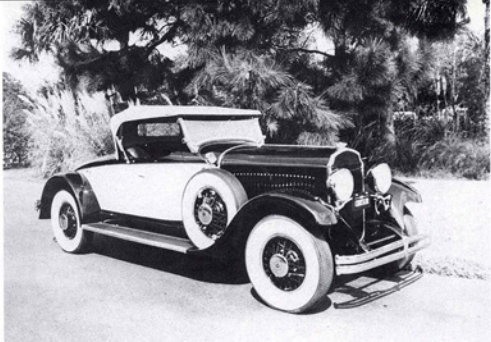
had displayed the car at its stand at the '27 New York Automobile Show; Walter Chrysler liked it. Whimsically, and appropriately, designated the Touralette, the four-passenger phaeton was catalogued in 1928 at \$4,485, a thousand-dollars-plus more than the production Imperials and two thousand dollars less than the Dietrich offerings. Conceivably, the car was underpriced. To create its canework rear panel was a time-consuming chore for a steady-handed craftsman using a device similar to that of a cake decorator to squeeze out an even bead of paint top to bottom. Twenty-one Touralettes were thusly cased that year; the Behring Museum's car is one of three extant. The Locke body style was not offered again in 1929.

1928 Chrysler Imperial Series E-80 Touralette, Locke

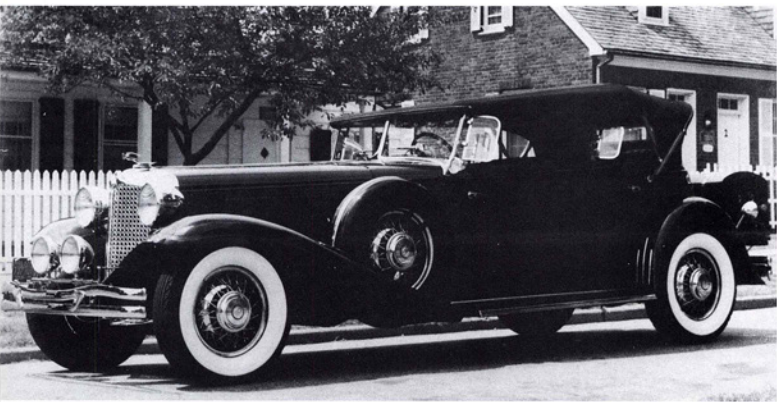
Owner: Behring Museum, Danville, California



But others were, among them Tom Lester's Locke Custom Roadster. Identifying it as a '29 Chrysler is the narrow profile radiator and the arched vertical hood louvers. By now, with their splendid performance and rakish good looks, Chryslers were in the garages of sporting drivers on both sides of the Atlantic. French racing champion Louis Chiron drove the cars exclusively for his personal transportation, found them supple and pleasurable even for his African journeys and pronounced himself "enchanted with them." Tom Lester is similarly enthusiastic: "Believe it or not, old story. My father (honest) had one just like it. My '29 Imperial drives excellently. The steering is a little strong for a little lady, but the car is quite fast for a plain-jane L-head engine. It will really exceed 80 mph." Tom has demonstrated this routinely during the decade he has owned this Chrysler.



1929 Chrysler Imperial Series L-80 Custom Roadster, Locke
Owner: Thomas J. Lester of Deerfield Beach, Florida



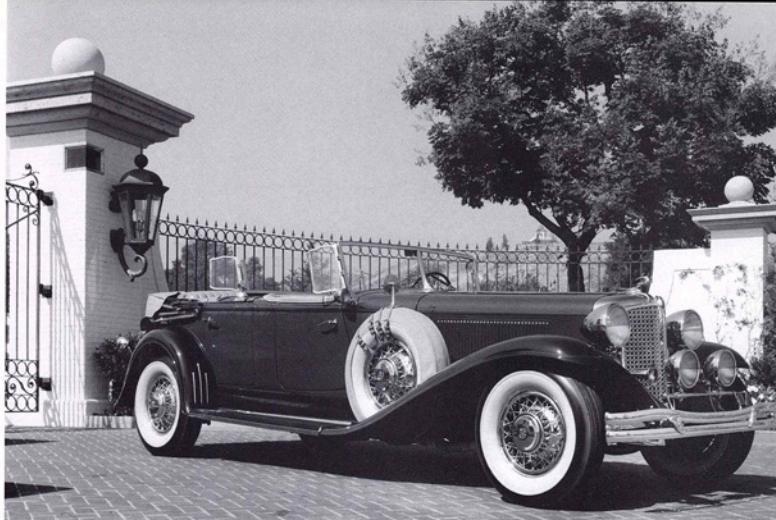
1931 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CG Dual Cowl Phaeton, LeBaron
Owners: Richard & Linda Kughn of Southfield, Michigan Photo: Torque

By the early thirties, whether he was at the factory in Detroit (where his time card was Number One and invariably the first punched in each morning) or in New York in his top-floor offices at the Chrysler Building (the world's tallest skyscraper until the Empire State took the honors and arguably the world's grandest architectural evocation of Art Deco),

Walter Chrysler was a busy man. Buying Dodge Brothers and introducing the low-priced Plymouth in '28 had both cemented his footing in the industry and positioned him well to withstand the buffeting of the Great Depression.

Ego might have persuaded Walter Chrysler to join with other luxury car manufacturers in succumbing to the

temptation of a twelve- or sixteen-cylinder engine for his Imperial, but Chrysler never did. Needless extravagance, he thought. Indeed, it was only after extensive development by his engineering "Three Musketeers" that Chrysler introduced a straight eight—in 1931. The new 384.8-cubic-inch nine-main-bearing side-valve L-head developed 125 hp at 3200



*1931 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CG Dual Cowl Phaeton, LeBaron
Owner: William Lyon of Trabuco Canyon, California*

rpm, only a couple of dozen or so less horses than its many-cylindereed competition.

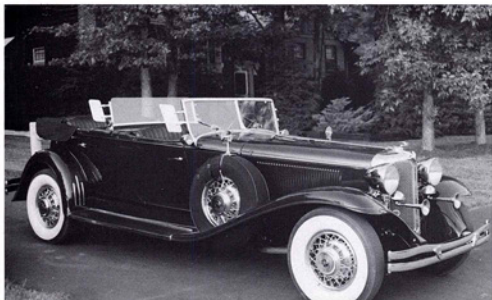
The new Series CG Imperial was quick to accelerate (0 to 60 in 20 seconds, which was splendid for that era), and a top speed of 96 mph meant Chrysler drivers, if they so

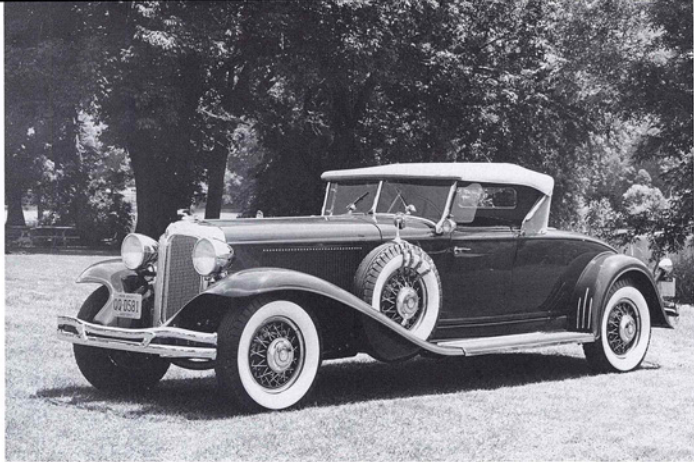
chose, rarely saw headlights in their rear-view mirror. This was a car that was hard to catch. "A super driver," says Joseph Morgan of the '31 Imperial he has owned for eight years. "The motor runs quietly and there is more than ample power. The four-speed transmission and

hydraulic brakes give the car a 'modern' feeling. And the styling is incredible."

Chrysler was very deft at gentle cribbing. Front-drive Cord L-29 influence in the Series CG Imperial is apparent from the deeply set-back grille to the car's proximity to the ground—but the total was put together with a styling identity that was Chrysler's own, and the envy of the industry that year. Especially effective was LeBaron's dual cowl phaeton rendering of the Imperial. "This automobile was truly ahead of its time," comment Dick & Linda Kughn. "In comparing phaetons of this vintage, the '31 Chrysler is much lower slung than any of its rear-drive competition. And the long 145-inch wheelbase makes the car seem even closer to the ground. The vee radiator shell was very advanced. The low roofline, of course, brought the windshield down for styling that subsequently was followed by other manufacturers." The graceful gazelle that was added to Chrysler's winged cap hood ornament was the perfect finishing touch.

*1931 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CG Dual Cowl Phaeton, LeBaron
Owner: Joseph Morgan of Windham, New Hampshire*





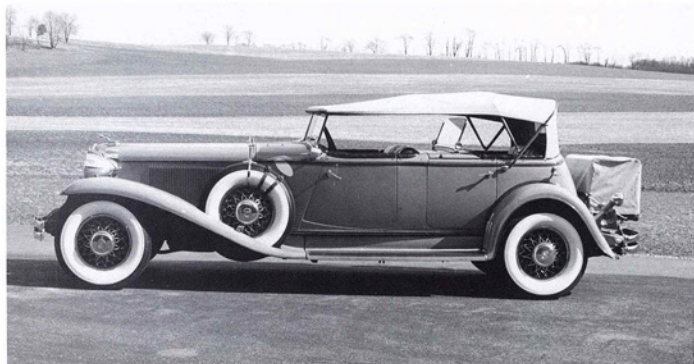
1931 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CG Roadster, LeBaron
Owner: John M. Elling of Oldwick, New Jersey Photo: K. Karger

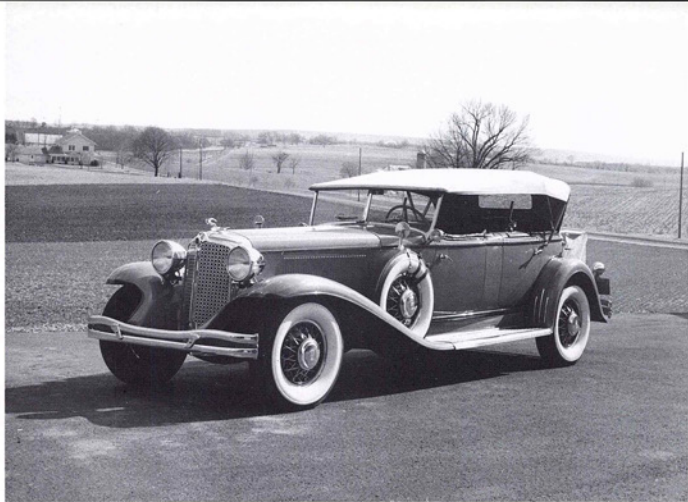
LeBaron supplied all semi-custom bodies for 1931 Chrysler Imperials—a total of 330 in four body styles. Among the eighty-five purchasers of the Dual Cowl Phaeton was actress Myrna Loy, although how much time she had to enjoy it that year is questionable since 20th Century Fox was keeping her occupied in about a half-dozen movies. Since acquiring

the Myrna Loy Chrysler two years ago, Ray and Lou Bowersox have been able to enjoy this “superb driving car” doubtless a lot more than the actress did in ‘31.

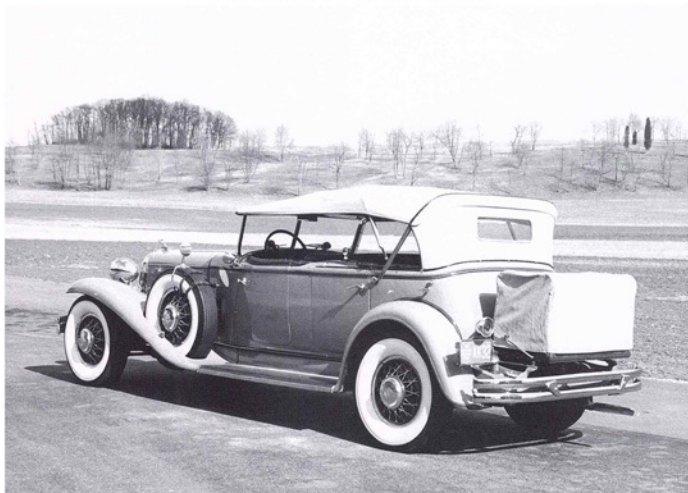
“It handles like a large sports car. The four-speed transmission with a close-ratio third gear gives excellent passing and hill climbing ability,” declares John Elling of the LeBaron

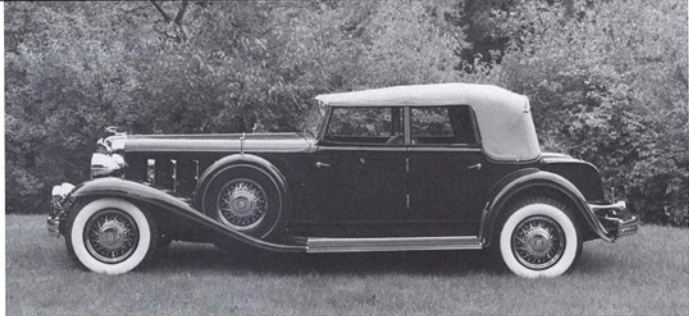
Roadster he has owned for two decades, one of just 100 built in ‘31: “Interesting details include the handsome pleated leather upholstery which continues around inside the cowl edge, over the door tops and rear of the compartment to create a cockpit effect, the rumble-seat latch release hidden in the storage compartment behind the passengers.”



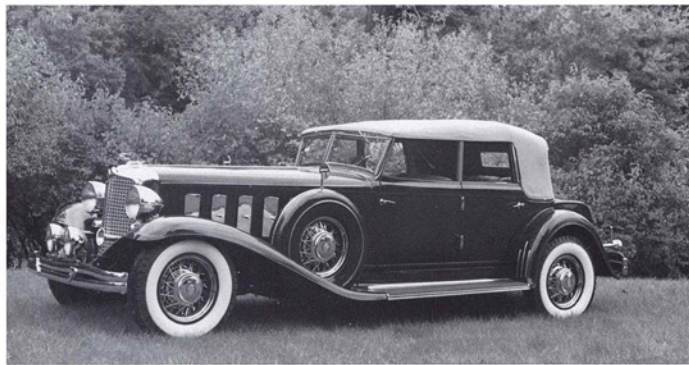


*1931 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CG Dual Cowl Phaeton, LeBaron (full profile on the page opposite)
Owners: Ray & Lou Bowersox of Milton, Pennsylvania*





1932 Chrysler Imperial Custom Eight Series CL Convertible Sedan, LeBaron
Owner: Joseph Morgan of Windham, New Hampshire



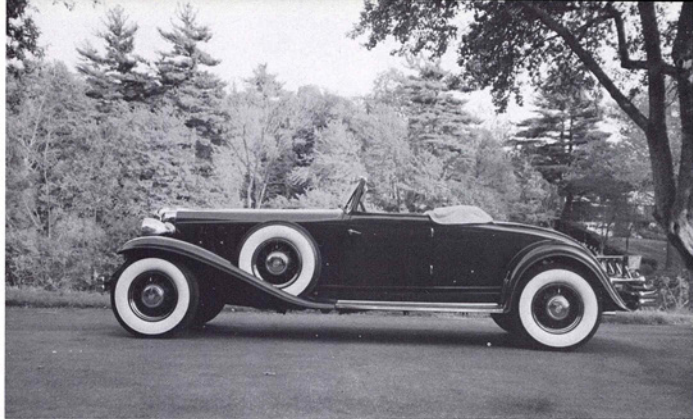
Again in 1932, most semi-custom Imperials carried LeBaron bodies. Under them was a new double-drop "girder truss" chassis with free wheeling, vacuum-operated clutch, power-assisted brakes and drop-center wheels.

Joseph Morgan likes the '32 Series CL Imperial so much he has two: "Although Chrysler had advanced engineering that year, I think the most impressive aspect of the car is its overall styling. From whatever angle, it looks good. Nineteen thirty-two was the first Chrysler and the first Classic to incorporate 'cowl-less' design. The extremely long aluminum hood accentuates the low and

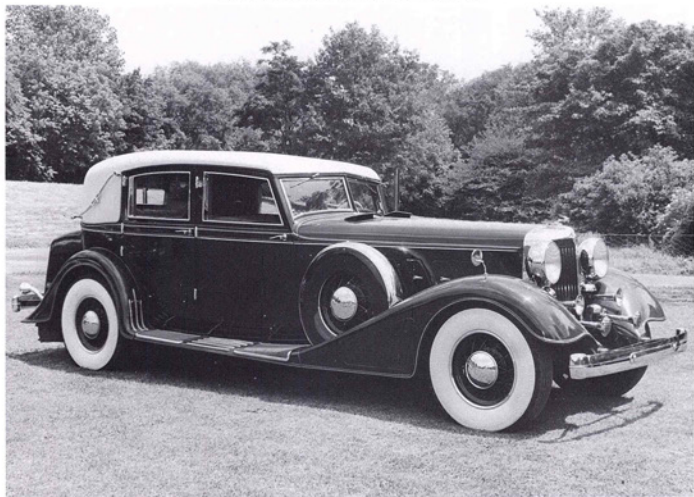
lean appearance. The split windshield with its twin opening panels is very smart and, together with the flat-folding top, makes the top-down profile of the Convertible Roadster very smooth. Total production of that body style was just 28 cars; mine is Number 25 and one of only a handful in existence. My LeBaron Convertible Sedan was one of 49 built and one of possibly two with an unusual custom interior featuring 'bucket' seats front and rear upholstered in square and diamond tuft patterns. Further, the car has very ornate black walnut door and seat wood trim, and the custom metal trunk matches the rear body curves. In this car especially, the

close-coupled body makes that already long hood seem even longer."

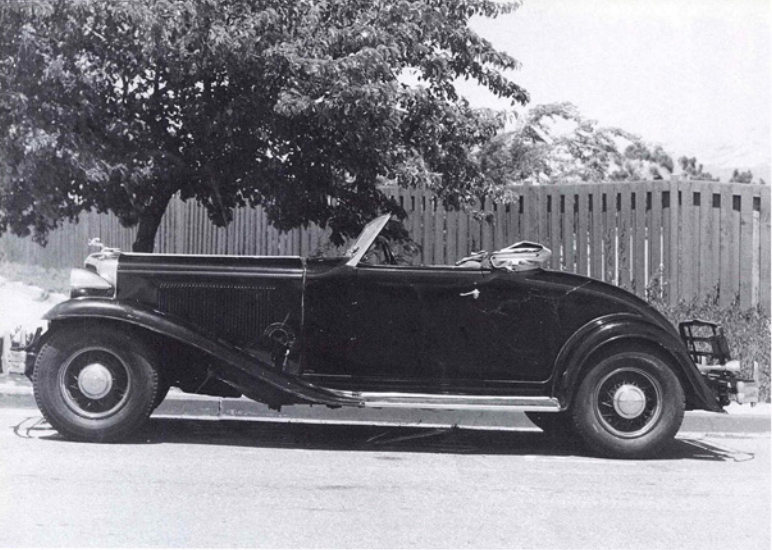
The 1932 Imperial Landau Formal Sedan in the Henry Ford Museum was Walter Chrysler's personal car, acquired from the Chrysler family in 1960 for the museum. "This is a great example of a one-off Classic done by a major corporate design studio," comments curator Randy Mason, "and incorporates early bowl-type headlights and a special fabric-covered top. Updated while in use, the car sports a '37 Custom Imperial Airflow engine and is painted in a favorite Walter Chrysler color, a red that he took from a Ming vase."



*1932 Chrysler Imperial Custom Eight Series CL Convertible Roadster, LeBaron
Owner: Joseph Morgan of Windham, New Hampshire*



*1932 Chrysler Imperial Custom Eight Series CL Landau Formal Sedan
Owner: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan*



1932 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CH Cabriolet, Bohman & Schwartz
Owner: J. Martin Anderson of Kent, Washington

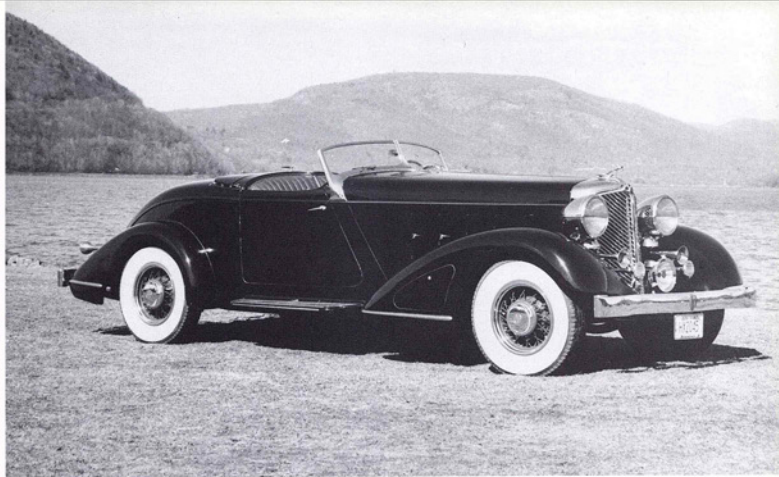
Chrysler Imperials were divided into two series for '32. Both carried the 384.8-cubic-inch straight eight but the CH, at 135 inches, was eleven inches shorter in wheelbase than the Imperial Custom CL. Although no catalogue customs were available in the CH series, nine chassis were provided with custom bodies by independent coachbuilders. Two of them are shown here.

J. Martin Anderson's CH Imperial Eight Cabriolet was probably the first car completed following the demise of the Walter M. Murphy Company when Murphy employees Christian Bohman and Maurice Schwartz stayed on and set themselves up in business in the same facility. The original owner of the car was Theodore Lincoln Perry, better known as Stepin Fetchit, the black comedian popular in films of the thirties.

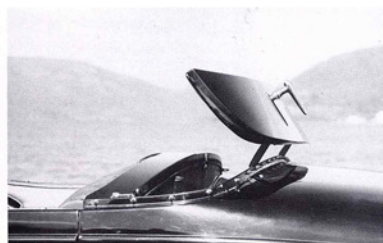
Al Nippert purchased his CH Imperial Eight LeBaron Speedster over twenty-five years ago from its original owner, Walter P. Chrysler,

Jr., and thereby hangs a fascinating tale: "Walter Chrysler, Sr. had driven the car at his summer home in New England for about a year, then gave it to his son. Obviously, this speedster was used to try out a lot of new ideas because many of the mechanical parts are marked 'experimental'—the gas pedal starting, the anti-stall restart system, the generator, the automatic choke with flood gas charge dump button on the dash, the pendulum control valve that disengages the clutch in a panic stop, etc. An original photograph indicates that none other than Barney Oldfield (with engineer Fred Zeder as passenger) road tested the car. Everything about this Chrysler is special. The headlamps are larger and the radiator shell four inches taller than stock. The body is aluminum but the fenders are steel, the fronts made in twelve pieces welded and hand hammered. The bumpers were custom made too. Leather-lined tool boxes were provided with the car. A Philco radio (cathedral dial head) is

mounted on the steering column with its antenna sewn into the leather binding of the top. The disappearing top folds down into a leather-lined compartment that also accepts the side curtains. The spare tire, held in by sidemount brackets on a trolley base, slides out of the trunk compartment on track rails. The LeBaron styling of the car is unsurpassed. So is the Chrysler engineering, with the high compression engine vibration-free on floating power engine mounts. It's a superb riding chassis. When I purchased the car, the WPC monogram was (and is) still on the door and the odometer read 8,600 miles. That was as close to driving a new 1932 Chrysler as one could get. The car remains totally original, now with 12,800 miles. With its high-speed rear end and extra high compression aluminum head, passing other cars on the road is accomplished with great ease. Cruising speed is an easy 70 mph, but this Chrysler is always ready to rip on."



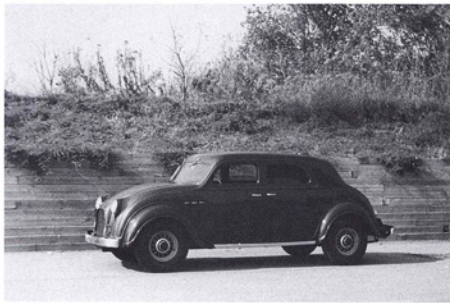
*1932 Chrysler Imperial Eight Series CH Speedster, LeBaron
Owner: Albert D. Nippert of Peekskill, New York*



Bruce Thomas discovered the Trifon in 1965 in the Chrysler Engineering warehouse. He was there on a mission—to drive retired engineer Carl Breer's personal Airflow to the Society of Automotive Engineers' 60th anniversary show. But what he found under the first canvas shroud he picked up was a dusty and dirty car he was unaware at the time had ever been built. Carl Breer's Airflow was located elsewhere in the warehouse and duly taken to the SAE show. But for days afterwards, Bruce could not get the strange car he had seen out of his mind. Following four months of discussion and negotiation with Chrysler Corporation, the Trifon was moved, for the first time in two decades at least, from the Chrysler warehouse to the Thomas garage, where it has remained ever since.

Meanwhile, Bruce, who today is head of the Chrysler Historical Collection, set about ferreting out the saga of this unique automobile: "As far back as 1927 Chrysler Corporation began work in aerodynamics. The research started after Carl Breer noticed a flock of geese approaching over the horizon near Port Huron one day and marvelled at their effortless smooth flight. To his surprise, the 'geese' turned out to be Army planes returning to nearby Selfridge Field. Mr. Breer's engineering mind took over and he reasoned that his mistake was due to the fact that both a plane and a bird took the best and most natural advantage of air currents. He wondered why an automobile shouldn't be streamlined too. Subsequent research culminated in 1932 in the first road-test car of this concept. Completed that September, the Trifon embodied many advanced engineering ideas, the most pronounced and prophetic being the complete relocation of the passenger compartment forward to permit 'between the axle seating' for all occupants. This in turn required relocation of the engine about twenty inches further forward in the chassis over the front axle which moved the radiator core well ahead of its traditional location. In toto, the concept provided for a much longer passenger compartment than found on anything but seven-passenger limousines of the era. The partially concealed running boards were the result of an unusually wide body which further increased the inside room. Another prophetic feature was the one-piece curved windshield incorporated in the styling mock-up.

"The Trifon name itself is interesting too. To provide security on this unique automobile, Chrysler



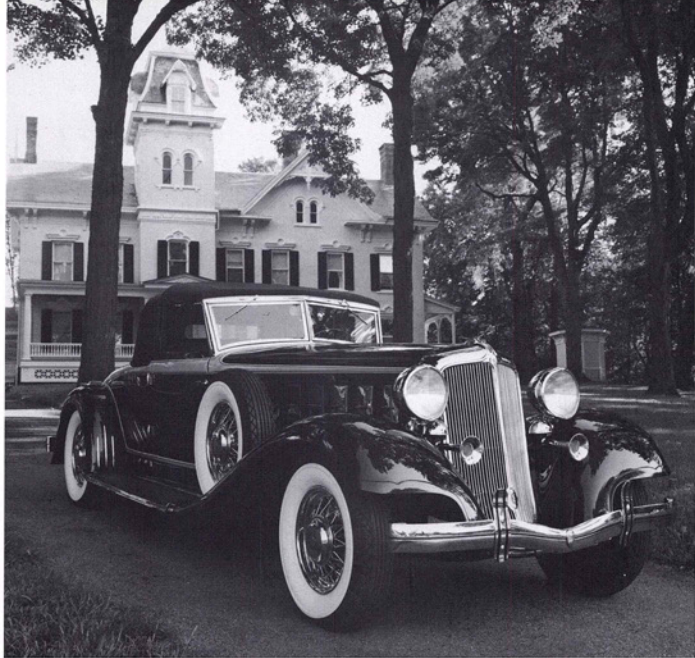
Corporation licensed and registered the car in the name of Demitron Trifon, a mechanic-driver in the road test garage who had worked on it. To further confuse the competition, licensing used only the Trifon Special name, with Chrysler appearing nowhere in the paperwork. Whenever the car was road tested, it was transported from the plant in an unmarked closed trucking van. And whenever corporation personnel, including even Walter P. Chrysler, journeyed to West Branch to drive the car, they made the trip in a competitive vehicle so that no one would connect the Trifon to Chrysler Corporation.

"The Trifon Special was subjected to many road and laboratory tests but by 1933 had been superseded by another series of experimental vehicles. Those, so far as is known, were all destroyed. How the Trifon survived is anyone's guess. Chrysler history is enhanced because it did."

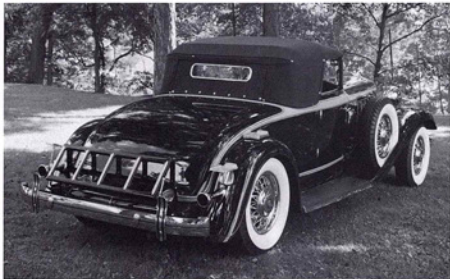
1932 Chrysler Trifon RD 1000
Four-Door Sedan

Owner: Bruce Thomas
of Troy, Michigan



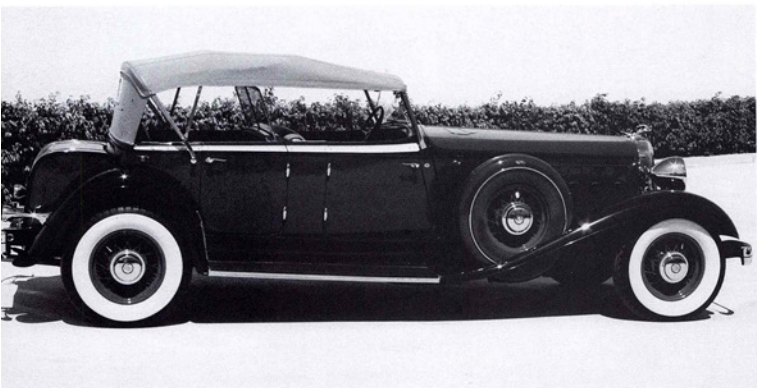
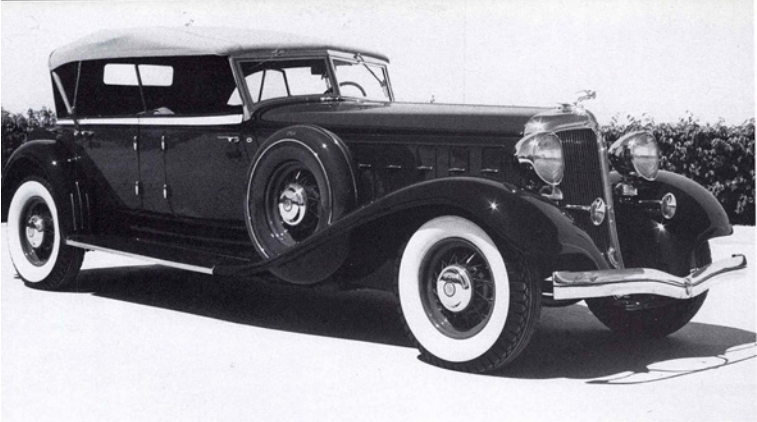


1933 Chrysler Custom Imperial Series CL* Roadster-Convertible, LeBaron
 Owner: Charles Montano of Gloversville, New York Photos: Daniel B. Lyons



While Chrysler was experimenting behind the scenes in 1933, the Imperial went to market changed only minimally. The biggest difference during these years was sales. As the Depression deepened, Imperial production had fallen from over 3,000 units in 1931 to less than 2,000 in 1932. Nineteen thirty-three found the CH discontinued and replaced with a downsized line; Custom Series CL*s—and why Chrysler chose to asterisk these cars in '33-'34 defies logic—found just 151 buyers.

Just nine LeBaron Roadster-Convertibles were produced in '33. "Lots of chrome yet not over-powering and exceptionally engineered" is Charlie Montano's verdict on his car which, just three years ago, was "a basket case."



1933 Chrysler Custom Imperial Series CL* Phaeton, LeBaron

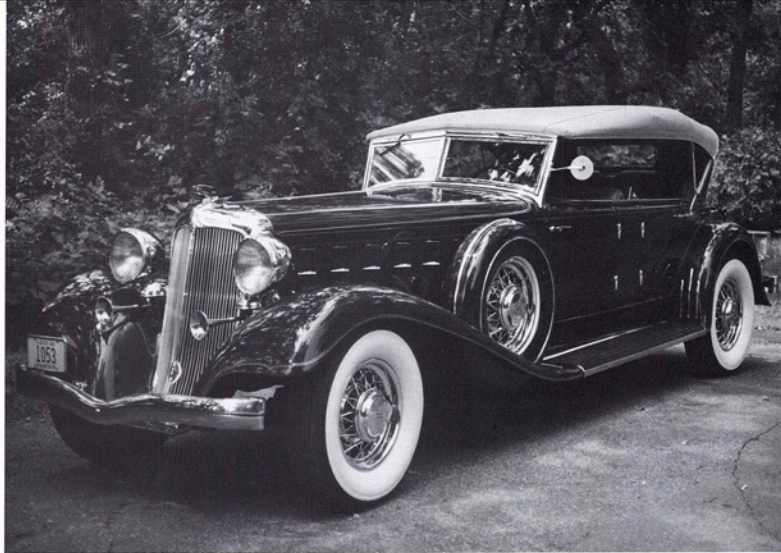
Owner: W. G. Lassiter, Jr. of West Palm Beach, Florida

Thirty-six was the total production of the \$3,395 LeBaron Phaeton, revised in '32 from a dual cowl to the more-easy-to-enter dual windshield. The Blackhawk car was a wedding present from Edward Long of New

York City to his daughter and honeymooned with the newly-married couple in Sweden.

"Beautiful car, drives and handles beautifully too," says Bill Lassiter. Comments Andrew Darling: "The

body is so well designed that when you look at it, especially from the front, it gives the illusion that the car is moving. Look at the picture. I hope it gives you the same impression of motion as it does me."

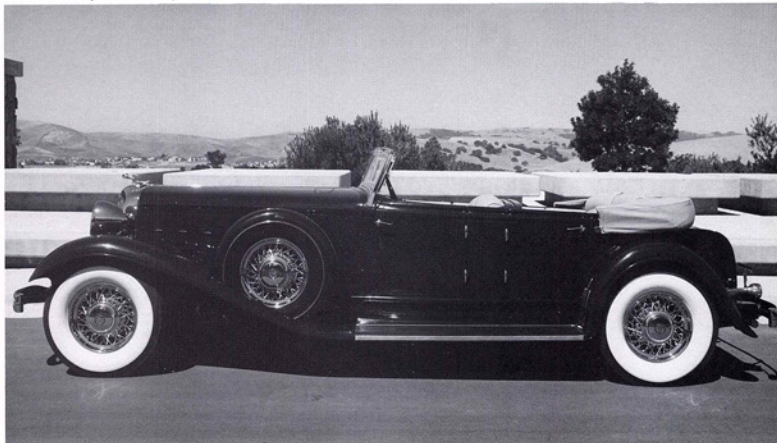


1933 Chrysler Custom Imperial Series CL* Phaeton, LeBaron

Owner: Andrew D. Darling of Edina, Minnesota

1933 Chrysler Custom Imperial Series CL* Phaeton, LeBaron

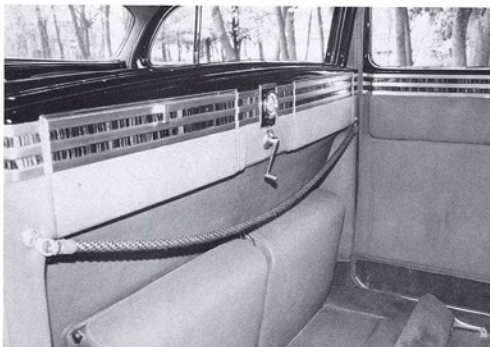
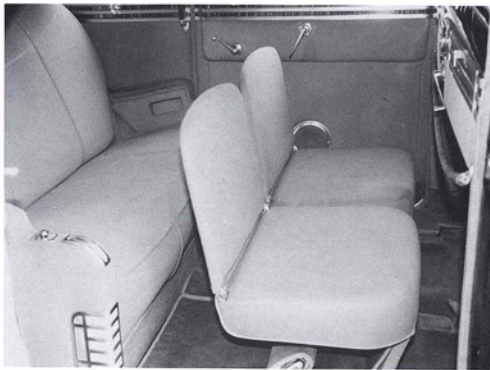
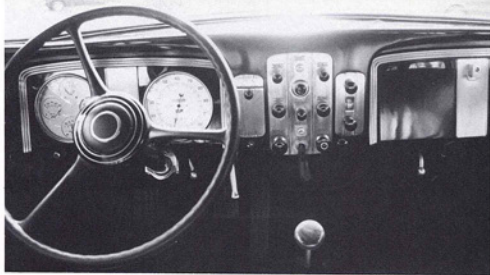
Owner: Blackhawk Classic Auto Collection, Danville, California

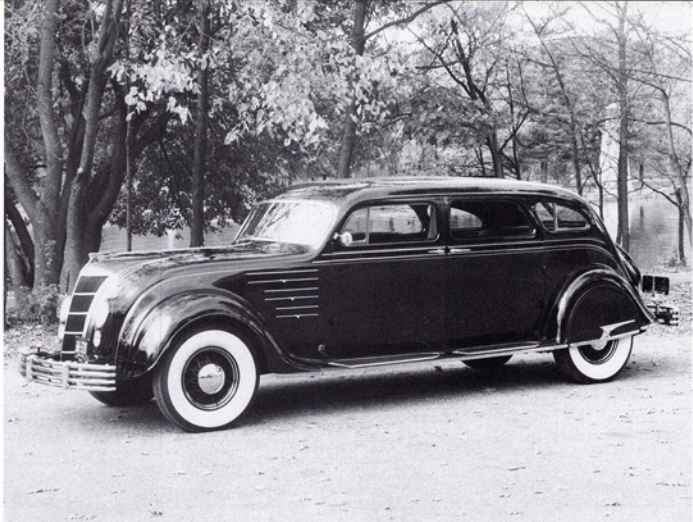


"Breathlessly different looking," gushed Carolyn Edmundson of *Harper's Bazar*. "Splendid just from its appearance," commented Professor Alexander Klemm of the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aeronautics. Look at the car for two or three days, the editors of *MoToR* suggested, and it will look right and all other automobiles will look wrong. The Airflow had arrived. Its look had happened naturally, Chrysler said, with the help of a wind tunnel. Underneath the aerodynamic body, the passengers were cradled between the axles à la the experimental Trifon. Semi-unitary construction was another Airflow idea whose time had not come elsewhere. Headlamps were recessed in front, the trunk was integral in the rear. Top-of-the-line Imperial Custom Airflows had the industry's first-ever curved one-piece windshield. The interior of the car was as Art Deco as the Chrysler Building. Wheelbase of the Series CW was the same 146 inches as the predecessor CL, cubic inches of the engine remained the same 385. But there similarity ended—dramatically.

Bob Joynt is as enthusiastic about his Airflow today as the aforementioned critics were in 1934: "Totally unorthodox and radical, this was the most advanced car available that year and the first modern car in history. It's also the most powerful Classic Chrysler, with high compression aluminum head, overdrive transmission and a top speed of 110 mph. And it's the largest, at 7,000 pounds, fully six feet two inches high and stretching twenty feet. The first owner of my CW was Huntington Hartford, patron of the arts and A&P heir; the third owner was Carl Breer, head of Chrysler Advanced Engineering and father of the Airflow. His son used to say that when he borrowed the Airflow to go out on a double date in the thirties all four of them sat in the front seat. In the nine years I've owned the Airflow, I've driven it 10,000 miles. On the road it feels like the 20th Century Limited. Is this the greatest car ever built? My natural modesty forbids answering this question. But the car speaks for itself!"

Chrysler went all-out with the Airflow. In addition to the rarefied \$5,000 CW, the Imperial Custom was offered in the Series CX on a 137.5-inch chassis with 323.5-cubic-inch straight eight delivering 130 hp and a price tag in the \$2,300 range. Internal corporation memos reveal Chrysler targeted the CX as a contender in the Packard 1102, Buick





*1934 Chrysler Imperial Custom Airflow Series CW Limousine, LeBaron (details page opposite)
Owner: Bob Joynt of Batavia, Illinois*

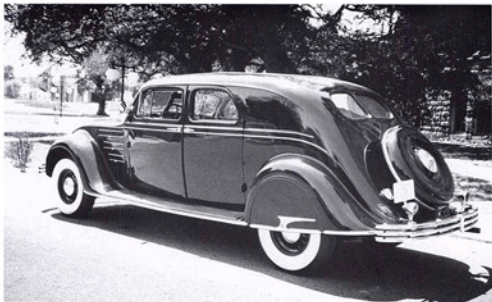




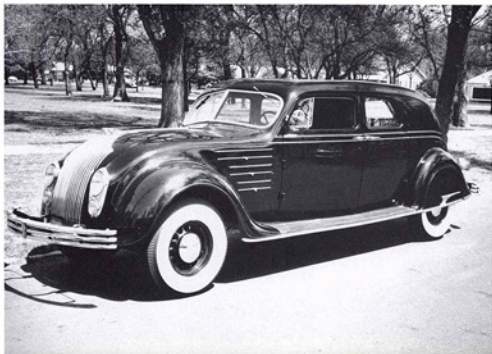
90, Cadillac V-8, Pierce-Arrow and Lincoln twelve market.

Why Charles Goddard chose the CX Town Sedan that Paul Tatman owns today is not known but an interesting story lies behind the car: "Goddard, one of the founders of Humble Oil, was building a ranch in Oklahoma at the time. One evening his son was involved in an automobile accident near Joe Walker's sawmill; Walker rushed the boy and his companions to the hospital in his Chevrolet flatbed truck. Although the son subsequently died of his injuries, Charlie Goddard bought the Imperial Custom Airflow for Walker in gratitude. Joe kept the car for thirty-five years. I've owned it for seven. With overdrive it has the ability to cruise all day at 65-70 mph."

The principal problem of the Airflow was that it didn't sell. In the five series offered, just 11,292 cars found purchasers in 1934; the single conventionally styled Chrysler available that year outsold all Airflows by more than two to one. Of the Series C/W Airflows like Bob Joyn't's, just 47 found buyers. Total CX sales stopped at 128, and Paul Tatman's Town Sedan was the only one built in that body style. Historians generally regard the Airflow as Walter Chrysler's first mistake. A critical success, it was a commercial failure. Chrysler Corporation would spend the next three years trying to undo what had been done, modifying the Airflow's natural waterfall grille into a more usual vee and replacing the functional hood louvers with versions more simply decorative, until finally in 1937 the remedial action was discontinued—and the Airflow was history.



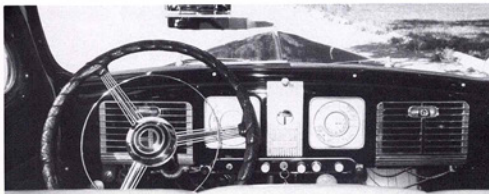
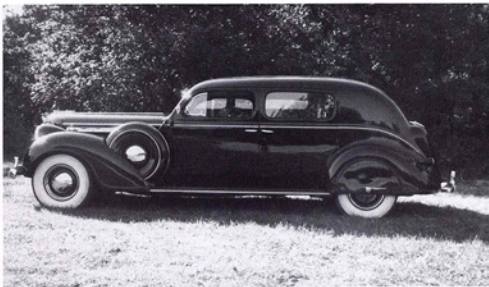
1934 Chrysler Imperial Custom Airflow Series CX Town Sedan, LeBaron
Owner: Paul E. Tatman of Wichita, Kansas





*1938 Chrysler Custom Imperial Series C-20 Limousine, LeBaron
Owners: Don & Carol Alexander of Riverside, Illinois*

Nineteen thirty-eight for the Custom Imperial brought sales of 519 cars and styling that was modish but not radical, courtesy of Ray Dietrich who became Chrysler's new chief body designer following the move of Oliver Clark, the man responsible for the Airflow, up to executive rank. Don & Carol Alexander have owned their LeBaron Imperial Limousine for nearly two decades: "Only five are known to exist of 145 built. The car behaves great on the road and the overdrive makes it ideal for expressways."





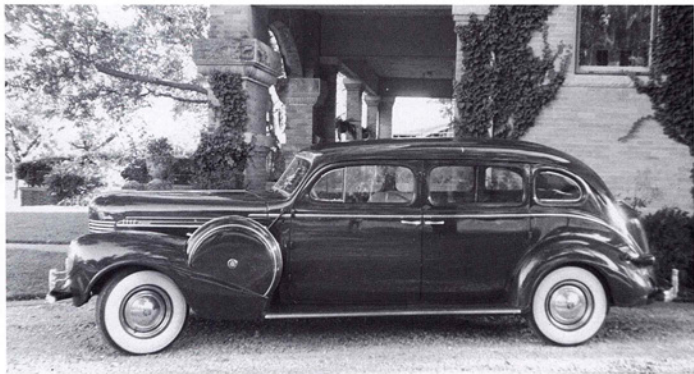
1939 Chrysler Custom Imperial Series C-24 Five-Passenger Sedan, LeBaron

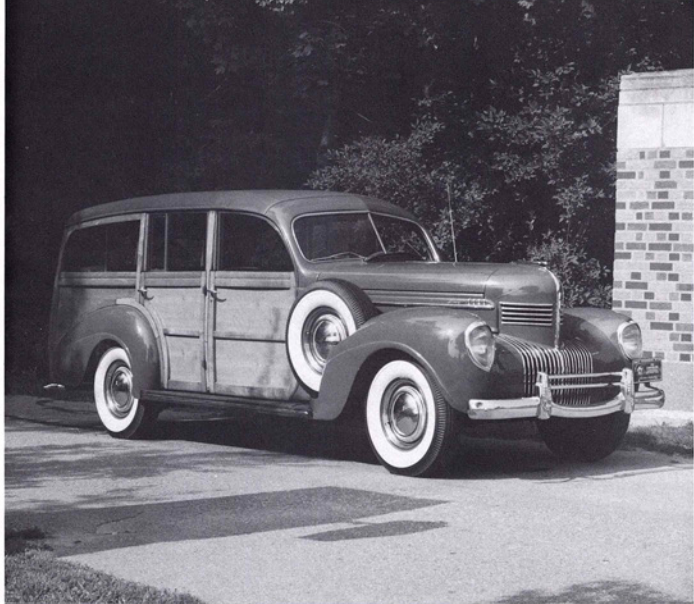
Owner: Gerald B. Talkington of Mineral Wells, Texas

The 1939 Custom Imperial introduced Fluid Coupling which with the three-speed and overdrive provided a semi-automatic transmission with fine flexibility. Of the 300 Series C-24's produced, 88 were five-passenger sedans like Gerald

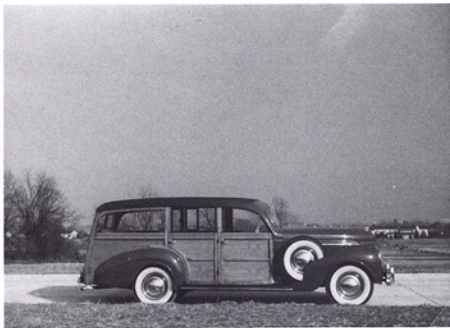
Talkington's: "The wheelbase is 144 inches, the engine the 323.5-cubic-inch straight eight that would be used until 1950. Sidemounts were an option for the last time in 1939 on the Custom Imperial. My car was base priced at \$2,595 and weighs 4,590

pounds. The pontoon-like fenders with the Art Deco lights in contrast to the bold outline of the hood spells Speed—Speed with Grace. Fluid drive with overdrive makes for a wonderful road car with a 'modern' feel."





1939 Chrysler Imperial Series C-23 Station Wagon, Bohman & Schwartz
Owner: Bruce R. Thomas of Troy, Michigan



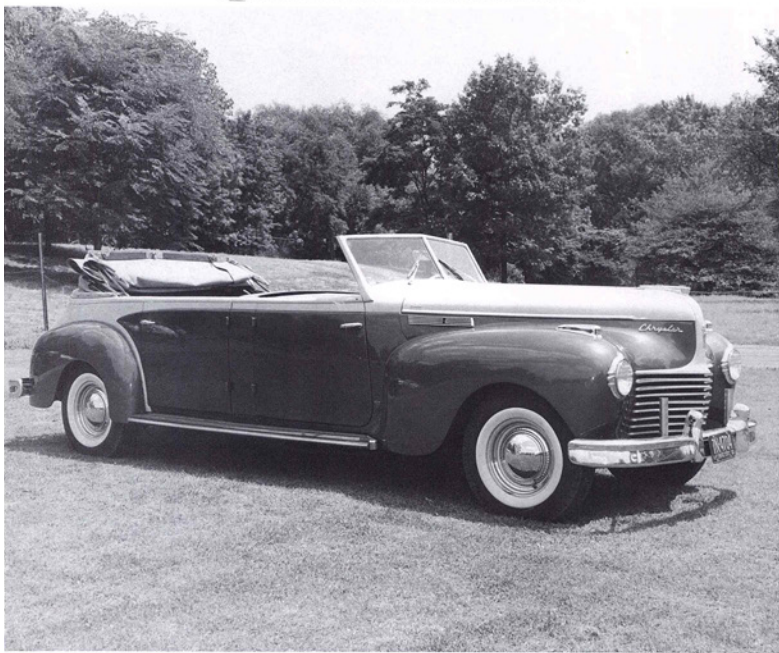
The most unusual 1939 Imperial has to be the car Bruce Thomas acquired from John Way, Jr., son of the original owner, in 1985: "This one-off Bohman & Schwartz amazes me! As far as I can research, it is the only Imperial Station Wagon built on a 1939 chassis, or any other year for that matter. With this car came total documentation, including the original sketch for customer approval, all correspondence and lots of the bills, etc. The metal-framed windows are rare for a wagon, and the lowered beltline provides better side visibility. The specification called for extra reinforcements everywhere to reduce (or eliminate) squeaks and rattles—and they worked. After 65,000 actual miles the car is still 'silent.' Except for soft trim and chrome plating, I restored this wagon myself. For a long time I didn't have any fingerprints due to the sanding-sanding-sanding. The last bits of 1000 grit were smoother than my fingers."

A sign of the times . . . the only 1940 Crown Imperial 145.5-inch chassis consigned to an individual coachbuilder for a custom body produced the Parade Phaeton shown here. By now most coachbuilding houses were no more. Still in business—and ultimately the last survivor—was Derham of Rosemont, Pennsylvania. “This very late special-order, special-purpose full custom Derham is really a political history artifact,” comments Henry Ford Museum transportation curator Randy Mason. “It was the official New York City parade car from 1940 to 1952. A lot of ticker tape fell on this Chrysler during that period.”

The Thunderbolt, named for the car that Captain George Eyston had sped to a new land speed record of 357.5 mph on the salt flats of Bonneville in 1938, was commissioned by Chrysler. Having learned a lesson well with the Airflow, this advanced design was not intended as a car for the marketplace but one for the showroom—to increase traffic and, hopefully, sales of conventionally styled Chryslers of the period. Certainly there was nothing conventional about the Thunderbolt, nor its companion dual-cowl-phaeton Newport. These cars were dreams of the forties presaging full envelope and straight-through fender line styling that wouldn't

become reality until well after the Classic Era ended. Underneath the Thunderbolt's body is a standard 127.5-inch New Yorker chassis with Imperial straight-eight engine. The hardtop is retractable, the doors open by pushbutton inside and out, the windows operate electrically. Total production of these show cars was twelve, six Thunderbolts, six Newports. Crowds thronged Chrysler showrooms to see them until after Pearl Harbor. Then Walter Chrysler, Jr. took one of the Newports (sadly, his father had died in 1940); the other eleven cars were sold. The Thunderbolt in the Blackhawk Classic Auto Collection is one of the few extant.

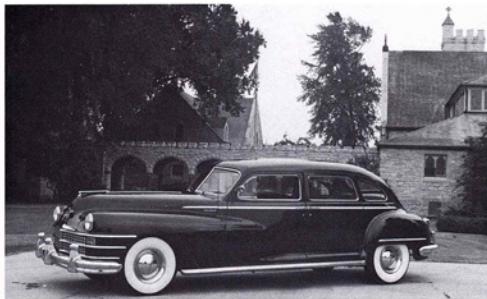
1940 Chrysler Crown Imperial Series C-27 Parade Phaeton, Derham
Owner: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan





1941 Chrysler Thunderbolt, LeBaron

Owner: Blackhawk Classic Auto Collection, Danville, California

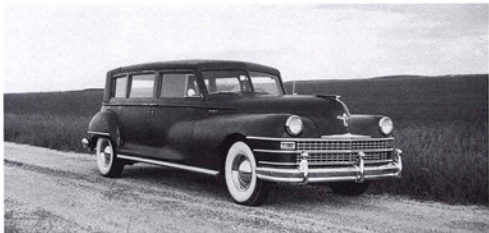


1948 Chrysler Crown Imperial Series C-40 Limousine
Owner: Bob Joynt of Batavia, Illinois

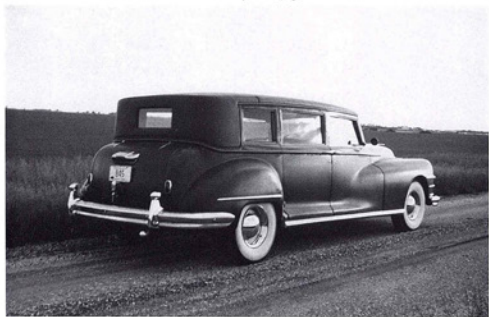
Jumping into production following the war, Chrysler sold every car it could build. Logic dictated the wisdom of focusing on the bread-and-butter models. Total production of the top-of-the-line Crown Imperials for 1946 through 1948 was 1,400 cars, 650 sedans, 750 limousines. Bob Joynt has owned his car for four years: "The engine is the venerable 323.5-cubic-inch straight eight, the wheelbase is 145½ inches, the transmission is fluid drive. Featured are power windows including divider, jump seats, mouton carpets and leather chauffeur's compartment. This was the last year, of course, of the prewar body style, and the car is a 1940's explosion of jukebox dash, lavish wood trim, jumbo 8:90x15 tires and a smiley face grille. A wonderful road automobile, this Imperial is 100% original."



Bob Rostecki's Imperial Brougham Limousine is 100% unique: "Marjorie Merriweather Post, the cereal heiress, commissioned Derham to build this car on the '48 Imperial chassis with a design updated from a 1928 Barker body style. The cost for the finished product was \$19,000. In 1956 Mrs. Post donated the car to the Mount Vernon School for Girls of which she was a patron, stipulating that when it broke down it was to be junked. The following year the rear axle developed a problem and the body was becoming shabby, so that stipulation was followed. Someone bought it from the junkyard for \$125.00; the bad axle made for a lot of grinding and banging as the poor old car motored along so when this fellow entered the Air Force, he gave the Derham to Bill Pettit for his museum in Louisa, Virginia. Initially, Bill considered using the Derham as a parts car but instead kept it intact for twenty-six years. I bought it from him five years ago and am now in the process of restoration. Following a complete bumper-to-bumper mechanical overhaul, this 58,000-original-mile car is pleasant and solid to drive. And it will always intrigue me because of its history. The car is a one-of-a-kind and so, for that matter, was its original owner. But most poignantly, this Brougham Limousine represents the last Classic body built in its entirety by the last of the old-time Classic coachbuilders—Derham of Rosemont, Pennsylvania. This beautiful Classic which escaped destruction twice has an honored place in our garage. She is a lady. We call her 'The Merriweather'."



1948 Chrysler Crown Imperial Series C-40 Brougham Limousine, Derham
Owner: Robert K. Rostecki of Winnipeg, Manitoba





In 1948 Cadillac introduced its first postwar redesign in all series except the 75. Total Series 75 production was 2,067 cars; 382 of them were Imperial Seven-Passenger Sedans like Rod Brewer's: "Sold new by Rickenbaugh Cadillac to the Meyers Drug family in Denver, this car remained in the Meyer family until the late seventies. A grandson sold it to the

Rippey Museum, and I bought it soon after. Having been garaged for most of its life—and showing only 44,223 miles—the car is very well preserved. For example, the never-used jack is still in its original cloth cover with the instructions attached! This car represents the finale of Classic Era Cadillac styling. The stainless steel running boards add a

lot to the look of the car. The most distinguishing feature of the '48 Cadillac limousine is the dashboard, used only this year, which has a leather look as opposed to the wood-grain finish of all other '48 Cadillacs. Also, exclusive to the limo are gold ring spacers in the door and window handles—for a final touch of Classic Era class."

1948 Cadillac Series 75 Imperial Seven-Passenger Sedan, Fleetwood

Owner: Rodney R. Brewer of Golden, Colorado

