

70 YEARS OF CHRYSLER



By George H. Dammann

For the first time since 1928, Chrysler's production exceeded 100,000 vehicles during the calendar year. The company's run of 107,872 returned Chrysler to the Top Ten list, via 10th Place, followed right behind by DeSoto in 11th position. The ever-changing Top Ten rankings this year were showing signs of moving into permanent position. The companies by rank now were Chevrolet, Ford, Plymouth, Dodge, Pontiac, Buick, Oldsmobile, Hudson-Terraplane, and Packard.

Appearing for the last time this year was the Airflow design. And, surprisingly, though the Imperial line had used the Airflow exclusively, these cars now went to conventional design, and the final Airflows ended up bearing the Chrysler signature. These last models used the 128-inch wheelbase chassis of the former Imperial 8, and used that car's 323.5 cubic inch engine, rated at 130 horsepower at 3400 RPM in standard form or 138 horsepower in the optional performance package. Engine numbers ran from C17-1001 to C17-15572.

Several exterior changes were made on the front end, and the result was that the last Airflows were probably the best looking of the lot, containing a sharply V-ed grille, attractive headlight shells, and rather inconspicuous louvers. But, by August, after approximately 4,600 Airflows were produced for the 1937 season, the line was dropped for good. And, despite reports to the contrary, the Airflow did not hurt Chrysler, either financially or in reputation. Total Airflow production for the four years of production was 29,928 Chryslers and Imperials, and 25,737 DeSotos, which was not that bad a record for a highly radical depression-era car. In addition, virtually all of the innovations that first appeared on the Airflows later were put into common use on other cars, both those produced by Chrysler Corp. and those produced by other manufacturers. Definitely, the Airflows have to be ranked among the most significant cars of the 1930s—and possibly as the most important car of that era.

Except for the Airflow, the Chrysler line contained no 8-cylinder cars this year, as all Eights now wore the Imperial signature. The remainder of the Chrysler line consisted of the new Royal Series, also known as the Series C-16. These cars received a total redesign, and

For some unknown reason, Chrysler brought back its fastback styles after having dropped them in 1935. The styles appeared only on the sedan and on this brougham, or 2-door sedan. In this model it was definitely unappreciated, and only 750 were built. The car sold for \$870 and weighed 3,114 pounds. All 5-passenger Series C-16 or Royal Six cars used a 116-inch wheelbase, but the new 7-passenger models used the 133-inch wheelbase chassis formerly used by the Airstream DeLuxe Eight models.



As in the past years, the lightest and least expensive Chrysler was the 6-cylinder business coupe, which this year weighed 3,049 pounds and cost \$810. However, the car received a tremendous spurt in popularity, and 9,830 were sold. This rather battered example, shown after more than 30 years of use, is fitted with 1942 black-out type hubcaps, but otherwise is original.



The 6-cylinder Chrysler line this year was known as the Royal Six or Series C-16. One of its less appreciated models was the coupe, built in rumble seat form only, which had sales of only 1,050. It cost \$860 and weighed 3,099 pounds, with the fender skirts being extra.



Chrysler this year promoted its Gold Seal Six engine, which was used exclusively in the C-16 Series. Basically, it was a slightly reworked version of the old Six, which still produced 93 horsepower at 2600 RPM. The sport model of this series was the convertible coupe, which sold for \$1,020 and weighed 3,274 pounds. Only 767 were built.

sported quite attractive lines, despite having been shortened via a new chassis of 116-inch wheelbase. However, the 7-passenger models continued to use the old 133-inch wheelbase chassis. Power was now by a newly designed L-head 6-cylinder engine of 228 cubic inches.



The only other Chrysler to use fastback styling was the Royal Six sedan, which was priced at \$910 and weighed 3,124 pounds. It shared the same fate as did the fastback brougham, in that the public just didn't like the style. Only 1,200 were built. This version, shown in Chrysler's styling studio, wears experimental steel spoke wheels on the rear and accessory wheel discs on the front. The chromed discs were available through Chrysler dealers. The car is also lacking its taillights.



Approximately ten times more popular than the fastback Royal Six brougham was the Royal Six touring brougham, which enjoyed sales of 7,835. The car used an integral trunk, much preferred over the fastback style. It cost \$880 and weighed 3,094 pounds, with the skirts being extra.



This block ran a bore and stroke of 3-3/8 x 4.25 and developed 93 horsepower at 3600 RPM in standard form or 100 horsepower at 3600 RPM with the optional performance package. The shaft ran on four main bearings. A Ball & Ball carburetor and Auto-Lite ignition were used. Engine numbers ran from C16-1001 to C16-88646.

As did all Chryslers and Imperials this year, the car featured built-in windshield defroster vents; fully insulated rubber body mountings, and safety padding on the backs of the front seats—all industry firsts.

As mentioned before, the Imperial line switched from exclusive Airflow styling to exclusive conventional styling, and except for the Chrysler Airflow, contained the only 8-cylinder engines produced by the company this year. The Imperial line now consisted of only two series, the Imperial, Series C-14, and the Custom Imperial, Series C-15.

The Imperial Series used a chassis of 121-inch wheelbase, which had been used on the former Chrysler DeLuxe 8, and continued to use that model's 273.8 cubic inch engine. However, this engine was now rated at 110 horsepower at 3600 RPM in standard form or 115 horsepower at 3600 RPM with the performance option. Engine numbers ran from C14-1001 to C14-15572.

The Custom Imperial series used a totally new chassis of 140-inch wheelbase, and was powered by the old 323.5 cubic inch block that had been used in former Airflow Imperial. However, this engine was now rated at 130 horsepower at 3400 RPM in standard form, or 138 horsepower at 3400 RPM with the power option. As did all Chrysler engines this year, the Imperials used Ball & Ball carburetors and Auto-Lite ignitions. Engine numbers of the Custom Imperials ranged from C15-1001 to C15-2237. Overdrive remained standard on the Imperials and the Airflow, but was a \$35 option on the Royal models.



By far the most popular Chrysler was the Royal Six touring sedan, which had a phenomenal run of 62,408. It cost \$920 and weighed 3,134 pounds, with the skirts being extra. Tires were 16 x 6-25 inches, the wheelbase was 116 inches.

Well battered after more than 30 years of constant use is this Royal Six convertible sedan, which was built in trunk form only. Priced at \$1,355, it was the most expensive car in the Royal Six Series. It weighed 3,484 pounds. A total of 642 were built. The upper centerpost would dip out of place when the top and windows were lowered.



Using the 133-inch wheelbase, which was new for the 6-cylinder series, was the 7-passenger sedan, also new for the 6-cylinder line. The car cost \$1,145 and weighed 3,544 pounds, with the skirts being extra. Despite the difference in wheelbase, the car was still considered part of the C-16 Series. A total of 856 were built.

Listed as a semi-production model but available on special order only was the Royal Six town sedan, with its body by DeSiam of Rosemont, Pa. It was built in true formal town car style, with a convertible chauffeur's compartment, a leather covered top, and blind rear quarters, also covered in leather. No production records exist on the car, since the records were included in the list of 524 Royal Six chauffeur units sold to outside builders this year.



The lowest production model in the Royal Six Series was the 7-passenger sedan limousine, of which only 138 were produced. The car was built on the 133-inch wheelbase chassis and used the same body as did the 7-passenger sedan, but was fitted with a divider window between the front and rear compartments. In standard form, it used the same upholstery throughout, but could be ordered with a leather chauffeur's compartment. It cost \$1,245 and weighed 3,550 pounds.



Appearing for the last time was the Airflow design. Formerly an exclusive style for Imperials, the interesting but unpopular design this year moved into the Chrysler line, and finished its life as a 2-model series powered by the only Eight to carry the Chrysler nameplate. This is the Airflow 6-passenger coupe, which cost \$1,610 and weighed 4,225 pounds. Only 230 were built. The Airflow Series was also known as the Series C-17.



Chrysler's only Airflow with any degree of popularity was the 4-door sedan, which had a run of 4,376. It cost \$1,610 (the same as the coupe) but weighed 4,360 pounds. Heavily redesigned, the 1937 model is considered by many to be the best looking and best engineered of all Airflows—a fitting swan song for what truly was a fine car. It used a 128-inch wheelbase chassis and was powered by the same 323.5 cubic inch engine used in the Imperial Custom Eight Series.





The most popular car in the Imperial Eight Series was the 5-passenger 4-door touring sedan, which enjoyed a run of 11,976. It cost \$1,100 and weighed 3,544 pounds, with the skirts being an accessory. The tires were 16 x 6.5 inches. In addition to completed cars, Chrysler also sold 114 Imperial Eight, C-14 chassis.



The California Highway Patrol this year bought a fleet of 20 Imperial Eight traveler broughams, or two door sedans. The cars were painted in black and white, and were equipped with red lights on the bumpers and spotlights for the driver. The first car is equipped with a two-way radio, but it doesn't appear that the other vehicles have this facility. In standard form the brougham cost \$1,070 and weighed 3,544 pounds. Not a very popular model, it had a run of only 430. The Imperial Eights used the 273 cubic inch engine of 110 horsepower at 3600 RPM.

The most expensive model in the Imperial Eight Series was the convertible sedan, priced at \$1,500. The 3,824-pound car had a run of only 325. The body was not just the sedan body fitted with a soft top, but was specially constructed for this model, and was the only 4-door style to have both front and rear doors hinged at the leading edge. The center-posts would unclip, when top and windows were lowered. Skirts and side-mounts shown here were accessories.



In a rather strange name switch, the Chrysler DeLuxe Eight Series was dropped this year, and its place was taken by the Series C-14 Imperial Eight. This move meant that the only 8-cylinder cars to bear the Chrysler name were the two models in the Airflow line. This is the new Imperial Eight business coupe, which sold for \$1,030 and weighed 3,374 pounds. A total of 1,075 were sold, attesting to the car's relative popularity. One of its main selling points was the enormous storage space stretching from the rear deck to the back of the driver's seat.



The sport model in the Imperial Eight Series was the convertible coupe, built in rumble seat form only. It had a run of only 351. Priced at \$1,170, it weighed 3,609 pounds. The Imperial Eight Series, also known as the Series C-14, used a 121-inch wheelbase chassis.

By far the least popular car in the new Imperial Eight Series was the rumble seat coupe, which had a run of only 225. Despite the continuation of the style, the public was no longer interested in the boney and uncomfortable rumble seats, which offered no weather or wind protection at all. The car cost \$1,070 and weighed 3,449 pounds.



A new innovation for Chrysler this year were the defroster vents built into the windshield frame. The units are shown here in operation on an Imperial Eight model, which used a different dashboard than did the Chrysler models. All of the 1-piece windshields could be opened. The plate between the dual subtrays was for a radio. The Imperials used a standard steering wheel and rubber floor mats, while the Custom Imperials used a steel spoked wheel and carpeting in the front.





The most popular Custom Imperial Eight was the 7-passenger sedan, of which 721 were sold. It cost \$2,060 (the same as the 5-passenger model) and weighed 4,522 pounds. It was powered by the 323.5 cubic inch L-head Eight which developed 130 horsepower at 3400 RPM.

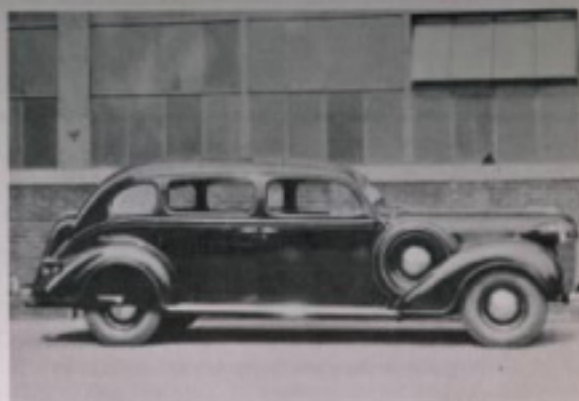


The heaviest and most expensive production model in the entire Chrysler line was the Custom Imperial Eight sedan limousine, which cost \$2,160 and weighed 4,644 pounds. The car was upholstered in the same material throughout, but contained a divider window between the front and rear compartments. Only 276 were built. In addition to the completed models, Chrysler also sold 18 Custom Imperial chassis-cool units to independent body builders. The side-mounts and white walls on this car were accessories. Tires were 16 x 7.5 inches.



Available only on special order from Chrysler was the Custom Imperial town sedan limousine. The car used the standard limousine body, but was built with blanked rear quarter panels, and had a formal leather front chauffeur's compartment. Since the production figures for this special order model were included with those of the standard sedan limousine, it is impossible to tell how many of this model were built.

Built in prototype form only, and never put into production, was this Imperial Eight, Series C-14 fastback sedan. The body was probably the Royal Six sedan body fitted to the 121-inch wheelbase Imperial Eight chassis as an experiment.



Chrysler's largest car continued to be found in the Custom Imperial Eight Series, also known as the Series C-15. The least popular model in the series was the 5-passenger sedan, of which only 187 were built. It is shown here with accessory skirts and side-mounts. Priced at \$2,060 and weighing about 4,500 pounds, it was built on a 140-inch wheelbase chassis.



Built on the Series C-14 Imperial chassis was this interesting custom convertible coupe, converted into a 2-passenger roadster. No information exists on the car, but it appears to have been built by Briggs, probably by the LeBaron division. The Briggs plant is in the background. The car features custom chromed headlight and taillight pods and custom wheel discs, plus custom bumpers and special trim on the running boards and fender skirts.



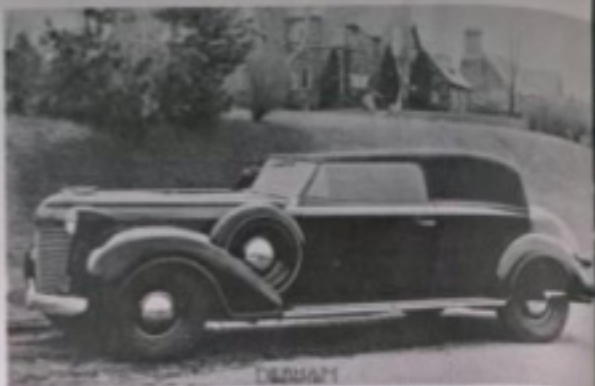


Custom built by LeBaron for Mrs. Walter P. Chrysler was this beautiful Custom Imperial formal town car. The beautiful vehicle used a highly reworked body of very flowing line, complimented by full-custom rear fenders and skirts. A convertible top covered the chauffeur's compartment in inclement weather. Note how the running board edging is carried around the skirts and then completely around the rear section of the body.



Although Chrysler didn't appear as a pace car at Indianapolis this year, it was quite in evidence during the 500 mile speed classic. This Imperial 4-door convertible was assigned to the chief steward, and was considered the official car during the event. The car was finished in silver and black in commemoration of the speedway's 25th anniversary.

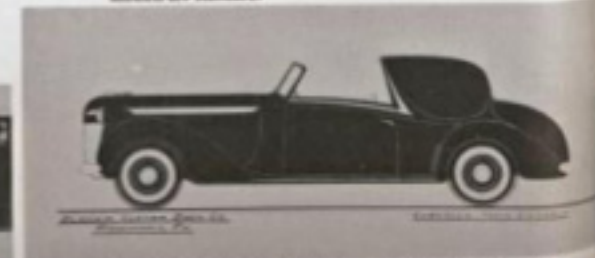
Upon special order of Joe Frazer, then vice-president of sales for Chrysler, Durham built this very formal convertible town car. The car could be used as shown, or the rear top could be retracted and the car used as either a dual seat phaeton or with the divider window lowered and the center-posts removed, it could be used as a straight 4-door convertible. An independent fabric top provided weather protection for the front compartment. Joe Frazer later served as president of both Willys and Graham-Paige, and after W.W. II was the Frazer name in the short-lived Kaiser-Frazer Corp.



The Durham Custom Body Co. of Rosemont, Pa. became very interested in Chrysler and turned out several interesting cars on Imperial and Custom Imperial chassis. This beautiful convertible victoria was built on the Imperial Eight chassis. The 5-passenger car featured a beautiful continental top with very long rear quarters, plus a highly rounded trunk design. Fenders, side-mounts, and skirts were stock Chrysler items.



Another beautiful Durham creation this year was this Imperial Eight convertible sedan, which used a full custom body and top. Note the very rectangular top lines as compared with the standard convertible sedan, plus the use of a split windshield and the center-hinged doors. Although the body is a full-custom, the fenders, skirts, and side-mounts are standard.



Durham of Rosemont, Pa. designed this interesting town victoria for the Chrysler Royal or the Imperial Eight chassis. It is not known if any were built. The rear portion of the top was of metal, and was not convertible nor removable. A completely different trunk deck was designed by Durham for its custom models.