

# Chrysler was the successor company to Maxwell in 1924; the first Full Classic<sup>®</sup> was built in 1926, named the E-80 Imperial 6

Walter P. Chrysler was the founder and President until his death in 1940

*Periodically the Roadrunner prints an article about American made Full Classics<sup>®</sup>. The most recent article about the Wills Sainte Claire was in the January-February 2008 edition. This edition covers Chrysler. The Summer 2008 edition of the Roadrunner will feature Cadillac and is the last of the series.*

By Les Jackson

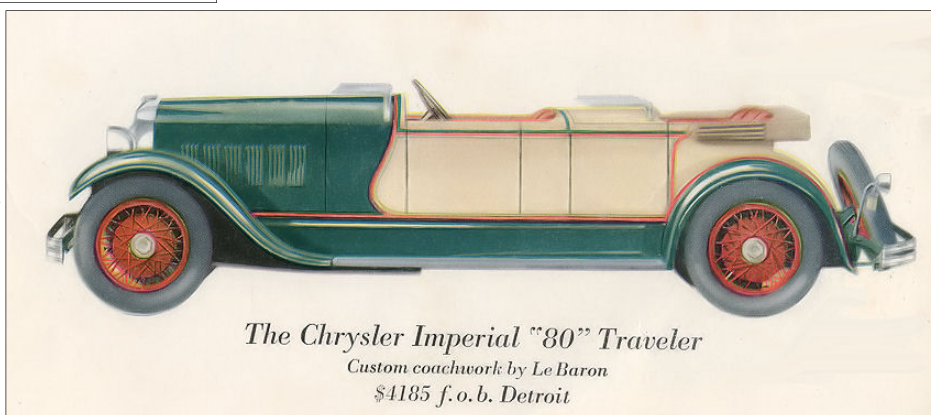
During the early days of the American automobile industry, the Teens and the Twenties, top executives of many companies moved from one firm to another.

Walter Percy Chrysler was one of those.

He went from the American Locomotive Company to be works manager for Buick in 1910. By 1919 when he left the company because he did not like working with William C. Durant (the head of General Motors at the time) he had reached the Presidency of Buick.

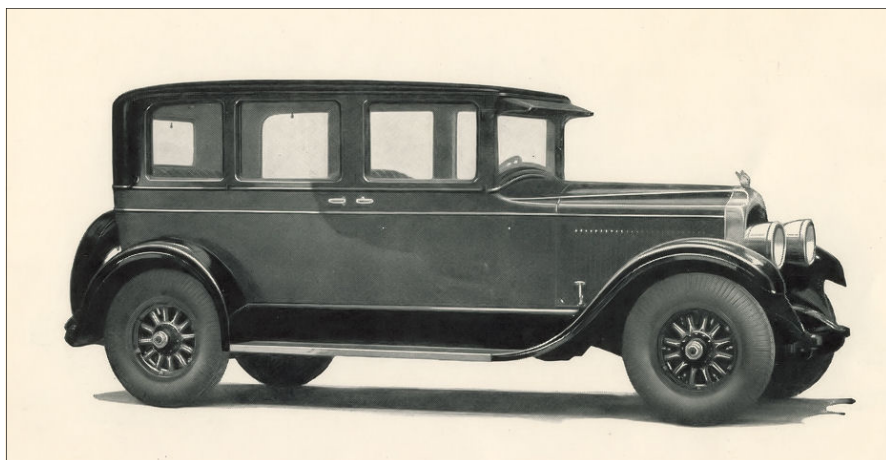
Next he took over the failing automotive business of John North Willys. Chrysler's fee was \$1 million per year. (Adjusted for inflation that would be \$12,236,590 in today's economy.)

He was only there two years before he left for the troubled Maxwell company which had merged with Chalmers. As the Chalmers was phased out, the new Chrysler was introduced in New York in January



*The Chrysler Imperial "80" Traveler  
Custom coachwork by LeBaron  
\$4185 f.o.b. Detroit*

The 1928 Chrysler Imperial 80 Six cylinder 4 door Traveler with body by LeBaron. It sold for \$4,185 fob Detroit. This was before the stock market crash and the subsequent depression, and many of the more expensive cars of the day were very colorfully painted. The wheelbase was 136 inches.



The Imperial 80 standard 5 passenger sedan for 1927 rode on 30 x 6.75 tires and was powered by a 6 cylinder 92 horsepower engine. Displacement was 288.6 cubic inches and bore and stroke were 3½" x 5". The crankshaft had 7 bearings; the price was \$2,695. Hydraulic four wheel brakes were standard.

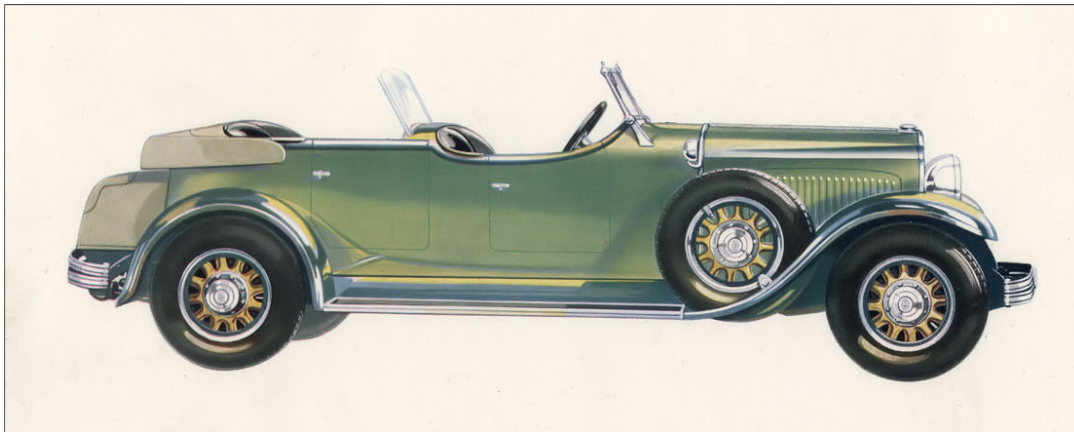
1924. For that calendar year Chrysler sold an amazing 32,000 cars, a record for a first year car.

### High Compression Engine

It had America's first high compression engine in a medium priced car with a displacement of 201.5 inches, but a 4.7 to 1 compression ratio (most competitors were 4.0:1). It developed 68 brake horsepower and was priced at \$1,395.

This first Chrysler had four wheel hydraulic brakes, aluminum pistons and full pressure lubrication. The car cruised at 70 miles an hour.

Chrysler Corporation was formed in mid-1925 as the successor to Maxwell. Walter Chrysler was president of the



Locke was the body builder of this 1929 Imperial L Sport Phaeton. The top was Burbank cloth tailored by hand. The rear seat had a center folding arm rest and elaborate pockets in the rear doors. Hand tufted Turkish Vellet leather provided the upholstery. Note the streamlined trunk and the subtle dip in the front doors—perhaps a precursor to the Darrin Packards of the late 1930's and early 40's. (See pages 12-15.)

are considered Full Classics from 1926 through 1932. After that some of the Imperials are non-classics. (See the table accompanying this article.)

**The Revolutionary Airflow**

Chrysler embarked on a revolutionary design with the 1934 Airflow, which turned out to be ahead of the market's tastes.

Despite Chrysler's ads emphasizing the car's "beauty", the pub-

company until he died in 1940.

During the years 1927 and 1928 the new Chryslers did well in competitive events such as stock car races and hill climbs. It was the first American car in the annual LeMans race and finished third and fourth in 1928.

The first Chrysler Full Classic<sup>®</sup> was the six cylinder

E-80 Imperial for 1926. Chrysler was rare among what are now classified as Classic car makers of the period as it had a large price differential between its top two series of cars. The non classic G-70 cars started at a price of \$1,625, whereas the least expensive Imperial was \$2,885.

This situation continued for many years as Chrysler competed in the middle price range with most of its models and in the high priced area with the Imperial. In 1929 the Chrysler Imperial was longer, lower and with a thin profile radiator compared with other American luxury cars. There were also custom designs by LeBaron, Locke and Dietrich.

All of the Chryslers with the Imperial designation



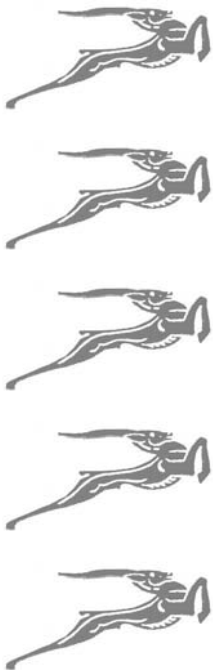
The Custom Imperial CL 8 convertible roadster for 1933. Total production of this beauty was nine cars. All CL Imperials in 1933 numbered only 151. This one sold for \$3295 new. The wheelbase was 146 inches which emphasized the sweep of the front fenders. This was a LeBaron "semi-custom" design. Horsepower was 135. Chrysler advertising bragged about "Floating Power" referring to the engine mounting cradled in rubber to "absorb all the power tremors" of the engine.

lic disagreed. Design changes followed in 1935, 1936 and 1937, but by the end of that year, the Airflow was history. (The Airflow design was also used in non-classic DeSotos for 1934, 1935 and 1936.)

After 1932, the name Imperial was often used in non-classic Chryslers as well as in the premium priced CCCA designated Classics.

In many years Chrysler used a letter and number combination to identify the various series as well as a name. For Example in 1938 the non-classics were the C-18 Royal and the C-19 Imperial, New Yorker and Saratoga series. That year the Full Classic<sup>®</sup> was

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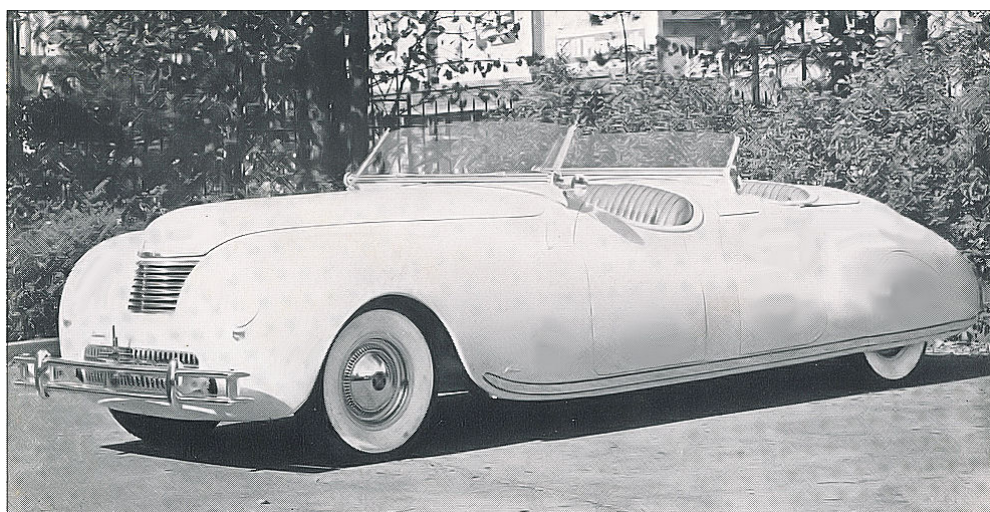


The 1937 Chrysler Custom Imperial 7 passenger sedan and sedan limousine (with the optional divider window.) Prices were \$2,060 and \$2,160 respectively. The wheelbase was 140 inches. Horsepower was 130 standard or 138 optional at 3400 rpm. Displacement of the engine was 323.5 inches with 6.2:1 or optional 6.5:1 compression ratio. These were all considered factory semi-custom. Also available on special order were custom cars by LeBaron or Derham.



Left and below right: The two door with the disappearing top was called the Thunderbolt by Chrysler in 1941. Six of them were built. The four door dual cowl convertible was the Newport, of which six were also built. These were show cars that traveled to several car shows around the country. They were called "dream" cars. Walter Chrysler, Jr. kept one of

the Newports, the other 11 cars were sold. Those who were on the Arizona CARavan in 1999 will remember a Newport that participated. Some region members saw one of the Thunderbolts at the Curves of Steel exhibition at the Phoenix Art Museum a year ago. See also page 19 of the Arizona Roadrunner March-April 2007 edition.

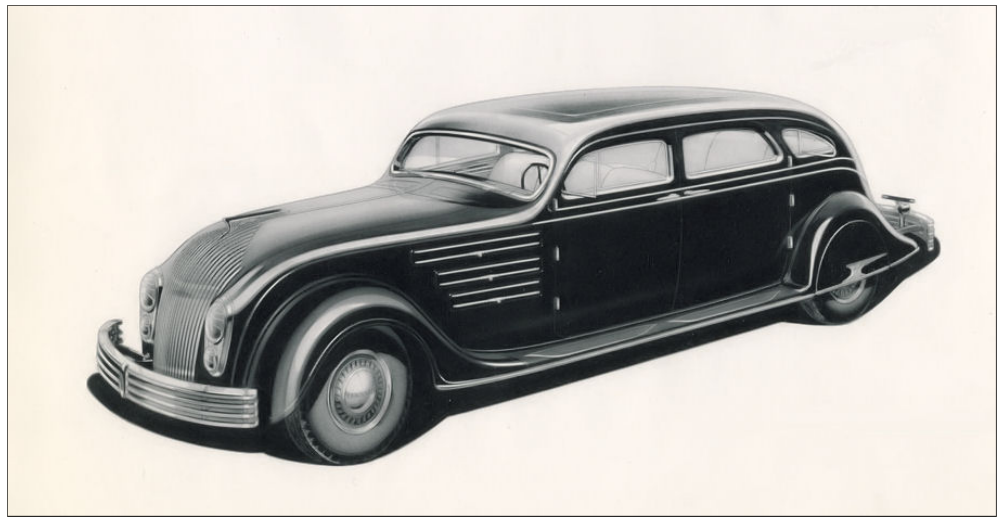


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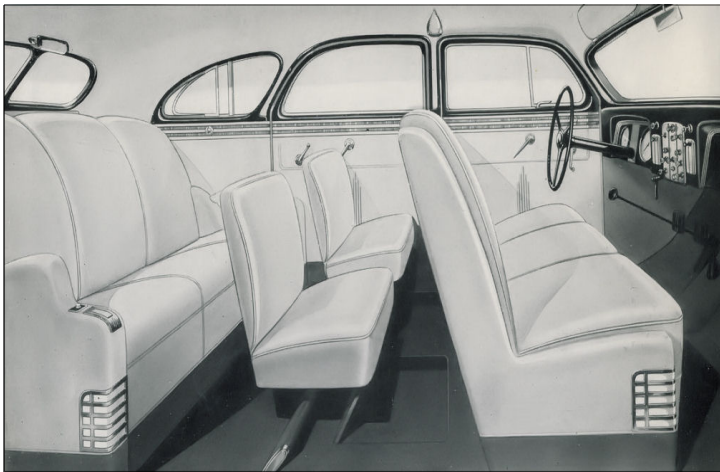
the Custom Imperial C-20.  
**The Crown Imperial Arrives**

For 1939 the Classic was the Custom Imperial, but starting in 1940 the top of the line was called the Crown Imperial which continued into the post war cars in 1946-1948. The cars by Chrysler for those three years were virtually identical for each year.

The only Chrysler Full Classic® in the Arizona Region is the 1941 Crown Imperial Town Sedan previously owned by Robert McAtee, since acquired by Leo Gephart. The CCA Directory shows 119 Full Classics® owned by members varying from 1926 through 1948.



The first year of the controversial Airflow was 1934 which featured the "waterfall" grille. This is the 8 passenger 146" wheelbase Custom Imperial CW sedan. The list price was \$5,000. The smaller 137" wheelbase CX Custom Imperials, of which 106 were built, were less than half the price of the CW's, of which only 67 were built. The non-classic Airflows for the U.S. market numbered 10,676 for 1934.



The interior of the 146" wheelbase 1934 Airflow Custom Imperial Sedan for eight passengers. The company said: "Amazing as is the flawless execution of interior styling in the Airflow Custom Imperial models, with their varied use of broadcloth, deep sprung seat cushions, heavy piled floor coverings, draft-free ventilation and a host of other features, their luxury does not subside with purely rich and beautiful appointments. Their real basic luxury is in the unparalleled character of the ride they give; the car glides over the roughest roads. Even at 80 or 90 miles an hour there is little sensation of riding." Below



left: The trunk was accessed by lifting the back seat cushion so luggage could be stored "... inside and out of the dust."

Right: The 1941 Crown Imperial Chrysler town sedan formerly owned by Arizona Region member Robert McAtee, since acquired by member Leo Gephart. See the March-April 2007 edition of the Arizona Roadrunner for more picture and an article about the car.



	<b>NON CLASSIC SERIES BY CHRYSLER</b>	<b>FULL CLASSIC® SERIES BY CHRYSLER</b>
1924	Series B-70 6 cylinder	
1925	B-70 6	
1926	F-58 4, G-70 6	<b>E-80 Imperial 6</b>
1927	50 4, 60 6	<b>80 Imperial 6</b>
1928	52 4, 62 6, 72 6	<b>80 Imperial 6, 80 L Imperial 6</b>
1929	65 6, 75 6	<b>Imperial 80 L 6</b>
1930	66 6, 70 6, 77 6, Series CJ Six	<b>Imperial 6 (carried over from 1929)</b>
1931	CJ 6, 66 6, 70 6, CD 8 Series, CM Six	<b>CG Imperial 8</b>
1931-32	CM 6, 70 6, CD 8	<b>CG 8 Imperial (carried to 1932)</b>
1932	CI 6, CP 8	<b>CH 8 Imperial, CL Custom Imperial 8</b>
1933	CO 6, CT Royal 8, CQ, Imperial 8	<b>Custom Imperial CL 8</b>
1934	CA/CB 6, CY Airflow 6, CU Airflow 8, CV Airflow 8	<b>CX Custom Imperial 8, CW Custom Imperial 8</b>
1935	C6 Airstream 6, CZ 8 Airstream & deluxe, C-1 Airflow 8, C-2 Imperial Airflow 8	<b>C-3 Custom Imperial 8, CW* Custom Imperial Airflow 8</b>
1936	C-7 6, C-8 Airstream 8, C-9 Airflow 8, C-10, Imperial, Airflow 8	<b>C-11 Custom Imperial 8, CW** Custom Imperial, Airflow 8</b>
1937	C-16 Royal 6, C-14 Imperial 8, C-17, Airflow 8	<b>C-15 Imperial Custom 8, CW Custom Imperial 8. (No CWs were built, but 3 from prior year were updated with bumper, grilles and trim.)</b>
1938	C-18 Royal 6, C-19 Imperial & New Yorker, Special 8	<b>Custom Imperial C-20 8</b>
1939	Royal, Windsor C-22 6, Imperial, New Yorker, Saratoga C23 8	<b>Custom Imperial C-24 8</b>
1940	Royal Windsor Highlander 25 6, Traveler, New Yorker, Saratoga Highlander 26 8	<b>C-27 Crown Imperial 8</b>
1941	28 Royal, Windsor, Highlander 6, Saratoga, New Yorker, Highlander 8	<b>C-33 Crown Imperial (also Classic are the C-30 Crown Imperial Town Sedan on the New Yorker chassis) and the Newport and Thunderbolt.</b>
1942	C34 Royal Windsor 6, C36 Saratoga, New Yorker 8	<b>Crown Imperial C37 8</b>
1946-48	Royal and Windsor 6, Saratoga and New Yorker 8	<b>C-40 Crown Imperial 8</b>