



**CARS THAT
BUILT GM**

An Album of Historic General Motors Cars



On November 23, 1954, General Motors men and women produced the 50-millionth GM motor vehicle built in the United States. It took more than ten years to build the first million. But in 1954 GM built a million vehicles in a little over three months. As part of the celebration marking this latest milestone in the long and interesting road GM has traveled, we are proud to present this album of historic GM cars. It offers a glance in our rear-view mirror. And it may serve to remind us of our past and how our past has made possible our present—and our future.

The “cars that built GM” bear little resemblance to the automobiles that GM builds today. Yet these high-bodied, low-compression antiques, on which we smile indulgently now, were proud leaders of the industry in their day.

And their owners were proud of them, too. For they were good cars. They had to be good to survive the rough and rugged roads and the equally rugged competition of the time. They pleased the public and continued to improve year by year.

The automobiles shown on these pages are still in good running order. They were photographed especially

for this booklet and are faithfully reproduced in full color, suitable for framing. Detailed information about the car appears on the back of each picture.

The running story of the early development of General Motors is necessarily sketched with a broad brush. It omits mention of the parts and accessories and non-automotive divisions which have had such a vital part in building the General Motors of today. This booklet deals only with the car and truck divisions and the companies that preceded them—the companies which provided the original foundation on which General Motors was built.



1903 "CURVED-DASH" OLDSMOBILE

The famous "curved-dash" Oldsmobile was the first mass production car. The Olds Motor Works produced 425 of these in 1901. Then production zoomed to 3,299 in 1902, 4,000 in 1903 and 5,000 in 1904. Oldsmobile was the acknowledged leader of the industry. Reasons for this popularity were well stated in the 1903 Oldsmobile catalog:

"The Oldsmobile is not the result of an experiment but represents seventeen years of hard labor and experience in the building of Gasoline Engines and in Automobile construction. Today the Oldsmobile is pronounced by experts the best constructed and most satisfactory motor carriage built. It is the pioneer and practical ideal in Motor Vehicles—the perfected Automobile. Handsome and graceful in design—body mounted low (about two feet from the ground) and hung independent of motor running gear, all vibration is practically eliminated. The motor (1 cylinder, 8 horsepower) is of simplest construction and unusual strength; anybody can understand it. Gearing is used in hill climbing and backing up—no gear is used in running at regular speed. Weighs but 830 pounds, but carries a load of 1500 pounds with absolute safety. Power is transmitted to the rear axle by a roller chain running direct from motor shaft. It has the regular wagon tread of 4 feet 7 inches, wheels 28 inches in diameter, fitted with heavy 2 1/2 inch pneumatic tires. It runs as smooth as velvet, speeding from 4 to 20 miles per hour . . ."

The 1903 Oldsmobile was priced at \$650. Leather top was \$50 extra. And, for another \$25, you could add a dos-a-dos seat on the rear for carrying two more passengers.

CARS THAT BUILT GM

In 1892 the first successful gasoline car in America coughed and wheezed its way down a side street in the quiet town of Springfield, Massachusetts. This "horseless carriage" was built like a buggy and it ran very uncertainly on its four-horsepower engine. But it was the beginning of a great industry.

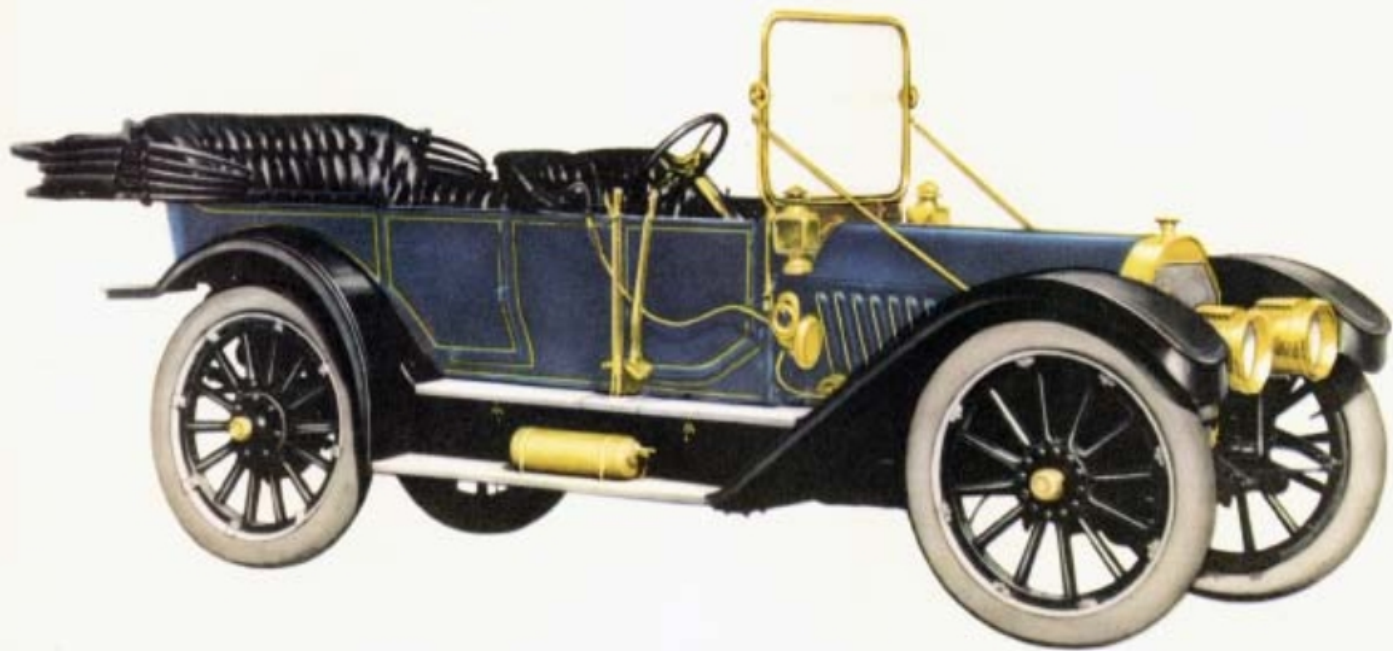
Since that time more than 2,500 makes of cars have been produced in this country. Their roster includes such promising names as Perfection, Success, Car DeLuxe, Economy car, Victory, Emancipator, Aurora, Meteor, Comet, Sun, Moon, Star, Sunset and Eclipse. Yet, of the companies that produced those 2,500 makes, only a handful are still in business.

The buying public selected the companies that were to prosper and grow. For if a business is to succeed it must give the people what they want at a price they will pay. GM's success was built on the principle of giving the customer greater value.

General Motors was organized in 1908. But its roots go back to carriage and wagon building, stationary engines and bicycle bells; to the days when men like R. E. Olds, David Buick and Henry Leland were experimenting and tinkering and forming their companies to make that new contraption about which everybody joked, the automobile.

1892: R. E. Olds and His Engine

Out in the quiet town of Lansing, Michigan, about eighty-five miles from Detroit, R. E. Olds had spent seven years in his



1910 OLDSMOBILE "LIMITED"

Oldsmobile entered the luxury field in 1910 with the huge "Limited" model. The Touring Car sold for \$4,600. It offered a 60-horsepower six-cylinder engine, a seating capacity of seven. Wheel base was 130 inches, tread 56 inches, wheels 42 x 4½. Production was limited to 310 in 1910. That year's catalog said:

"The OLDSMOBILE LIMITED has created a new standard of luxury in motoring. The combination of the smooth-running, six-cylinder OLDSMOBILE engine, improved spring suspension and large 42-inch tires, produces the easiest riding car ever built."

Oldsmobile also produced 1,525 four-cylinder cars in 1910.

father's shop working on stationary and marine gasoline engines. While he labored over those engines he dreamed of putting one on wheels, so that people could ride around easily, cheaply and rapidly. In 1892 young Olds took his savings and bought his father's interest in the business. He then tinkered and experimented for five more years before completing the first Oldsmobile, in 1897.

1897: *The First Oldsmobile*

This car looked much like a buggy, as was usual in those days. It had two seats holding four passengers, and the motive power was furnished by a five-horsepower gasoline engine that could propel the car, under the best conditions, at a speed of about 18 miles an hour. The driver steered by a tiller held in his left hand, and worked a lever with his right hand to control the speed. Today this first Oldsmobile is in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, D. C.

1899: *Price Becomes Important*

When his first model ran successfully, Mr. Olds was encouraged to build the first factory in America especially designed to produce automobiles. This was in Detroit in 1899. Olds started making a "deluxe" model priced at \$1,250, the price including such improvements as "cushion tires."

The car did not sell. People were skeptical about the future of the automobile. The horse still seemed to be a rather satisfactory means of transportation. And twelve hundred dollars was a lot of money for a mechanical contraption that many thought might prove to be just a fad. Accordingly, Mr. Olds decided to give his public what they seemed to want—a car that was simple to operate and low in price. He threw away his plans and started all over again, working out a one-cylinder car that weighed 700 pounds and could be sold for \$650.



1905 BUICK MODEL "C"

The 1905 Buick Model "C" (like the first Buick, in 1903) was powered by a two-cylinder valve-in-head engine located under the body, cranked from the side. A central chain carried power to the rear axle. Water and gasoline tanks were under the hood. The catalog also listed the following information: "Price \$1,200. Guaranteed 22 brake horsepower. Planetary transmission, two speeds forward, one reverse. Clutch—cone type, spring tensioned. Wheel base 85 inches, tread 56 inches, wheels 30" artillery type, tires 30 x 3½. Weight 1,740 pounds. A car that will take any hill 'suitable or safe' for automobiling on high speed gear. A car of quality as well as power. Simple in construction—built for wear."

This car, offered to the public in 1901, was an immediate success. It was the first car to be built in commercial quantities. It was also the first of the famous "curved-dash Oldsmobiles" that were to bring fame to the organization and contribute to the establishment of Detroit as the automotive center of the world.

1902: *Buick Enters the Field*

While Olds was making such rapid progress with his low-priced and dependable car, other engineers and designers were not idle. David Buick, who had already been active in the manufacture of marine engines, was one of many who decided that the automobile field held great possibilities for expansion. In 1902 he organized the Buick Manufacturing Company, located in Detroit. This organization produced the basic design from which the well-known Buick "valve-in-head" engine was developed.

It was July, 1903, before the first Buick rolled out of the little shop in Detroit. It had taken two months to build that first car. In 1903 the name of the firm was changed to Buick Motor Car Company and the scene of operations moved to Flint, Michigan. Sixteen cars were built in 1903, and 37 in 1904. Foundations for Buick's first big assembly plant were laid in Flint in 1905. Production totalled 1,400 cars in 1906, jumped to 4,641 in 1907 and to 8,820 in 1908. Buick was in first place among all car manufacturers. And it became the keystone in the arch of General Motors.

The One-Cylinder Cadillac

The Cadillac Automobile Company was organized on August 22, 1902. The first Cadillac appeared in October. It had patent leather fenders, no running boards, and a one-cylinder engine designed by Henry M. Leland and built by Leland and Faulconer. In 1904, Leland's company merged with Cadillac and he became general manager.

The one-cylinder Cadillac, a rugged, dependable car, continued to be built until 1909. But Cadillac also built a four-



1906 BUICK MODEL "19" SINGLE RUMBLE

OWNED BY CHARLES A. CHAYNE, VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL MOTORS

1908 BUICK MODEL "10" SINGLE RUMBLE

The Model "10" Single Rumble, with its "mother-in-law" seat, was one of the most popular of the early Buicks. This model was produced in 1908, 1909 and 1910. Its 1910 price of \$1,000 included "oil lamps, tail lamp, generator, gas headlights, horn and repair outfit." Wheel base was 92 inches, tires 30 x 3½. The four-cylinder valve-in-head engine developed 18 horsepower. Current was supplied by a Remy magneto, and a reserve set of dry cells was used for starting. Planetary transmission, cone clutch, shaft drive. In 1909 and 1910, the Model "10" came in two additional body styles—the "Surrey" and the "Toy Tonneau". Other 1910 Buicks included Models "F", "16", "17" and "19". Production for the year totalled 30,500 cars, giving Buick first place in the industry. Here is an excerpt from the 1910 catalog:

"No other automobile manufactured in the world today can claim as many glorious achievements. . . . In every conceivable form of automobile racing, Buicks have proven their superiority. It is with pleasure that we present to the American public, in our 1910 cars, a product which has been thoroughly tested in every respect, and one whose mechanical points are so constructed as to give the highest efficiency in power and durability, while the general outlines of the chassis, body, etc., are an exemplification of beauty. . . . In the future, as it has been in the past, the name 'BUICK' will be synonymous with high quality and low prices."

cylinder car from 1905 until October of 1914 when the V-8 was introduced.

1907: The Oakland Car

By 1907 the automobile had established itself as a successful means of transportation. People were beginning to realize that the motor car was here to stay.

About this time Edward M. Murphy, the owner of the Pontiac Buggy Company of Pontiac, Michigan, decided that the buggy business was a thing of the past and that he had better get into the growing automobile field while his business was still solvent. He organized the Oakland Motor Car Company in 1907, naming it after the county in which Pontiac is located.

The first Oakland was a two-cylinder model, designed by A. P. Brush, who had been with Cadillac as an engineer. In 1908 Oakland brought out a four-cylinder car that undersold all competitors and became famous as a champion hill climber at a time when many cars had to enlist the aid of the farmer's horse on the steeper grades.

1908: GM's Birth Year

Incorporation papers of the General Motors Company, organized by W. C. Durant, were filed in New Jersey on September 16, 1908. Within the next few months Buick and Oldsmobile joined General Motors, and early in 1909 the Oakland Motor Car Company was added, followed by Cadillac in July. These four companies formed the nucleus of what is today General Motors Corporation.

Cadillac Wins the Dewar Trophy

It was in 1908 that Cadillac won the Dewar Trophy in London for developing interchangeability of parts. This award recognized one of the most important advancements in manufacturing that had taken place up to that time. Cadillac had succeeded in



1906 CADILLAC MODEL "M"

The 1906 Cadillac Model "M" Touring Car was priced at \$950, or \$1,025 with Cape Cart top, lamps not included. It was powered by the one-cylinder engine which Cadillac had used from its beginning in 1902. Wheel base was 76 inches, horsepower 9.7, weight 1,578 pounds. The 1906 catalog read as follows:

"In this model we offer a car which for general utility will not suffer in comparison with any automobile regardless of cost. No effort or expense consistent with its price, has been spared to make it all that could be wished for in a light family car, easily capable of a speed of 25 to 30 miles per hour. In it are embodied all of the Cadillac special features, and we do not hesitate to assure our friends that it positively offers better value than any car selling at from 50 to 100 percent higher, while with the advantages of economy in fuel and oil and low cost of maintenance generally, it has no competitor at any price. It will be found a constant car, ready for service at any and all times. . . . The general design is of surpassing beauty and with our superb finish, gives it a tone of quiet richness which will not be excelled. The owner of a Cadillac Model "M" will never be ashamed of his car."

so accurately controlling the precision of its manufacturing operations that any two parts of the same type were identical and interchangeable. This principle is now part of the regular shop practice of all car manufacturers, and is one of the basic elements in mass production. It has had more to do with making quality cars available to everyone than any other single technical advance.

1910: *Engineering Goes Forward*

In the meantime, better and more dependable products were being made through engineering advances. During 1909 "one man" tops appeared, and four-door bodies increased in popularity. In 1910 Cadillac contracted for 150 closed bodies from the Fisher Body Company. This was the first quantity order for closed bodies in the industry. Cadillac also paved the way for the self-starter by installing a system of battery ignition. But in spite of all this, the automobile market was far from booming. In 1910 there were fewer than 500,000 cars and trucks in operation in the United States.

Chevrolet Organized

On July 31, 1911, General Motors stock was listed for trading on the New York Stock Exchange, the first automobile stock on the "Big Board."

Later that same year, the Chevrolet Motor Company of Michigan, backed by Durant, was formed in Detroit. Louis Chevrolet, a racing driver, who had designed the car for him, was one of the original incorporators. Durant remained in the background until two years later when he moved Chevrolet to Flint and combined it with his Little Motor Car Company.

In 1914 Chevrolet brought out the famous "Baby Grand" and "Royal Mail" models. Within a few years assembly plants were placed in operation in several cities, including Tarrytown, New York, St. Louis, Missouri and Oakland, California.



1912 CADILLAC TOURING

OWNED BY EVERELL E. FISHER, BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

1912 CADILLAC TOURING

The 1912 Cadillac achieved international recognition with the introduction of electric self-starting. For being the first in the world to equip cars with electric self-starting, lights and ignition, Cadillac won the prized Dewar Trophy a second time. According to the 1912 catalog, the Delco system marked "the greatest achievement in scientific research for the advancement of the motor car that has taken place since the inception of the industry. It embodies the one additional function to which motorists have looked forward probably more than to any other—a thoroughly efficient and dependable automatic starting device . . ." Wheel base was 116 inches, tires, 36 x 4, engine, 4 cylinder, 40 horsepower. Price was \$1,800. The year's end found Cadillac with a record production of 13,994 cars.

General Motors Truck

The thousands of GMC trucks on the highways today are direct descendants of one of the first gasoline-powered commercial vehicles to appear on the American scene. Their forebear was a 1902 Rapid motor truck. Its maker, the Rapid Motor Vehicle Company, joined General Motors in 1908. In that same year, GM also acquired the Reliance Motor Company in Owosso, Michigan. In 1911, these two companies were consolidated to form the General Motors Truck Company at Pontiac, Michigan. One year after that, in 1912, the familiar GMC name plate made its first appearance on the highways.

In many cases, early trucks were mere modifications of passenger cars. But here were trucks engineered and built to meet the peculiar requirements of heavy duty transportation. Because they so efficiently served their purpose, they enjoyed immediate acceptance. By 1916, production was up to 4,000 units per year; and the line included models ranging in capacity from 1¼ tons to 5 tons.

During the first World War, trucks exerted a profound influence in the mechanization of the Army. And GMC trucks played a leading role in that development when the Army adopted Model 16 as the standard for all ¾- to 1-ton military duty.

Kettering and the Self-Starter

Probably the outstanding event of 1911 was the installation by Cadillac of an experimental electric self-starter on one of its cars. Charles F. Kettering had been experimenting with the self-starter in Dayton, Ohio. In 1911 he installed a test model on a Cadillac and prepared to demonstrate it to Mr. Leland in Detroit, who was very anxious to have it for his 1912 cars. On the day of the demonstration, some of the assembled onlookers indulged in a little good-natured ridicule of the idea, maintaining that such a "gadget" could not possibly turn the engine over against the compression in the cylinders. Kettering, answering that the best



1913 CHEVROLET "BABY GRAND"

This car is one of the earliest of Chevrolets. It has the flat dash and angular cowl which characterized the few "Baby Grand" touring cars produced in 1913. The "Baby Grand" officially announced at the New York Auto Show in January, 1914, was a more streamlined model. It had the same curving cowl as the "Royal Mail" roadster shown on the opposite page. These were the first Chevrolets with valve-in-head engine and first to carry the Chevrolet trademark. The 1914 "Baby Grand" seated five passengers, weighed 2,375 pounds and sold for \$875. Wheel base was 104 inches, tires were 32 x 3½. The four-cylinder engine was rated at 21.7 horsepower.

way to find out was to try, closed the switch—and the engine started. Out of that demonstration came the present famous General Motors trade name, "DELCO." It is a contraction of the name Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company which was the company formed to manufacture the new electric self-starter.

1912: Expanding Markets

The electric self-starter was an important milestone in automotive history. Until its development only a few brave and hardy women had ventured to drive a car. But with starting made simple and easy, women could operate automobiles with confidence. So the self-starter served to double the number of potential drivers, opened up an entirely new market and immeasurably increased the usefulness of the automobile. Along with the introduction of the self-starter came the development of better batteries and generators, and these improved units in turn led to the increased use of electrical automotive equipment and accessories.

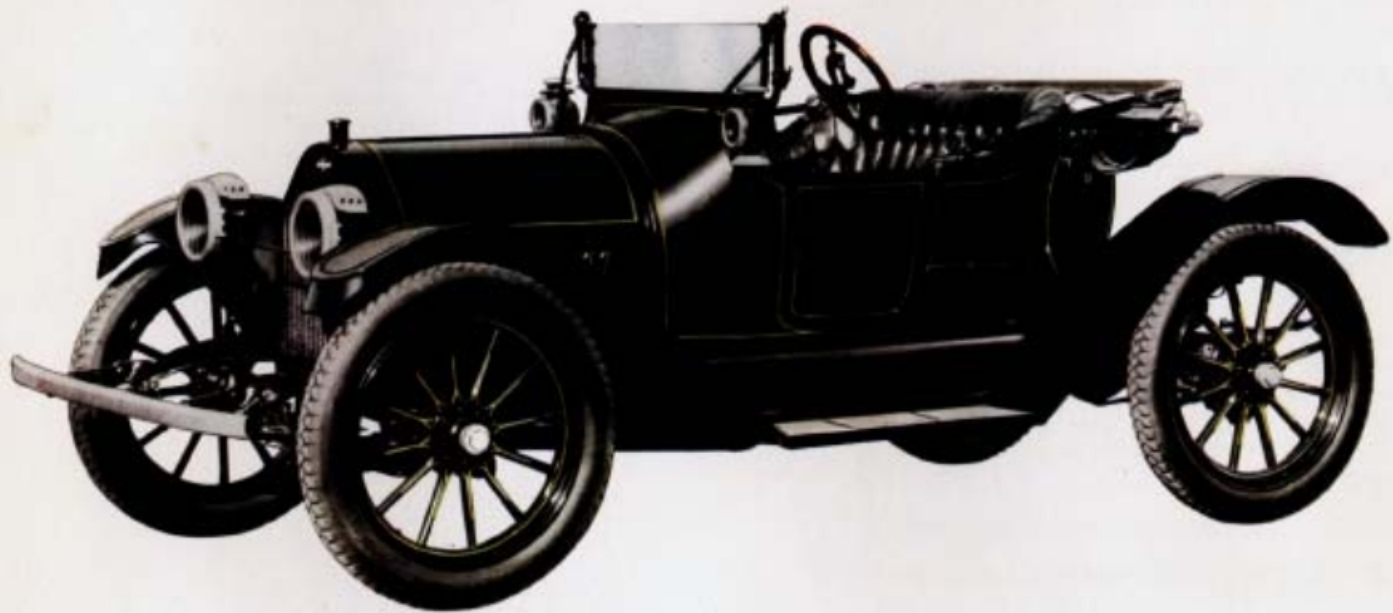
1914-1917: The First World War

The first high-speed V-eight automobile engine in this country was introduced by Cadillac in 1914.

With the entry of the United States into the World War, the facilities and experience of General Motors were made available to the Government. After extensive tests in Texas in 1917, the Cadillac car was adopted as a standard model for war use. Ambulances, trucks, tanks, Liberty aircraft engines and field kitchen trailers were among the many other GM products manufactured and shipped overseas.

1918: Chevrolet Joins GM

Early in 1918 Chevrolet joined the General Motors family. From the time of its organization in 1911 Chevrolet had moved steadily forward, establishing assembly plants in strategic areas. In joining



1914 CHEVROLET "ROYAL MAIL"

The Chevrolet "Royal Mail" roadster carried two passengers, weighed 2,250 pounds and sold for \$750. This car came with a flat rear deck. Other specifications were the same as for the "Baby Grand". The bumper shown in the picture was an accessory. Chevrolet production totalled 5,005 for 1914, and 13,605 for 1915. In 1916, when the "490" model was introduced at \$490, production jumped to 70,701. The "490" was produced from 1916 through 1922.

the Corporation it rounded out the General Motors line of cars to cover every price class.

In the same year, United Motors likewise became a part of General Motors. This organization consisted of a group of companies closely related to the automobile business. United Motors Service Division today handles field distribution and service on the parts and accessories manufactured by accessory divisions of General Motors.

General Motors in Canada

While the automobile industry was growing and expanding in the United States, similar developments were taking place in Canada. The year 1867 saw the beginning of a company that later was to be the basis of General Motors there. During that year, Robert McLaughlin manufactured his first carriage in a small Ontario town. His company grew and prospered, and in 1907 his son, R. S. McLaughlin, became one of the founders of the McLaughlin Motor Car Company, Ltd.

At its inception, this new company executed a contract with Buick to manufacture that car in Canada. In 1915, the McLaughlin interests organized the Chevrolet Motor Company of Canada under an agreement with the United States Chevrolet organization, to produce Chevrolets in Canada. When the United States Chevrolet Motor Company joined General Motors in 1918, the two Canadian companies (McLaughlin Motor Car Company, Ltd. and Chevrolet Motor Company of Canada) merged to form General Motors of Canada, Ltd. The main factory at Oshawa is the largest automotive plant in Canada. Engines are supplied from the GM of Canada plant at Windsor, Ontario, and from the St. Catharines, Ontario plant of The McKinnon Industries, Ltd., a separate General Motors subsidiary. McKinnon Industries, which was organized in 1878 and joined GM in 1929, also supplies a number of major units for General Motors Canadian cars.



1909 OAKLAND MODEL "40"

The first Oakland car (1907) had a two-cylinder engine which rotated in a counterclockwise direction. The four-cylinder Model "40" was introduced in 1909, the year in which Oakland joined General Motors. An early advertisement said this about the Model "40" touring car:

"It has a forty-horsepower motor with cylinders cast in pairs, 112-inch wheel base, seats five people without touching elbows, and in every little appointment is luxurious and easy-riding. Light weight, 2,000 pounds, means low cost of maintenance. Big 34-inch wheels, 4-inch tires, steel I-beam axles—nothing cheap about the Oakland."

Sprayed lacquer finish was introduced as standard on the 1923 Oakland.

Coming of Age

The automobile industry was now generally established on a firm basis. Improved tools, machinery and working conditions all contributed to more efficient operation. This in turn lowered the cost of the products, enabling more people to buy, and making more work to be done at better pay.

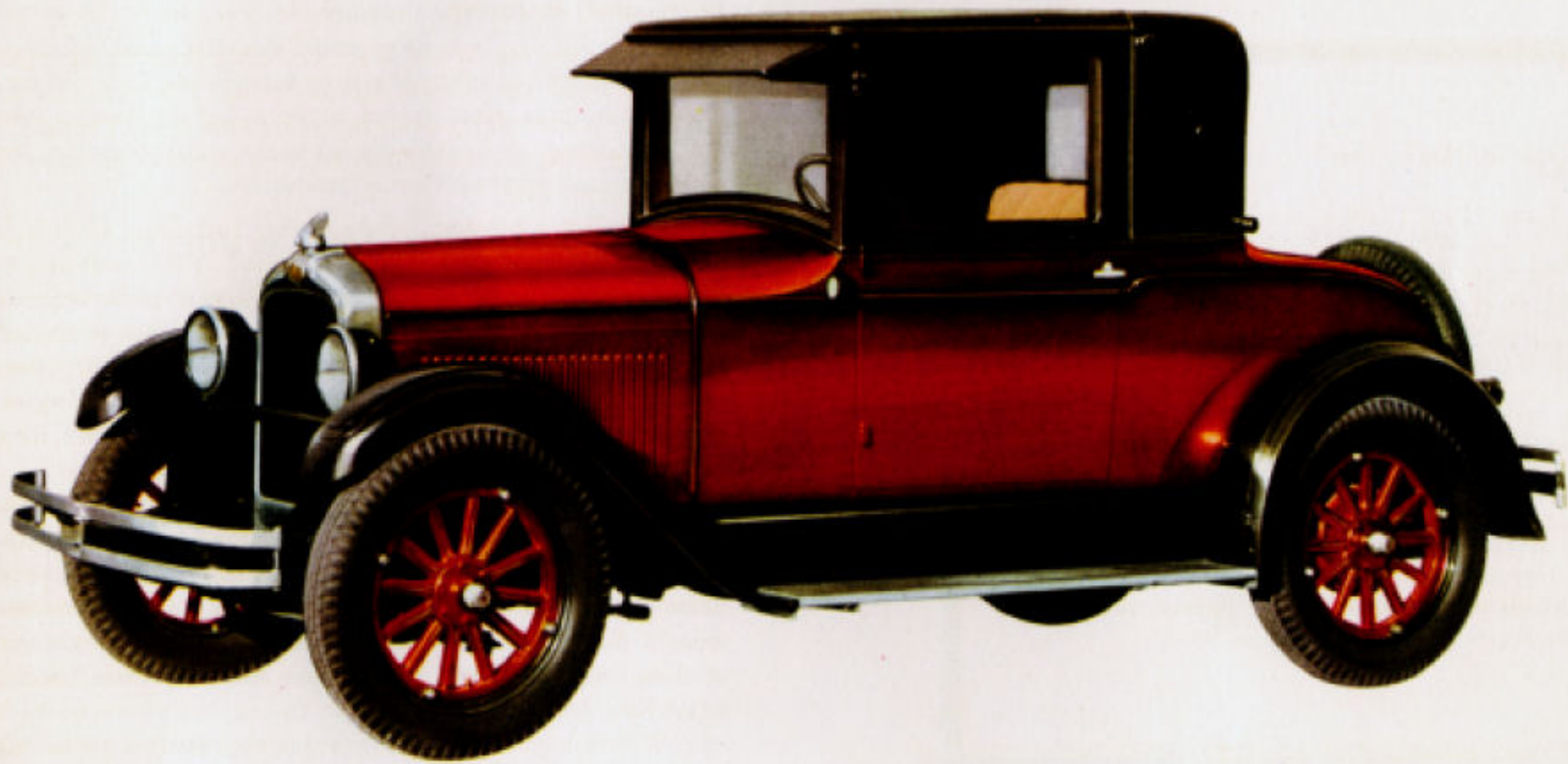
1919: Body by Fisher

Shortly after the first World War, the Fisher Body Corporation allied itself with the General Motors family. That organization had been founded eleven years before by Fred J. and Charles T. Fisher, the eldest of the six Fisher brothers who became active in the automotive field.

The Fisher brothers, whose father had been a carriage builder in Norwalk, Ohio, had been trained by him in his craft. From that training, they realized that the buggy-type bodies then being supplied to the automobile makers could not withstand the stresses and strains imposed on them. So, on July 22, 1908, the two oldest Fisher brothers started their own factory in Detroit. Soon, the bodies they made won acceptance for their strength and durability.

But, the Fisher brothers also were aware that the open, touring-style body seriously limited the usefulness of motor cars. Failing to protect passengers during inclement weather, early automobiles usually were relegated to the garage for the winter months. So that automobile owners could have year-round use of their cars, the Fisher brothers pioneered the closed body, in 1910.

With the passing of the years, Fisher Body supplied an increasingly large share of the General Motors requirements for bodies. By 1919, it became obvious that a closer relationship between the two companies would result in a more efficient operation. It was then that General Motors acquired a majority interest in the Fisher Body Corporation. Seven years later, in 1926, Fisher Body became a division of General Motors.



1926 PONTIAC

The first Pontiac was offered in 1926, in two body styles: The coupe weighed 2,320 pounds, the coach 2,400 pounds. Both were priced at \$825. Wheel base was 110 inches. Engine was a six cylinder L-head with a rating of 25 horsepower. Following is from the 1926 catalog:

"After a long period of careful preparation, General Motors now presents through the Oakland division an entirely new motor car—Pontiac, "Chief of the Sixes," the lowest priced high quality six-cylinder automobile."

Pontiac was an immediate success. In 1932 the name "Oakland" was dropped and all facilities of this Division were concentrated on producing Pontiacs. Pontiac built a V-8 in 1932, introduced a new Straight 8 in 1933.

1926: *The Pontiac Car*

With the 1926 model year the Pontiac car made its appearance, produced by the Oakland organization. This addition to the General Motors line was made in accordance with the Corporation's fundamental policy of building a car for every purse and purpose. At that time the Chevrolet was a four-cylinder car, and it was felt that a large potential market existed for a six-cylinder automobile selling at a price between the Chevrolet and Oldsmobile. This soon proved to be a fact as Pontiac sales rapidly increased and eventually led to the concentration of the entire Oakland plant on Pontiac production.

PROGRESS AND WHEELS

The automobile industry truly has come a long way since that day in 1892 when the first successful horseless carriage made its appearance. Within two generations, it has brought a marked change in the pattern of our lives. Back in 1908, the year GM was founded, automobiles were considered as luxuries and rich men's toys. Less than 200,000 vehicles were registered in the United States . . . and even those few were limited in their use. Drivers seldom ventured beyond the city limits because of the lack of good roads.

Today there are over 56,200,000 vehicles registered in this country alone. That's enough to give every man, woman and child a ride at the same time. A vast network of highways, totalling over 3,300,000 miles, covers the length and breadth of the land, yet is far from adequate to carry the growing load of traffic. Now, instead of being a luxury available to only a comparatively few wealthy people, automobiles are practically standard equipment of the typical American family.

What does the future hold for the automobile? No one can tell for sure. But, using the past 50 years as a yardstick, we can look to the future with the assurance that the last chapter will never be written and the best is yet to come.



1915 GMC COMMERCIAL TRUCK MODEL "SC"

The 1915 GMC commercial truck Model "SC" had a 1½-ton stake-type body. Load capacity was 4,000 pounds. This truck was powered by a 25-horsepower four-cylinder GMC engine with chain drive. Solid rubber tires were mounted on wood spoke wheels. Price was \$1,900 for the chassis. GMC truck production for the year totalled 1,408 units.

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