

Those Wonderful Old Automobiles

By Floyd Clymer

Bonanza Books, New York, 1953 (First Edition)

Hard Cover, 214 pages: includes automobile pictures, ads and Index.

Floyd Clymer published this book in 1953. He writes in the Preface: "I have attempted to convey my experience and feelings regarding early cars in America." He dedicated the book to his mother, Ella Duff Clymer and adds, "At the tender age of 11 when I was a REO, Maxwell and Cadillac representative in Berthoud, Colorado, it was my mother who together with my father, Dr. J.B. Clymer, a small-town physician, encouraged me in all my endeavors. She tolerated my lugging home all sorts of catalogs, pictures, newspapers...which I piled high in the attic, basement and the garage."

In this Clymer book he informs the reader about the development of early American automobiles from his observations. By 1900 there were many companies with operable automobiles powered by internal combustion engines, electric batteries and steam. Clymer states that by 1920 there were 2000 different automobile brands. Most of the brands lasted only a few years but that the total American automobile production became an important economic driver in the 20th century.

Clymer also recognizes the automobile "restoration movement" that emerged post-WW II. He lists 41 antique car museums that are open to the public. He also comments that many of the restored automobiles are in better condition than when they were delivered to the original purchaser.

by Paul Duncan

Book Review

In **Chapter VIII-The Survivors**, he includes vignettes about Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, DeSoto, Dodge, Maxwell and Ford. Many of these companies were started early in the automobile era and had survived into the 1950's.

David Dunbar Buick, a plumber who is credited with developing the porcelain bath tub, started an automobile company in 1899. He also developed the overhead-valve engine. In 1908, Buick Motor Co. became the first company in General Motors (GM) followed by Cadillac. Chevrolet entered the GM group in 1916. The Chevrolet 490 was designed to compete with the Ford Model T and sold initially for \$490.

Walter Chrysler grew up in Ellis, Kansas and became a railroad mechanic. He was a quick learner and by 1911, he had moved into the auto industry. He worked under Charles Nash president of Buick. By 1916, he was earning \$10,000/month! In 1919, however, he left Buick and was paid \$10 million for his GM stock. In 1923, Chrysler purchased Maxwell and

Chalmers automobile companies and incorporated their designs into new Chrysler Motor Co. brands that included Plymouth and Dodge.

This is a book that includes minimal text and a lot of pictures. Every time I have opened this book, I discover something new about the history of American automobiles that I did not know before!

