

# Adventures in Airflow

By Don Butler

Part II

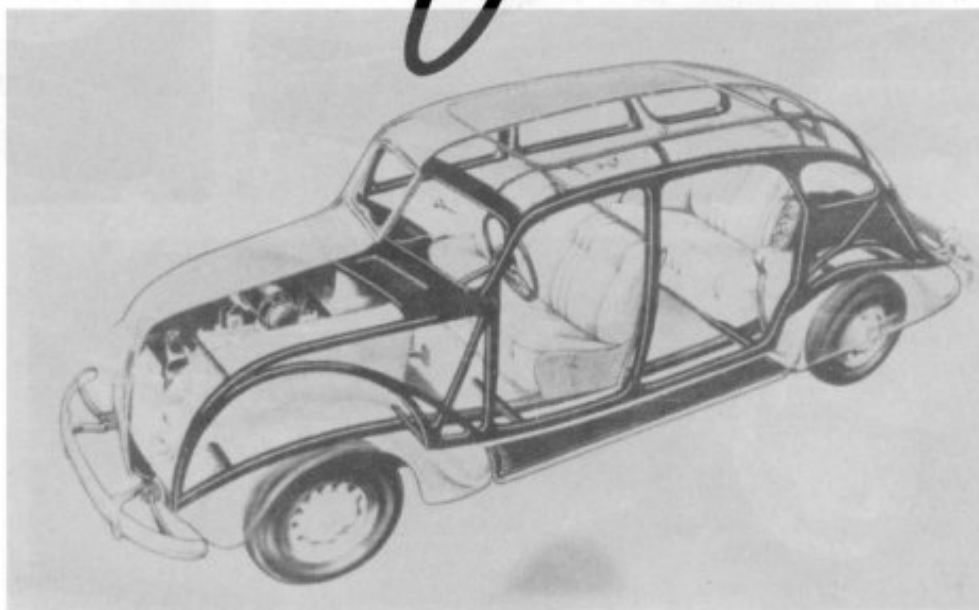
The Airflow cars for 1934 introduced the motoring public to new standards of riding comfort. This achievement, called "Floating Ride," was largely due to the shape of the cars, which placed the engine and seats further forward in relation to the wheelbase. This put the engine directly above the front axle, the front seat at mid-ship and the rear seat well ahead of the rear axle. The result was much better distribution of weight and a relocation of road shock factors for better shock control.

Extra-long semi-elliptic leaf springs eliminated jiggling motion. It is interesting that independent front-wheel suspension with coil springs was not incorporated in these advanced cars. This feature was making its first U.S. appearance on production cars at this time and was drawing considerable public interest. It was employed on the conventional Chrysler Six, the Plymouth and Dodge, and all General Motors makes.

The girder-truss framework that unified Airflow construction was the first in U.S. production cars. The unitized frame idea had originated some years previously. Paul Jaray used it in his little experimental streamliner in 1922. Chrysler's construction was an important safety factor. Its strength was proved in smash-defying demonstrations. A car was speeded to the brink of a 100-foot cliff and sent tumbling to the bottom while a movie camera filmed the action for publicity. For crowds at Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition, Airflows were put through roll-overs. As clouds of dust rose from these wrecking attempts, the cars were started without aid and driven away.

While not due to the Airflow styling and engineering concept, automatic overdrive was pioneered by Chrysler Corp. and introduced as a feature of the Airflow cars. Standard on the Imperial Model CV and Custom Imperials CX and CW, it was optional for the Chrysler Eight CU and became standard in DeSotos in the latter months of 1934. To use it, an instrument panel control engaged the freewheel, foot pressure on the accelerator pedal was momentarily relaxed at 40-45 mph, freewheel action automatically cut out and the car was in overdrive. This had no kick-down feature and it automatically cut out of overdrive when the speed slowed to 25 mph.

It seems that there had not been enough pre-production time for road-testing to discover all of the "bugs" in these radical cars. In the hands of owners, various flaws showed up. Adding to this damaging effect were the degrading rumors, some from competitors, that circulated through the trade and on to the public.



A 1935 DeSoto illustration shows the girder-truss unit body framework that was typical of all Airflow cars. This cage-like steel structure was not adaptable to convertibles or extensive reworking by custom coach builders.

To combat these sales-killing effects, Airflows were sent out to prove that they were capable of extraordinary performance, as well as dependable operation for the driving needs of the average man. They were also to demonstrate the streamlining benefits of the Airflow design.

A stock Imperial CV Coupe was selected by noted racing driver Harry Hartz for ramming around a 10-mile oval laid out on the hard salt flats in Utah. In sweltering temperatures ranging up to 110 degrees, he knifed the car through hot winds for 24 hours and 2,026.3 miles. This was about 190 miles farther than any stock car of any class had ever gone in 24 hours. For the first 500 miles he averaged 90.04 mph, did a one-mile spurt at 95.7 and averaged 84.43 for the entire run. AAA observers noted that 72 stock car records had been broken. Of these, 35 were in the unlimited class (for more powerful cars) and 37 were in the 304-to-408 cid class in which the Imperial qualified (the CV had 323.5 cid).

One week later, the record-smashing Airflow Imperial left Los Angeles with Hartz again at the wheel but this time with an official observer beside him to check fuel consumption. The car was seen by thousands as it covered the cross-continent distance to New York City where its trip average of 18.152 miles to the gallon was determined. Hartz then took the car on a tour to key dealerships around the nation.

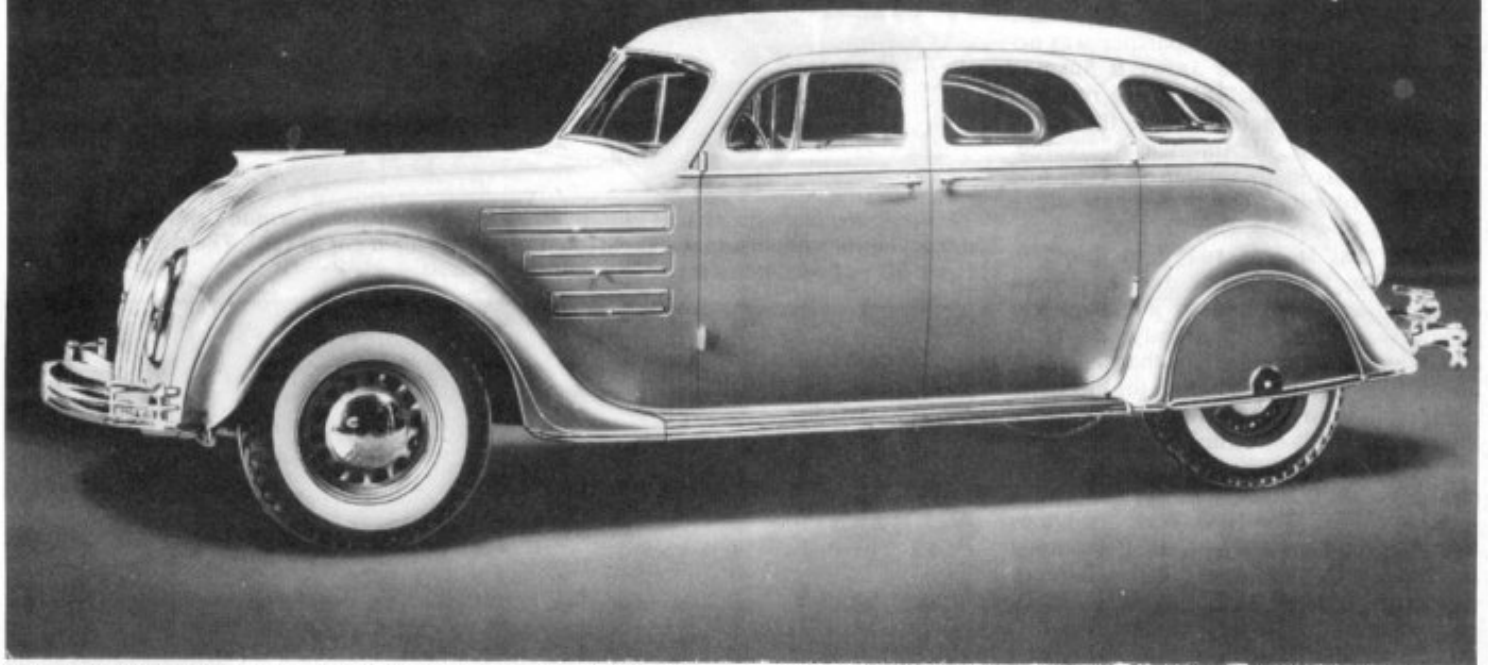
DeSoto also set out to show that it was no slouch, but it put the fuel economy trip first on the schedule. Hartz drove a sedan from New York City to San Francisco, av-

eraging 21.4 mpg under AAA supervision. He then drove it to California's Muroc Dry Lake. There he and racing driver Tony Gullotta teamed up and drove the sedan and a coupe to 32 new AAA speed records on a five-mile course laid out on the hard lake bed. The coupe set a new class record of 86.23 mph for five miles. But the sedan was the star, shattering every closed stock car record in its class by averaging 86.2 for one mile, 80.9 for 100 miles, 76.2 for 500 and 74.7 for the 2,000-mile run. Not bad for a 100-hp six of 241.55 cid and about 3,570 pounds of road weight.

These speed and economy runs failed to impress the public enough to reverse slumping sales. Nor were Americans impressed when Europe added luster to the DeSoto marque by bestowing on one of its cars the most coveted of all motor car awards — the Grand Prix in the Concours d'Elegance at Monte Carlo. This "most beautiful" honor was given to an Airflow DeSoto that competed with American and European cars, some of which were expensive custom creations.

Europe was also the source of a severe headache for Chrysler Corp., adding to the pains already being suffered because of the Airflows. The seeds of this trouble were sown in the office of Paul Jaray in Zurich, Switzerland in 1927 when he was granted a U.S. patent for his streamlined car concept. Later subsequent improvements were awarded patents. Of course these were for protection, but since he apparently had no plans to manufacture automobiles, he would exploit his creations

*The  
Chrysler Airflow*  
1934



*The aerodynamically advanced lines of the all-new 1934 Chrysler Airflow, as captured in this Chrysler publicity photo, above, brought a whole new dimension in automotive styling concepts to the American market. It proved, however, a bit too radical and futuristic for a country shrouded in depression-era conservatism.*

*Actress Ann Sothorn, below, who starred as "Maisie" in many movies and later achieved acclaim in the "Private Secretary" television series, poses with a 1934 DeSoto Airflow. The DeSoto edition was essentially the same as the Chrysler version, but carried different styling appointments.*



# Airflow

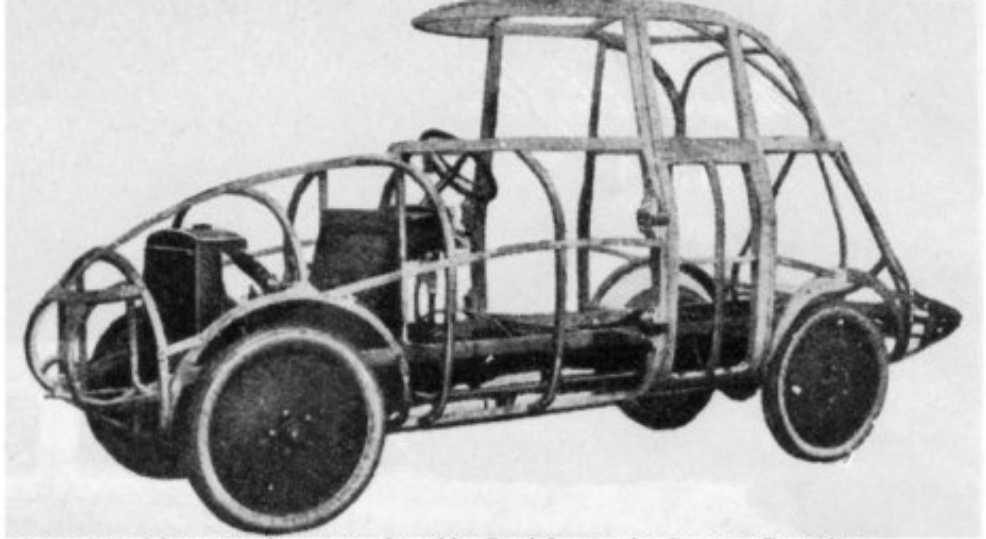
by licensing others to use his design principles. They were also applicable to trucks, buses and railcars, and he had taken care to get patent coverage for everything.

To watch for infringements and handle licensing arrangements, a partner was acquired and the firm of Jaray & Susman was set up in Zurich. This office retained control of foreign patents while the Jaray Streamline Corp. of America was established and given ownership of U.S. and Canadian patents. The American office opened in New York City in 1932 and announced that it was ready to grant licenses. The Rollston Co., famed custom coachbuilders, also located in New York, promptly got one. Apparently, no other companies applied. It seems that the validity of the patents granted to foreigner Jaray was not realized by U.S. makers of the various kinds of vehicles covered by it.

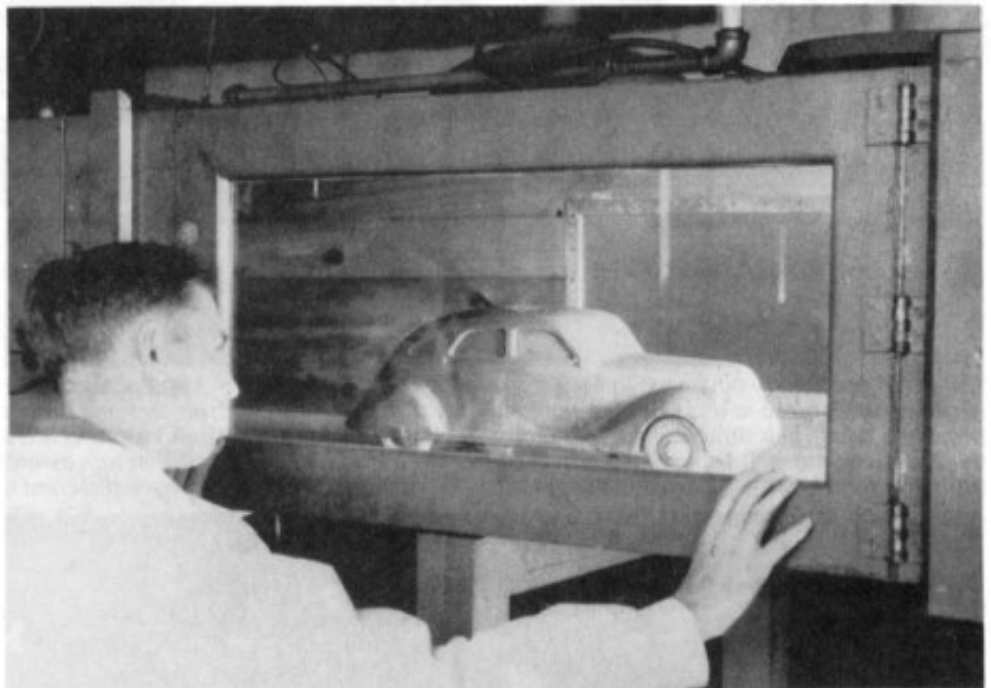
Action against Chrysler Corp. let everyone know that Jaray was serious and a genuine threat. The New York headquarters filed suit on May 24, 1934, claiming infringement. This must have been a shocking surprise to Chrysler officials, particularly Airflow creator Carl Breer. It was impossible to believe that Jaray had valid grounds for claiming that the Airflow design utilized shapes that were of Jaray origin. Breer had developed the Airflow shape from his own wind tunnel experiments, and the compromises made for production and marketing purposes had given it distinction that could hardly be related to Jaray's idealistic aerodynamic forms, it was felt.

Nevertheless, the patents were proved valid in all aspects, including the broad coverage of vehicle types. Chrysler was allowed time for preparing defensive action, and promptly engaged a recognized authority on automotive streamlining to study the patents and their designs and to determine the degree of Airflow similarity, and also the possibility of future Chrysler designs becoming involved. This man was Walter T. Fishleigh, a consulting engineer who had established his own office after employment as a design engineer at the Ford Motor Co. His experience in aerodynamics and automobiles included the wind tunnel testing of various shapes. Preference for a "teardrop" shape with a rear engine would not affect his honest evaluation of the design factors and associated aspects that were brought into focus by the lawsuit.

Fishleigh conducted his analysis in an impartial atmosphere and took his findings to Chrysler Corp., whose legal counsel had planned to make him a key figure in the defense action. He probably surprised and disappointed those officials who were determined that Jaray should be contested, for he recommended a settlement instead. After considering the "pros and



*This unitized framework was employed by Paul Jaray, the German Zeppelin aerodynamics expert, in his experimental streamlined car of 1922. The radical little two-door car was based on a stock Loreley chassis.*



*Shown under study in Chrysler's wind tunnel is a small-scale model of a facelift proposal for the 1935 Imperial C-2. The projected hood nose is obvious. Headlamps were moved up and blended into the fenders.*

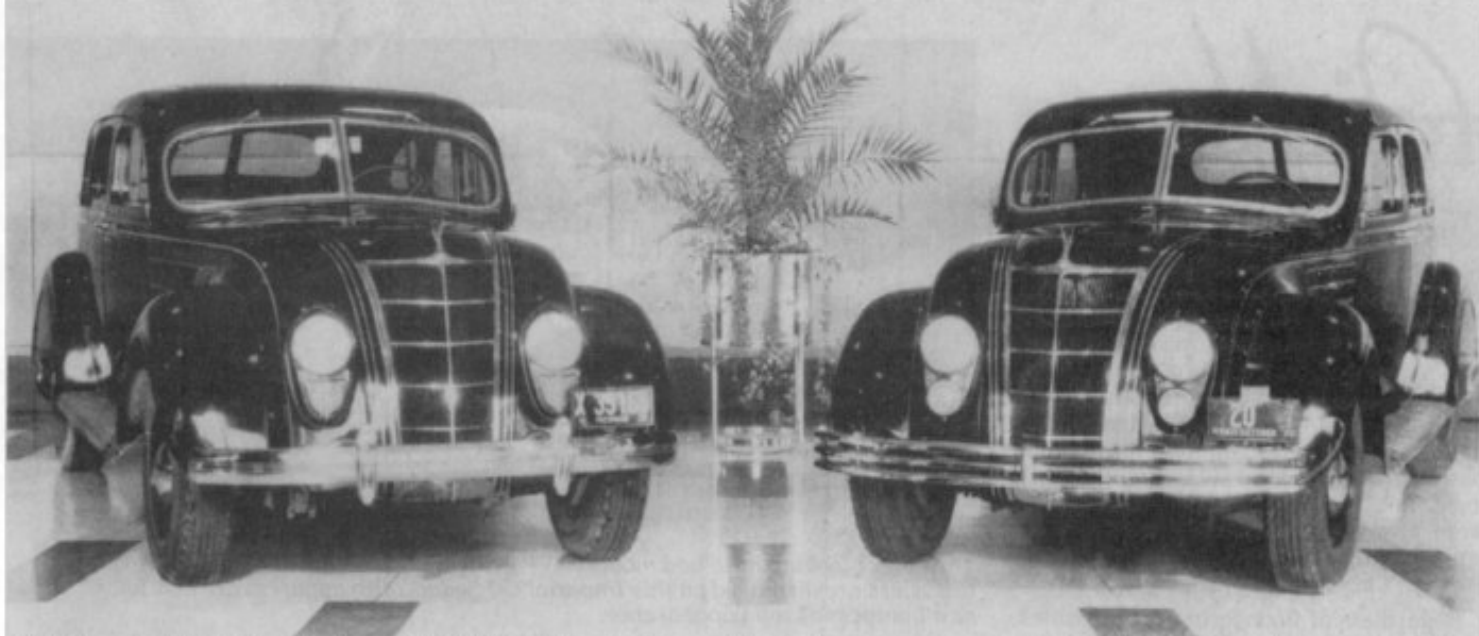
cons," his advice was regarded as the wisest course to pursue, and Chrysler's plans for court action were shelved.

Negotiations were conducted by John Harness, the chief of Chrysler's patent department, and Lowell H. Brown, president of the Jaray Streamline Corp. of America. Fishleigh was called upon to participate because his input would be useful, and at the conclusion of the dealing he was credited as the one most instrumental in bringing about an agreement.

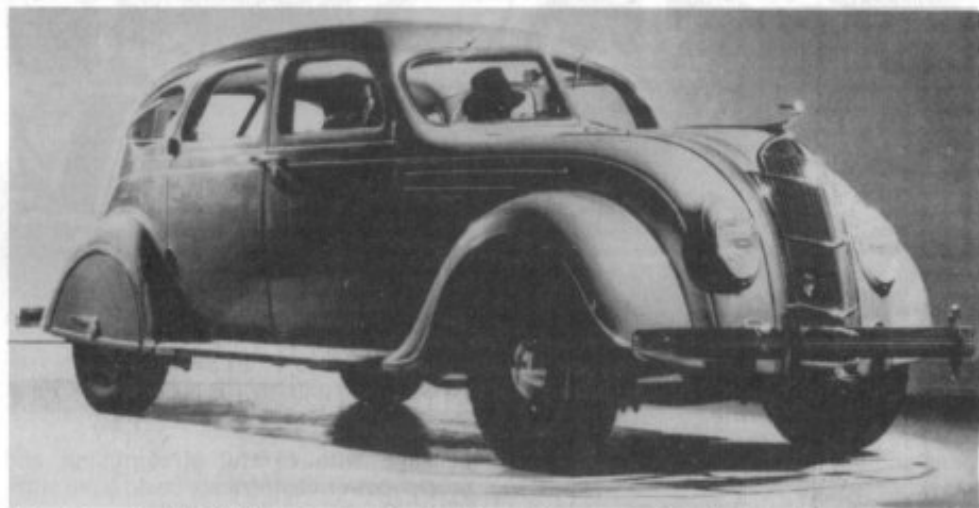
After more than a year had passed since his infringement suit was started, the Jaray corporation announced to the press in mid-July of 1935 that Chrysler Corp. had purchased a license to cover U.S. products, plus a similar purchase of export rights under corresponding foreign patents. The price of the licenses was not disclosed, but circulated reports indicated that a considerable sum of money was paid. The rights covered the Chrysler, Dodge, DeSoto and

Plymouth car lines and the truck and bus vehicles. Some observers felt that Jaray's success in this case signaled far-reaching effects in the auto industry.

Chrysler Corp. was reluctant to issue public or trade statements about the patent case while it was pending, and afterwards. After news of the settlement broke, attempts to question officials were rebuffed with a flat "no comment" about any part of the entire Jaray matter. Cordial reactions could hardly be expected. Corporate pride in developing the streamlined cars was painfully jabbed by Jaray's claim that his formula was foremost in this field and he must be paid for it, which meant that they must buy the privilege of having their own (but basically similar) creations on the market. And the marketplace itself was not accepting the Airflow "babies" conceived by DeSoto and Chrysler as if they were the darlings of the future.



At left is a stock 1935 Chrysler Imperial C-2. At right, a 1934 Imperial CV shows an updated hood/grille assembly made to fit the 1934 opening. To soften public dislike for the 1934 curved-down front, dealers put it on leftover new cars and it was also offered to 1934 owners. DeSoto did likewise.



This view of a 1935 Airflow DeSoto Sedan shows the new hood and grille that contrasted with the smoothly-rounded effect of the previous front. Also, lower front louvers were eliminated and side louvers were simplified.



A mild facelifting in 1935, keyed to a more conventional looking grille and bumper, was a bit less daring, but failed to ignite an expected surge in consumer interest and sales. This 1935 Airflow C-1 four-door sedan was restored by Dr. James Adcock, Washington, Ga., and is shown at the Airflow Club of America's meet at Stone Mountain, Ga. in 1974. Sidney, Ohio

Chrysler was not wrong in believing that the time for streamlined cars had arrived. The form of U.S. production automobiles had remained fundamentally unchanged for many years until stylist/engineer Amos Northrup applied some streamline touches to the 1931 Reo Royale. The 1932 Graham "Blue Streak" cars styled by Ray Dietrich carried the streamline influence a bit further. Then there was the 1934 Hupmobile Aerodynamic series, which was a Raymond Loewy design. But these were mostly of the "styled streamlining" kind, not total products of scientific development in a wind tunnel. Except for Hupmobile's forward-located seats to place the rear seat ahead of the axle (like the Airflows), none featured any notable advancement in construction.

It was time for the automotive form to be overhauled, but in evolutionary steps. The public would cautiously buy radical features one at a time but would not accept them all in one package. DeSoto and Chrysler were idealistic in their presentation of the Airflows, believing that effective streamlining could be offered only as a unit. Unfortunately, this ideal could not be sold in volume.

There was another factor, besides the "overdose" of streamlining, that helped to suppress Airflow acceptance. This was an unapparent, hidden factor best characterized as an image within the human mind. The image was very ultramodern, as that is how the Airflow cars registered on the minds of many. To them, ultramodern leaned to the futuristic, and most were not interested in buying any part of the future — it would not improve the economics of the present. This was the psychological attitude of the major portion of a nation that was beginning to recover from the worst economic depression the world had ever known.

The Airflows were not alone in the battle for streamline acceptance. The Hupmobile Aerodynamic was not attracting many buyers, either. It was the product of a company that had won much respect for producing reliable cars since 1909, but that

# Airflow

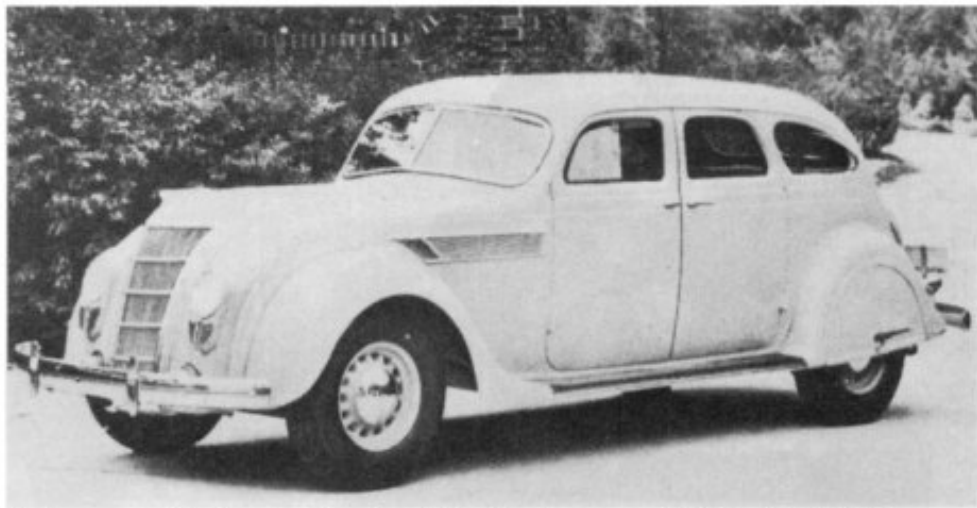
made no difference in the salesroom. The styling was too advanced. There was not a lot of difference between Aerodynamic and Airflow styling. Most notable was the Aerodynamic's conventional radiator grille, a longer hood with a straight profile, and a three-glass windshield. Secondary differences were in the contour variations at the front, elliptical headlamps blending with the hood sides, and the trailing ends of the fenders. Aerodynamic sales were always well below the Airflow volume, due in part to fewer Hupmobile dealers than Chrysler-DeSoto had.

Regardless of floundering Airflow sales, Chrysler Corp. was virtually locked into the science of aerodynamics in automotive application. Techniques would be sharpened and much more would be learned, some of which would dribble into production during the next eight years.

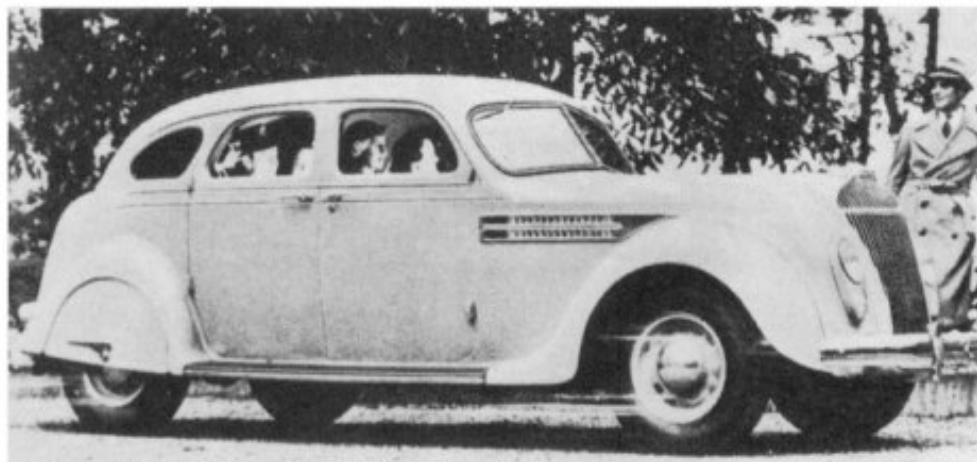
For all the study, effort, time and money put into developing the Airflows and putting time in production, they failed to demonstrate the benefits predicted on the basis of wind-tunnel experiments. This showed that wind-tunnel testing of small-scale models was useful and necessary in developing the least-resistant shape, but performance calculations derived from it could not be regarded as results that would be delivered on the road. The same shape scaled up to a full-size car and put through road-testing was the only sure means of determining true results. It is obvious that the production Airflow shape was not given such fact-finding road tests before the "go" signal was given for tooling and manufacturing.

Among a number of 1934 production Airflows that hit the road for testing was a DeSoto Sedan that showed the others what streamlining was all about. Bit by bit, this car proceeded to provide the answers sought. Tests of a 1933 DeSoto Sedan that registered a top speed of 76 mph and fuel consumption of 9.5 mpg at that speed were a basis for comparison. For its first test, the Airflow DeSoto was in standard form with no rear wheel shields and its top speed was 84, while 11.3 mpg of fuel was the consumption rate at 80 mph. Next, with rear wheel shields installed, bumpers removed and added window glass fitted flush with the body surface, top speed increased slightly to 86.3.

From here on, the car was fitted with a progression of extensions and superficial surfaces until the desired degree of aerodynamic form was achieved. The first add-on was an entire front end featuring a lengthy projection at the center and a level hood profile. This nudged the top speed up to 88. Then came an entire rear end that tapered the body to a "sliced" vertical flat (for an add-on tail), which raised the speed to 91.1. With the addition of under-



The longer-looking hood and modest "V" grille that was typical of all 1935 Airflow Chryslers are displayed on this Imperial C-2 Sedan. Also apparent are new louvers and new bumpers of solid appearance.



For 1936, all Chrysler and DeSoto four-door Airflow models had a trunk in which the spare wheel was stored. This Chrysler Eight C-9 Sedan also shows the upper wrapover of the new diecast grille.

pans and sill fairings, 94.4 became the top mark.

By attaching a conelike tail to the rear-end flat, a top speed of 98.8 was reached. The last add-on extended the roof and windshield considerably forward in semi-circular fashion, but this only increased the speed to 99.4. In this final form, fuel consumption was 17.7 mpg at 80 mph. After the known effects of other factors were integrated with these performance figures, engineers summed up the accomplishments of effective streamlining. Air resistance at maximum speed was reduced 44 percent and fuel economy was increased 57 percent at 80 mph. At moderate speeds the fuel economy advantage was in the area of 25 to 35 percent. Less horsepower was needed to move the car through the air, so the engine ran slower and less frictional wear resulted.

The engineers were elated about these generous findings. And they had found that even better results could have been attained if the "add-on car" had had an engine and drivetrain especially engineered to complement and take advantage of the vehicle form. The long-nose/long-tail shape, necessary for the experiments, would be too clumsy in public use, but the car led them to conclude that a practical

package with careful streamlining and proper power components could have similar performance advantages.

Eventually, development of the practical streamliner began. Starting with studies based on results obtained from the "add-on car," it proceeded in small-scale form through the wind-tunnel refining stages. This was a coupe design, chosen because the smaller space required for fewer passengers would permit the best streamlining. A sedan could later evolve from the coupe design, but its larger interior would require body dimensions that would penalize the streamline efficiency of the form.

The coupe design progressed to a point near its objectives by mid-1941, according to a Chrysler report at the time. There is no known evidence that the car was built, and it may not have gone far beyond the wind-tunnel stage. The project probably became a casualty of World War II, but it's also likely that the corporation's seven-year lack of interest in streamlining as a sales attraction was a very influential factor.

During the thirties the wind-tunnel was in operation much of the time. Models for a number of different compact-size experimental cars were tested. Much routine work was also handled, as models intended

# Airflow

for production in all of the corporation's divisions had to be checked to make sure that they possessed a bit of streamlining principle that the current production cars didn't have. Streamlining had to move ahead, but in very subtle ways, from year to year.

The 1935 Airflow cars received even less public favor than the 1934 models. In answer to objections to the rounded-off profile of the previous front end, new hoods and grilles had a raised center for relief. Side louvers were simplified and parking lamp styling was altered. Bumpers were new and interiors were reworked.

The Airflow Chrysler line again offered four sizes to the U.S. market, and they were lined up precisely as in 1934. All were straight-eights, as in the case of all 1934-37 domestic Airflow Chryslers. The smallest car-line was the Eight, code-designated Model C-1, on a wheelbase of 122-13/16 inches. Maximum horsepower was cut to 115, seven less than its 1934 counterpart. The body-type list was reduced to three offerings, of which the best seller was the sedan. The regular coupe now seated six instead of five, and this body was now also available as the three-passenger business coupe. The cars were a bit heavier, shipping weights ranging from 3,823 to 3,893 pounds. Factory prices were at first higher, the business coupe at \$1,375 and the others at \$1,395, but within a few months they were cut to well below 1934 by pricing all three at \$1,245. Total C-1 Eight production was 4,996, much less than the 1934 CU Eight total because many buyers chose the conventional new Airstream Eight.

The Imperial continued with 130 hp and a 128-inch wheelbase and was coded as Model C-2. The body line was cut to only the coupe (now a six-passenger) and the sedan. Both were initially priced above 1934 prices at \$1,675, but were soon slashed to \$1,475, dropping them below comparable 1934 prices. The sedan weighed 3,998 pounds and the coupe hit 4,003, an increase over the previous year. C-2 Imperial production amounted to 2,598, which represented a modest gain over 1934's CV Imperial.

The Model C-3 Custom Imperial clung to the size and body-type line established for its predecessor, the CX. The sedan and town sedan were of six-passenger capacity while the sedan limousine and town sedan limousine could each carry eight. The cars were heavier, weighing from 4,208 to 4,478 pounds. The six-passenger cars factory-listed at \$2,245 and the eight-passenger jobs at \$2,345. These prices prevailed through most of the year and were equal to the 1934 CX. The 130-hp, 137.5-inch wheelbase series drew a few more buyers than the CX, as the factory turned out 125 of them.

The huge Model CW Custom Imperial of 150 hp and 146.5-inch wheelbase again reigned at the top of the Airflow line. The body-type list was identical to the Model C-3. Sedans were priced at \$5,000 and limousines at \$5,145, the same as in 1934. Weights of 5,785 to 6,090 pounds were above those of 1934. According to factory records, only five CW cars were built this year and none were built in 1936-37. However, one 1936 and one 1937 are known to exist.

For 1935, the Airflow DeSoto was the Model SG which carried over the six-cylin-

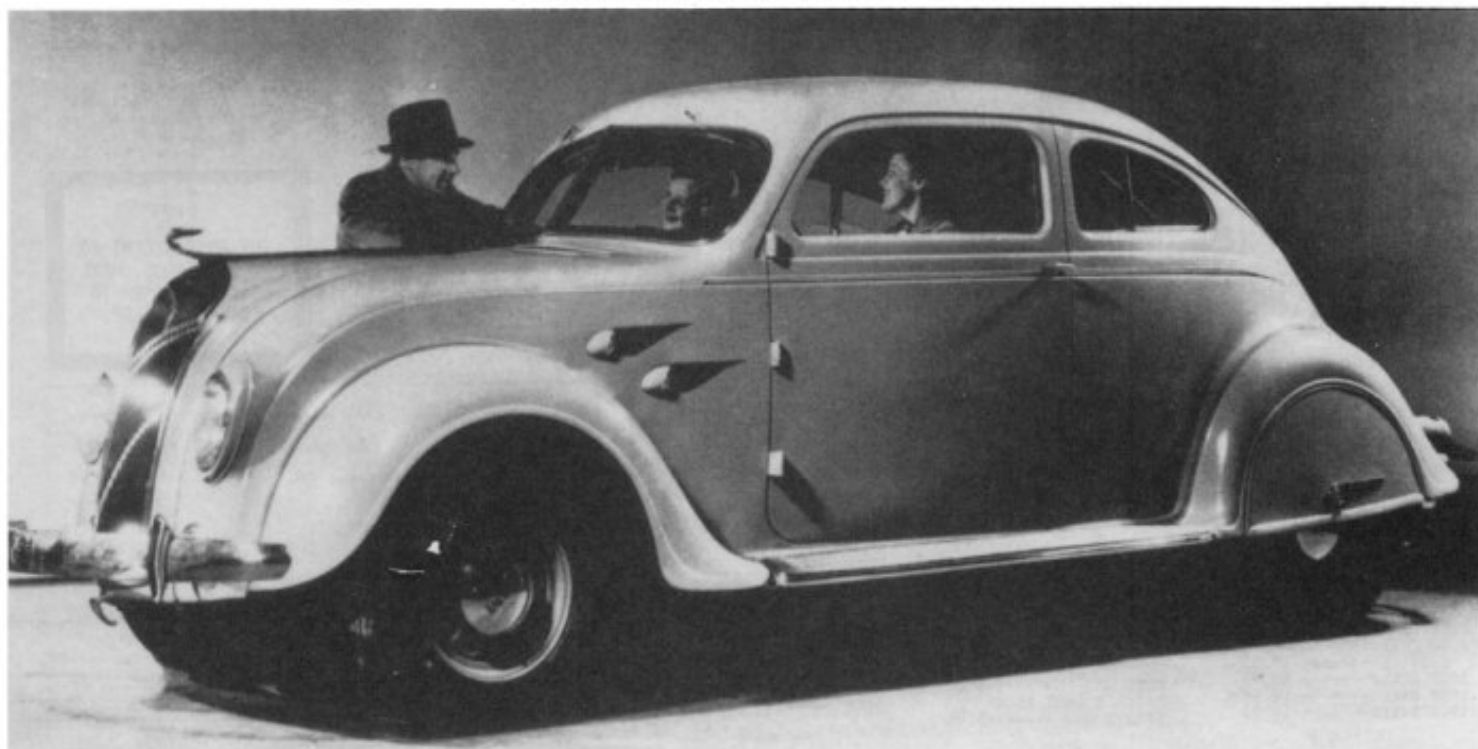
der 100-hp engine and 115.5-inch wheelbase. Offered were the three-passenger business coupe, five-passenger coupe, and the six-passenger sedan and town sedan. The introductory price of all models was \$1,195, but this was soon cut to \$1,015, which was still above 1934. Also increased were the shipping weights, which ranged from 3,300 to 3,400 pounds. Output plummeted to 6,797 cars. This was partly due to the popularity of the conventional new Airstream DeSoto six.

For the 1935 model year, total Airflow production fell to 14,521 cars. This loss of 41.2 percent was much more severe than Chrysler Corp. had expected. The national economic sickness was giving way to creeping prosperity and people were buying more cars. Hopefully, minor improvements in the Airflows would have a slowing influence on the sales decline and 1936 would bring a rising demand.

The 1935 Airflow Chryslers had numerous mechanical changes, but few were notable. The C-1 Eight was given a 3/8-inch longer stroke to match the C-2 and C-3, and a cast iron head replaced the aluminum unit. The C-2 Imperial and C-3 Custom Imperial were available with an optional high-compression aluminum head that added eight horsepower. Airflow advertising was now heavily emphasizing engineering, fuel economy, safety, interior space and riding comfort. Streamlining was rarely mentioned.

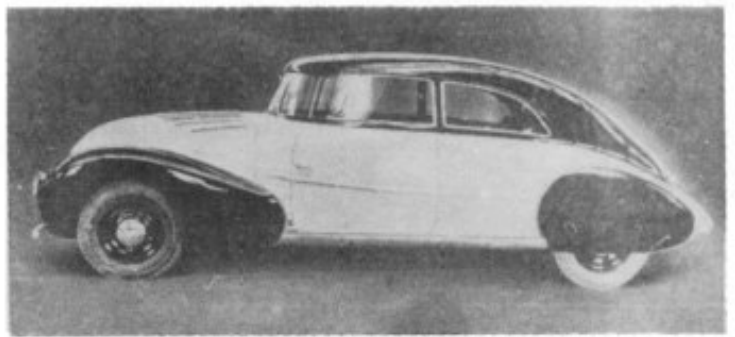
The most important mechanical changes in the 1935 Airflow DeSoto were the adoption of a hypoid rear axle and optional overdrive but no free-wheeling feature. As in 1934, one of these cars captured the Grand Prix award in the Concours d'Elegance at Monte Carlo.

*The 1936 Airflow III was DeSoto's last offering of the unusual design. Shown is the coupe, whose "faster" taper toward the rear had always concealed the spare wheel. The new diecast grille had a "deep V" motif.*

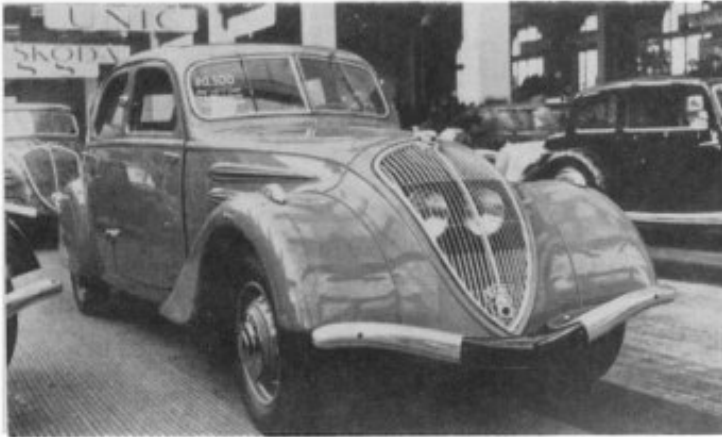


# Airflow

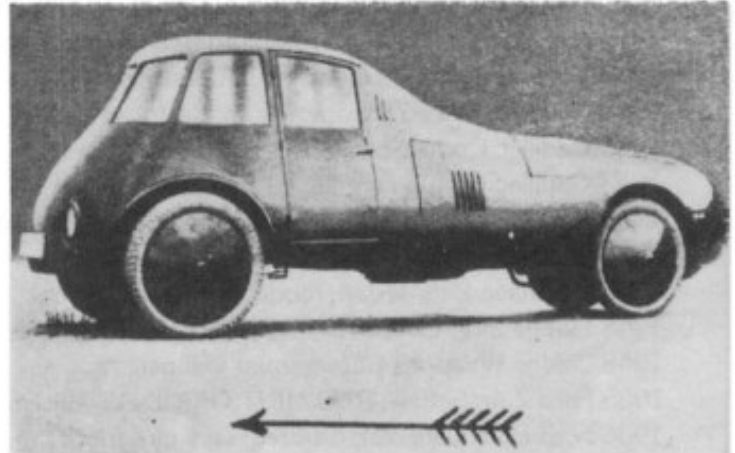
Although the Airflows of Chrysler and DeSoto origin are the most memorable and notable of the early exercises in aerodynamic styling, a number of other manufacturers experimented in vehicle streamlining. Here are a few of the more interesting and exotic attempts.



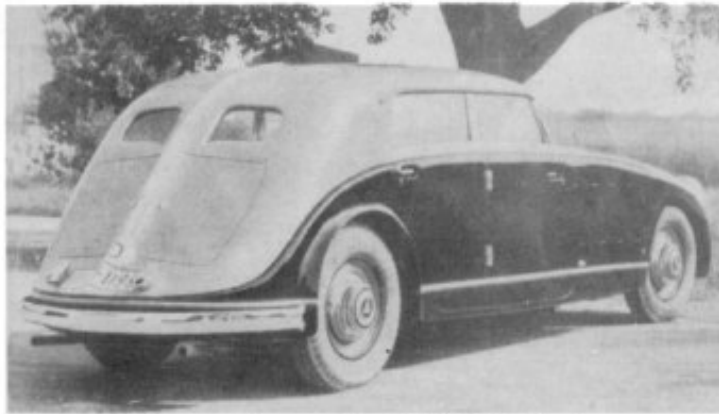
Using Jaray streamline principles, this 1935 Maybach luxury car was capable of 100-plus mph. The wraparound windshield was near-vertical. The hood "marks" were louvers.



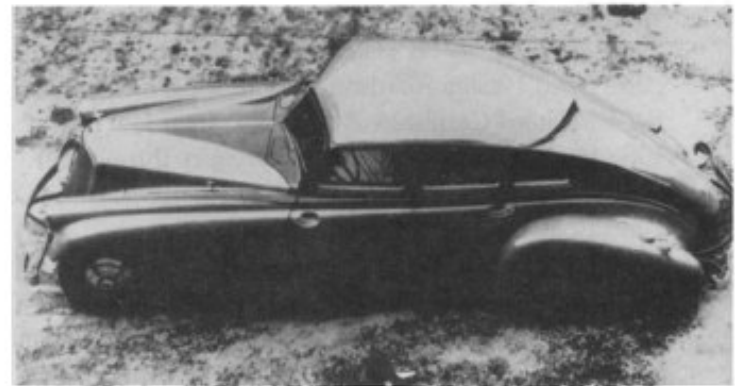
In France, Airflow-like Peugeot cars made during the 1930s were under Jaray patent influence. Shown is a Series 302 of about 1936. Headlamps were behind the grille.



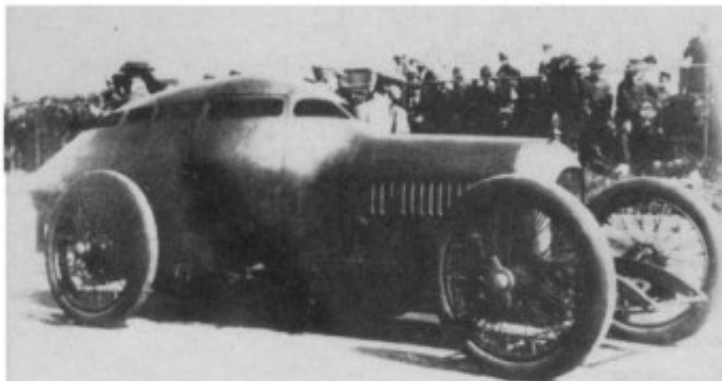
Early streamlining explorations sometimes resulted in odd shapes. This German experiment in 1923 seemed to be made for traveling backwards. The engine was in the low rear.



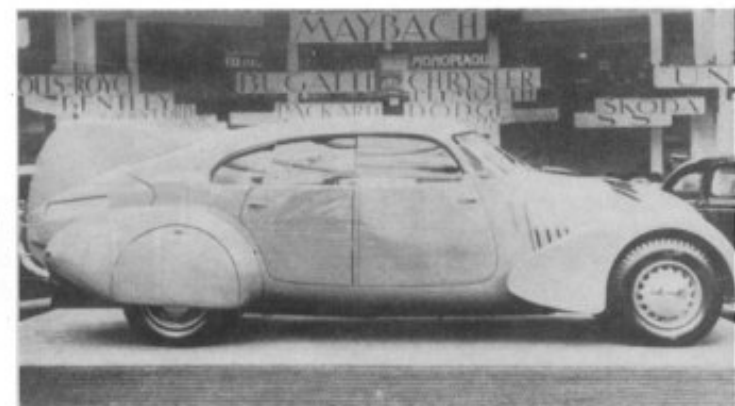
Germany's Maybach firm produced this flush-sided car as a six and V-12 in 1932. Its orthodox radiator grille was oddly-integrated. The design was under Jaray license.



The Silver Arrow was created by designer Philip Wright for the Pierce-Arrow company in Buffalo, N.Y. The sleek 1933 automobile had a V-12 engine. Only five were built.



The streamlined "Golden Submarine," also dubbed "The Egg," was the first racer built by Harry Miller, who would become renowned for his successful race machines. The famed Barney Oldfield had it built in 1917.



This Peugeot's tailfin, elliptical fenders and wrapped windshield carried the streamline effect much further. The fast-looking 402, circa 1937, was a special creation.

The year 1936 found Chrysler and DeSoto Airflows again with a spread of alterations. Exterior styling was updated, again in the places where change was easy. Sedan and limousine models had an integral trunk bulge that enclosed the spare wheel. All models featured a steel roof-top insert that replaced the deck material and was installed in a manner that allowed it to serve as the radio antenna. Interiors were restyled and given new comfort and convenience touches. Horsepower and wheelbases remained unchanged. The Airflow family had less than half as many members as when it started out in 1934.

The Model C-9 Chrysler Eight six-passenger coupe and sedan were heavier at 3,997 and 4,102 pounds, respectively, and higher-priced at \$1,345 each. The C-9, of which only 1,700 were built, was further improved by changing the near-vertical steering wheel to a normal angle. The C-10 Imperial Coupe weight rose to 4,105 and the sedan went up to 4,175 pounds but their price remained at \$1,475. The C-10 registered 4,500 built, the highest total the regular Airflow Imperial had attained. The C-11 Custom Imperial's two models were publicized as "custombuilt by LeBaron." The six-passenger sedan weighed 4,328 pounds and was tagged at \$2,475, while the eight-passenger sedan limousine scaled 4,453 pounds and was marked at \$2,575. Exactly 75 of these heavier and costlier cars were produced.

DeSoto adhered to the Chrysler pattern by presenting only two body types. The five-passenger coupe checked in at 3,535 pounds and \$1,095. The rear seat was called "auxiliary" because it was removable to permit more space for sample cases or supplies, making this a limited utility model. The 3,595-pound sedan's price was

the same as the coupe. These Model S-2 cars, which weighed and cost more than their predecessors, chalked up an output total of exactly 5,000 cars. This was the lowest model-year production during the three years of Airflow DeSotos.

The 1936 Chrysler-DeSoto Airflow total of 11,275 cars was another loss of 22.3 percent. The revival hoped for had not materialized, and DeSoto would not continue the unusual and unprofitable cars. Thus the DeSoto Division, which had mothered the Airflow idea through its formative years, was the first to abandon it.

The final Airflow was the 1937 Chrysler Model C-17, a single series. This was simply known as the Chrysler Airflow. Though this was actually a facelift of the C-10 Imperial, the prestigious Imperial name could not be associated with this final Airflow. Other Chrysler luxury cars would carry the Imperial tradition into the future. The C-17 was redressed with a new hood and divided grillework, simplified headlamp treatment, "speedline" side louvers, single beltline trim moldings, new bumpers and new interior styling. These were applied to the 128-inch wheelbase cars with the 130-hp straight-eight engine.

The C-17 continued the familiar pattern of rising weight and price. The coupe, said to have "ample room for five passengers" but seating six by squeezing rear seat occupants, weighed 4,225 pounds and the six-passenger sedan balanced the weight scale at 4,300. Both models were factory-priced at \$1,610. Exactly 4,600 of these cars came out of the factory. While this figure was higher than the Airflows of this size had achieved in previous years, it could not be

interpreted as a sign of increasing public acceptance of the Airflow design. With this lone series, Airflow production had slumped a whopping 59.3 percent from 1936, but Chrysler had long before decided that discontinuance was inevitable. By August of 1937, all but one of the C-17 cars had left the factory. The "die-hard" was shipped in October.

The 1934-1937 grand total of 55,150 Airflow Chryslers and DeSotos represented what turned out to be an expensive attempt to sell streamlining to the American public. It had started with the sincere belief that the advantages should be made available, that Chrysler Corp. should be the first major auto producer to do so, and that the public was ready to buy them. It had ended as a disappointing experience, but it had earned more respect for Chrysler's progressive spirit. And, the advanced features would gradually be accepted in the cars of Chrysler and most other auto makers in the years ahead.

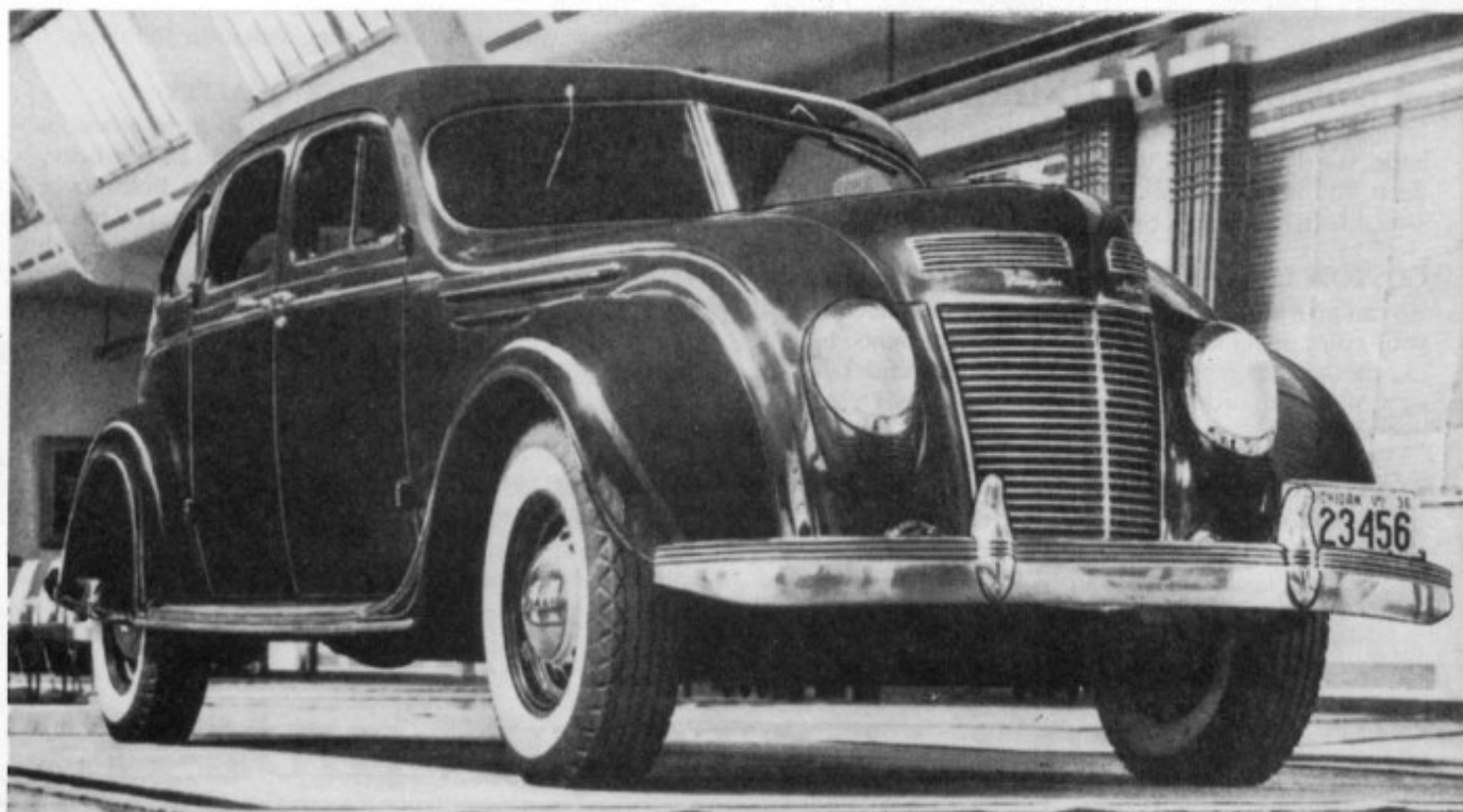
For Chrysler, the "Airflow Experience" ended in 1937, but for many individuals who would later own and love the cars for their unique charm, it was yet to begin.



#### Author's Acknowledgements

The author thanks James Bradley, Curator of the National Automotive History Collection of the Detroit Public Library; James Wren of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Assn., Detroit; Chrysler Corp.'s Historical Collection, Detroit, and William L. Bailey's AutoFoto, Royal Oak, Mich.

*The last of Chrysler Corp.'s controversial Airflow cars was the 1937 Chrysler C-17. Shown is a pre-production sedan, which was like stock models except for dummy forms that simulated new-design headlamp lenses that were not yet available.*



Sidney, Ohio