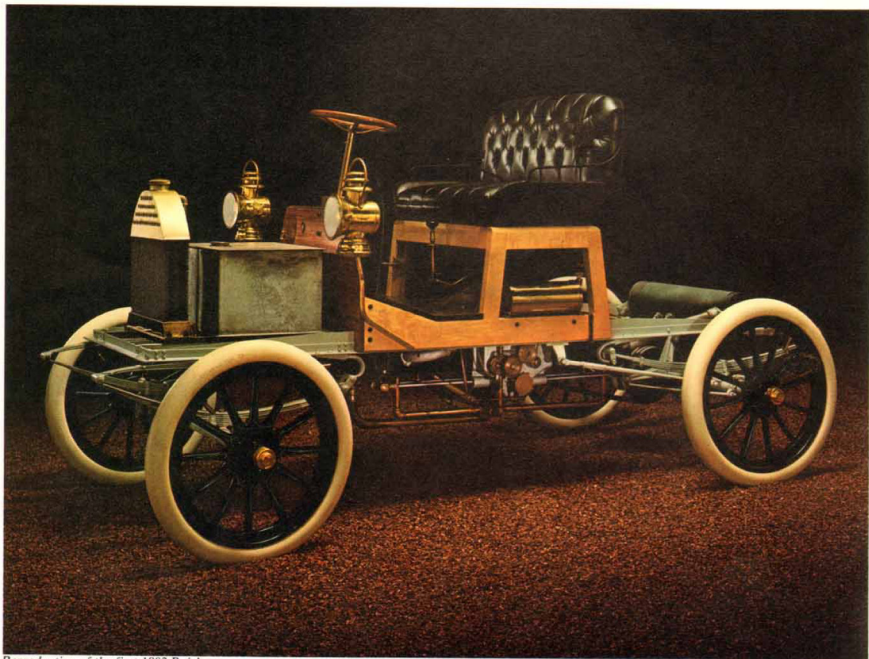
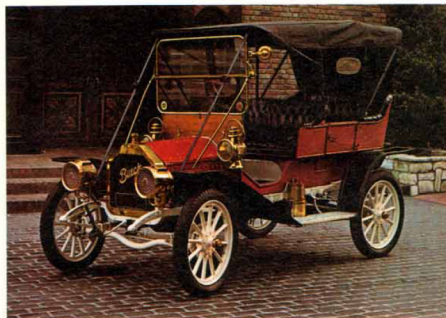


Biuck. 75 Years of Greatness.





Reproduction of the first 1903 Buick



1910 Model 10



1910 Model 16 Roadster

Buick

No automobile manufacturer in existence today can claim a more prestigious heritage than Buick Motor Division, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 1978.

Few manufacturers can claim more industry firsts that are almost universal today—the valve-in-head engine, directional signals, tinted glass, the torque converter transmission, all were pioneered by Buick.

Certainly no manufacturer can claim such a distinguished list of industry giants as were spawned by Buick: William C. Durant, the founder of General Motors; Walter P. Chrysler, founder of Chrysler Corporation; Charles W. Nash, founder of Nash Motor Company (now American Motors); Louis Chevrolet, who made his name as a race driver for Buick; and Harlow H. Curtice, who later became president of General Motors—all were products of Buick Motor Division and are a part of its proud heritage.

While the Buick heritage rests principally on its record as a manufacturer of premier automobiles, in its 75 years it also has built an enviable reputation for the production of a wide variety of military hardware in two World Wars.

It all began in 1903—September 10th to be exact—when a group of Flint businessmen, headed by James H. Whiting, borrowed \$10,000 from a local bank and bought the financially-troubled Buick Motor Company and brought it to Flint.

This was probably the most important single loan in the community's history, since it not only brought Buick to Flint, but subsequently the extensive General Motors operations which provide some 75,000 jobs in the area.

David Dunbar Buick, the man who lent his name to it all, was an obscure Detroit plumber and inventor before he turned his talents to the automobile business.

We don't know as much about the man as we'd like to. We know his parents brought him to America two years after his birth in Scotland in 1854. More than 80 years later, when Buick

Motor Division sought to discover his family coat-of-arms, first used on the 1937 model, it found that the original spelling was "Buik." How it got changed to "Buick" is not known.

An able mechanic from the age of 13, David Buick put his talents to work and helped build a plumbing business that developed a method of annealing porcelain to iron, making white bathtubs possible. Then he sold his share for a small fortune in 1900—\$100,000.

With this nest egg, Buick started experimenting with gasoline engines, developing the valve-in-head engine that has been a Buick hallmark ever since. Among the engineers who aided him was the energetic Walter Marr, who later became Buick Motor Company's first chief engineer.

Backed by the Briscoe brothers, Buick formed the Buick Motor Company on May 19, 1903. From this acorn grew the Buick oak.

The fledgling Buick Motor Company quickly fell into financial difficulties and in the fall of 1903, James H. Whiting persuaded his associates in the Flint Carriage Company to purchase Buick and bring it to Flint.

Flint, then the center of a giant carriage manufacturing industry, already was known as the "Vehicle City," and boasted the world's largest whip socket manufacturing plant.

The Buick automobile made its first headline in 1904 when Marr and Tom Buick, son of the founder, drove to Detroit and back to prove the car's reliability.

That summer, the first Buick was sold to a Flint physician, Dr. Franklin Hills.

Several more cars were built, or in the pipeline by the end of the year, and therein lay a problem.

With his experiments and tests, David Buick had piled up debts with most of Flint's lending institutions. It was said that if Buick failed, Flint would too.

Then to the rescue came one of Flint's most flamboyant and prosperous wagon builders, William Crapo Durant.

Durant was a visionary who could see the automobile as the death-knell of the carriage business. He rallied a half million dollars behind the Buick company and took control of it in November, 1904.

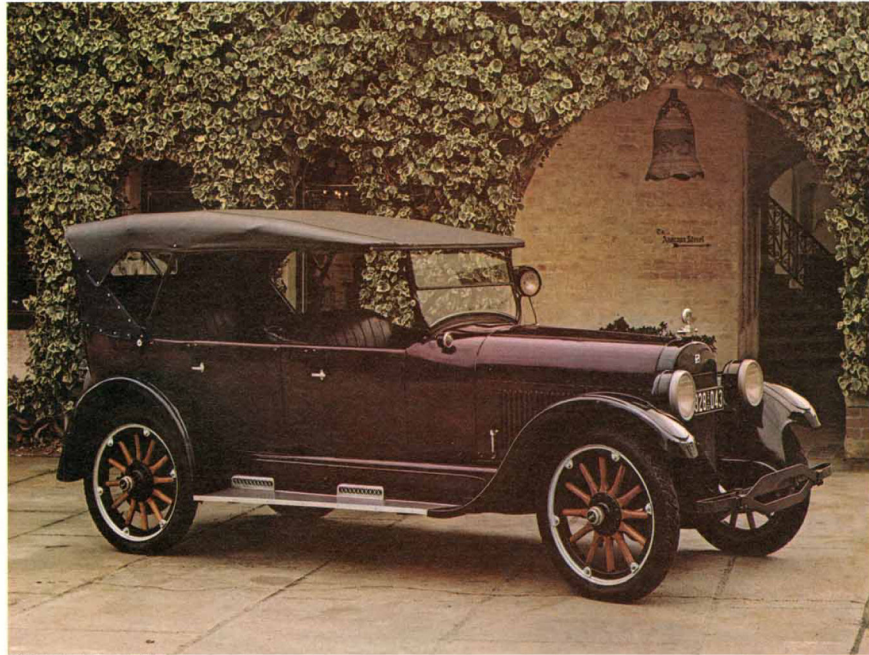
Super-salesman Durant quickly set Buick's wheels spinning. New body styles were introduced and in 1907 Buick came out with its famed Model 10, a three-seater with the



1918 Model E-44 Roadster



1922 Model 35 Touring Car



1923 Model 45 Touring Car

third seat in the rear, which was dubbed the "mother-in-law" seat.

The car, with its silvery-grey paint, became known as the White Streak. It was an immediate sales hit at \$850 and up for a well-equipped, 1,500-pound overhead valve four of 18 horsepower, and a planetary transmission.

Thanks largely to the White Streak, Buick soared into first place in production in 1908, building 8,820 cars. Production was increased to 30,525 units by 1910.

It was at this time that Buick came to a fork in the road. Should it put all its resources behind the White Streak? Some counselled this, while others recommended that Buick get out of the low-priced market.

Those favoring the latter course prevailed, and in 1911 the Model 10 was dropped from the line. A similar car was offered, but it was given a smaller share of the production capacity.

Another circumstance influenced this decision. In 1908, Durant had founded General Motors, with Buick as the cornerstone. He used the profits Buick was generating to buy Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Oakland (now Pontiac) and many smaller companies.

This was Billy Durant's kind of horizontal expansion, covering all possibilities and giving General Motors the ability to compete on a variety of fronts.

Although Durant's interests were now diverted to General Motors, Buick was still the big money-maker in the corporation. In 1916, it built nearly 125,000 cars and was the country's third largest producer.

It held that ranking in 1917, despite the fact that part of its manufacturing facilities was diverted to the production of tanks for Great Britain and Liberty aircraft engines for the U.S. Army Air Corps.

In 1921, Buick jumped back into second place in production and was third in 1923. That was an historic year for Buick. It was the first year that production exceeded the 200,000 mark and it reached its first million car milestone.

One of the things that gave impetus to Buick sales in the pre-World War I years was its aggressive racing programs. Buick's were actually fast when put up against other cars and Billy Durant took full advantage of this.

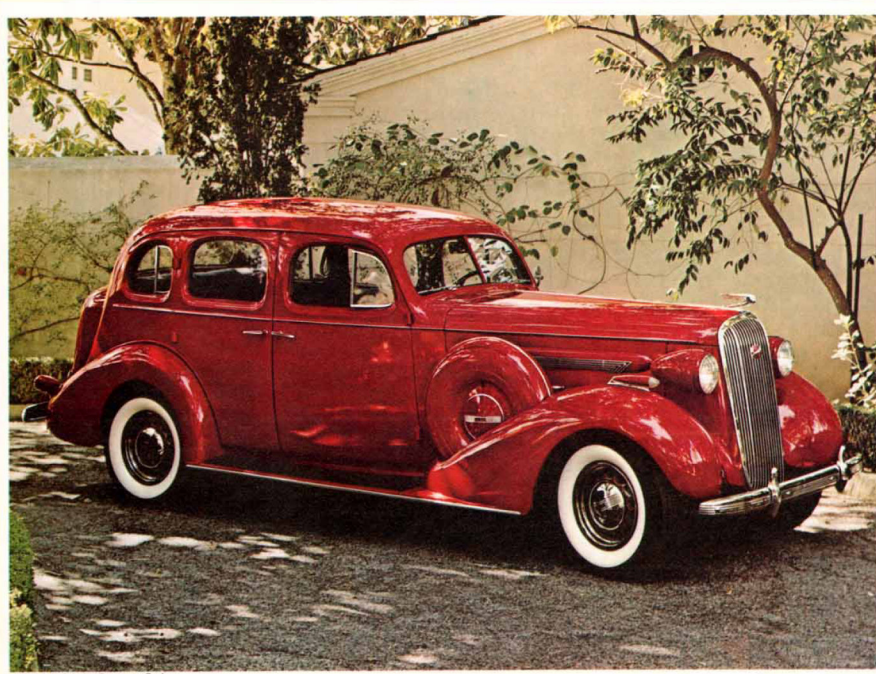
He discovered one of his most able drivers, Bob Burman, painting wheels in his wagon factory. The Chevrolet brothers



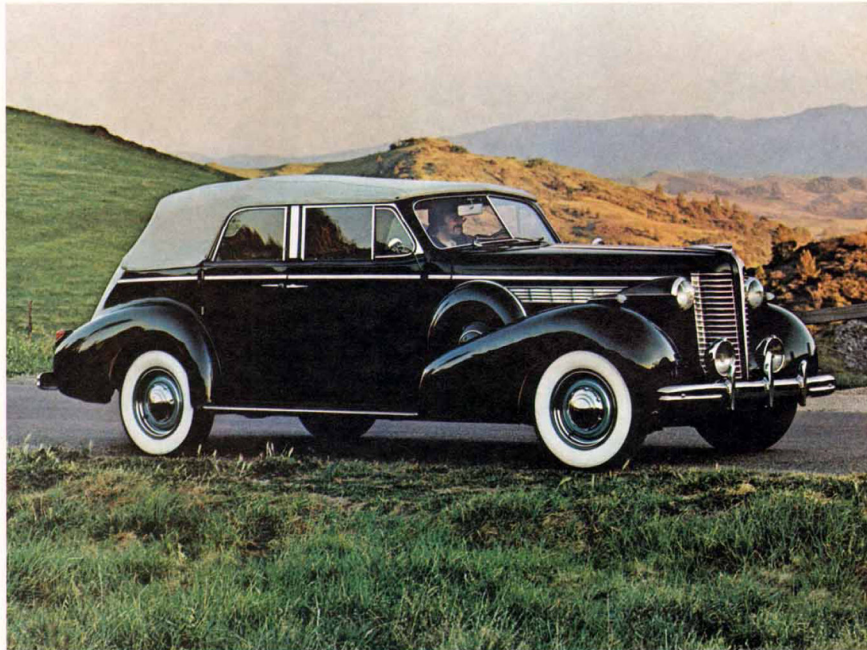
1931 Series 50 Convertible Coupe



1934 Model 41 Club Sedan



1936 Model 61 Century Sedan



1938 Model 81 Convertible Phaeton

and Lewis Strang also raced for the Buick team, which was active through 1910 and boasted a budget of \$100,000 a year.

The first official race ever held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway was won by a Buick in 1909. At the end of that year an advertisement gloated: "During the season of 1909 Buick cars won 166 firsts—90 percent of the events entered."

Another competition in which Buick excelled was hill climbing. Dealers and factory alike proudly flaunted the hill-climbing prowess of early Buicks.

Many hills were named "Buick Hill" and signs at the foot of them proclaimed: "Buick Cars climb this hill in high gear. Try your car."

Buick's star climbed steadily throughout the roaring twenties, reaching more than 225,000 units in 1927. Then came the great depression in 1929, and it wouldn't exceed its 1927 output until 1940.

Being a manufacturer of premier automobiles, Buick was harder hit by the depression than most of its competitors. In 1933, production plummeted to little more than 40,000 units.

But looking back over its first 30 years, Buick saw some surprising sights. In Texas a 1906 model was still in daily use. A Los Angeles family had so far owned 60 Buicks. More than 47 per cent of all Buicks produced were still in service.

Records showed that a 1914 Buick had logged more than 500,000 miles, and another had service costs amounting to only one-tenth of a cent per mile. These more than supported its advertising boast that "Buicks give more and better miles."

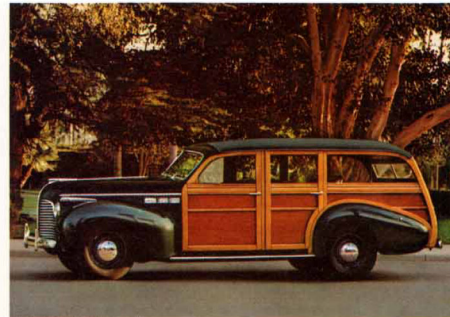
At peak production, 25,000 people worked in the Buick plant. It was the largest in the industry, half a mile wide and almost a mile and a half long.

But with production at the lowest ebb since 1913, 1933 was no year for celebration. Late that year, Buick got a new head man, Harlow H. Curtice.

Curtice, 39, was general manager of AC Spark Plug Division when he was tapped by General Motors to bring Buick back to its former greatness.

A super-salesman in the Durant mold, Curtice brought power and speed back to Buick. In 1934, the Buick Special was launched, a model that gave exceptional performance for its price of \$865. Production that year increased to 78,757 units.

Next he issued GM's chief stylist, Harley Earl, a simple challenge: "Design me a Buick that you would like to own."



1940 Model 59 Estate Wagon



1948 Roadmaster Convertible

Earl accepted the challenge and the result was the 1936 line which added Roadmaster to the other great names in the Buick stable: Special, Super, Century and Limited.

The '36 models boosted production close to the 200,000 mark again, and at the end of the year a GM executive gave Curtice the words he'd been waiting to hear: "I'm glad to say that Buick is off relief!"

The next daring move by Curtice came in 1938 when Buick introduced cars with all coil-spring suspension, an optional semi-automatic transmission, more power and majestic new styling that perfectly expressed his preference for a long, high hood line.

Running boards, already fading in 1939, were scarcer still on the torpedo-style 1940 models. In those years, Buick introduced its distinctive hood design, opening from either side by means of an outside latch that was incorporated into the styling.

In 1941, Buick became the industry's power leader with a throaty 165 horsepower in the Century and Roadmaster. Both were clocked at better than 101 mph at the GM Proving Grounds.

The 1942 Buicks looked as swift as they were. For that war-shortened model year, Curtice brought out the hottest styling Harley Earl had to offer.

Buick was the first American make to extend the front fender line all the way back to the rear fender. The idea was so radical that Fisher Body refused to put the fender on the doors.

This didn't daunt Curtice. He had the piece bolted onto the doors at Buick. This striking Buick look, with its wide, low grille, was resumed after the war, carried through 1948, and greatly influenced many postwar car designs both at home and abroad.

With the advent of World War II, Buick halted automobile output on Feb. 2, 1942, and turned to the production of aircraft engines, Hellcat tank destroyers and other military hardware.

All in all, Buick was awarded more than 30 separate military contracts and Buick-built material could be found at virtually every fighting front.

The first cars produced immediately following the war were the same as those in pre-war days as manufacturers raced to get back into the production of motor vehicles to meet the pent-up demand for transportation.



1949 Roadmaster Riviera Hardtop Coupe



1953 Roadmaster Riviera Sedan



1955 Century Riviera Hardtop Coupe



1961 Special Deluxe Sedan

For Buick, the decade following the war was the most innovative of any period in its history. The torque converter transmission, hardtop styling and tinted glass all were pioneered by Buick during that time.

The torque converter transmission, Dynaflo, was introduced on the 1948 Roadmaster. It was based on the same torque converter principle as the transmissions Buick built for tanks during the war, and it was the first major innovation in automotive engineering in the postwar era.

Although smooth—there were no gears to shift—Dynaflo was sluggish at first. But Buick engineers improved it with pitch-switching stator blades and later with additional gear ratios. Now all automatic transmissions follow the design lead set by Buick.

Late in 1948, Harlow Curtice was made an executive vice president of General Motors, a job that led to the presidency of the corporation some four years later. But despite the fact his responsibilities now included all the car and truck divisions, he never really left Buick or Flint.

He maintained his home in the city until his death and never drove any other make of car but a Buick.

Curtice was succeeded by Ivan L. Wiles, his comptroller at Buick. Wiles was general manager from 1948 to 1956, the greatest era Buick had ever seen up to that time.

At the time Wiles took over, Buick had a backlog of more than 500,000 orders, far more than it could produce in a single year.

This indeed was the Golden Age for the automobile industry and it was the era of "more car per car" as makers introduced new options—tinted glass, power steering, power brakes, automatic transmissions and air conditioning.

Buick's greatest innovation at that time was "hardtop" styling. It was Sarah Ragsdale, wife of Edward T. Ragsdale, Buick's general manufacturing manager, who is credited with spawning the idea of the hardtop.

Mrs. Ragsdale always drove a convertible, but she never put the top down. When her husband asked her why she insisted on driving a convertible, she reportedly replied:

"I like the lines of the convertible, but I don't put the top down because the wind musses my hair!"

Ragsdale went to see Harley Earl and asked him to make a two-door car with a fixed steel top, without any pillars.



1963 Riviera Sport Coupe

Thus the "hardtop convertible" was born.

Buick introduced it on the 1949 Roadmaster. It was called Riviera styling and it was an immediate hit. The automobile writers of the time referred to it as a "convertible for an old man with young ideas."

The following year, Buick came out with a completely new model in its Super and Roadmaster series, and a two-door hardtop model was offered in both.

Buick couldn't build them fast enough. That year—1950—Buick became the fourth manufacturer to exceed the 500,000 mark in production in a 12-month period. Total output amounted to 552,857 units.

Simultaneously with the introduction of the hardtop in 1949, Buick's famed "portholes" appeared.

Originally they were functional—for ventilation—three on each side on the Super and four on the Roadmaster.

Like the hardtop styling, the portholes also became a hit. One automotive equipment manufacturer made rings that simulated portholes and many owners put them on their cars.

New Yorker magazine that year ran a cartoon showing a bird building its nest in a porthole.

The portholes—now called ventiports—have become a Buick hallmark and still can be found on many of its models.

Immediately after the introduction of the hardtop, all manufacturers hurried to get into production with a similar model. By the end of the decade, almost every domestic manufacturer offered models in hardtop styling.

The combination of the hardtop styling, torque converter transmission and the introduction of a new, high compression V-8 engine in 1953 propelled Buick into third place in industry sales in 1954.

Then, in 1955, the four-door hardtop was introduced and Buick sales soared to nearly 745,000 units, a record that would not be exceeded until 1977.

That was the highspot for Buick during that Golden Age. Immediately afterward, a combination of product problems, poor styling and an economic recession sent Buick sales into a tailspin.

From a high of nearly three-quarters of a million cars in 1955, sales plunged to fewer than a quarter of a million units in 1959. It was the worst of times for Buick since the great depression of the '30's.



1967 Sportwagon



1973 Regal Hardtop Coupe

Buick changed the names of its entire product line in 1959. The great old names that had made Buick famous—Special, Century, Limited and Roadmaster were discarded for LeSabre, Invicta and Electra.

The Special, Century and Limited, all except the Roadmaster, were named after the great trains of an era that had long since disappeared, it was argued. Trains were passe.

One of the reasons for Buicks' drastic decline was the fact that it had no small car to compete at a time when the trend was to smaller vehicles.

So in 1961, Buick re-introduced the Special, a compact model with an aluminum V-8 engine. The following year, Buick offered a V-6 in the Special. Its upper series cars, LeSabre, Invicta and Electra, also were completely new that year and sales climbed to more than 452,000 units. Buick again had gotten off relief.

The '70's have been challenging years for the automobile industry. Stringent emission and safety standards mandated by the government left little time for innovations, and the end is not yet in sight.

Nevertheless, Buick has thrived and sales reached an all-time high of 746,394 cars in 1977, finally toppling the old 1955 record.

Today, Buick is run by a young and vigorous management group headed by David C. Collier, the youngest general manager to head the division since Harlow Curtice.

The Buick plant is General Motors' largest manufacturing facility on the North American continent. Its employment is in excess of 19,000 persons and its daily output includes 3,500 cars, 4,800 transmissions, 4,400 engines, 3,200 axles and 33,000 springs, plus 1,500 tons of cast iron.

Today's world seems as remote from 1903 as Buick's turbocharged engines are from David Buick's original two cylinder job. Now you can fly the Atlantic at twice the speed of sound, carry a powerful computer in your pocket, and find out the sex of your baby before it is born.

But you can still drive him or her—or them—home from the hospital in a Buick. That's one of the pleasant things in life that hasn't changed in three-quarters of a century.

Buicks, and the immutable values they represent, are still with us. And as long as there is a demand for better automobiles, Buick will continue to build them.



1977 Riviera Sport Coupe



1978 Electra Park Avenue



1978 Regal Coupe

