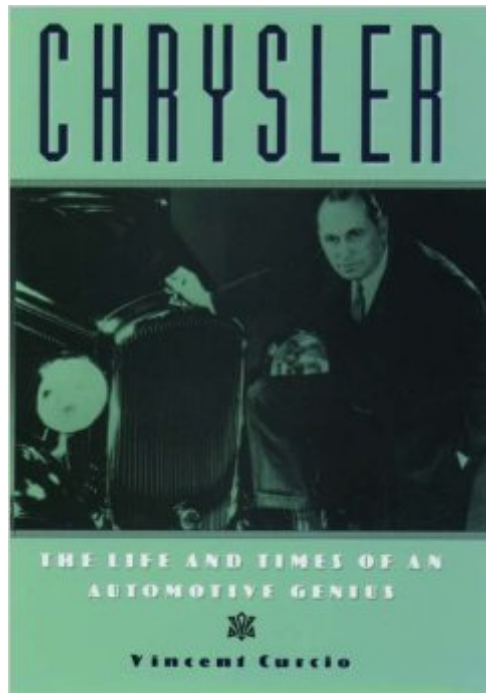


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Chrysler: The Life And Times Of An Automotive Genius



Synopsis

Here is a richly detailed account of one of the most important men in American automotive history, based on full access to both Chrysler Corporation and Chrysler family historical records. Chrysler emerges as a man who loved machines, an accomplished mechanic who also had highly developed managerial skills derived from half a lifetime on the railroads, a man whose success came from his deep understanding of engineering and his total commitment to the quality of his vehicles. Vincent Curcio traces Chrysler's rise from a locomotive wiper in a Kansas roundhouse to the head of the Buick Division of General Motors, to his rescue of the Maxwell-Chalmers car company, which led to the successful development of the 1924 Chrysler--the world's first modern car--and the formation of Chrysler Corporation in 1925. Chrysler was quite different from the other auto giants--a colorful and expansive man, deeply involved in the design of his cars, a maverick in establishing his headquarters in New York City, in the world's most famous art deco structure, the fabled Chrysler Building, which he built and helped to design. Because of his emphasis on quality at popular prices, the company weathered the Great Depression with flying colors--losing money only in the rock-bottom year of 1932--and despite the market fiasco of the Chrysler Airflow (which was years ahead of its time), the company grew and remained profitable right up to Chrysler's death in 1940. The definitive portrait, Walter P. Chrysler is must reading for all car enthusiasts and for everyone interested in the story of a giant of industry.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My mother always said that the good things always came last. And so it is with this biography of Walter P. Chrysler. As I sit and look at the books on my library shelves, I find volumes of information on the men who built the automobile industry. Henry Ford, William Durant, the Dodge Brothers, etc. but there were two notable men missing--Charles Nash and Walter Chrysler. The only work on Chrysler was his own ghost written autobiography which first appeared in serialized form in the Saturday Evening Post back in 1937--and reprinted in book form in 1950, ten years after Chrysler's death. I was fortunate to meet Vincent Curcio, the author of this new work on Walter Chrysler in 1994, at Walter Chrysler's boyhood home in Ellis, Kansas. Six years is a long time to wait but the wait was worth it. Vincent Curcio spent those six years traveling the country, visiting every place Walter Chrysler ever lived--considering his wanderlust while working for the railroads, Curcio had a lot of steps to cover. He was able to meet and interview old timers who had worked with or knew Walter Chrysler personally. Considering their age, this was a vital link to Chrysler that will soon be lost....Curcio takes us from railroad town to railroad town, then to Chicago where Chrysler saw and fell in love with an ivory colored Locomobile car that he purchased and had shipped to his home in Oelwein, Iowa (after all, Chrysler did not know how to drive at that point!). The book is rich in lore about Chrysler--how he moved from working on the railroad to building locomotives FOR the railroads--and his move to Flint, Michigan where he began working for Charles Nash at the giant Buick works.

Chrysler : The Life and Times of an Automotive Genius is an entertaining, engaging biography of a man and his times. So much more than a dry biography of one of the major figures of the automotive industry, this book by Vincent Curcio provides fascinating insight into American industrial life in the late 19th and early 20th century. Walter Chrysler was the quintessential "working man," a railroad (and later automobile industry) mechanic by trade who first mastered himself, then proceeded to lead others in the burgeoning automobile industry. His early years in the railroad industry and his transition from mechanic to leader are nicely chronicled along with the development of American transportation history. Mr. Curcio lucidly explains the evolution of modern manufacturing and the integral parts played by seemingly (taken on their own) inconsequential methods and practices. While not as well known as a man (although the car and skyscraper are certainly famous), Chrysler embodied the American entrepreneurial spirit as deeply as any other leader of the auto industry. He was willing to take unusual risks, some resulting in relative failure (the Airflow), but all transforming the nature of the industry. He was not an early pioneer, first joining Buick in 1912. However, he completely understood design, engineering and manufacturing

techniques. Perhaps more importantly, his ego was of a different mold. He was not afraid to accept the ideas or contributions of his employees. Chrysler made decisions perceived as unusual. For example, he built the graceful, elegant art-deco Chrysler Building, headquartering the company in New York at a time, its silhouette dominating the skyline of yesteryear.

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