

Let's Talk About...

American Automakers



Some people just view cars as a way to transport us from here to there. Others see cars as a hobby or a way to impress those around them. Even though cars didn't get their start in America, the U.S. has a long-standing history and tradition with these fun and fascinating vehicles.



This is a photo of a vintage race car. Do you think it would be enjoyable to race cars? Why or why not?

**Which American brand do
you think makes the best
automobiles?**

Ford?

Buick?

Cadillac?

Chevrolet?

Jeep?

Why?

The automobile was first invented and perfected in Germany and France in the late 1800s. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, Americans quickly came to dominate the automobile industry.

In 1893, bicycle mechanics, Frank and Charles Duryea, designed the first effective American gas automobile. These brothers then won the first American car race in 1895 and went on to make the first sale of an American-made gasoline car the next year.



This is Charles Duryea in one of the automobiles he made. Would you like to ride in a car like this?

In 1899, 30 American manufacturers produced 2,500 motor vehicles. In the next decade, nearly 500 companies entered the auto business. The Ford Motor Company was founded in 1903 by Henry Ford. In 1908, Ford introduced the Model T. That same year, William Durant created General Motors.

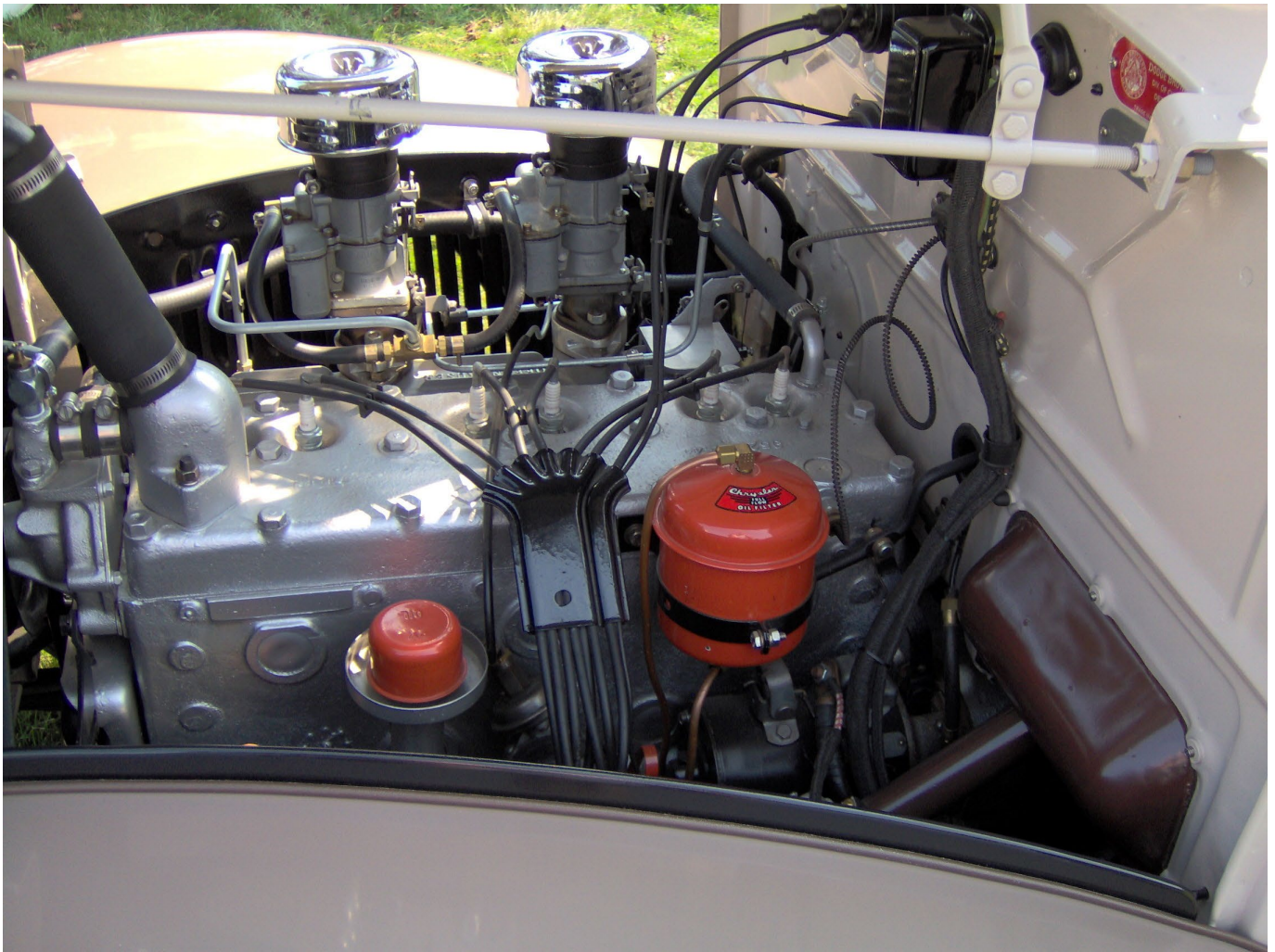
The U.S. had a greater need for automotive transport than Europe. The demand for cars was also ensured by the higher income of Americans. This demand was able to be met largely because of Henry Ford's creation of the first moving assembly line in 1913.



This is a Ford assembly line. Do you think it would be fun or difficult to work a job like this? Why?

Chrysler was founded in 1920 by Walter Chrysler, a former General Motors executive. His experience within the company allowed him to gain valuable insights into the industry.

Walter Chrysler acquired Dodge quickly, which allowed him to expand his operations significantly. By the 1920s, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler became known as the “Big Three” automotive companies.



This is a Chrysler “flathead” engine from 1937. Do you like working on cars? Why or why not?

The Big Three continued to dominate until problems in the automotive industry began to emerge in the 1960s. Two issues that came to the forefront were environmental and safety concerns.

Federal regulation became utilized more and more, leading to the introduction of the catalytic converter. By the 1970s, more important issues emerged from a number of different areas.

What do you do when you encounter a problem?

Get advice from a friend?

Look at past solutions?

Pray about it?

Hope for the best?

Something else?

The Japanese automaker Toyota and German automaker Volkswagen started offering affordable alternatives to American cars. Suddenly, the American market wasn't as dominant as it was before. The Big Three attempted to adapt and compete with foreign companies, but they didn't do very well at first.

The 1973 oil crisis led to further troubles in the auto industry. Chrysler and GM had to downsize. Chrysler even had to be bailed out by the federal government in 1979. The Big Three auto companies struggled to adapt to a changing auto industry, despite their major successes decades earlier.

The end of the 1980s saw a revival of the U.S. car industry. This was due in part to falling oil prices. The Big Three adapted well to technological innovations of the time. They started to equip their cars with fuel injection, disc brakes, air bags, and other recent inventions.

You, gas mileage and the 1980 Buick Skylark.

The Skylark is equipped with GM-built engines produced by various divisions. Your dealer has details.

With Skylark's EPA estimated mileage and 14-gallon fuel tank your gas station attendant may even forget what you look like.

Skylark offers an EPA estimated 24 mpg, estimated 38 for highway. Remember: Compare this estimate with the "estimated mpg" of other cars. You may get different mileage depending on your speed, trip length and weather. Your actual highway mileage will probably be less than the estimated highway fuel economy. Estimates lower in California.

It just might be the perfect car for you.

Sure, it's important these days to drive a car that's sensible in the gasoline mileage department. But you also want a car that performs. Happily, Skylark is both. With the standard 1980 2.5 liter 4-cylinder engine and available automatic transmission, it's quicker from 0-50 mph than last year's Skylark with the standard 3.8 liter V-6 and automatic. You'll like the 1980 Buick Skylark at gas stations—and between them. Talk to your Buick dealer about buying or leasing one. It just might be the perfect car for you.

BUICK
After all, life is to enjoy.



This is an ad for the 1980 Buick Skylark and its great gas mileage. Is gas mileage important to you in a car?

In the 1990s, the Big Three began to invest in foreign car companies as a way of limiting competition. This didn't work very well. BMW, Honda, Volkswagen, and Toyota all still opened huge manufacturing plants in the U.S. This signified the rise of foreign companies and the decline of the Big Three's dominance.



This is a GM manufacturing plant producing Cadillacs. Would you want to own a Cadillac? Why or why not?

In recent years, U.S. car companies have started to build all-electric cars. They can be plugged into a standard electrical outlet. Your car can charge overnight while you sleep. Drivers of these all-electric cars rarely stop at gas stations, only doing so if they need directions or if the air is low in their tires.

**Would you be willing to
drive an electric car to help
protect the environment?
Why or why not?**

Chrysler, Chevrolet, and Ford are still in business today, but they almost didn't make it through the tough times. It just goes to show how important it is for a company never to take success for granted and to be aware of what their competition is doing.

**This completes our story
and discussion.**

***Would you like to do this
again sometime?***



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- National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners
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