

Luxury motorcars, as we know them, really did not appear until the early 1920's. Only then did great road machines like the Duesenberg, Stutz, Pierce-Arrow and Locomobile grow numerous on the prosperous American scene.

Those who could afford such automobiles, however, found their luxury limited to the engineering. To enjoy comparable quality in coachwork and interiors, buyers had to turn to the custom shops of Brewster, Locke, Derham, Judkins and others.

This was the situation, then, when LeBaron and Chrysler entered the business of building fine road machines from opposite sides of the field.

LeBaron, Carrossiers, came first in 1921. From humble beginnings (custom body designs at \$25 per drawing), the story-book rise of the design studio to international prominence took less than four years.

LeBaron's treatment of the 1923 Isotta-Fraschini in Print No. 1 reveals what made this designer's work so admired. Daring originality . . . a masterful command of proportion . . . the grafting of elegance upon power—these were the signatures of LeBaron. Each custom body had its own character; yet taken together, they revealed a singular taste and genius for design.

The paradox of LeBaron's work was that the master designer named LeBaron never existed! "LeBaron" really was two young automobile designers who each contributed to the brilliant succession of custom bodies for the world's most luxurious cars.

By the mid-twenties, an impressive list of wealthy and titled clients were patronizing LeBaron salons in New York and Paris, and the firm had acquired a coachworks in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to execute their own designs.

But now the luxury car business began a significant turnabout. Automobile manufacturers were working hard on their coachwork; LeBaron and competitors were designing more bodies for the car builders,

fewer for individual buyers. Before long, car lines were offering a choice of custom bodies by various designers (like the LeBaron styled Pierce-Arrow of 1931 shown in Print No. 2). And LeBaron's elegant designs now were available in several car lines within the same year.

One of these was Chrysler, the new nameplate of a young automobile company. Chrysler's first luxury model to highlight the line appeared in 1926, and in two years a full series appeared, with bodies by LeBaron, Locke and Dietrich.

From the first, it seemed inevitable that the great LeBaron talent and Chrysler's magnificent engineering were destined for one another. Soon LeBaron was given all of Chrysler's luxury design assignments. And from this close working relationship came the 1932 Chrysler Custom Imperial shown in Print No. 3—one of the true classic cars of all time.

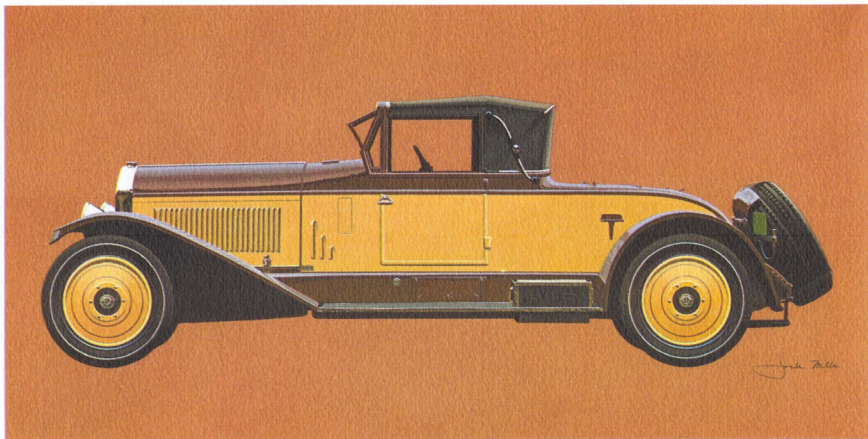
Then, in tragic succession, came the Great Depression and World War II. Few luxury car builders and fewer custom body firms survived the double blow. When the post-war luxury-car resurgence came, fine coachwork emerged as a mass-produced commodity—highly-integrated automotive manufacturing had made custom bodywork an ancient ritual.

Today, custom coach building is an art kept alive only by a few small firms, and local bands of antique-car enthusiasts or youthful car buffs. Still, the early achievements in fine coachwork left an indelible heritage for the modern luxury car. LeBaron's hand-built beauties are no more—but LeBaron's emphasis upon magnificent design, handcrafted quality and pure elegance continue in the car that bears the name.

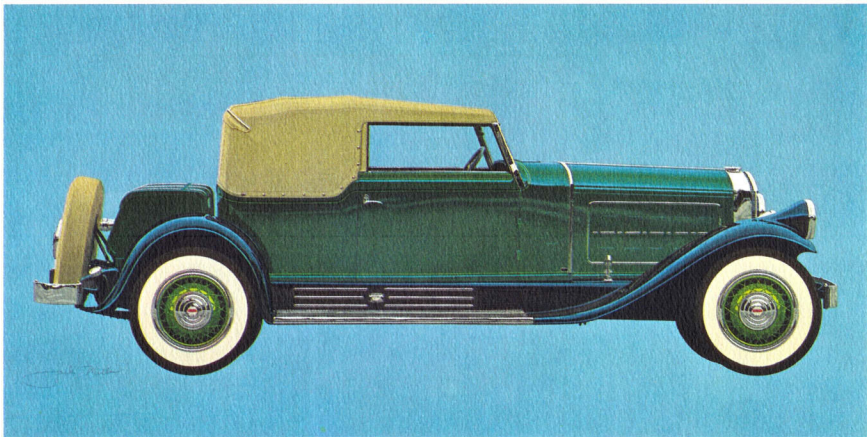
Which brings us to the last print of our collection: a modern-day Imperial LeBaron. You see it here rendered in the style of the legendary originals as a tribute to the coachwork tradition still prized by LeBaron owners today.

The Legendaries LeBarons

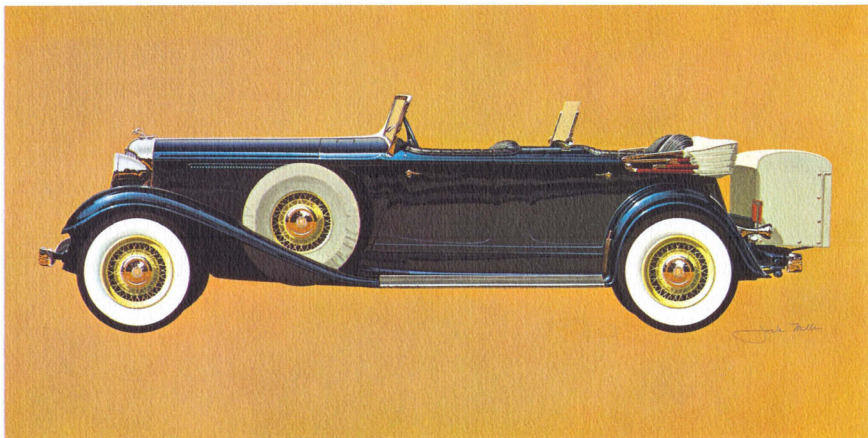
A portfolio of collector's prints tracing luxury car coachwork from inspired beginnings to 1963.



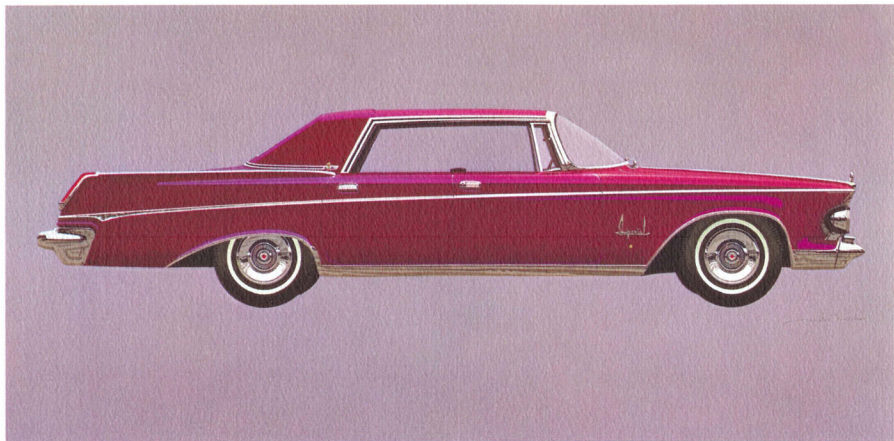
1923 Isotta-Fraschini



1931 Pierce-Arrow



1932 Chrysler Custom Imperial



1963 Imperial LeBaron

The Legendary
LeBarons

IMPERIAL DIVISION  **CHRYSLER**
MOTORS CORPORATION

