

The Chalmers Automobile Newsletter

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In this issue, I present a story entitled "Chalmers' Impact on Detroit". This article demonstrates that Hugh Chalmers was indeed a super salesman who had a futuristic view of the automobile industry when he moved to Detroit in 1908.

CHALMERS CLASSIFIED

The Chalmers Classified listing is intended as a service for members to advertise Chalmers cars and parts that are for sale and/or wanted. Please contact me regarding items that should no longer be listed and pass-on your new wanted and for sale items.

WANTED:

- 1917 Speedster Stewart Warner speedometer (0 to 100 or 95) (posted 4/2004) - contact Bob Valpey (#17).
- 1922/1923 hubcaps (posted 4/2000) - contact Bob DuBois (#9).
- 1912-1914 Chalmers Model 12/18 "Six" (also 1910-1912 Model "Forty", 1912-1914 Model "36", or 1914-1915 Model 24/29 "Master Six") (posted 4/2000) - contact John Lehnert (#35).
- 1914 Chalmers Model 24 "Master Six" shop manual (posted 4/2000) - contact Jim and Donna Stamper (#52).
- 1911 Chalmers Model "30" Pony Tonneau complete rear axle assembly (or any parts for it) (posted 7/2001) - contact Fred Hoch (#38).
- 1908-1909 Chalmers-Detroit Model F "30" radiator (posted 10/2001) - contact Alan Leclair (#42).
- 1923 Chalmers Model "Y" Jaxon disc wheels (one or more) for 24" tires (posted 2/2002)- contact Alan Maris (#56).
- 1913 Chalmers Model 36 front wheel hub and left side bail handle sidelight (kerosene and electric) or a matching pair (posted 2/2002)- contact Lloyd Elliott (#26).
- 1915 Chalmers Model 26-C "Six-48" Entz starter/generator, oil gage, distributor, steering wheel, crank, hubcaps, speedometer, and other parts & photos of wood framing (posted 7/2002) - contact Scott Sandersfeld (#69).
- 1912 Chalmers Model 11 "30" ignition switch/key for Splitdorf type ignition (posted 12/2003)- contact Mike Morris (#65).
- 1912 Chalmers Model 11 "30" owners manual and parts list, either original or copy (posted 12/2003) - contact Al Shaw (#25).
- Pattern for 1911 Model M brass "Chalmers" radiator script (any size/year is acceptable), Instruction book for 1910 Model K "30" (original or copy), and 1910 or 1911 engine complete (or parts of) (posted 7/2004) - contact Don Curtis (#40).

FOR SALE: None

Chalmers' Impact on Detroit

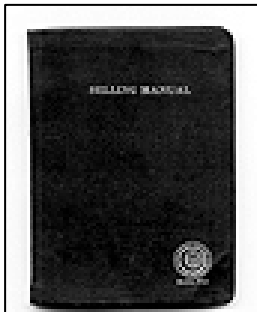
It has been reported that "Hugh Chalmers was Detroit's first marketing powerhouse who had previously made a fortune selling cash registers to customers who didn't know they needed them". That statement epitomizes the automobile marketing philosophy in the early 1900's. Although a few automobile manufacturers did understand the value in advertising, there was a general lack of awareness industry wide. Hugh observed his competitor's apathy and started to apply his own advertising principles, learned in Dayton, Ohio as vice-president and general manager of the National Cash Register Company (NCR). An essential ingredient of his approach to shaping the future of Detroit was the use of nation-wide advertising. Auto companies that did not have a national advertising perspective usually failed; those that did succeeded. Hugh Chalmers mounted a coast-to-coast advertising campaign that promoted the virtues and features of his Chalmers automobiles using the finest prose and merchandising genius. There was no one better than Hugh Chalmers when it came to selling and the other car companies soon followed his techniques, which proved successful. As a result, Hugh revolutionized the merchandising of automobiles and influenced the development of some of the best auto-salesmen in Detroit. This advertising success was a major factor in making Detroit the automobile capital.

In another marketing related area, Hugh Chalmers also influenced the restructuring of Detroit's dealerships. Before he arrived in Detroit, cars were sold in bicycle shops, hardware stores, carriage dealers, and other similar retail businesses. After his arrival, emerging car dealers were still not prevalent, but the transformation was underway and Hugh was a driving force behind their development. Chalmers observed that the auto manufacturer and the merchant (or car dealer) operated more or less independently. This produced a counter-productive result on sales. Under the then prevailing arrangement, the manufacturer simply supplied cars to the dealer/merchant - who usually owned the cars at that point and was then responsible for training their sales force and selling the cars. Common sales practice dictated that the car dealer simply waited for customers to come to him; an extension of advertising apathy previously noted. These car dealers did not entice or promote auto sales! All of this was foreign to Chalmers' experience at NCR. Hugh once wrote:

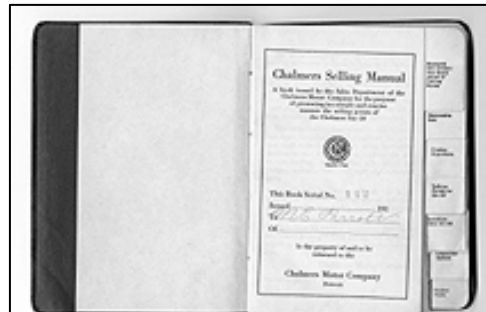
"The retail selling of motor cars has not been highly organized. Many dealers are still depending on the people who come into their salesrooms for their prospects. They have no regular or efficient method of creating new buyers, either by personal call or by printed matter regularly mailed."

He revamped the arrangement and organized Chalmers dealerships into a nation-wide network integrated into the Chalmers company organizational structure as a new department called the "Sales Department". This network included spare parts depots throughout the country and more convenient and mutual support between dealers, parts depots, and headquarters. The rest of the industry started to adopt Chalmers' approach to an integrated system of dealers and by the 1920's; many companies expanded this arrangement to include factory distributors, car service, and used car sales. Detroiters often said that before Chalmers arrived, automobiles were *bought*; after he arrived, automobiles were *sold*.

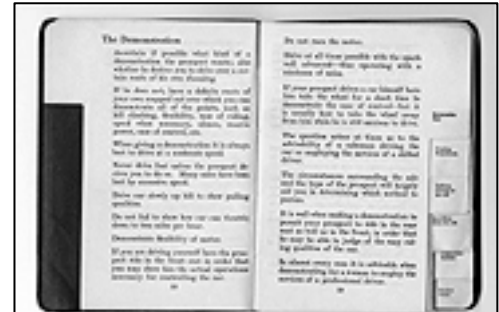
Another first was training. Hugh Chalmers setup a special sales school at the Chalmers plant, to train the salesmen in the science of salesmanship, something in which he was supremely proficient. In Hugh's mind, he was simply following the mold that John Patterson, the president of NCR, developed and he had successfully refined. Hugh would tell the student salesmen, "when I sold cash registers a few years ago, we had what is called a *Primer*. It was a written procedure for demonstrating the cash register. I memorized the procedure so that I could say it forward and backward. I was just a youngster then, but I remember distinctly after a demonstration the merchant say, 'young fellow, you are a pretty smart talker'. But all I was doing was telling him what I learned verbatim from the *Primer*. Of course, I didn't recite it parrot-like. I had to give it my personal expression." Each Chalmers salesman received a pocket size *Selling Manual* that provided the simple and concise details for selling a Chalmers automobile (just like the old NCR *Primer*). The book was organized, with subject tabs, in the natural order of selling a product. Starting with the salesman's preparation, approach, and demonstration, the subject tabs concluded with closing arguments, specifications, quality inspection, and factory facts. A serial number was assigned to each book and the salesman affixed his signature on the first page; it was their responsibility to keep it in good condition and return it when no longer employed by the company. Hugh Chalmers told his salesmen "to be long on courtesy because it costs nothing". The Chalmers selling philosophy is exemplified by the words, be prepared, use your personality, and be courteous.



Selling Manual front cover



Selling Manual first page with serial number and signature



Selling Manual demonstration tab

Other automobile manufacturers followed suit with specialized schools to train their workforce in various aspects of automobile engineering, design, production, and sales. Even today, these schools are evident in Detroit's big-three organizations.

Some historians credit the Chalmers' move and success in Detroit to attracting others to make the migration, thus contributing to the growth of the city into the automotive capital. It is a fact that a few of his close Dayton friends and NCR coworkers (and perhaps others who heard about him) decided to join the boom. Charles Kettering, Joseph Fields, Richard Grant, and Alvan Macauley are prime examples of this "magnetic" attraction. Kettering invented the electric starter in 1912 before he came to Detroit and he followed up with many other significant automotive engineering improvements in later years while in Detroit. Fields is credited with a successful end run to get the new Chrysler cars (just introduced but not yet in production) in front of the public at the New York auto show; on many occasions, Walter Chrysler lauded him as a great

salesman. Grant was a prime mover in rescuing Chevrolet and gaining first place in industry sales in 1927 when William Knudsen was in charge. Macauley became president of Packard motors in 1916. It is speculative to say just how important Chalmers was in this intangible attraction to the motor city. However, these particular individuals may demonstrate that Hugh Chalmers' impact on Detroit goes beyond his Chalmers cars and revolutionary merchandising, but also includes his "magnetic" influence on others who in turn made significant contributions to build the automotive capital of the United States. Today, Chalmers Avenue, named after Hugh and located on the East Side of Detroit not too far from the old Chalmers plant site, provides a living testament to the Chalmers name in the motor city.

That's all for now and I hope you enjoyed the article about Chalmers' impact on Detroit. As always, forward any questions, comments, or other items of interest for the next newsletter.

Dave Hammond