

COLUMBIA MOTORS COMPANY

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

1916-1924

“A CAR WORTHY OF THE NAME”

The Columbia Motor Company was incorporated in January 1916, with a capital stock of \$500,000. **J. G. Bayerline** was president, and was joined by A. T. O'Connor, W. L. Daly, and **William Metzger**. Ray Long was chief engineer. The company purchased the Argo Electric Vehicle Company of Saginaw, Mich. which had a factory well adapted for automobile manufacturing. The first "Columbia" was built with a degree of secrecy early in the summer of 1916, and driven 60,000 miles before the 1917 season. A factory was secured on Jefferson Avenue in Detroit, and two months later, a larger plant formerly occupied by the B. F. Everitt Company was acquired at Beaufait and Mack in Detroit.

The Columbia was an assembled car moderately priced at under \$2000. The wheelbase was 115 inches, with 32 x 3.5 inch tires. Rear tires were non-skids. It was powered by a Continental six cylinder motor with a 3 x 4.75 bore and stroke, and had a Stromberg carburetor. It was water-cooled using a Harrison radiator, and had a thermostat placed above the fan which automatically opened the radiator shutters as the temperature increased. It also had cowl ventilators and a Boyce Moto-Meter.

The motor was built as a unit with a three speed Warner gearset, and Borg and Beck multiple disc dry clutch. The frame was made of chrome-nickel with Timken axles and roller bearings. The suspension utilized Detroit self lubricating cantilever rear springs and semi-elliptic front springs.

In 1920, the capital stock was increased to \$4,000,000 by a stock dividend of 700 percent, and then to \$5,000,000 by subscriptions to shareholders. In the middle of 1923, the capitalization was reduced by an exchange of stock, and then 83,000 shares of no par stock were offered to stockholders at \$6 per share. In 1923, the company had its production peak of 6000 automobiles sold.

The defunct **Liberty Motor Company** was purchased with the intention of continuing its production. Less than 100 "Liberty's" were produced in 1923, all made using parts on-hand. The Columbia Motor Company had over-extended itself: and the equipment was sold to **Winternitz & Tauber**. of Chicago, for \$112,500 in November, 1924.

Source: Szudarek, Robert G., How Detroit Became the Automotive Capital, Detroit, Typocraft, 1996

COLUMBIA SIX - Detroit, Michigan - (1916-1924) - In 1915 the executive suite of the King Motor Car Company in Detroit became a temporarily lonely place as the firm's president sales manager, and manufacturing superintendent took an abrupt leave to start their own company. Joining J.G. Bayerline, Walter L. Daly, and T.A. Bollinger in the formation of the Columbia Motors Company of Detroit were William E. Metzger, one of the founders of the E-M-F Company, and A.T. O'Connor, formerly of Olds and Packard. With a roster like that, success seemed assured - and for a while it was. The Columbia Six was an assembled car, but a particularly fine one: Continental engines, Timken axles and roller bearings, Detroit Self-Lubricating springs, Warner transmission and steering gear, Borg & Beck clutch, Stromberg carburetor, Harrison radiator. But one feature that belonged exclusively to Columbia was its motor temperature control: a thermostat placed just above the fan that automatically opened the radiator shutters as temperature increased. The Columbia Six was probably the first car in its price class to feature such a device. Most Columbias sold for under \$2,000, and were nicely finished. The \$1,475 Sport Model, for example, had a walnut instrument panel, French beveled plate window, and hassocks instead of the usual footrail. An even sportier model was rather cleverly called the Columbia Six Shooter. "The Gem of the Highway," ads said. When sales reached 6,000 units in 1923, however, the men who had so wisely guided Columbia's fortunes thus far became overenthusiastic. Anticipating a boom, they acquired plants formerly occupied by Hudson and the B.F. Everitt Company, and bought out the Liberty Motor Car Company across town in Detroit. Both Liberty and Columbia went bust the following year.

COLUMBIA SIX PRODUCTION; 1917 1,317; 1918 1,793; 1919 1,718; 1920 3,163; 1921 3,213; 1922 4,807; 1923 5,903; 1924 2,603.

Source: Kimes, B.R. & Henry Austin Clark, Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805-1942, Third Edition, Iola WI, Krause Publications, 1996

COLUMBIA (iv) 1916-1924

Columbia Motors Co, Detroit, Mich.

The Columbia was a well thought of assembled car of its era and its low price attracted a considerable number of buyers. Two basic models were offered, both sixes and both powered by Continental engines. As many as 6,000 units were sold in 1923, principally the roadster at \$995 (disk wheels were extra). Planning to expand its manufacturing activities, Columbia purchased the Liberty in 1923, but both makes failed a year later.

Noteworthy was Columbia's use of thermostatically-controlled radiator shutters, as early as 1920, which opened as radiator temperature increased. This was one of the first automobiles to use this device and doubtless it aided Columbia sales.

Source: Georgano, G.N., Encyclopedia of American Automobiles, New York, E.P. Dutton, 1968