



# '54 AUTO DIRECTORY

BY SYDNEY KEITH

**W**HAT'S really new about the new cars this year? After pondering over several ways of presenting all the possible answers to that question, MOTOR LIFE decided to put on its own "automobile show"—first of its kind in 1954 to be offered by any nationally-read motoring publication.

Whether you're a deep-down enthusiast who likes to know and talk about cars, whether you're a hot rod jockey, or whether you're steeling yourself for the high pressure atmosphere of dealer showrooms as a prospective buyer, the pages that follow contain all the facts and figures you ought to know about the 1954 cars.

The mass of data assembled here is an excellent example of the cooperation MOTOR LIFE was accorded by the auto makers; 40 categories of information are charted on 16 makes rolling off assembly lines in a variety that extends to dozens of models. Up to press time, information on the Kaiser-Willys lines for 1954 was unfortunately not available. This point is made now and in this manner because, the early timing of our "automobile show" notwithstanding, our Toledo inquiries brought a frank response indicating substantial changes are planned by that maker in both engineering and styling. These will be covered in a subsequent issue.

**A**S THE YEARS pass by, certain makes and models—whether for power or performance, long-term stamina, or for some notable detail of design—are remembered above all their contemporaries. If only among proponents who match memory with persistence, these "good cars" sometimes succeed to vintaged reputations among the auto classics. Let's

concede the possibility that 1954 will add to this lore but, instead of venturing a prediction or two, offer the factual basis for others to judge. We'll take the styling highlights as they come and let Roger Huntington, on the following pages, analyze the 1954 engine innovations. Huntington's authorship of "Souping the Stock Engine" and other books, together with his past contributions to these pages, have given him unquestioned stature as a powerplant expert.

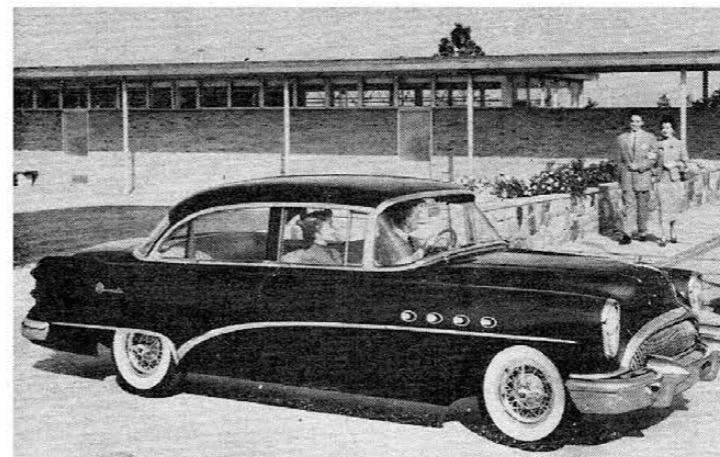
Prices aside, 1954 is the best year yet for the individualistic buyer. The American industry has now developed the lure of variety of body style, color and equipment to a near-ultimate. You can buy a low-price make in 161 different combinations of body style and color—and that's just a starter. Inclusive only of factory-installed options, no less than 8,241,600 cars could come off this particular assembly line before the first exact duplicate got past final factory inspection!

In the upper price brackets, believe it or not, another make can be purchased in 327,452,928 combinations, each differing in one respect or another.

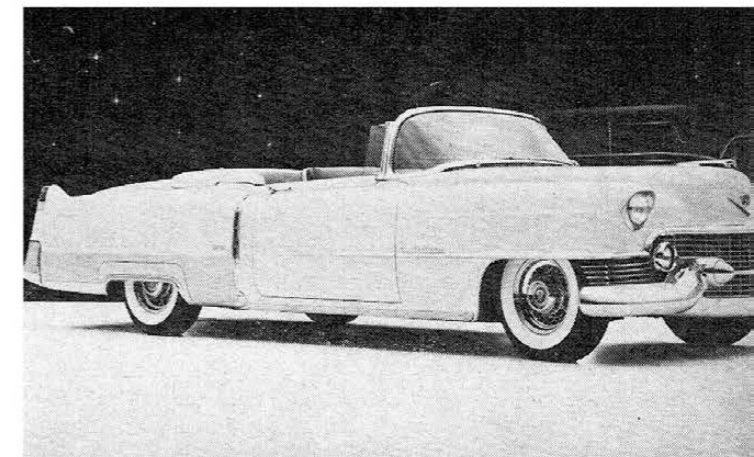
Both instances cited above include only factory-designed and installed accessories and equipment—from steering gears to tinted glass. The buyer can take it from there if he still hankers for more individuality . . .

Broadly speaking, on the other hand, 1954 shapes up as an automotive year in which only a great deal more of the same is being offered the buyer. There are some few exceptions, of course, and they are all the more noteworthy for it.

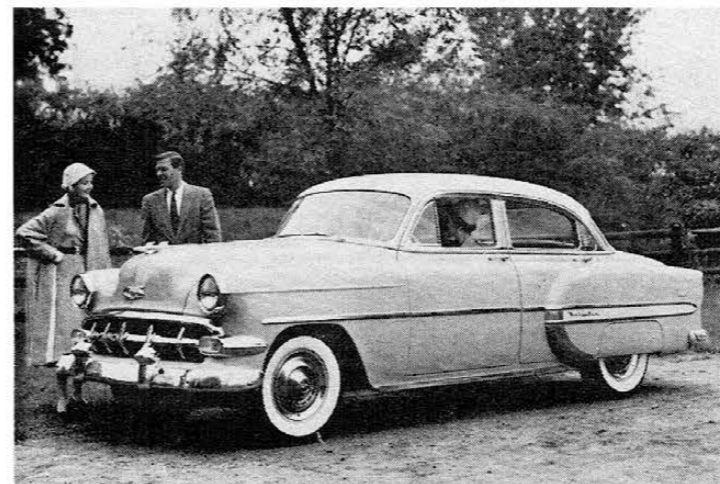
Ford and Mercury contribute new hardtop models—respectively, the Skyliner and the Sun Valley—with roofs of



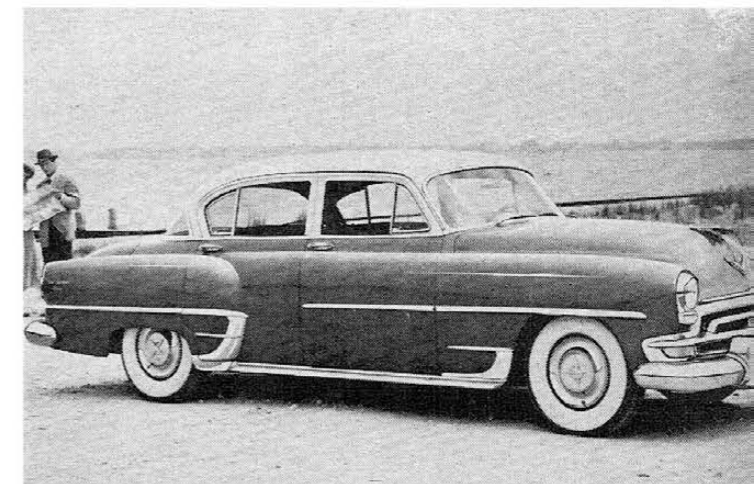
*Buick styling for '54, with panoramic windshield and built-in sunvisor, is exemplified in Roadmaster. New Century, with 200-hp engine in small chassis, should be unusually hot car*



*Cadillac advance is paced by Eldorado. Although lines retain traditional characteristics, body actually is completely new series, plus an improved chassis installed underneath*



*Chevrolet's top model is the Bel Air shown here. Style changes are chiefly refinements, while engine on optional Powerglide cars has had horsepower upped to 125 for 1954*

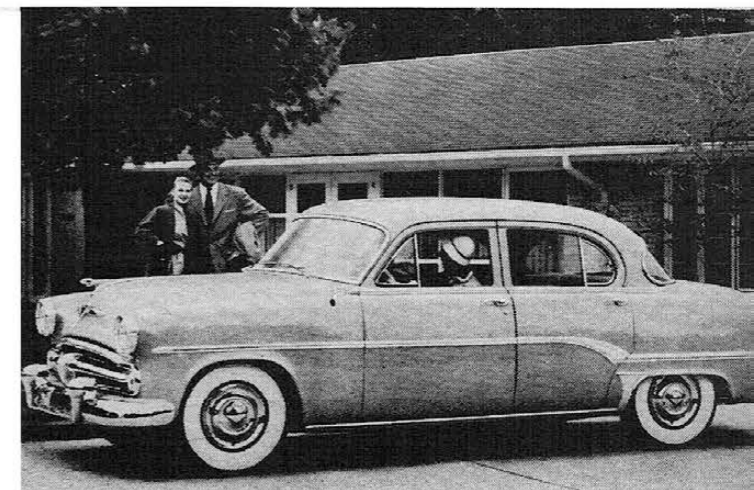


*Chrysler leads the horsepower parade for '54 with this New Yorker DeLuxe. Rated at 235-hp, the car will have few, if any, rivals in the performance department for the year*

*DeSoto is called the "automatic" for '54 and features wide variety of power accessories, plus its own version of the highly efficient Chrysler V-8 engine adapted to the car*



MOTOR LIFE, March, 1954

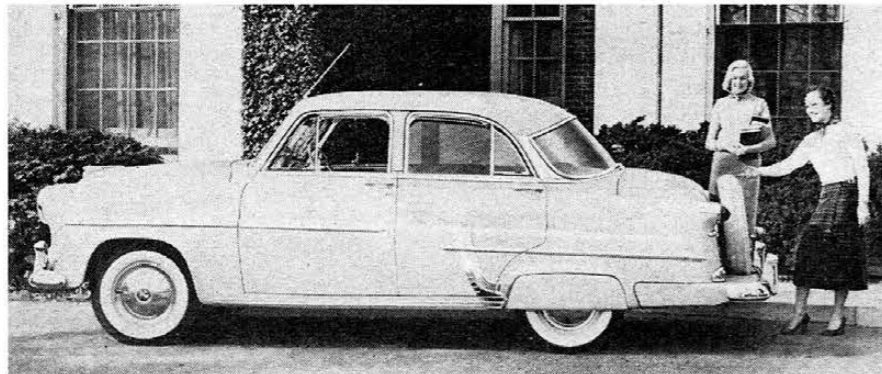


*Dodge introduced a new super deluxe model for '54 in its Royal V-8. Fitted out luxuriously, the car carries the Red Ram engine stepped up to 150 hp at 7.5:1 compression ratio*

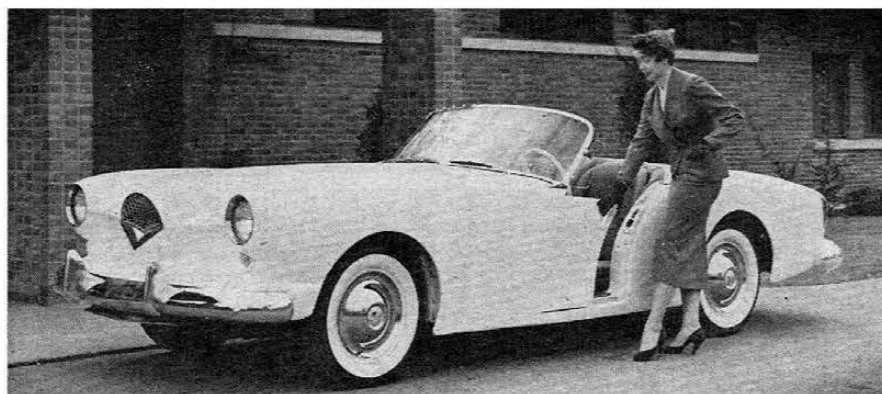




Ford offers much in new engineering for '54. An ohv V-8 of 130-hp tops the list, along with ball-joint suspension. New dash also is important safety improvement

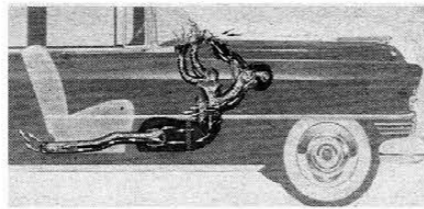


Hudson Jet is available with continental tire mount for the coming year. Photos and details on Hudson Hornet will be found in the road test report in this issue



Kaiser's only announced '54 model by press time was Darrin 161 plastic sports car which is being built on Willys production lines. Engine is a 90-hp six, which produces 135 ft. lbs. maximum torque at 1600 rpm. Using a rear axle ratio of 4.55-to-1, car weighs 2,175 lbs. and is listed at \$3,668, about same as the Corvette

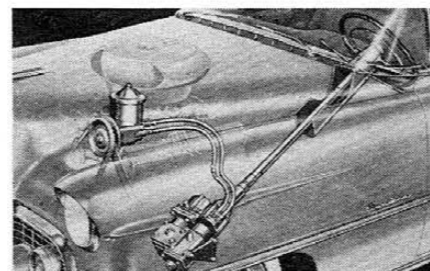
Lincoln goes into new year with enormous prestige of Mexican road race victory by Capri, similar to one shown below. Engine still is rated at 205 hp for ohv V-8



Air intake supply has been increased on '54 Cadillacs by cowl ventilator which brings interior vastly greater volume

transparent green-tinted plexiglas. The plastic comprises the front half of the roof in a styling move that takes its cue from this element of the X-100 and XL-500, the two Ford experimentals which attracted much attention for this and other reasons.

**T**HE TREND to greater visibility (an obvious safety factor) gets its biggest boost this year from the new General Motors "C" body in which Cadillac, Buick and Oldsmobile are decked out. Gone are the familiar rearward sloping windshield posts, symbol of the "streamlined" mode. They're now moved inches back of the front door's leading edge, stand in a vertical position in some models and even tilt forward in others. For this style in-



Power steering acceptance is underlined by fact that Cadillac, shown here, has made device standard on all its models

novation and others flowing from it, the auto designers are in the debt of the glass makers.

From other builders this year have come contributions combining body variety with styling distinctions. Studebaker, for example, enters the station wagon arena with its Conestoga and there's the longer-wheelbased four-door Nash Rambler. Buick's revival of the Century (last built in 1942), the Packard Super Clipper, Pontiac Star Chief, Dodge Royal and Plymouth Belvedere likewise add to the variety offered by their respective makes. The last three named are super deluxe top-liners but the Century is uniquely sandwiched between the Buick Special and the Super. Let's face it, here's a new high in luxurious hot rods!

Both the Special and Century are mounted on a 122 inch wheelbase but that's where they part company. The former's new V-8 provides a nice, respectable 150 horsepower. The Century, though, skips even the big Super's ratings to fea-



All-metal estate wagon is new to the Buick line for '54 and is shown here in Century series. Engine is the 200-hp Roadmaster V-8, wheelbase is 122 inches

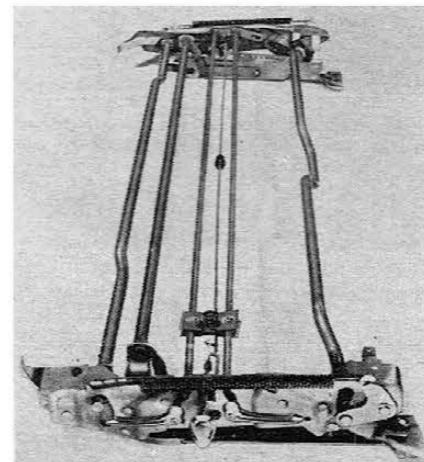
ture the 200 hp Roadmaster engine. Its power-to-weight ratio will edge out much smaller cars.

Leaving a model of singular interest now, and overall styling as such, another design element begs our attention. It also—in these days of major parking problems still unsolved almost everywhere—raises eyebrows: we're referring now to the general increase in overall length. The stretch-out characterizes just about every model and if this is a cause for criticism, only Hudson, Nash, and Packard escape it. At that, the new Rambler is eight inches longer overall than the small version. Packard, on the other hand, has trimmed from two to three inches off its 1953 lengths. Hudson's are virtually unchanged.

Car length as an aspect of style—that is, the greater length compelling (as well as permitting) more effort on the part of the stylist—has brought most people to conclude that the two are integral. The thought is abroad that auto makers have been busy trying to make cars look as though they were moving while they stand still; they are succeeding in this direction, true enough. But it is equally true that they're even busier working to make cars feel as though they were standing still while they are moving!

This class of effort covers, as just one excellent example, ball-joint front wheel suspension. It was introduced by Lincoln  
(Continued on next page)

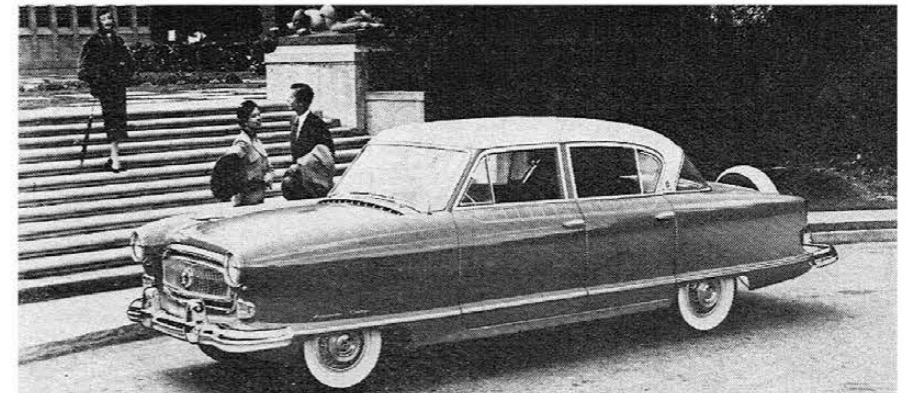
Seating mechanism of '54 Pontiac offers 360 different positions—up and down, backward and forward, plus easy tilting



MOTOR LIFE, March, 1954



Mercury has new 161-hp ohv engine and ball-joint suspension, plus novel styling innovation in Sun Valley model, shown on first page of this Auto Directory for '54

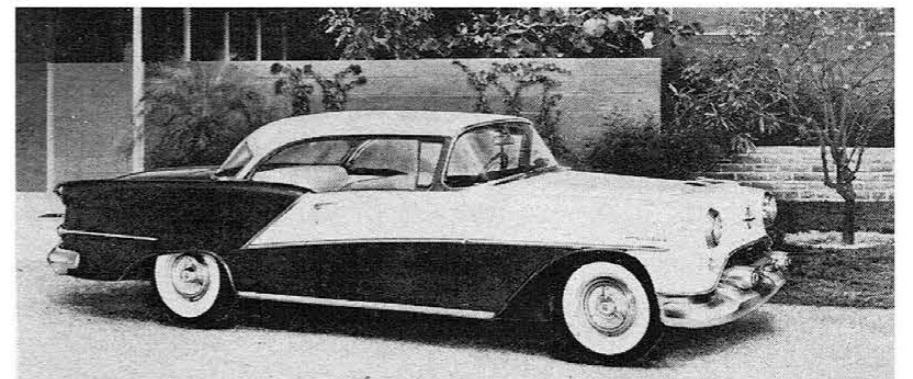


Nash still gives Farina credit for its styling, shown in Ambassador here. Tire mount is standard on some models, with many power-operated accessories also added



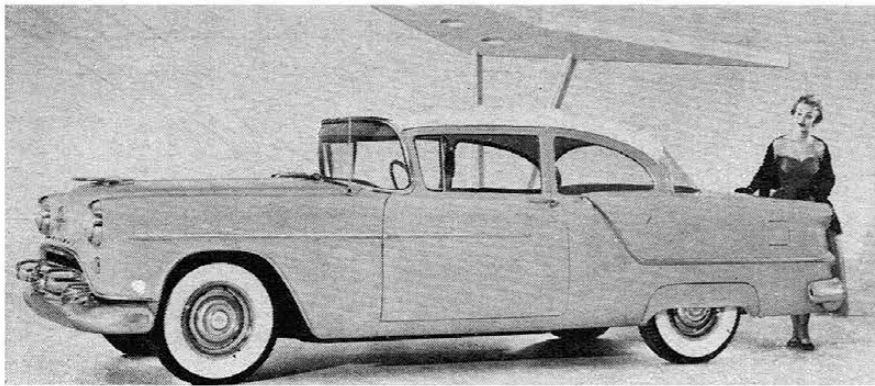
Rambler revived by Nash soon after war has almost become a distinct line made by company. For '54, a four-door model has been added, with 90 hp engine at 7.3-to-1 compression ratio. Notable feature of economy car is list price includes much deluxe equipment, such as tire mount, radio, clocks, directional signals

Most startling two-tone combination for year appears on Olds 98 Holiday coupe which accents futuristic styling. Engine on this particular model produces 185 hp



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Oldsmobile 88 two-door is 60.5 inches high, lowest overall height of any car ever produced by this GM division. It also features characteristic new styling treatment

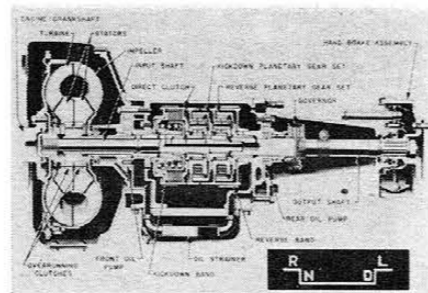


Packard improved rear fender treatment, as shown on this Clipper club sedan. Engine made by company has compression ratio of 8.7-to-1, highest in the U.S.



Pontiac has new series in Star Chief. Catalina model shown here is a big car, mounted on a 124-inch wheelbase, and is powered by familiar inline eight engine

Studebaker's Commander convertible still is one of the most striking cars on the road with European styling touch. Car got new grille and bumper revisions for '54



PowerFlite transmission for Chrysler line was only new transmission for '54

in 1952 and is now also offered in the 1954 Ford and Mercury. We're not overlooking the great advance which power steering represents. At the same time, we can't ignore the fact that for two decades the industry's engineers have come up with no really basic change for the better in the king-pin suspension design. With the ball-joint system, steering is intrinsically easier, there's less wear on it over the long pull, front wheel alignment is simpler and longer-lasting, and servicing is easier.

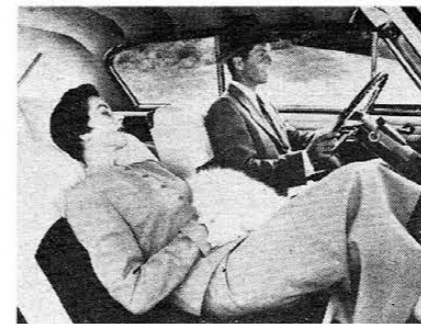
CHASSIS changes were fairly general this year, and Cadillac offers another illustration. Rigidity of the frame is increased 35 per cent—a very considerable step up in strength; it's wider up front, too, accounting for greater width (one inch) in front tread and more stability. The front cross member has been dropped, lowering the engine a full two inches. Rear suspension leaf springs are wider and the rear axle assembly is moved rearward an inch.

In a way, 1954 car interiors offer as



Plastic speedometer raised on recessed dash is novel and improved feature on Fords. Burnished metal is non-reflecting

many changes as have been effected elsewhere. The trend to padded instrument panels is in good evidence: standard in Oldsmobile's Ninety-Eight is a pad of spun glass covered with color-matching plastic and contoured to the panel shelf. This is also available in the 88 and Super 88 at extra cost. Chrysler, Cadillac, DeSoto, and the Nash Ambassador and Statesman offer crash-padded instrument

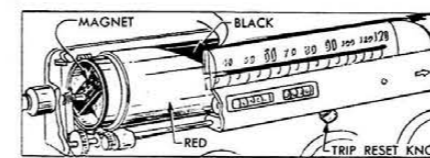


Reclining seat is innovation in Nash and Rambler line. It is attractive prospect for tiring, long-distance road trips

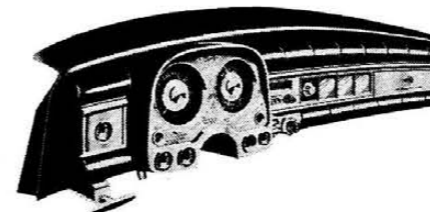
panels. Other makes are featuring, at the least, no-glare finishes where they count most for safety's sake.

But some sort of acme is reached this year in interior trims and upholstery. Fabrics available include just about everything except oil-cloth! You can get genuine leather, nylon, Jacquard, cord, vinyl, broadcloth—even linen.

To sum up, 1954 can hardly be called a year of drastic, widespread change. It rates strongly as one in which most makers have trotted out subtle advancements toward greater automaticity by spreading power accessories around—as a year in which only a comparative few makes entered a new style-cycle. This latter point, to many observers on the automobile scene, implies something in the nature of a prelude. We'll wait and see. Meanwhile, here's the score on '54. And if Detroit predictions on sales and production hold up, there'll be 5,500,000 of them on the road a mere year hence.



GM speedometer is line that flows across scale. Drum, painted red and black, revolves during acceleration of the car

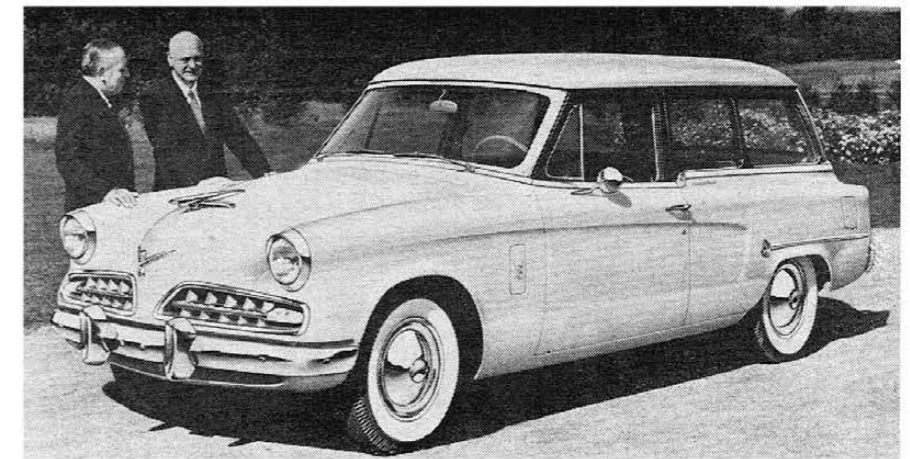


Safety features of Chrysler dash is unsurpassed among '54 models. It is padded, and has most knobs recessed

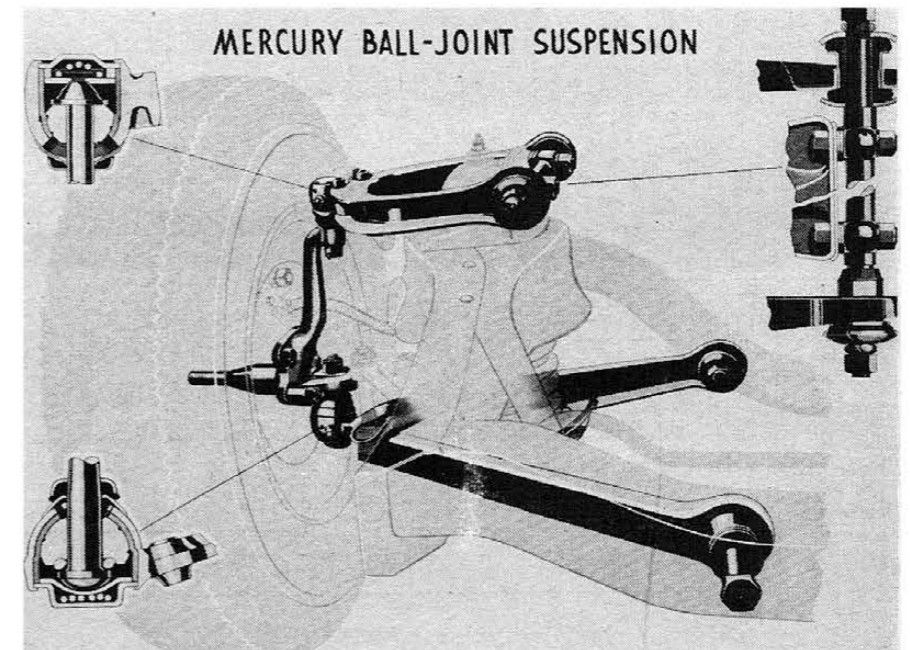
Frame for Cadillac of rugged I-beam X-members is 35 per cent stiffer and is wider in front for increased tread width



MOTOR LIFE, March, 1954

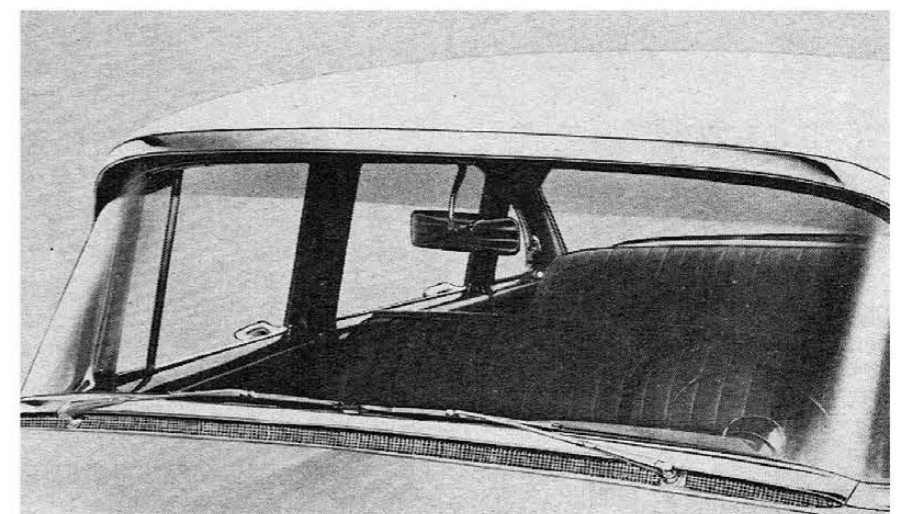


Station wagon field is invaded for first time by Studebaker with Conestoga, which comes in both Champion and Commander series. Body is all steel construction



Biggest news in suspension department for 1954 was ball-joint system introduced on Mercury (shown here) and Ford. Arrangement offers easier steering, ease of repair and reduces grease fittings from 16 to four in front. See story this issue

Major styling advance for year was panoramic windshield on Olds, Buick and Cadillac, which moves body pillars back. Note new air intake shroud across base





# SPECIFICATIONS OF 1954

# U. S. PASSENGER CARS

	GENERAL										ENGINE									
	Price Range	Bodies	Wheel-base (inches)	Maximum Overall			Shipping Weight (Dry)	Tread Front/Rear (inches)	Tire Size	Turning Diameter (feet)	Overhang Front/Rear (four-door)	Engine Type, No. of Cylinders	Bore & Stroke	Piston Displ'm't (cu. in.)	Comp. Ratio	Max. BHP @ Engine RPM	Max. Torque @ Engine RPM	Carb. Type		
<b>BUICK</b>																				
Special	\$2196	5	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								Dual			
Century	\$2196	3	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								Dual			
Super	\$2196	3	127	216.8	79.9	62.4	4020	59/62.2	8.00x15	NA	NA	OHV, V8	3.625x3.2	264	8.1	150@4200	240@2400			
Roadmaster	\$5000	3	127	216.8	79.9	62.4	4020	59/62.2	8.00x15	NA	NA	OHV, V8	4x3.2	322	8.5	200@4100	309@2400			
Skyline		3	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								Dual			
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		1	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								4-barrel			
		1	127	216.8	79.9	62.4	4020	59/62.2	8.00x15								4-barrel			
		1	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								4-barrel			
		1	127	216.8	79.9	62.4	4020	59/62.2	8.00x15								4-barrel			
		1	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								4-barrel			
		1	127	216.8	79.9	62.4	4020	59/62.2	8.00x15								4-barrel			
		1	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714	59/59	7.60x15								4-barrel			
		1	127	216.8	79.9	62.4	4020	59/62.2	8.00x15								4-barrel			
		1	122	206.3	76.8	60.5	3714													