

The 1950s

The **Golden Age** of Automobile Styling

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Prelude to the 1950s Styling

1946 – Automobile production resumes after World War II

- No automobiles produced 1942 – 1945
- Pent-up demand on the home front and from returning soldiers
- Everything would sell – no need to spend money for new styling

New styling and models started arriving in 1949

- Stodgy styling – practical, but did not sell well

Key question in 1952: What kind of car would your neighbor buy?

- Longer, lower, wider
- Flashy, modern look

US Dominated World Automobile Production

The Big Three

- General Motors
 - Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Cadillac
- Ford
 - Ford, Mercury, Lincoln, Continental
- Chrysler
 - Plymouth, Dodge, DeSoto, Chrysler, Imperial

Other companies had niche markets and some were gone by 1960

- Studebaker, Packard, Nash, Hudson, Willys, Kaiser
- Fresh styling cost money and required a large market share

Few Foreign Automobiles in the 1950s

Much of Europe and almost all of Japan were destroyed during World War II

Volkswagen and Mercedes entered the market in the 1950s

British, French, and Swedish automobiles had a small market share

1955 – the Watershed Year for Style

1955 design work started in 1952

- Seller's market was over, new styling needed for sales
- Three years needed to create and launch a new design



1954 Dodge



1955 Dodge

Styling Influence

Aircraft

- Sound barrier broken in 1947
- Jet fighters appeared in 1948



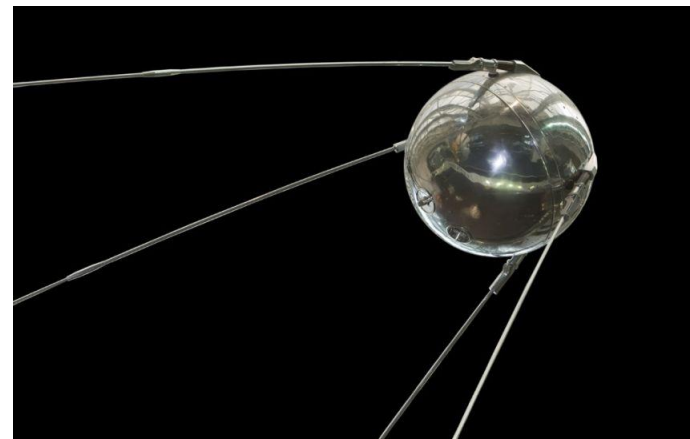
Rockets

- Redstone Rocket – 1950 – 1964



Space Race

- First satellites - 1957



Styling Cycle was Two or Three Years



1955



1956

1956 Dodge was a “facelift” of 1955.

1957 Dodge was new.

1958 and 1959 Dodge were “facelifts” of 1957.



1957



1958



1959

Dash Boards Look Like Airplane Controls and Instruments



Extensive use of chrome on exteriors and interiors.



1957 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser



1954 Cessna

Wrap-around Windshields – Like a Jet Fighter Canopy



Some Grilles Looked Like Air Intakes for Jet Fighters





Tailfins – Like a Rocket





Dual rear radio antennae were popular.

Taillights look like Flames from a Rocket



Hardtops – Metal Top on a Convertible Body

First appeared in 1948 – By 1955 all major manufacturers had one.
Automobiles looked lower and sportier.



No “B” Pillar between the front door and rear passenger compartment.



Station wagons became more luxurious – some with hardtop styling.

Color Offerings were Many

Example: 1955 Dodge

13 single tones (included 3 metallics)

32 two tone combinations (16 standard and 16 deluxe)

16 three tone combinations

Interior choices were blue, green, black, red, and yellow
(number of choices depended on exterior color)



AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

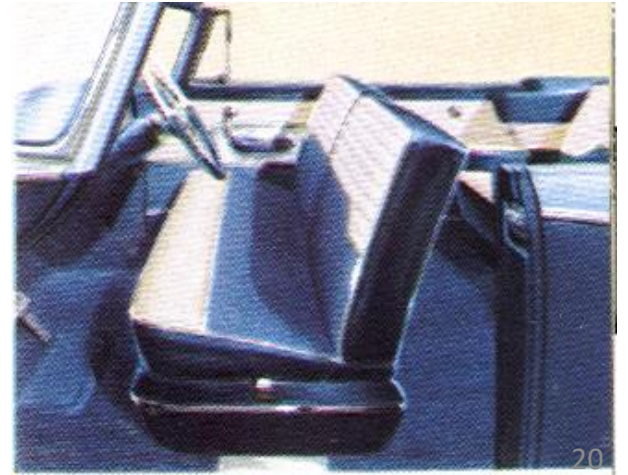
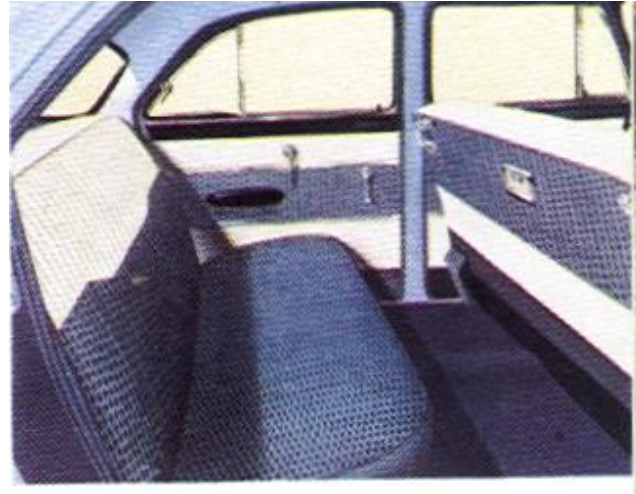
1955 DODGE

Comb. No. 515 565-L 566-L		Comb. No. 551 567-U 568-L 570-U	
	L-1600 CHIFFON GREEN		L-1606 CAMEO RED
516 563-U 564-L 566-U		555 562-U 570-L 571-L 572-U 573-U 575-U	
	L-1601 EMERALD GREEN		L-1607 SAPPHIRE WHITE
517 563-L 564-U 565-U		556 573-L 574-L	
	L-1602 SATIN GREEN METALLIC		L-1608 FANTASY YELLOW
505 560-U 561-L		530 567-L	
	L-1603 HALO BLUE		L-1609 CASHMERE GRAY
507 560-L 561-U		552 575-L	
	L-1604 ADMIRAL BLUE METALLIC		L-1610 REGAL BURGUNDY METALLIC
550 569-L 571-U		506 562-L	
	L-1605 HEATHER ROSE		L-1611 PARISIAN BLUE
			M-1724-L BLACK

Black is not shown in the color chart

Interiors were usually two tone

B Pillars in Sedans



Too Much Change is a Disaster

Ford Edsel – mechanically a good car but looked “dumb”, a classic example of a failure due to bad styling.



No coordinated design theme.

Exceptions – No Significant Styling Changes



1950 – VW and Jeep

These vehicles were unique.



1959 – VW and Jeep



Part of the market appeal was in the “look” of the vehicle.



The US during the 1950s

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” from A Tale Of Two Cities by Charles Dickens.

Quoted by high school English teacher Richard Dadier from the 1955 movie “Blackboard Jungle” in a discussion about life in 1955.



CONELRAD – CONtrol of ELectromagnetic RADiation

1951 – 1963 – radios were marked with the CONELRAD stations 640 and 1240.

When Russian bombers are detected coming in over northern Canada major radio stations switched to 640 and 1240 for broadcasting emergency instructions.

In case of attack most radio stations shut down and the others broadcast “round robin” so the Russian bombers could not use radio stations as a homing signal to the target.





END