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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Old Car Prices Were 'Different'

By NEIL A. MATHESON

MY THANKS this week go to Ken Cameron, Cape Traverse for his list of car prices back to 1930 through the outlet Smith Motors, Summerside.

Smith Motors were selling Cadillac, LaSalle, Buick, Marquette, Pontiac and Chevrolet cars.

Here are some 1930 Chevrolet prices to look at and talk about. They were listed as "retail delivery prices":

Roadsters \$815, on time, \$770 cash

Sport Roadsters \$910 on time, \$860 cash

Superior Roadsters were \$1,015 on time, \$950 cash.

A coach sold for \$940 on time, \$895 cash.

The most expensive of the Chevrolet lines at that time was the Special Sedan which sold for \$1087 on time and \$1020 cash.

A one and one-half ton truck heavy duty sold for \$1,000 on time, \$1,020 cash.

Extras Included

A FOOTNOTE said "These prices include spare tires, front and rear bumpers, all except the truck which does not have a rear bumper.

The note explained further that the above prices included G.M.A.C. charges and the purchaser must have half cash, with the balance on G.M.A.C. note.

Smith Motors had three Marquette cars in stock, two dark blue and the other light blue. The listed price was \$1,100 each but a footnote to their dealers suggested they quote a price of \$1,200 when they had to take a trade in.

Low Interest Rates

INTEREST RATES were low in those days, and prices today are perhaps almost four times as high. But a colleague of mine here at the Guardian says cars were harder to buy in those days than they are now, despite the great difference in prices. It was harder to get money then, he explained.

A 1930 Chevrolet delivery sold for \$640 and a man said this was \$40 less than the same Ford vehicle.

A sheet dated January 12, 1931 listed a Coupe as selling for \$1,203, a Sport Coupe at \$1,316, a Cabriolet at \$1,371, a Sedan at \$1,299 and a Sport Sedan at \$1,402.

A note said the prices were for cash, or cash and convenient GMAC payments.

Stressed was the instruction that "No discount will be allowed for the above prices, no chains, extra equipment or license will be allowed free of charge. All used cars taken in trade must be valued by our appraiser before an order will be accepted by us", Smith Motors instructed their dealers.

I don't know anything about automobile corporation financing now – I borrow money at the bank for car purchases I make. But the length of time allowed on time payments seemed to have been very short in the references I find in these papers.

Only Seven Months?

FOR EXAMPLE under “Retail cash and Time prices” I find one-half cash, balance seven months, or the balance in payments at four months with apparently the thing being cleared off at eight months.

I'm not criticizing for I know nothing about how car purchases were financed in those days – this was 1931 – but merely passing on the information which should be of interest to many readers.

Incidentally a Chevrolet roadster sold for \$714 in 1931, if the payment was in cash. A sport Sedan was the most expensive Chevrolet mentioned in these papers and it cost \$960 cash. The time price is printed at \$1,024, but the price of \$1,000 is penciled in as an apparent change.

Again the instruction is that “nothing but cash and GMAC accepted as payment”. No trades were to be taken unless the deal was approved by Smith Motors.

Here are shipping weights for some of the 1931 cars.

The McLaughlin-Buicks were mentioned for the first time and the weight was 3,110 for a coach, 3,215 for a Sedan, 3,755 for a Sport Roadster, 4,320 for an 8-87 Sedan and 4,525 for an 8-90 Sedan.

Pontiacs weighed from 2,645 pounds for a Coupe in 1931 to 2,765 pounds for a Sport sedan.

Model A Ford Prices

HERE ARE some retail prices for the Model A Ford of 1931:

A Roadster sold for \$650, a Sport Coupe for \$735 and a Deluxe Coupe for \$765. A Ford was \$840.

If you are wondering, I don't know what a Phaeton was either. A station wagon sold for \$875, a deluxe Coupe for \$765. A Fordor was \$840.

Some idea of used car prices in the Thirties is gleaned from a list at Harding's Garage, Summerside.

A 1937 Pontiac had an asking price of \$775, a 1929 DeSota had a tag of \$100. They were asking \$650 for a Terraplane coach 1937 vintage. A Studebaker Sedan 1931 was \$125.

A bright green Terraplane sedan, 1938 was listed at \$900.

1930 Nash Sedan At \$175

1930 NASH sedan was listed at \$175.

Remember the Essex cars with their low power engines. This 1927 Sedan cost \$75. That will give readers a rough idea of what new and used cars sold at back in the early and later 1930's

My thanks again to Mr. Dawson for letting me have the old lists.

