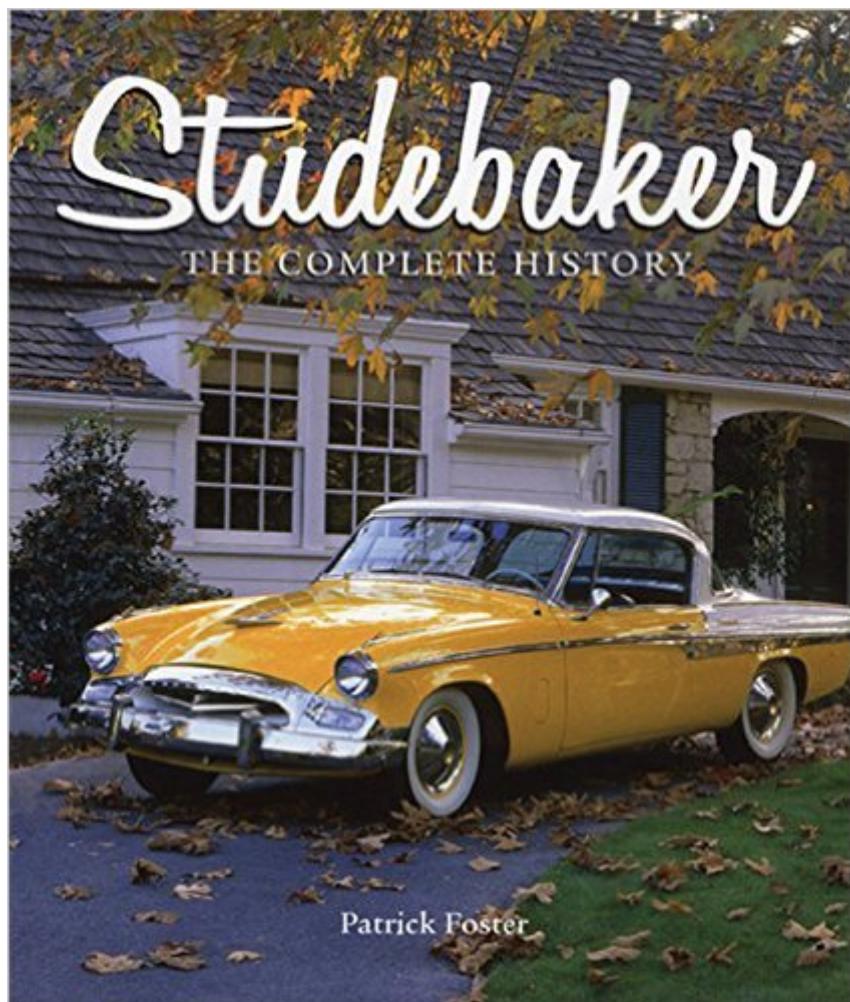


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Studebaker: The Complete History



Synopsis

The Studebaker history is a short one, and a sad one at that, but inside Studebaker, you'll find a meticulously crafted history of the early automobile. Studebaker began business as a builder of covered wagons. By 1921 they were the number four automaker in the nation. By 1932 they were bankrupt. And for Studebaker, one of the most remarkable stories in American automotive history, that was only the beginning. *Studebaker: America's Most Successful Independent Automaker* tells the full and fabulously colorful history of this icon of the American automotive scene. Rife with triumph and tragedy, brilliant moves and boneheaded decisions, Studebaker's decades of building cars makes for a tempestuous saga featuring some of the more interesting characters in the twentieth-century business world. Above all, the story features cars that, for countless Americans, truly defined driving: not just the Champion, which rocketed the company back to the top in 1939, or the 1950s Raymond Loewy-designed Starliner, deemed a "work of art" by the Museum of Modern Art, but also the Hawks and Larks that so many drivers loved. As the book traces Studebaker's fortunes from success to crisis to merger and back, it also dwells with loving photographic attention on the vehicles, from the first electric car to the last Avanti.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Patrick Foster is the world's leading expert on American Motors Corporation. His corporate biography, *American Motors: The Last Independent* is excellent. He also writes extensively on the independent auto manufacturers of the 1950's and 1960's in old car magazines. This is a coffee

table book in large format (11 by 9) with large illustrations, lots of white space, double spaced type, and not much text. It suffers when compared to The Last Independent and to Tom Bonsall's book, More Than They Promised: The Studebaker Story. The author structures his narrative largely based on data and text from individual annual reports but never gives an overview of company financial trends or what was happening to Studebaker's market share or rank in the industry. He spends too much time explaining the intricacies of various parts of the bankruptcy code. For the five year period 1933 - 1937, which includes the 1936 models that brought Studebaker out of bankruptcy, he includes only two pictures, a 1933 station wagon and a 1937 pickup. The discussion of Studebaker's actions in the early 1950's is excellent. The most glaring omission in the book is the almost total lack of discussion about any Studebaker pickup trucks. There are a few pictures but that's about it. If you love looking at illustrations from Studebaker sales brochures and promotional photos from the 1950's, this is the book for you. If you want a comprehensive history of Studebaker, look elsewhere.

The author is a fan of the old now gone independants. Granted, they did come out with lots of innovative features. His gushing about the looks of some of the Studebakers get's a little tiresome. It is a good story though. I feel he has gotten the history down well. It appears management didn't do a good job of managing. Good read. I recommend it.

A good description of the rise and fall of Studebaker, presented with accompanying pictures. Sometimes the pictures are out of sync with the text, but this is not too distracting. The fabulous cars are seen in their glory, with the story beginning with the horse-drawn wagons, and continuing with the trucks, airplane engines, and tracked vehicles of World War-II. The story ends with the Avanti, of course, and the 1963 model looks good in today's terms. Good coverage of all the models, including the trucks, the Hawks, the Larks, the Commanders and Presidents. Discusses the relationships with Packard and others.

Foster has done a super job on this book. His research into the South Bend legend is to be applauded. As a current Avanti II owner I found the 1960s section of the book to be quite interesting. Not only does Patrick describe the cars Studebaker produced, but he also analyzes the business conditions that Studebaker had to navigate through during its existence. The men who guided Studebaker also get their time in the spotlight. Foster criticizes Studebaker management and labor several times for decisions that ultimately would undo the proud auto maker. I am old enough to remember the marque and lived close enough to South Bend to also have fond memories of

Studebaker. A cousin lived in a home purportedly owned by a former Studebaker executive. If you love old cars, American business history and such, this book should be a must read. I never claimed to be a Studebaker expert, nor do I now, but this book has broadened my knowledge of the company and its cars. I liked this one. A whole lot.

Purchased this book for my father for Christmas. He grew up in the 50's and 60's and always had fond memories of Studebakers. He tore into the book and enjoyed it at once. Its a great mix of history with nice vivid photography and is very readable instead of just being a picture book.

Patrick Foster will probably fix all the mistakes in this book when they bring out a 2nd edition. (even the dust jacket has some big boo-boos) Studebaker made bad decisions time after time once it began to make cars, ultimately killing its ability to compete in the marketplace. But the successes were unforgettable! The Loewy Coupes are so gorgeous, the bulletnosed coupes and sedans so odd, and the finned Hawks were so sexy! Buy this book for the great pictures, get the real Studebaker story elsewhere.

Even if you thought you have learned everything about Studebaker, you will find new info in this book. Not only a great coffee table book but also a great reference book.

This excellent history of the Studebaker Brothers' contributions to transportation in America should be a "must read" for students of that subject and those who want to understand some of the mistakes that can be and have been made in executing the automobile business. But for an absence of sound business vision, Studebaker could and should still be a leader in this industry. The book provides some insights into the errors that the company's most senior management made and the impacts that failing to invest in one's (the company's) future can have. And how such errors in judgment can assure eventual failure. An easily readable, insightful book.

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