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1954 CHRYSLER IMPERIAL Custom



Royal Classic

THE YELLOW CAR
1954 CHRYSLER IMPERIAL CUSTOM

 **1954 Chrysler Imperial Custom** OWNER - John Barrett

1954 CHRYSLER IMPERIAL Custom

I first encountered the yellow car in a Kijiji ad in November, 2023. My brother Darrell had directed me to the ad and suggested it was my kind of car. It was; it ticked most of the boxes: great color, wire wheels, hemi, continental kit, great presentation, priced right, and it was a local car so no out of province inspection would be required. The ad included video of the car from when it was listed on Bring a Trailer (BAT) twice in 2023. I stewed about it for a couple of weeks and let the ad age while I thought about where I could store it and if I really needed another car. Anyway, I decided the car deserved a closer look and arranged to inspect it and test drive it.



THE MIGHTY NORTHERN MOPARS

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1954 Chrysler Imperial Custom OWNER - John Barrett

The Imperial was in a shop in NE Calgary after having been stored for years in an arena somewhere in Springbank. Apparently the owner had bought three cars in a package deal and had done very little with this car.

I had been advised earlier that there were starting problems and that a 12-volt battery was in the car. That raised alarms for me as it should be a 6-volt system. I agreed to take a 6-volt battery and asked them not to operate on 12 volts. My inspection revealed that the car still had a 6-volt generator, regulator, starter, etc. but most bulbs had been changed to 12. The polarity was also backwards as all 6-volt cars are positive ground. With a correct battery and polarity the car started fine but with a bit of after noise. Amazingly, the generator and regulator seemed ok, as well as the temp and fuel gauges. Oil and amp lights bulbs were toast. Test driving in the industrial area was interesting as I kept hearing a "crank" sound. I attributed it to body flex over uneven ground, until the engine died. The car was out of gas and I could hear the electric fuel pump running. The "crank" sound was the fuel tank collapsing. When I removed the gas cap there was a whoosh sound and other noises as the vacuum was relieved and the tank magically popped back into shape.

There were a few more minor discoveries but no deal killers and I made a deal. The deal included delivery on a flat deck to my farm at Okotoks.

Over the last couple of years, I put a lot of TLC into the car to make it safe and a bit prettier. This included touching up paint, aligning the rear bumper, continental kit, and hood; and replacing a broken tail light. The wheels looked ok from five feet but had minor corrosion; the tires also looked ok except for age and cracking. I ordered new wheels from Wheel Smith in California and I picked up new Coker Wide Whites from The Coker Booth at the Portland Swap Meet in April of this year.

I discovered early on that, mechanically, the car had major issues, and was not fit to drive. The brakes were a mess, with leaking cylinders on all corners, and the brake shoes were out of adjustment to the point that the LF drum was forced on and dragging. (I should note here

that the heel of each brake shoe is anchored with an eccentric pin on '56 and older models, and drum to shoe clearance should be .006". Special tools are needed to adjust this before the drum is installed). Some other significant surprises were: there was conventional oil in the engine (lacking additives for flat lifter cams), no oil in the diff, the RR brake drum axle nut was only finger tight, and there was no cotter pin (the axle nut should be torqued to 140 ft/lbs), the LR drum was bent from using the wrong puller (old mopar had tapered rear axles, requiring a special hub puller), the front wheel bearings still had original grease but the drum cavity was packed with new grease, the idler pulley bearing was gone, and there was terrible belt misalignment.

I won't go into the myriad number of electrical issues that we all know require endless time to resolve.

Anyway, fast forward to 2025 and I was hoping to have the car ready for our NIM August car show but to no avail, as it was still on the hoist with brake problems. But I was very excited to introduce the car at the September 28 show in High River. It was very gratifying for me to see the yellow car receive such a positive response and, even better, it started and made it back to the shop afterwards. The Yellow Car was also the lead picture and story in Nice Old Cars. It was all very cool and my thanks for the many comments



1954 Chrysler Imperial Custom OWNER - John Barrett



SPECIFICATIONS:

Purchased: by John Barrett December 17, 2023
Model: C64 (Custom) Newport two-door six passenger hardtop
Production: 1,249 two-door hardtops built in Detroit
Wheelbase: 131.5", weight 4345 lbs (1975 lbs)
Overall length: (Custom hardtop) 224" plus the continental kit

VIN Series: C64 - 7775001 to 7780767
Motor numbers: C542-8-1001 to C542-8-40478.
Engine: V-8 331 hemi with cast iron block with five main bearings and hydraulic valve lifters. Imperial also featured the first four-barrel Carter Carburetor - Carter WCFB 20415 WCFB 20415

Displacement: 331.1 cubic inches
Bore and Stroke: 3.81 x 3.62 inches
Compression Ratio: 7.50:1
Brake Horsepower: 235 @ 4400 rpm
Torque: 330 ft-lbs of torque at 2600 rpm

SPECIFICATIONS:

Transmission: Powerflite was Chrysler's first fully-automatic transmission, marking a major step forward from earlier semi-automatic systems such as the M6 Presto-Matic and the Hy-Drive. Powerflite was initially offered in the Chrysler Imperial and New Yorker models, and expanded later to other Chrysler divisions like Dodge and Plymouth. Powerflite, a two-speed fully-automatic, was the predecessor to the Torqueflite three-speed introduced in the 1956 Imperial.

OPTIONS:
• Power drum brakes (optional on Custom)
Note: Power disc brakes were also an option. They were a totally-enclosed unit (and impossible to find parts for)
• Power steering (standard on Crowns)
• Power windows

• Power seat
• Radio
• Heater
• Solex tinted glass
• Wire wheels
• Continental wheel kit

• Windshield washer
• Outside rearview mirrors

Regards to all,
John Barrett