



Automotive History Preservation Society  
P.O. Box 467  
Perry, MI. 48872

## 1959 DESOTO CARS DESCRIBED

**1959 DESOTO - GENERAL:** The DeSoto remained virtually unchanged from the 1958 model year, except for trim and front fascia, where DeSotos had three air scoops built right into the bi-level front bumper. At the bottom was a full-width scoop. Above it, on either side of the license plate indentation, were two more. A rectangular cross-hatched grille insert stretched between the headlights.

On the body sides, full-length sweep spears were narrower and redesigned. They took a dip behind the rear wheel openings and then curved upwards towards the tips of tall tailfins. The tri-cluster turret shaped taillight lenses were still there while a large double rear bumper with beauty panels between the top and bottom members was featured.

After such a wonderful year in 1957, the recession was hammering the line very hard once again in 1959, so the powers that be at DeSoto were wise to keep new tooling to a minimum. Not only that, but this would be the final year for separate frame and body construction in all Chrysler products, so there was even more incentive to keep sheet metal changes to a minimum. 1959 would be the last season for DeSoto convertibles and station wagons.

**INNOVATIONS:** Swivel buckets made their debut across the entire Chrysler Corporation line this year.

**1959 FIRESWEEP SERIES MS1-L (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8):** There were no series nameplates on Firesweep models. The silver colored inserts—standard in Fireflite and Firedome—that ran along the body sides were an option. The four-door sedan had painted side window trim. At the start of the season, four body styles appeared in this line, but two "SeVille" hardtops were introduced as mid-run additions.

Standard equipment included: front foam cushions, dual exhausts on the convertible, four black nylon "Captive Air" tubeless tires on three-seat station wagons, and front and rear carpets (except on the six-passenger station wagon and four-door sedan.

The "B" Series 350 CID V-8 engine was replaced with the 361 CID unit.

**1959 FIREDOME SERIES MS2-M (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8):** Firedomes were identified by a nameplate on the front fenders. Silver color sweep inserts were optional. Side window trim on four-door sedans was of bright metal. Special appointments including plaid upholstery, padded dash and custom steering wheel were added to the Firedome standard equipment list in the spring of 1959.

Standard equipment was the same as in Firesweeps, plus: backup lights, padded dash panel, rear foam cushions, front and rear carpets, wheel covers, special steering wheel and vari-speed windshield wipers.

The Firedome was now equipped with a 383 CID "B" Series V-8.

**1959 FIREFLITE SERIES MS3-H (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8):** Fireflites looked like Firedomes, but could be distinguished by their "Fireflite" nameplate on the front fenders and by large medallions above the dip in the side trim on the rear fenders. This model also moved up to the 383 CID V-8, albeit with a 4-barrel carburetor.

Standard equipment matched all found on Firedomes plus: Torqueflite transmission, front and rear bumper guards, electric clock, hand brake warning light, color-sweep molding, roof molding package, side molding package number 2, windshield washer, and 8.50 x 14 tires. Three-seat station wagons came with a power tailgate and four-ply black nylon "Captive Air" tubeless tires as regular features.

**1959 ADVENTURER SERIES MS3-S (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8):** Adventurers were now their own series, and cars in this line had "Adventurer" nameplates on their front fenders. Gold color sweep inserts were affixed and the grille was also finished in gold. A narrow vertical medallion was placed at the dip in the side trim on rear fenders. Bright wheel cutout moldings were used. The two-door hardtop had simulated Scotch-grain leather finish for the roof.

Standard equipment was the same as for Fireflites, plus: power steering, power brakes, dual exhausts, dual rear radio antennas, dual outside rear view mirrors, white sidewall Rayon tires (size 8.50 x 14), brushed aluminum sweep insert, deck lid moldings; swivel front driver's seat, and the high-performance Adventurer 383 CID dual four-barrel carburetor V-8 fitted with a longer duration camshaft.

### MODEL/ENGINE I.D. DATA:

- **Firesweep serial numbers:** Cars built in Detroit had serial numbers that started with M412-100001. Cars built in Los Angeles had serial numbers that started with M414-100001. Station wagons had unique serial numbers that started with M471-100001. All wagons were Detroit built. Motor numbers started with MS1-L 10001.
- **Firedome serial numbers.** Cars built in Detroit had serial numbers that started with M43-100001. No cars were built in Los Angeles. Motor numbers started with MS2-M 10001.
- **Fireflite serial numbers.** Cars built in Detroit had serial numbers that started M451-100001. No cars were built in Los Angeles. Motor numbers started with MS3-H 1001
- **Adventurer serial numbers.** All Adventurers were built at the Detroit factory. Adventurer Serial numbers started with M491-100001. Motor numbers started with MS3-S 1001.

Serial number codes were on the left front door hinge pillar post. V-8 the engine numbers were positioned at the top of the engine block under the water outlet elbow. 2-digit code numbers were provided for positive identification of body style type. See Production Figures Chart for body style ID numbers.

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#### **BODY PAINT CODE/COLORS:**

- A Black
- B Bahama Blue
- B Catalina Blue (Firesweep)
- C Caribbean Blue
- C Glacier Blue (Firesweep)
- D Heather Blue
- E Spring Green (Firesweep)
- E Surf Green
- F Forest Green
- F Jade Green (Firesweep)
- J Riviera Turquoise (Firesweep)
- K Capri Turquoise
- L Aztec Silver
- M Dawn Gray (Firesweep)
- M French Gray
- N Flamingo Pink (Firesweep)
- P Bimini Coral
- P Tangier Rose (Firesweep)
- Q Bradenton Blue
- R Castilian Red
- U Canyon Beige
- U Morocco Beige (Firesweep)
- W Golden Tan
- W Tropical Tan (Firesweep)
- X Pearl White
- Y Aspen Yellow
- Y Sunshine Yellow (Firesweep)

#### **DESOTO ENGINES:**

- **DeSoto Firesweep V-8.** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 361 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.12" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.0:1. Horsepower: 295 @ 4600 RPM. Torque: 390 @ 2400 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetor: Carter BBD two-barrel, model number 2870S.
- **DeSoto Firedome V-8.** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 383 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.25" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.1:1. Horsepower: 305 at 4600 RPM. Torque: 410 @ 2400 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetor: Carter BBD two-barrel, model number 2871S.
- **DeSoto Fireflite V-8.** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 383 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.25" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.1:1. Horsepower: 325 at 4600 RPM. Torque: 425 @ 2800 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetor: Carter AFB four-barrel, model number 2794S.
- **DeSoto Adventurer V-8. Optional All Models.** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 383 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.25" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.1:1. Horsepower: 350 at 5000 RPM. 425 @ 3600 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetors: Two (2) Carter AFB four-barrels; front, model number 2790S, rear, model number 2791S.

#### **CHASSIS:**

- **Wheelbase:** Firesweep 122". All others 126".
- **Overall length:** Firesweep station wagon 216.1". Firesweep passenger cars w/bumper guards 217.1". Firesweep w/o bumper guards 215.5". Firedome, Fireflite and Adventurer 221.1". Firedome w/o bumper guards 219.5". All other station wagons 220.1".
- **Front tread:** Firesweep 60.9". All others 61".
- **Rear tread:** All 59.7".
- **Tires:** Firesweep 8.00 x 14. Firedome, Fireflite, Adventurer 8.50 x 14.

#### **POWERTRAIN OPTIONS:**

- Three-speed manual transmission was the base price unit on Firesweep
- Powerflite and Torqueflite were optional on Firesweep.
- Torqueflite automatic transmission was included in the price of Fireflite and Adventurer models.
- Manual transmission models used 3.54:1 rear axle as standard
- Automatic transmission models used 3.31:1 rear axle as standard.

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#### SIGNIFICANT OPTIONS:

- Adventurer deck lid molding (\$11).
- Adventurer dual four-barrel 383 CID V-8 for Firesweep (\$142); for Firedome (\$122); for Fireflite (\$108).
- Air conditioning - dual with hot water heater for station wagons (\$710).
- Air Conditioning (\$483).
- Air conditioning with accessory groups (\$404).
- Air conditioning with hot water heater (\$501).
- Air foam seat cushion as option (\$11).
- Aluminum sweep insert (\$21).
- Anti-freeze (\$4).
- Appearance group (\$63).
- Automatic headlamp beam changer (\$50).
- Backup lights (\$11).
- Backup lights for Firesweep (\$12).
- Basic radio group (\$160).
- Basic trim group (\$102).
- Color-sweep trim (\$21).
- Convenience group, V-100 only (\$16).
- DeLuxe V-200 floor covering (\$17).
- DeLuxe wheel covers (\$16).
- Dual exhaust option (\$34).
- Electric clock (\$18).
- Front and rear bumper guards for Firedome (\$12) for Firesweep (\$24)
- Front and rear carpets for Firesweep (\$14).
- Heater - hot water (\$98).
- Heater - instantaneous (gasoline) (\$135).
- Hot water heater with defroster (\$74).
- Left-hand outside rear view mirror (\$5).
- Manual dual rear antenna (\$16).
- Outside rear view mirror (\$6).
- Padded dashboard for Firesweep (\$21); for Firedome, Fireflite (\$13); standard on Adventurer.
- Photo electric tilt rear view mirror (\$23).
- Power brakes - Firesweep (\$43), Firedome, Fireflite (\$41), standard on Adventurer.
- Power steering - Firesweep (\$106), Firedome, Fireflite (\$73), standard on Adventurer.
- Power tailgate on six-passenger wagon (\$40).
- Power tailgate window (\$33)
- Power window lifts (\$106).
- Powerflite transmission on Firesweep (\$189).
- Radio - Pushbutton (\$59).
- Radio - Electric Tuner with antenna (\$94).
- Radio - Standard, with antenna (\$94).
- Rear air suspension (\$140).
- Rear seat speaker (\$17).
- Rear window - Panoramic (\$24).
- Rear window defogger (\$21).
- Remote control outside rear view mirror Firesweep, Firedome, Fireflite (\$18); on Adventurer (\$11); on
- Roof molding package - Number 1 for four-door sedans and station wagons (\$14).
- Roof molding package - Number 2 for Firesweep and Firedome Sportsman (\$38).
- Sill and lower deck molding package (\$27).
- Six-way seat (\$101).
- Solex safety glass (\$37).
- Solex tinted glass (\$43).
- Station wagon luggage locker (\$31).
- Station wagon third seat (\$61).
- Steering wheel - special plastic (\$10).
- Sure-Grip differential (\$50).
- Swivel seat - manual (\$86). Note: Swivel seats available in Firesweep Sportsman; not available on Firedome four-door sedan and Fireflite wagon.
- Swivel Seat - passenger seat Adventurer (\$101).
- Swivel Seat - power front Firedome/Fireflite (\$187).
- Torqueflite transmission - Firesweep (\$227).
- Two-tone paint - special or solid (\$71).
- Two-tone paint - standard (\$21).
- Undercoating (\$14).
- Undercoating with under-hood pad (\$14).
- Variable speed windshield single wiper (\$7).
- Variable speed windshield dual wipers (\$17)
- Wheel covers - full (\$18).
- White sidewall tires (\$29).
- Whitewall 8.00 x 14 four-ply Rayon tires on all but Explorer Wagon (\$42).
- Whitewall 8.50 x 14 four-ply Rayon tires on all but Explorer (\$46).
- Whitewall 9.80 x 14 four-ply Rayon tires (\$147).
- Windshield washer (\$12).

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** Due to ever decreasing sales, a decision was made to integrate the Chrysler and DeSoto bodies/styling/wheelbase with that of the lower-level Chrysler cars for 1960 when unit body construction would be introduced.

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**PRODUCTION:** DeSoto production slipped further from the previous year's low point of 49,445, down to a dismal 45,724. Could anything save DeSoto? See attached chart for production numbers.

1959 DeSoto Models								
Model Name	Series Number	Body Number	Wheelbase	Body Style Type & Seating	Factory Price	Shipping WeighHardt op	Body Totals	Model Totals
DeSoto Firesweep	413	41	122	4-dr Sedan-6P	\$ 2,904	3,670	9,649	20,834
	414	43	122	4-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,038	3,700	2,875	
	412	23	122	2-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 2,967	3,625	5,481	
	415	27	122	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 3,315	3,840	596	
	476	45A	122	4-dr Station Wagon-6P	\$ 3,366	3,950	1,054	
	477	45B	122	4-dr Station Wagon-9P	\$ 3,508	3,980	1,179	
							<b>TOTAL</b>	
DeSoto Firedome	433	41	126	4-dr Sedan-6P	\$ 3,234	3,840	9,171	15,076
	434	43	126	4-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,398	3,895	2,862	
	432	23	126	2-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,341	3,795	2,744	
	435	27	126	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 3,653	4,015	299	
							<b>TOTAL</b>	
DeSoto Fireflite	453	41	126	4-dr Sedan-6P	\$ 3,763	3,920	4,480	9,127
	454	43	126	4-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,888	3,950	2,364	
	452	23	126	2-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,831	3,910	1,393	
	455	27	126	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 4,152	4,105	188	
	478	45A	126	4-dr Station Wagon-6P	\$ 4,216	4,170	271	
	479	45B	126	4-dr Station Wagon-9P	\$ 4,358	4,205	433	
							<b>TOTAL</b>	
DeSoto Adventurer	492	23	126	2-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 4,427	3,980	590	687
	495	27	126	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 4,749	4,120	97	
							<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>Production TOTAL</b>								<b>45,724</b>

**CAR IMAGES**



The 1959 Adventurer convertible challenged the Chrysler 300 for looks and power. The adventurer's 383 CID 350 HP V8 was underrated. Only 97 were made – a bit more than 1958.

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#### CAR IMAGES Continued



The 1959 Adventurer still was available in hardtop guise, and it was now powered by a 383 CID, 350 HP dual 4-barrel V-8. 590 were delivered, up significantly from 1958's 350. Perhaps including it in the brochure helped sales.



The 1959 Firelite convertible was a low production piece with only 186 produced. The Recession just drove people away from such extravagance.



The 1959 4-door Sportsman hardtop was a classy ride. Class, however, wasn't selling with only 2,364 delivered.

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**CAR IMAGES Continued**



The 1959 Fireflite 2-door Sportsman hardtop could be had with the Adventurer 350 HP 383 CID V8 for only \$108. Even with that going for it, only 1,393 were built.



The 1959 Fireflite 4-door sedan was the most prolific of that line at 4,480 produced. The sad part was that this car sold 11,565 units only two years before.



The Fireflite wagons, Explorer (9 passenger) and Shopper (6 passenger), only accounted for 433 and 271 units respectively, in 1959. DeSoto wagons were never very strong sellers, but they were off by 25 % this year over 1958's weak year.

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#### CAR IMAGES Continued



The 1959 Firelane convertible was also a low-numbers car with a mere 299 built.



The more practical Firelane 4-door Sportsman barely beat the 2-door in sales with 2,862 delivered.



The 1959 Firelane 2-door Sportsman saw 2,744 produced, 500 below 1958.

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#### CAR IMAGES Continued



As was usual, the 1959 Firedome 4-door sedan sold the most of all in that line, being second in total sales at 9,171.



Convertibles took a big beating in all of the DeSoto line for 1959. The 1959 Firesweep Convertible was also a rare piece with 596 sold. It did, however, almost tie with the total of Adventurer, Fireflite, and Firedome convertible sales.



The 1959 Firesweep 4-door Sportsman did not connect with the public any more than its larger & more expensive brethren, though its sales of 2,875 was slightly better than that of the Fireflite and Firedome.

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#### CAR IMAGES Continued



The 1959 Firesweep 2-door Sportsman could also be had with the 350 HP Adventurer V8 for only \$142. With 300 lbs pounds to carry around, this would have been the DeSoto performance piece. That may be one reason why 5,481 were sold – the third highest total model sales in this year.



The best selling DeSoto in 1959 was the Firesweep 4-door sedan - with 9,649 produced.



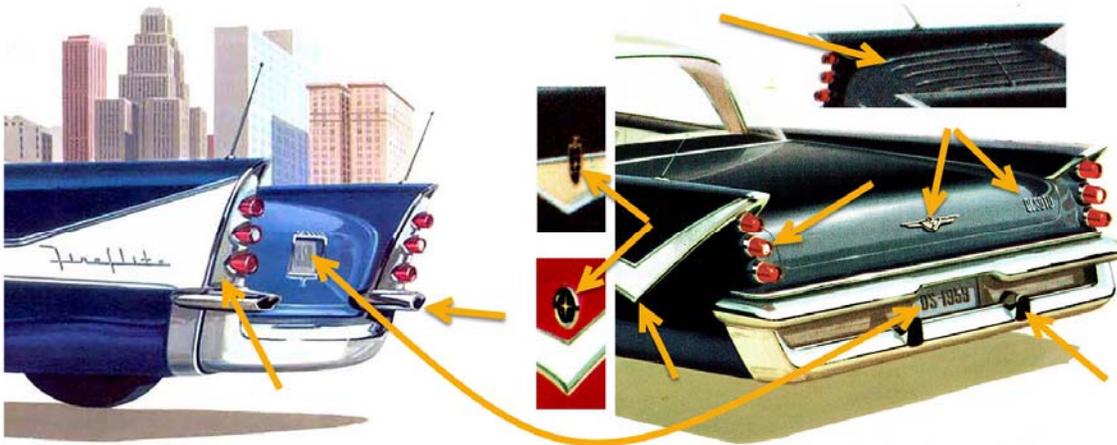
In 1959, the Firesweep line station wagons sold the best with 1,054 Shopper 6-passenger versions and 1,179 Explorer 9-passenger versions delivered. This was close to the previous year, but way under 1957.

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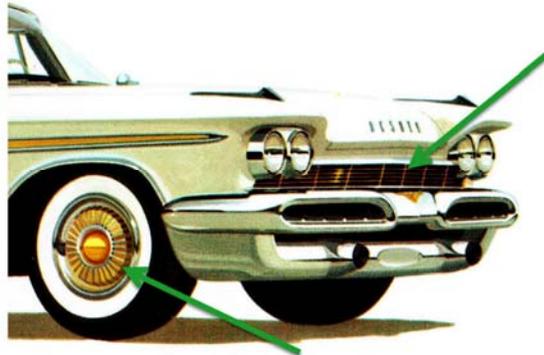
**STYLING CHANGES FOR 1959**



1959 DeSoto nose was a drastic change, not an evolution and it mirrored the Chrysler line. The fenders finish as an overhang atop the headlights. Note that the headlights are no longer inset in the fender but part of the front fascia with the parking lights in the headlight at the center of the bezel eyebrow. The grille is outside and above the bumper, which is still massive and contains two jet-like intakes. The faux hood air inlet is gone and the DeSoto emblem moves to the bumper. There is no hood ornament.



The 1959 DeSoto rear keeps the three taillights theme started in '56 but there is no chrome bezel. The lights rake forward rather than backward. The bumper is more massive but devoid of exhaust outlets. The Desoto emblem appears at the center of the trunk fascia, and "DESOTO" is on the right side. The license plate is now in the bumper. The side color inset forms a "check mark" as it runs up to terminate at the fin tip. For Fireflites a circular emblem is set in the space above the "V" formed by the upward sweep of the inset. The Adventurer receives a shield that bisects the top chrome line. Firedomes and Firesweeps had no emblem. See next page for side trim images. The Adventurer still had the trunk top luggage strips.



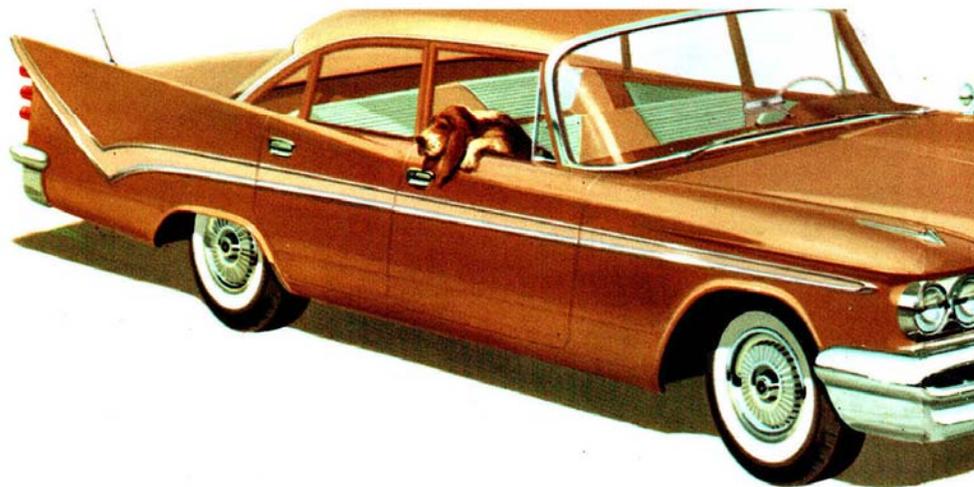
Unique trim in 1959 DeSoto Wagons and Adventurers is shown. The wagons continued with a chrome bezel around the taillights. The also retained the 1957-58 rear bumper and rear tailgate. Even Fireflite wagons had the emblem. Adventurers had gold anodized grilles and wheel covers but the fame front and rear facias as other models.

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## STYLING CHANGES FOR 1959



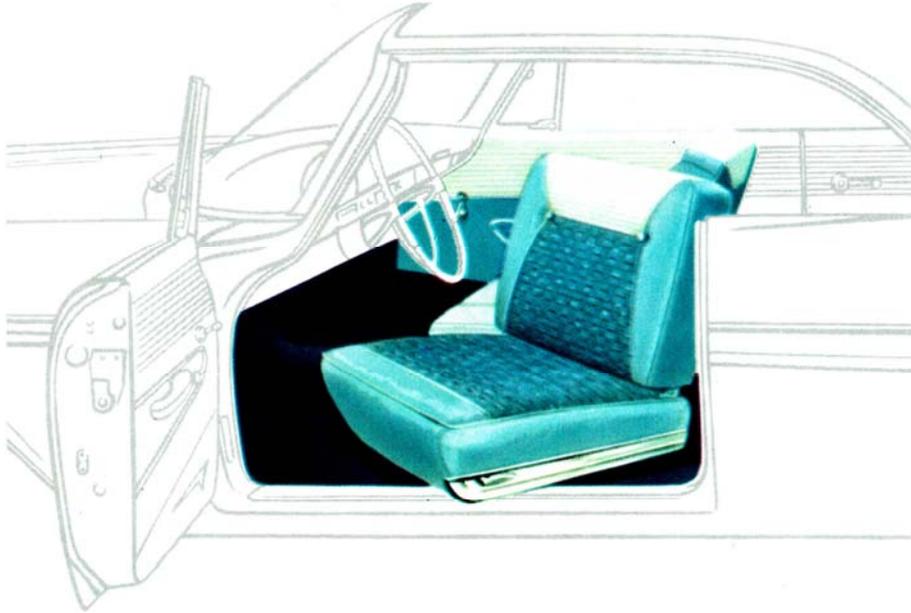
All 1959 DeSotos used the same side trim and two-tone paint inserts on all models except the Adventurer (top). The Adventurer's top chrome trim piece went straight back at an angle slightly different than the bottom strip, yet it appeared to almost be horizontal at the rear where it butted up against the bottom strip and the ran upward unparallel. The Adventurer emblem bisected the top strip at the lower strip's "V". All other models used the same side molding with only the Fireflite having the emblem in the "V".

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## SWIVEL BUCKET SEATS



New for the 1959 DeSoto and all other 2-door and convertible Chrysler Corporation cars was the swivel bucket seat option. The driver's seat was standard on the Adventurer and optional on all other DeSotos, including the Adventurer's passenger seat. The driver's seat was also power operated.