



## 39E – Chrysler Royal

This yellow and red Dinky toy was not marketed as a taxi, but only as one of the color variations of the Chrysler Royal sedan (actually a 1939 Royal). Like other Dinkies this one had pre-war and post-war production runs, from 1939 to 1940 and 1946 to 1952.

There were 11 different color combinations, one of which Dr. Force identifies as a yellow body with “tan” fenders though in pictures on the web the fenders look very red.

The striking combination of a yellow body and red fenders is something of a mystery. It seems a very odd choice for a standard sedan, one that would appeal to only a tiny segment of automobile buyers.

Of course Dinky was free to paint its toys in any colors it fancied without reference to the real world but, strangely, this red and yellow car mimics a taxi livery well known in New York during the 1940s and 1950s.

The color scheme seems to have been instituted by Desoto to identify their Custom and Skyview taxis, which appeared in New York in 1936. The Skyview had a sliding door in the roof (later a glass window) so that riders could admire the New York skyscrapers. New York Desoto cabs were operated by a variety of companies, many of whom retained the red/yellow livery.

During the 1940s and 1950s Desoto cabs were featured in a large number of movies set in New York, notably *On the Town* (1949) starring Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra as sailors on shore leave and Betty Garrett as a New York cab driver.

Perhaps due to influences like this the red and yellow livery, for many people, came to symbolize *all* New York taxis. As a result the web now contains many pictures of “restored” 1940s and 1950s sedans of different makes that sport Desoto livery to represent New York cabs of that period.

Many of these vintage red and yellow cars appear as taxis in movies that depict the 1940s and 1950s, notably *The Godfather* (1972) where both a 1946 Desoto and a

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**Above:** Betty Garrett's Desoto Skyview taxi from the 1949 movie *On the Town*.

1940 Chrysler Royal appear; *The Way We Were* (1973) which includes (probably) the same 1940 Royal, a 1950 Desoto and a 1946 Buick Super; *Pearl Harbor* (2001) which has a 1940 Lasalle; and *Florence Foster Jennings* (2016) which features a 1941 Chevrolet.

Here's the mystery. The first New York Desoto cabs appeared in New York in 1936, but color pictures of the red/yellow paint job only appear from the 1940s on. Earlier photos are black and white.

The 39E Dinky toy car was first produced in 1939. So did its colors reproduce the Desoto livery, or were they merely coincidental?

## Picture Sources (page 1)

**Left top** – liveauctioneers ([Link](#)).

**Left middle** – same as above.

**Left bottom** – thetradinggroup via ebay ([Link](#)).

**Right** – This photo is a still captured from the movie clip “Come Up to My Place,” from the movie *On the Town*, accessible on Youtube ([Link](#)).

## Movie Links

### The Godfather (1972)

- Desoto: Shot Café ([Link](#)).
- Chrysler Royal: Internet Movie Car Database ([Link](#)).

### The Way We Were (1973)

- Desoto and Chrysler Royal: Internet Movie Cars Database ([Link](#)).
- Buick Super: Internet Movie Cars Database ([Link](#)).

### Pearl Harbor (2001)

- Lasalle: Vintage Car Museum, Weatherford, Texas ([Link](#))

### Florence Foster Jennings (2016)

- Chevrolet: Vintage by the Sea, Morecambe (Flickr photostream) ([Link](#)).
- Chevrolet: reddit (r/whatsthis car, toptaul) ([Link](#)).
- Chevrolet: Liverpool Echo, June 16, 2015. ([Link](#))

## Other Notes

The source for information about Desoto taxis is Mark Theobald's detailed history on the Coachbuilt web site. Unfortunately it says nothing about the red/yellow livery ([Link](#)).

