

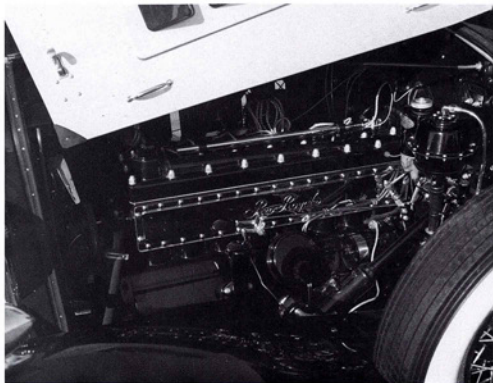
R E O

"A gorgeous new creation whose style is exclusive and whose behavior leaves nothing proper to be desired" was the verdict of *Automobile Topics* when the Royale was introduced. Since 1904 when, following a dispute with his board of directors, Ransom Eli Olds left the company bearing his name and chose his initials for his next automotive venture, the Reo had enjoyed a splendid reputation as a medium-priced car. The Royale, introduced for 1931, was the company's first (and last) attempt to challenge Packard and Chrysler in the luxury field.

In charge of Reo's engineering department was Horace T. Thomas. The Royale chassis was rugged and sturdy, with lever-action one-shot lubrication, thermostatically-controlled radiator shutters and huge fifteen-inch Lockheed hydraulic brakes. Statistically and dynamically balanced, the nine-main-bearing engine displaced 358 cubic inches. Ninety miles an hour was assured, courtesy partly of the 125 hp straight eight, partly because of the car's aerodynamics. The Royale was one of the first American production cars to

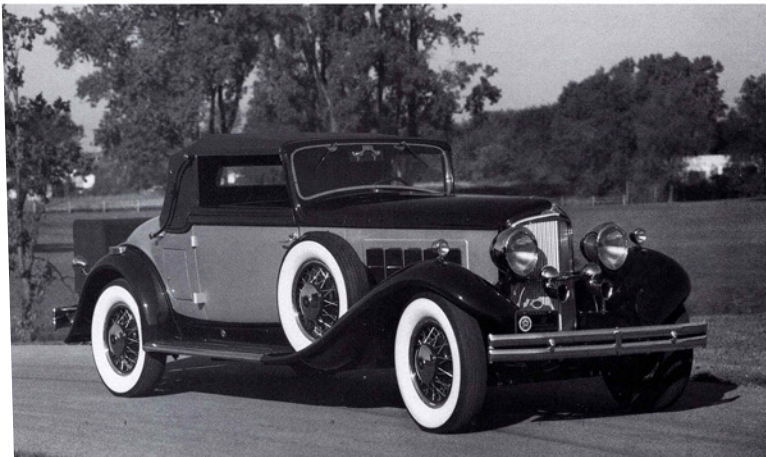
be wind-tunnel tested. Responsible for its wind-cheating form was Amos Northup, chief designer of the Murray Corporation of America. By previous coachbuilding standards, the Royale lines were smooth, soft

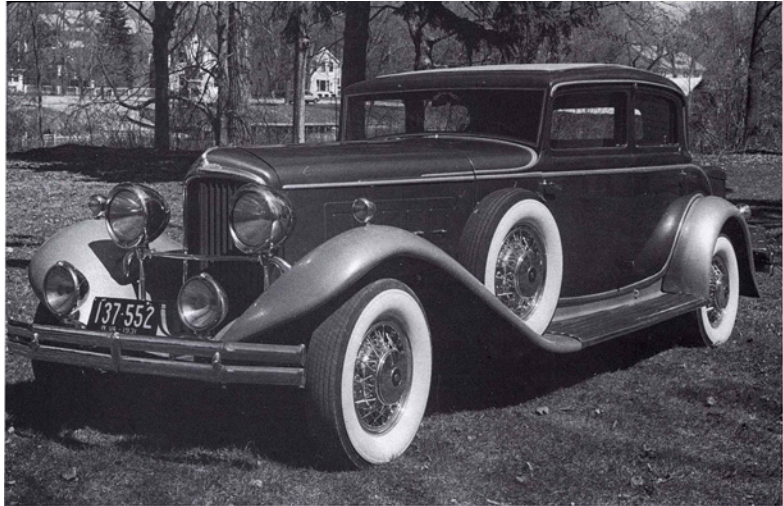
and gently flowing, with rolled edge fenders, a double curvature rear panel sweeping down to conceal the fuel tank and the roof panel curving back from the top of the fixed, sloping, narrow-pillared windshield.



1932 Reo Royale 8-35 Convertible Coupe (engine above)

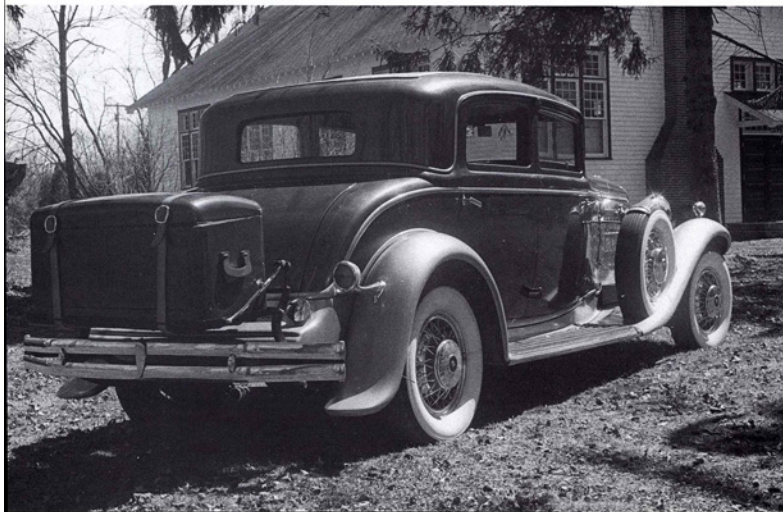
Owner: S. Ray Miller, Jr. of Elkhart, Indiana

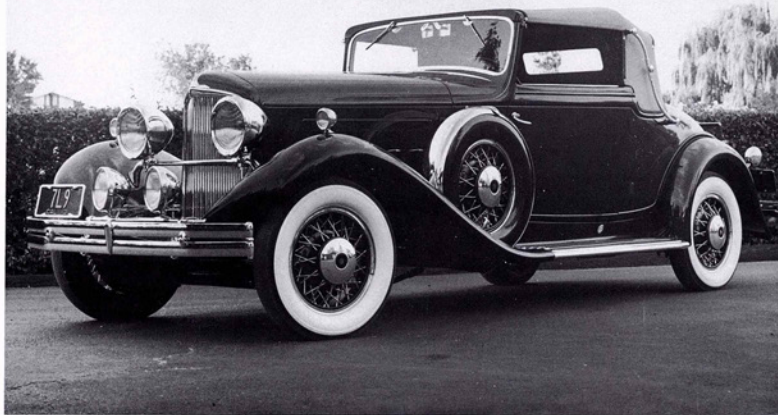




1931 Reo Royale 8-35 Sport Sedan, Dietrich

Owner: Alden Peach Thomas of Northport, Michigan



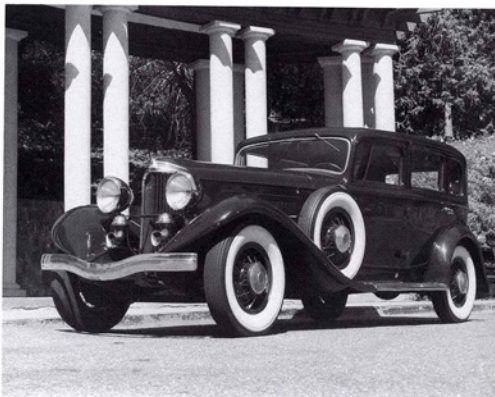


1931 Reo Royale 8-35 Convertible Coupe

Owner: Gregg Whitney of Orangevale, California

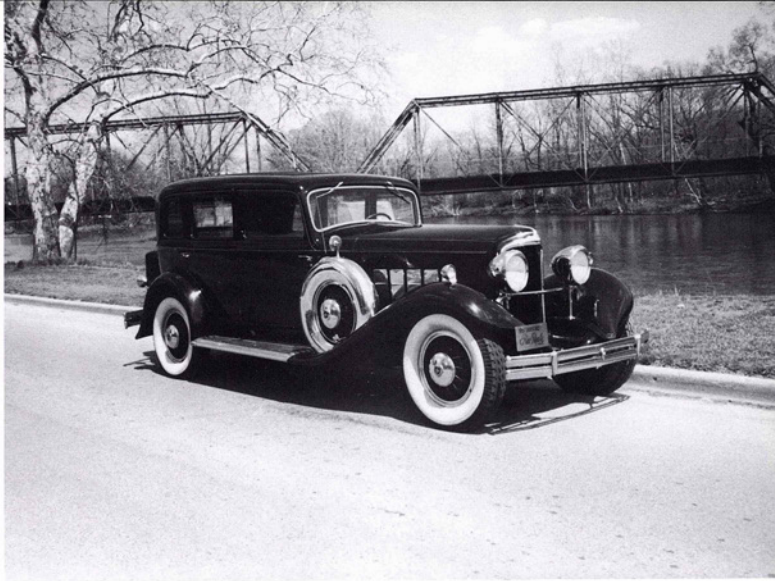
Six million dollars had been budgeted for the Royale's development—money well spent in the view of the Royale owners in this portfolio. "The finely detailed engine compartment is a joy in itself," says Ray Miller. "The long hood, sculptured fenders, the streamlined design . . . a beautiful Classic," comments Jim Callahan. Jim's 1933 Sedan is the only Classic Royale to feature the "Self-Shifter," which Reo introduced that year as America's first production automatic transmission of the Classic Era. The system was entirely workable, if not especially fast in doing its job.

With price tags in the \$2,500 range, the Royale should have been a runaway best seller. But at Reo red ink was everywhere, and the company was torn by internal strife. In a few years, automobile production would be discontinued to focus all energy on truck manufacture. Royale production had been limited. Just forty-nine convertibles were built: Gregg Whitney's '31, which was once owned by Universal Studios, is one of only a handful extant; Ray Miller's '32 likewise.



1933 Reo Royale N-1 Sedan

Owner: Jim Callahan of Oakland, California



Records from 1931 indicate the production of three Royales with Dietrich bodies. Alden Thomas' is the only one remaining: "I watched it being built. At the time I was in my junior year at the University of Michigan. I had been a member of the Reo family since birth because of my good fortune to have the vice president of engineering as my father. There just can't be a better car than my Royale. Being able to acquire it eight years ago was 'the impossible dream' come true."

Walter Sprague's '31 Sedan has a sentimental history as well. Reacquired by the company in the fifties and with the Diamond Reo emblem added to the hubcaps, the car was used for display at the Lansing plant and for V.I.P. chauffeuring until 1975 and the Diamond Reo bankruptcy auction. Walter was high bidder—and thus, in addition to owning a coveted Royale, has the distinction of possessing the last Reo passenger car ever sold by the factory.



1931 Reo Royale 8-35 Sedan

Owner: Walter Sprague of Portland, Michigan