

2005 is the 100th anniversary of the Reo, for 4 years producing Royale 8 cylinder Full Classics[®] 1931-1934

By Les Jackson

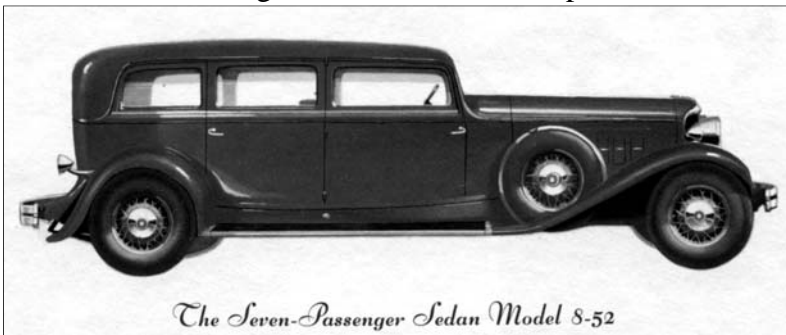
This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Reo automobile. The company was founded by Ransom Eli Olds after he left the company he had started earlier, Oldsmobile.

When he founded the new company there was objection by the new owners of Oldsmobile to the use of his name, so he used his initials instead and Reo was born.

The first Reo was shown at the New York auto show in January, 1905 and was an instant success.

We skip ahead to 1931, the first year of the Royale, now recognized as a Full Classic[®] by CCCA. The lesser Reos were called Flying Clouds and are not classified as Classics.

The car was being introduced near the depth



The Seven-Passenger Sedan Model 8-52

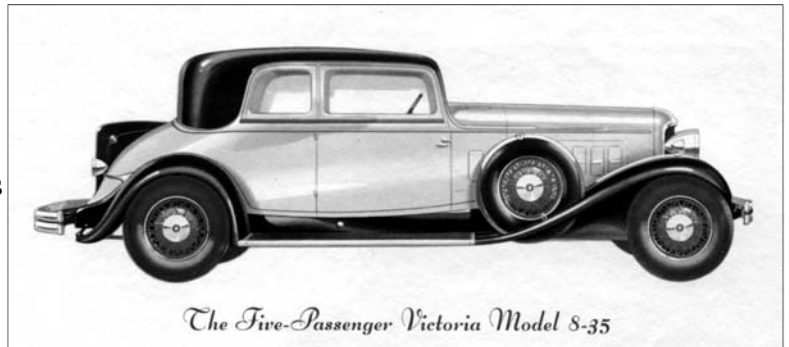
The 7 passenger sedan model 8-52 was only produced one year, 1932. The Royale sat on a 152 inch wheelbase, claimed to be the longest standard chassis in the U.S.A. The long wheelbase eliminated "road sway or weaving at high speeds," so said Reo advertising.

of the depression during a time Reo was losing money.

It had a lot to offer however: 125 horsepower engine with a 9 bearing crankshaft, one shot lubrication, and shutters which were thermostatically controlled.

The chief body designer for the custom coach maker Murray, Amos Northup, was the body designer.

The company continued to have financial difficulty and in 1936 it made its last passenger cars, concentrating on truck production thereafter. The last Royales were manufactured as 1934 models. Only the smaller non-classic Fly-



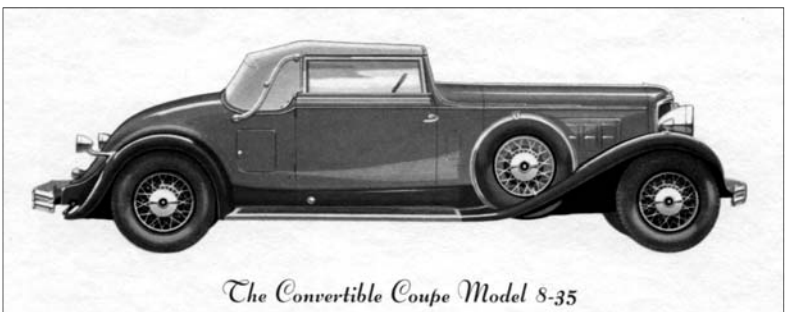
The Five-Passenger Victoria Model 8-35

Reo produced the slick looking Victoria 5 passenger in each of the Full Classic years 1931 through 1934. Note the front opening (suicide) doors which were used on all front doors of Reo Royales. The rear doors of the 4 door cars opened from the back.

ing Clouds were made in Reo's last two years.

The 1931 Royale was touted as having a "silent second transmission...You can slip from second to high or from high back to second at forty and faster—without hesitating in neutral or 'feeling in' the gears." The company bragged about minimizing engine vibration with a Lanchester vibration damper attached to the crankshaft. They also pointed out the one-shot chassis lubrication and the oversized hydraulic brakes with uniform pressure on all four wheels.

There were three models offered in 1931, a 4 door sedan, a Victoria coupe and 4 passenger coupe with rumble seat. They were in the 31 series, the 35 series and the Elite. Wheelbases were 131 and 135 inches.



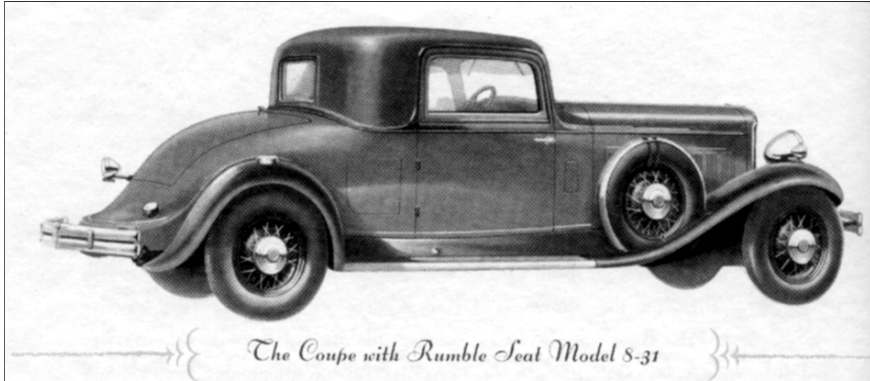
The Convertible Coupe Model 8-35

Reo Royale 8's included convertible coupes only two years, 1932 and 1933. The color of the hand-buffed leather upholstery was "harmonized" with the cars exterior finish according to the company's literature.

Production figures for 1931 were 6,762 Reos, but most of those were non-classic Flying Clouds. Production dropped in the next three years to fewer than 3,900 total Reo cars each year.

In 1932 the line was expanded to include a convertible coupe, which remained in 1933, but was

Specifications for the Reo Royale Eight Full Classics® include: Horsepower 125 at 3,300 rpm, bore 3.355 by stroke 5.00, displacement 358 cubic inches, compression ratio 5.3, tires 6.50 x 18.



The Coupe with Rumble Seat Model 8-31

In describing the coupe Reo said, "The dangerous blind spots that ordinary construction entails, are eliminated by the Reo Royale's advanced windshield design. The coupe rumble seat is opened automatically by a spring latch in the parcel locker." No mention of the blind spots in the back!

dropped for 1934.

Series were identified as 31, 35 and 52 with wheel-bases of 131, 135 and 152 inches respectively. The 152 inch model was only available in 1932.

The big innovation in the Spring of 1933 was the self-shifter, available on the Royale and Flying Cloud series. Reo literature stated: "It enables you to keep both hands on the wheel instead of trying to shift gears with one hand and dodge traffic with the other." It added "...a foolproof mechanism that will not let you strain or 'stall' your motor through improper shifting...[it will] lead the way for the entire industry toward greater pleasure, convenience and safety in driving."

Reo offered the self-shifter through 1935, but did not advertise it for 1936.

The elimina-



Reo advertises its new (1933) self shifter with a picture of the front floor of the car with no gear shift and no emergency brake lever (it was moved to the left of the driver).

Reo Royale Prices:

- 1931 \$2,485
- 1932: \$1,985 to \$3,695
- 1933: \$2,445 to \$2,995
- 1934: \$1,745 to \$2,445.

tion of the floor shift and the movement of the emergency brake to the left of the driver, made the front seat comfortable for three passengers.

Reo proclaimed that the new self-shifter had been tested on the road by its engineers for two years.

Note: Oldsmobile and Buick offered an automatic transmission in 1938 and Oldsmobile and General Motors continued its development in the following years.

Reo made a car they called a Royale in 1935, but it had a 6 cylinder engine and is not a Classic.

Sources

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