

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 1903 Oldsmobile Model R

- Lot sold  
USD 41 954 - 47 947  
GBP 35 000 - 40 000 (listed)  
**Year of manufacture** 1903
- **Chassis number** 15508
- **Number of seats** 2
- **Drivetrain** 2wd
- **Lot number** 218
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- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Engine number** 15508
- 

### Description

1903 Oldsmobile Model R 'Curved Dash'  
Registration no. BS 8396  
Chassis no. 15508  
Engine no. 15508

Known as the 'Curved Dash' for obvious reasons, Ransom Eli Olds's gasoline-powered runabout was first offered for sale in 1901, following a fire at the factory that had destroyed every other prototype. Over 11,000 of the three Curved Dash models ('R', '6C' and 'B') were constructed before production ceased in 1907, making it the first volume produced American automobile. The Model 'R' runabout was powered by a single-cylinder, 1.6-litre engine of 114x152mm bore/stroke, mounted horizontally at the rear and producing 4½ horsepower at 600rpm. Later '6C' and 'B' models benefited from a more-powerful (7hp) 1.9-litre engine, and all featured two-speed transmission and chain final drive.

Several improvements to the design were made during the course of production, but the engine's basic layout remained unchanged. Two mechanically operated overhead valves were set side-by-side at 90 degrees to the cylinder axis, and the rocker arms had roller ends. An ignition contact-breaker was mounted on the end of the camshaft, and sparks provided by a trembler coil. By 1902, the mixer-type carburettor had been replaced by a float-less design, while a manually adjustable valve in the exhaust system vented exhaust gases via the silencer box or more or less straight to the atmosphere, the two settings presumably

being intended for town and country use respectively. Cooling water was contained in a reservoir above the engine and circulated by a crankshaft-driven pump, mounted on the side of the chassis. The radiator's copper piping wound its way back and forth beneath the floor.

Despite appearances to the contrary, the suspension's leaf-springs which linked the front and rear axles were not true half-elliptics like those fitted to the later model 'B' cars. On the 'R' and '6C' models, only the bottom leaf ran from front to rear, so it would be more accurate to describe these as four quarter-elliptics. Steering was by means of a tiller, a common enough method in the early 1900s, while there was a choice of brakes: one acting on the transmission, the other on the differential. The wheels were un-braked.

Restored 10-15 years ago, this 'Curved Dash' Oldsmobile was imported into the UK from the USA in 2004. The car was bought by the current owners through Bonhams in 2007, and since then they have installed a new crank shaft and new ignition trembler coil. The car starts readily and runs well, although the reverse gear hub has been removed, and it comes with a VCC dating certificate, current road fund licence and a Swansea registration document. The car enjoys the benefit of an accepted entry of the 2014 London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

Bonhams 1793

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