


CLASSIC DRIVER

1929 Ruxton Model A

- Lot sold
USD 400 000 - 500 000
- **Year of manufacture** 1929
- **Lot number** 39
- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Car type** Other
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Description

The Ruxton is one of the rarest and most unique automobiles of the Classic Era, combining innovative front-wheel-drive engineering with bold, avant-garde styling. Today, nearly three-quarters of all cars sold are front-wheel-drive, but during the late 1920s and early 1930s this drive layout was a foreign concept to most, except for a limited number of engineers and racing drivers. One of these engineers was the talented William J. Muller, who got his start on America's early racetracks. In 1912, he set a land speed record on Galveston Beach, riding an Excelsior motorcycle to 103 mph. In 1913, he drove the famous front-wheel-drive Gila Monster race car, and this drive influenced the rest of his career. He explained, "I really liked the way it handled. I will never forget the sensation of being pulled," referring to the car's front-wheel-drive layout. During this era, some manufacturers of racing cars, most notably Harry Miller, were building innovative front-drive machines and emerging victorious. Cord, Ruxton's archrival, was quietly developing the technology for road car use with their L-29.

In 1920, Mr. Muller joined Edward G. Budd Manufacturing of Philadelphia, a builder of rail cars and auto bodies, as an experimental engineer. Eight years later, he produced a prototype front-drive sedan with a dramatic and low-slung body, nearly a foot lower than other cars of the time. This prototype became the basis for the Ruxton. Only about 96 Ruxtons were built in total, making them by far the rarest of the high-end automobiles of the era. The least expensive Ruxton sold for \$4,500, or nine times the price of a new Ford and was priced 40 percent higher than the Cord L-29. The Great Depression brought an end to Ruxton rather quickly, like many great auto manufacturers of the time. Only 19 examples are known to survive today.

The engine that powered the Ruxton was a Continental 268 cubic inch, side-valve, straight-eight engine capable of producing 100 horsepower. It was the front-wheel-drive layout that allowed the car to sit so much lower than its contemporaries and also added to its stability at speed. To highlight its innovative nature, the noted stage designer and architect Joseph Urban was recruited to help emphasize the lowness of Ruxton sedans. Urban's horizontal bands of paint distinguished the Ruxton quite dramatically from its competitors. Additionally, many drivers preferred the Ruxton's smaller proportions, low center of gravity, and lighter touch to its rival, the Cord L-29. The Ruxton was also more spacious inside since its transmission and the differential were combined into one unit. This moved the drive axles about 12" closer to the engine, which also allowed more weight over the drive axles. Compared to the L-29, the Ruxton was lighter and much more efficiently engineered.

According to an email on file from the foremost Ruxton authority in the world, Jim Fasnacht, this example is believed to be the third production car built and the first production sedan produced. Mr. Fasnacht comments on this example's fine qualities and notes that this Ruxton is believed to be the only surviving sedan that originally sported the famous Joseph Urban paint design from "a handful" painted new per William Muller interviews.

Mr. Fasnacht also believes that this car was originally used as an auto salon car, shipped to California for publicity, and was the subject of famous photos that appeared in various ads for the Ruxton. He notes that this car is "a great piece of Ruxton history."

According to Mr. Fasnacht's notes on his research, which are available for review in the car's file, the original engine was 185-117 but was replaced by prior owner Doug Shinstine with 185-1043. Such engine changes were not uncommon with Ruxtons. Mr. Fasnacht's more detailed notes on its condition and correctness can be found in the car's file.

By the 1970s the Ruxton was owned by Doug Shinstine of Sumner, Washington. Mr. Shinstine had an extensive restoration done over a four-year period during the late 1970s, before exhibiting the car at prestigious concours events during the early 1980s. Mr. Shinstine received exceptional awards for the Ruxton's restoration during that time, including a First in Class at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance®.

Today, this Model A Sedan remains a stunning object of design. Mr. Shinstine's restoration was done to a very high level throughout, but as can be expected for work done

around 40 years ago, the paint has started to crack in certain places. Inside, fine Bedford cloth can be found all over, finished in blue, and the painted dashboard matches one of the exterior's stripes.

To the astute collector, the sale of this Ruxton represents a very rare and significant opportunity as it possesses all the qualities of a highly collectible object: extreme rarity, innovation, and bold design. It is believed to be the first production sedan made and the only surviving sedan originally finished with the iconic Joseph Urban paint design. A Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance® class winner and one of the most significant Ruxtons in existence, this Model A Sedan could be the focal point of a collection and is sure to be the center of attention at any classic car gathering or show.

Please note that this vehicle is titled 1930 and by its engine number.

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