



Heartland Science



Ohio's Legacy of Discovery & Innovation



Transportation

From the Soapbox Derby to the Jeep

Olds' Oldsmobile

In 1897, Ransom E. Olds, a native of Geneva, Ohio, began manufacturing the Oldsmobile, America's first commercially successful automobile. The 3-horsepower vehicle had a sporty curved dashboard and was the first car manufactured with an assembly line system that foreshadowed modern mass-production methods. Oldsmobile is the oldest continuing car make manufactured in the United States.



The Oldsmobile was not America's first domestically produced car. That honor goes to a vehicle built in 1893 by Charles and Frank Duryea. They were two bicycle makers from Springfield, Massachusetts who were inspired to build a car after seeing a gasoline engine in 1886 at the Ohio State Fair. The Duryea brothers were the first in the United States to build cars for sale. By 1896, they had sold 13 vehicles.

Olds incorporated The Olds Motor Co. in 1897 in Lansing, Michigan, and it turned out 4 vehicles that first year. The "Curved-Dash Oldsmobile" had a single-cylinder engine, chain drive, and used tiller-type steering rather than a steering wheel. It sold for \$650. By 1978, Oldsmobile, a part of the General Motors Corp., had produced 20 million vehicles.



Early Oldsmobiles set a number of automotive records. In 1903, the Olds "Pirate" model traveled 5 miles in 6.5 minutes, a new world record. In 1905, two Oldsmobiles complete the first transcontinental race from New York City to Portland, Oregon in 44 days. In 1922, an Oldsmobile set another record by traveling 1,000 miles in 15 hours.

Find out more...

- [Oldsmobile History](http://www.oldsmobile.com/olds/enthusiasts/history.htm)
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