

1921 GARDNER TOURING

1921 Gardner Touring Sedan, 4-door

Owner: Bernie and Janice Taulborg Collection

Original cost: \$1,595.00 (\$20,268.00 in 2018 dollars)

Number made: 3,531 produced, 1921, all models; 3,800 sold in 1921

Engine, etc.: 4 cyl.; 3-speed, 35 hp; 112 in. wheelbase; Lycoming engine

Gardner manufactured cars from 1920 – 1931. Its sales motto for 1920 – 1922 was "It Speaks for Itself".

Russell E. Gardner left his native Tennessee in 1879 for St. Louis without a dollar to his name. Thirty-five years later, when he turned his business over to his sons, he was a millionaire several times over.

He started by building buggies, moved on to building bodies for Chevrolet, and established Gardner Motor Company after World War I ended.

General Motors purchased the Chevrolet Motor Company and all of its subsidiaries in 1918. The purchase included the St. Louis plant owned by Gardner Motor Company.

With cash in hand and a working knowledge of the auto industry, the Gardners decided it was time to start producing their own vehicles under the Gardner name.

The first Gardner models were released in 1920 – a touring car, roadster, and sedan. All featured 3 – 4 cylinders and 35 horsepower and were priced between \$1,125 and \$1,595. Initial sales were good and increased over the next two years. Updates in 1921 included the addition of an oil pressure gauge, aluminum top molding, and the "dog bone moto-meter" radiator cap.

Gardner sought to expand factory capabilities in order to make 40,000 cars a year. Despite efforts to improve business, by the late 1920's business began to decline.

In 1930, 24 separate body styles were introduced and prices reduced, in a last ditch effort to boost business. Gardener also became involved in a fateful plan to build the front-wheel drive Ruxton for Archie Andrews that contributed to the demise of the Moon Motor Car Company.

By 1931 the company was no longer profitable, driven out of business by the stock market crash and competition of major producers and their control of many sources of parts supplies. The last Gardner cars, funeral cars, were finished in 1932.

In liquidating their business, the Gardners actually made money rather than losing it, a rarity.

Source: Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805 -1942. Beverly Rae Kimes, et al. 3rd ed. Krause Publications, 1996.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gardner_\(automobile\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gardner_(automobile))

<http://www.gardnermotorcars.com/1920-text.html>

<http://www.gardnermotorcars.com/index.html> (History of Gardner cars, 1920 – 1931)

<http://classicrodatabase.com/specs.php?series=2389&year=1921&model=9130>