

# 1877 SELDON REPLICA

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Selden Motor Vehicle Company, Rochester, N. Y., 1906 – 1914

George Baldwin Selden, a patent lawyer from Rochester, N. Y., in 1877 designed an automotive vehicle to be powered by an internal combustion engine that was based on an original design invented by George Brayton.

Selden improved the design and applied for a patent on it two years later. He chose George Eastman, a local bank teller (who later founded Eastman Kodak), as a witness for the patent filing.

Selden's abilities as an inventor and lawyer far outstripped his talent as a production engineer. He kept his patent alive by filing numerous amendments that delayed its issue. It wasn't granted until 1895 and acquired in 1899 by the Electric Vehicle Company (EVC) owned by William C. Whitney of Hartford, Conn. This company began producing gasoline-powered cars with Selden's engine patent. They paid Selden for the patent and a royalty on each car based on his design.

Whitney and Selden attempted to gain a stranglehold on American gasoline car manufacturing by filing patent infringement suits against other automobile manufacturers and succeeded for years.

Selden began his own car company, the Selden Motor Vehicle Company, in 1906.

Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company in Detroit in 1903, and four other car makers resolved to contest the patent infringement suit filed by Selden and EVC. The legal fight lasted eight years and generated a case record of over 14,000 pages. The case was heavily publicized in newspapers of the day and resulted in a decision in Selden's favor. Ford appealed and won in

1911 after arguing that his car was not based on the same engine as Selden's. The defeat, with only one year left to run on the patent, destroyed Selden's income stream.

The company produced cars for only three years, 1909 – 1912.

Selden then focused on manufacturing trucks instead of cars, renaming his company the Selden Truck Sales Corporation. It survived until 1930 when it was purchased by the Bethlehem Truck Company.

Two cars built during this time are still in existence: one built by George B. Selden is housed in the Henry Ford Museum and the other, built by the Electric Vehicle Company, is housed at the Connecticut State Library.

Sources: "Engines of Our Ingenuity, No. 207, Selden's Automobile", John H. Lienhard, University of Houston, College of Engineering. <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi207.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George B. Selden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_B._Selden)

"The Selden Motor Wagon", <http://www.kcstudio.com/selden.html> by Bruce Duffie.