

1903 Cadillac Rear Entry Tonneau

1903 was the first year of Cadillac production. The newly introduced car, designated model A, was engineered by Henry Leland, formerly an associate of Henry Ford. Leland had produced an engine which was more durable and powerful than other single-cylinder engines, but was rejected by Ford, resulting in Leland branching off to form his own company, named after Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, the founder of Detroit, Michigan, birthplace of the new car.

The first Cadillac performed remarkably well, and its introduction of interchangeable parts was a revolutionary development in the auto industry. Sales were an impressive 2500 units, and the production run sold out by year's end, most of it subscribed during the first presentation at the New York Auto Show of that year. Leland-produced engines were so durable that many survived their original use to power everything from farm equipment to motorboats in later years.

Like the Ford automobile of 1903, which the Cadillac closely resembles in styling, Cadillac bodies of 1903 were mostly painted black with red trim, and original unrestored examples appear to bear black paint as the primary color option. This car was acquired in 2022, repainted black, and restored to what seems to be its original appearance—black paint, black leather, and no top, since tops were optional, and the car when acquired bore no evidence of metal trim for a foldable top. Note the rear entry door, convenient on muddy roads, where the car could be backed to the curb to keep passengers' footwear dry.