



BODY BY FISHER

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 TR S072 11 11R PNT
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**1976 CADILLAC FLEETWOOD ELDORADO
 BICENTENNIAL EDITION CONVERTIBLE AT A
 GLANCE:**

- **Years Available:** 1976 only
- Number Built:** 200 (199 replica cars, plus 1 actual last car)
- Paint:** Cotillion White (paint code 11)
- Convertible Top:** White (top code A)
- Interior Trim:** White Sierra Grain Leather with Dark Firethorn Seaming Laces (piping on seats) (trim code S072)
- Accent Striping:** Blue (color code 26A) and Red (color code 76A) (Red accent stripe is the lower stripe, and continues on door; Blue stripe is upper stripe and is only on hood)
- Price:** \$85.00 (Accessory Code E45 SR Last Convertible Replica Decor Package)
- Body Plate Notes:** Number listed before BDY should range from 13801-13999 (14000 was

actual last car, retained by Cadillac Motor Car Division; see example at left)

- Special Notations On Build Sheet:**
 SPEC FIRETHORN SEAMING LACES
 SPEC TWO COLOR ACCENT STRIPES
 SPEC INSTRUMENT PANEL PLAQUE
 SPEC WHITE WHEEL DISCS

While much of the nation was preparing for the bicentennial events to be held on July 4, 1976, other notable dates

were taking place in the months before the nation's big birthday celebration. Wednesday, April 21, 1976 was a sunny spring day in Detroit. A Cotillion White 1976 Cadillac Fleetwood Eldorado was proceeding down the assembly line at Cadillac's Clark Avenue plant, as many convertibles had done in the years before. But this one was different. All along the way, plant workers were posing to have their picture taken with the car. And as it came off the final line shortly after 10:00 AM, Cadillac Motor Car Division General Manager Edward C. Kennard sat behind the wheel, with Manufacturing Manager Bud Brawner, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, and several Cadillac assembly workers coming along for the ride.

What made this particular convertible special was its status as the last production American-made convertible built by a major U.S. auto manufacturer. It was the last of 200 identical "last" models built to commemorate the occasion. At the time, this was big news because the convertible model—no matter the make or model—was always the model that seemed to depict the American way of life better than any other. And its day had sadly come.

The popularity of the convertible body style peaked in the early sixties, then began a rapid descent as more hardtop models were introduced with vinyl tops, factory air conditioning systems, and more elaborate sound systems. Sunroofs were more mainstream by the late sixties, and there was the potential of new roll-over legislation being enacted which would make it too costly to build a convertible model that could meet the standards. All of these things came together to put an end to the convertible body style.

The demise of the convertible shouldn't have been a huge surprise to anyone paying attention, as convertible models had been dropping out of production for years. Luxury convertibles were particularly hard hit, and that happened early on as pampered luxury car buyers were more than willing to give up the glamorous looks of a top down model for factory air conditioning, stereo radios, a quiet interior environment, and arriving with hairdos intact, no perspiration, and dust-free clothing.

The first luxury convertible to go was the Oldsmobile Starfire, which offered its final convertible in 1965, a year before the model itself passed into oblivion after 1966, to make way for the new personal luxury Toronado. The Ford Thunderbird was next, with its last open air model coming off the line in 1966. Lincoln Continental followed the next year, with its last four door convertible being made for 1967. Chrysler Corporation's flagship Imperial model still built a Crown Convertible in 1968, but that was the end of the line for that body style. That left only the Cadillac DeVille to represent the interests of luxury car buyers who still wanted a convertible at that point.

Convertibles elsewhere were being discontinued as well. 1969 would be the last year for a Chevrolet Camaro or Pontiac Firebird Convertible. Ford built its last full-sized convertible in 1972, as did Mercury. The Ford Mustang and Mercury Cougar would build their final convertibles in 1973. Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, and Buick would all assemble their final convertibles in 1975. The majority of convertible models dropped out of production in a relatively short period of time, from 1970-1975, just six years.

So when Cadillac served notice—rather discreetly at first—that the Eldorado Convertible was the only convertible now built in America, and it would not be repeated for 1977, everyone knew they only had one chance to get a new convertible. Speculators saw an opportunity to profit from this announcement as well. Even Cadillac was a bit shocked when it saw the orders for Eldorado Convertibles escalate to 156 percent of 1975 production. A total of 14,000 Eldorado Convertibles were built for the 1976 model year, and Cadillac likely would have built more if they had been able to obtain more of the necessary components.

There were many requests for the actual last convertible to be built. Cadillac had already determined that it would keep the actual last car for its historical collection, so the decision was made to create a trim package of identical last convertibles. Since Cadillac didn't want to appear to be taking advantage of this situation, the package they created was named the Eldorado Bicentennial Convertible, in recognition of that year's most significant date. The base price on a 1976 Cadillac Fleetwood Eldorado Convertible was \$11,049, and the Last Convertible Replica Decor Package was a mere \$85! Only 200 would be built, and of those only 199 would be for sale to the public.

Production of the replica cars began late in the model run, after all of the "standard" convertibles had been built. Assembly of the actual last car was delayed slightly for some unknown reason. There doesn't appear to be any particular significance to the April 21st date, so its uncertain why the actual last car was built on that particular date. One accounting is that a critical convertible top part was either damaged or lost, and a replacement had to be obtained in order to finish the last car. We haven't verified that, so it's only hearsay at this point. However, it would explain why the last few replica cars were built almost a week prior to the last one coming off the line. Cadillac needed that extra time.

The Bicentennial Edition cars are based on regular production models, and differ only in a few details. In fact, any car ordered in all-white could almost be made to look like one of the last replica cars. But there are several things that would not be easy to duplicate, and we'll point those out to you so you'll be able to identify a real replica. The paint finish was Cotillion White (paint code 11), a color used for many years on Cadillacs. The convertible top is White as well (top code A), as is the Sierra Grain Leather interior. The Dark Firethorn carpeting, instrument panel, steering column, steering wheel, and seat belts are typical of interior trim code 072. The accent stripes on a car with this color combination would likely be Red (code 76A). But this is where the details make the difference.

HOW TO IDENTIFY A GENUINE BICENTENNIAL EDITION CAR

First of all, locate the Body Plate, which is mounted under the hood on the cowl near the passenger's side hood hinge. It will indicate a series of six numbers at the end of the second line. (The second line ends with **BDY**.) The six numbers will be between 013801 and 013999. If they are, you've likely identified a genuine car. Also check the third line down. It begins with **TR** and must have the numbers S072 immediately following. That indicates a special interior trim code.

The replica car interiors differ from other production models with the use of Dark Firethorn Seaming Laces. Also known as piping, it is used where two pieces of leather hide are attached, typically along the edges of seats and where a pattern ends and joins a part of the seat without a pattern. Normally, this piping would be white in color, to match the seats. Of course, a trim shop could duplicate this design, but it would be costly for them to do so.

The exterior accent striping on the replica cars uses two colors, instead of the typical single color striping. Details of the accent striping are listed below.



EXTERIOR ACCENT STRIPES

Only the 200 convertibles equipped with the Last Convertible Replica Decor Package have the distinctive two color accent stripes, as shown here. What's confusing is the stripes are in the same location, and of the same configuration as the accent stripes found on every 1976

Eldorado, except on other Eldorados, the stripes would all be the same color. The dual red stripes are located on the forward/lower edge of the hood, and continue back to near the rear edge of the doors, where they come to a point and end.

The dual blue stripes are mounted further back on the hood or above the red stripes, and end near the rear edge of the hood, where they also come to a point. The blue stripes are the extent of the red, white, and blue bicentennial theme, as there's nothing else on the car that's blue as part of the trim package.

It's difficult to tell in the photo above, but the outer stripe of the dual stripes is slightly thicker than the two inner stripes, which are thinner. Looking at the stripes from the front of the car, from the front to the back of the hood, they are thick - thin - thin - thick.

DETAILED VIEW OF BICENTENNIAL ACCENT STRIPES

Note in photo at right, the two thinner stripes are facing each other, with the thicker stripes on the outside edges. This photo was

taken standing near the passenger fender and shooting forward across the hood at an angle, toward the front of the car.



UNIQUE INTERIOR WITH FIRETHORN SEAMING LACES

The interior of the 200 last replica convertibles is a stock White Sierra Grain Leather interior, with Dark Firethorn carpeting, instrument panel, steering column, and steering wheel, and seat belts. The difference is the piping on the seats, which Cadillac referred to as "seaming laces" is Firethorn also, instead of White to match the seats.



Additionally, the last 200 replica cars included a plaque mounted on the instrument panel in front of the passenger seat. The plaque was designed to be installed in the holes normally used for the Cadillac wreath and crest and Eldorado script. It stated, "**This 1976 Fleetwood Eldorado is one of the last 200 identical U.S. production convertibles**".



The instrument panel plaque (shown above) was not attached to the car when it left the factory. All cars left the factory **without** the production Cadillac wreath and crest emblem and Eldorado script on the woodgrain panel in front of the passenger. Any dealership taking delivery of a replica convertible received a letter in the mail that included the plaque, and a post card that was to be filled out with the customer's information and returned to Cadillac. The letter advised that the special plaque was to be "snapped into the right side of the instrument panel in the holes provided for the wreath and crest and the Eldorado script. Barrel nuts are affixed to the studs of the plaque for retention. (Be sure to use the proper holes). For added security, you may wish to use an epoxy type adhesive on the back of the plaque to ensure its retention as a deterrent to petty thievery. There are no replacement parts for this commemorative plaque." (*Underlined words per original document; not intended to be a link.*)

Returning the completed post card to Cadillac would generate a parchment scroll which would be sent to the dealer, to be presented to the customer authenticating the car as one of the 200 replicas of the last convertible. (Actually, it would be one of the 199 replicas, as the last car wasn't a replica, it was the real thing!)

Shortly after production ended, prices for 1976 Eldorado Convertibles jumped two to three times the manufacturer's suggested retail price. However, because so many 1976 convertibles were built, and because so many of them were placed in storage for their investment potential, clean, low mileage, original cars were plentiful. Before long, prices came down to more reasonable levels, and as a result many nice examples are still available today.

All Bicentennials start out loaded with all available equipment including the hard parade boot. The only exception to this will be if your car was produced for the California market, then it will include the VJ9 California Emission Equipment & Testing option at a cost of \$50.00. All are #11 Cotillion White body color, White Leather Interior with red piping, Dark Firethorn Carpet with red dash and seat belts. All have a white convertible top. The pin stripping, #3 Blue and #8 Red is unique to this model only. Blue and Red are both on the hood but only the Red extends down both doors. Another unique item is the Wheel Cover Centers, they are painted Cotillion White to match the body where as all other Eldorados came with #19 Sable Black Centers. Another item that lets you know you have arrived is a small gold engraved plaque on the dash just above the glove box door. It states "This 1976 Cadillac Fleetwood Eldorado is one of the last 200 identical U.S. production convertibles"

All of these items will be there if indeed you truly have one of these cars, BUT, the only way, without a doubt, to be sure is to check the Body Number Tag. All Eldorados have one of these tags.

To locate your Body Number Tag and number, check under the hood below the windshield on the passenger side close to the firewall. As you can see it is a black metal tag with the top line reading BODY BY FISHER. The end of the second line is where you find your Body Number. If you have a TRUE Bicentennial Eldorado your number will be between and including numbers 013801 thru 013999. There are only 199 of these cars out there. That is it! #14000 was the last one made and is held by GM making it #200. This is the only way to know for sure if you have a true '1976 Cadillac Fleetwood Bicentennial Eldorado'. Hopefully this helps explain what to look for when on the hunt for this truly Rare and "Last of the Breed" BIG Eldorados.

CADILLAC 1976 Eldorado Bi-Centennial Convertible. Cotillion White, 50-50 soft white leather with red piping 6 way electric seats, white top. Fully powered with a host of standard equipment and is original not a restoration. The Bi-Centennials were the last 200 of 14,000 1976 Eldorado convertible's that were produced. The last body number 14,000 is at the G.M. Heritage Center in Michigan. Have all of the original documents including the window sticker. Flawless condition " No snow, smoke, rain with only 24,000 original documented miles. This is a rare Bi-Centennial offered for sale and will only appreciate in value, truly a fine investment automobile. \$50,000, financing and leasing available. BobWilliams 864-246-0318 Greenville, S.C. e/mail: r fw122927@aol.com Web-site: cadillaccreampuffs.com

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