

AUTOMOBILE TRIVIA

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When we think of the first automobiles, most of us think back to the days of Henry Ford and the Model "T," but that was actually a latecomer in the development of the automobile. Some say the development of the automobile goes back to the day of Leonardo da Vinci, who drew up a basic plan for motor driven vehicle.

• **The First Motor Vehicle**

The very first motor vehicle to actually convey without benefit of animal power was designed and built in 1771 by a Frenchman, Nicolas Joseph Cugnot. Cugnot designed and built a steam-powered, three-wheeled flatbed vehicle that was used to haul military equipment, and flew by at the alarming rate of 2 1/2 miles per hour. Later, Cugnot designed another three-wheeled vehicle designed to carry people, but his automobile design and building career was cut short after he drove one of his vehicles into a wall and his financial backers were unable to continue providing him with funding.

• **The Adventure Continues**

Steam power continued to be the main force behind other inventors, who tinkered with and built upon the basic engine used by Cugnot and the types of engines used on locomotive trains. Problem was, the steam engines were huge; far too big to even be practical on something as small as a motor vehicle. They were great for locomotive engines and ships, but were just too impractical for a motor vehicle.

• **Breakthrough!**

In Scotland, inventor Robert Anderson designed a more practical motor vehicle that used a battery to power a small motor. This was hailed as a breakthrough, even though this early vehicle was still very slow and needed to stop for a recharge often. But, the idea of electricity-powered vehicles did catch on; streetcars and trams used electricity for power and became the transportation mode of choice in Europe, England, and in the U.S. in the early 1800s.

• **Internal Combustion Engine**

It was the invention of the first reliable internal combustion engine that really brought a reliable, workable automobile to the world. Internal combustion engines were not new; some of the first references to designs date back to the late 1600s, and more than a few inventors attempted to make a wagon or other carriage run by using a motor?with only moderate success.

It was in 1885 that Daimler perfected his internal combustion engine and attached it to a former stagecoach, thereby inventing the first four-wheeled motor vehicle.

• **No Stopping Now**

Once word of Daimler's four-wheel vehicle got out, engineers, mechanics, and designers took the lead and began refining and shaping the internal combustion engine and vehicle design. Most early vehicles maintained the essential shape of the animal-powered coaches, wagons and buggies that had been used for so long. By the early 1900s, motor-powered vehicles became more popular than any other type of vehicle.

• **Back to France**

In order to find the very first automobile manufacturer, we return again to France. In 1889, former woodworkers Rene Panhard and Emile Levassor designed the first factory that would

build a motor vehicle from start to finish. The first cars not only had the same gasoline-powered engine designed by Daimler, but they were refined and improved by Panhard and Levassor. Improvements included moving the engine to the front of the vehicle, and designing a rear-wheel drive for better control of the vehicle.

• **Cars in America**

It was not until 1901 that the first mass-produced cars would be sold in America. Designed by Ransome Eli Olds, it was called the "Curved Dashboard Oldsmobile," and was made in the Detroit, Michigan, area. This car remained the best seller from 1901 to 1904.

• **Enter Henry Ford**

Ah, at last, a name most of us recognize? Henry Ford. Too many people credit him with the invention of the automobile, but as we can see, that's pretty far from the truth.

So, you may wonder, what did Henry do that made his name stand out in the history books far and above those of his predecessors? There are two reasons: 1). The Model T, introduced in 1908, was a huge success; and, 2). In 1913, Ford made use of the conveyor belt in his factories, and began making automobiles on a moving conveyor line, something that had not been tried before. This was a smashing success, speeding up the assembly process to the point that by 1927, more than 15 million Model T cars had been made.

• **A New America**

Once the moving assembly line became the way that cars were built, the automobile movement in America was off and running. Ford also took part in a lawsuit to overturn the patent on an inexpensive method for fabricating the automobile engine, which helped him make his Model T and later models affordable to more people, rather than just a toy for the rich, as autos had been up until that time.

With the advent of an affordable automobile, the entire face of the nation changed. Trips that once took a full day by horse and cart could now be completed in about half the time, allowing more Americans to travel further distances and to seek out opportunities in cities and towns that had been inaccessible prior to the automobile.

Roads and highways were pretty primitive when the automobile first came on the scene; but with the demand growing as fast as car ownership, roads, streets, then highways, and finally freeways began to be built, offering more connection between places that had formerly been dependent on horse riders or the railroad for news and goods from elsewhere.

• **Life During Wartime**

Automobiles were an integral part of the First World War. Jeeps and troop carriers made it possible for the first time for armies to move troops overland in ways other than marches and by horseback. Invasions could be carried out faster and with more precision. The wounded could be cared for faster, which helped more soldiers recover from the injuries they suffered.

Back home, more and more Americans were buying automobiles and using them to go to jobs in factories and to other work in the cities.

• **And Still Growing**

Automobile growth has not slowed down much for the early days of huge, steam engines the size of one of today's Mini Coopers strapped to the front or back of an enormous wooden hay wagon. New technology is helping designers make our cars more fuel efficient, less dependent on fossil fuel, cleaner, safer, and better all around