

## THE SAGA OF THE ROARING ROAD

According to the general opinion of the lay public, the real history of the gasoline motor propelled vehicle dates from about 1900, and this view would seem to be supported by many facts. For example, as recently as 1904, the use of automobiles was so new to New York City that those who drove and rode in them were often stoned.

The first legislation enacted in this country, in connection with the use of highways by automobiles, was passed by the New York state legislature in 1901. A few months previous, in November, 1900, the first auto show was held in New York, and at that time there were fewer than 500 motor cars in the entire United States.

The year 1899 had marked the appearance of the first privately-owned automobile on this side of the Atlantic, and there are some old-timers who will point to the fact that several of the earliest builders were hard at work trying to solve the horseless carriage problem in the late '80's.

The motor vehicle, however, can trace its ancestry to the Eighteenth Century. Credit for the first road wagon propelled by its own power—steam—is generally given to Nicholas Cugnot, a Frenchman, who in 1770 drove his contraption at the terrific speed of two and one-half miles an hour.

## IV

The first of the evidence of the birth of the daddy of the present-day auto, came with the action of the directors of the Chicago World's Fair, in 1893, who obtained a couple of exhibits by advertising prizes and premiums. A gasoline double-bicycle and an electric brake were shown there but no results followed because neither of the devices was marketed or even reproduced so far as is known. Still this was the first time that two different motor vehicles were shown at one exhibition in America.

The real automobile event, however, came a couple of years later, when H. H. Kohlsaat, Chicago newspaper publisher, was the one man who could see the value of the infant industry to the land, and who was willing to contribute to its advancement by offering prizes for a strictly automobile contest. He put up \$5,000 in prizes and spent additional thousands in advertising the event and in conducting it. More than eighty entries were secured, but most of them were not ready or were unsuited when the cars lined up at the tape.

The contest finally came off on Thanksgiving Day, 1895, with only a half dozen starters braving the eighteen inches of snow that covered the streets and roads. The best foreign vehicles were there and came in for second and third positions, but the real honors went to Duryea, who won the first prize of \$2,000.

Duryea had studied the problem for years, and had decided in favor of the gasoline engine, electrically