

It was the invasion of America by the famous European race drivers, whose Grand Prix victories and deeds had made them familiar names to most red-blooded Americans, that gave the needed internationality to arouse interest in these contests all over the United States.

For weeks before the race the details of the arrival of the famous racing cracks in this country, pitching of their racing camps in Long Island and their performances in practice were given spreads by the newspapers not only on their sporting but even on their front pages.

As the date of the contests drew near and as early as a week before the Vanderbilt, race-going cars began to pour into New York, literally by the hundreds, from all the states east of the Mississippi and scores from even farther west than that. As for New Yorkers, they simply gave themselves up utterly to the race.

Before sundown on the eve of the race day the automobile invasion of Long Island began with thousands of eager, early birds seeking advantageous parking space around the course. The big rush, however, did not begin until midnight. All the big hotels and restaurants featured Vanderbilt race "Breakfasts," which were eaten at midnight after theatre-closing hours. All during this time out on the course thousands of automobile parties were camped—most of them making a merry night of it and many using their tonneaus for beds.

At the Garden City Hotel, the race headquarters, there was no sleep. The big inclosed veranda was jammed with excited speed fans, whose numbers were increased every minute by the arrival of more race-

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In the early Vanderbilt Cup races, which were run on Long Island roads in 1904, 1905, and 1906, motor cars had their most spectacular manifestations, not only in the speed contests themselves, but numerically in the tens of thousands of passenger automobiles and the hundreds of thousands of racegoers—some of the "railbirds" even guessed a million—that surrounded the thirty-mile course. In fact, the attendance of cars and people at these races has never been approached in the world in magnitude in the whole history of sport.

His 39-second mile record on Ormond Beach the previous winter had filled young Willie K. with racing enthusiasm and a desire to promote automobile road contests in this country on the same scale and high plane as the classic Grand Prix contests in France. His interest in highway speeding was practical. It was evidenced by his donation of the classic Vanderbilt Cup, a trophy that is now in the custody of the American Automobile Association.

The fatalities and accidents due to the impossibility of providing adequate police or military protection of the hundreds of thousands bound to attend the races caused a New York course for the Vanderbilt Cup race to be abandoned. Two years later, in 1908, the Vanderbilt races were shifted to the safer Savannah course. Then a few occasional contests for the Cup were run off in California but we will touch upon that point later in our story.