

THE NEW YORK-PARIS RACE OF 1908: SELECTED SOURCES IN THE GROSVENOR ROOM



The 1907 Thomas Flyer on its way to win the 1908 New York to Paris Race
Photo by Harry M. Rhoads
Collection of Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library

KEY

*	= Oversized book
BST	= In Business, Science & Technology Dept.
Buffalo	= In Buffalo Collection in Grosvenor Room
Folio	= Very oversized book
GRO	= In Grosvenor Room
HSS	= In Humanities & Social Sciences Department
RBR	= In Rare Book Room, available by appointment
Ref.	= Reference book, cannot be borrowed

Grosvenor Room
Buffalo and Erie County Public Library
1 Lafayette Square
Buffalo, NY 14203-1887
(716) 858-8900
www.buffalolib.org
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ABOUT THE NEW YORK-PARIS RACE OF 1908

At the dawn of the 20th century, automobiles were an infant technology with none of the infrastructure we take for granted today: road maps, traffic signals, pavement, gas stations, fast food, parking lots, expressways, or motels. Most people in the world had never seen a car in person.

What, then, could be more fun than the first 'round-the-world automobile race under such punishing conditions? In the summer of 1907, Paris newspaper *Le Matin* and the *New York Times* announced The Great Race: New York to Paris by Automobile.

Four nations entered six cars: Italy, with the Brixia Zust; Germany, with the Protos; France, with the De Dion, the Moto-Bloc, and the Sizaire-Naudin; and the United States, with the Thomas Flyer.

Legend has it that the Thomas Flyer entered the race at the insistence of President Theodore Roosevelt, who hated the prospect of European automobiles crossing the country unchallenged by Americans.

Better-established companies, such as Buffalo's Pierce-Arrow, declined to enter. But the Thomas Automobile Company, also from Buffalo, pulled one of its production models out of its factory at the last minute and entered the race. Buffalo's own George Schuster was driver and chief mechanic.

The starting line, on February 12, 1908, was in Times Square. Two hundred and fifty thousand people turned out to watch. The route crossed the country to San Francisco. There, drivers shipped out to Alaska and drove to the Bering Strait, where they ferried across and pushed through Russia to Europe, finishing at the Eiffel Tower. Organizers estimated the trip to take six months and the route to be 20,000 miles long.

Newspapers around the world followed the progress of the race. The Sizaire-Naudin didn't get past the snowdrifts of the Hudson Valley before dropping out. The Moto-Bloc got lost in the farm fields of Iowa and withdrew. The Protos was caught cheating when the driver boarded it on a train and received a 30-day penalty. Fearing bandits and the brutal weather of Siberia, the De Dion backed out in Russia.

The Protos crossed the finish line first, but factoring in its penalty, did not win the race. The Thomas Flyer arrived in Paris on Friday, July 31, 1908, 170 days after leaving Times Square, the true winner. Buffalo was ecstatic and threw George Schuster a hero's welcome party in Cazenovia Park that drew 10,000 people.

The victory of the Thomas Flyer briefly boosted sales for the Thomas Automobile Company, but mechanical flaws in subsequent models doomed the company and all production ceased in 1913. Its factory at 1200 Niagara Street is owned by Rich Products and bears a plaque honoring its achievements. In addition to winning the world's only around-the-world automobile race, E.R. Thomas was also one of the first commercial manufacturers of motorcycles and taxicabs.

The winning Thomas Flyer was restored to finish-line condition under the supervision of George Schuster, who died in Springville in 1972 at age 99. It is on exhibit at the National Automobile Museum on Nevada.

BOOKS
Buffalo G440 .N63 Nicholson, T. R. (Timothy Robin) Adventurer's Road: The Story of Perkin-Paris, 1907, and New York-Paris, 1908 New York: Rinehart [1958, ©1957]
Buffalo GV1029 .B4 Bentley, John Great American Automobiles: A Dramatic Account of Their Achievements in Competition Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, ©1957
Buffalo GV1029 .S3 Schuster, George N. The Longest Auto Race New York: J. Day Co. [©1966]
Buffalo GV1029.2 .C65 1991 Cole, Dermot Hard Driving: The 1908 Auto Race from New York to Paris New York: Paragon House, 1991
Buffalo GV1029.2 .F46 2005 Fenster, J. M. (Julie M.) Race of the Century: The Heroic True Story of the 1908 New York to Paris Auto Race New York: Crown Publishers, ©2005
Buffalo GV1029.2 .G74 1992 The Great Automobile Race: New York to Paris, 1908 West Seneca, NY: Intrepid Pub. Co., ©1992
Buffalo GV1033 .M39 2000 McConnell, Curt Coast-to-Coast Auto Races of the Early 1900s: Three Contests that Changed the World Warrendale, PA: Society of Automotive Engineers, ©2000
DEWEY COLL. 913 351 Scarfoglio, Antonio Round the World in a Motor-Car New York: M. Kennerley; London: G. Richards, 1909

ARTICLES & ESSAYS	NOTES
To find more articles like these, use the Local History File (see next page).	
*F119 .C7 v.3, pp. 14-15 Conant, Charles A., ed. Progress of the Empire State New York: Progress of the Empire State Co., 1913	A brief company history
BST *HD9710 .A2 W6686 1997, pp. 485-486 Baldwin, Nick et al World Guide to Automobile Manufacturers New York: Facts on File, ©1987	A brief company history

ARTICLES & ESSAYS	NOTES
BST Ref. *HD9710 .U52 A815 1990, pp. 441-442 May, George S., ed. Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography: The Automobile Industry, 1896-1920 New York: Facts on File, ©1990	A brief company history
BST *TL23 .K56 1985 pp. 1382-1385 Kimes, Beverly Rae Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805-1942 Iola, WI: Krause Publications, ©1985	Company history and all known models
TL160 .H37 1969, pp. 76-77, 192-196, 337-340 Handbook of Gasoline Automobiles New York: Dover, ©1969	Technical specifications for selected models, 1904-1906
Mag. R25 v. 82, no. 489, pp. 188-198 Readers Digest , January 1963 Schuster, George "Around the World"	The driver of the winning car tells the story in his own words

DATABASES		
Name	Description	Access
The New York Times	Full text of articles from 1851-2003. The <i>New York Times</i> co-sponsored the race and covered it extensively.	Available on all public workstations in the Central Library only. No at-home use. Also available on microfilm in GRO.

LOCAL HISTORY FILE
This is a card index of newspaper and periodical articles about people, places, and things in the Buffalo area. Use these headings to find articles about individuals and events associated with the race.
Eaton, Clarence Miller, George J. Roberts, Montague Thomas Automobile Company Thomas, Edwin Ross Safford, Clarence Schuster, George

MEDIA	NOTES
POP DVD 6033 Blake Edwards' The Great Race Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, [2002]	Comedy originally produced in 1965. This video may be borrowed.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mADMfKU5-Gw New York to Paris Great Race 1908	A free, online 5-minute documentary video about the race

NEWSPAPERS

The following newspapers were published on a daily basis in 1908 and have varying amounts of coverage of the race. All are on microfilm.

Call Number/Location	Title	Dates We Have
GRO Microfilm Collection	Buffalo Enquirer	1891-1925
GRO Microfilm Collection	Buffalo Evening News	1881-present
GRO Microfilm Collection	Commercial Advertiser	1842-1924
GRO Microfilm Collection	Daily Courier	1842-1926
GRO Microfilm Collection	Morning Express	1846-1926
GRO Microfilm Collection	New York Times	1851 to present. Also available as a full-text database in the Central Library.

PERIODICALS

The following journals were published in 1908 and have varying levels of coverage of the race.

Call Number/Location	Title	Notes
BST *TL1 .A8 v.15-v.16	Automobile Topics	Published weekly with regular reports and photos from along the race.
BST *TL1 .H81 v.21-v. 22	Horseless Age	Published weekly with some reports and no photos from along the race
BST *TL1 .M95 v.17-v.19	Motor World	Published weekly with some reports and no photos from along the race

RARE BOOK ROOM

NOTES

Material in the Rare Book Room may be seen by appointment (716-858-8900).

RBR TL215.T4 T4 The Thomas Model XXXI [New York, Pittsburgh: Chasmar-Winchell Press, 1907?]	Manufacturers' catalog
RBR WNYO 1905.T4 The Thomas "Flyer" 1905 Buffalo, NY: E.R. Thomas Motor Co., [1905]	Manufacturers' catalog of the 1905 models. It is digitized at: http://tinyurl.com/3426j2
RBR WNYO 1907.T66 Thomas-Flyer: More Than a Thousand Level Headed American Business Men Testify to the Absolute Reliability and Unquestioned Leadership of the Thomas [New York]: The Company, [1907]	A full color magazine advertisement from <i>Colliers</i> , 1907
RBR WNYO 1907.T66A New York to Paris Race Buffalo, NY: E.R. Thomas Motor Company, [1907]	A map of the route. It is digitized at: http://tinyurl.com/2qk695
RBR WNYO 1908 .S7 The Story of the New York to Paris Race Buffalo, NY: E.R. Thomas Motor Co., [1908]	A 75-page brochure with a map.

SCRAPBOOKS	NOTES
GRO *F129 .B8 B6927 v.1, pp. 103-108, 126-137 Industry in Buffalo and the Niagara Frontier	Newspaper photographs from the race
GRO *F129 .B8 B6928 v. 8, pp. 172-174 Local History	A <i>Buffalo Evening News</i> article from Jan. 22, 1949

SELECTED WEBSITES	NOTES
http://wnyheritagepress.org/photos_week_2006/thomas_automobile/thomas_automobile.htm E. R. Thomas Motor Company 1903 - 1911	Pictures of the factory then and now
http://www.thegreatautorace.com/index.htm The Great Automobile Race	A general history of the race
http://greatrace.com/greatrace/gr2008/index.php Great Race: New York to Paris	This organization hopes to restage the race in 2008.
http://becpldigital.cdm.oclc.org/ Buffalo & Erie County Public Library New York to Paris Race Digital Exhibit	A map of the race, an E.R. Thomas catalog, and more
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgtitle_tree.cfm?level=1&title_id=454055 New York Public Library NYPL Digital Gallery: Automobiles: Manufacturers Catalogues	Includes 5 digitized E.R. Thomas catalogues

VERTICAL FILE
The Grosvenor Room collects articles, pamphlets, and clippings about local history. Ask for this folder:
Businesses – Thomas Automobile

WEB2: THE ONLINE CATALOG OF THE BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
http://web2.buffalolib.org/
WEB2 is a database showing the books, magazines, CDs, videos, maps, and manuscripts owned by the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. It includes the Grosvenor Room, all departments in the Central Library, and every town and branch library. Anyone may access it for free on the internet at the address above.
To find additional New York-Paris items in our collection beyond those listed in this guide, try these Subject searches.
AUTOMOBILE RACING HISTORY E R THOMAS MOTOR COMPANY NEW YORK TO PARIS RACE 1908

WHERE ELSE CAN I RESEARCH THE RACE?	NOTES
<p>Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Research Library 25 Nottingham Court Buffalo, NY 14216 716-873-9644, ext. 306 http://www.bechs.org/research.htm</p>	<p>Owns multiple items, including #A65-15, <i>Arthur H. Driver Letters Concerning Thomas Flyer</i>. Author was employed by E.R. Thomas when the car was built. They also own a piece of sheet music, <i>The Thomas Flyer: Intermezzo-Two-Step</i> from 1908.</p>
<p>Buffalo Pierce-Arrow Transportation Museum 263 Michigan St. (at Seneca) Buffalo, NY 14203 (716) 853-0084 email: piercemuseum@adelphia.net http://www.pierce-arrow.com/</p>	<p>Owns a 1909 Thomas Flyer and Thomas memorabilia</p>
<p>National Automobile Museum The Harrah Collection 10 South Lake Street Reno, NV 89501-1558 (775) 333-9300 FAX (775) 333-9309 e-mail: info@automuseum.org http://www.automuseum.org/</p>	<p>Owns the actual 1907 Thomas Flyer which won the race. It is considered the most valuable vehicle in the collection.</p>