

# 1904 Thomas 6-cylinder Racer Tribute Car

Kelly Williams 2 Nov 2025

In March of 1904, the E. R. Thomas Motor Co. began the design of their first 6-cylinder engine. Their production car used a 3-cylinder engine, and doubling it seemed like the quick route to horsepower and to parity with other high-performance manufacturers. By August, work on the chassis had advanced to the point where a completion date was predicted for October.

## SIX-CYLINDER THOMAS

### Buffalo Maker Announces "Double-Triples" Model for 1905—Racing Car Almost Ready.

It has been on the cards for some little time that the E. R. Thomas Motor Co. planned some ambitious offerings for the 1905 season. Announcement made this week confirms this belief, and makes known that the Buffalo concern will make a six cylinder type of car—a "double triple cylinder" as it terms it—including racing and touring cars, ranging from 50 to 100 horsepower.

Work on the chassis of the racing car is so far advanced that it is promised to be ready in eight weeks, after months of labor on it, and arrangements have been made to use it in all the important events. A limited number of six cylinder cars will be constructed, and orders for a number of them have already been received. Orders placed now will secure machines in time for next season.

The cars will be built as racers, semi-racers and touring cars, and will be fitted with special open or limousine bodies.

The E. R. Thomas Motor Co., of Buffalo, N. Y., has caught the racing fever and is now building a six-cylinder motor racing car of 50 horsepower. The company is so convinced of the correctness of the triple-cylinder motor as adapted to the regular Thomas models, that it will accept special orders for six, or as it calls them, double-triple-cylinder motor machines, fitted with different styles of bodies and of 24, 30 or 40 horsepower.

*Motor Age, Mar. 31, 1904*

*Motor World, Aug. 18, 1904*

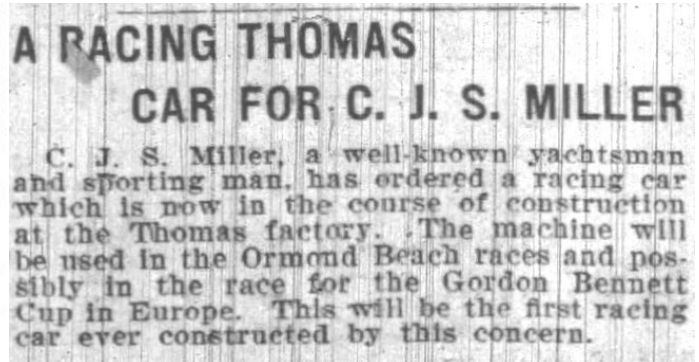
And, in fact, the car was completed by early November.

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#### Thomas Six-Cylinder Racer.

The Thomas Flyer, six-cylinder racing machine, which has been the special hobby of Mr. E. R. Thomas all summer is now completed in the assembly room of factory A, of the E. R. Thomas Motor Company's big Buffalo plant, and will be sent out for road trials next week. After giving it a severe try-out on the road between Buffalo and Tonawanda, where a mile course has been measured off, the car will be fitted with the speediest of racing bodies and will make its first appearance, probably at the Eagle Rock hill climb on Thanksgiving Day.

The car as it reposes in the assembly room, with its large cylinder and unmuffled exhausts, looks like a powerful animal ready to fight to a finish anything ever constructed in the racing automobile line. Should the new addition to the Thomas family prove worthy of its name, it will be sent South for the Ormond-Datona meet, and also entered in the preliminary speed contests for the Gordon-Bennett cup race.



*Automobile Review*, Nov. 9, 1904

*Buffalo Times*, Nov. 9, 1904

On Dec. 3, the car had its first road trial. Designer A. B. Schultz drove it, and purchaser Miller was on hand. The E. R. Thomas Motor Co. had decided to sell 6-cylinder cars to the public, and referred to them as Model 27.

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#### THOMAS SIX-CYLINDER CAR.

The first of the model 27 Thomas Flyers—six cylinder—had a road trial last Saturday afternoon in Buffalo, N. Y. Designer Schultz held the wheel, and although the roads were covered with snow and the going was slippery, the speed indicator registered over sixty miles an hour on several occasions.

This car will be equipped with both racing body and touring body and will go to Major C. J. S. Miller, of Franklin, Pa., who has entered it for the Florida race meet in January, as well as all the principal racing events next year.

Duplicates of this car have been ordered by a number of other gentlemen who will use them both for racing and touring during the coming summer. This model is a 60 horse power, and catalogues at \$6,000.

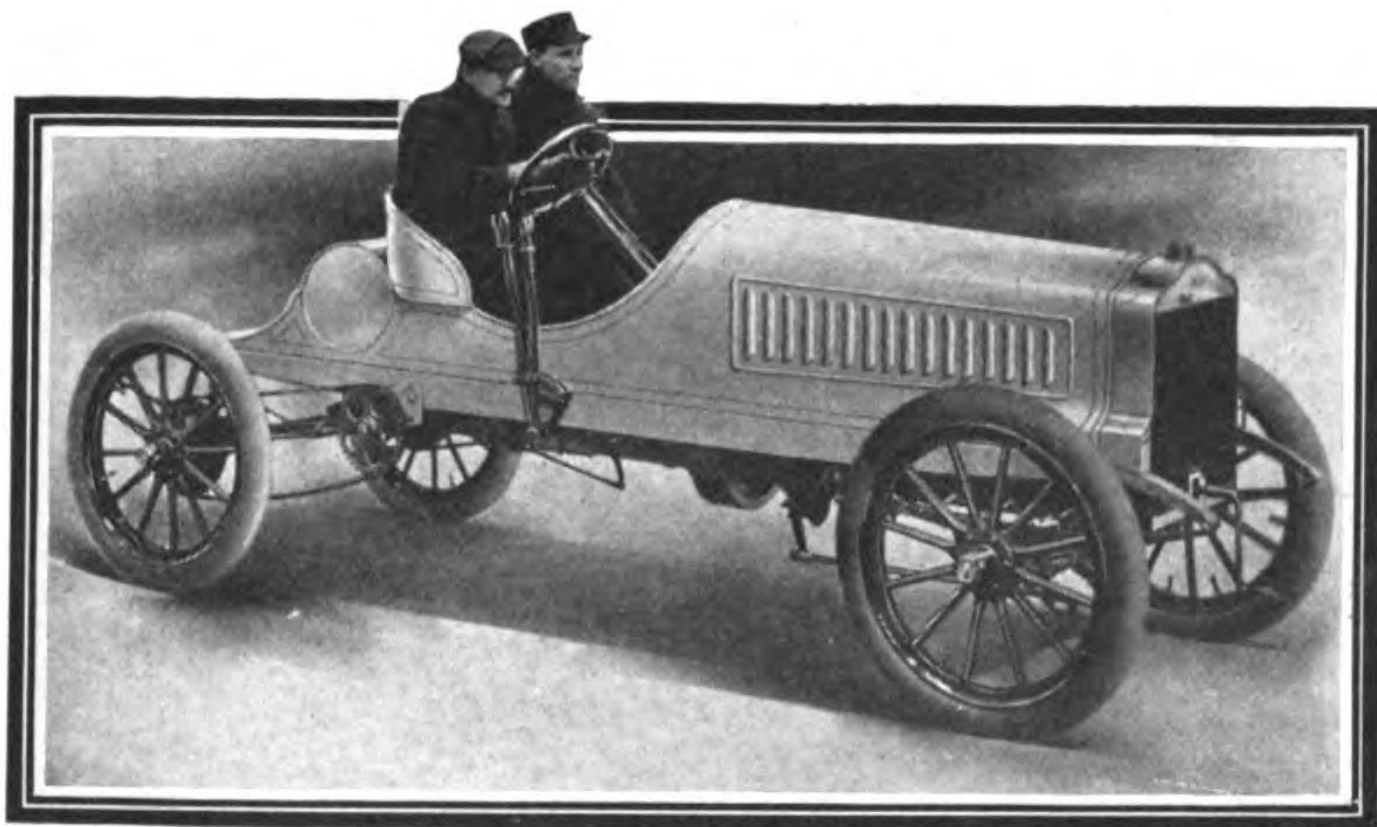
*Automobile Review*, Nov. 9, 1904

By January, the car was at Ormond. Miller's plan was to run it in the competition.

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The six-cylinder, 60 horsepower Thomas racing car, which was built by the E. R. Thomas Motor Company, of Buffalo, for Major C. J. S. Miller, of Franklin, Pa., has been taken to Ormond, Fla. A. B. Schultz, who designed the car, went with it.

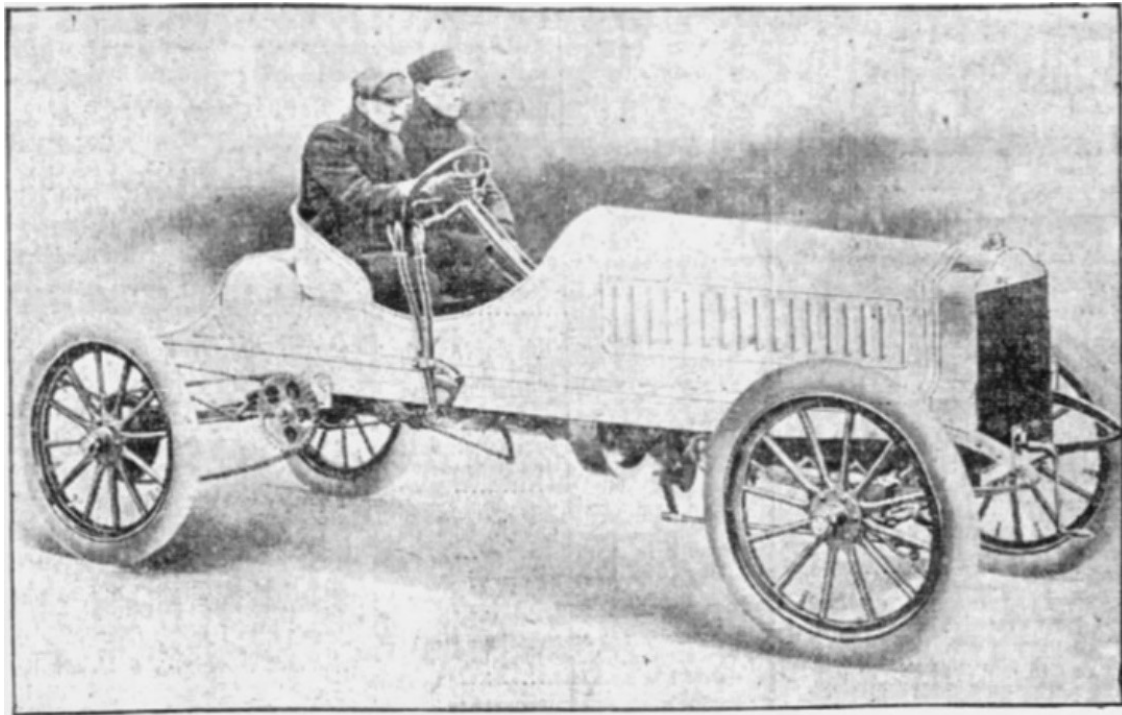
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**Thomas Six-cylinder 60 Horse Power Racer, that Major C. J. S. Miller will drive in the Ormond Daytona Meet.**

*Automobile Review, Jan. 7, 1905*

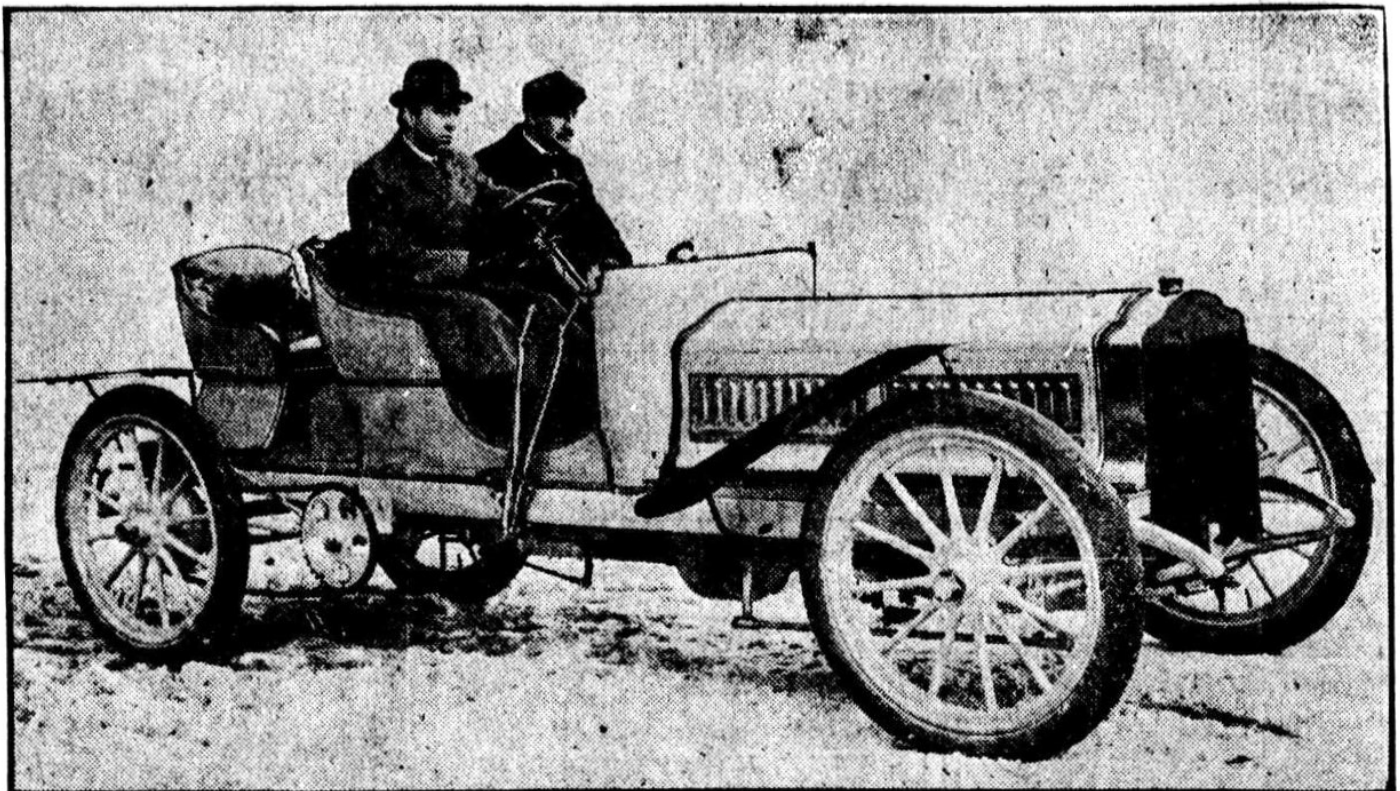
This is the only known image of the car in this form. It was undoubtedly taken on the occasion of the Dec. 3 test run. Schultz is at the wheel and Miller is the passenger. The same photo was also published in at least one newspaper.



A. B. SHULTZ, DRIVING 60 H-P SIX-CYLINDER THOMAS FLYER.

*Boston Globe, Jan. 22, 1905*

However, there's no evidence that the car ever appeared in this racing form when it was at Ormond. None of the final race event lists show Miller and his Thomas. And photos that do exist of Miller in the car, at Ormond, show a significantly different configuration. In addition to the hood and bodywork, the shift levers and rear suspension have been changed.



MAJOR C. J. S. MILLER AND THE THOMAS SIX-CYLINDER, 60 HORSEPOWER FLYER AT ORMOND BEACH, FLA.

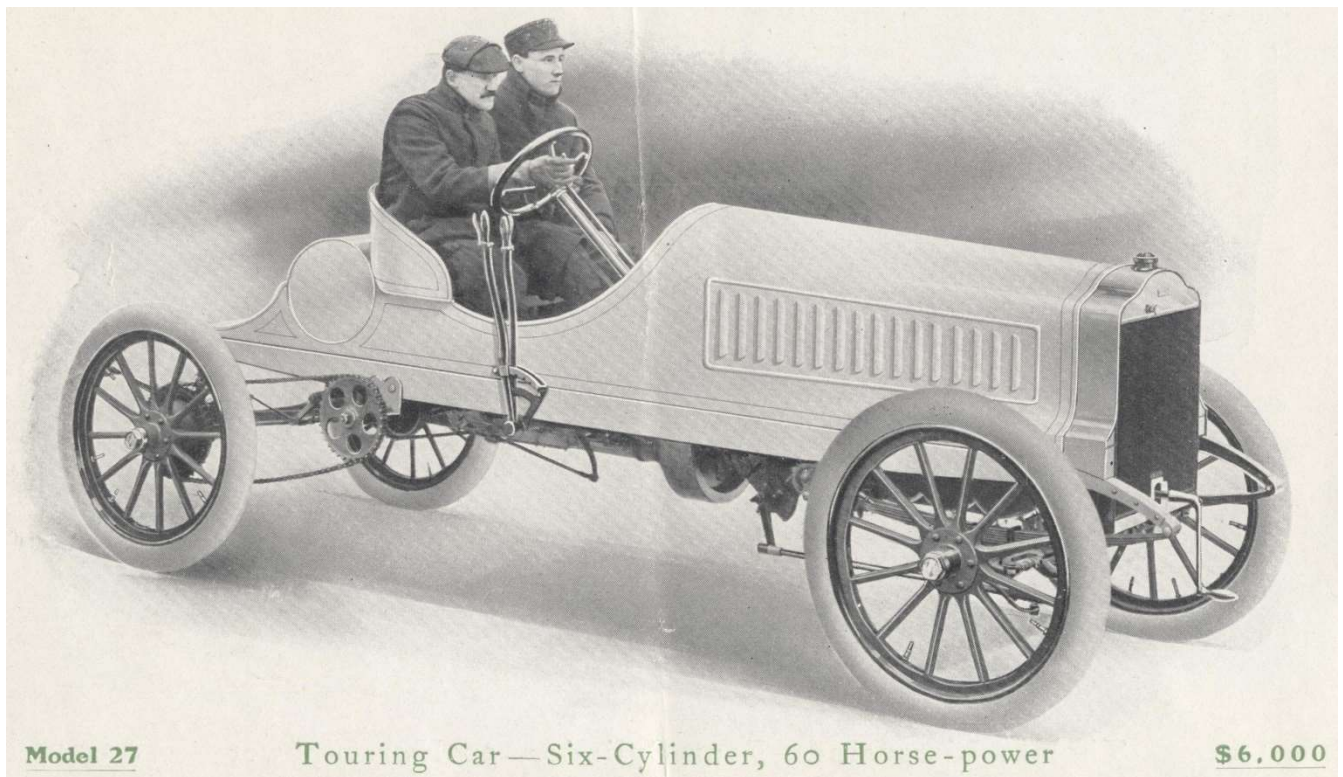
*Boston Post, Jan. 22, 1905*



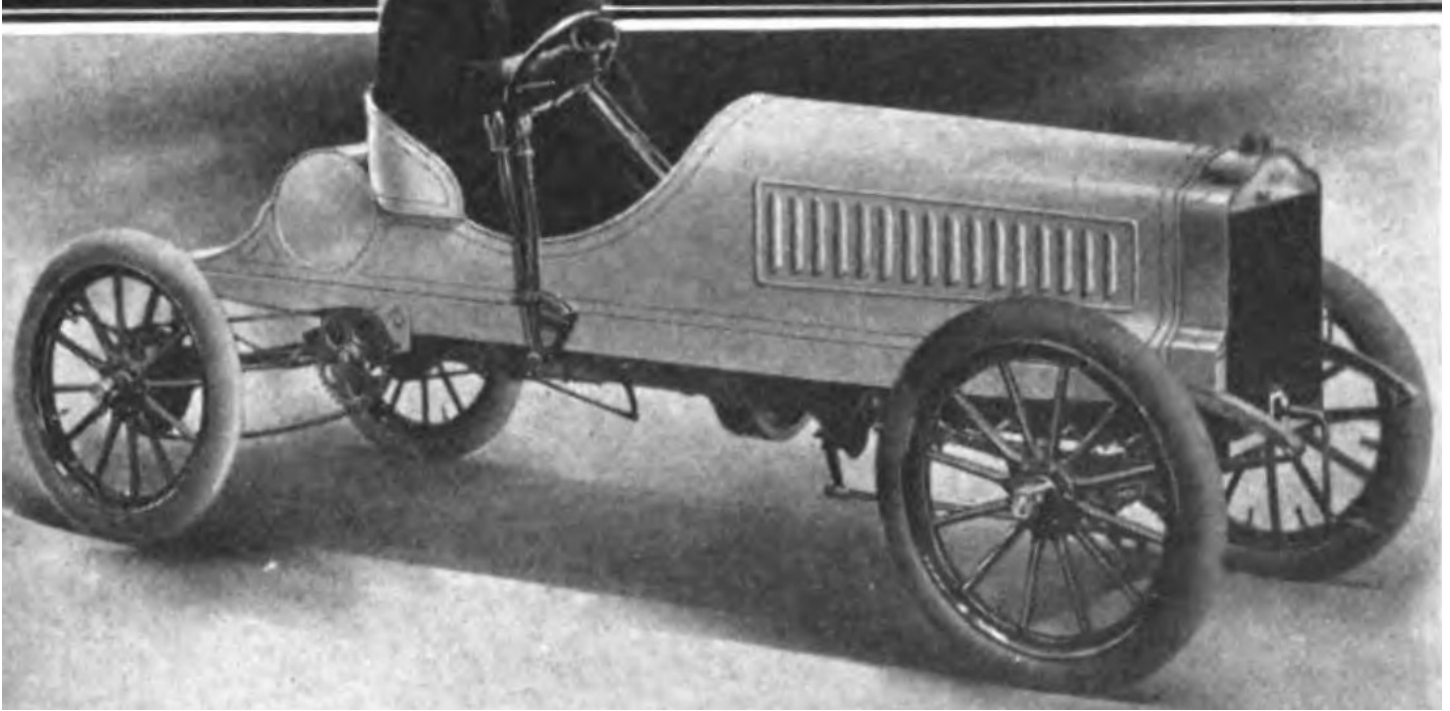


*Detroit Public Library*

When the 1905 Thomas catalog came out, the Dec. 1904 road test picture was shown for Model 27, even though it was labeled "Touring Car."



Some time in the early 2000s, a car was built that was apparently intended as a tribute to the unraced 1904 form of the E. R. Thomas creation. It does bear some resemblance to the reference photo, but most of the visual details, and observable mechanical details, were unfaithfully realized. Following are some of the major differences, based on the image of the actual racer version, as well as chassis and front-end images of the Ormond version.





## BODY



### Real body:

- Bottom wooden sill, extending the length of the frame to the radiator
- Fuel tank rests on body sill
- Side panel height is low and racy
- Seat is short in height with upward curve at lower rear
- No spare tires

## FRAME, RADIATOR



### Real frame:

- Short cross section height, body sill on top
- Frame horn curved deep
- Three rivets on frame horn
- No frame horn tie bar
- No grease cup

### Real radiator:

- No script
- Short support arm rests on body sill
- Low overall rise from frame
- Crank passes through it
- 2-tier cap

## HOOD



### Real hood:

- Tapered louver panel, upper line follows slope of hood
- 16 louvers
- Shorter height overall to rest on the wooden body sill
- Shorter height in front to meet the lower-slung radiator
- No straps



## STEERING COLUMN



Real column:

- Steering wheel is forward of seat

- Column is correct length for wheel position and low body height

## SIDE LEVERS



Real levers:

- Short, seat is close to frame

- Normal common-axis double quadrant

- Hand grips

## STEERING, FRONT SPRING MOUNT



Real steering:

- Early steering box

- Short, stout pitman arm

- Drag link goes horizontally forward

  - to meet the steering arm at a correct angle under the axle

Real spring mount:

- J-shaped, only mounting is forward of spring end

- Further from steering box - rear half of spring is same length as front

## FINAL DRIVE



Real drive:

- Cross-shaft mount plate is forward of shaft

- Drive sprocket has 5 holes, almost completely spanning the radius

- Final drive ratio is close to 1:1

- No lower radius rod

## WHEELS



Real wheel:

- Large rim diameter

- Slender spokes

- Tire locking bolts



One final footnote. The Thomas company continued experimenting with the double-triple in 1905, building a few more one-off racers later in the year, including an entry for the Vanderbilt Cup. This was a considerably different car.

