

## HOW I BECAME THE OWNER OF MY 1910 THOMAS FLYER AND THE PLEASURE IT HAS GIVEN ME

By Ernest K. Sachreiter

In February 1908, the Thomas Flyer began the round-the-world race from New York to Paris. I was 19 then, and I read the interesting accounts in the papers about the progress of the racing Thomas Flyer. One of the drivers and also mechanic was George Schuster. In 1964, I had the great pleasure and good fortune to meet Mr. George Schuster and his son at Harrah's collection of automobiles in Reno, Nevada. It is history that the Thomas Flyer won the race.

I asked my father to buy the Thomas Flyer for me, but he would not give me a firm answer. I got tired waiting for his yes or no, and decided to save all I could from my earnings and buy a 2 cylinder Maxwell, which cost \$725.00. In February of 1910, I had 725 bucks, and told my father I was going to San Francisco to buy a 2 cylinder Maxwell. He told me if I would wait until May he would go to San Francisco with me and I could select any automobile I wanted. I knew I would get a Thomas Flyer.

On the morning of May 4, 1910, Father and I, and one of the hired hands, left the ranch at 3 A.M. in a buggy, driving a span of horses to Arbuckle. We had to flag the Southern Pacific train there at 5 A.M. We made the 10 miles to Arbuckle and the S.P. Depot, flagged the train and were on our way to San Francisco.

In San Francisco by noon, we went out to the Pioneer Automobile Company on Van Ness Avenue. There was the Thomas Flyer that I still own today. After talking at length with the manager, we left to return the next day, May 5, at 10:30. The Pioneer Automobile Company was to send a man along to drive the Thomas Flyer up to the ranch. I did not sleep too much that night, I was so excited, and morning did seem so long in coming. *May, 5, 1910.* I so well remember when we purchased the Thomas Flyer. My father gave the manager a check for \$3,680.00. All one hundred percent dollars and no sales tax. The manager took us to lunch. We met Mr. Jenkins, who was to drive the car for us. He stayed a week on the ranch to teach me how to drive.

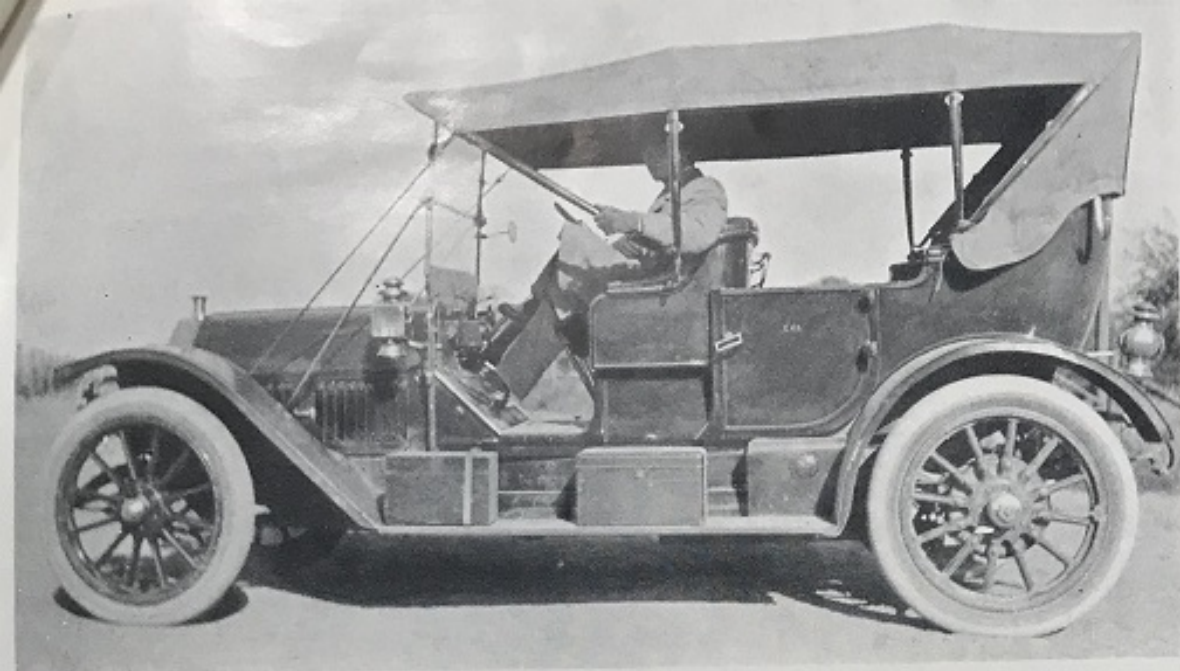
We drove to the ferry about four o'clock that afternoon. It took about 50 minutes to cross the San Francisco Bay to Vallejo. Leaving the ferry, we started north. After about 30 minutes on the road, we had a puncture, caused by a nail about 3 inches long. There was no extra tube, so after patching the inner tube and inflating the tire with 60 pounds of air with a hand pump, we were again on our way. In those days there were no highways, no road signs, just dusty roads. We trusted to luck and took the road which seemed to go north. There were several of such roads, and we were lost most of the night. After eleven hours of driving, we arrived home about 3 A.M., but I was up at 6 A.M., admiring the Thomas Flyer. Colusa was having its annual water carnival that afternoon and I drove the Thomas Flyer in the parade. I was having the time of my life.

The next four years, 1910 to 1914, I drove the Thomas hard, over dusty, dusty roads with chuck holes a foot deep in summer. Winter weather was no deterrent to motoring. Since the Thomas Flyer had won the race around the world, why not race? I raced with any and all who would race. I won most of the time, but it was most expensive. I did not slow for chuck holes, dust, mud, etc., so broke my springs. The cost of a new front spring was \$16.00, and tires were \$86.00 apiece. My father refused to let me enter a real race in Marysville, when he found out I had entered my name. I felt very bad that I could not race with the Thomas Flyer in a genuine race.

In 1914, the Thomas needed some repairs. I drove to San Francisco and left the car there. In two weeks I received notice that the Thomas Flyer was ready for some more hard driving. This time I drove the car home and it did not take eleven hours.

From 1915 to 1918 the Thomas Flyer was on the go. I was in love with the Thomas, first of course, being in love with Lillie-Anne. We three went all over the country to picnics and lots of dances. 1915 was a very wet year, lots of rain and floods. Water everywhere. Once we made a date to Williams to a dance. Before I left home, I put chains on all four wheels and side curtains on the top. Lillie-Anne lived about 6 miles away, near Grimes. I drove through mud and rain water in some places at least 6 inches deep, but we had a good time at the dance. The Thomas Flyer plowed through mud and rain that night without a struggle. What a grand car to own!

On August 25, 1918, during World War I, Uncle Sam decided he wanted me in the army for a while. I blocked up the Thomas Flyer, gave each cylinder half a pint of oil, and drained the gas and water. I served six months in the army, and then the war was over and I was discharged. I was met at the train in Arbuckle by my father with a new car, a Marmon. The Thomas Flyer remained in the shed (we didn't call them garages) for 39 years, and the spiders, mud-daubers and mice took over.



July 20, 1910—Ernest Sachreiter in his new Thomas Flyer. He owns the same car today.

Soon after 1955 the Thomas Flyer had many visitors. They were Horseless Carriage Club members. All wanted to buy the car, but I told them no sale. Still they came. Finally a young man from Placerville and his lovely wife came one day. When I said "No sale," he asked me why not get the Thomas Flyer to run again. I told him I would some day. He offered to help me, and being put on the spot, I got to work. That young couple came to the ranch many weekends and we did enjoy them very much. At last the Thomas Flyer motor woke up. The young folks were Jack and Barbara White, members of the Carmichael H.C.C.

I joined the Horseless Carriage Club and made my first tour in 1958. It was the Reno Tour and we enjoyed it. Since then, the Thomas Flyer has received some face lifting treatments. Not once has the car given me any trouble and I had my first flat tire on the 1964 Reno Tour.

The Thomas Flyer will not qualify in point system for a trophy. But I doubt if any other antique car on the tours have the mileage record of my car. It ran 50,000 miles from 1910 to 1918. Since 1958 to 1964, it has a few more miles. We three again have toured in California, Nevada, Washington, British Columbia, and Arizona, and always covered the tour as mapped out by the tour master. My Thomas is original and it is going to stay that way.

See you on the next tour?



Lillie-Anne and Ernest Sachreiter and the Thomas Flyer on the Reno Tour, June 1964.

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