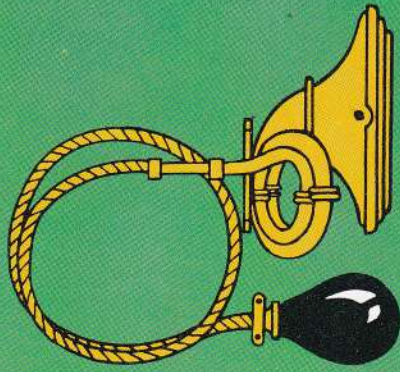


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BULB HORN

THE VETERAN MOTOR CAR CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.





A Thomas Flyer Restoration

by S. P. Stevens

FOREWORD

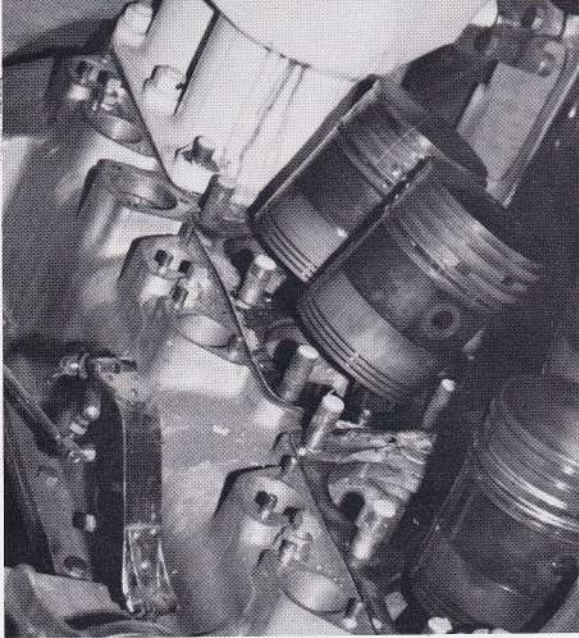
S. P. and Elizabeth Stevens, are, and have been, the owners of Stevens Outdoor Advertising Company in San Antonio, Texas for the past 32 years. Mr. Stevens had been an ardent antique gun collector for the past 25 years, and is the publisher of the well-known Antique Arms Annual. In recent years he became interested in antique cars, and first one acquired being a chain-driven 2-cylinder 1910 Buick. He later acquired a beautifully restored top-award-winning 1910 Cadillac Demi-Tonneau. Finally, he heard of this unrestored 1911 Thomas Flyer 6-cylinder "Fly-about" while attending the Glidden Tour in Ottawa, Canada in 1971. On the second day of this Tour, Mr. Stevens met Mr. Mahlon Patton of Elizabethtown, Pa. During the course of their old car conversation, Mr. Patton told Mr. Stevens about an unrestored 1911 Thomas Flyer "Flyabout" owned by Mr. Oakley Sumpter, Sr. of Perryville, Md., who was also attending the Glidden Tour. Later that day he met Mr. Sumpter. He described the Thomas and said it was for sale, and agreed to show the Thomas to Mr. Stevens when he came to the Hershey meet about five weeks later.



On October 5th when I traveled east to attend the Hershey meet, Mr. Mahlon Patton met me at the Harrisburg airport and we drove 135 miles south to Perryville, Md. to visit Mr. Oakley Sumpter and see the Thomas Flyer. It was a crisp, sunny day and the Fall foliage was very colorful, and with old car conversation, it was a most delightful trip. Oakley had the Thomas setting out in front of his garage, and although it was unrestored, the car surely stirred up my imagination. I visualized how proud a car it once had been! Oakley has been an antique car collector for many years and is well known and liked among the antique car collecting fraternity. He is affectionately known as "Mr. Model T," and on Model T's he is an authority! Mahlon Patton is also well known in the

antique car field, and among his many beautiful antique cars is a splendid 1910 Thomas Flyer 6-cylinder Model K Touring. Oakley primed the big engine and after a few cranks it roared loud. Then he and I jumped in the bucket seats and drove around the area with a cloud of dust behind us. The power that surged from the Thomas was unbelievable! Coming back to the garage, Oakley brought it to a stop, and then I drove it around the block, came back and drove it into the garage. It was love at first sight! Oakley showed Mahlon and me the headlights, side-lamps and tail lamp, plus the fenders and body parts that he had planned to use if he had restored it. Both Mahlon and Oakley suggested that if I bought the Thomas I should ask Mr. Larry Amsley, owner of



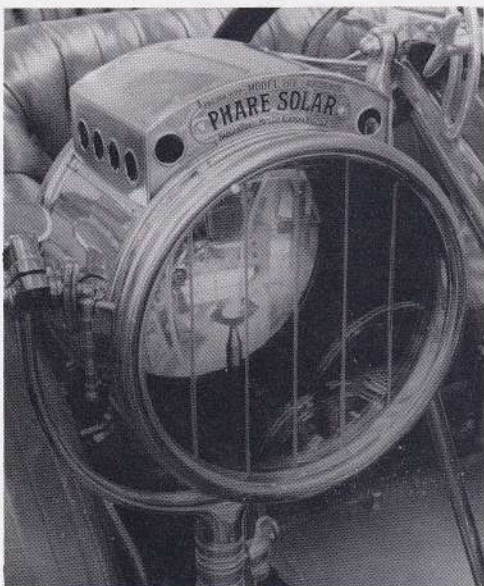


Large T-head engine with aluminum crankcase. During restoration. The 4 1/4 in. cast iron pistons were replaced with new aluminum pistons. The cylinders had almost no wear and did not have to be refinished.



In Larry Amsley's shop is Wayne Stewart, the master mechanic, who did all of the mechanical restoration.

Large brass spotlight with copper back and front



Amsley Antique Body Company in Chambersburg, Pa. to do the restoration. I immediately called Larry and discussed my possible purchase of the chassis and parts. He told me he could begin the restoration the first of 1972.

Mahlon drove home, and I spent the night with Oakley and his wife, Nellie. We talked about the Thomas and its possibilities far into the night. The next morning, after a great breakfast, the three of us drove to Hershey, but NOT BEFORE I HAD PURCHASED THE THOMAS FLYER.

We arrived at Hershey about noon, and I immediately found Larry Amsley at his father's car and parts space in the Flea Market. We further discussed the restoration and closed the deal. He had the all-important job of restoring my newly-found Thomas Flyer. After Hershey, I returned home with lots of ideas and could hardly wait until the Thomas was delivered to Chambersburg.

Oakley had given me a lot of Thomas literature, including a 1911 brochure showing the thirteen different body styles, and a Thomas 1911 Operator's Manual. Also, a lot of old Thomas ads. I studied all of these and read all of the available Thomas literature in my car library. By the time I went back to Perryville I knew exactly how my Thomas Flyer "Flyabout" was going to look when finished. I arrived at Oakley's about December 15th. He loaded the Thomas onto a big trailer and secured it. Then we carefully loaded all of the fenders, windshield, boxes of brass lamps and many other boxes of parts into the trailer. We delivered the load into Chambersburg that afternoon and unloaded it all in the Amsley Antique Auto Body Shop. It was snowing that afternoon, and after the last box of Thomas parts was safely out of the weather, Larry showed me around to the different departments of his large shop. I was very impressed with Larry and the work being done on several antique cars. Later, we settled down in his office and began drawing up plans for the restoration.

I left for Texas the next morning. For the next several months I ran ads in old car magazines for 1911 Thomas literature and a pair of Model 1150 Solarclipse headlamps. I had learned that many early luxury car owners had replaced the original headlamps with the optional Solarclipse lamps. In fact, I had already seen three Thomas Flyers - one 1909 and two 1910 models - with the solarclipse lamps. It has been said that these lamps are the most beautiful available. Mr. Ken Pearson of Crystal Lake, Illinois, came to my rescue with a beautiful pair of Solarclipse lamps, and, I was beginning to receive Thomas literature from my ads.

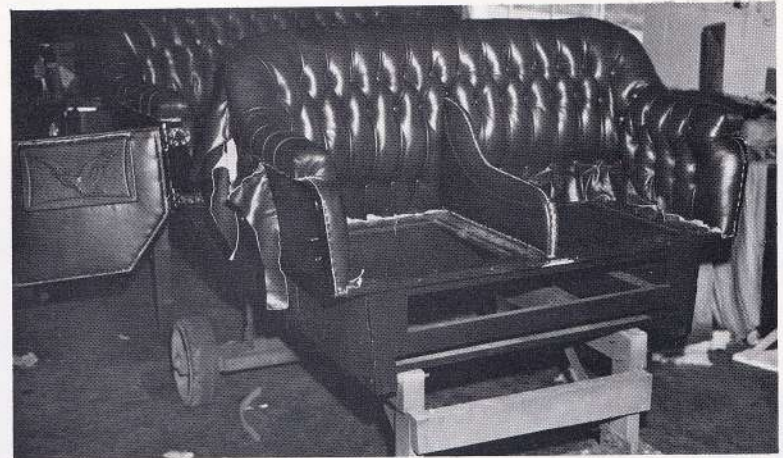
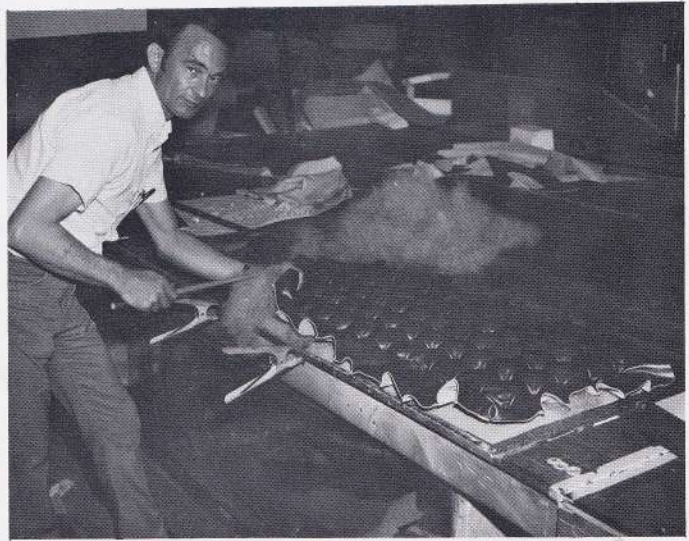
The first of February I made a trip to Reno, Nevada, to visit and look over the great Harrah car collection, and to completely research the 1911 Thomas Flyer "Flyabout." Among the 1400 or so

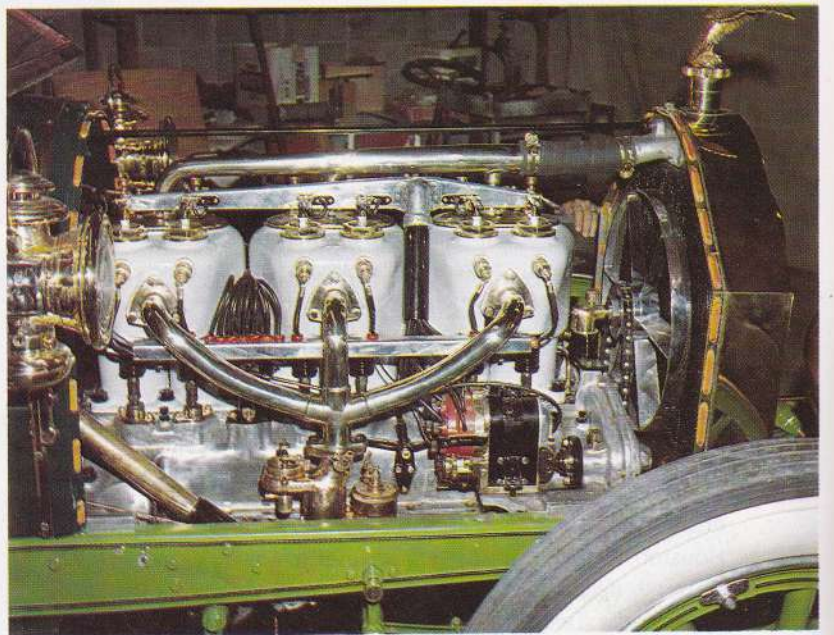
cars there, there were several Thomas Flyers, including the world-famous "Around the World" winner. I filled a small notebook with notes and measurements. I made over forty photographs of one particular Thomas Flyer. Mr. Ralph Dunwoodie, the manager of the Harrah collection, was most helpful during my 2-day stay. He arranged for me to browse through all of the material about the Thomas Flyer in their enormous library. They made many copies from their original material for me.

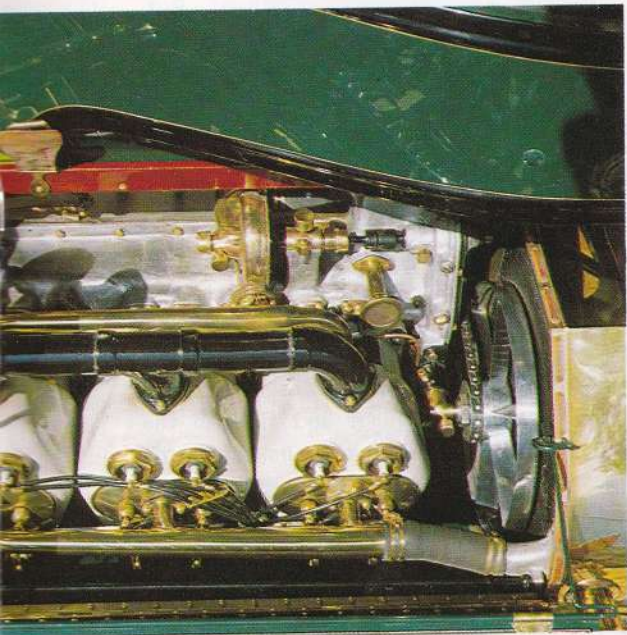
About the middle of February, Larry Amsley advised me that much progress had been made taking the Thomas Flyer apart, checking out the transmission, differential, wheel bearings and motor - and all were found to be perfect. He suggested that I come up there and see how the work was progressing. Frankly, I could hardly wait until I got up there! I found my Thomas scattered in different departments of his shop. The wood mechanic was busy shaping the ash for the frame; the mechanic had the motor completely apart. I never saw so many pieces! He had the large heavy cast iron pistons out, and suggested that I replace them with new lightweight aluminum ones, and, of course, with new rings. He had polished the aluminum transmission and crankcase until they looked like a mirror. The large 26-inch wheels had been taken to a wheel-wright to be tightened and refinished. Larry has his own brass foundry and was busy preparing wooden copies of different parts of the car that would be cast in brass - like the door handles, side lamp brackets, tail light bracket, horn bracket, foot rail, lap robe rail brackets, windshield and spare tire, etc.

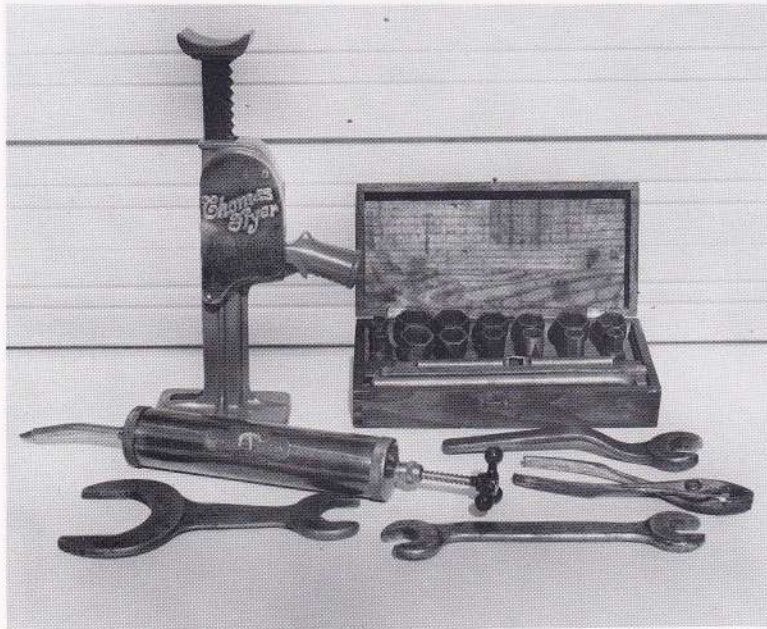
We decided that the big Thomas 6-cylinder engine had been run very little. The cylinders were perfect, no wear at all. However, since the motor had been taken down I wanted it to be put back in like-new condition. Larry suggested that we send the crankcase to a shop in North Carolina which specialized in grinding down crankshafts and pouring all new Babbitt bearings. There were slight scores on both the crankshaft and all of the bearings. So, a large wooden crate was made, and in went the crankshaft and the crankcase for a trip to North Carolina. I gave Larry all of the photographs and information I had gathered from Harrah's, and we made a trip to our friend Mahlon Patton's to study his marvelous 1910 Thomas Flyer. Together with all of the research, notes and photos, the Thomas was beginning to shape up.

Back home again, after several weeks I was ready to go back east and look at my car again. Also, I had learned that the annual Texas Tour was to be held in Houston, June 1-4. I was very anxious to have the car restored, delivered to Texas, and to show for the first time on the Texas Tour. When I told Larry about it he was very doubtful that it could be done. So much work had to be done in a total of five months, and,









A set of original tools, mighty rare for a 1910 car.

two months were already past! However, Larry had a very efficiently operated shop; the three mechanics and himself were certainly moving forward on the restoration. And, each one of them is an expert at whatever he does. I found their reputation to be legendary.

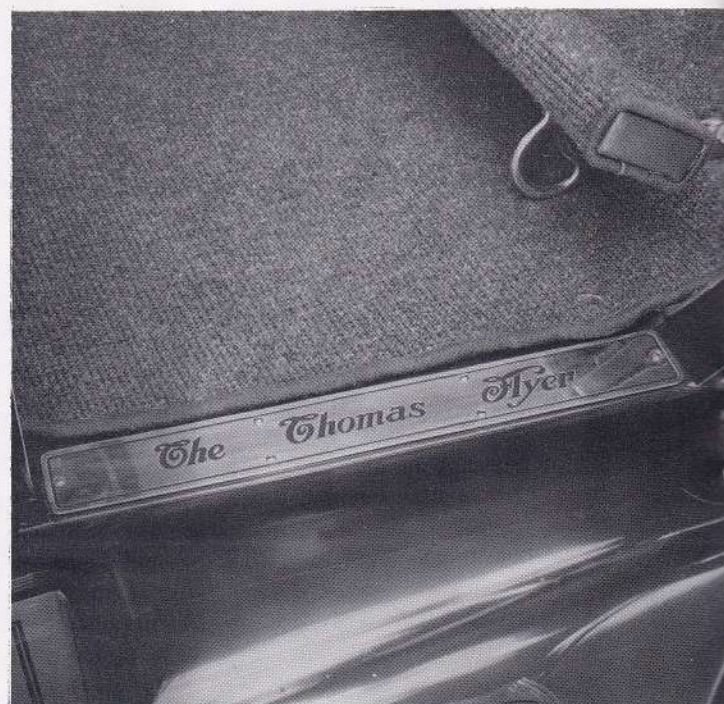
I went to look at the car on an average of once each month, and I was amazed at the progress I saw each trip. By the first of May, the frame, wheels and body had been painted. The chassis and wheels were a light green, the body a medium blue-green with heavy black stripe and a gold one on top of the black. The engine had been mounted on the frame, as was the transmission. The fenders were made of steel, but the complete body was made of hammered aluminum, just like the original. The body was ready to be taken over to Mr. Charles Yaeger's upholstery shop for the rich brown leather seats and backs and the spare tire cover. I had ordered eight cowhides for the job, and only one-half of one hide was left over. The top was also made in Mr. Yaeger's shop, as were the floor mats, the lap robe holder and the foot rail covering.

I made the final trip back east on May 22nd, and found the Thomas Flyer nearly completed. It looked just like I had imagined it would on the day I bought it from Oakley Sumpter some eight months before. JUST GREAT! The beautiful greens, the sparkling brass, the large spotlight of brass and copper on the running board, and the big top was certainly impressive.

Larry and his men had road-tested the Thomas several times. But, I had not driven the car since the day I bought it. We started the Thomas and drove out of Chambersburg on some beautiful country roads and put about 10 miles on the speedometer. My Thomas Flyer ran like a million dollars! But, Time was wasting! We had to get back to the shop and finish the car because Tom Lester's big Passport van was going to pick up the Thomas at 8:00 A.M. on May 25th, and there were hundreds of small things to be done on the Thomas before pick-up time. On May 24th we all were on hand at the shop at 6:00 A.M. Everybody was doing something or other on the Thomas. Larry's charming wife Carole, her father, Larry's father Carl Amsley, Chuck Yaeger, his man sonny, the three shop men, Larry and myself — we were all working on the Thomas at one time or another during the day. Larry and his mechanic, Wayne, and I worked all night and finished the Thomas at 6:00 A.M. — just two hours before the Thomas would be driven into the large van and start its journey of 1750 miles to San Antonio. And, at 8:00 A.M. we did load the Thomas, and away it went to Texas!

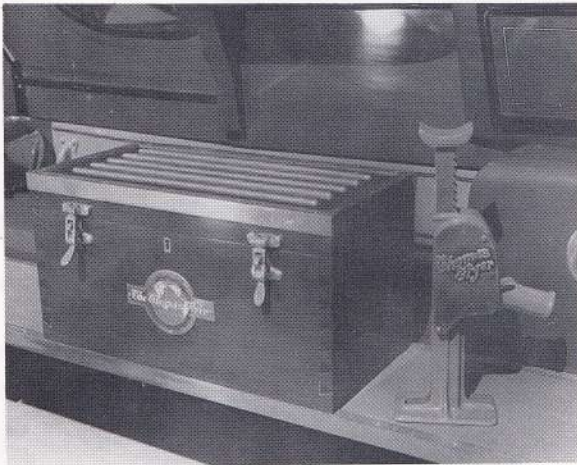
On the morning of May 29th, my Thomas Flyer was unloaded and I drove it into its new home, a new garage addition. Several days before, a large 20 foot long enclosed trailer was delivered to me from Indiana. On May 30th my wife Elizabeth and I loaded the Thomas into the new trailer and we drove to Houston for the Texas Tour. Larry Amsley and his wife Carole flew into Houston for the Texas Tour,

Brass Thomas Flyer threshold plates, one of the many fine appointments of the car.

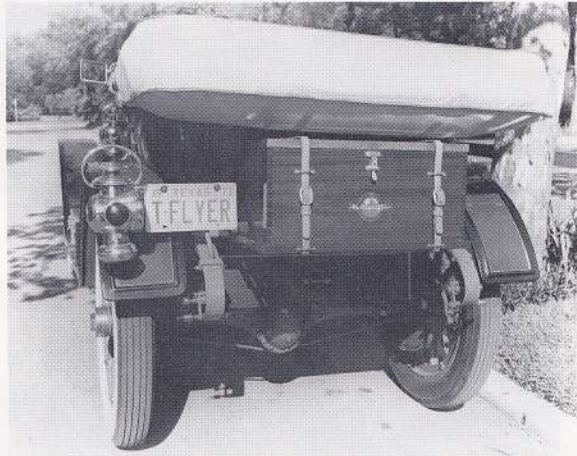




*The Brass emblem displaying
"The Thomas Flyer, New York to Paris Winner – World's Champion still undisputed"*



*The mahogany toolbox with its brass emblem and the
Thomas Flyer jack*



*View showing the mahogany trunk proudly displaying
the Thomas Flyer emblem*

and a visit later in the week to our home in San Antonio. During the 3-day tour the Thomas was very well accepted. We drove it on a 30-mile trip to a big barbecue, then to the other side of Houston for a Mall display. Then, just before the Awards banquet, the chief judge asked me if I would drive the Thomas Flyer into the Grand Ballroom of the Astroworld Hotel for display during the evening. I drove in the Thomas, parked it in the center of the large room beneath an enormous crystal chandelier on a regal red carpet. Several spotlights were focused on the car and it looked like a diamond with all of the brass sparkling and the beautiful blue-green colors flashing. Our Thomas Flyer won three awards: the large and handsome Liston Zander award for Most Desirable Car of Show, the best pre-1916 car, and the best car in its class.

After the Texas Tour, we made two long trips back east showing the Thomas. It won a First Junior award at the AACA meet in Seven Springs, Pa. In July it received the coveted National First Prize at an AACA Central Division meet in Gatlinburg, Tenn., plus a large "Judges' Choice" plaque given for the most popular car of the meet. The Thomas received 994 points out of 1000. On the Glidden Tour at Lake Placid, New York it received the Most Popular Car award from Lake Placid Club Hotel. But, our Thomas Flyer's height of achievement was reached at the winter meeting in Philadelphia, February 10, 1973, when it was awarded the AACA Cup for the best restoration of the year in the Central Division.

All of this instant success had happened in just five months! To our wonderful Thomas Flyer!

The 1911 Thomas Flyer "Flyabout" has a 132-inch wheelbase, with 26-inch wheels with demountable rims, carrying 37 x 5-inch tires. The motor is cast in three blocks, 2 cylinders to each block. In raised numerals on top of the front cylinder is the date of manufacture, 10-13-11. On top of the back cylinder block is 10-16-11. This 6-cylinder "T" head engine has a bore of 4 1/4 inches, with a 5 1/2 inch stroke. It was rated at 40 HP, but actually develops 64 to 70 HP at 1500 RPM's. *The 1911 6-cylinder Thomas can run from 4 to 57 MPH in top gear.

This engine has dual ignition system. 6 plugs on the side of the cylinders from the Bosch distributor, which is driven off the cam shaft by a set of gears that also operates the oil pump, plus the fuel tank pressure pump. The distributor is powered by a storage battery through a Bosch coil. And 2 plugs per cylinder on top of the blocks coming from the Bosch high tension magneto.

The large carburetor is a Stromberg. The fan is of cast aluminum. The crankcase is of aluminum, and the three motor blocks are porcelain-enameled light grey. The exhaust manifold is black porcelain.

The Thomas has a slide gear, 3-speed and reverse selective type transmission. It is shaft driven and is equipped with a full-floating type rear axle.

A force-feed and splash system lubricate this large motor. The oil is stored in the false bottom of the lower case section, from which it is brought up by a pump that runs off a vertical shaft. On the dash or instrument panel the circulating oil passes through three glass tubes, which are visible. The fly wheel is a large 21 inches, in which there is a cork-faced cone clutch.

An oil reservoir or tank is bolted on the outside left front frame. It is made of copper with a brass inlet and a brass pump. When the crankcase gets low on oil, as shown by a drip level faucet, a valve is turned and fresh oil is hand-pumped into the crankcase from this reservoir.

The two rear brakes are dual purpose, with internal expanding shoes and external bands that are pressed on the steel drums and are bolted to the rear wheel.

The external bands are operated by the foot pedal, and the expanding shoes operated by the emergency side lever brake.

Besides the matching tool box and rear trunk, additional equipment includes the following:

A large spotlight standing on the right front running board. It is a "Phare Solar Model 768." The main body is brass, with a copper back and copper front rim. The shock absorbers are Hartford.

A deluxe mahogany brass-trimmed roll-down windshield. A large combination Warner speedometer and clock. An extra tool compartment under the main trunk, with lock. Also, storage space under the rear seat. There is a deluxe brass and leather robe rail, and a deluxe foot rest rail, trimmed with leather.

A pair of optional Solarclipse headlamps with 10-inch bulls' eye lenses. Lamp Model 1150. The headlamps and spotlight operate from a PRESTO-O-LITE gas tank located between the spare tire and splash guard. The side lamps and tail lamp burn oil. There is also a large muffler cutout; and an exhaust whistle. On the leather drop covers of the back doors large flying eagles are embossed on the leather. And, above the brass radiator cap is a large flying brass eagle.

There are 2 spare tires. One tire and rim is covered with a custom-tailored leather cover with brass button snaps. The other spare tire is covered with the same fabric as the cop, also with brass button snaps. The top boot is made of the same fabric as the top. Deluxe trimmed throughout with leather same as the car upholstery. The back door threshold brass plates have "The Thomas Flyer" embossed on them. The crank has a deluxe custom-made leather sling.

The Thomas has a complete set of tools, including an original car jack with "Thomas Flyer" in script on the side of the jack plate, as shown in photo. Plus a complete set of sockets, a brass grease gun, an old original pair of pliers, a spark plug wrench, hub cap wrench, etc.

*Quoted from the 1911 Thomas advance booklet.

