



# Little Known Facts and Trivia About the Automobile Business

1782	James Watt builds the first engine crank.
1792	The first U.S. toll roads opened in PA and CT.
1860	Jean Lenoir invents the spark plug.
1887	The Benz became the first car offered for sale.
1896	The Duryea became the first production motor vehicle in the U.S.
1897	The first auto insurance policy is purchased in Westfield, MA.
1900	The first Guide Michelin published mostly containing a list of gas stations in France.
1901	The first Grand Prix race was won with an average speed of 46 mph.
1901	The first American car manufactured in any quantity, the "Curved Dash" Olds is offered for \$650.
1913	More than one million cars registered in the U.S.
1914	The Chevrolet bow-tie emblem first appears.
1914	The first electric traffic light was installed in Cleveland.
1923	Powered windshield wipers became standard equipment on many cars.
1923	A radio was first offered as an accessory.
1939	Buick introduces turn signals as standard equipment.
1946	The first power windows were introduced.
1948	Harley Earl introduces the tail fin on the Cadillac. Fins don't go away for over a

	decade.
1953	Chevrolet introduces its Harley Earl-designed Corvette.
1954	Padded dashboards introduced for safety.
1956	Electric door locks introduced on several luxury models.
1958	The first remote adjusted side view mirror.
1958	Ford introduces the first electric trunk release.
1958	Chrysler introduces the day-night rearview mirror.
1960	All-weather antifreeze plus coolant introduced.
1963	Seat belts first offered as standard equipment.
1965	Rear seat belts became standard on most cars.
1974	National 55 mph speed limit enacted after oil shortages.
1984	Chrysler introduces the Dodge Caravan and Plymouth voyager minivans.
1972	Cars traveled along LA freeways at an average speed of 60 mph. In 1982 the average was only 17 mph!
1974	The average American family spent 33 percent of their yearly income for a new car. In 1995 the average was 50 percent.
1995	the Big Three sold a whopping 97,000 cars in Japan.
1996	New Jeep Wrangler got coil springs.
1997	<i>Thrust SSC</i> broke the <i>sound barrier</i> and raised the World Land Speed Record to 1221kph (763mph, Mach 1.02).
1998	Bentley bought by VW. Is nothing sacred? BMW pulled a swifty and
1998	bought the <i>Rolls Royce</i> name.
1998	Bugatti name bought by VW.
1998	Chrysler and Mercedes-Benz merged to form DaimlerChrysler.
1998	Volvo cars sold to Ford.

1999	Ford bought <a href="#">LandRover</a> and 'Phoenix' took over MG- <a href="#">Rover</a> from BMW.
2000	BMW put the retro 'new Mini' on sale in Europe (.au in 2002).
2001	July: Rolls-Royce and Bentley Motor Cars announced details of the last Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph model to commemorate 97 years of Rolls-Royce cars; production ends with 2001. VW continued to build Bentleys but future Rolls Royces were to be built at BMW's new factory.
2002	Rolls-Royce became pure BMW, and Bentley pure Volkswagen.

### Big Names in the Automotive History

<i>Buick, David</i>	A plumbing inventor and manufacturer built his first car in 1900.
<i>Cadillac, Antoine</i>	Founded the City of Detroit in the 17th century.
<i>Chevrolet, Louis</i>	A Swiss race car driver and engineer built his first car in 1911 with financing by William Durant.
<i>Chrysler, Walter</i>	A locomotive mechanic who got into the automobile business in 1912 and publicly displayed his own first car at the 1924 NY Auto Show and selling an amazing 32,000 car in his first year.
<i>Cord, E.L.</i>	As General Manager of Auburn Auto Company he produced some of the most advanced (front-wheel drive, supercharged V8's) and beautiful cars ever under his own name. Unfortunately, they were expensive and came along during the start of the

Depression.

*Daimler, Gottlieb*

Can be considered as the founder of the automobile industry when he formed Daimler Motor Company in 1890.

*Dodge, John & Horace*

Their first car came off the assembly line in 1914. Both brothers died within less than a year of each other during the influenza epidemic in 1920.

*Durant, William*

A businessman, finance man, and salesman who was a self-made millionaire before ever joining the auto business. He was called on by the owners of the failing Buick Motor Company to help. He soon bought Oldsmobile, Pontiac and Cadillac and formed General Motors. He almost bought Ford, but didn't come up with enough cash to suit Henry. Durant always kept himself stretched thin with his money in stocks and other businesses. He lost everything in the Depression.

*Duryea, Charles & Frank*

Built the first successful American automobile and the first to offer a production model for sale to the public.

*Earl, Harley*

Designed the La Salle in 1927, the beginning of a trend towards lower and wider cars. As head of GM's styling department he invented the tail fin and designed the Corvette.

*Ferrari, Enzo*

A mechanic, race car driver then race car team owner. His cars dominated racing for many years after WWII.

*Firestone, Harvey*

His tires went on the first mass-produced Fords.

*Ford, Henry*

In creating the assembly line for automobiles he also created jobs for thousands and affordable cars for millions. What Henry did for automobiles spilled over into other

consumer good.

*Gale, Tom*

A Chrysler designer largely responsible for the current crop of Chrysler's design of cab-forward and curved styling on everything from the minivan to the Viper.

*Goodrich, BF*

The company started in 1896 has many firsts: First synthetic rubber tire, first tubeless tire, first American-made radial tire, the first space saver spare and the first "run flat" tire.

*Goodyear, Charles*

Accidentally discovered the rubber vulcanizing process. He patented the process, but couldn't come up with any practical uses for it and died penniless in 1860. The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company was named after him.

*Honda, Soichiro*

After WWII with \$3,300 he started making motorcycles.

*Iacocca, Lee*

Responsible for the Mustang in the early 1960's and bailing out Chrysler in early 1980's.

*Jellinek, Emile*

In 1900, while a Daimler Motor Works board member, Jellinek convinced Gottlieb Daimler to build a race car and name it after Emile's daughter, Mercedes.

*Murphy, Edward*

Founded the Pontiac Buggy Company in Pontiac, MI in 1893. At the turn of the century he decided to switch to making "those noisy, smelly, unreliable automobiles."

*Olds, Ransom*

His highly successful "Curved Dash" runabout put Michigan on the map as a source of motor vehicles. He soon left his namesake company. Later he produced the first gasoline lawn mower.

*Porsche, Ferdinand*

A design engineer who never created a car carrying his name. That was left to

his son, Ferry, to accomplish.

*Royce, Frederick & Rolls,  
Charles*

Engineer Royce and car dealer Rolls introduced their first car in 1904.

*Sloan, Alfred*

Led GM to become the world's largest corporation. Responsible for the idea of yearly styling changes.

*Tucker, Preston*

After WWII Tucker designed, built and promoted an innovative car with features, power, and aerodynamic design never before seen and at a very good price. His company folded after building 51 cars.`

Sources: Auto Performance