

*Across  
America  
in a  
Franklin*



*Across*  
AMERICA  
*in a*  
FRANKLIN



1907

BY  
*L.L. Whitman*

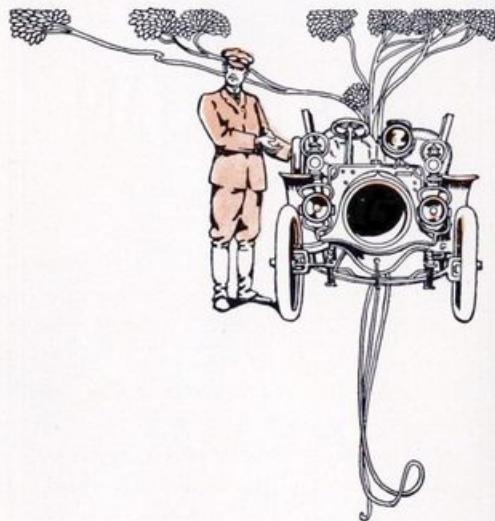


## *Author's Apology*

The car is the real hero of the story ; but,  
like most real heroes, it won't talk.

This is my "apology."

L. L. Whitman



*San Francisco to New York — Over 4100  
Actual Road - miles*

*Fifteen days, two hours, twelve minutes. In a  
Six-cylinder Franklin Car*

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## ACROSS AMERICA IN A FRANKLIN



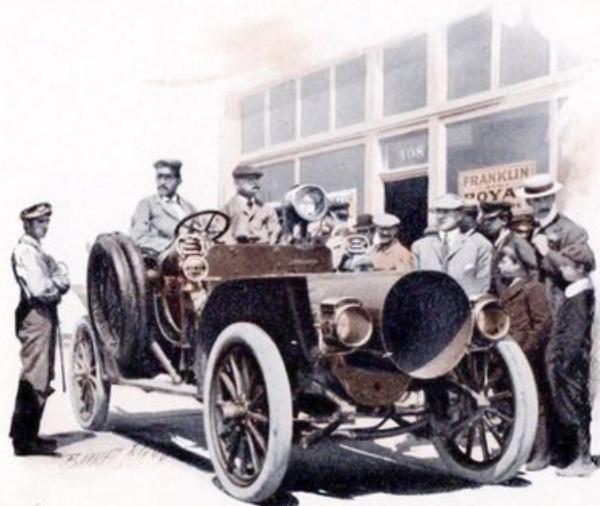
### Official and Encouraging



E started out with three kind  
letters given us respectively  
by Major-General A. W.  
Greeley to Major-General  
Wade; President R. P.  
Schmerin of the Automobile

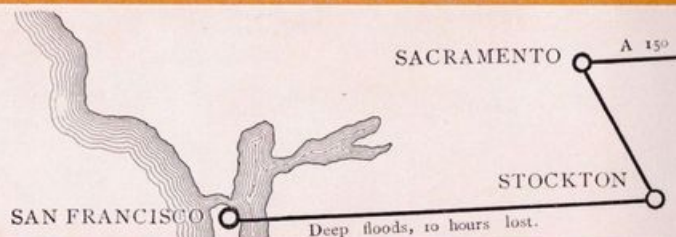
Club of California to the President of the  
Automobile Club of America; and by Mayor  
Schmitz of San Francisco to Mayor  
McClellan and the citizens of New York,  
thanking them for New York's assistance  
to San Francisco in her recent calamity.

When you have read the story of our trip,  
you will say we did wisely to get official  
testimony that we were actually alive and  
had whole necks, when we started from San  
Francisco, August the second, Nineteen Six.  
Perhaps you'll think we need an official  
confirmation of the fact that we are still  
living.

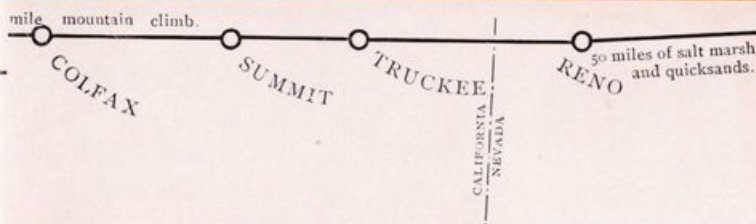




# ACROSS AMERICA



# IN A FRANKLIN



## What we went after

We were after a new transcontinental record.

The Franklin already held the record; but we wanted to cut it in halves and throw away about eighteen days which we had no



use for. We also wanted to demonstrate what can be done with a motor-car that a sane man wants to do.



## The outfit

Our car was a regular six-cylinder Franklin Stock Touring-car.

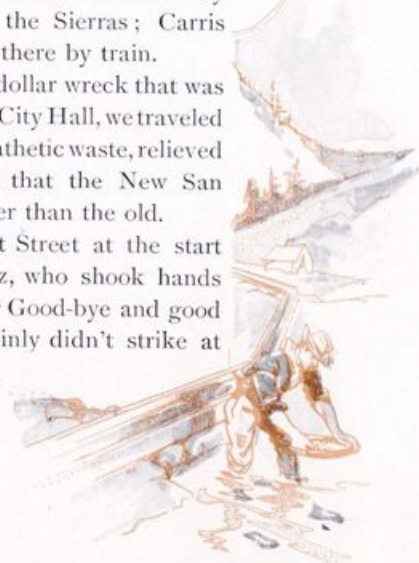
We took off the tonneau; substituted a large hamper; carried a steamer-trunk to hold clothing; an extra gasoline tank, two extra tires, five inner tubes, an extra set of batteries, extra brake-band, some spark-plugs, bag of tools; sack of bolts, nuts and small parts; an axe, a shovel, pulley-block, two stout hickory poles and 150 feet of rope—and thereby hangs the tale.

## A bad Start

Carris, Harris, Bates, Daley and Yours Motorfully undertook to do the honors; Bates and I taking the car for the first relay to Summit Station in the Sierras; Carris and Daley going on to there by train.

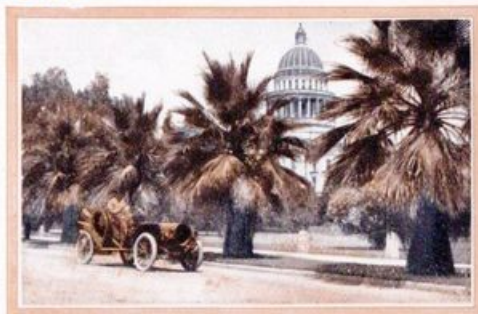
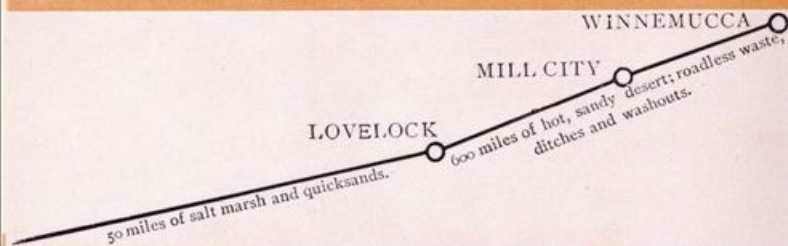
From the six-million dollar wreck that was once the San Francisco City Hall, we traveled through 2400 acres of pathetic waste, relieved by inspiring evidences that the New San Francisco will be greater than the old.

Rolling down Market Street at the start we met Mayor Schmitz, who shook hands with us and gave us "Good-bye and good luck"—which we certainly didn't strike at





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the start; for the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers were all over the easy four- or five-hour road from Oakland to Sacramento; and instead of going this way we had to ferry all the way to Stockton—which put us ten hours to the bad at the very start.

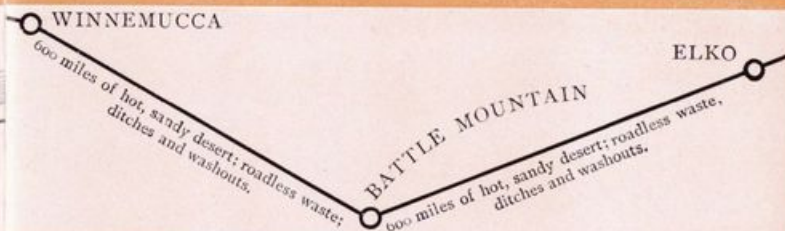
From Stockton we skimmed through sixty miles of wheat fields to Sacramento in just two hours.

In the afternoon we climbed a hundred and fifty miles of mountain; through beautiful fruit-country, big pine forests and twenty miles of rocky ledges; reaching Summit Station at the same time as the "Overland Limited," which made the hundred-mile run on smooth rails only two hours faster than the Franklin came up the 150 miles of crooked and rocky mountain road.

### Dropping down the Sierras

Bates and I sought the solace which a dining-car grants; while Carris and Daley took the Franklin and plunged off down the

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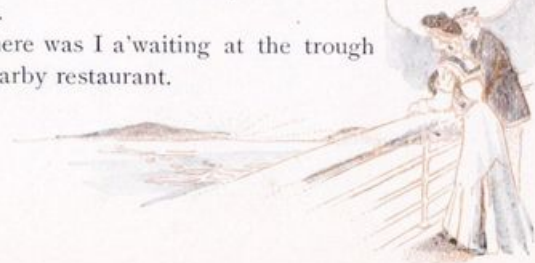
1200 feet drop in the first mile, toward Donner Lake.

They ran from 7.40 in the evening until 6 the next evening, except for the time that they were digging themselves out of the desert sand, salt marsh or the hub-deep alkaline shore of Humboldt Lake.

In the Humboldt "Sink", as it is called, the hard top crust kept breaking through and letting them down into the quicksands; so that at one point they could only go seventeen miles in seven hours. Yet the motor did not overheat. No heavy car could have made any headway at all along this route.

They lost one canteen, and the other sprung a leak so that they were 10 hours on the burning sands of Humboldt Sink without a drop of water. And when they rolled into Lovelock they carried the most capacious thirst that ever was packed on a motor-car.

And there was I a'waiting at the trough—in a nearby restaurant.





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The Franklin also was ready for twenty gallons of gasoline and altogether we had a brief but joyous tank-fest before piling into the machine—all four of us, and pulling out at 7 P.M. across the State of Nevada.

Later on we dropped this State behind; and we think of offering a liberal reward to the finder for leaving it just where it is.

There isn't a lake or river in the whole big State that has an outlet in summer. Every stream sinks into the sand or evaporates under the six months of cloudless sun. The sand burns your feet through leather shoes. On the railroad track you can cook an egg in the sun. Yet at night under the sparkling stars you need a blanket to keep warm.

The sun has the despicable early-rising habit; gets up red-eyed and ugly; looks you flat in the face, and says—"I'll make it hot for you today!"



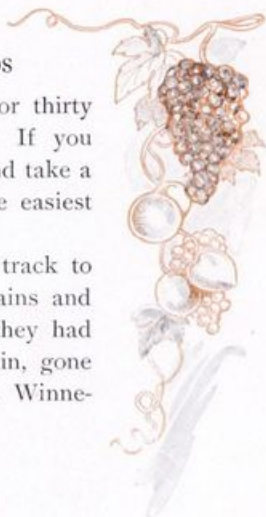
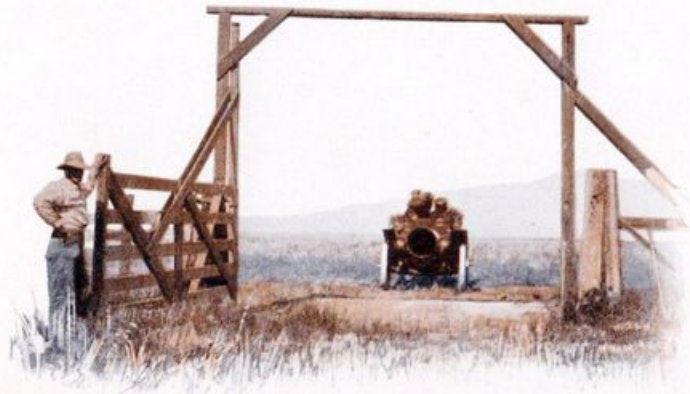
## Bumping the Bumps

From Mill City we bumped for thirty miles over the railway sleepers. If you want to know why, go out there and take a look at the situation—we took the easiest way.

About midnight we got off the track to get out of the way of two fast trains and went to bed on the sand until they had passed. Then we were on again, gone again, bump again, Finnegan—to Winnemucca, arriving at 2.30 A.M.

## A roadless way

For six hundred miles of this country there is no real road. The early trail in these regions was made by the first adventurer driving where nature offered the least resistance; the next followed this track and so the trail was formed. But, when this became washed into deep ruts by heavy rains, instead of rebuilding the trail, another would be formed in similar fashion; and that in turn abandoned.







I have seen five sets of trails paralleling each other, all impassable but the last—and that was not a boulevard. Anything that a wagon-axle will slide over is considered good enough. Only our high ground-clearance made it possible for us to get along.

For a thousand miles the country is a destitute barren desert waste with no forests and few streams. Only burning sand, sagebrush and dazzling alkali flats.

At Winnemucca Carris took the train for Elko; Daley took to bed in a hotel; the Franklin took gasoline and oil—dug up by an obliging freight-agent—and Harris and I



took ourselves off through the night, reaching Golconda in the early streaks of dawn. This sounds very romantic; but it is certainly the Gol-condest hottest place on the map.

At Battle Mountain Bates met us with more gasoline and a guide to show us the next twenty-five miles of blind trail.

### A large Beef Stake

Here we passed through a big 50 x 20 miles ranch—640,000 acres; 57,000 acres fenced in one field—said to be the largest fenced field in America—15,000 head of cattle and 5000 horses roam here. I wonder what a woman with a red parasol does when she strikes that field—it must be fatiguing to go around.

We drove through acres of wild flowers ten feet high.

### Ditches and Washouts

Reached Elko at 2.30 P.M. and gave the car up to Carris and Bates, who next showed up at Ogden, Utah, at 2 P.M., the following day, having passed clear around Salt Lake over some very bad roads. They encountered one big dry washout. And the heavy rains had left ditches from two to six feet deep. It took a great deal of time crossing these ditches at the best points. And at many places the machine was terribly racked.





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RAWLINS

160 miles mud and bad roads.

Many deep fords.

LARAMIE

160 miles mud and bad roads

SHERMAN

Highest point reached-  
8,000 ft.



This continuous severe punishment must have gradually weakened the rear driving-axle; for within twenty-four hours it suddenly gave way, from no apparent cause.

This held us up twenty-eight solid hours while we sent to Cheyenne for a new rear axle. When it came, we took about ten minutes putting it in.

## Less than four days to Ogden

We reached Ogden in 3 days, 20 hours, and 30 minutes from San Francisco. The best former record was 10 days; made in a four-cylinder Franklin. The best time ever made in any other automobile was 16 days.

Harris and I sent her out of Ogden before sunrise and were up in Weber Cañon by sunset. We went by Devil's Slide, Devil's Gate, Echo Rock, through deep defiles and along rocky cliffs through a natural gateway in the mountains; through Evanston at 10 A.M. and on until midnight when we



reached an elevated plateau 7000 feet above the sea.

Here it was cold enough for rubber coats over the leather ones.

After a midnight luncheon we pushed on till stalled by a mudhole; pulled out with our blocks and nearby fence-posts; wandered and floundered through irrigating ditches of irritating frequency; spun through a fifty-acre oat field; rushed three nasty fords with water pouring into the engines; and made Granger at 9.30 A.M.

Carris and Bates stood on the far bank of the last ford like a couple of welcoming angels, gasoline in one hand and breakfast in the other.

## “Water-cooling” with a Vengeance

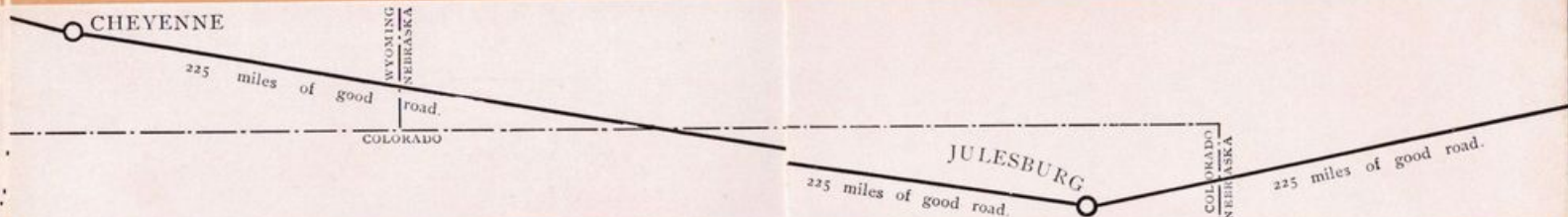
They leaped into “the saddle” and disappeared in a cloud of dust, getting their





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next drink in four feet of water over the tops of the tires, in the middle of the "Big Muddy" an hour later.

Even Franklin engineering isn't at its best under water. The nearest team was at Green River twenty miles away; so after a little wireless "hellegraphy" which failed to "carry" the twenty miles, they got out their hickory sticks and pried their craft ashore inch by inch.

They had to draw the water out of the engine-base; bore a hole and let the water out of the battery-box; empty their shoes and wring their legs before proceeding. The engine started right away again as soon as it got its nose above water!

All the streams were higher this summer than usual on account of last winter's heavy snow-fall. And we were stuck or hampered by mud a good deal of the way.

## An awful fix

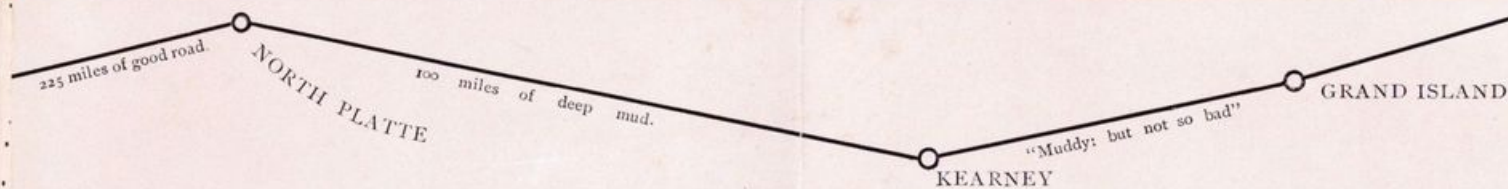
Between Red Desert and Rawlins, Wyo., we tried to cross the bed of a creek on a slippery clay bottom; but, although we put sage-brush down to make a track, our wheels would not take hold. We went to a station two and one-half miles away for help; and about fifty men came and pulled us out.

But after getting out, there was only gasoline enough to run two and one-half miles. Then we bought some kerosene and ran seventeen miles on kerosene to Rawlins — which speaks volumes for the Franklin carburetor. I don't believe there's another carburetor that would run that distance on kerosene.

At Rawlins we got gasoline; left in an hour; ran to the Laramie River — which







we forded; made Laramie at 2 A.M., and waited till daylight for more gasoline.

We reached Cheyenne at 11 A.M. the same day, August 9th. At Sherman we reached our highest elevation, 8000 feet.

We replaced a spring, one of whose leaves had slipped out; left Cheyenne at noon, and after traveling 240 miles, arrived at North Platte, Nebraska, 3 A.M. August 10th.

### A hundred miles of mud

We put on our tire-chains here; and we needed them; for along the North Platte we found a hundred miles of mud. I do not



mean a hundred miles deep, for after a good rain it is deeper than that, but a hundred miles long in one solid stretch. And at times the mud flew twenty feet high as we skated along.

Equal parts of corn, hog and black mud are the recipe for this part of Nebraska after a rain. And they are all rich and fat. I wish I owned a Nebraska farm.

We waltzed and slid and "swung partners" all over this territory; occasionally landing in ditches and plunging into barb-wire fences.

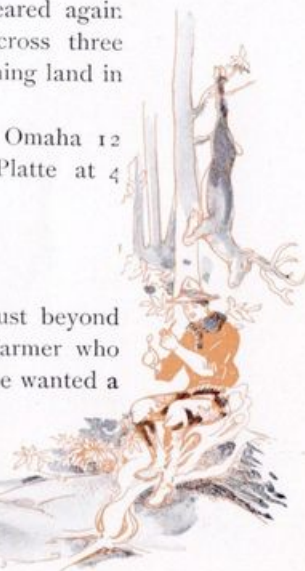
You hear a lot about gentle Mother Earth and her kindness toward man; but when you've traveled a few thousand miles through floods, mud, sand, alkali, and gumbo, you come to think this maternal benevolence is altogether too strenuous and sticky; and that a good man-made road beats nature all to pieces.

At Kearney, dry roads appeared again, and we made the dust fly across three hundred miles of the finest farming land in the world.

We pulled the switch-plug at Omaha 12 midnight; having left North Platte at 4 A.M.—that's going some.

### Held up

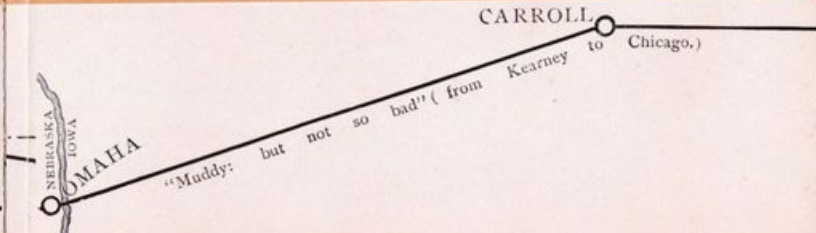
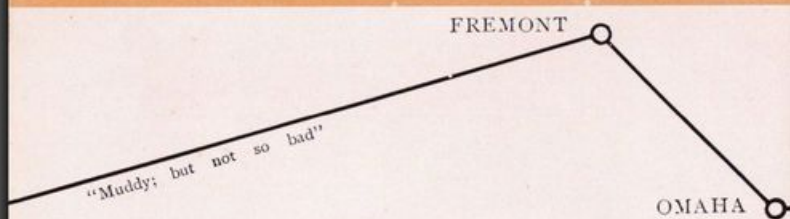
Over in Iowa the next day, just beyond Cedar Rapids Daley passed a farmer who immediately had a feeling that he wanted a





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new buggy-pole as his was a little cracked. He saw a cloud of dust, which looked good to him; so he telephoned down the line toward Chicago for the police to stop our outfit long enough to take up a collection.

Daley was stopped at the second town by three deputies with guns; and a hundred blood-thirsty natives demanding unconditional surrender.

The name of this town was Chelsea. And I'll never say again—"As dead as Chelsea."

The farmer declared that Daley smashed his buggy-pole, although Daley never knew it; and has his doubts to this day.

But the farmer got a new pole; and Daley got eight hours—more time to the bad.

Arrived at Cedar Rapids Aug. 12th 2 A.M. Chicago 5 P.M.

## Chicago in less than eleven days

We came into Chicago in 10 days and 21 hours from San Francisco. The best



previous record, made by Carris and myself in 1904, was 25 days. The next best, made in a water-cooled car, was 50 days.

Up to this point we had not touched a wrench to the engine except to change a few spark-plugs.

We put on new tires here solely for the purpose of beating the Chicago-to-New York record. They were not needed to finish the trip.

We tightened up the crank and connecting-rod bolts a little; and Daley and Bates got away from Chicago at 10 P.M. Aug. 12. At daylight they were half way to Toledo.

Harris, Carris and I met them there at noon the next day; and those two undertook to drive to Erie, Pa.

## A bad spill

They passed Cleveland twenty-four hours out of Chicago; and the old record began to look sick.





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AMES  
"Muddy; but not so bad"

MARSHALLTOWN



But pride goeth before a spill: About eleven o'clock at night nearly up to the Pennsylvania line, thirty-two miles west of Erie, while sailing along at almost forty miles an hour on a fine stretch of road, they swung around a curve too short to hold; missed an iron bridge by twenty feet; plunged down a steep bank into the creek; crashed into a stone abutment on the opposite bank—and the car stopped.

Harris and Carris, however, kept right on after the record. In order to have the proper "light and leading" toward New York, Harris took the searchlight with him—clutched to his breast—and Carris tried to carry away the steering-wheel; but thought better of it and left it bent up over the dash.

The guide on the steamer-trunk pointed the way over the tree-tops in a graceful arc for fifty feet or so, into a friendly mud-puddle.

He was the first to show up uninjured. Carris sprained his ankle and bumped the front of his intellect; Harris wrenched his knee. Otherwise they were all right.

It is certainly true that people born to be electrocuted will never be killed in a motor-car smash.



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CEDAR RAPIDS  
"Muddy; but not so bad"

\* When 3150 pounds of automobile running like a fast express jumps into a bank of rock there are apt to be some proceedings to report. Front-axle, springs, steering-post, lamp and front mud-guards did not look exactly wealthy; but they were certainly better off.

The engine was in perfect running order. The wood-sills were all whole; except the tip of one, where the lamps bolt on; rear-axle all right, but one wheel had its spokes slightly sprung. The hamper hung out over one wheel, and the gasoline tank was aleak.

We towed the wreck back to Conneaut, Ohio, and took thirty-six hours getting machine and invalids patched up and on the road again.

Leaving Conneaut 11 P.M. Aug. 15 we ran through Erie to Buffalo.

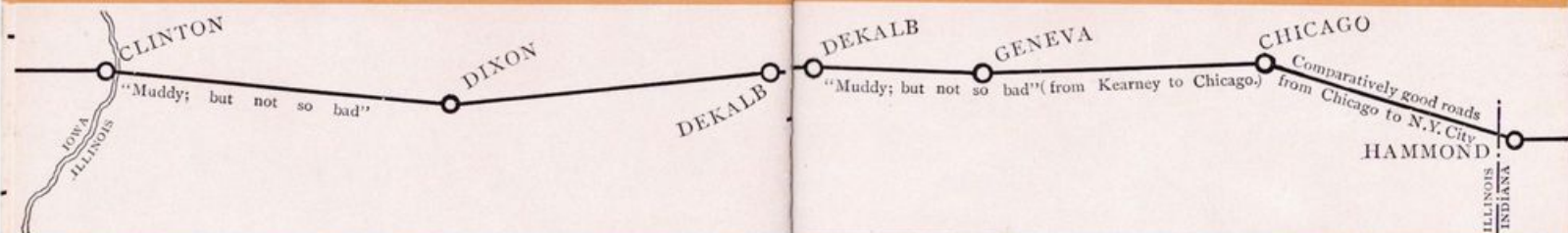
## On the home stretch

Just out of Buffalo along about midnight of the 16th we suddenly passed a cop and





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surprised him so that he started to pinch himself to see if he was awake. But on second thoughts, he decided to pinch us. And took us back to make a fresh start about 1 P.M.

From Buffalo we flew on through Rochester, Syracuse, Utica and Albany, and on down the river till we struck the end of Kingsbridge at Harlem, Aug. 17th 11.12 P.M. where the swarm of automobiles filling the road made us fear for a moment that we were held up again, till we realized that New York City begins at the bridge; and we had actually *arrived*.

### Coming under the wire

Allowing for the difference in time, we made the trip from San Francisco to New



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York in 15 days, 2 hours, 12 minutes. We brought along with us the record from Buffalo to New York in 23 hours.

Then followed loud demoniac yells, red fire, a procession to Hotel Astor, fizz, bouquets—literal and figurative, a real bed and sweet oblivion.

The fifteen days of broken sleep were beginning to show and one of the boys was so foolish as to attempt a bath before retiring; the consequence was that he fell asleep in the bath-tub, soaked five hours, and when he woke up the water was cold and the sun shining in the window.



### Some interesting lessons

Well, what did we do; and what did we find out after all?

We did pretty near all that a motorist *can* do, except get himself killed. And it wasn't our fault that we stopped at that.





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HAMMOND SOUTH BEND GOSHEN  
Comparatively good roads.



This is where the car ran into the bridge-abutment at forty-miles-an-hour. Notice the stone pushed out of place

We climbed, coasted, slid, drove and bumped 4000 miles twice as fast as it was ever done over the same route before.

Only eight automobiles ever crossed the American continent on their own wheels. Of the seven who tried for a speed record one crossed in 63 days; another in 61; another first crossed in 72 days and twice again in 44 days and 48 days; the four-cylinder Franklin in 33 days; and our six-cylinder Franklin in a little over 15 days.

## Carving up the record

We were the only motorists who ever came within eleven days of touching our own previous record; and we beat it by eighteen days—crossed the United States in a month less than it was ever crossed in any motor-car but a Franklin.

We roasted, shivered, fasted and thirsted most mightily. We plunged in, dug out,

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INDIANA OHIO  
WAUSEON TOLEDO  
Comparatively good roads.



After the Conneaut Wreck

pushed along, came in under the wire and chalked up some figures that beat the multiplication table. And that's a hard thing to do.

## A Six-Cylinder Lesson

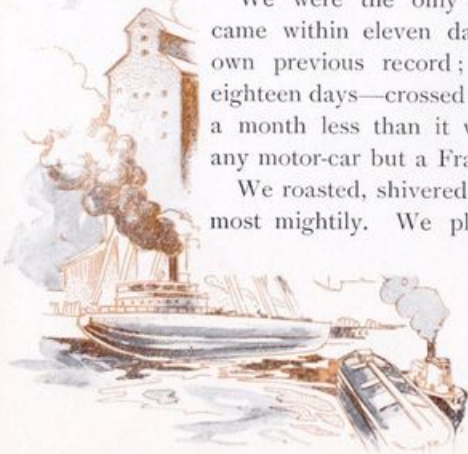
We knew that four-cylinders were good—smooth, swift and ready; and we found that six cylinders are even better for eating up the miles—with mountains, deserts, swamps and rivers all thrown into the reckoning.

Carrying 3150 pounds we averaged 300 miles a day when traveling; and ran in many places at fifty miles an hour. We climbed three mountain ranges and reached an altitude of 8000 feet.

We made the run up the Sierra Nevada mountains 7260 feet almost in "Overland Limited" train time.

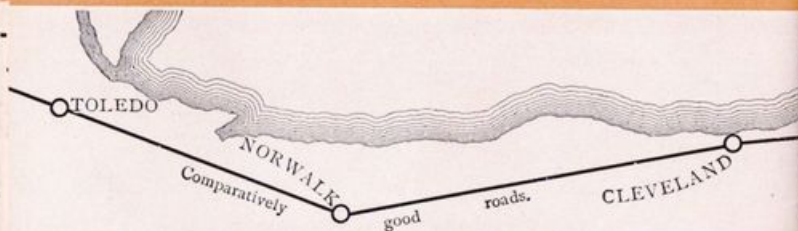
## New Air-cooling Experience

We covered 600 miles going almost constantly through deep desert sand with





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the mercury at 120 degrees, at an average of eleven miles an hour. And most of the way not a drop of water was obtainable. What could a water-cooled engine have done?

We proved that Franklin air-cooling cools a big powerful engine as well as a small one; cools on a hundred-and-fifty mile climb or with the mercury at 120 as perfectly as in winter or on a level floor.

### A Hard Bumping Trial

We traveled thirty miles over railroad ties with four passengers in four hours; which shows what human beings can stand in a resilient-frame car with four full-elliptic springs; and what such a car can stand without being damaged, or even stopping the motor.

### A Severe Endurance Test

We demonstrated that high-grade light-weight construction gives a motor-car phenomenal endurance and resisting strength



—more than would be possible with any other type of construction; more than we supposed was possible even in a Franklin.

Our wood-sills were substantially undamaged by that terrific smash near Conneaut. What would have happened to a pressed-steel sill? It would have been shivered to fragments.

If we had undertaken to arrange a special and infallible construction-test we could not have imagined a more trying and convincing climax than the various road conditions of this Franklin run capped by that frightful plunge.

### The Reliability Question

What did we learn about motoring reliability?

"Comparisons are odious," according to the proverb, and I don't want to be odious. But I can't help drawing a few comparisons





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SYRACUSE

Comparatively good roads.

## IN A FRANKLIN

Comparatively good roads.

ALBANY

NEW YORK CITY



When you consider the all-around nature of the test; its racking severity; what it shows about the fundamental principles of automobile design and construction and its great practical significance to the entire motoring fraternity—it seems to me that this six-cylinder Franklin performance makes the greatest of all motoring records. And we're all proud of our share in it.

L. L. WHITMAN.

P.S.—We took this identical car after its 4100-mile run—back again 1000 miles to Chicago and then made the return run to New York in 56 hours, 58 minutes; clipping 1 hour and 45 minutes from the Chicago-to-New York record. 500 miles of the way we ran without any fan.

P.P.S.—What about Franklin air-cooling?

L. L. W.



## Comments of the Press



**Scientific American.**—"It is doubtful whether any but a powerful light-weight car could equal the record which has just been made."

**Pittsburg Post.**—"That the car could make this record with no trouble whatever to the engine or transmission, and without the slightest evidence of engine overheating, is a testimonial to the efficiency of the car that cannot be marred."

**Pittsburg Dispatch.**—"This is a remarkable pace to maintain for 4000 miles over mountains, deserts and impassable roads."

**Utica, N. Y., Herald Dispatch and Gazette.**—"The record is simply wonderful. A year ago it would have been declared impossible."

**Boston, Mass., American.**—"Speaks volumes for the construction and reliability of the air-cooled motor."

**San Francisco, Calif., Call.**—"The car climbed the Sierra in about as good time as the Overland Limited."

**New York World.**—"Nearly 6000 miles of record-breaking touring this particular car has made in five weeks."

**Youngstown, O., Telegram.**—"A remarkable record."







**New York Globe.**—"One of the most remarkable feats in the history of automobiling."

**New York Herald.**—"His feat establishes the high perfection to which the construction of the American automobile has attained."

**Chicago Record-Herald.**—"Sets a mark which the dopesters admit will be beaten only with luck as a valiant ally."

**New York American.**—"Incidentally, the car smashed about every long-distance automobile road record."

**New York Press.**—"All previous records for the run dropped out of sight."

**York City, Pa., Gazette.**—"A phenomenal run."

**Automobile Topics.**—"One of the most remarkable feats ever accomplished."

**New England Automobile Journal.**—"The run is a credit to the driver and the Franklin car."

**The Motorist.**—"The most phenomenal long-distance automobile run ever made in this or any other country."

**Automobile.**—"Has added a strong argument in favor of the air-cooled car of high power."

**The Motor Way.**—"The most remarkable accomplishment in the history of American motor touring."

**Motor World.**—"Whitman's performance is wonderful and speaks volumes for the reliable running of his car."