

# Wheels for a Nation: How America Fell in Love with the Automobile, and Lived Happily Ever After...Well, Almost

Frank R. Donovan



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Anyone who drives a car should read this book which covers the history of the automobile from the 1890s to the early 1960s on 290 pages with over 125 illustrations. The bicycle craze of the 1890s taught America the benefits of personal transportation. The motorized carriage was the next logical step. These pioneers were self-taught skilled mechanics, born between 1857 and 1864. The main components existed, the principles were known; the automobile creators were not inventors in the strict sense. The automobile answered a need in rural life. Gasoline engines were in use as stationary power plants. America was not receptive to the new horseless carriage. These playthings of the rich were said by Professor Woodrow Wilson to "spread socialistic feelings"! The public resented the owners who drove as if they owned the road. The rich loved automobiles because they avoided the crowds at railroads. Song writers quickly connected sex with automobiles; they also became a favorite stage prop ("Man and Superman"). The French leadership in automobiles was partly due to Napoleon's legacy of good paved interurban highways (no "Red Flag" law). Neither mud or two feet of water could stop a horse. Frequent flats required an hour to repair the tube. Rural farmers learned how to sabotage cars: barbed wire in the road. These noisy machines panicked horses, cattle, and chickens. Speed traps were invented. Doctors were early adopters; they made house calls.



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