

1905 Glidden Tour



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A local constable nabs a group of "scorchers". The speed trap has been with us as long as the automobile.

The Glidden Tours provided numerous people with their first glimpse of a horseless carriage; and in many towns and villages along the tour route, citizens came out in force to wave at and welcome the drivers and their automobiles. The Glidden tourists were not received as warmly everywhere and were often greeted by local constables lying in wait in speed traps. Drivers often lost their way when the confetti trails marking routes were changed or eradicated by locals, and they also had to be on the lookout for more serious practical jokes such as poles being placed across the road. The Manchester, New Hampshire *Union*, an influential New England newspaper, took a particularly strong dislike to the tour and had this to say about the 1905 Glidden:

We could not say anything about this tour until it happened. To talk about it in advance would manifestly be to offer battle to a possible shadow. But now that the procession has passed and the tour of the AAA is completed, it is fair to comment upon it. To our mind, the whole thing has been an almost entirely unmitigated nuisance. The lives and property of perfectly harmless people have been seriously menaced; the laws willfully disregarded; and for no earthly reason rather than to afford amusement to a lot of strangers. There seems no reason at all why the people of the community should be subjected to such things.

Automobiles are good things, and some of the people who own them or drive them are fit to be trusted with them; but, to tell the thing exactly as it is, most of them are not. They seem to think they have the right to use the road to the exclusion or discomfort of other people, to say the least. A few entirely disregard the danger they cause to the lives and property of the people who live here and built the roads they are using and keep them in repair for their own use.

Take for instance the record of the run from Concord to Nashua -- 18 miles in 40 minutes! Have they the right to do such a thing? Take a list of accidents they caused: an old man thrown out of his wagon and his arm injured, while his horse ran away and smashed the wagon and harness to bits; a collision with a lumber wagon and the driver of the automobile hurt; a horse and a mowing machine badly frightened and cut up. All these things without redress offered or obtained from the man who owns the machine.

We say it is an outrage; and, if these people think of coming here another year, we hope the laws against speeding and scorching will be promptly and vigorously enforced against every offender. Let a few of them stay in jail for two or three days, and all the rest of us will be the better for it. We like automobiles. We believe in them and enjoy them. We hope they have come to stay, and we see where great benefit will come to the state from their reasonable use; but to turn loose a lot of crazy mountebanks bent on making a record over our roads is a distinct outrage and ought to be stopped once and for all. This is in the interest of the machine as well as everybody else.

The first AAA Reliability Tour to bear Charles Jasper Glidden's name began in New York City on July 11, 1905. Thirty-three contestants started on this first Glidden Tour which concluded on July 22. Glidden and the Touring Committee of the AAA drafted a set of rules for the tour that assumed sportsmanship and proper conduct on the part of the participants. The comfort of the Glidden tourists was a prime concern; and the excellent preliminary work done by the AAA included a thirty-two page tour packet with detailed maps, road directions, and pertinent information on

hotel, garage, and baggage truck accommodations.

The first 121 mile leg of the trip started in New York City and traveled through New Rochelle, Greenwich, and Stamford to Hartford. One of the most famous incidents on a Glidden took place on this day of the tour. Jean Newton Cuneo was following closely behind Harlan W. Whipple when construction workers setting off a blast near Brother's Brook warned him to stop. She swerved violently to avoid hitting Whipple's Peerless and managed to get on the bridge, but her White Steamer crashed through the guardrail and fell nine feet to the river bed below. It landed on its side, pinning Mrs. Cuneo underneath. The construction crew and other motorists worked quickly to release her and were relieved to find her and her three passengers unhurt. The White had not fared as well, suffering a bent rear axle and connecting rod and broken road spring and condenser. Amazingly the steamer started once it was upright and Mrs. Cuneo drove out of the river under her own power.

The resourcefulness, stamina and resoluteness of Mrs. Cuneo was typical of the early Glidden tourists as was the willingness of drivers to help each other. This attitude was soon defined as the "Glidden Spirit" and is recognized and appreciated now as much as it was then. On the second day, 122 miles were covered going to Boston. Stops on the following days included Portsmouth and Bretton Woods where contestants took part in the 8-mile, 3,000 foot "Climb to the Clouds" up Mount Washington. On the ninth day of the tour the Gliddenites began the return trip to New York City traveling a total of 870 miles on this tour.

The 1905 Glidden Tour was a social event as well as a motoring contest; but although Glidden's intent was to attract owner-drivers to a sporting test of their machines, the tour attracted a large number of factory entrants eager for the publicity the tour generated. The scoring system allowed many contestants to achieve a perfect score at the end of the tour and participants were asked to vote for the three Glidden tourists they felt had accomplished the best all-around touring. Percy P. Pierce, who drove a Pierce Great Arrow, received more than twice the votes of any other contestant and was presented with the Glidden Trophy.



1906 Glidden Tour

A 1906 Harrison Touring on a Sunday afternoon in downtown Detroit, Michigan. Touring was a family affair then, just as it is now.

Photo Courtesy Gerard Lacey Collection

The second Glidden Tour became an international event by traveling north into Canada from Buffalo, New York. The tour started on July 9 with a deceptively easy first day of touring. The sixty-five entrants reached the check points ahead of time giving the drivers and passengers an opportunity to look over their vehicles, add gasoline, and have a bite to eat since no lunch time was figured into the official tour schedule.

On the second day, the Glidden tourists had to complete the seventy-six miles from Auburn to Utica in four hours and twenty minutes. This task was made difficult by roads that were terrible in the extreme, and many drivers expressed the sentiment that they hoped never again to drive in New York State.

The road from Utica to Saratoga was described as "vile" and eliminated several entrants on the third day. Cars broke axles and got lost in dust so dense that a search light was necessary to see. On Schwartz's hill, near Amsterdam, cars got stuck on the thirty percent, three-quarter-mile long grade. The delayed motorists helped others out so that everyone made it over, and many cars enhanced their reputation by handling the hill with ease. One man did nothing to improve his reputation when "he took the road and held it at a fifteen-mile gait, refusing to give up to delayed tourists who had just escaped the hills. He drove fast only when a car wanted to pass." When he arrived at Saratoga Springs he was given a cold shoulder by all for his uncouth behavior.

The Glidden Tour continued on to Plattsburg, crossed the border into Canada and on to Montreal, Three Rivers, and finally Quebec. Of the fifty contestants who started, thirteen finished with perfect scores. Some of these, of course, did not make the full tour, only going part way and leaving the tour. Others joined the tour as it progressed along. Percy P. Pierce was voted the winner for the second year in a row, as his only adjustment or repair was cleaning one spark plug.

The organization of the "Mud Larks," the survivors of the New York to Pittsburgh endurance run of 1903, had a dinner on the 1906 tour to celebrate their reunion.



Twelve of the thirteen finishers of the 1906 Glidden Tour received these medals. Percy P. Pierce retained the Glidden Trophy he won the previous year.



1907 Glidden Tour



Photo Courtesy Gerard Lacey Collection

A 1907-1908 Breese-Paris and a couple of salty dogs touring on a beautiful day in New York City -- an inspiration to 1990's antique automobilists who only tour when the sun shines.

The contest for the Glidden Trophy in 1907 was a club affair with teams from automobile organizations who represented different cities competing for the prize. Eighty-two cars carrying nearly three hundred passengers started out July 9 at Cleveland and concluded in New York City on July 24. The distance covered on this tour was 1,519 miles over roads that ran from gravel and clay to brick pavement or asphalt and many were in very bad condition.

The tour started in Cleveland, went to Toledo, then South Bend, on to Chicago, and back to South Bend, Indianapolis, Columbus, Canton, Pittsburgh, Bedford, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, before reaching New York City.

This Glidden was a very strenuous tour that was marred by several terrible accidents. Officials were criticized for setting short completion times for long distances, causing the tourists to push their cars to the limit. Mr. T. J. Clark died from injuries received when his Packard skidded on a sharp muddy turn and rolled into a ditch. Miss Teenie Rollins suffered a broken jaw and shoulder when she and other passengers in the Pierce Great Arrow driven by Kenneth R. Otis overturned.

Contemporary reports of the tour show that accidents and breakdowns were simply considered to be part of early touring with the majority of starters persevering to complete their Glidden Tour.

1908 Glidden Tour



Photo Courtesy Gerard Lacey Collection

Thomas Flyer -- a tough car, enroute from New York to Paris for the race that shared the public's attention with the Glidden Tour. It just took block and tackle and a lot of intestinal fortitude.

The tour route for the 1908 Glidden was as strenuous as the previous year, but the scenery was considered even more beautiful.

Disagreement and controversy surrounded the 1908 Glidden Tour. Although they had done very well in previous tours, the Maxwell team refused to participate. They believed that a change in the rules favored bigger, more expensive cars and challenged the winner of the tour to an endurance run .

That challenge was never accepted because a winner was never determined. The system of score-keeping resulted in twenty-eight of the forty-six cars entered receiving perfect scores. Five runabouts that were tied re-ran a course a second time in an effort to determine a winner by process of elimination. The Peerless and Haynes factory teams declined to participate in a runoff, and the Pierce team declined to accept the trophy under the circumstances. As a result the Glidden Trophy was not awarded and was returned to Mr. Glidden.

1909 Glidden Tour



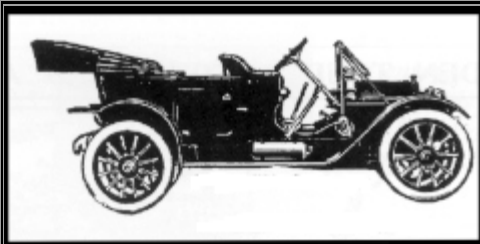
Photo Courtesy Gerard Lacey Collection

That's what it was -- a 5,000 lb. battleship -- a 1909 FWD Battleship to be exact.

The 1909 Glidden tourists were the first to travel west of Chicago. The 2,636 mile course was the longest and most rigorous to be undertaken up to this time. As a matter of comparison, the 1907 tour averaged 98 miles per day, the 1908 tour 132 miles per day, while the 1909 Gliddenites would average 180 miles per day. The increased strain on cars as well as drivers resulted in fewer participants. There were thirteen contestants for the Glidden Trophy at the start of this race; and of these, eight finished with a perfect score. One contestant remarked that the trouble with most Glidden Tours was that there weren't enough losers.

Road conditions were particularly tough on springs which were a source of chronic trouble. Many of the roads were deeply rutted, and vast tracks of sand were also encountered. The cars that were equipped with shock absorbers seemed to fare better than those not so equipped, and contestants suffered less fatigue. The dryness of the weather encountered also caused considerable trouble with wooden spoked wheels.

1910 Glidden Tour



**Chalmers "30" Touring Car won the
1910 Glidden Trophy**

The 1910 Glidden Tour went from Cincinnati to Chicago, but certainly not by the most direct route. The Gliddenites went first from Cincinnati to Louisville, followed by Sheffield, Memphis, Little Rock, Texarkana, Dallas, Lawton, Oklahoma City, Wichita, Kansas City, Omaha, Des Moines, Davenport, and wound up in Chicago. This tour was the longest undertaken up to this time and covered 2,851 miles. An average day's travel was 178 miles with the lengthiest day of touring covering 242 miles.

The reliability run was conducted from June 14 to 20. There were 18 contestants, but no perfect scores were obtained as this was an extremely difficult tour. There had been concern for several years among Glidden participants that the scoring system often resulted in many perfect scores, and no clear-cut winner was determined. This was particularly true for factory teams who wanted the accolades all to themselves. A new set of rules was adopted in 1910; although, this did not eliminate the controversy surrounding the winning car. Chalmers protested the awarding of first place honors to a Premier based on a detail of the latter's lubricating system. Chalmers was successful and was finally presented with the Glidden Trophy.

1911 Glidden Tour



Photo Courtesy Gerard Lacey Collection

The stately driver and dapper crew of this 1910/1911 Regal pause in New York City's Herald Square during the 1911 Atlanta Good Roads Tour.

New York to Jacksonville, Florida was the undertaking for the 1911 Glidden Tour which ran from October 13 to 26. This was the latest time of year that the Glidden had been run, but the contestants still suffered from the heat the further south they traveled. There were 64 contestants, but only three of them finished with a perfect score.

This tour covered 1,476 miles and was the most grueling, toughest tour that had been undertaken. Many of the contestants came to grief at the various water fords. Overnight stops were made at Philadelphia, Gettysburg, Staunton, Roanoke, Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Anderson, Atlanta, Cordele and Live Oak before reaching Jacksonville.

A large number of ladies participated on this tour. Descriptions of the tour say that despite the bad weather and other handicaps, the ladies did not complain as much as the men.

1913 Glidden Tour

The final Glidden Tour was held in 1913 and ran from Minneapolis to Glacier Park.



The 1913 Glidden tour started on June 11 and ran through the 19th. The trip started at Minneapolis with stops at St. Cloud, Alexandria, Fergus Falls, Fargo, and Grand Forks. From there, the Gliddenites continued on to Devil's Lake, Rugby, Minot, Stanley, Williston, Poplar, Glasgow, Malta, Harve, Shelvy, and wound up in Glacier Park. The total distance traveled was 1,245 miles. The little cars on this tour made the best showing since they could travel roads which were more or less impassable for the heavier cars. There were twenty-four contestants entered, and seven finished with perfect scores. Actually, ten cars finished with perfect scores; but the three Metz cars and the two Hupmobile cars were considered as one unit per manufacturer since they operated as a team.

The Glidden Tours were discontinued after 1913 -- not because they failed but because they succeeded. The automobile proved a reliable and efficient means of long distance transportation. Mr. Glidden envisioned the Glidden tours as reliability runs for owners of cars. However by 1913, the manufacturers made the most entries; and the tour evolved into a manufacturers' tour rather than an owners' tour. Many individuals probably could afford neither the expense nor the time to participate; although, private owners did compete in all these tours. Whereas, the manufacturers were attracted to the tours as a means for publicity and as a venue for advertising. Many non-contestants also participated.

The Glidden Tours benefited automobile consumers. The public's attention was captivated by the tours; and it became obvious that the automobile was, in fact, a reliable and obtainable method of transportation for the average person. Glidden's vision did much to shape our way of life in America. Manufacturers made needed technical and mechanical improvements to better compete in these tours. No state wanted adverse publicity concerning road conditions in their area, so better roads were constructed to accommodate automobile transportation.

Thank you, Charles Jasper Glidden for your generosity. Your vision encouraged automobile innovation and helped make the automobile the average person's mode of transportation.