

The Great Automobile Race

New York to Paris 1908

JEFF MAHL, FOREWORD AUTHOR

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NEW YORK
TO PARIS
• 1908 •



WITH A FOREWORD BY JEFF MAHL

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This well-done book is produced from the original account of the greatest race ever, detailing the cars and events that happened 100 years ago. The foreword was written by Jeff Mahl (great-grandson of George Schuster). The race proved that the American car was on a par with the foreign machines. Only nine men had successfully crossed the United States in an automobile when the race of the century took place. Two of these men were recruited to assist race officials with charting the American leg of the great auto race. From New York the teams were to proceed to the first official checkpoint – Chicago. Roads were meager, but seemed downright modern compared to the dirt paths of the Great Plains and mountain trails of the far west. The second and final U.S. checkpoint was San Francisco. From there, racers were to travel by ship to Valdez, drive across Alaska, over the ice of the Bering Strait, then on to Siberia, Asia and Europe.

That was the plan at least. And that's why race organizers chose to start in the middle of winter – so that the Bering Strait would be frozen. The American entry was the first to find out that driving north of the 49th parallel in North America would be impossible. Adjustments to the official race route were constantly required. In the end, teams traveled by ship from San Francisco to Japan, drove across the island, crossed the water to Vladivostock, slogged across Siberia, through Manchuria, Russia, Germany and into Paris.

But it was easy to draw lines on a map. No one could have charted mountains 10,000 feet high, bridgeless rivers, miles of mud ruts tall enough to reach a horse's belly, seasickness, deserts, mutiny, bandits, wolves, and average citizens who would go to great lengths to help their favorite team – or hinder the ones for which they weren't cheering.

Almost six months from the sound of the starter pistol and 22,000 miles from Times Square, three of the six starting teams pulled into Paris.

"Was such a journey possible?" asked the London Daily Mail in 1908. "Theoretically it is, but it must be borne in mind that the motorcar, after woman, is the most fragile and capricious thing on earth." The Buffalo News called it a "Homeric adventure outdoing all the wanderings of Ulysses, Aeneas and the Argonauts combined."

If you have a child or a grandchild, acquire this book for them. It's a must. A television movie about the event is due to be released this year. For more information, go to www.thegreatautorace.com.