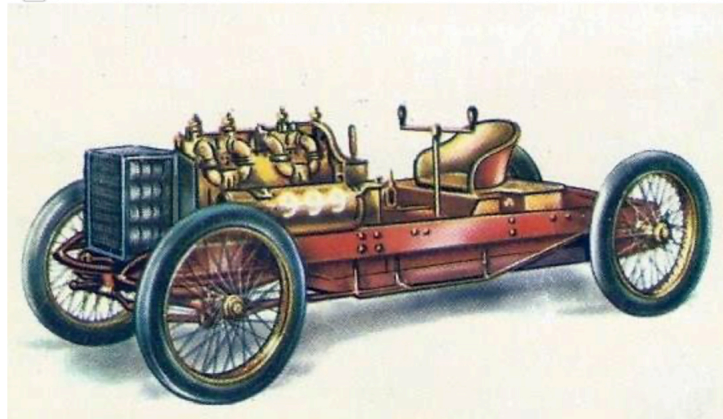


Henry Brings It home!

So just who was Henry and what did he bring us! Well the Henry was Henry Ford, who was struggling to establish a successful Car Company at the time. What he brought us was the Land Speed Record that had been held exclusively by the Europeans.



Henry knew that these flashy endeavors were a great way to garner support for his new Car Company so he began by producing two special Cars just for that purpose. Here is where History gets a little sketchy, depending on your source the car is referred to as the 999, Arrow or Red Devil. No matter what name you use, it was a monstrous no frills Car sporting a four cylinder engine with a displacement of nearly 20 Liters! To put that in perspective, a five Liter engine in today's cars would be a medium size V Eight and this was four times that size! Needless to say there was not much in the way of optional equipment since the car had no windshield, fenders, coachwork, steering wheel (it employed a form of Tiller steering using two vertical handles) or other seemingly necessary items. The second car would go on to become famous with Barney Oilfield at the wheel.

So where do you find a place to measure the flying mile, you need quite a bit of real estate to get up to speed, measure the mile and then safely stop. The answer was the frozen Lake St. Clare, in Michigan. Ashes were spread on the frozen surface in order to provide traction. Forty year old Henry Ford took up the challenge on a blustery day on January 12, 1904. In a testament to his determination and toughness he covered the flying mile in 39.4 seconds (91.37 miles an hour) wearing no goggles or other protection!

It was said that he was so impressed with the drive that he never drove that car again. He held the record for sixteen days before William Vanderbilt broke the record again in Daytona Beach while driving a Mercedes 90. Although some disputed the record as not being set on "Land", there is no denying that Henry got the publicity he was seeking.

Sources:

Website landracing.com

The Fords an American Epic by Peter Collier and David Horowitz

Ford the Man and the Machine by Robert Lacey

Wikipedia Commons

Jim Barnes