

# Presidents loved their automobiles

Four score and six years ago the White House met the automobile.

Just as the century was turning, William McKinley became the first president to take a car ride. It was a Stanley steam carriage. Unfortunately, he also was the first chief executive to travel in an ambulance automobile after he was shot in Buffalo at the Pan American Exposition in 1901.

The records of the Patent Library of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association in Detroit indicate that McKinley took a lukewarm view of the automobile — and he was strictly a passenger. Theodore Roosevelt, his successor, was the first to get behind the wheel.

Warren G. Harding was the first president to ride in his inaugural in 1921. Ronald Reagan should have been the 12th president to motor down Pennsylvania Avenue before taking the oath of office. But he wasn't. The string started by Harding was snapped in 1976 when Jimmy Carter chose to walk.

The equine era is long gone from the White House, but it was not until 1951 that Congress passed legislation that officially eliminated the stables.

THE FIRST government owned presidential car, a White steamer, carried President Theodore Roosevelt. Despite his

reputation as a daredevil on horseback, the Rough Rider preferred the role of a car passenger.

William Howard Taft, his successor, was different. Taft was the "Barney Oldfield" of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. He loved automobiles, the faster the better. The hefty Ohioan once drove a Packard around a race course at 56 miles an hour, a fast pace for the early 1900s.

Taft left five Buffalo-built Pierce-Arrows to President Woodrow Wilson. The World War I commander-in-chief was an open air devotee and would ride with his touring car's top down. President Wilson wanted to see and wanted to be seen. He drove an electric car that belonged to his wife. However, he gave up the plodding electric for a quicker gasoline engine automobile during his presidency.

Harding was driving before he was elected. While in the U.S. Senate, he frequently drove home to Marion, Ohio, from the nation's capital. Like Taft, Harding like his cars to have get-up-and-go.

President Coolidge lived up to his moniker, "Silent Cal," when being driven in an official car. His speed range was moderate to slow and he favored the latter. He seldom spoke to the driver lest he distract from his motoring manners.



The Pontiac Fiero GT features a new look. New deck lid, grille, side glass in the sail panels, tail lamps, rear fascia, emblems and body side molding single out the Fiero GT for 1986. The popular two-seater is offered in red, black, silver and gold.



The Volvo 240 DL has returned as the entry level Volvo series, featuring a new Euro-contemporary style and numerous interior improvements.

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