

Washington, D.C. Since then, Thomas argues, the memorial has been inescapably associated with the cause of inclusion; through that association, past imperfections in civic culture are remembered when they once were forgotten.

To the modern viewer, Washington appears written in stone, its monuments to great leaders and events standing as apparently immutable testimony to triumphs of national will. Thomas's book reminds readers that our history is more complicated. Behind every commemoration lies a complex and often contested pathway

to completion. Thomas has made us think not just about a singular structure, but about the processes that produce public memorials; in so doing, he has helped us appreciate how collective memory is shaped.

HOWARD GILLETTE, JR., is professor of history and director of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities at Rutgers University-Camden, and author of *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (1995).



The Record-Setting Trips By Auto from Coast to Coast, 1909–1916

By Curt McConnell

(Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003. Pp. ix, 326. Illustrations, tables, appendix, notes, index. \$60.00.)

In this work, automobile historian Curt McConnell explores what he calls the "the automobile's age of acceptance" by tracing a series of eight pioneering coast-to-coast journeys that took place between 1908 and World War I (p. 3).

Each of the trips chronicled had a specific purpose. The thirty-one-day journey undertaken in 1908 by seasoned racing driver Frank X. Zerbis, Private Malcolm E. Parrott, and Lieutenant B. B. Rosenthal had the ostensible goal of carrying a military dispatch from New York to San Francisco to demonstrate the potential strategic importance of the automobile to the

army. A 1910 trip between the same two cities in an REO automobile was undertaken both to set a transcontinental speed record (ten days) and to boost REO's sales. The objective of a 1911 caravan of autoists "whose combined net worth was estimated at 100 million" (p. 70) was to be the first group of amateur drivers to motor literally from ocean to ocean. They began by edging their fleet of Premier autos into the waves at Atlantic City, then reversed course across the continent while making many publicity stops along the way—including one in Premier's home city of Indianapolis—before finally splashing their ve-

hicles into the Pacific at Venice, California, in front of hundreds of spectators some forty-five days later.

McConnell writes, as well, of the first organized auto cruise in 1911, available to any member of the public willing to shell out \$875; and of a 1916 record-breaking trip from New York to San Diego (in a grueling eleven days) by a single driver, sponsored by Indianapolis-based Stutz Motor Car Company. After the trip, Stutz used the car to support advertising claims of vehicle durability—the first automaker to do so. The final journey presented is a 1916 “double trip,” from San Francisco to New York and back again in a Hudson, accomplished in just ten days—fifty-three days less than the first one-way transcontinental auto trip, undertaken in 1903. World War I finally ended what the author regards as “the golden age of record-setting coast-to-coast auto trips” (p. 274).

McConnell’s stated purpose for writing the book was also to set a record of sorts—to be the first researcher to mine a “rich vein of automotive history” overlooked for so long due to the “enormous effort necessary to research a single coast to coast trip, much less several” (p. 3). The result is an impressive assemblage of details of the flat tires, muddy roads, breakdowns, adventures, and local promotional events encountered on these pioneering odysseys.

While reinforced by a number of fascinating, mostly made-for-publicity photos—some of which are unfortunately muddily reproduced—the text hits a few bumps along the way.

The author, not infrequently, detours into paragraphs disputing unimportant minutiae, such as the count of people in a group photo which *Motor Age* and the *New York Times* had listed as forty and the author claims to be thirty nine. He also fails to place any of the trips in a broader spatial, cultural, or social context. The book is an interesting read, however, and, as stated in the concluding paragraph, does successfully excite “our fascination with the pioneering trips made in the early twentieth century, when the automobile was new and the trails it tamed were primitive and steeped in adventure” (p. 280).

Such fascination lies close to the heart of America’s modern automobile addiction; this book may therefore prove useful to future historians who ponder why the twenty-first-century citizens of some industrialized nations, such as Japan, rocketed along in energy-efficient, jet-rotation-speed trains while Americans remained wedded to individual automobile ownership with its attendant excesses of oil consumption, suburban sprawl, and loss of human life.

CHESTER LIEBS is adjunct professor in the graduate certificate program in historic preservation and regionalism at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and professor emeritus of history and the founding director of the historic preservation graduate program at the University of Vermont. He is the author of *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (1985).