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World Race 2011
April 14 - July 21, 2011

[Video](#)

Can History Repeat Itself?



Times Square, New York City - February 12, 1908. Moments before the crack of a gold plated pistol sent six teams from four countries on the ultimate automotive adventure.

At a time when the London Daily Mail newspaper described the motorcar as "...the most fragile and capricious thing on earth [after a woman]," the concept of a world race seemed outlandish. Yet, the idea was simple enough: contestants would drive the recently invented automobiles the full distance across the continents of North America, Asia and Europe. To add to the challenge,

traversing the globe meant that the racers would drive over the frozen Bering Straits, making a winter start date essential. Though the feat of driving across the world seemed impossible to many skeptical critics, the racers of [1908 New York to Paris Race](#) successfully navigated the globe by automobile. In the process, they proved the naysayers wrong and established the validity of the automobile as a reliable means of transportation.

In 2011, over a century after the 1908 New York to Paris Race, we find ourselves once again preparing for a global auto race. Only this time, [World Race 2011](#) will challenge cars built with green technology, as well as vintage classics. Though vintage vehicles will continue to participate to prove their longevity, this race will be a true test of cars built with green technologies. For many, these "green" automobiles are considered no more than a passing fad, suitable only for local travel. The thought of alternative technology having the endurance to make such a journey is absurd.

The race will not be easy. The World Race 2011 [route](#) retraces much of the [route taken in 1908](#), starting in New York and ending in Paris. The start of the Race on April 14, 2011, in Times Square New York, will mark the 103rd Anniversary of the original automobile race. The 1908 Race also began in Times Square at 11:15 AM on a cold February 12th morning with the American built Thomas Flyer poised at the starting line. Over 250,000 people crowded into Times Square and Broadway, each trying to catch a glimpse of these newfangled machines and the competitors in this epic international competition. Each team represented one of the superpowers of the day: Germany, France, Italy, and the United States.





In 1908, roads were virtually non-existent, and much of the world's population had never seen an American, much less an automobile. Services and amenities like fuel, repairs, communications, even food and lodging for the weary competitors was sparse and often unavailable. The threat of bandits, illness, endless miles of snowdrifts, and bottomless quagmires were just a few of the obstacles they encountered on a daily basis.

The original Race inspired moments of courage, despair, humor, camaraderie, and "Yankee" ingenuity. At one point the German Protos became stuck axle-deep in a Siberian bog. The American Thomas Flyer avoided the quagmire and then, with a sense of true sportsmanship, threw the rival German Team a towline pulling them out to resume the Race.

Once again, innovation and intuition will be critical to the racers, as they vie for the title of World Champion. That title currently belongs to George Schuster Sr.*, winner of the 1908 New York to Paris Race, driving the American built Thomas Flyer. The 1908 victory has been unchallenged for over 100 years.

The 1908 New York to Paris Race ([see 1908 video](#)) had a lofty goal, to prove the viability of long distance automobile travel at a time when the technology was brand new. World Race 2011 has its own lofty goal, to prove the viability of sustainable and alternative fuels.

The race will challenge the auto industry to produce vehicles that can burn two or three different fuels: (Electric, Solar, Natural Gas, Propane, Ethanol etc.) Not only would drivers no longer be captive to one fuel, the technology will lead toward energy savings and a cleaner environment.

World Race 2011 demands answers to several questions: Are the restored vintage classics able to retrace the route of their 1908 predecessors? Does the "green" technology of 2011 equal the rugged endurance of the 1908 automobiles? And perhaps most importantly, will someone claim the title of World Champion in 2011?



What would the winner of the 1908 Race think about the 2011 competitors? I can hear the response of my Great Grandfather George, who with a knowing chuckle, would say, "Those chaps have a big challenge ahead of them. It will take sheer determination and a bit of luck for them to succeed!"

*George Schuster was inducted into the [Automotive Hall of Fame](#) on October 12, 2010.

About the author:

Jeff Mahl is the Great Grandson of George Schuster Sr., driver of the Thomas Flyer and winner of the 1908 New York to Paris Race. For additional information on the 1908 Race, please visit: <http://www.TheGreatAutoRace.com>.