Automobiles

The first autocar in Jacksonville was devised and built by John Einig of this city in the summer of 1896. In general body appearance it resembled a narrow buggy with high iron-tired wheels. The motor was a small steam engine that threw out a blinding cloud of steam when running and made a noise that caused it to become known as "Einig's chug-chug wagon". Its mechanism confined it to the paved streets. The heat generated by the engine was so great that it was uncomfortable for long runs. Two single seats were provided. An illustrated description of this motor-buggy was published in the Scientific American and the publicity brought many inquiries to the inventor. Mr. Einig was finally induced to sell his machine to an Englishman for $1,000, and it was crated and shipped to New York. Its subsequent history is unknown.

In 1899 Mr. Einig purchased an auto-carriage of French design and had it shipped to Jacksonville. It was equipped with a gasoline motor made in France. It arrived in sections and was assembled by its new owner, who made a number of refinements upon it. This machine was first seen on the streets here July 4, 1899. It did not prove entirely satisfactory and was eventually discarded.

Charles A. Clark was the first local resident to own a factory-made stock car. It was a locomobile known as Stanley No. 2, made by the Locomobile Company of America. It resembled a buggy of ordinary size, with wheels equipped with bicycle pneumatic tires. The motive power was a 5 h. p. steam engine capable of a driving speed of 40 miles an hour under favorable conditions. The machine weighed 450 pounds and cost at the factory $650. It arrived in Jacksonville January 4, 1900, and was the first automobile in Florida and was said to have been the first in the Southeast.

The automobile as a business proposition saw its start in Jacksonville about 1903 and probably the first newspaper advertisement of an automobile dealer in the State was that of Fred E. Gilbert in the Times-Union of October 25, 1903. Mr. Gilbert opened the first garage here and was the pioneer of the business in Jacksonville; he was an enthusiast without a peer; Atlantic Boulevard to the beach was largely the result of his enthusiasm and persistent effort.