

Lesson 7 Transportation

AUTOMOBILES IN THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY

OVERVIEW

This lesson provides an overview of the development of roads and the introduction of automobiles, from the late nineteenth century through 1929. You can view or print most single images directly as a JPEG file. However, some documents are in Adobe Acrobat PDF format and must be viewed or printed with Acrobat Reader.

In Lesson 7, students use the Sacramento History Online database at <http://www.sacramentohistory.org>.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

1. Compare and contrast driving conditions (roads and automobiles) in the early 20th century.
2. Use the SHO database to find specific historical information.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY STANDARDS

4.4.4, 4.4.6 California's rise as an agricultural and industrial power

BACKGROUND ARTICLE 7

Automobiles in the Sacramento Valley (page 7-5)

STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET 7 AND KEY

Automobiles (pages 7-7 and 7-8)

DOCUMENTS TO DISCUSS

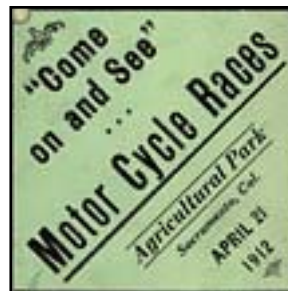
The documents below provide examples related to automobiles.



1. Photographic print of two cars on a muddy dirt road

[ca. 1910]

View of two cars traveling down a rutted and muddy dirt road in the country.



2. Scrapbook on Sacramento bicycling and motorcycling

[1911-1924]

Includes photographs, ephemera, and related published material documenting the activities of the Capitol City Wheelmen and other organizations. Also contains material on bicycle and motorcycle racing in Sacramento. *For more images from the scrapbook, use the SHO database.*



3. Cross-Country Road Trip

[1916]

Amanda Preuss removes a bolt from the rim of her Oldsmobile tire. Part of a cross-country road trip along the Lincoln Highway.



4. Automobile ads *Your Protection* magazine [1919]

Articles and advertisements, including several about the S.S. Albright automobile company.



5. Willows Union School Bus

[ca. 1923]

Side view of school bus parked in front of palm trees, state capitol building in distance; designed and built by S.S. Albright Co.



6. Causeway over Yolo Basin between Sacramento and Davis, California

[ca. 1920]

View of the Yolo Causeway with two cars and wagon.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Print any of the images and PDF files shown above that you will use in your discussion, as well as **Student Activity Sheet and Key 7**. (Label the images above by their number to identify them in the instructions).
2. Read **Background Article 7**. Read it to your students or print it and have them read it themselves. Discuss any questions that they may have.
3. Show and discuss **Document 1, Photographic print of two cars on a muddy dirt road**. Ask students to describe the photo. How old do they think the image is? (*ca. 1910*) Ask the students to compare the road in the picture to modern roads. Why do they think roads were so bad at that time?
4. The role of the Wheelmen is described in **Background Article 7**. There are many items in the database related to **Document 2, Scrapbook on Sacramento bicycling and motorcycling**. These items include a variety of ephemera such as posters and tickets for automobile and motorcycle races sponsored by the Wheelmen and similar groups. Choose several documents to show and discuss.
5. In the early days of automobile travel, there was much interest in racing and in setting cross-country driving records. In 1909, Alice Ramsey became the first woman to complete a coast-to-coast driving trip. **Document 3, Cross-Country Road Trip** shows Amanda Preuss, a Sacramento woman who traveled cross-country on the Lincoln Highway from San Francisco to New York. An article in the *Sacramento Bee* (Aug 3, 1916) notes, *This young woman will have as her companions two inanimate friends, a .38 caliber revolver and a .22 caliber rifle. She is an expert shot and an expert driver, and is out for a record, which will stand for some time in a cross-continent trip.* Successful in her goal, she made the trip in 11 days and 5 hours, beating the previous women's record by 18 hours.

To train for the task, Preuss drove from 50 to 100 miles a day, *so as to be in physical trim*. Upon her return, the *Bee* reported *This was her vacation. She did it for the fun of the thing and to demonstrate that a girl could go it alone across the United States in perfect safety, make good time with ease and certainty.* (Aug 21, 1916) Discuss how making such a trip in 1916 would be different from doing so today.

6. Document 4, Automobile ads. *Your Protection* magazine. This magazine has a variety of articles and images related to the automobile business of S.S. Albright, including a description of his company's factory and manufacturing process. It also notes that a customer could help design customized features for his or her car, which used a Ford body as a base. Download the PDF file and duplicate pages as desired. You may want to have small groups each report on what they learn from an individual page. Also see the collection of Albright images in the SHO database by using the keyword *Albright*. Why do students think that this company did not last?

7. Document 5, Willows Union School Bus. One of the Albright vehicles featured is this school bus. Ask students to compare and contrast it to buses that they see today and to the wagon carrying children, included in Lesson 4.

8. Document 6, Causeway over Yolo Basin between Sacramento and Davis, California. Ask if any students have crossed over this causeway near Sacramento. Ask why the causeway needed to be elevated. To see the engineering feat involved, look in the SHO database for additional images of the Yolo Causeway construction, using the keywords *Yolo Causeway*.

9. Search the *Sacramento History Online* database (<http://www.sacramentohistory.org>) together using the keyword and advanced searches, or let students explore the database independently. What different types of cars and trucks can they discover? How many of the companies represented still exist today? (*Ford, Dodge, Oldsmobile, possibly others*)

10. Give students **Activity Sheet 7: Automobiles** (page 7-7). After they have completed the activity, discuss their answers as a group.

FOLLOW-UP

1. **Learn more about Amanda Preuss or Alice Ramsey** and write a report about her trip. Read a book or account from someone who traveled the route. See the **References and Resources** and **Related Links** below.

2. **Find a map that shows the route of the Lincoln Highway.** Did it pass through or near your hometown? Read more about how it started.

3. **Find the Yolo Causeway on a map.** What issues have to be considered today in building a new highway?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Anderson, M.E. *Link across America: A story of the Historic Lincoln Highway*. 1997. (juvenile)
- Brown, D. *Alice Ramsey's grand adventure*. Houghton Mifflin, 1997. (juvenile)
- Amanda Preuss* [begins cross-country trip]. *Sacramento Bee*. Aug 3, 1916. p. 13.
- Amanda Preuss* [completes cross-country trip]. *Sacramento Bee*. Aug 21, 1916. p. 3.
- Rusch Hyatt, P. *Coast to coast with Alice*. Carolrhoda Books, 1997. (juvenile)
- Crabb, R. *Birth of a giant: The men and incidents that gave America the motorcar*. Chilton Book Company, 1969.
- Hokanson, D. *The Lincoln Highway: Main street across America*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988.
- Hunt, R.D. and Arent, W.S. *Oxcart to airplane*. Los Angeles, CA: Powell Publishing Co., 1929.
- Mason, P. *A history of American roads*. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1967.
- McConnell, C. *A reliable car, and a woman who knows it*. McFarland Publishers, Inc., 2000.

RELATED LINKS

Henry Ford Museum

(www.hfmgv.org/collections/Collections/transportation.asp)

The Lincoln Highway Association

(<http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/>)

Lincoln Highway Adventures: Links

(<http://about.lincolnhwy.net>)

Transitpeople

(<http://www.transitpeople.org/lesson/trancovr.shtml>)

background 7 AUTOMOBILES IN THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY



For the first 50 years that California was a state, most people traveled by foot, horse, wagon, boat, or train. Around the turn of the 20th century, the automobile became increasingly important. In 1904, there were 27 automobiles registered in Sacramento. The use of the automobile spread quickly, causing rapid changes in the state's economy and landscape.

Automobile travel was not easy in its early years. An automobile ride was often noisy, rough, and dirty. It was very common to have a flat tire or to get stuck in the mud. The few roads that existed were poorly maintained. Most had been designed for wagon use and were often too narrow and steep for cars. Even in the cities, traffic moved slowly. Streets and intersections had not been planned for automobiles, and horses and wagons did not always mix well with car traffic. Traffic regulations developed slowly, and accidents were frequent.

In the late 1800s, the American road system was locally managed, and little public, federal, or state aid was provided to support highways. For many years, statute labor was used, which meant that taxpayers (usually men) had to work two days a year building roads. Many people also believed that building roads did not require any special training or skill. Because many citizens were not happy with the condition of roads at the end of the 1800s, a reform movement grew, made up of various groups such as carriage makers.

The first bicycles, developed in the 1870s, had very high front wheels. After the introduction of the *safety* bicycle, bicycling became a popular pastime. The League of American Wheelmen was a group of bicycle riders, established in 1880 on the east coast. They were interested in the rights of cyclists and also began to hold bicycle races and tours.

It was the Wheelmen that may have had the biggest impact on road improvement between 1885 and 1905. Members of the League established a National Committee for the Improvement of Highways, promoting the need for good roads through articles, meetings, and conventions. Their work was the start of what was known as the *Good Roads* movement. Through such efforts, the government began to pay attention to road construction. Eventually, states used taxes instead of statute labor to support highway construction, and, in 1916, Congress enacted the Federal Highway Act to provide more money for roads.

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Like the horse-drawn vehicles before them, the first automobiles were hand-built. The process was improved when auto makers began to use interchangeable parts and the moving assembly line, where workers did the same task, and the automobiles were moved to their work location.

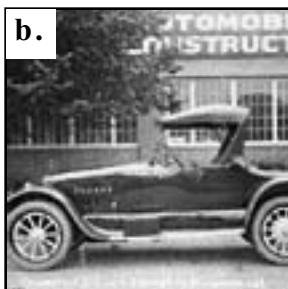
Advertisements in Sacramento in the early years list several automobile manufacturers and dealers. One such manufacturer was S.S. Albright, who began his career as a wagon maker in 1909. By 1916, he had moved to a new factory, where he produced a variety of automobiles for several years.

Early in the 20th century, some people dreamed of a cross-country highway for automobile travel. In 1912, Carl Fisher proposed building such a road, which would become known as the Lincoln Highway. He dreamed of completing the highway so that travelers could drive from New York to San Francisco on a paved road, to attend the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. Although the highway wasn't ready in time for the Exposition and was still not completely paved even after 10 years, the Lincoln Highway Association continued to collect donations to support road improvements until 1928.

In the early days of Sacramento, people traveled to San Francisco primarily by riverboat and later by train. The Sacramento River Delta region was marshy, swampy, and hard to traverse by wagon. In 1916, the Yolo Causeway was built to connect Sacramento and Davis with a good highway. It was a section of the original Lincoln Highway route. Today, this causeway is now part of Highway 80, the major automobile link between San Francisco and Sacramento.

I. Match the Automobiles

Find the image using the keyword search. Put the correct letter by the name of each car. Write the date of the image in the space after its name.



image

automobile

date

_____ 1. Baker Electric car

_____ 2. First Ford in Sacramento

_____ 3. Albright roadster

_____ 4. Albright convertible

II. Choose Your Favorite Albright Auto

Use the keyword *Albright* to look at other Albright autos online. Pretend that you are going to buy an Albright automobile. Which model do you like best? Print its type (included in the entry title) and its date below:

Auto Type _____ Date _____

Why do you like it best? _____

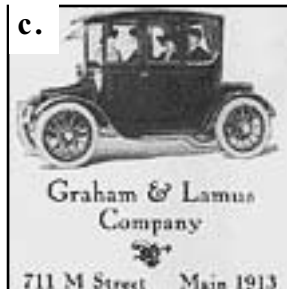
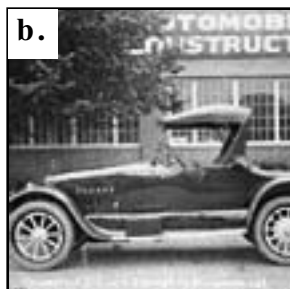
How is it different from a modern car? _____

How is it the same? _____

BONUS: Make an ad for the automobile you like best on the back of this paper or on a separate sheet. Include a picture of it and why someone should buy it.

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Find the image using the keyword search. Put the correct letter by the name of each car. Write the date of the image in the space after its name.



<u>image</u>	<u>automobile</u>	<u>date</u>
<u>c</u> 1.	<u>Baker Electric car</u>	<u>1914</u>
<u>a</u> 2.	<u>First Ford in Sacramento</u>	<u>ca. 1903</u>
<u>b</u> 3.	<u>Albright convertible</u>	<u>ca. 1923</u>
<u>d</u> 4.	<u>Albright roadster</u>	<u>ca. 1919</u>

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