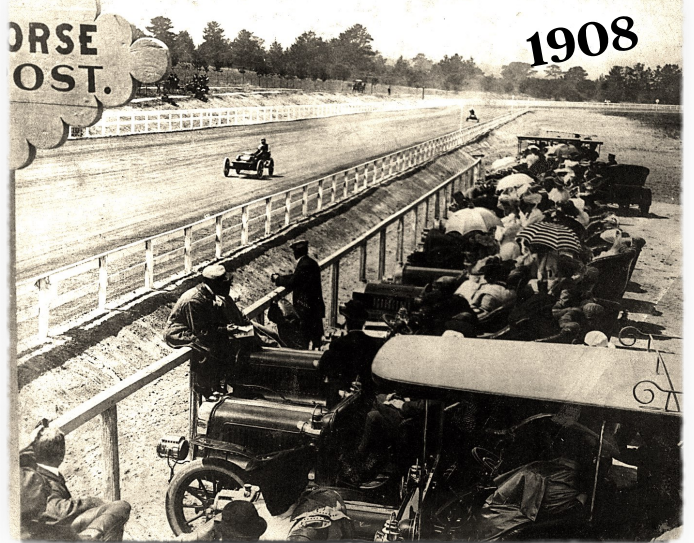


MRS. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON and *THE* AUTOMOBILE

Handout prepared for a meeting of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club of Monterey at Trotter Museum and Gallery, Pacific Grove, on March 29, 2025. Based on email messages between Terry Trotter, Greg Berkin and John Sanders.



Autoists gather at Hotel Del Monte, 1904



Auto racing at the Del Monte track, circa 1908

1904

Enthusiastic Automobilists. — The widow of the late Robert Louis Stevenson and her son, Lloyd Osborne, are among the most enthusiastic of local automobilists, says the San Francisco Wasp, and are frequently seen on the park roads and ocean boulevard. They consider a run to San Jose in their White steamer as nothing out of the ordinary, while trips to Del Monte are of frequent occurrence during good weather. Mrs. Stevenson herself is an expert autoist and manipulates the levers with all the confidence of a veteran chauffeur.

Above: San Jose Mercury News, June 20, 1904

Below: Santa Barbara Press-Democrat, July 22, 1908
California Digital Newspaper Collection

1908

MEXICAN MOTOR MISHAP
Mrs. Robert Lewis Stevenson and Her Son and Daughter Injured
San Francisco, July 21.—Hurled from an automobile while motoring through a pass in the rugged Mexican mountains, Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson, her daughter, Mrs. Isabel Strong, and her son, Lloyd Osborne, were painfully hurt, and escaped death by a narrow margin, according to a message received today by San Francisco friends of the famous writer's widow. Mrs. Stevenson's party left Santa Barbara several days ago, intending to drive an automobile to their ranch at Sausal, Mexico.

Owners of early autos often had full time drivers (chauffeurs). Fanny Stevenson was among a group of women who showed technical skill and independence by driving their own cars.

NOTABLE EVENTS, 1904-1908

1904: The first mission bell is placed on El Camino Real, a 600 mile carriage road between San Diego and Sonoma. Jo Mora traveled the road by horseback to sketch missions that year, then began an art-filled wagon journey throughout the state.

1905: The Southern Pacific Railroad launched its Road of a Thousand Wonders campaign to promote Golden State rail travel.

1906: The San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed the Hopkins School of Art and galleries of prominent painters including William Keith, the grandfather of California art.

1907: Keith and other noted painters helped establish the Del Monte Art Gallery at Hotel Del Monte. 30 Mitchell autos participated in the Mitchell car company's first Mitchell Jubilee there.

1908: Hotel Del Monte hosted the Great White Fleet during its port visit in Monterey. A record 300 Mitchell autos assembled at Del Monte for the auto company's second Jubilee.



1908 Stoddard Dayton touring car Fanny drove to Mexico

1908 Second Prize trophy 17 Mile Time Drive Run Hotel Del Monte