

Magazine Cover Images of Motorized Personal Transportation in the 1910s—Reflecting and Effecting Changing Times

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The automobile was invented by the late 1800s, but it was not until 1908 that Henry Ford produced his Model T cars using assembly line manufacturing, thus drastically reducing the cost of car ownership.¹ Andrew Strieber acknowledged the significance of this milestone on its centennial in a July 2008 *Motor Trend* article: “Henry Ford's creation was the first car specifically designed for the average consumer and helped create the era of personal transportation we know today.”² The “era of personal transportation” that Strieber references affected much more than commuting. The affordability and speed of personal transportation—including automobiles, motorcycles, and racecars—also expanded recreation and travel pursuits. Additionally, these vehicles altered familial relationships and relationships between men and women.

The dramatic shift in transportation and its effect on American life was often pictured on magazine cover illustrations that were distributed nationwide during the 1910s. This evolved as a result of the explosive growth of magazine publishing and illustration “in the last decades of the nineteenth century” that was termed “the birth of the modern national magazine” by Theodore Peterson, author of *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, and which continued into the early twentieth century.³ Magazines were no longer just for the elite. The combination of a well-educated public and technological advances including the rotary press and the halftone photographic color printing process, led to the nationwide distribution of all kinds of magazines that were increasingly well-illustrated.⁴ Since, at the time, newspapers could only reach local audiences—and radio, television, and the internet had not yet been invented—magazines served as a major form of mass communication.

Nationally circulated, these highly appealing and colorful magazines helped unify the country. Their purpose was to enlighten and entertain. Magazines—through words and pictures—disseminated information about new nationally-distributed brands and products, innovations, styles, and ways of living. Heavily illustrated magazines promoted a popular visual culture that extended to all parts of the nation. They informed as well as influenced—economically, culturally, and politically. Likewise, through their visual impact, magazine cover illustrations enlightened and entertained just as the magazine as a whole. The visual impact of the magazine cover—part of what distinguished a magazine from a book or newspaper—had much to do with its periodic nature. Non-daily publishing allowed time for the creation of the covers’s alluring designs and illustration which served as advertisements, persuading the public to purchase the magazine either on the newsstand or by subscription.

The periodic nature of magazines also resulted in another role for magazine covers: the mass media conveyance of significant messages. Free of daily deadlines, magazine cover illustrators in the 1910s had time to ponder and aesthetically express their own pictorial view of current events and the exciting changes in society that were occurring during their lifetime. Judgments or persuasive messages contained in the cover illustration were those of the illustrator, albeit with the approval of art editors and magazine publishers. Illustrators often used humor or narrative storytelling techniques in combination with artistry, adding to entertainment value as well as persuasiveness. By representing the changes of the 1910s, cover illustrations reinforced and granted credence to historic events, easing their acceptance by magazine readers throughout the nation. In doing so, magazine cover illustrations not only reflected but also helped mold American history and culture.

In addition to boosting magazine sales and conveying persuasive messages (subtle or obvious), magazine cover illustrations had an important role in reinforcing art appreciation. Tebbel and Zuckerman, authors of *The Magazine in America: 1741-1990*, credit the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia for contributing to Americans’s new desire for art, noting that numerous visitors were exposed to art for the first time. Magazines, which contained art reproductions, furthered this interest.⁵ The *American Art Review*, in an 1880 quote provided by Tebbel and Zuckerman, stated: “Within the last ten years, a great change has taken place in public sentiment. The arts are no longer regarded as comparatively unimportant to our national growth and dignity, and an ever increasing enthusiasm has replaced languid interest or indifference.”⁶ It is fascinating to note that the latter article was published in 1880 the same time (“the last decades of the nineteenth

century”) Peterson uses for the introduction of the modern national magazine.⁷ By including art reproductions and illustrations in their pages and on their covers, nationally distributed magazines assisted in introducing Americans to the enjoyment of art on a wider scale. Art was no longer limited to the few who had access to museums and galleries.

The “Golden Age” of illustration coincided with the emergence of the modern magazine and Americans’s expanded interest in art. Walt Reed (illustrator, illustration gallery owner, author, and illustration expert) writes that the “Golden Age” began in the 1880s, and he elaborates on the excellent opportunities it provided for illustrators:

“In short, the country was prosperous, circulation of the magazines was increasing from month to month with new publications emerging to compete with the older ones; prosperous magazines could afford the best talents and paid higher fees to the writers and artists who illustrated them. Artists responded with great enthusiasm to this national showcase for their pictures. The better illustrators had more work offered to them than they could handle, opening up opportunities for new talents. Full-color printing soon became possible. Through their appearances accompanying fiction within and covers on the outside, magazine illustrators became celebrities with coteries of fans and followers.”⁸

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the growing field of illustration offered impressive financial rewards for both men and women. The unnamed writer of “A Latter-Day Industry and its Rewards” (1910) portrays, perhaps longingly, the high life achieved by high earning illustrators of both sexes:

“In this day and generation the chug-chug of a \$15,000 motor car clipping its mile-a-minute rush toward a luxurious country home is best in keeping with the man or woman whose genius has concentrated upon a certain type, preferably a girl and emphasized in colors, to be spread country wide through the medium of the big magazines, calendars, gift books, and even postal cards!”⁹

The writer speaks of the “Commercialism with a capital C” which leads to high salaries, and includes a listing of top illustrators and their earnings. These earnings, the writer adds, “represent what might be termed the public earnings; many have private ones as well.”¹⁰

The reported earnings listed range from Harrison Fisher’s \$75,000 to \$7,500 earned by Hamilton King, John Cecil Clay, Walter Taylor, F.C. Yohn, and H.C. Raleigh. Even the lower earnings were ten times higher than the decade of 1910 to 1919’s average salary of \$750.¹¹ Also, the 1910 earnings figures refer to that point in time; they do not reflect potentially higher earnings of illustrators whose achievements continued to escalate. For example, James Montgomery Flagg’s listed 1910 earnings of \$15,000 likely increased dramatically after he became known for his famous

image of Uncle Sam which first appeared on the cover of the July 6, 1916 *Leslie's* magazine.¹² It was later used as a recruiting poster for both World War I and World War II, incorporating the words "I WANT YOU."¹³ Jessie Wilcox Smith probably earned more than \$12,000 annually after she began creating her endearing *Good Housekeeping* cover images (often portraying children) which appeared each month from December 1917 through April 1933.¹⁴

The article ends with a statement about what the public was demanding of illustrations in 1910, and how meeting the demand created high illustrator remuneration:

"No magazine editor will to-day venture a guess as to what the future will bring forth in still higher prices, but it is certain now that the illustrators have them on the run—for the simple reason that the public wants pretty girls and cute children or designs which artistically appeal—and color, color, color!"¹⁵

In other words, public demand for colorful illustrations—and increased sales of magazines that met that demand—justified the excellent compensation commanded by top illustrators. This symbiotic relationship between magazine publishing and illustration allowed for the blossoming of both industries. As the public bought more magazines because of their appealing cover and interior illustrations, increased magazine circulations allowed magazines to compensate illustrators well. This, in turn, sparked illustrators's creativity.

Unsurprisingly, cover illustrators for major magazines were among the most capable and well-known artists of their time. While some illustrators preferred to be recognized primarily for their fine art and worked as illustrators to help pay bills (John Sloan comes to mind), others were proud of the status and compensation that came with being an illustrator. Patricia Frantz Kery, in *Great Magazine Covers of the World*, raises the often repeated question of the difference between fine art and illustrative art. Referring to her study of one hundred and fifty years of cover art from many countries, she states:

"It can be seen clearly, for instance, from such an overview that before the mid-1920's there was often little difference between fine and commercial art. Artists, especially around the turn of the century, saw art as art and did not see it as less grand just because it was reproduced for a magazine (as some would suppose today). Rather, cover work enhanced their reputations because more people became aware of their work."¹⁶

Viewing magazine cover illustrations from the 1910s leaves little question of their artistic impressiveness, whether one considers them art or illustration—or both.

In sum, magazine cover illustrations in the 1910s served three important roles. They boosted magazine sales, provided messages to help readers adapt to modern changes, and

encouraged art appreciation. Their broad influence ranged from matters of great importance such as war and peace to matters of less significance such as women's changing styles of dress. In-between are matters of considerable importance such as influencing technological developments and urbanization, new roles for women, and the creation of a consumer-based economy, which—as they pertain to the rapid shift to motorized personal transportation—form the focus of this article.

Magazine Cover Images of Automobiles, Racecars, and Motorcycles

Automobiles began appearing frequently on magazine covers almost immediately following the development of the Model T, both reflecting and stimulating interest in motoring. Car ownership expanded so rapidly that by 1915, according to *1001 Places to Sell Manuscripts*, there were at least nineteen of these special interest magazines published in New York City including *American Motorist*, *Automobile*, *Automobile Magazine*, *Automobile Topics*, *Horseless Age*, *Motor*, *Motor Life & Motor Print*, and *Motor World*.¹⁷ The large number of automobile interest magazines is evidence that automobiles were becoming a common part of the landscape. The frequent depiction of cars on the covers of general interest magazines as well as the proliferation of special interest magazines confirms that cars were indeed impacting the lives of people throughout America.

The rapid transition from horse-drawn carriages to motorized personal vehicles would have far reaching effects on all aspects of American society. Suburbs expanded, horse manure dwindled, and bicycle sales plummeted.¹⁸ The economy boomed with the growth of burgeoning industries including the automobile and motorcycle industries, gas stations, repair shops, auto parts businesses, and road building. Seemingly unrelated businesses also expanded as a result of the changeover in transportation, which allowed the populace to venture further from their homes. These included motion pictures and movie theaters; camping, recreation and travel; magazine publishing which addressed all these new interests; and eventually shopping centers, malls, and fast food restaurants. Those who drove motorized vehicles—both men and women—gained a newfound independence from the ability to travel wherever and whenever they wanted. This affected relationships as well as lifestyles. Accordingly, emphasis was placed on the joyfulness and freedom of car ownership, with frequent images of families and romantic couples traveling together.

Americans were instantly drawn to the appeal of motorized vehicles notwithstanding some initial trepidation. *Life*, a refined humor magazine, addressed both the attraction of the automobile as well as the concerns surrounding it in its January 6, 1910 issue “Auto Number.” An amusing article, “The Lure of the Auto,” explains why “lots of people who lived simply and thriftily and

seemed to be interested in saving money have suddenly let thrift go hang and blossomed out on the road in motor cars.” According to the unnamed writer, the answer is three-fold: First, the auto “does not eat....Nobody has got to stay with it, nor bring it oats, water or hay, nor clean out its stall.” The second reason for the “comprehensiveness of its appeal” is that “everybody can enjoy it....Nobody is too young, too old, too big, too small, too ignorant or too wise to find a pleasure or a use in them.” The third reason is that autos “call for only one thing—time—a thing that everybody has got.” The article concludes that “it is lucky that autos are dear. If they were not, there would be so many of them that there would not be room on the earth for the folks to move about.”¹⁹

Cartoons contained in this special auto issue poke fun at the many new concerns of driving: learning how to drive and the potential for crashes (Figure 1), rolling off cliffs (Figure 2 and 3), and harming animals (Figure 4) or even pedestrians (Figure 5). One prophetic cartoon even addresses the danger of drinking and driving (Figure 6).

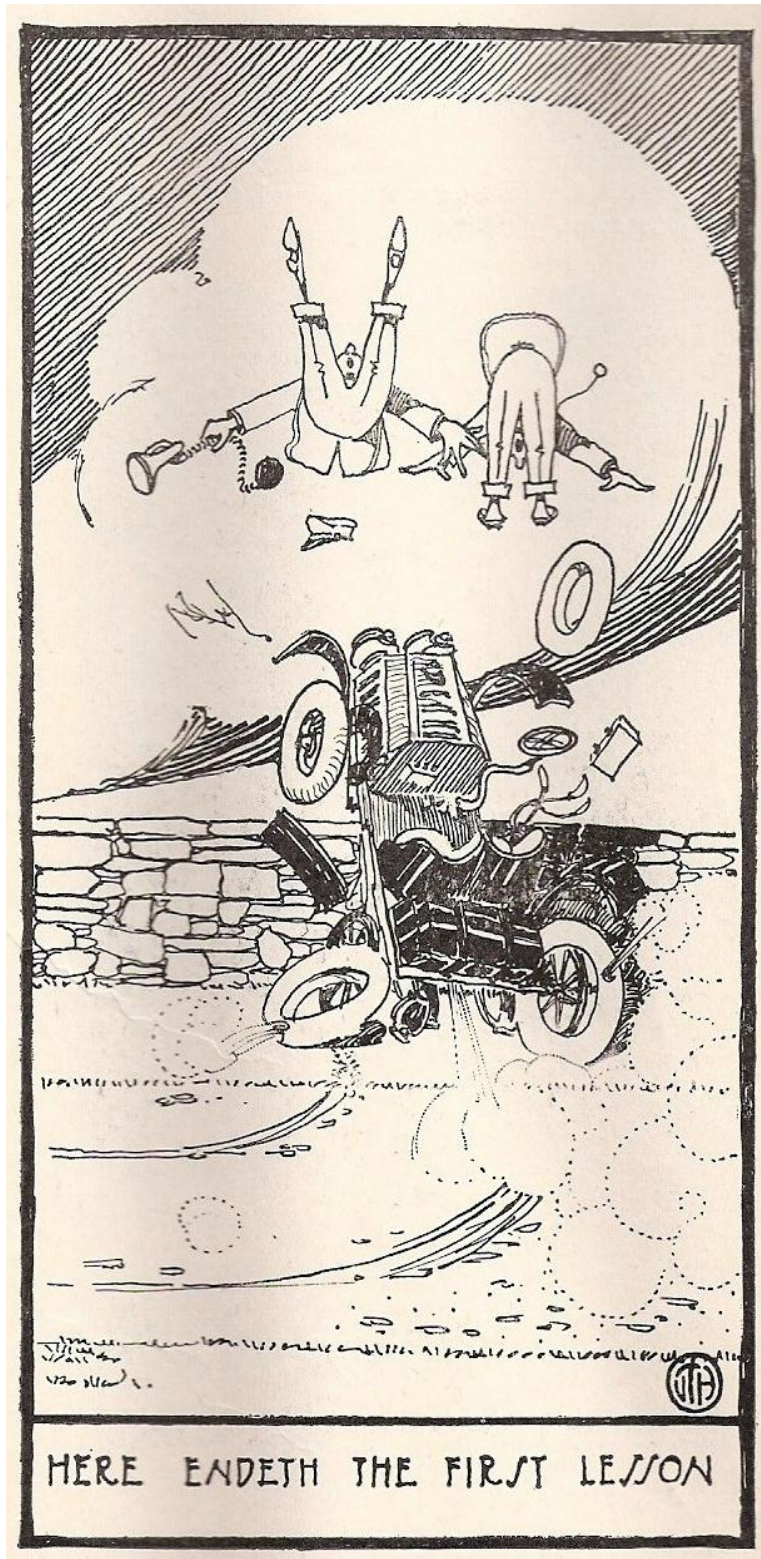
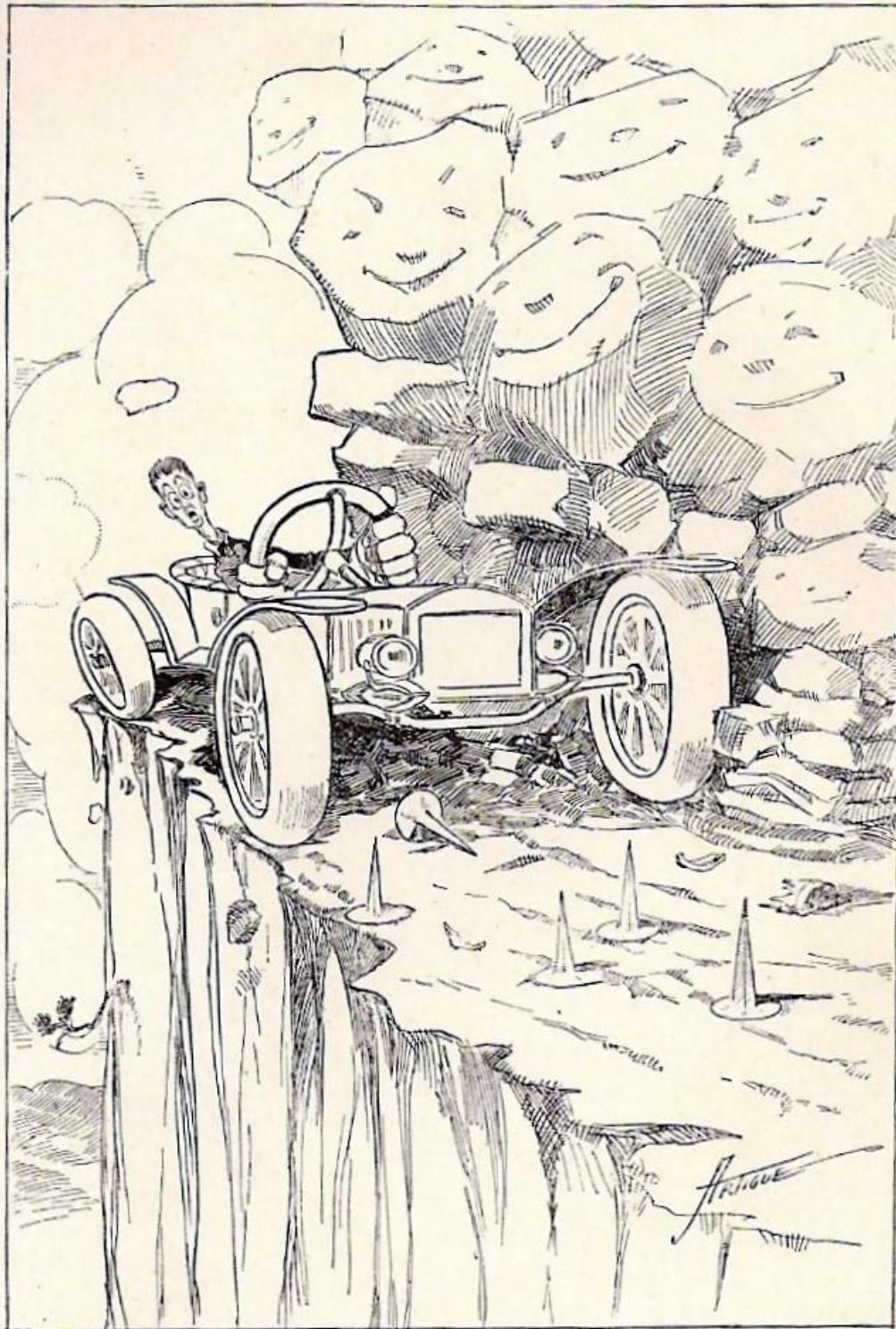


Figure 1. *Life*, January 6, 1910, 29²⁰.



HIS FIRST TOUR
AS IT SEEMED TO HIM

Figure 2. *Life*, January 6, 1910, 32²¹

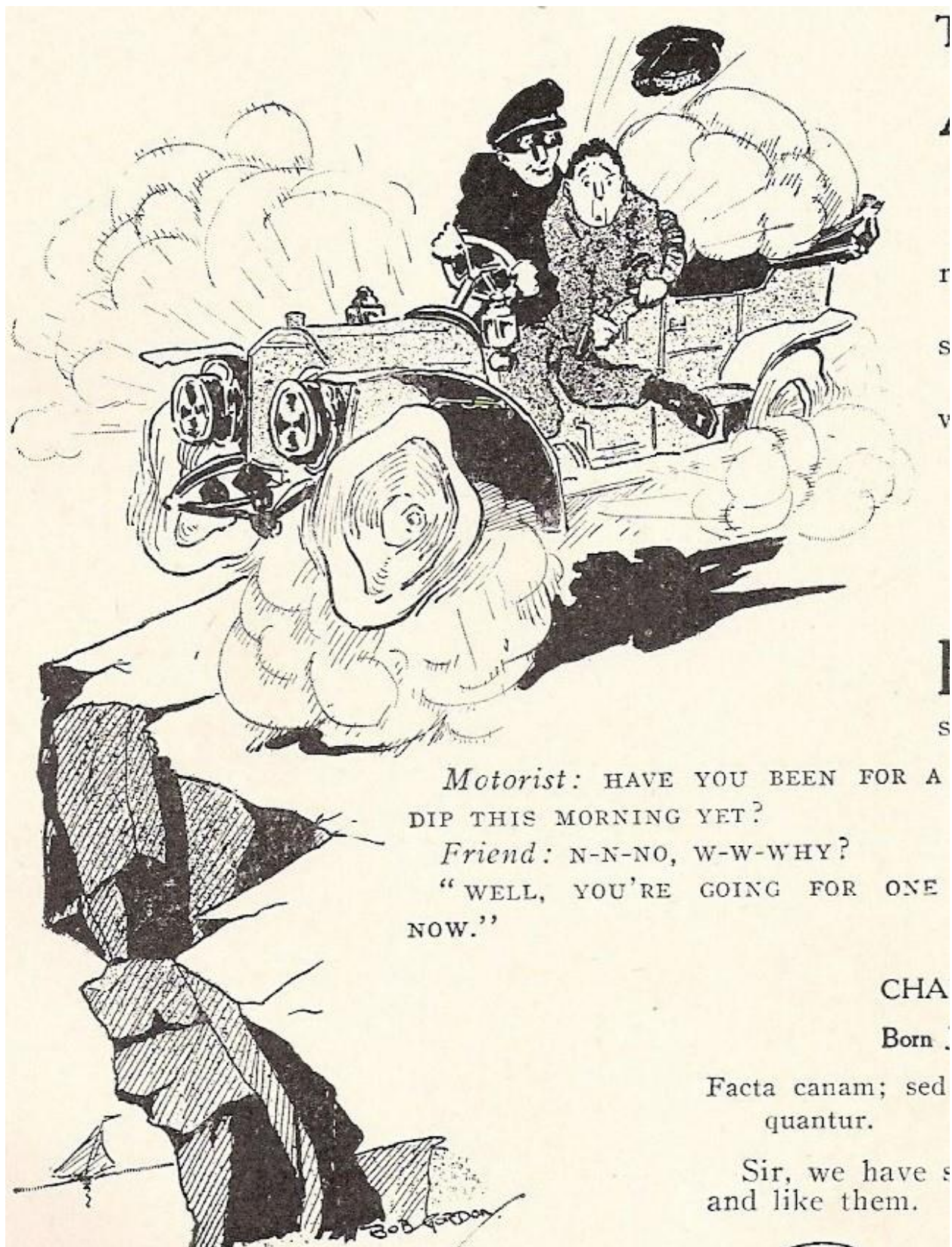


Figure 3. *Life*, January 6, 1910, 33²²



Figure 4. *Life*, January 6, 1910, 35²³

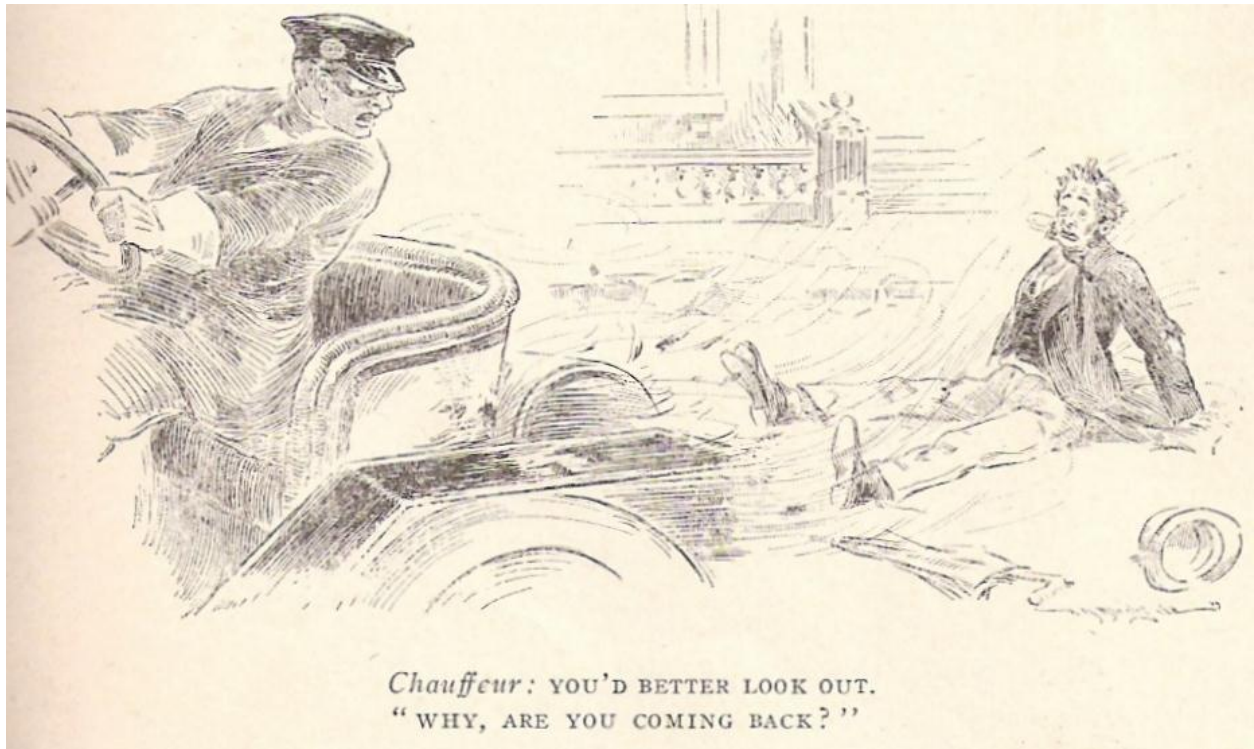


Figure 5. *Life*, January 6, 1910, 40²⁴

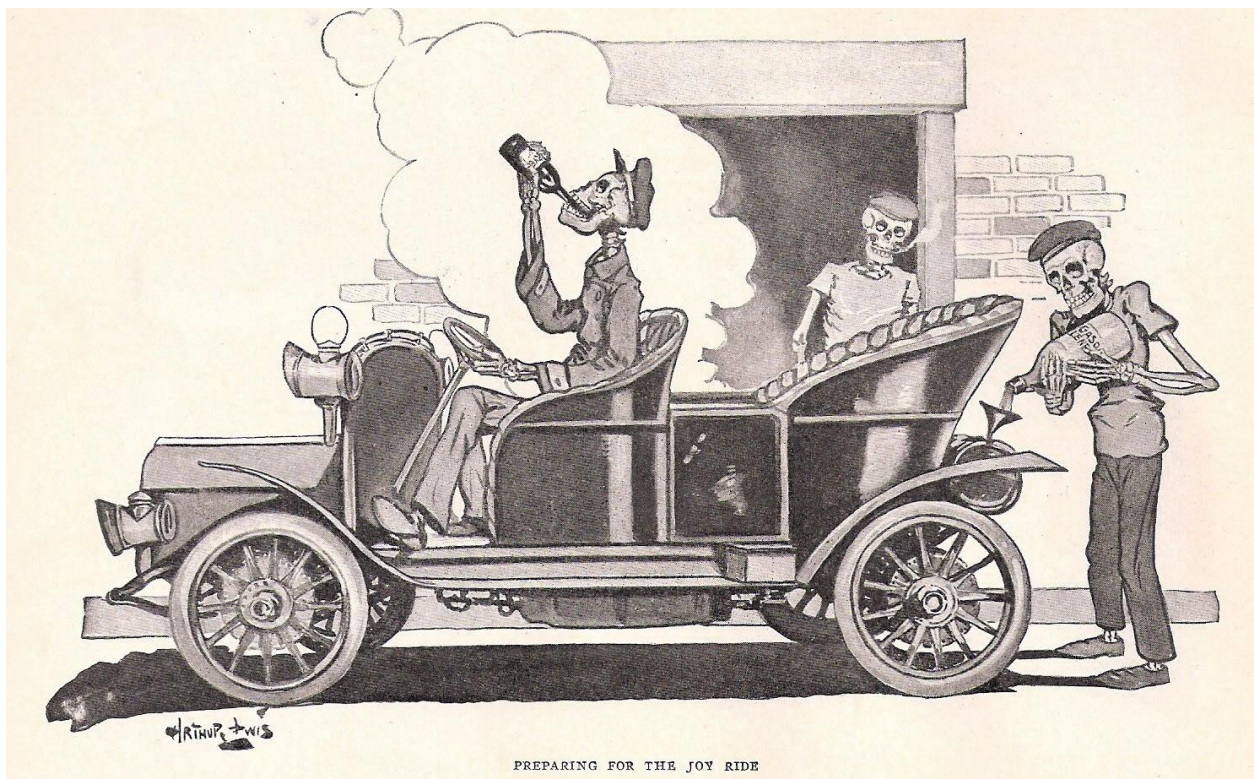


Figure 6. *Life*, January 6, 1910, 46²⁵

Other concerns include the cost of car ownership, concerns about breakdowns with few service stations, and limited roads. The daunting number of choices concerning cars might have contributed to inertia. Potential car owners had to choose between numerous new car companies, all vying for their business. They also had to decide between a gas powered and an electric powered vehicle. Surprisingly, electric powered cars were more popular at first, until the self-starter began replacing the hand crank around 1912.²⁶

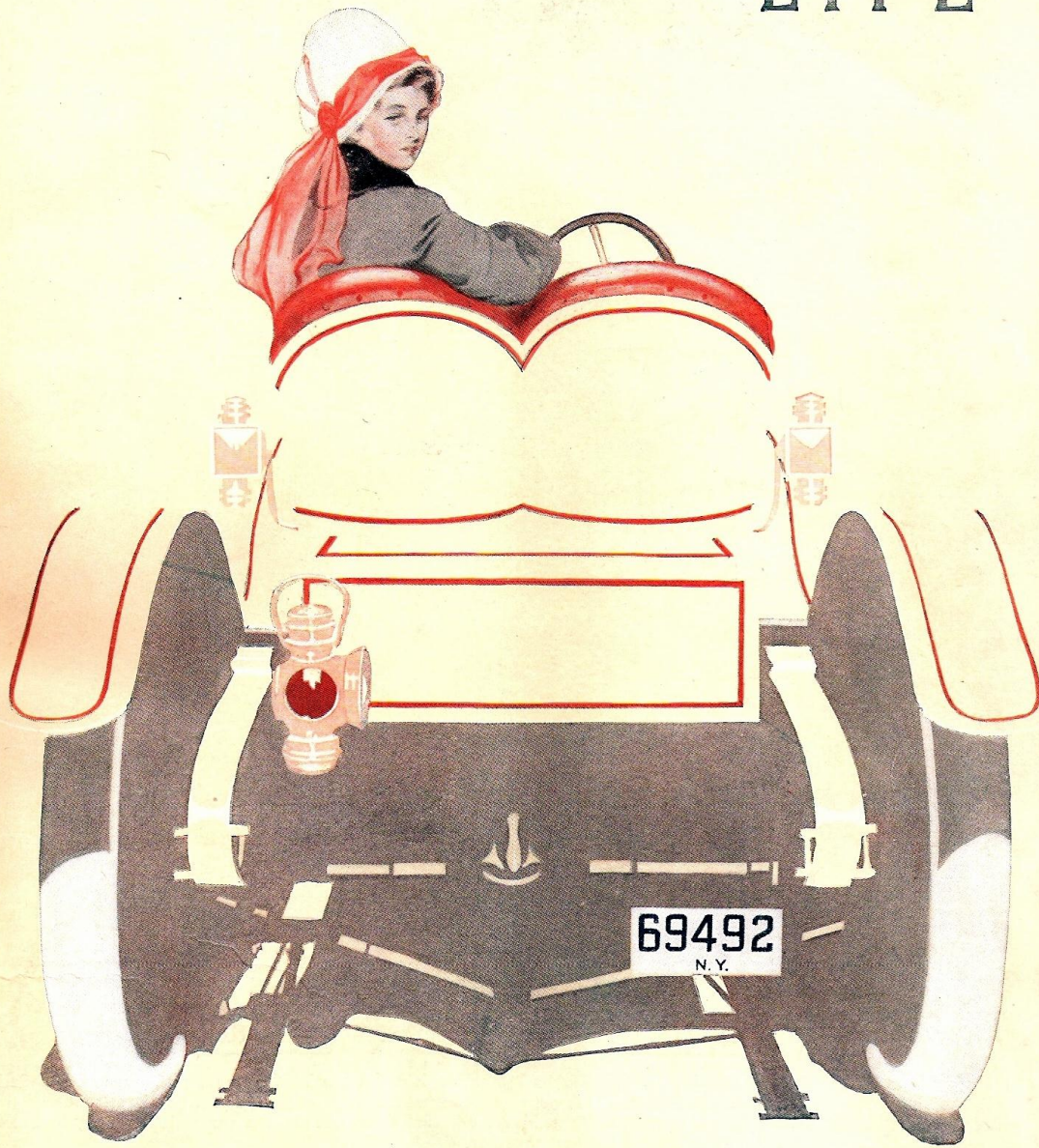
Even the position of the steering wheel required the buyer to make a decision. Many of the vehicles in *Life's* “Auto Number” have the steering wheel on the right side (including the cover by C. Coles Phillips), even though driving on the right side of the road was already established.²⁷ (Figure 7) Ford models had the steering wheel on the left side starting in 1908, but standardizing the position of the steering wheel on the left side did not occur until a few years later.²⁸

VOL. LV, NO. 1419
COPYRIGHT, 1910, BY
LIFE PUBLISHING CO.

AUTO NUMBER

PRICE, 10 CENTS
JANUARY 6, 1910

LIFE



C. COLES PHILLIPS

ONE GIRL POWER.

Figure 7. C. Coles Phillips, "One Girl Power," *Life*, January 6, 1910²⁹

During this period of rapid change, magazine cover art displayed images of the horse-drawn carriage as well as the automobile. One example is the illustration on the cover of the 10 February 1912 issue of *Collier's*, *The National Weekly*. (Figure 8) *Collier's*, a general interest magazine which included current events, was published from 1888 to 1957.³⁰ The cover illustration by Adolph Treidler—who had a distinguished career in illustration creating artwork for many magazines and travel posters in support of war efforts during both World War I and World War II—shows a group of elegantly attired men and women surrounding a whip-bearing driver of a horse-drawn vehicle. The figures's poise and boldly stylish apparel draw the viewer to the scene. Even the top-hatted driver exudes an air of authority.

The illustration is stylized and sophisticated, while realistic as opposed to nonrepresentational. Its paucity of detail and the simplified pattern on one woman's coat gives it modern flair. This 1912 illustration hints at the beginnings of Art Deco styling, which became increasingly popular in the 1920s and 1930s.³¹ “Borrowing from Cubist blocks, Fauvist colors, and Futurist motion, Art Deco artists created bold, simple designs suitable for mass production,” writes curator Paula A. Baxter in a brochure for the 2009 *Art Deco Design: Rhythm and Verve* exhibit at the New York Public Library.³² Treidler's 1912 cover illustration contains elements of Baxter's description. The simplicity and boldness of the design bestows elegance. Treidler's illustration was ahead of its time, even predating the 1913 New York Armory Show which is generally associated with introducing modern art to America.³³

The subject of Treidler's illustration reveals an ironic twist. While depicting a horse-drawn vehicle, ample evidence indicates that the surrounding men and women are attending an automobile show. Wording on the glass window in the background, while partially blocked and difficult to read, refers to “Knickerboc(ker) The Show,” and a small, indistinct image of an automobile is visible adjacent to the driver. Further evidence is the “Father Knickerbocker Shows ‘1912’ The Latest Models” banner headline which appears with a *New York Times* article published on January 7, 1912 (one month prior to the publication date of the cover illustration), announcing the show's glamorous opening:

“With the opening of the twelfth National Automobile Show last night at Madison Square Garden the season of 1912 began under the most favorable auspices. Not since the inception of motor car exhibitions has so much real interest been manifested in the industry, and where in former years many of the visitors to the big exhibition buildings were attracted largely by curiosity and because it was the fashion

to attend the shows, the public generally has developed into a critical discriminator of the good and bad qualities of the motor car.”³⁴

Despite the incongruity, it makes sense that automobile show visitors are pictured arriving by a horse-drawn vehicle. These well-to-do men and women are readying themselves to purchase their first car. The cover illustration illuminates the change from non-motorized to motorized personal transportation, one of the most significant technological and marketing feats of the time. Depicting the horse-drawn vehicle and the automobile show in the same image sends the strong message that times are changing.

Collier's

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY



Figure 8. Adolph Treidler, *Collier's*, February 10, 1912³⁵

Another example of persuasive cover art is the cheerful illustration by an unnamed artist of a couple out for a leisurely spin in the country depicted on the July 1915 issue of *World's Advance in Electricity, Mechanics, Invention, Science*, one of many new magazines marketed to a public eager to incorporate technology in their lives—and which evolved along with the innovations they promoted. (Figure 9) Wording on the cover and the inside masthead states that this magazine, published in New York City, was formerly *Modern Mechanics* as well as a consolidation of *Popular Electricity and the World's Advance*, *Modern Electrics and Mechanics*, *Electrician and Mechanic*.

The cover illustration showing the happy couple in their own car includes accompanying wording which proclaims: “In This Issue ‘HOW TO BUILD A SIMPLE CYCLECAR.’” This would be an easy undertaking, according to the article:

“The tools actually required for the construction of our car are comparatively few and simple. The possession of a lathe is a fortunate one, but the amateur who has access to a near-by machine shop need not hesitate to undertake the work, even though he has no lathe of his own. The machine work on the car is very simple and therefore inexpensive, even if done on a time basis in a shop.”³⁶

This cover is significant for two reasons. First, it heralds the beginnings of automobile tinkering as a favorite pastime for many. Second, the smiling young couple on this cover found a way to afford a car without having to purchase one. They built it themselves, to save money. The message to the viewer is that you, too, can find a way to both afford and enjoy your own automobile.



Figure 9. "How to Build a Simple Cyclecar," *World's Advance*
In Electricity, Mechanics, Invention, Science, July 1915³⁷

Racing was another newly emerging automobile-related pastime. One way Americans became aware of racing was through magazine cover illustrations depicting this new leisure activity. Howard V. Brown, who illustrated for magazines such as *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Everyday Engineering*, *Radio News*, *Science and Invention*, *Scientific American*³⁸ and *Harper's Weekly*³⁹, provided the 1 January 1916 *Scientific American* cover illustration; a striking depiction of car racing. (Figure 10) Distinguished magazine historian Frank Luther Mott describes *Scientific American*, published throughout its history in New York City,⁴⁰ as the “famous popular weekly of general science and mechanics.” He noted in 1957 that it “issued a fiftieth-anniversary number on August 7, 1896.”⁴¹ It is still published today, as a monthly.

Brown—a prolific magazine and children’s book illustrator capable of rendering artwork in many styles—uses bright colors and a blurred atmosphere to give the impression of speed. The racecars are the center of attention in this illustration, and the drivers are secondary. One can almost hear the roar of the engines as the racecars speed past the finish line. At first glance the style seems impressionistic due to its looseness. The subject matter, however, is modern. The racecars’s modern appearance is so remarkable that one finds it hard to accept that this illustration was published ninety-six years ago.

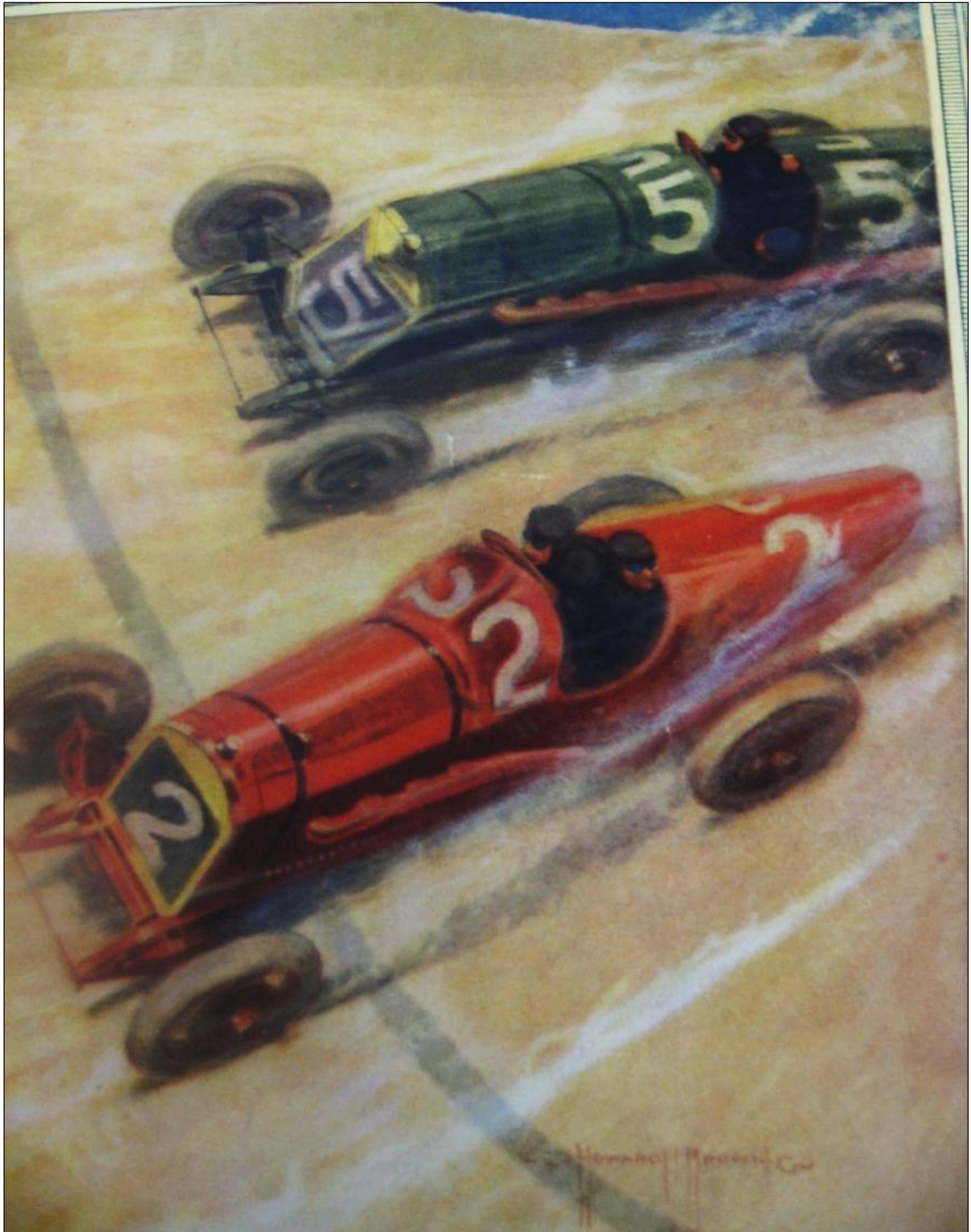


Figure 10. Howard V. Brown, *Scientific American*, January 1, 1916⁴²

The April 6, 1912 issue of *Harper's Weekly* features a beautiful cover illustration created by Brown depicting a New York City street scene with what photographic evidence suggests is the Knickerbocker Trust Company on the northwest corner of 5th Avenue and 34th Street in the background. (Figure 11) In this illustration, Brown shows cars as a natural part of the cityscape, increasing the public's comfort with the changeover from horses and buggies. Cars predominate in this illustration, and there is only one horse-drawn vehicle. Interestingly, a 1910 photo (Figure 12) which seems remarkably similar to the illustration (and might have been used by Brown as a reference photo) shows additional horse-drawn vehicles.⁴³ Brown seems partial to the new technology.

This street scene showcases Brown's extraordinary artistic talent. Its realistic yet aesthetic depiction of people, cars and buildings is reminiscent of similarly appealing renderings of city life created by Ashcan School artists. Nonetheless, according to Brown researcher Steve Kirch, he was perhaps best known for his science fiction art:⁴⁴ Kirch notes: "Howard V. Brown probably had as much to do with shaping our concept of the future as any three science or science-fiction writers you could name. What the futurists thought, Howard put into pictures so we could immediately see what it would be like."⁴⁵ Brown's racecar illustration, while different from his street scene and science fiction art, also exhibits his extraordinary talent. He was as capable of creating art that dramatically portrayed the era in which he lived and worked, as well as his era's perception of the future. Multi-talented as a creator of diverse forms of art, it is unfortunate that few people today recognize his name.

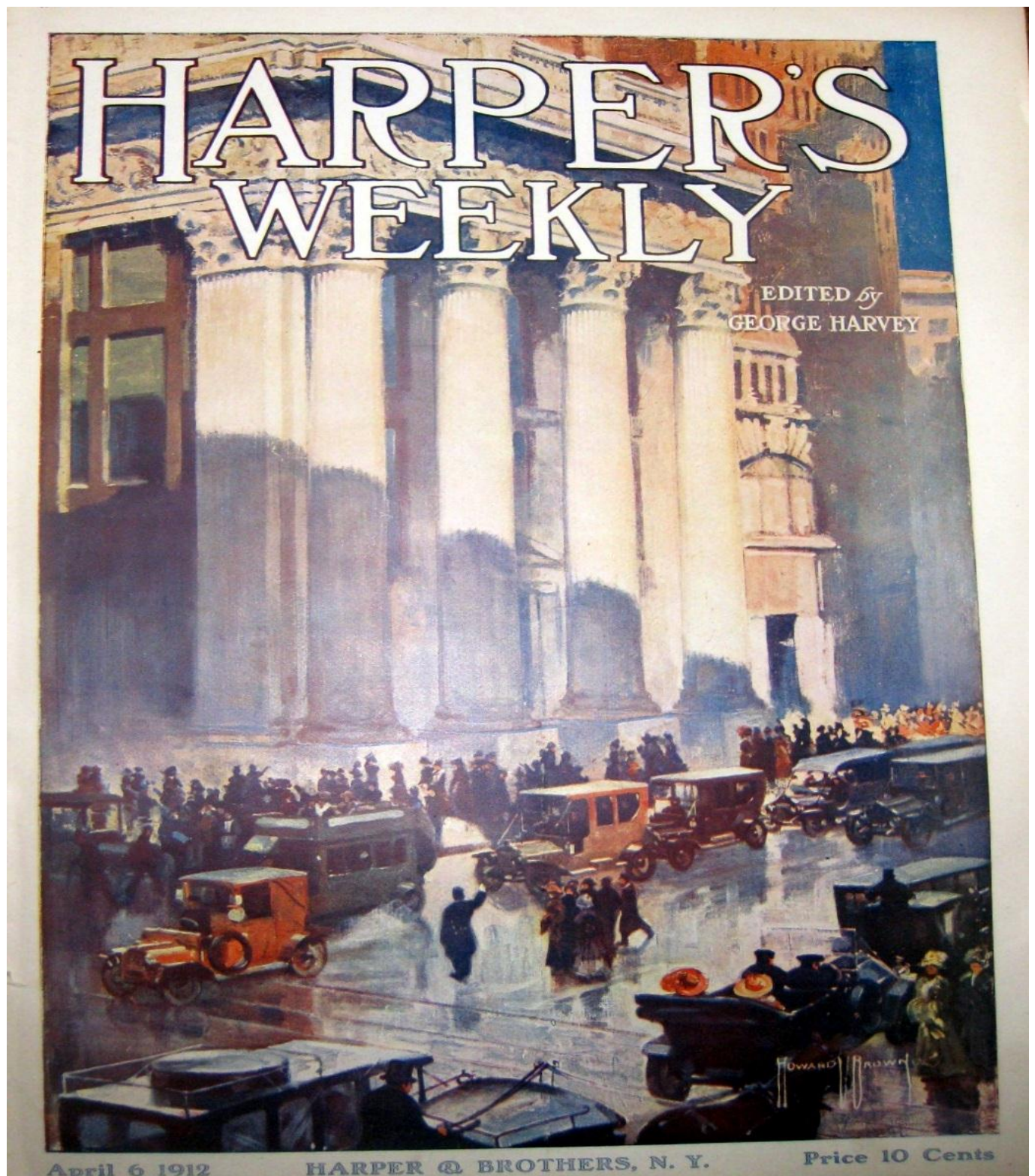


Figure 11. Howard V. Brown, *Harper's Weekly*, April 6, 1912⁴⁶



Figure 12. Knickerbocker Trust Company, 1910⁴⁷

A friendly race between an automobilist and a motorcyclist appears on the cover illustration of the 23 August 1919 *Literary Digest*. (Figure 13) According to Peterson, this New York City-based magazine was founded in 1890 by Dr. Isaac K. Funk and Adam W. Wagnalls “to winnow instructive material from the periodicals of their day,” and “The man who probably did most to guide the *Literary Digest* into becoming a national institution was Robert J. Cussihey, its publisher from 1905 to 1937.”⁴⁸ The two motorized vehicles pictured on the cover create a cloud of dirt from the ground as they speed, side by side, up a countryside hill. This illustration, created by Leon Alaric Shafer, is not full color yet it is full of life. The two drivers are confident competitors who appear quite adept at handling the new technology. Shafer’s illustration emphasizes the motorcyclist by placing him in the foreground. It introduces its audience to motorcycling as an alternative means of motorized transportation.

Unfortunately, there is scant information on Leon Alaric Shafer (who signed his work L.A. Shafer) even though he created magazine cover illustrations for the *American Legion* monthly and the *Literary Digest* as well as World War I posters.⁴⁹ He also worked as an etcher and as a fine artist, and created marine art as well as striking, impressionistic paintings of the 1906 San Francisco fire. Shafer was born in Illinois in 1866, and he exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1897 and 1905. He later moved to New York, and died in 1940.⁵⁰



Figure 13. L. A. Shafer, *Literary Digest*, August 23, 1919⁵¹

Magazine cover art from the late Progressive Era also shows women's eager acceptance of the automobile in their lives. Viewing these images of women's ease with automobile travel and ownership made more women comfortable with automobiles, and thereby expanded automobile acceptance even more. The humorous yet telling illustration on the cover of the March 8, 1913 issue of *Truth* (Figure 14) is evidence of the fact that women as well as men were attracted to automobiles from the earliest stages. The illustration depicts a fashionable woman, encircled by a tire, smiling at the car in her hand. She does not even notice the dejected man at her side. The illustration is entitled "JILTED." The automobile is so important to the woman that it has replaced the man as her first love.

The illustrator's name is not apparent on this image, but the woman is rendered in the fashion of a *Gibson Girl* or *Christy Girl*, so named after their creators Charles Dana Gibson and Howard Chandler Christy. These idealized images portrayed women of the time as beautiful, confident, and adventuresome—and they were rendered by many illustrators, both male and female. The subject of this illustration causes one to ponder the gender of the unsigned artist who created it. Regardless, the resemblance of the woman in the "Jilted" illustration to the feminine ideal likely sparked the interest of female viewers of this image to start their own love affair with an automobile.

Truth



Figure 14. "Jilted," *Truth*, March 8, 1913⁵²

The colorful January 1916 *Metropolitan* magazine cover illustration of a woman driver (Figure 15) also serves to lure women to the joys of car ownership. Created by Penrhyn Stanlaws, it presents a large full color image of a beguiling young woman driving confidently in a roofless vehicle through gentle snowflakes. *Metropolitan*, published in New York City, featured fiction by renowned writers as well as “Special Articles” and “Features” to keep readers informed. The sophisticated female driver gracing the cover is dressed warmly and fashionably in a red coat and matching hat with feathery material gracefully streaming with the wind. Her ebony fur scarf and light gloves complete the picture of comfort and entitlement. Despite the inclement weather, the driver assuredly faces the viewer instead of the road. Handling a car is a statement of joy, not trepidation. Other young women viewing this engaging magazine cover image, might, in turn, be eager to drive cars of their own.

Penrhyn Stanlaws, similar to Gibson and Christy and other illustrators of the time, specialized in images of attractive women. Illustration experts Walt and Roger Reed describe his work:

“Penrhyn was completely absorbed in the presentation of pretty girls and did so with great success. Their beautiful faces appeared on most of the magazines including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Associated Sunday Magazine*, *Hearst’s International*, and *Metropolitan* magazine.”⁵³

Stanlaws died in 1957. His *New York Times* obituary tells that “Hollywood used his soft and fluffy feminine creation to advertise early motion pictures.” The article adds other information about his remarkable accomplishments:

“He was born in Dundee, Scotland. He came to the United States and entered Princeton University in 1901, using his artistic talents to pay his way through the four years. From Princeton he went to Paris ‘To study real art.’ After several years he returned and created the ‘Stanlaws Girl.’ It was an immediate success with magazine editors. His connection with the motion picture industry led to a brief respite from the easel. He directed the motion picture ‘The Little Minister,’ starring Betty Compson. He once worked for the art staff of the Chicago Daily News and was a regular for the cover of the Saturday Evening Post. He came to Los Angeles in the early Nineteen Forties. Since then he had done mainly portrait work.”⁵⁴

Although talented and accomplished, Stanlaws did not achieve the level of lasting fame as other illustrators who specialized in portraying beautiful women such as Gibson and Christy.

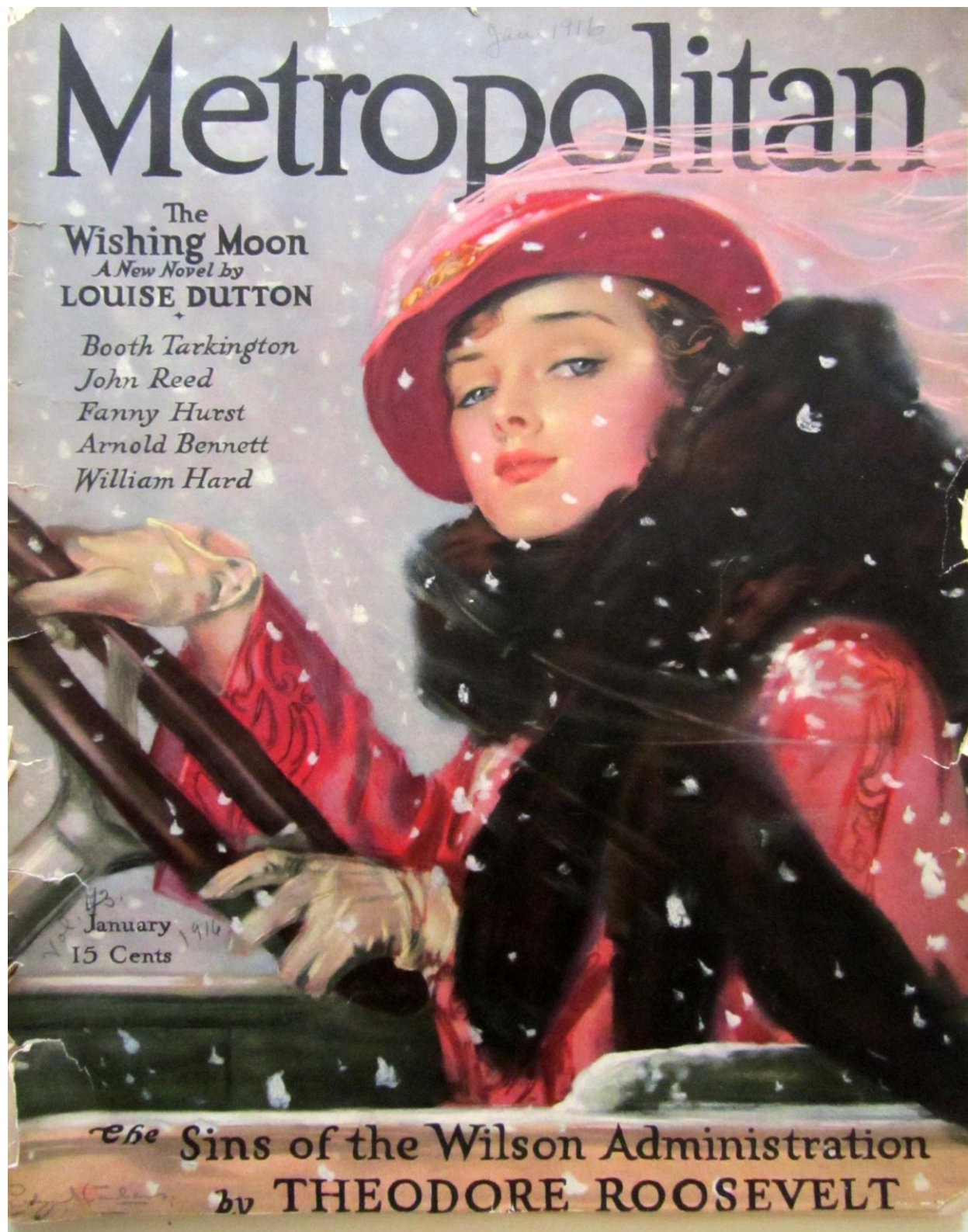


Figure 15. Penrhyn Stanlaws, *Metropolitan*, January 1916⁵⁵

Reliable transportation has always been the automobile's primary purpose. This message was also delivered via magazine covers. One example is the beautifully illustrated December 2, 1916 *Literary Digest* cover, another creation by L.A. Shafer. (Figure 16) The cover depicts a family, comfortable and warm in a large car, approaching a house on a snowy evening. The wreath displayed incongruously at the top of the scene indicates that the family is visiting for Christmas. The black automobile is driven by a chauffeured driver. This is either a prosperous city family that has no need of their own car, or a family of more modest means that needed to hire a cab. The black silhouette of the car, with a touch of warmth from its lit interior, contrasts with the dimness of the snowy night. The message here is that the car, protective and strong, makes this holiday visit possible.

Another effect of the changeover to automobiles was the expansion of recreational travel. Travelers with access to automobiles no longer had to rely on trains and horse-drawn vehicles to arrive at their destinations. Automobiles allowed people to travel quickly from door-to-door. This speed and convenience made day trips practical. The growing population living near or in cities could escape by car for brief visits to the countryside. The large number of people who still lived in rural areas could travel quickly to town or to a nearby city for shopping, culture or entertainment.

Automobiles initially also helped bring families closer. This was a time of growing respect toward children, as Collier Schorr, author of *The Essential Norman Rockwell*, explains:

“Between the turn of the century and about 1915, America discovered Childhood and Youth. The Victorian middle-class legacy of ‘children should be seen and not heard’ gave way to the belief that children and teenagers did indeed have something to say and were worth adult investment in their future as good citizens and responsible, self-sufficient consumers.”⁵⁶

Parents now wanted to spend time with their children on day excursions or lengthier vacations. The family automobile made this possible.

The Literary Digest

PUBLIC OPINION *New York* combined with *The LITERARY DIGEST*



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY *Publishers*
New York and London

Vol. 22, No. 22 Whole No. 1389—

DECEMBER 2, 1916

Price 10 Cents

Figure 16. L. A. Shafer, *Literary Digest*, December 2, 1916⁵⁷

The October 28, 1916 *Judge* cover illustration, “Sour Grapes,” (Figure 17) shows the joyfulness of a family automobile excursion while poking fun at the ignoble side of human nature. Those who have not yet achieved this most recent indicator of American success—automobile ownership—are understandably envious of those who have. The illustrator, Emil Flohri, cleverly writes excuses on the grapes in the foreground of this scenic vista, showing his humor as well as his artistry. The humor magazine *Judge* was the perfect venue for this slice-of-life artistry. Peterson records that “*Judge* began existence in October, 1881, by announcing editorially that it was ‘started...for fun’ and that ‘money is no object.’”⁵⁸ It was published in New York City by the Leslie-Judge Company.

According to his 1938 *New York Times* obituary, Emil Flohri began working for *Leslie’s Magazine* as its “Washington political cartoonist and illustrator” when he was just sixteen. He later became a portrait artist for silent screen movie stars. The obituary states that Flohri’s “‘full dinner pail’ cartoons helped elect William McKinley President.” It also mentions that “he had been associated with the Walt Disney studios for ten years.”⁵⁹ He died at his home in Van Nuys, California at the age of sixty-nine. Despite Flohri’s diverse capabilities as an artist, a cartoonist, an illustrator, and a humorist, his name is surprisingly unrecognizable today.



Copyright, Judge, New York, 1916

S O U R G R A P E S

Figure 17. Emil Flohri, "Sour Grapes," *Judge*, October 28, 1916⁶⁰

Ironically, the automobile—a symbol of the machine age—allowed a growing urban population to reconnect with nature. The prominent inclusion of an automobile in the 3 December 1910 *Harper's Weekly* cover illustration (Figure 18) provides aesthetic representation of this new interest. Interestingly, *Harper's Weekly*, published from 1857 to 1916, featured full-color cover illustrations while *Harper's* (with copious inside illustrations by well-known illustrators) primarily retained its original staid look over time.⁶¹ The two attractive young couples in this cover illustration break for a cookout beside a wooded lake while touring the countryside. Their sophisticated yet semi-casual attire suggests that their homes are urban, not rural. The automobile makes it possible for them to explore the wholesomeness of the natural environment, for which they have a yearning. This engaging illustration is skillfully rendered by W.H.D. Koerner who received art training from famed illustrators Stanley Massey Arthurs, Harvey Dunn, Howard Pyle, Frank Earle Schoonover, and N.C.Wyeth.⁶² His fine realistic style reflects that of his teachers. Koerner's biographer W.H. Hutchinson exultingly describes him as "the most dependable of the great magazine illustrators when the mass-circulation magazines were the television screens of their day and their advertisements were the commercials."⁶³ Hutchinson also adds to the continuing discussion of the value of illustration versus fine art by pointing out that Koerner, like Winslow Homer and Remington, viewed illustration as "a vivid form of art and he gave his best to it."⁶⁴

Despite Hutchinson's acclaim that Koerner was "the most dependable of the great magazine illustrators," he gives two reasons to explain why Koerner "until recently, has been so little known and even less recognized." Koerner, unfortunately, was like so many other fine illustrators in this regard, and these reasons apply to them as well. The first reason is the "peculiar canons by which artists, art critics, and art collectors, be they competent or self-anointed, distinguish between illustrators and those who do 'easel painting.'" Hutchinson quotes Frank Luther Mott to dispute the denigration of illustration as an "impure," lesser form of art. In Mott's words: "Art criticism is a field from which the dogmatist should be barred." The second reason is that "an invidious distinction between those who illustrate books and those whose work is done primarily for magazines." Hutchinson continues: "It is impossible to find a serious discussion of magazine illustrators and their works, although it is comparatively easy to locate learned disquisitions on book illustrators and their works."⁶⁵ It is time to restore deserved credit to the extraordinarily talented magazine cover illustrators—Koerner and many others—who aesthetically documented and gently influenced the American lifestyle during the 1910s. These are the artists who brought art to the masses.



Figure 18. W. H. D. Koerner, *Harper's Weekly*, December 3, 1910⁶⁶

Conclusion

Magazine cover art displayed the growing impact of automobiles—and sometimes racecars and motorcycles—during the late Progressive Era, extending their appeal to the American public. Cover illustrations depicted the changeover to motorized vehicles and increased the public's comfort level with this new technology, showing the many ways that automobiles could enrich the lives of everyday Americans. Automobiles especially, by transforming our means of transportation, also affected our relationships and our recreational pursuits. Automobiles altered the lives of Americans in many ways, and magazine cover illustrations played a large part in making this happen. The appealing artwork on the covers of magazines proved to an eager audience of both women and men that automobiles were for visiting, fun, adventure, and vacationing, as well as for more practical uses such as commuting. Magazine cover art was not the sole factor in the expansion of automobile usage, but it certainly boosted it. Meanwhile, talented cover artists provided the public with lifestyle changing messages along with their artwork.

A century has passed since these automobile cover images were published in nationally distributed magazines. Revisiting them entertains today's viewers with a nostalgic journey through time. However, just as the original images purported to both enlighten and entertain, viewing these images today encourages contemplation as well as amusement. One gives thought to the artistic value of the illustrations, as well as to granting overdue recognition to the men and women who created them.

The persuasive messages imbedded in these images also invite thoughts concerning the value of the changes they precipitated and the changes that society will undertake in the future. The cover illustrations boosted magazine sales as well as eased the public through the tumultuous changes of their times, such as the shift to motorized personal transportation. Gas-powered vehicles including Ford's Model-T and the development of numerous related industries created a prosperous economy and triggered the expansion of suburbia. Magazine cover illustrations depicted the many positive aspects of this changeover in transportation: the thrill of modernity, the enjoyment of a new hobby, independence, travel, comfort, family togetherness, and the joyfulness of connecting with nature.

While acknowledging that the positives related to last century's changeover to motorized personal transportation still remain, today's perspective offers suggestions on needed changes and enhancements. Foremost is the urgency for innovative technologies that will reduce pollution and

concerns about climate change. *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman writes about this in 2012 in “Take the Subway”:

“There will be two billion more people here by 2050, and they will all want to live and drive just like us. And when they do, there is going to be one monster traffic jam and pollution cloud, unless we learn how to get more mobility, lighting, heating and cooling from less energy and with less waste—with so many more people.”⁶⁷

Friedman’s concerns for the future recall the wording by the unsigned author of “The Lure of the Auto” (1910): “It is lucky that autos are dear. If they were not, there would be so many of them that there would not be room on the earth for the folks to move about.”⁶⁸ In another reminder of the past, Friedman quotes James Bradfield Moody, co-author with Bianca Nogrady of *The Sixth Wave: How to Succeed in a Resource Limited World*, recounting the times when increasing consumerism boosted the economy. This is reminiscent of the public’s eagerness to purchase automobiles in the 1910s and the resulting growth of the automobile and related industries, and the economy as a whole. Friedman writes:

“In the past, says Moody, ‘the more we consumed, the more we grew.’ And therefore, there was a tension between green and gold. But that cannot last, says Moody. When you have a global market, with a burgeoning population, that faces rising scarcity of resources and still so much waste in how we make and consume things there is a great market opportunity for innovation.”⁶⁹

Friedman is optimistic that American ingenuity and innovation will overcome pollution and climate change problems. To support his claim, he mentions the efforts of Amory Lovins, chairman of the Rocky Mountain Institute and author of *Reinventing Fire: Bold Business Solutions for the New Energy Era*. Friedman explains:

“The Rocky Mountain Institute and its business collaborators show how private enterprise—motivated by profit, supported by smart policy—can lead America off both oil and coal by 2050, saving \$5 trillion, through innovation emphasizing design and strategy. ‘You don’t have to believe in climate change to solve it,’ says Lovins. ‘Everything we do to raise energy efficiency will make money, improve security and health, and stabilize climate.’”⁷⁰

Friedman’s optimism is refreshingly reminiscent of an earlier time in history when the rapid succession of exciting innovations, including motorized transportation, brought change and lifestyle enhancement. It is comforting to consider that we are living in a new era of both change and betterment for society. A century later, viewers comprehend that the significance of the change in transportation is still evolving. Once again, Americans need advice on coping with the many effects

of the vast numbers of gas powered vehicles. The illustrations of the past incite interest in finding solutions to the situation in the present and the future.

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²⁰ *Life*, January 6, 1910, Collection of June S. Knopf.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Automobile History,” in Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, www.bentley.umich.edu/research/guides/automotive/ (accessed March 2, 2012).

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