

Lozier

Supercars of Their Time

In the early 1900s, the fast and powerful American-built Lozier was breaking world records for speed and endurance.

By Todd D. Lozier and Mike Turner

PHOTOS COURTESY TODD D. LOZIER

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL RUN brokering and then manufacturing high-quality sewing machines in the 1880s, Henry Lozier Sr. started a bicycle company in Plattsburgh, N.Y., which eventually became internationally known for the quality of its products. Later, the company also experimented with internal

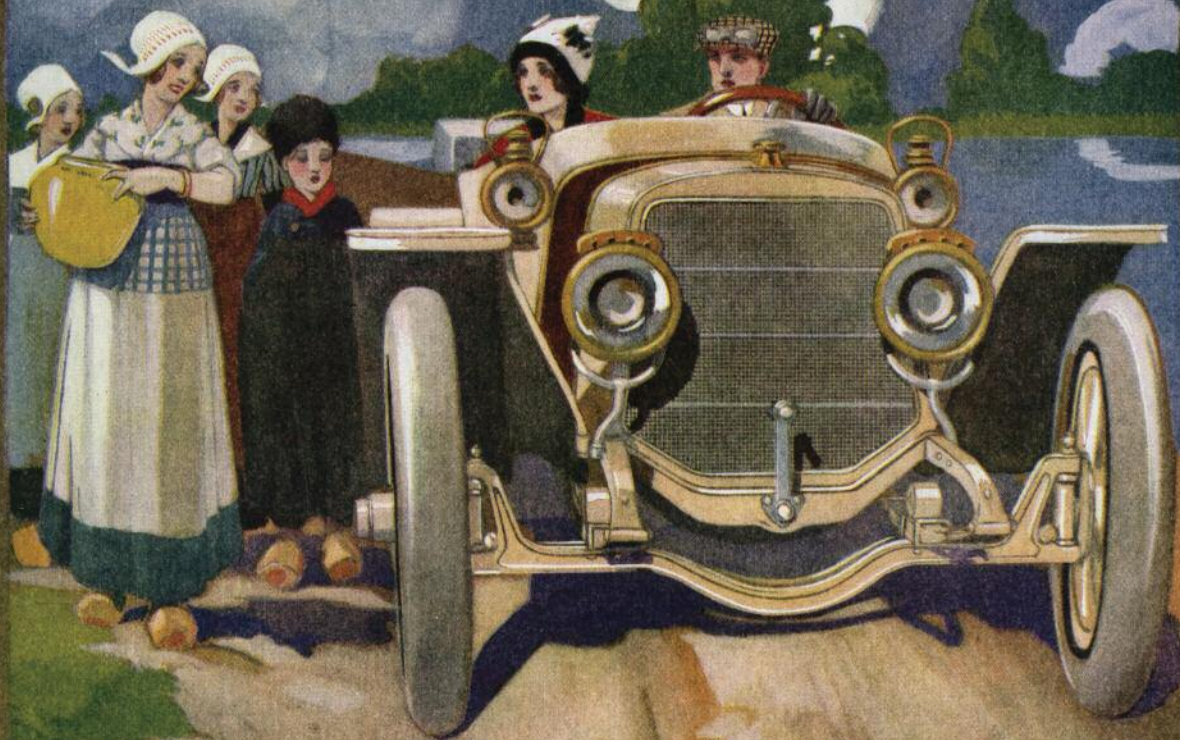
■ Winner of the 1911 Vanderbilt Cup race in Savannah, Ga. Ralph Mulford drove his Lozier averaging 73.4 mph on dirt tracks for 290.7 miles.

combustion engines, both gas and steam power, and in 1898 built and sold 100 single-cylinder tricycles. Production peaked at 50,000 bicycles per year by 1899.

At the time, the “bicycle rage” was similar to the 1990s “dot-com” era where excitement and market overvaluations led to an eventual, but temporary financial collapse of an entire industry. Lozier was fortunate to sell out just



LOZIER



In foreign lands, at the famous pleasure resorts, on the touring routes of the world, wherever you meet people whose position and training accustom them to the best — there in increasing numbers you find the LOZIER — the choice of "Men Who Know."

Touring Cars
Five Models
\$5000

Rene Vincent
12

LOZIER

2310 Mack Ave., Detroit

Limousines
Landaulets
\$6500

■ Lozier marketing was bold, often making predictions or offering guarantees of winning future races. The company always met its predictions. This high-class ad is from a 1912 issue of Life magazine.



■ *"The Gumdrops Kid": Ralph Mulford was Lozier's most successful driver.*

■ *This factory photo featured a 1914 Type 84 Roadster two-seater known as the Mountain Climber. There is just one Roadster in existence today and it's here at Amelia.*

before the collapse in 1899 to a newly formed conglomerate for a reported \$4 million dollars in cash.

With Henry Sr.'s fortune in the bank and his health deteriorating (he died in 1903), his son Harry (Henry Jr.) was set on a path to build the most reliable and powerful internal combustion engines made in America, if not the world. Lozier developed a large engine to successfully power a personal yacht 600 miles from Cleveland across the Erie Canal and the Hudson River to Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain. All the while secretly researching and developing the technology and knowledge to build a reliable, fast and luxurious motor car.

Lozier and lead engineer John Perrin, whom Henry Ford publicly praised as the greatest automobile engineer in the U.S., sailed to Europe multiple times to observe and research the German, Italian, English and French automotive advances. Perrin set up a shop and repaired various high-quality European automobiles to learn how they were built.

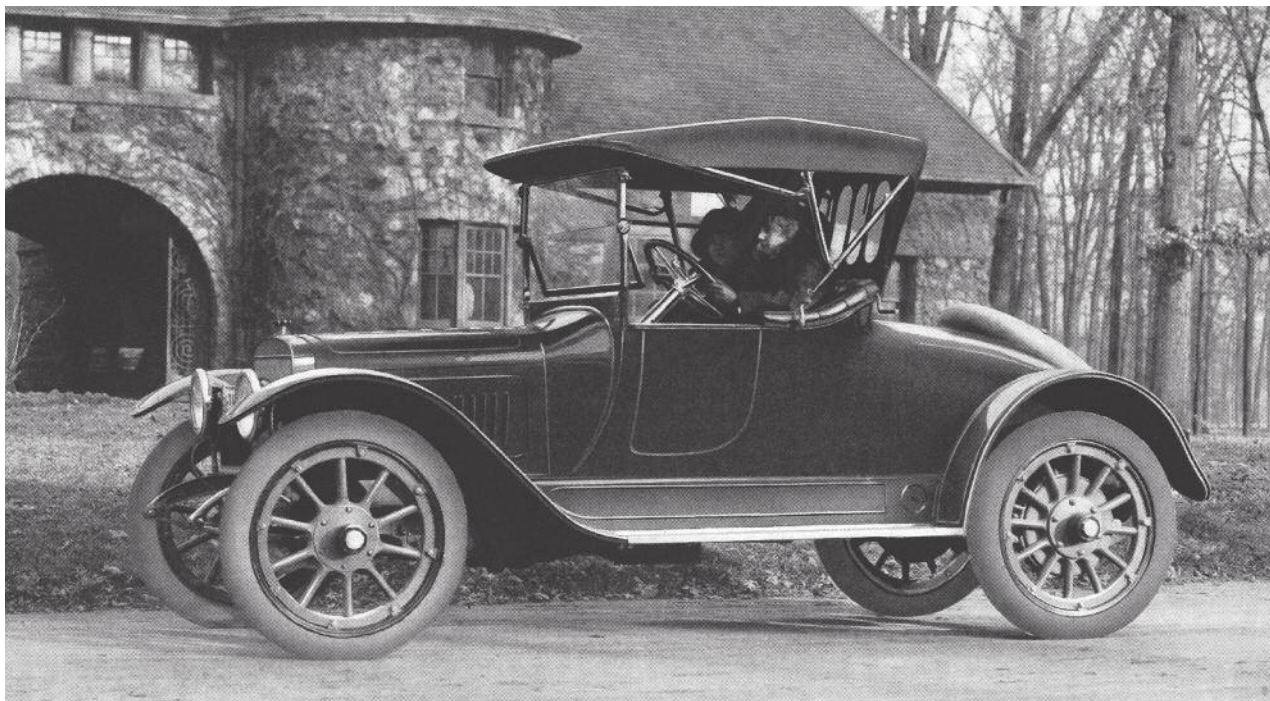
By 1904 the first Lozier car prototype was

complete. It was reported that the first Lozier's cylinders were interchangeable with a Mercedes of the period. With creative marketing and the Lozier quality reputation, they presold 25 cars in 1905 at prices from \$5,500 to \$7,500, twice the price of the average home at the time and the highest priced domestic car on the market. By 1907 the cars were breaking world records for speed and endurance.

Recognized as "supercars"

THEY WERE QUICKLY RECOGNIZED as "supercars" of their day, setting more 24-hour endurance speed records by 1910 than any other manufacturer. They were honored as the AAA National Champions in 1911 and were one of the favorites to win the inaugural 1911 Indy 500, the biggest new race in the world.

A legitimate controversy remains today about whether Lozier actually won the inaugural Indy 500, instead of the recorded second place. We may never know since the



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racetrack owner, Carl Fisher, ordered all records and relevant film be destroyed after the hometown hero and car got to the winner's circle first. The official winner was the Marmon Wasp driven by the Ray Harroun. The Lozier that supposedly finished second was driven by Ralph Mulford, Lozier's most successful driver.

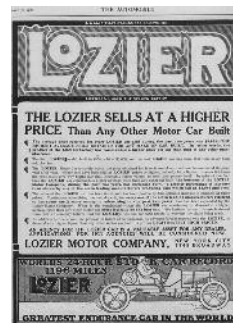
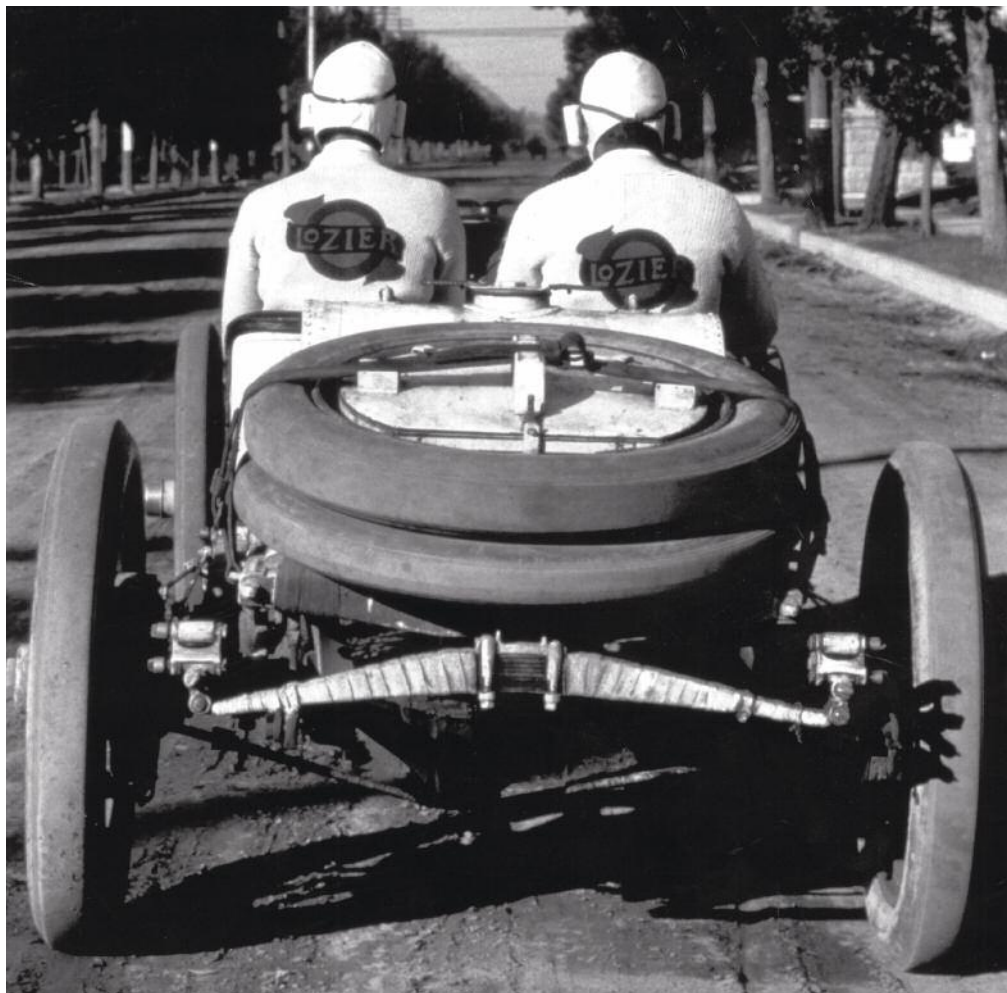
Also known as "Smiley" and the "Gumdrop Kid," Mulford was as straight-laced as they came. He didn't drink, smoke or swear and refused to race on Sundays because of his Christian convictions. He was an excellent tenor and would often sing and hold services at the racetrack. He always wore a collar and tie under his racing coveralls. Quite an unusual individual given the uncivilized nature of the racing industry at that time. He had raced Harroun in Marmon cars before in multiple events and never lost before the ruling at Indianapolis.

Due to Lozier's known dominance in the States and the negative perception of Yankee-built cars in Europe, in 1911 Fiat racing sought to put Lozier in its place by challenging it to a head-to-head 100 mile race at

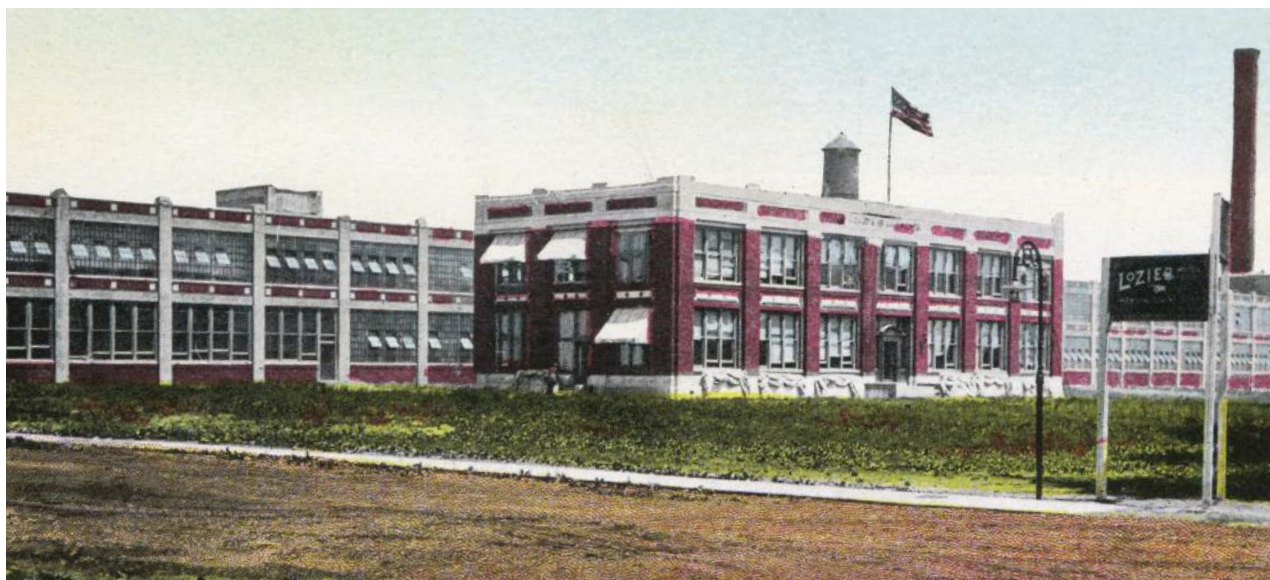
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the Los Angeles Motordrome. Fiat shipped over its monstrous 90 horsepower racing-only Fiat and had DePalma drive. It was reported that both cars performed flawlessly throughout the race, but the Lozier, with its stock four cylinder won by more than six laps, shattering the track record, and broke four world records that day for speed. The winning Lozier was driven by "Terrible" Teddy Tetzlaff.

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■ Loziers were stock factory cars with fenders removed and were raced on the streets and track. They dominated even the special-built European race cars.



■ This is a postcard of the Lozier office and factory in St. Clair Heights, Detroit, Mich., which ran in conjunction with the original plant in Plattsburgh, N.Y.

Mercer, Isotta Fraschini and others all had cars built only for racing competition (in other words, not for sale). All racing Loziers were right off the showroom floor, just stripped of fenders, lights and heavy body-work. Lozier's last race was in November 1911, the prestigious Vanderbilt Cup Run, which it won, with the famous Ralph DePalma in his world-class Mercedes running second. Again, Mulford drove the Lozier.

The company was proud to advertise that "The Lozier Sells at a Higher Average Price Than Any Other Car in the World," "Legitimately High Priced," "The Choice of Men Who Know" and "No motor car in America or Europe can dispute the right of the Lozier to its title 'Champion of the World.'" Lozier was confident in what it built and sold.

Famous people and automotive leaders of the time owned Loziers, including automobile industry leaders such as John and Horace Dodge, Henry Ford and M. Hauvette Michelin. Corporate executives such as Asa Candler (founder of Coca-Cola), silent movie stars like Florence Lawrence and Grace

Cunard, the millionaire tobacconist W.W. Blake and John D. Rockefeller. Lozier was also the car of choice for the political elite in New York City, including police and fire, bishops in the archdiocese, leaders of foreign countries and the White House. Woodrow Wilson was chauffeured in a Lozier.

By 1912 Lozier's reputation and racing dominance was proved, and it now sought higher production numbers at its new high-tech Detroit plant, where it hoped to produce more than 1,200 cars per year. However, economic conditions worsened and new financial investors took control of the company. Harry Lozier was then forced out through a sequence of unfortunate events, including the departure of his legacy management team, which started the Chandler Motor Co. This led to the demise of the Lozier company by 1916.

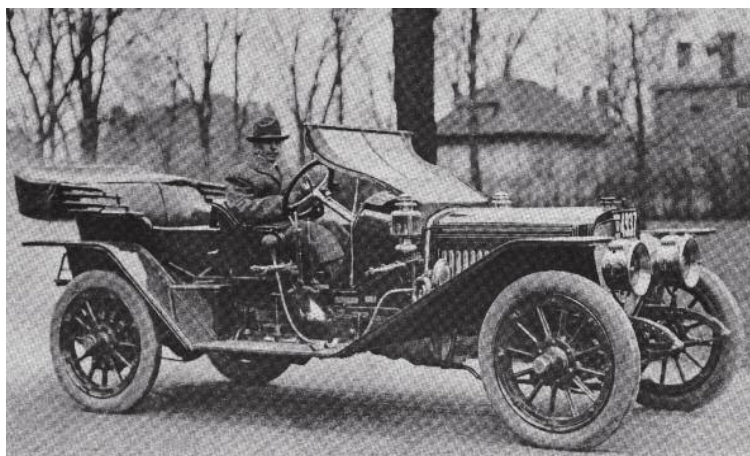
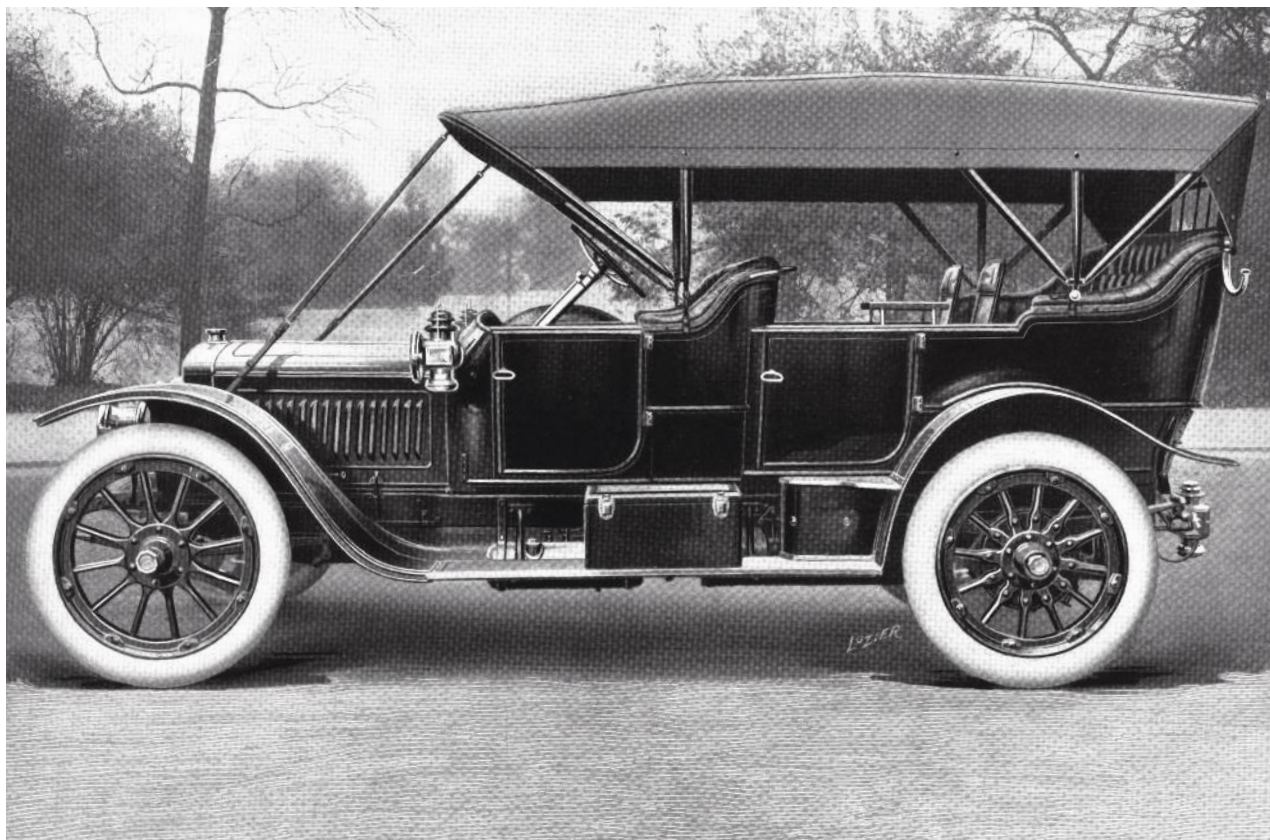
Many automotive enthusiasts today have never heard of the Lozier, but, "In the early 1900s it was well known as one of the largest and best built automobiles," says Henry B. Lent, author of "Car of the Year." Lozier was named America's Car of the Year in 1906.

Lozier's features and patents included many "firsts"

MANY LOZIER CARS contained a wide range of special features, including a four-speed sliding gearbox and a beautiful 2 ½ to one gear ratio in fourth; 70 mph was not a problem. Water-cooled drum brakes delivered water via a driver-controlled pressurized tank. The cars featured the first 36-inch wheels of any manufacturer, later to

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■ Top: The Model H Lozier was manufactured from 1908 to 1910 and featured an unheard-of 58 ball bearings inside the motor.

■ This 1910 Briarcliff Model 51 was powered by the race-winning four cylinder and was equipped with a Cambridge windscreen. It was popular for high-speed driving in the rain.

become commonplace. And it had the only pawl-and-ratchet brake system, allowing the car to stand motionless on a steep hill with the clutch in to prevent roll-back.

Lozier also boasted one of the first all-ball-and-roller-bearing engines. Crankshafts were a work of art, machined from a great solid chunk of vanadium steel, which rotated on massive ball bearings. Frames made of nickel steel were heat treated in a bath of molten lead. And two-tone body colors, such as blue and white or burgundy and black, were common. Hand-painted striping of real silver or gold was also used on occasion.

Other features included nickel-steel forged axles, all-aluminum bodies, a chassis

sprung on five springs and a solid copper 26 gallon gas tank.

The entire underside of the car was enclosed by a tough aluminum alloy casting, and valves were forged from a nickel alloy. The accelerator pedal controlled a movable oil trough beneath the connecting rods. At higher speeds the linkage raised the trough to allow the rod ends to dip further into the oil, which the company claimed resulted in near smokeless exhaust.

In the early years every car was given a rigorous 500 mile road test before the body was installed so no break-in period was necessary and any issues were resolved before delivery. In addition, a gear-driven fan disengaged at 40 mph.

Lozier engines also used three separate oiling systems to prevent failure, and at a time when fuel pressure was determined by the driver, passenger or riding mechanic operating a hand pump, the company used exhaust gas pressure to force the fuel through the lines. And a spark arrester was used in the system to ensure that the risk of explosion was reduced, if not altogether eliminated.

No one knows exactly how many Loziers were built, but the number is believed to be in excess of 3,500. Based on exhaustive research, it's believed that there are only 40 known chassis left, and of those 35 are whole cars. ✚

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