

MAXWELL  
Perfectly Simple; Simply Perfect

by  
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*HORSELESS AGE -January 15, 1913. "It developed late last week that the purchasers of the United States Motor Co. had decided to operate their new possessions under a title different from the Standard Motor Company, which was incorporated not long ago in Virginia with a capitalization of \$31,000,000. Under the new plans the Standard Company is to die a natural death and the U. S. Motor Co. properties will be taken over by the Maxwell Motor Company which will have an original capitalization of \$31,000,000 under the same arrangement as the Standard Company. The Maxwell Company is to take over the Flanders Motor Company and then its capital will be increased to \$37,000,000. The company will start with a cash working capital of \$3,000,000 and will have headquarters in Detroit."*

With this announcement it became official that the end had come to both the United States Motor Company and the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company. Many observers were surprised by the failure of the U.S. Motor Company, the conglomerate competitor of General Motors; however, the greatest disappointment was reserved for the demise of the Maxwell Briscoe Motor Company, the viable member of the corporation. Also removed from active control of the Maxwell destiny were the company's founders Jonathan D. Maxwell and Benjamin Briscoe. During the period of eight years these two industrialists created a company and a product which was highly respected.

The founding of the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company was not accidental. The association of J.D. Maxwell and Benjamin Briscoe combined the best of two necessary talents with respect to the manufacturing of automobiles. J.D. Maxwell was well versed in mechanical engineering and prior to 1904 had been associated with such enterprises as Haynes-Apperson, Oldsmobile and Northern; while on the other hand, Benjamin Briscoe had become extremely accomplished in the establishment and administration of his own business, the Briscoe Manufacturing Company, which was noted for its automotive sheet metal products and radiators.

The designing of the Maxwell automobile had begun in the summer of 1903 by J.D. Maxwell, who up until that time had been associated with the Northern Automobile Company. A partnership was developed between Benjamin Briscoe and Jonathan Maxwell about the same time and remained unchanged until the incorporation of the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company in June, 1904. The new company was capitalized for \$750,000 of which \$500,000 was fully paid. Named as directors and officers were Benjamin Briscoe, President and General Manager; J.D. Maxwell, Vice-President and General Superintendent; Richard Irvin, Treasurer; H.B. Randolph, Secretary and Assistant Treasurer. All that remained to complete the formula was a suitable

manufacturing location which was soon finalized through the leasing of the former factory of the Mobile Company of America, manufacturers of the Mobile steam automobile, which was licensed under the Stanley Brothers patents at Tarrytown, New York. The new factory was fully equipped and ready for operation with excellent access by both water and railroad.

#### **1904: MAXWELL-BRISCOE PRODUCTION BEGINS**

After further revisions of the plans and patterns had been made, production on the Model H, two-cylinder, sixteen horsepower, touring car was initiated. The first advertisements for the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company appeared in October, 1904. Enough raw material had been ordered to permit the production of 25 automobiles. This was soon followed by the purchase of additional material to construct 500 Model L, two-cylinder, eight horsepower, tourabouts and an additional 300 Model H touring cars. Regular deliveries began in November of that year with a total of four sales, and by December an additional six automobiles were on their way to new owners. From the beginning one of the most important aspects of the Maxwell philosophy was the emphasis which was placed upon engineering. Not only was it the intent of Maxwell advertising to inform the prospective purchaser about the company's policies regarding construction and ease of operation, but additional care was taken to interest those who might be considered as prospective dealers for the new company as well. The growth of a dealership system was slow, one of the first being established in New York City under the direction of Colonel K.C. Pardee. Before the year had ended I.C. Kirkham had been sent to Europe to analyze the market potential of the Maxwell automobile in that part of the world. The coining of the company slogan, "Perfectly Simple; Simply Perfect," was also established before the end of 1904. All that was required was acceptance by the public.

The pace established in 1904 was accelerated throughout the new year. Attendance at all of the major automobile shows was considered mandatory to communicate the Maxwell message. Madison Square Garden on January 14, followed by the Chicago Show, February 4, and the Detroit Show, February 13. During the Detroit Show agencies for several Michigan towns were awarded, in fact, it was claimed that Maxwell sales made during the show week aggregated 150 cars. Statements were made by factory officials that the total yearly output for 1905 would be 5,000 cars, although production statistics released by Benjamin Briscoe indicated that only 542 automobiles had been sold by mid-year. Production still continued on the Model L tourabout and the Model H touring car; still for the most part unchanged from the prior year.

#### **1905: MAXWELL WINS THE GLIDDEN**

It was readily apparent from the beginning that publicity was necessary to sell Maxwell cars. The most obvious recognition could be guaranteed by participating in endurance and reliability contests, hill climbs and track racing. The Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company, its dealers and private owners sought to secure publicity and fame by winning an impressive inventory of victories. Although the company's attitude toward track racing was to falter temporarily in later years many individuals were successful in adding to the list of victories. Prime attention was

given by the factory to participation in the Glidden Tour. The 1905 Glidden Tour was the premier endurance contest and represented the first opportunity the company had to prove the durability of its product publicly. Of such importance was this event that Benjamin Briscoe and Jonathan D. Maxwell personally participated in the event, along with Colonel K.C. Pardee, the New York dealer. The challenge of the Glidden Tour took its toll, not only of the Maxwell entries, but many others, as well. Out of a total of six Maxwells entered only two successfully completed the course, J.D. Maxwell in a Model L tourabout and a private entry driven by Ralph Colburn, a Model H touring car.

Jonathan Maxwell's victory was far from uneventful. Aside from a broken differential key, the road conditions also served to work against the Glidden tourists. Two minor accidents serve to highlight the delights of touring through New England in 1905.

Four miles from Sharon, Connecticut, J.D. Maxwell was overtaken by W.C. Temple in his big 40-horsepower Pierce Great Arrow. Mr. Temple's chauffeur, who was driving, blew his horn and Maxwell obligingly gave him the road to pass -- a favor, by the way, not always extended by Mr. Temple's chauffeur to others on the tour. When Mr. Maxwell pulled out he was at the top of a slight grade and did not notice that the planking over a culvert at the bottom was very narrow, as its ends were concealed by tall grass. The Pierce crossed without trouble, but the runabout was crowded so much that its two right hand wheels ran off the planking and dropped into the culvert. The front wheel caught against the bank and brought the little car to a sudden stop, bending the axle several inches out of line from the spring block. The same shock also turned up the rear spring shackle on the left side. Neither Mr. Maxwell nor his companion, J. Ross, was thrown out or hurt, but after that the runabout steered badly.

The second accident which was much less serious occurred on the road leading out of Poughkeepsie, New York. Workmen were making a new macadam road along side of a trolley line, and the only place where vehicles could get through was over the ties of the street railroad. The rails projected their full height above the ties and the road surface, and the left wheel of the runabout refused to mount the rail, the shock bending the spindle just enough so that afterward there was no longer difficulty in steering. But it was a cross-eyed looking runabout that ran into New York that evening.

As the victories began to amass, apparently so did the orders, which, in turn, began to tax the physical facilities at the Tarrytown factory. Rumors began to gain wide circulation in August that an additional factory had been purchased in Providence, Rhode Island. The rumor, however, proved to be only partially true, when in September a contract was signed with the Providence Engineering Company to manufacture the motors for all Maxwell cars and assemble the Model L tourabouts. Production of the Model H touring cars continued at Tarrytown, although additional pressure was mounting to expand the production facilities there or add a new factory altogether, preferably in the Midwest. Assembly facilities were again expanded when the former Hope Thread Mill plant in Pawtucket, Rhode Island was leased. By December 18, 1905, the four story, 40,000 square foot building had been converted for assembling finished Model L cars. The

proximity of the new plant to the Brown & Sharp Manufacturing Company of Providence, suppliers of transmission gears for all Maxwell cars, was an additional determining factor which hastened the decision favoring the new plant.

Continuing its publicity and advertising plans for the next year, reservations were again made for the major automobile shows. A merchandising innovation was also introduced, a motion picture film highlighting the 1906 Maxwell line, racing and touring incidents, and, presumably, scenes at the factory. The new movie was circulated by company representatives for viewing by potential customers, although it is not known how long this device was utilized.

### **1906: CHICAGO ASSEMBLY PLANT OPENS**

The 1906 model year began, as did the one preceding, with only two basic models, the Model L tourabout and the Model H touring car. A new limousine body was also available, but only on the Model H chassis. In order to meet the estimated production for the year of 3,500 automobiles an additional factory was secured, this time in Chicago, Illinois. With 60,000 square feet of working space it was anticipated that 1,500 vehicles could be assembled there annually. Parts were shipped from Tarrytown, New York and Pawtucket, Rhode Island and then assembled in Chicago. The purchase option originally written into the lease contract covering the Tarrytown factory was also activated. Now the first Maxwell plant was the sole property of the company's ever expanding inventory of physical property.

The production of Maxwell automobiles was still restricted to two-cylinder machines, although a greater variety of body styles were available. The 10 horsepower Model L chassis was available with either the runabout or gentleman speedster bodies. However, the 20 horsepower Model H chassis was still available in only three different body styles -- touring car, doctor's roadster, and limousine. In addition, there was a variation of the Model H known as, the Model O which was available as a delivery wagon. There were very few mechanical changes in comparison to the previous year's models, with one major exception. The standard main bearing caps were redesigned so that external adjustment of the bearings was possible through the use of screws and wedges. This system was continued throughout the ensuing two-cylinder production. Gone was the armored oak frame used on the Model L tourabout. Actually, this had been discontinued about mid-1905 and was replaced with a pressed steel frame then already being used on the Model H touring car. The two-ton Maxwell truck continued to be described in many publicity releases, but it was only a prototype and was not generally available. A second was built in 1907, but it too was used only at the factory.

### **1906/07: FOUR-CYLINDER MODEL INTRODUCED**

Again in the following year the company's products were exhibited at the major automobile shows, including the prototype of the four-cylinder touring car, designated as the Model F and destined for introduction with the 1907 model year as the Model M. 1906 Maxwell advertising continued to be profuse with continued emphasis on the superiority of the car's mechanical

features. In some instances it appeared as though each full-page advertisement was intended to be a capsule treatise about the Maxwell car. In addition to the normal advertising methods an outdoor advertising campaign was launched in May, 1906. This entailed placing 30 large cutout signboards along the right-of-way of the Pennsylvania Railroad between New York and Philadelphia, and 40 along the same railroad from Washington to the Susquehanna River. Obviously, this was an effort to get people off the trains and into Maxwell cars.

A document known as the "Maxwell Doctrine" was intended to provide the prospective purchaser of a Maxwell car with the company's manufacturing policy as well as additional reasons which might clinch the sale.

The Doctrine:

- 1st -- A cylinder of 5 inch bore and 5 inch stroke is ideal for a double opposed gasoline motor;
- 2nd -- A double opposed 5x5 inches, when properly made, develops about 20 ACTUAL horsepower;
- 3rd -- To use four cylinders for motors of 20 or less horsepower is unnecessary, because thereby the number of wearing parts is unnecessarily increased;
- 4th -- 20 ACTUAL horsepower, not momentum on flywheel horsepower, is enough for every requirement except excessive speed or extreme fashion. Therefore, a two cylinder, 5x5 inch, double opposed motor is the best, and IT IS AS EVENLY BALANCED AS FOUR CYLINDER CONSTRUCTION, is very much less complicated, and much more reliable. It would take four 4x4 inch cylinders to develop the same power as two 5x5 inch cylinders properly made;
- 5th - - Four cylinder cars appeal largely to "Fad and Fancy" only; TWO CYLINDER CARS PRODUCE RELIABLE SERVICE.

With this doctrine the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company stated its position and remained remarkably loyal to its stated ideals. The exception was the fifth clause. The production of four-cylinder cars was necessary to remain competitive and Maxwell was intent upon maintaining a substantial sales volume, both in two and four-cylinder cars.

Road racing and endurance contests were heavily patronized during 1906, all of the entries being two-cylinder machines. The Glidden Tour was again entered with two vehicles in direct competition and one in use as a general service car. Jonathan Maxwell apparently sensed that an opportunity existed to enhance the Maxwell image by entering the prestigious Vanderbilt Cup Race, although, most certainly not with a two-cylinder vehicle. Two specially designed and built machines were produced for the assault on the Vanderbilt Cup. One was an eight-cylinder, vertical engine machine, which was made by mating two four-cylinder, 40 horsepower touring car engines. The second was a twelve-cylinder, horizontal-opposed mammoth, created by bonding six two-cylinder, 20 horsepower engines to a common crankshaft. After months of hard work the Maxwell hopes were placed with the eight-cylinder racing car, but for some unreported reason the car did not start in the Vanderbilt Cup Elimination Trials held on September 22, 1906.

Directing their attention away from the Vanderbilt trials and more toward automobile production, it became obvious to the Maxwell executives that even more additional factory space would soon be required. A plan was tentatively established to build a large plant in the Midwest. Although, no particular city had been decided upon, a campaign was set in motion to solicit municipal support. Benjamin Briscoe personally carried the Maxwell proposal to many midwestern cities with some preference being exhibited for a location in Indiana. On November 16, 1906, it was formally announced that Newcastle, Indiana had been chosen as the new site for the second large Maxwell-Briscoe factory. A factory site of fifteen acres had been selected, but it remained for the citizens of Newcastle to raise \$100,000 to guarantee the location of the company's' factory in that city. For this Indiana city of 10,000 people a new factory meant that there would be additional employment, as well as, new revenue. In addition, certain financial guarantees were made by the company to the city to serve as insurance for their investment.

As the year closed, plans were made for the new factory, while the following year's models were being prepared for display at the major shows. By December 29, 1,200 cubic yards of concrete construction had begun, followed soon thereafter by 1,200 tons of structural steel work.

As business plans for 1907 were established, estimates for the year's production were set at approximately 5,000 automobiles. Participation in endurance contests and road races also continued to receive the company's endorsement. The company's steadfast resistance to joining the Association of Licensed Automobile Manufacturers was evidenced by its membership in the independent American Motor Car Manufacturers Association. In fact, Benjamin Briscoe had been elected to serve as chairman at the annual meeting of the A.M.C.M.A. held on February 14, 1907. The A.L.A.M. would eventually be represented in the Maxwell camp, but for now sales were increasing and the company's presence at the shows was well received

### **1907: INDIANA FACTORY BUILT; 5,000 UNITS PLANNED**

Work at the Newcastle, Indiana site had been continuing without delay. In April, 1907, the \$150,000 construction contract for the factory building had been signed. Although a completion date had not been announced, efforts were being made to place the facility in operation at the earliest possible time. Saturday, June 22, 1907, was reserved for the dedication of the half completed factory. For the people of Newcastle it was a day of extreme satisfaction. For J.D. Maxwell and Benjamin Briscoe it was a sign of their continued success. The day was hot, but heat did not deter the townspeople from attending the dedication, which was highlighted by the appearance of the Vice-President of the United States, Charles W. Fairbanks.

By mid-August the new factory had been completed and an additional 350,000 square feet of manufacturing space was available for the production of Maxwell automobiles. Precisely at 8:55 a.m. on August 13, 1907, the Newcastle plant was set into operation. By this time the added space was badly needed, especially for the production of four-cylinder vehicles. The popularity of the Maxwell four-cylinder automobiles prompted a modification of the Maxwell Doctrine to

accommodate a marketing policy change:

Two-cylinder double opposed motor for cars up to 20 horsepower; Four-cylinder vertical motor for cars over 20 horsepower; Three point suspension; Unit construction; All metal disk clutch; Shaft drive; Thermo-siphon or natural circulation of water; and, Metal Bodies.

The latter part of 1907 saw the clouds of economic depression approaching quickly over the horizon. Many companies were destined to experience extreme difficulty, including the powerful conglomerate, the Pope Manufacturing Company. While many companies seemed to be on the brink of financial collapse the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company was well prepared to weather the approaching storm, a fact not denied by J.D. Maxwell, who took pleasure in citing that \$20,000 per day had been received as deposits during the Grand Central Palace Show of October 24-31, 1907. Maxwell further stated, "The fact that we have increased our orders for raw material by fifty per cent ought to have a tendency toward changing the opinions of those pessimists regarding the automobile business." Maxwell-Briscoe was again preparing for the new year with its automobile shows and endurance contests. The future looked good, with 1908 holding a better promise than the preceding year.

### **1908: MAXWELL-BRISCOE IN SAN FRANCISCO?**

In 1908 all Maxwell factories were operating at capacity. The Maxwell show displays had again been well received and ample orders were on hand. Late in November of the preceding year it had been reported that plans were being developed for the establishment of a Maxwell factory in San Francisco, California with a capacity of 1,500 cars per year for markets in the Pacific Coast and in Hawaii. In March, 1908, support of the earlier statement was offered when it was reported that W. B. Jamison, general superintendent of the Maxwell-Briscoe factory was making a trip to San Francisco to examine potential factory sites. No further reports were issued on the subject nor was any additional action taken. Later in the same month the first automobile came off the assembly line at the Newcastle plant. New to the 1908 line of Maxwell cars were the Model D four-cylinder touring car and a variation of the same chassis, the Model K roadster. Also available to the commercial trade was a taxicab built upon the Model HC chassis.

Apparently the success of the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company was so complete that its commercial value had begun to attract the notice of the financial community. Along this line was the surprise rumor that appeared in June, 1908, concerning the possible merger of the Buick Motor Company and the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company. Despite denials from both companies the rumors persisted. In fact, fictitious reports continued to appear until October. Whatever the reason the true facts were quite evident when the General Motors Company, which was incorporated on September 16, 1908, purchased the Buick Motor Company on October 1. General Motors was soon to become the most powerful conglomerate force in the automotive field. Perhaps the rapid and successful rise of G.M. served to attract Benjamin Briscoe's interest, particularly with respect to the power of a conglomerate.

## **1909: \$500 MODEL A MAXWELL JUNIOR**

Although the year had not yet ended, plans were already being drafted for the 1909 production. In July, 1908, statements were issued to the effect that production at Newcastle would be increased to 6,000 automobiles, while the production for the company as a whole was estimated to be 9,000 vehicles. Contracts had already been signed with the Rushmore Dynamo Works for lighting equipment needed for 5,000 cars. In September, the car known in the trade as the elusive \$500.00 car, the 1909 Maxwell Junior, Model A, was introduced. Publicity throughout the year had been extensive. Full page advertisements were utilized frequently, many accompanied by a long text of reasons, both mechanical and operational, offered to substantiate why the Maxwell was the better car. Each ad was signed by Benjamin Briscoe. The establishment of branch distributors had also continued at a rapid rate. Less than a year after the delivery of the first car from the Newcastle plant, plans were being made for an addition to the manufacturing space, with completion scheduled by February, 1909.

Production and sales still continued to increase and the new year appeared to offer unlimited opportunity. The addition to the Newcastle plant had not yet been completed, when the company announced in February, 1909, that the former plant of the Ingersoll-Rand Drill Works on Kingsland Point, in Tarrytown, New York had been leased. This new addition was located directly across from the Tarrytown plant, being separated only by a narrow water tributary. The Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company now had manufacturing operations in three different states. Because of this it was considered a necessity to create a traffic department at Tarrytown, New York to control all of the incoming and outgoing shipments from each of the four plants.

Within five years of the company's founding its physical assets had grown to include four factories with a total floor space of 21 acres, 419 acres of land adjacent to the factories, and over \$600,000 invested in machine equipment. For the most part, the actual accumulative value of the physical properties and inventories was never reported in the published lists of assets.

The Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company continued to endorse endurance and reliability contests and was again entered in the Glidden Tour after having boycotted the event the year before. Perhaps, the most significant Maxwell endurance effort this year was not the Glidden Tour, but an independent run made from New York to San Francisco by four women in a Maxwell Model KA 30 horsepower touring car, led by Alice Huyler Ramsey. During the 3,800 mile, 41 day experience, all manner of road hazards and weather conditions were encountered. It is very probable that the ability of Mrs. Ramsey to drive an automobile transcontinentally had an additional effect of spurring Maxwell sales. In September, 1909, Maxwell advertising carried reports of the number of cars sold during the preceding month as well as the total still remaining in operation since the beginning of production. In this respect sales for August, 1909, were 678, while the total number of cars in operation was 18,278. Shipments to foreign countries and U.S. territories also continued at a rather substantial level. By 1908, 22 Maxwells had been shipped to Hawaii; 13 in 1907, and 9 in 1908.

In October, 1909, the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company made a surprising move by joining the A.L.A.M. The reasons for the reverse in the company's attitude toward independence was not clearly defined. The fact that Maxwell cars could now be exhibited at the licensed dealers' show was probably not the reason. Exhibition at the shows was still important to the marketing philosophy of the company, as it was with most automotive manufacturers of the time, and the 1910 show market the introduction of the Model AA, 2 cylinder, \$600.00, runabout; and the Model Q, 4 cylinder, 22 horsepower cars. The thirty horsepower cars marketed the year earlier now had a six inch longer wheelbase. By the end of the year additional factory space had been secured, and the total work force was estimated to be 6,700 people. Sales for the month of December, 1909, amounted to 867 vehicles, which increased the number of vehicles in service to 20,784.

The year 1910 began, as did those years before, with continuing prosperity anticipated for the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company. January sales amounted to 1,085, a rather significant figure especially for a winter month, which was known to be a slow season for automobile sales, except for sales in the West. On January 6, 1910, in conjunction with the 10th Annual International Automobile Show at the Grand Central Palace in New York, the 5th annual Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company sales organization meeting was held. This was followed two weeks later by another meeting in New York, which was designed to finalize the formation of a regional licensed dealers' association. The Maxwell-Briscoe Company had now completely abandoned the independents.

By now the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company was well established as a profitable manufacturing entity. Jonathan Maxwell was occupied with his engineering interests and by this time held many patents for equipment used on Maxwell cars including a multiple disk clutch, universal joint, carburetor, annular ball bearings, automobile body, and a mechanical oiler, to name just a few. Benjamin Briscoe, on the other hand, had been very successful in welding together a very effective business machine; and it is assumed that he felt that little more could be accomplished by further expansion of the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company. Briscoe's energies were now being directed toward the establishment of an organization to rival the two year old General Motors Company.

### **1910: TRACK RACERS BUILT**

For the interim the Maxwell-Briscoe Company continued in its steady and certain fashion. Automobile shows and endurance contests were still the order of the day. However, the Maxwell Company had not participated in hard automobile track racing since the construction of the mammoth 8 and 12 cylinder racing cars in 1907. Now ten new racing machines were being constructed. Production in January and February totaled 2,445 units, and the factory was having a difficult time finding 200 additional workmen to fill available positions. But the spotlight was now being commanded by Benjamin Briscoe, who in the following two years was to change the destiny of many automobile companies, including Maxwell-Briscoe.

The founding of the United States Motor Company and its subsequent activities represent a new chapter in the history of the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company. Incorporated in November, 1909, with a capitalization of \$2,000,000, the U.S. Motor Company was immediately programmed to increase its capitalization through the acquisition of viable automobile manufacturing organizations, including the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company (November 17, 1909), Columbia Motor Car Company (November 17, 1909), Alden Sampson Mfg. Co. (April 9, 1910), Courier Car Co. (April 30, 1910), Dayton Motor Car Co. (April 30, 1910), Gray Motor Co. (May 4, 1910), Brush Runabout Co. (May 14, 1910), Briscoe Mfg. Co. (May 14, 1910), and the Providence Engineering Works (May 19, 1910). Within seven months Benjamin Briscoe had assembled an impressive automobile conglomerate. His next task was to make the new corporation perform.

Benjamin Briscoe was elected the president of the new company, removing him from immediate control of the Maxwell-Briscoe subsidiary, where he was replaced as president by Jonathan D. Maxwell. As president of his own company, J.D. Maxwell headed an organization which possessed actual and tangible assets of \$3,230,000. It was obvious to anyone who was interested that Maxwell-Briscoe was the workhorse of the U.S. Motor Company. By May, 1910, over \$16,000,000 in U.S.M.C. stock had been sold, and in June an issue of \$6,000,000, six per cent convertible bonds was readied for sale. Although an additional \$6,500,000 in bonds had been authorized for sale by the stockholders, the company instead chose to increase the capital stock from \$16,000,000 to \$30,000,000 at another stockholders meeting held on June 15, 1910. Corporate headquarters were subsequently removed from Tarrytown, New York to a new building in Detroit, Michigan.

Maxwell automobiles fared very well during the first half of the year, after having been entered in many endurance and racing contests, including the Glidden Tour where second and third place victories were achieved. Design planning for the 1911 Maxwell models had been accelerated, and in July, 1910, details were already being fed to the major trade journals. The total production of cars during the month of June had surpassed all expectations -- 2,243 cars were produced and sold. In August, J.D. Maxwell was reported to be assigning 3,000 automobiles for export during 1911, however, no figures were released during the following year to check the accuracy of his prediction. Of continuing concern was the improvement of the Maxwell factories, particularly the Tarrytown and Kingsland Point facilities. These two plants had received \$165,000 in new machinery and equipment and were scheduled for further enlargement.

Activity within the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company did not receive the publicity during 1911 that it had during the previous years. For the most part those automobiles in production under the new model banner were similar to those of the year prior. A substantial price reduction of all U.S. Motor Company products, including all of the Maxwell models excepting the Model AB two-cylinder runabout, did make news. Generally, Maxwell prices were reduced, almost \$200.00 in some cases, with the greatest savings being offered on top-of-the-line models. Approximately eleven automobile shows were officially patronized by the company, and production was again expected to exceed the previous year. An official interest was still maintained in road racing and

endurance contests, as evidenced by continued membership in the Manufacturers' Contest Association. The 1911 Glidden Tour was a special success for the United States Motor Company, when three 1912 model Maxwell "Specials" arrived at the finish line with perfect scores.

### **1911: SALES DOUBLE TO 16,000**

Sales during 1911 were estimated to have been about 16,000, almost double the amount produced the year earlier. Export sales did continue at a substantial rate, partially supporting statements made by J.D. Maxwell in 1910. The largest export shipment made by the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company was completed on December 20, 1911, when seventy-five Maxwells were shipped to Australia. According to *Horseless Age* magazine, "this was the largest single cargo of automobiles ever shipped abroad by an American manufacturer. The shipment which filled the steamer to capacity was made as the result of a cable order." In some form or another many of those Australian Maxwells may still exist.

Insofar as the Maxwell-Briscoe Company was concerned, 1912 appeared to have promise equal to those earlier years, though there was little of the same optimism on the part of the executives at the U.S. Motor Company. Nonetheless, a new line of Maxwell automobiles was available including a two-cylinder model, rated at 16 horsepower and known as the "Messenger." The remaining models were rated at 25, 30, and 36 horsepower, and were known as the "Mascotte," "Mercury," and "Special" respectively. Only the two-cylinder "Messenger" continued to utilize a planetary transmission. The others featured three speed progressive systems. Thermosiphon cooling was retained, as it had been since the production of the first Maxwell in 1904. Sales distribution was now possible through an enlarged system of 1,503 dealers established by the U.S. Motor Company.

Something ominous, however, was happening to the U.S. Motor Company. For the first time since the public sale of its stock in May, 1910, a dividend had been cancelled. The February 10 dividend had been suspended on the grounds that greater seasonal liabilities had made it difficult to justify. The U.S. Motor Company as a whole was credited at this time with having \$23,000,000 invested as business capital, 8,000 employees with an annual payroll of \$6,500,000, and an annual purchase of \$12,500,000 in material. In June \$750,000 was due to creditors, who, upon learning about the company's inability to satisfy their claims, conceded a 90 day extension. Benjamin Briscoe offered a defense of the company's condition by stating that considerable funds had been expended on raw materials for the 1913 models, while a large quantity of 1912 stock remained unsold, despite a 30 per cent increase in sales. The increase in sales, although not publicly defined, was credited to the Maxwell subsidiary. It was anticipated that the excess stock would be sold as a matter of course and the debt refunded.

### **1912: U.S.M.C. IN RECEIVERSHIP**

Instead of improving, the financial condition of the corporation deteriorated further, and on

September 12, 1912, the United States Motor Company was placed in receivership. This action was precipitated when the Brown & Sharpe Company filed a claim for \$70,000 against the corporation. At the time of receivership the actual capitalization of the corporation was estimated to be \$42,500,000. The corporation and its subsidiaries were kept in operation under the authority of the receivership committee.

Despite the depressed financial condition of the corporation, the Maxwell subsidiary, which had successfully maintained a consistently improved production and sales record, introduced its new 1913 model line in September, 1912. The new line was as different and distinct as had been the 1912 models. For the first time since the founding of the company a two-cylinder automobile was no longer available. The new line was completely dominated by four-cylinder machines ranging from 22 to 30 and 40 horsepower. Mechanically the new line was typical Maxwell, combining all of the proven features, with the exception of the planetary transmission. Prices ranged from \$785.00 to \$1,675.00.

By October 10, 1912, a reorganization plan had been proposed to the court, was accepted, and then implemented. During this time the subsidiary factories were kept in operation, excluding the Brush Runabout Company. Coincidental with the reorganization was the resignation of Benjamin Briscoe, although he continued to maintain his interest in the corporation. Entering into the picture was Walter E. Flanders, who was directing a move to form another corporation which would purchase the assets of the United States Motor Company when they were sold at the receivers' auction on January 8, 1913. Much speculation followed concerning how Flanders would utilize the assets of the failing corporation. By mid-December, as it became apparent that Walter Flanders' offer was soon to be accepted by the reorganization committee and the court, many of the personalities long noted for their association with the U.S. Motor Company resigned, including Jonathan D. Maxwell.

### **1913: FLANDERS TAKES OVER**

With a definite plan in hand the sale of the U.S. Motor Company properties was only a legal formality. The name Standard Motor Company was selected for the new corporation, but owing to a conflict with another similarly titled organization the name was changed to Maxwell Motor Company. According to The Commercial & Financial Chronicle, January 18, 1913, "this is because nearly 75,000 Maxwell cars have been produced and the name is widely advertised." The Maxwell Motor Company was incorporated on January 2, 1913, with Walter E. Flanders as president, the successful and sole bidder for the former property of the United States Motor Company. Production of Maxwell automobiles continued with the same models as previously described. In March 1913, the acquisition of the property and business of the Flanders Motor Company by the Maxwell Motor Company had been completed. This announcement was soon followed by the activation of another plan whereby all of the manufacturing for the Maxwell Motor Company was to be centralized in Detroit, Michigan, Dayton, Ohio, and Newcastle, Indiana. The other former plants of the U.S. Motor Company, including Tarrytown, New York and Providence, Rhode Island were to be sold. Coincidental with this plan was the introduction in May 1913, of an entirely new Maxwell line. The new models, which originally had been sold as

Flanders automobiles, were now designated as Maxwell models 25-4, 35-4, and 50-6. For the most part all that had been done to make the new 1913 model line was the substitution of the new Maxwell radiator emblem for that of the Flanders. In some instances the Flanders body plates remained.

The final chapter in the history of the Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company was closed when the Tarrytown, New York factory was sold in 1914 to the Chevrolet Motor Company.

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