The ***history of the automobile*** begins as early as 1769, with the creation of [steam engined](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_engine) [automobiles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automobile) capable of human transport. In 1806, the first cars powered by an[internal combustion engine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_combustion_engine) running on [fuel gas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_gas) appeared, which led to the introduction in 1885 of the ubiquitous modern gasoline- or petrol-fueled internal combustion engine.

The year 1886 is regarded the year of birth of the modern automobile - with the [Benz Patent-Motorwagen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benz_Patent-Motorwagen), by German inventor [Carl Benz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Benz).

Cars powered by [electric power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_power) briefly appeared at the turn of the 20th century but largely disappeared from use until the turn of the 21st century. The early history of the automobile can be divided into a number of eras, based on the prevalent means of propulsion. Later periods were defined by trends in exterior styling, size, and utility preferences.

[Ferdinand Verbiest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_Verbiest), a member of a [Jesuit mission in China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesuit_China_missions), built the first [steam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam)-powered vehicle around 1672 as a toy for the Chinese Emperor. It was of small enough scale that it could not carry a driver but it was, quite possibly, the first working steam-powered vehicle ('auto-mobile').

Among other efforts, in 1815, a professor at [Prague Polytechnic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_Technical_University_in_Prague), [Josef Bozek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josef_Bozek), built an oil-fired steam car. [Walter Hancock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Hancock), builder and operator of London [steam buses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_bus), in 1838 built a four-seat steam [phaeton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phaeton_(carriage)).

In 1828, [Ányos Jedlik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%81nyos_Jedlik" \o "Ányos Jedlik), a Hungarian who invented an early type of [electric motor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_motor), created a tiny model car powered by his new motor. In 1834, [Vermont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vermont) [blacksmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blacksmith) [Thomas Davenport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Davenport_(inventor)), the inventor of the first American [DC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_current) electrical motor, installed his motor in a small model car, which he operated on a short circular electrified track. In 1835, Professor Sibrandus Stratingh of[Groningen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groningen_(city)), the [Netherlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands) and his assistant Christopher Becker created a small-scale electrical car, powered by non-rechargeable [primary cells](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_cell). In 1838, [Scotsman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) [Robert Davidson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Davidson_(inventor)) built an electric locomotive that attained a speed of 4 miles per hour (6 km/h). In England, a [patent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent) was granted in 1840 for the use of [rail tracks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rail_tracks) as [conductors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electrical_conductor) of [electric current](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_current), and similar American patents were issued to Lilley and Colten in 1847. Between 1832 and 1839 (the exact year is uncertain), [Robert Anderson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Anderson_(inventor)) of Scotland invented the first crude electric carriage, powered by non-rechargeable [primary cells](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_cell).

Early attempts at making and using [internal combustion engines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_combustion_engine) were hampered by the lack of suitable [fuels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuel), particularly [liquids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liquid), therefore the earliest engines used gas mixtures.

Early experimenters used gases. In 1806, Swiss engineer [François Isaac de Rivaz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Isaac_de_Rivaz) who built [an engine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Rivaz_engine) powered by internal combustion of a [hydrogen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen) and [oxygen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxygen) mixture. In 1826, Englishman[Samuel Brown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Brown_(engineer)) who tested his hydrogen-fuelled internal combustion engine by using it to propel a vehicle up [Shooter's Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooter%27s_Hill) in south-east London. Belgian-born [Etienne Lenoir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etienne_Lenoir)'s [Hippomobile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippomobile_(car)" \o "Hippomobile (car)) with a [hydrogen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen)-gas-fuelled [one-cylinder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_cylinder_engine) internal combustion engine made a test drive from Paris to [Joinville-le-Pont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joinville-le-Pont) in 1860, covering some nine kilometres in about three hours. A later version was propelled by [coal gas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coal_gas). A [Delamare-Deboutteville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delamare-Deboutteville" \o "Delamare-Deboutteville) vehicle was patented and trialled in 1884.

Exemplary vintage vehicles:

1. *1922–1939*[*Austin 7*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austin_7) — the Austin Seven was one of the most widely copied vehicles ever, serving as a template for cars around the world, from [BMW](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BMW) to [Nissan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nissan).

2. *1922–1931 [Lancia Lambda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancia_Lambda" \o "Lancia Lambda)* — very advanced car for the time, first car to feature a load-bearing [monocoque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monocoque" \o "Monocoque)-type body and [independent front suspension](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_suspension).

3. *1924–1929*[*Bugatti Type 35*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bugatti_Type_35) — the Type 35 was one of the most successful racing cars of all time, with over 1,000 victories in five years.

4. *1925–1928 [Hanomag 2 / 10 PS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanomag_2_/_10_PS" \o "Hanomag 2 / 10 PS)* — early example of [ponton styling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponton_(automobile)" \o "Ponton (automobile)).

5. *1927–1931*[*Ford Model A (1927-1931)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Model_A_(1927-1931)) — after keeping the brass era [Model T](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Model_T) in production for too long, Ford broke from the past by restarting its model series with the 1927 Model A. More than 4 million were produced, making it the best-selling model of the era. The Ford Model A was a prototype for the beginning of Soviet mass car production ([GAZ A](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=GAZ_A&action=edit&redlink=1)).

6. *1930*[*Cadillac V-16*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadillac_V-16)— developed at the height of the vintage era, the [V16](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V16_engine)-powered [Cadillac](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadillac_(automobile)) would join [Bugatti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bugatti)'s [Royale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bugatti_Royale) as the most legendary ultra-luxury cars of the era.