

tion, Ovington Motor Company provided a full line of spare parts, boasted of an "efficient repair department" and participated in auto shows to promote its 120 mile per gallon F.N. Big Four motorcycles. In addition, a separate line of accessory devices, sold under the Ovico brand name, provided such items as a spring-fork attachment,—which offered greater resiliency and comfort on rough roads,—and a distinctive lens mirror motorcycle searchlight.

### Deja Vu All Over Again

However, clouds soon appeared on the horizon of his new business. According to an article in the January 1908 issue of *The Motorcycle Illustrated*, as if repeating his experiences with Clapp, Eastham and Eddy, one of Earle's three partners objected to the liberal policy he employed in managing the day to day operations of the company. Earle countered his objections by saying that it was precisely because of his policy that the F.N. machine was so widely accepted in the United States and that the business was growing so rapidly. Being a gentleman and wishing to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all, Earle offered to either buy the stock of his dissenting partner or sell his own interests in the company. The dissenting partner agreed to buy out Earle's interest. Earle then resigned as president of the company and resolved to move on.

However, within two weeks of resigning he was contacted by the other partners holding majority stock interests (probably over the objections of the dissenting partner) and was offered a proposition to return to the company he had founded. Earle agreed to return provided he could continue, as in the past, to dictate the general policy of the company. Earle not only repurchased his former stock holdings but also an additional portion of stock held by the remaining parties. As a result, he and his original partner, George Neumann, now owned the entire capital stock of the company and Earle continued to have the complete executive control over its management. A line from an editorial in the same issue of *The Motorcycle Illustrated* provides insight into Earle's motivation:

"The fact that he has reinvested his money in the F.N. proposition indicates his absolute faith in the future of the motorcycle he has so staunchly championed."

The officers of the company were Earle Ovington, president, E. G. Neumann, vice-president, and G.A. Neumann, secretary and treasurer.

### A Fascination With Motor Racing

Motor racing was banned on most public roads

in the United States in the early twentieth century. This meant that motorcycles, like automobiles, were raced primarily on tracks. In the heyday of the bicycling craze that swept the country at the turn of the century, wooden board tracks built for bicycle racing were re purposed for motorcycle racing.

In addition to his ongoing interest in things electrical, Earle loved automobiles and owned over twenty-one during his lifetime. In 1908 he entered a single-cylinder, handle steered, Stanley steam car he owned (that burned gasoline) in a race on an Atlantic City beach, winning second prize. He felt warm several times during the race and at the conclusion of the race turned around to see flames licking his back, a common problem, according to Earle, that ultimately resulted in the burning up of half of these vehicles.



Above: Earle Ovington on his pedals F.N. motorcycle before the start of the September 16, 1908, New York to Montauk Point, Long Island two-day run.

*The Motorcycle Illustrated*, October 1908, public domain.

Although he drove automobiles his primary love was the motorcycle. In a letter published in the January 1908 issue of *The Motorcycle Illustrated*, Earle explained his fascination:

I have a strong, personal love for the motorcycle. I at one time or another owned three automobiles and later bought a motorcycle. Since riding a motorcycle I have had little, if any, desire to possess the four-wheeled ve-