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The original "gasoline alley"

Hampton Dunn
The original "Gasoline Alley" came into being with development of the first auto races at the "Birthplace of Speed." The great Florida developer, Henry M. Flagler, had purchased the ornate Ormond Hotel and brought his railroad here, and the wealth of the country congregated here to vacation.

An imaginative newspaperman who was a hotel guest, J. F. Hathaway, is credited with "discovering" Ormond Beach as a site for racing. He'd noticed that bicycle tires made little impression on the hard sand and the large stretch of oceanside would make an ideal track for the primitive autos.

The Flagler company built the garage. Here the racers were constructed, modified, tested and serviced. In 1904, a frustrated thrill-seeker named Henry Ford borrowed funds to bring his "999" to Ormond to race, then broke an axle. He lacked funds for a new one. He, by the way, wasn't a guest at the hotel; he slept in a tent by the garage and ate cheese and crackers. Others who labored here included Louis Chevrolet, R. E. Olds, Barney Oldfield and many more pioneers. The first race sanctioned by the American Automobile Association, was staged in 1903.