

## Kissel Radiator Emblems

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One of the more colorful aspects of automobiles of any era is the nameplates and emblems that they sport. These symbols are an important part of the image and mystique that the manufacturer tries to create with the consumer.

The radiator emblems of the Kissel Motor Car Company grew in sophistication and elegance over the life of the company. This short note sketches their progression over the 1906-1930 life of the company.

In a nutshell, the following is my observation of the progression of Kissel radiator emblems.

1. 1906-1907 – *no emblem*
2. 1908-1910 – *KisselKar plate*
3. c1910-c1912 – *plain KisselKar emblem*
4. c1910-c1912 – *winged KisselKar emblem*
5. c1912-1918 – *KisselKar emblem (with slogan)*
6. 1918-1928 – *Mercury emblem*
7. 1928-1929 – *National-Kissel emblem*
8. 1929-1931 – *White Eagle*

I am particularly uncertain about the precise sequence of radiator emblems for 1910-1912. It also seems possible to me that there could be overlap in the use of emblems during this period. I've used the notation "c1910" (read as "circa 1910") to indicate a fuzzy, uncertain or overlapping transition boundary that occurs in approximately 1910.

### Initial Cars – 1906-1907

I suspect that the earliest Kissels had no radiator emblems. No radiator emblem is evident on a photo of the 1906 prototype or in an early 1907 advertisement [Quandt, Motor Age].

### KisselKar Plate – 1908-1910 – Photo 1

A rectangular molded brass plate (7¼" x 2") with the letters "KISSELKAR" is evident by 1908 [Quandt]. As examples, this badge appears on Phil Renuart's 1908 D Touring and Frank Bristing's 1910 D-10 Toy Tonneau.



Photo 1. *KisselKar plate* (1908-1910) as seen on a 1909 Kissel 6-60 G-9 Semi Racer at the 2006 Hilton Head Concours d'Elegance. (Photo from [www.conceptcarz.com](http://www.conceptcarz.com).)

### Plain KisselKar Emblem – c1910-c1912 – Photo 2

Kissel introduced a Mercedes-style radiator in 1910 with a 3" cloisonné disk (metal disk with hard enamel inlay) mounted in the upper left quadrant of the radiator [Georgano]. I have heard of, but haven't personally seen, a 32-page advertising pamphlet entitled "Kissel Season 1910" that shows illustrations of a radiator emblem with the letters "KISSELKAR" on a plain background with no other characters.

This (or a similar) emblem is visible on a photo of the KisselKar that drove President Theodore Roosevelt to dedicate the Roosevelt Dam near Phoenix, AZ, on March 17, 1911 [Duerksen, Kendrick]. I don't know if the car is a 1910 or



Photo 2. *Plain KisselKar emblem* (c1910-c1912), as seen on Vic Groah's 1912 Kissel 4-50 Semi Touring. (Photo by Vic Groah)

1911 model.

This emblem appears on William (Bob) Ullrich's 1910 D-10 Toy Tonneau, Steve Mergele's 1911 LD-11 Semi-Racer, Drandall Blohm's 1911 LD-11 Touring and Vic Groah's 1912 4-50 Semi Touring. Steve believes his emblem is a reproduction since it did not ever have a mounting screw soldered to the back when he received the "project car" in boxes.

**Winged KisselKar Emblem – c1910-c1912 – Photo 3**

The emblem depicts the front clip of a car with a prominent "winged" Motometer on the radiator. "KISSELKAR" appears in a central white circle and the logo "EVERY INCH A CAR" stretches along the bottom of the disk.

A Milwaukee Alhambra Theater program (seen on ebay) shows a radiator emblem on the illustration of an ad for Kissel 1910 models. In the low-resolution image that I have, I imagine that the emblem appears to be the "winged" version of the emblem, but I'm not positive.

This emblem is seen in photos of Steve Dana's 1911 LD-11 Semi-Racer, Don Bosco's 1911 LD-11 Touring, Bruce Barnett's 1912 4-40 Semi-Racer and Robert Woodburn's 1912 6-60 Semi Touring.

**KisselKar Emblem (with slogan) – c1912-1918 – Photo 4**

The company now uses an emblem with the plain KisselKar design and the addition of the slogan "EVERY INCH A CAR" in an arc

following the bottom edge of the emblem.

This emblem is seen on multiple 1912 cars in Quandt's book and on Robert Feind's 1912 4-50 Touring on display in the Wisconsin Automotive Museum. Feind's vehicle is thought to be an original, unmolested car.

Dale Anderson tells me of a variant of this emblem. A *Hughson Special* emblem is owned by Mike Schuetz that he inherited from his brother Jim (see Photo 5). Neither Mike nor Dale know much about it's origin. Dale points out the differences in font compared with the *KisselKar emblem* (note the serifs and the tail of the "R"). Also this emblem is edged in silver while the

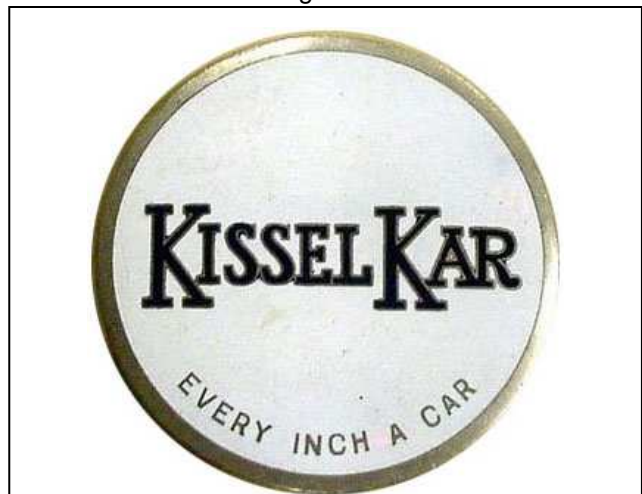


Photo 4. *KisselKar emblem* (c1912-1918) with company slogan. (Photo from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/>)



Photo 3. *Winged KisselKar emblem* (c1910-c1912) as seen on Don Bosco's 1911 Kissel LD-11 Touring. (Photo by Don Bosco)



Photo 5. *Hughson Special emblem*. (Photo by Dale Anderson)

original is brass [Anderson].

I suspect that this emblem was created for William (Billy) L. Hughson, head of the Pacific KisselKar Branch. Billy Hughson was a significant individual in automotive industry in the Western US and is recognized as the first Ford dealer [Hughson]. With showrooms in Los Angeles, Oakland and San Francisco, he helped plan Anita King's 1915 transcontinental trip in a KisselKar 6-42, arranged a reception for Anita in San Francisco with at least a half-dozen KisselKars, and escorted her a short distance on her journey east [Drew].

#### **Mercury Emblem – 1918-1928 – Photo 6**

The mood of the American public had grown decidedly anti-Germanic following the Great War (1914-1918) so the company shortened their trade name to "Kissel". In the Summer of 1918 they adopted the Roman deity Mercury (the fleet-footed god of trade, profit and commerce) as their logo [Quandt]. The new radiator emblems were a stamped, silver-plated metal disk and are quite elegant.

A larger version of this emblem was used on a special 1916 KisselKar 20-passenger tram used on the Mount Tamalpais scenic railway. This was likely a KisselKar 6-60 truck chassis that sat on railway trucks (wheels). With elegant "Pullman" coachwork, this vehicle took small parties to the inn at the top of Mount Tamalpais and sightseers to Muir Woods in Marin County, California, through the late 1920s [Runner].



Photo 6. **Mercury emblem** (1918-1928). (Photo from 2009 ebay auction listing)

#### **National-Kissel – 1928-1929 – Photo 7**

For two years, Kissel built hearse/ambulances that were sold through the National Casket Company, Boston. Called National-Kissel, these professional cars had a unique radiator emblem that was centered on the front of the radiator top tank [Coachbuilt].

#### **White Eagle – 1929-1931 – Photo 8**

Starting with the 1929-model-year Kissel White Eagles, the round radiator emblems were replaced with a large, spread-wing eagle mounted across the top of the radiator.

After producing a small number of 1931-model-year vehicles, Kissel automobile manufacturing ended on September 19, 1930.



Photo 7. **National-Kissel emblem** (1928-1929). (Photo by Adam Borkat, <http://community.webshots.com/user/ABorkat>)



Photo 8. **White Eagle** (1928-1931) as seen on Bonnie Schauer-Strand's 1929 8-126 Kissel White Eagle Brougham. (Photo by Lvnn Kissel)

## Reproductions

Some reproductions of Kissel radiator emblems are known to have been produced. Harry Pulfer had reproductions made of many antique automobile emblems and badges including Kissel radiator emblems. I've been told that these reproductions are of high quality and they may have been sold as originals on eBay.

Several years ago I purchased reproductions of the *Mercury emblem* from a vendor by the name of *Cartotem*. These emblems were cast in stainless steel (unlike the stamped originals) and, while they were of relatively high quality, they were not as finely detailed as the originals. The word "Cartotem" is stamped on the back side of my emblems. This vendor is not currently producing new emblems.

## Miniature Replicas – Photo 9

For some years, I have found miniature replicas (~3/4" with a pin post soldered to the back) of the *winged KisselKar emblem* for sale. I have acquired copies on eBay and from a vendor at the annual AACA Swap Meet at Hershey in October. Unfortunately I have never seen miniature replicas of the other emblems.

I've had a limited number of the *KisselKar* and *Mercury* emblems created as miniature replicas. While supplies last, you can acquire these pins along with a small information card from the gift shop at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum. Contact Dale Anderson for more information.



## Do You Have Other Information?

I would be grateful to hear if you have additional information to help refine this history of Kissel radiator emblems. You can contact me via email at [emblems@starship.org](mailto:emblems@starship.org), by telephone at 925-667-7087 or by mail at 912 Loyola Way, Livermore, CA 94550-7286.

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