

History Jan 26, 2016

The Porsche story

Every story is the sum of individual moments. Great stories are the sum of great moments. And the story of Porsche is no different. Key moment 1: 1900 – the moment of initiation.



1900: the moment of initiation

Paris, 1900: The fifth World Exhibition eclipsed everything that had gone before. An area covering more than 200 hectares in the midst of the Metropolis between the Ferris wheel and the Grand Palais presented the "achievements of a century", with over 75,000 exhibitors displaying everything that was modern and exciting.

Ferdinand Porsche also travelled to Paris, along with his employer, the Austrian vehicle builder Ludwig Lohner. The young Porsche had spent the recent months exclusively in the workshop, deeply immersed in his designs or standing for hours at the workbench bent over electric motors, wheel hubs and massive, heavy lead-acid batteries. After only four years working at the Vereinigte Elektrizitäts-AG in Vienna, the 22-year-old had advanced to become head of the test department, where he had attracted attention by his achievements, including the design of an electric bicycle and a drive system for the Viennese coachbuilder Ludwig Lohner.

Lohner was so inspired by the visionary designer that he headhunted Ferdinand Porsche without further ado in 1898 – and put him completely in charge of building an improved successor to the electric coach. Within a mere ten weeks, Porsche had assembled the first "Lohner Porsche" from his bold plans. Two electric motors were arranged directly in the hub of the front wheels so that the drive wheels also carried out the steering function. However, there was one main reason why Porsche was able to create a drive system of such unparalleled efficiency – by leaving out transmission, belts and chains, he minimised friction losses.

In the automotive sector, this "Electric Phaeton" was the greatest innovation at the World Exhibition – and a tremendous success. The Lohner Porsche was hailed by the press as the "most distinctive novelty" and "epoch-making innovation". And its creator? The World Exhibition in Paris set the stage for his first major appearance. "He is still very young," Ludwig Lohner explained when asked about the hitherto unknown designer. "But he is a man with a great career ahead of him. You are going to hear a lot more from him, his name is Ferdinand Porsche."

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