



History of Spark Plugs

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Courtesy of The [Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association](http://www.asecc.com).

- The first known spark plug was invented on February 2, 1839 by Edmond Berger.

France dominated the spark plug market in the early 1900s, supplying gasoline engine manufacturers with only a limited line of plug configurations. They were also known to be quite costly and had substandard quality.



Albert Champion was born in France in 1878. In 1889, a renowned bicycle and motorcycle racer, Champion came to America to compete in a series of races. He had brought several bicycles and motorcycles, but found parts very hard to find in the United States. As a result, Champion made his own. To help pay bills and cover expenses, Champion began making spark plugs and sold them to friends.

Champion's love of motors slowly turned towards automobiles and he later returned to France to open a shop that manufactured spark plugs and magnetos.

In 1900, Champion returned to America after being hired by Charles Metz to race bicycles and motorcycles for the Waltham Manufacturing Company. In 1904, Champion moved to Flint, Michigan where he founded Champion Ignition Company for the manufacturing of spark plugs. With the help of investors, Champion was able to turn his racing hobby into a successful business. Unfortunately, problems with the investors soon lead to a break up. Champion soon found himself without a company. The investors continued to manufacture the spark plugs under the Champion name, but Champion himself was out of a job.

In 1908 with the backing of the Buick Motor Co., Champion began a new company called the AC Spark Plug Company. Albert Champion was appointed president. In 1916 Alfred P. Sloan formed United Motors Corp. and eventually acquired Buick and AC Spark Plug.

On October 27, 1927, Champion died of a heart attack. General Motors purchased the remaining stock held by Champion's estate and took over the AC company. On December 1st of



that year, AC became a full division of General Motors. In 1971, United Motors Service was renamed United Delco Division. A few years later United Delco and the AC Spark Plug Division combined to form the company we know today as AC-Delco. To this day Albert Champion's name lives on with every AC and Champion spark plug made.

Some known AC Spark Plug Facts:

1927- AC spark plugs were used in Charles Lindbergh plane in his trans-Atlantic flight.

1932- Amelia Earhart's plane was equipped with AC spark plugs when she made her trans-Atlantic solo flight

1969- AC igniter spark plugs were used to fire the second and third stage rocket engines that took Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins to the moon.

Other forms of Ignition for early day engines before spark plugs were Hot Tube ignition, Wipe Spark ignition, and Low Tension Igniter.