

Obituaries

Abner Doble, 70; Built Luxury Steam Autos

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Abner Doble, 70, once a leading manufacturer of the steam-powered automobile, died here of a heart attack July 16.

Mr. Doble built his first steamer while he was still in high school. He built others while a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and finally quit school to devote full time to steamers.

In 1915 he drove one of his cars to Detroit and went from factory to factory until General Engineering Co. bought his design. General built the Doble Detroit until the United States entered World War I.

After the war, Mr. Doble returned to California and with his three brothers and his father—all engineers—began planning what they envisioned as the finest steam car that could be made.

The firm of Doble Steam Motors was established and in 1921 a factory was built at Emeryville, Calif. Three years passed and 11 pilot models were built before the first car was considered good enough to sell.

The company experienced a series of economic crises until the depression put Doble Steam Motors out of business—the last of 125 U. S. firms that once built steam cars.

Mr. Doble in subsequent years worked on light steam power projects in Germany, England and New Zealand. Many German trucks, buses, rail cars and boats were Doble powered in the '30s.

Probably the finest Doble built was the E Series, of which only 42 were made between 1924 and 1932. They had Murphy bodies and were priced from \$8,800 to \$11,200. The bare chassis was tagged at \$6,800.

The boiler and condenser were under the hood and the engine was built integrally with the rear axle. With a high-pressure system and electrically driven turbine, steam pressure could be built up in 30 seconds from a cold start.

The complete Doble steam-generator unit was unconditionally guaranteed for 100,000 miles and the entire chassis carried a three-year warranty.