

Short History of Pocher-Rivarossi

From the beginning to the end

by Giovanni Ingrao¹



Mercedes Benz 500 K/AK 1925



K 75 Rolls-Royce Torpedo Phantom II Convertible 1934



Rolls Phantom II coupé 1922



Fiat 130 HP 1927



Mercedes cabriolet 1935

¹ Compiled from several sources, see bibliography. Translated from Italian by Roel Bennink.

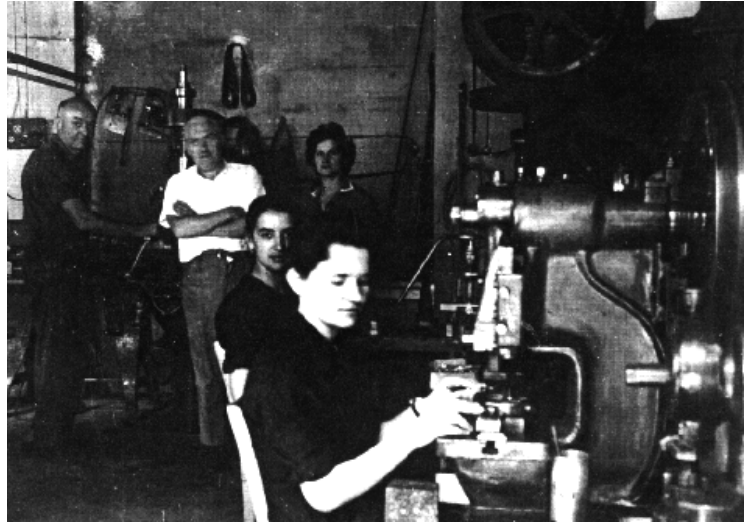
Arnaldo Pocher was born in Trento on 23 September 1911, where he spent his infancy and first years of youth, and where he concluded his scholastic career by attending the school for goldsmith-engraver and started work in a goldsmith workshop. In 1932 he moved to Turin to carry out his trade.

In the first years of the post-war period he came into contact with railway modelling and in 1948/49 he realised his first production of some components for a Turinese store, followed in 1950/51 by train signals and platforms.

In 1951/52 he founded the "Pocher Micromeccanica S.n.c." together with Corrado Muratore (who took care of the administrative and commercial duties) producing from 1952 train signals, platforms and points, using innovative production techniques.

In the post-war period toys were fashionable and many were produced in Italy and abroad, for example by firms like Rivarossi and Märklin, which evoke a glorious past to the railway model enthusiast.

They were truly industrial products, beautiful and technically advanced, but Pocher had the idea to make an even more refined semi-artisan creation, not only for the internal market, but especially for the foreign market.



They founded the "Corrado Muratore and Arnaldo Pocher Company": the first one was the manager, the second one the technician. The company was situated in a small suburban villa with annexed workshop, in the Via Foglizzo number 2; the number of staff could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Arnaldo Pocher was a skilful engraver, with great patience and a fiery passion, ideal characteristics for the work he was undertaking. Muratore was a man full of initiative, with all the necessary qualities to start a company

from scratch and to achieve ambitious goals. The first catalogues presented ingenious accessories for plastic railways, freight and passenger carriages in white metal and later locomotives and motor carriages. They issued authentic masterpieces that excited those who love true modelism and they soon presented a tough challenge for the big companies.

The Pocher carriages, embellished with the refined carvings of their creator, became a "myth" for those who, boy or adult, loved to play with electric trains and they still are for today's collectors. They were rather expensive, but they were well-made and produced in limited series, which is why they are much sought after. In the United States they sold like hot cakes and on the ill-fated day in 1956 when the Andrea Doria sank in the Atlantic

sea, thousand of carriages and other Pocher material in her hull ended up on the bottom of the sea.

The switch to automobiles happened in 1956 when Rivarossi was commissioned by Fiat to produce models of the 600 and 500 that would be issued shortly after the presentation of the real cars. The bonnet of the 600 could be opened to reveal the spare wheel; both models were equipped with steering and an electric motor.



The quality of the reproduction was very good and curiously enough they were sold in a box with the text "Fiat 600/500 disassembly model", the exact opposite of today's kits, and with



instructions for taking the model apart.

In 1961 Fiat commissioned Pocher, the emerging Turinese company, to produce a series of models of the "1300" that would be presented at the Turin Automobile Show in



April. Pocher had very secretly received the construction plans of the car some months before the launch, so the deal was closed in great secrecy and formalised with many notarial deeds. Punctually, the model was ready in April and aroused quite a stir. Realized in 1:13 scale, like the previous ones, it came in an elegant box, it had working steering, the hood could be opened to reveal the reproduction of the engine, it had an electric motor, sculpted tyres and a faithful reproduction of the front and rear lights.

In 1963, Pocher is transformed into an S.p.A. and capital comes in from Rivarossi, of Alessandro Rossi, which provides the resources for placing the model railway production that is now consolidated, next to the new automotive passion that, thanks to a carefully chosen reproduction scale, could stupefy the enthusiasts with a quality never seen before.



In 1964 the operation is repeated for the launch of the "850": in his mini-factory Pocher works once again in great secret and the model appears together with the real car on May 5.

The Fiat "1300" and "850" were the first models of a long series that lasted nearly 15 years during which every new car introduced by the Turin factory was followed by a model in 1:13 scale, the last one being

the "132".

They were excellent and true-to-scale models, but not yet the authentic masterpieces of Pocher. We must go to the year to 1966 to witness the real leap in quality. By that time, the original premises had become too cramped and the factory had been moved to Via Ambrosini 8, where it had much larger rooms, new equipment and a greater number of labourers.

At the International Toy Fair in Milan in January 1966, the Pocher stand shows the prototype of a maxi-model that astonishes everyone. It is not a contemporary car but a historical one: Muratore and Pocher had visited the Automobile Museum of Turin and had decided to make a model "with a moustache", an unprecedented specimen, destined to baffle their international markets as well. It was the Fiat F2 "130 HP" with which the legendary driver Felice Nazzaro had won the Grand Prix of France of 1907. Scale 1:8, approximately 50 centimetres long.



The acronym "F2" represents the race number, in fact the regulations required that the cars came marked with a letter that indicated the team and with a number that identified the pilot. Therefore Fiat had the letter F and number 2 was for Nazzaro.

Adding to the impressiveness of the model was the incredible amount of parts and the following data may give an idea. The total number of pieces was 823, subdivided in 144 high-resistance plastic parts, 173 in brass, 506 in other materials like steel, iron, copper, leather, rubber and aluminium. The model came on sale in an assembly kit and also in a mounted version, in 1967, with glass show cases.

Pocher had established a new point of reference and presented the enthusiasts with a reproduction of such quality, precision and completeness that it could rank among the masterpieces of the most celebrated modellers on a national and international level. Needless to say that the success was so huge that the Pocher company began to think of a second "giant" right away. After the necessary market research and assessing many proposals, the attention focused this time on an equally glorious Alfa Romeo, the "2300 8c" Monza 1931-34, the car that had collected a spectacular series of successes with ace drivers like Nuvolari, Campari, Varzi, Caracciola and Trossi.

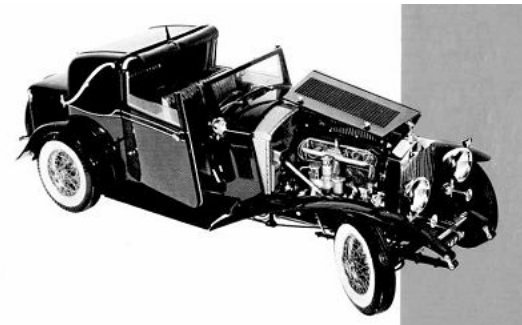


Alfa Romeo submitted the original designs and relevant documentation and Pocher exceeded himself so much that there was already an abyss between the Fiat and the Alfa. To get an idea of its perfection one should know that the model consisted of 1452 pieces (629 more than the Fiat) with an

integral reproduction of the engine, the chassis and several mechanical components, with steering and working brake system. Splendid were the spoked wheels that were created with steel thread. In the beginning it cost 72,000 Liras mounted and 28,000 as an assembly kit. It was 1968: in only two years Pocher had dealt another sensational blow.



But this was not the end. A change in the staff must meanwhile be recorded at the Turin factory: in 1968 Mr. Pocher leaves the company and is succeeded as production manager by Mr. Gian Paolo Altini, also a very skilful modeller, expert of cars and trains, already in the company since 1960. In two years time - we are in 1970 - we see the third novelty appear. Encouraged by the vast acclaim around the world, Pocher decides to play a card aimed at increasing its prestige abroad even more. Out comes the name everybody had waited for: Rolls Royce. The choice falls on a luxury car of 1932, the "Phantom II" Drophead Sedan Coupe that is realised with the help of the original designs made available by the English company and thanks also to the collaboration of the collector who owned the real car.



Pocher's ascent does not stop and reaches record heights again: the astonishing Rolls consists of 2199 parts, of which 454 in high resistance plastic, 1059 in brass, 430 in stainless steel, 256 in various materials. The wealth of detail and the mechanical functions are impressive: it can be said that the whole car was reproduced in minute detail: fully functioning steering and suspension, pedal brake operating

on the four wheels and hand-brake on the rear wheels, working electrical headlights operated from the dashboard, the drive train complete with connecting rods, pistons, repeats all the movements of the real thing when the starter crank is turned by hand and with belts and gears puts in motion the radiator fan, the dynamo and the magnet. Connoisseurs and traders stood with open mouth.

On July 1st, 1972, when the fourth model, the Alfa Romeo Touring 1932 (variant of the previous Alfa), is almost ready, a furious fire destroys the Pocher plant and brings production to a halt. After some month the factory reopens in Collegno in the Via Adamello 12 and here work commences on the fifth model that will appear in 1975: the Mercedes-Benz "500 K/AK" cabriolet 1935. It is another magic of Pocher.

The real car, a unique specimen owned by a Turinese collector, comes directly to the plant and here the technicians analyse all necessary particulars for nearly two years. The spectacular model that comes out consists



Corrado Muratore, fondatore e animatore della Pocher, di fronte alla sua Rolls Royce Phantom II 1934.

of 2378 parts (another record), is 66 centimeters long and does not come short of the original in any respect. Unfortunately, the Mercedes is the swan song for Gian Paolo Altini, who passes away prematurely before the release of his masterpiece. It is another hard blow for the company, but once again they succeed in raising the head thanks to the tenacity of Corrado Muratore and also to the contribution of another great modeller, Mr. Franco who takes over the heritage and contributes to carry on with the activities.



Using partially the mechanics of the Rolls, Pocher introduces its sixth model in 1977: it is the reproduction of the “Torpedo Phantom II Convertible”, a one-off car constructed by coach builders Thrupp & Maberly for the Maharaja of Rajkot. Another dream car to which Pocher dedicates all just commitment:

it consists of 2905 and measures 72 centimeters in length.

Particularly refined is the interior furnishing with padded walls and upholstered seats with real leather. Characteristic is the saffron colour that is said to have a religious significance in India.

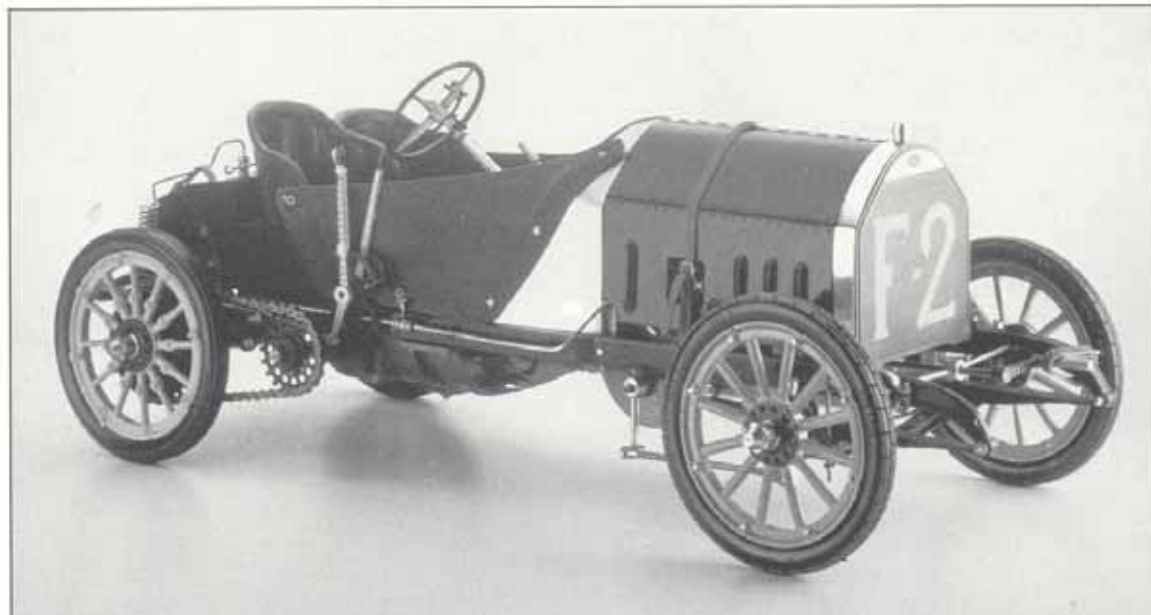
Three years later Pocher, meanwhile having moved to Brandizzo, introduced its seventh model and another historical name is entered in the golden book, the one of Bugatti. The car reproduced was the fantastic “50T” of 1933 that combined power and refined technique. The characteristics did not differ from the previous models and were perfectly in line with the tradition. This car concludes the Turinese history of Pocher which has by now become property of Rivarossi, and is transferred to Como in 1981. Here they introduce other models of contemporary cars, unfortunately less spectacular than the previous ones, such as the Ferrari “Testarossa” and “F40” and, finally, the Porsche 911.

In the centre page of the 1995 catalogue appears the prototype of the Ferrari F50 with reference number K62. This model never entered into production because, allegedly, the prototype was stolen in Milan together with the car that contained it and Rivarossi did not have enough financial means to repeat the operation. The 1995 catalogue was quickly reprinted with only the Mercedes with reference number K91 on the centre page and nothing is heard of the F50.

The bankruptcy of Rivarossi and its sale in block to the English company Hornby have concluded the history and the production of Pocher, so far. Only thanks to Ebay it is possible to acquire and to sell these wonderful models and to find any parts necessary for the restoration.



In alto lo stabilimento Rivarossi di Como dove attualmente vengono prodotti i favolosi modelli in scala 1:8. In basso il primo modello della serie Pocher: la Fiat «130 HP», vincitrice del Grand-prix di Francia 1907.



Pocher-Rivarossi Production

Classic models

Original Series

- K70 Fiat 130 HP Grand prix de France
- K71 Alfa Romeo 8c 2300 Monza
- K72 Rolls-Royce Sedan Coupé Phantom II
- K73 Alfa Romeo Spider Touring Gran Sport
- K74 Mercedes Benz 500K/AK Cabriolet
- K75 ROLLS-ROYCE Torpedo Phantom II Convertible
- K76 Bugatti 50T

Subsequent variants

- K77 Fiat F-2 Racer
- K78 Alfa Romeo 8c 2300 Monza "Muletto"
- K80 Mercedes Benz 500K "Sport Roadster"
- K81 Alfa Romeo 8C 2600 "Mille Miglia-Scuderia Ferrari"
- K82 Mercedes Benz 540K "Cabrio Special"
- K83 Rolls-Royce Phantom II Ambassador
- K84 Bugatti 50 T Coupe de ville
- K85 Mercedes Benz 540K "Classic Roadster"
- K86 Bugatti 50T Surprofilé
- K88 Fiat F-2 Racer
- K89 Alfa Romeo 8c 2300 Coupé Elegant
- K90 Mercedes Benz 540K "Rumble Seat"
- K91 Mercedes Benz 540K "True Roadster"
- K92 Alfa Romeo "Dinner Jacket"
- K93 Mercedes Benz 500K/AK Cabriolet
- K94 Mercedes Benz 540K Cabrio Special
- K95 Mercedes Benz 540K "Rumble Seat"

Trucks

- K79 Volvo F-12 Turbo Truck
- K87 Volvo F-16 Globetrotter

Prestige series

- K30 Porsche 911
- K31 Porsche 911
- K31 Porsche 911 "Silver Plated" Exclusive Limited Edition
- K31 Porsche 911 Cabrio" Limited Edition
- K32 Porsche 911 "Yellow" Limited Edition
- K33 Porsche 911 "Blue" Limited Edition
- K34 Porsche 911 "Red" Limited Edition
- K35 Porsche 911 "Racing" Limited Edition
- K51 Ferrari Testarossa Coupé
- K52 Ferrari Testarossa Spider
- K53 Ferrari Testarossa Coupé "Black Star"
- K54 Ferrari Testarossa Spider "Sportster"

- K55 Ferrari F40
- K56 Ferrari F40 "Yellow"
- K57 Ferrari F40 G.T
- K58 Ferrari F40 G.T
- K62 Ferrari F50 (not taken into production)

Meanwhile.....

In 1972, Arnaldo Pocher founded the Ar-Po brand (ARnaldo POcher) and he remained in full activity until his death by a tragic accident in 1989.

The company produced accessories for trains in pewter fusion, among the several important collaborations were those with Metropolitan and MCA of Lugano, from 1975 to 1989.



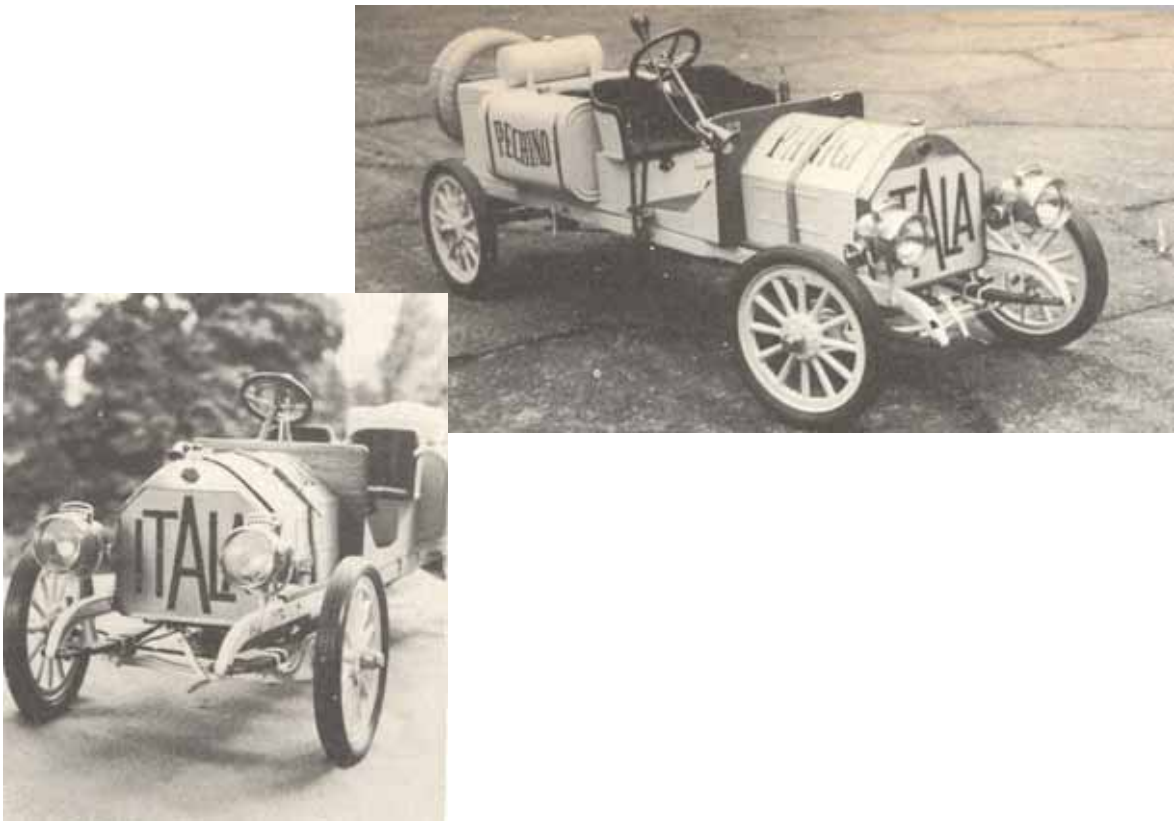
Next to the numerous realizations of trains, the company returned to an old love, the cars in scale 1/8, introducing in May 1981 the famous Itala Grand Prix of the Raid Peking-Paris of 1907, realized with the aid of son-in-law Adelmo Canali, famous Turinese modeller. It entered in production in 1983, as an assembly kit under the brand name Metrop-ArPo (Metropolitan - Arnaldo Pocher). This spectacular model measured 57 centimetres and consists of approximately 600 parts, in pewter, brass, copper, high resistance plastic, aluminium and leather. The production was limited to a numbered series of 350 in all.

Unfortunately this model, in the light of the years gone by, has a very serious and irresolvable problem: all the parts in pewter, (spars of the chassis, front axle, motor base, differential, great part of the levers, tank, brakes, headlights, radiator and parts of the body), are often irremediably damaged by aging and they crumble under their own weight or as you handle them.

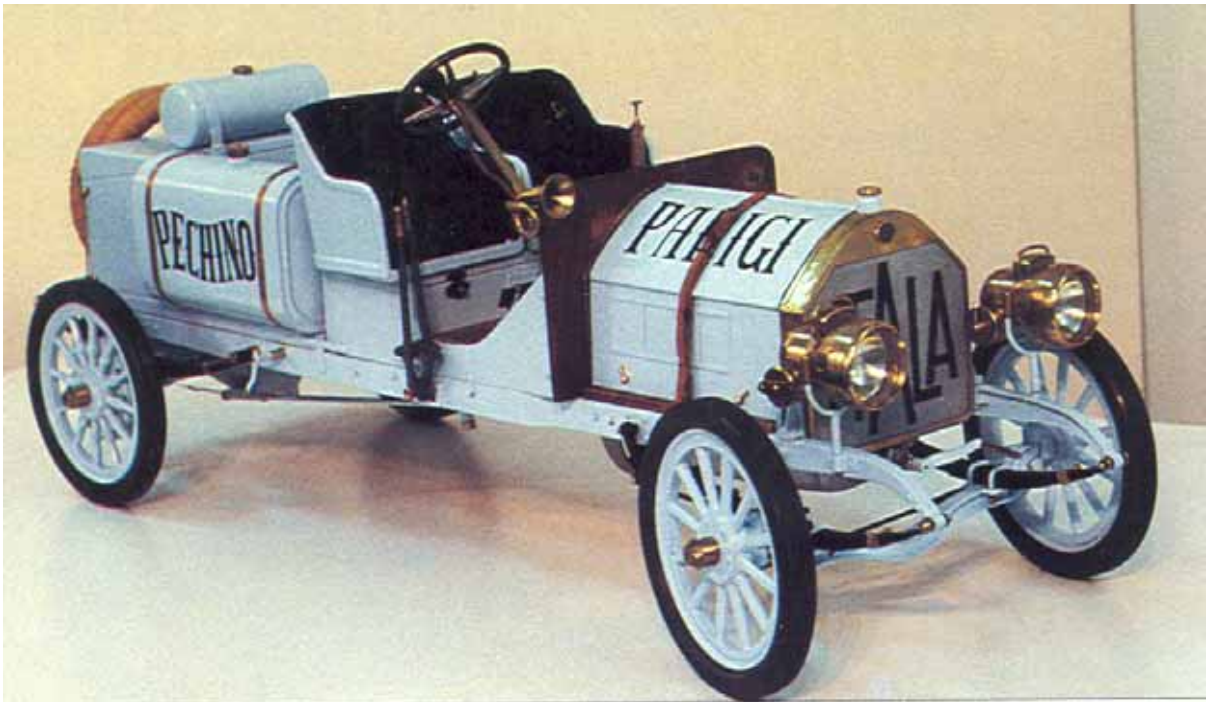
This particularity leads the model to "self-destruct". Only a reconstruction work by means of silicone rubber moulds and using polyurethane resin (in order to lighten the weight) and white metal (for the smaller pieces) for all pewter parts can save this very beautiful model, allowing for a reconstructive restoration faithful to the original.



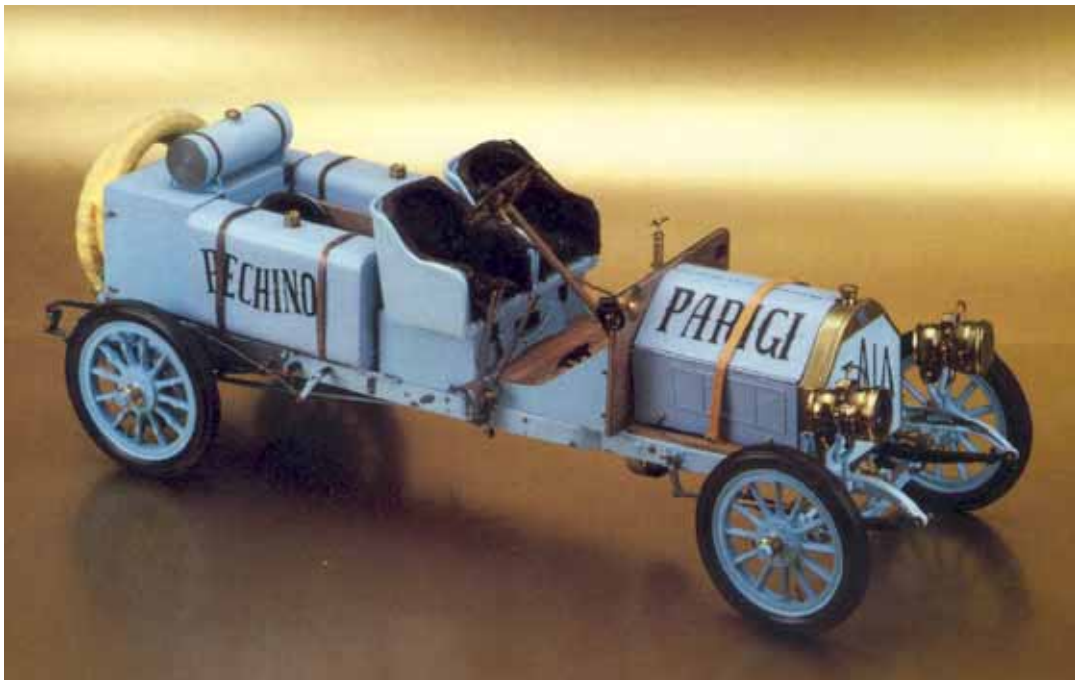
Here some images of original die-cast, perhaps an “pre-serie”, at first presentation in England in 1981.



The same “pre serie” at presentation in Italy in 1981, will be produce in 1983



Here is possible to see that the chassis is already deformed by too front weight



Bibliography:

Much is taken from the following sources:

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