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Plates have been around since New York mandated automobile licensing in 1901...

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“Plates have been around since New York mandated automobile licensing in 1901. Car owners then cobbled together their own, often attaching metal numbers designed for house fronts to leather backings. Early state-issued markers tended to have enameled porcelain surfaces, and by World War I plates that weighed as much as a pound were being stamped from heavy steel.”

Quote Source: Lander, David: “The Buyable Past: The License Plate.” American Heritage (2007). Middle Search Plus.
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mih&AN=24907843&site=src-live>>.

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