

THESE GARAGES

ARE FULL

Of technology, that is, as the parking industry builds safer, more convenient facilities.

BY BOB DIDDLEBOCK

For a glimpse of the parking industry's future in the U.S., cruise past the narrow, brick-faced building snuggled among the row houses at 916 Garden St. in Hoboken, N.J.

The four-story garage, which opened in late 2000, almost completely automated parking. A driver pulling up to the garage's front door swipes a specially coded card through a computer-

ized "reader," then drives a few feet into a bay. The driver locks the car, picks up a claim check from a nearby machine, and leaves. All done. The car is carried away to one of the garage's 324 spaces on a pallet controlled by the "flexible transfer" technology that keeps assembly lines moving at Detroit automobile plants.

To retrieve the car, the owner

inserts his claim check into another computerized reader, and the automobile reappears in the bay just 60 to 90 seconds later.

Worldwide, parking facilities are investing heavily in similar technological marvels that do everything but check the oil. The goal is to say goodbye to attendants, punch clocks, exhaust fumes, crunched doors, long check-in or check-out lines,

