

# British Automobile



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Open Saturdays and Mondays from 10am to 4pm.  
Museum tours are available by appointment.

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**NEXT MEETING – 7pm August 21st (3rd Wednesday)**

**UPCOMING EVENTS –**

**SPEED IS INCURABLY ADDICTIVE !! ... Karl Strauch**  
*If it doesn't make lots of noise burning lots of fuel, it's not a real sport to me. Consider this history ...*

## 1896 – The 1st London-to-Brighton Run

UK's Motor Car Club held a 60-mile "Emancipation Run" from London to Brighton to celebrate the repeal of the Red Flag Act of 1865 which required a person with a red flag to walk ahead of any mechanically-propelled vehicle.

## 1900-1905 – Gordon Bennett Cup

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia ...*

"In automobile racing, the Gordon Bennett Cup was an annual competition which ran from 1900 to 1905. It was one of three Gordon Bennett Cups established by James Gordon Bennett, Jr., millionaire owner of the *New York Herald*. In 1899, Gordon Bennett offered the *Automobile Club de France* (ACF) a trophy to be raced for annually by the automobile clubs of the various countries. The competition was held until 1905, after which the ACF held the first Grand Prix motor racing event at a road course near Le Mans. The 1903 event in Ireland possibly gave rise to the birth of British Racing Green. As a compliment to Ireland the British team chose to race in Shamrock green which thus became known as British racing green, although the winning Napier of 1902 had been painted Olive green. According to *Leinster Leader*,

Saturday, 11 April 1903, Britain had to choose a different colour to its usual national colours of red, white, and blue, as these had already been taken by Italy, Germany, and France respectively. It also stated red as the color for *American* cars in the 1903 Gordon Bennett Cup."

**1900 – Paris to Lyons**

**1901 – Paris to Bordeaux**

**1902 – Paris to Innsbruck**

1902 race winner was Selwyn Edge in a British Napier

**1903 – Paris to Vienna**



Magazine spread showing three Gordon Bennett Cup Teams in 1903: German Mercedes (top), USA Wintons and Peerless (middle) and British Napiers (bottom)

**1904 – Taunus Mountains in Germany**

**1905 – Clermont- Ferrand, Avignon, France**



1904 and 1905 winner – Léon Théry in Richard-Brasier



**1904 – Vanderbilt Cup – Long Island, NY – 30.24-mile course on winding dirt roads in Nassau County**

“This was the first major cup in American auto racing. The Vanderbilt Cup was held successfully on Long Island until 1911 when it was showcased at Savannah, GA in combination with the American Grand Prize. The next year it moved to a racecourse in Milwaukee, WI, then for three years in California: Santa Monica in 1914 and 1916, San Francisco in 1915. The race was canceled after the United States joined the Allies in World War I in 1917. Some of the drivers who participated in the Vanderbilt Cup became famous names, synonymous with automobiles and racing such as Louis Chevrolet, Vincenzo Lancia and Ralph DePalma.”

**1906 – French Grand Prix at LeMans, France**

“The only race at the time to regularly carry the name Grand Prix was organized by the Automobile Club de France (ACF). The circuit used, which was based in Le Mans, was roughly triangular in shape, each lap covering 105 kilometres (65 mi). Six laps were to run each day, and each lap took approximately an hour using the relatively primitive cars of the day. The driving force behind the decision to race on a circuit – as opposed to racing on ordinary roads from town to town – was the Paris to Madrid road race of 1903. During this race a number of people, both drivers and pedestrians – including Marcel Renault – were killed and the race was stopped by the French authorities at Bordeaux. Further road-based events were banned. From the 32 entries representing 12 different automobile manufacturers, at the 1906 event, the Hungarian-born Ferenc Szisz (1873–1944) won the 1,260 km (780 mi) race in a Renault. This race was regarded as the first *Grande Épreuve*, which meant "great trial" and the term was used from then on to denote up to the eight most important events of the year”

**1907 – Peking to Paris Race**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia – “The Peking to Paris motor race was an automobile race, originally held in 1907, between Peking (now Beijing), then Qing

China (now the People's Republic of China) and Paris, France (then the Third French Republic), a distance of 9,317 miles. The idea for the race came from a challenge published in the Paris newspaper *Le Matin* on 31 January 1907, reading: "What needs to be proved today is that as long as a man has a car, he can do anything and go anywhere. Is there anyone who will undertake to travel this summer from Paris to Peking by automobile?" Eventually the race started from the French embassy in Peking on 10 June 1907. The winner, Prince Scipione Borghese, arrived in Paris on 10 August 1907. There were forty entrants in the race, but only five teams ended up going ahead with shipping the cars to Peking. The race was held despite the race committee cancelling the race.”

“In 2007 the Endurance Rally Association staged a rally to celebrate the centenary of the original 1907 race. Unlike the 1997 event, also staged by Philip Young, which took a southerly route, this event followed more faithfully the route taken by Prince Borghese in 1907 in the winning Itala. From Beijing, competitors went north to the Mongolian border at Zamyn-Üüd and, as with his original route, north to Ulaan Bataar. The route then went west across Mongolia, crossing the Russian border at Tsagaannuur through Siberia to Moscow, on to St Petersburg (where Prince Borghese attended "a great banquet") and then through the Baltic states to finish in Paris. 126 veteran, vintage, and classic cars took part, the oldest being a 1903 Mercedes. The major challenge of the rally proved to be Mongolia and the Gobi desert with no conventional roads, merely rutted tracks at best. Despite this 106 crossed the finishing line. The rally covered 12642 km in 36 days.”

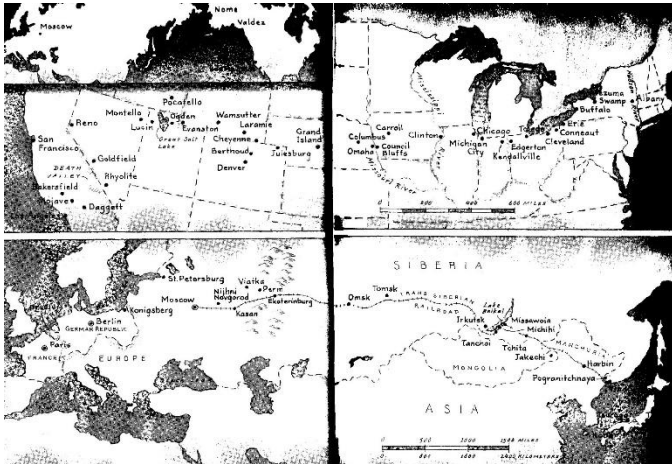
**1908 – New York to Paris “Race of the Century”**



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia – “The 1908 New York to Paris Race was an automobile competition consisting of drivers attempting to travel from New York to Paris. This was a considerable challenge given the state of automobile technology and road infrastructure at the time. Only three of six contestants completed the course. The winner was the American team, driving a 1907 Thomas Flyer.



New York State Register and National Register of Historic Places as the Watkins Glen Grand Prix Course, 1948–1952.



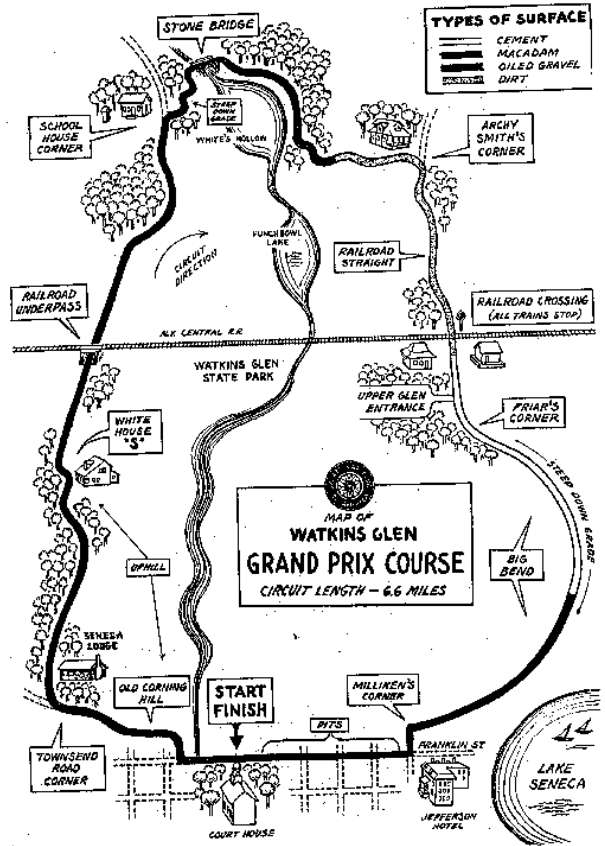
William Shakespeare in *Midsummer Night's Dream* ...  
"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

"The **Sports Car Club of America (SCCA)** National Sports Car Championship was formed in **1951** from existing marquee events around the nation, including Watkins Glen, Pebble Beach, and Elkhart Lake. Since then, it has become a significant annual event in U.S. amateur road racing, showcasing top-notch competition and memorable racing action."

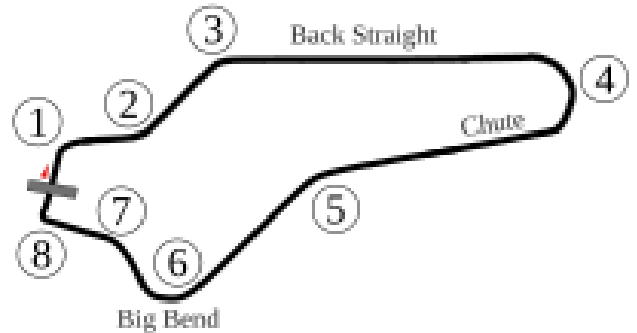
**1948 – Watkins Glen, NY**

"The first races in Watkins Glen were organized by Cameron Argetsinger, whose family had a summer home in the area. With local Chamber of Commerce approval and SCCA sanction, the first Watkins Glen Grand Prix took place in 1948 on a 6.6-mile course<sup>1</sup> over local public roads. For the first few years, the races passed through the heart of the town with spectators lining the sidewalks. However, after a car driven by Fred Wacker left the road in the 1952 race, killing seven-year-old Frank Fazzari and injuring several others, the race was moved to a new location on a wooded hilltop southwest of town. The original course is listed in the

**1948 CIRCUIT**



The second layout (4.6 miles) began use in 1953, and also used existing roads. The Watkins Glen Grand Prix Corporation was formed to manage spectators, parking, and concessions; this arrangement lasted three years.  
**Grand Prix Course**



Watkins Glen from 1956 to 1970. The first permanent course, known as the Watkins Glen Grand Prix Race Course was constructed on 550 acres, overlapping part of the previous street course. Designed by Bill Milliken and engineering professors from Cornell University, the 2.350-mile layout was used from 1956 to 1970. In 1968, the sports car race was extended to six hours.

### **1950 – Elkhart Lake, WI**

“In the late 1940s, road racing was gaining popularity, owing to the post World War II economy, and the influx of sporting automobiles. The Sports Car Club of America was the main organizer of these races, and in 1950, the Chicago Region SCCA and the Village of Elkhart Lake organized the first road race at Elkhart Lake. The 1950 circuit start-finish line was on County Road P.

Competitors went north to County Road J, then South into the Village of Elkhart Lake, and West on what is now County JP (then called County Highway X), and reconnected with County Road P for a total distance of 3.3 mi. For the next two races, in 1951 and 1952, a different course was used. It was 6.5 mi (10.5 km) long, on County Roads J, A, and P. To date, one may still drive most of the original course. In 1955, Clif Tufte started what is now known as Road America, in a configuration that has changed little over the past 60 years. The addition of Road America as a private track meant a transition from racing through the streets of tiny Elkhart Lake to racing on a big, wide, dedicated race track.”

### **1950-1956 – Pebble Beach, CA Road Races**

“The "Del Monte Trophy" was held on the twisty, leafy, and very narrow town roads in Pebble Beach, California from 1950 through 1956. The races were managed under the auspices of the SCCA (Sports Car Club of America), as were most races from that day to this. The route was originally 1.8 miles long but was lengthened from 1951 onwards to 2.1 miles. The search for an appropriate route for the race began at the famous 17 Mile Drive but that later proved unsuitable. After evaluating several alternatives, a collection of roads near the Lodge at Pebble Beach was chosen, partly for its location and partly because it was short enough and tight enough that it wouldn't overtax some of the small cars of the day. Not all of the "track" was paved; the original 1950 route consisted of both paved two-lane roads and sections of dirt or loose gravel. Races started along Portola Road near the present-day Pebble Beach Equestrian Center. Cars then turned right onto Sombria Lane, then right again onto Drake Road. In 1950, drivers would turn right once again onto Forest Lake Road; in 1951 and later years they turned left onto Alvarado Lane (now Stevenson Drive), then sharp right onto Forest Lake. The final corner was a sharp right-hander at Ondulado back onto Portola and past the start/finish line. Although the course was always tight and twisty with tall Cypress trees hemming in the track on either side, accidents were scarce and relatively uneventful. The

exception came in 1956 when Ernie McAfee (no relation to fellow racer Jack McAfee) fatally slammed his Ferrari into a tree. This spelled the end of the popular Pebble Beach Road Races, although it was the genesis of Laguna Seca Raceway, its modern-day successor.”

### **1950 – Sebring International Raceway**

“Sebring Raceway is one of the oldest continuously operating race tracks in the U.S., its first race being run in 1950. Sebring is one of the classic race tracks in North American sports car racing and plays host to the 12 Hours of Sebring. The raceway occupies a portion of Sebring Regional Airport (an active airport for private and commercial traffic that was originally built as Hendricks Army Airfield, which was a World War II training base for the United States Army Air Forces). Sebring Raceway occupies the site of Hendricks Army Airfield (a training base for B-17 pilots in operation from 1941 to 1946), in the middle of southern Florida, 70 mi south and southeast respectively of Orlando and Tampa, and 140 mi northwest of Miami. After the war, Russian-American aeronautical engineer Alec Ulmann was seeking sites for converting military aircraft to civilian use when he discovered potential in Hendricks' runways and service roads to stage a sports car endurance race similar to the 24 Hours of Le Mans, a race Ulmann was inspired to somewhat re-create in the United States. Sebring's first race was held on New Year's Eve of 1950, attracting thirty race cars from across North America. The Sam Collier 6 Hour Memorial race was won by Frits Koster and Ralph Deshon in a Crosley Hot Shot that had been driven to the track by Victor Sharpe. The first 12 Hours of Sebring was held on March 15, 1952, shortly growing into a major international race. In 1959, the track hosted the U.S.' first Formula One race (the successor to historic European Grand Prix motor racing), held as that year's installment of the historic United States Grand Prix competition. However poor attendance and high costs relocated the next U.S. Grand Prix to Riverside International Raceway in southern California.”

### **1953 – Willow Springs, CA**

“Willow Springs International Motorsports Park (commonly referred to as Willow Springs) is located in Willow Springs near Rosamond, California, about 80 mi north of Los Angeles. It is the oldest permanent road course in the United States. Construction began in 1952, with the inaugural race held on November 23, 1953. The main track is a 2.5 mi long road course that is unchanged from its original 1953 configuration. The

elevation changes and high average speeds make it a favorite of many road racing drivers. The original intent was to create a replica of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway oval, but space constraints resulted in its final configuration. Ken Miles was among several people involved in planning the layout. The first event was held on November 23, 1953. The course was very fast from the outset and quickly earned the nickname "The Fastest Road in the West." In 1962, the course was sold to Bill Huth, who paid \$116,000 for the facility and hoped to use the main straight for drag racing. Huth purchased the lease outright in 1980 and soon began expanding the facility. The initial 230 acres expanded to 600 acres with the purchase of adjacent land. A second track, the Streets of Willow, was constructed next, and a third track, Horse Thief Mile, was added in 2003. In June 2024, the park was listed for sale.

### 1956 – Lime Rock Park, CT

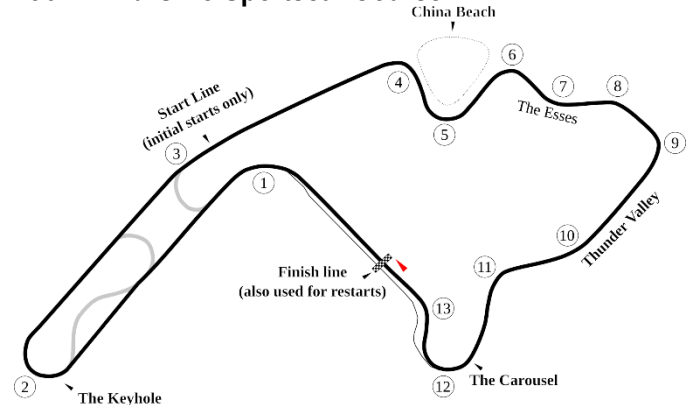
Lime Rock Park is a natural-terrain motorsport road racing venue located in Lakeville, Connecticut, United States, a hamlet in the town of Salisbury, in the state's northwest corner. Built in 1956, it is the nation's third oldest continuously operating road racing venue, behind Road America (1955) and Willow Springs International Motorsports Park (1953). The track was owned by Skip Barber from 1984 to April 2021, a former race car driver who started the Skip Barber Racing School in 1975. Now, it is owned by Lime Rock Group, LLC. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. The 1.530 mi Lime Rock track was originally conceived of in 1956 by Jim Vaill, who, along with John Fitch and Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory, built the track utilizing state-of-the-art road and highway safety principles of the time. The first race, a mix of G-Production class and an MG class, was held on April 28, 1957. The winner of the G-Production was Ted Sprigg in an Alfa Romeo Giulietta. The winner of the MG class was Charles Callanan in an MG TC.

### 1957 – Virginia International Raceway

The track originally opened August 3, 1957, and was created by a group of men using a bulldozer. The track had been closed from 1974 prior to its reopening in March 2000.<sup>[1]</sup> The track was reopened in 2000 by New Yorker Harvey Siegel and Connie Nyholm using a "country club" model. Memberships to the track are sold. Each member of the VIR Club receives track time on member days, tickets to all spectator events, and other benefits. VIR's membership model has since been

followed by other racetracks across the United States. The track hosted the SCCA National Sports Car Championship from its opening in 1957 until the series' demise in 1964. The IMSA GT Championship visited VIR in 1971 and 1972. After its re-opening, the AMA Superbike Championship held races at VIR from 2001 until 2010 on the North Course. The Rolex Sports Car Series utilized the Full Course from 2002 through 2011. The American Le Mans Series used the Full Course configuration for its inaugural event at VIR in September 2012 where a new track record was set by Klaus Graf driving the Muscle Milk LMP1 car. Driving a Maserati 450S, Carroll Shelby won the feature race on the track's inaugural weekend in August 1957. The list of other well-known drivers who raced at VIR during its first incarnation includes ... Briggs Cunningham, Walt Hansgen, Roger Penske, Mark Donohue, Richard Petty, Bob Holbert, Augie Pabst, Curtis Turner, Dick Thompson, Peter Revson, Wendell Scott, Bob Tullius, Janet Guthrie, Skip Barber, Ricky Rudd, Gene Felton, Denise McCluggage, Hurley Haywood, Brock Yates, Don Yenke, Lance Reventlow, Dan Gurney and Parnelli Jones.

### 1962 – Mid-Ohio Sports car Course



The track opened in 1962 as a 16-turn road course run clockwise. After only one year, the "Oak Tree Bend" series of turns (in the northeast corner) was removed due to being too slow. It was replaced by the "Thunder Valley" downhill straight, which remains to the present day. For 1963 and beyond, a 15-turn, 2.40 mi layout was established. The back portion of the track allows speeds approaching 200 mph. A separate starting line and flagstand is situated on the backstretch to allow for safer and more competitive rolling starts. The regular start/finish line is located on the pit straight.



## The Nut Behind the Wheel ... by Karl Strauch

The great grandfather of this month's "Nut" was a blacksmith to the Duke of Argyll in the late 1700s. His 2<sup>nd</sup> son David was born in 1785. While his cousins became shipbuilders, David took engineering training in Scotland and then founded a company in London and designed a steam-powered printing press which sold quite well. Between 1840 and 1860, the company that he founded was quite prosperous, had between 200 and 300 workers and made a wide variety of products including a centrifuge for sugar manufacturing, lathes, drills, ammunition-making equipment, and railway cranes.



David's younger son James was born in 1823, joined the company in 1837, and became a partner in 1847. He succeeded his father as head of the company in 1867 and specialized in precision machinery to make coins and print stamps and banknotes. While James was an excellent engineer, he was a poor businessman and the company declined down to only 7 employees in 1895.

James' son (I'll call him "M", this month's "Nut") was born in 1870 and inherited the business in 1895. Fortunately, "M" had inherited his father's engineering talents, too, and was a hobby racing cyclist. At the Bath Road Club, "M" met S. F. Edge, manager at Dunlop Rubber and colleague of H. J. Lawson, amateur motor tricycle racer. H.J. convinced "M" to improve his "Old number 8" Panhard which had won the 1896 Paris-Marseille-Paris race, converting it from tiller steering and improving the oiling system. Not satisfied, "M" offered to replace the Panhard's engine with his own 8 HP vertical twin cylinder engine which had electric ignition. S. F. was so impressed by the results that he encouraged "M" to make his own car and collaborated with his old boss at Dunlop to form the Motor Power Company which bought "M"s entire output. The 1<sup>st</sup> of an initial order of 6 cars (three 2-cyl 8 HP and three 4-cyl 16 HP) with aluminum bodies by Arther Mulliner was delivered in March 1900.

Recognizing the publicity value gained from racing, which no other British marque did at that time,

S. F. entered one of "M"s 8 HP cars in the Thousand Miles Trial of the Automobile Club, winning its class.



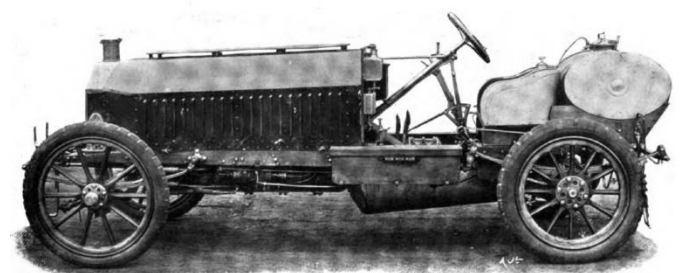
By 1900, eight "16 HPs" had been ordered and S.F. entered one of them in the 837-mile Paris-Toulouse-Paris race with Charles S. Rolls, co-founder of Rolls-Royce, as his riding mechanic. The 301.6 cubic inch side-valve engine suffered problems with its ignition coils and cooling system and failed to finish.

For the 1902 Gordon Bennett, 3 entrants contested for France and 3 for England (two Wolseleys and S.F. in one of "M"s cars). S.F., with his cousin Cecil as co-pilot, won that race at an average of 31.8 mph. It was the first British victory in international motorsport and would not be repeated until Henry Seagrave won the French Grand Prix in 1923.

In 1904 one of "M"s cars was the 1<sup>st</sup> to cross the Canadian Rockies when Mr. and Mrs. Charles Glidden, sponsors of Glidden Tours, covered 3,536 miles from Boston to Vancouver. The photo below was taken of the Gliddens in London in 1902.



THE SIX-CYLINDER NAPIER RACER.



Our heroic "Nut" this month? .... Montague Napier