

The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Historic Race Circuits of Elkhart Lake Preservation Society
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Lesser Known Cars in the 1951 Open Road Races

The 1951 Open Road Race saw a greater variety of cars entered and raced in Elkhart Lake than in any other year. Everyone is familiar with the well known MGs, Jaguars, Allards, Ferraris, and Porsches but less may be known about the Jowett Jupiter, Lea Francis and the VW, Fitch-O'Shea, Veritas and Simca Specials. The Specials were basically one of a kind modifications of well known marque cars but the Jowett Jupiter and the Lea Francis were the products of established British car makers that though popular in England gained little recognition in the American market. One of the most interesting of these was the Lea Francis.

Lea Francis traces its roots back to 1895 when Richard Lea and Graham Francis started a bicycle manufacturing business. They branched out into the motorcycle business in 1911 and started building cars in 1919. A sporting image began to appear in 1925, leading to models such as the Hyper and the Ace of Spades.

In 1937, the company was reorganized under former Riley executives who designed a new engine for Lea-Francis with a similar layout to the popular Riley engine. In 1939 commercial production ceased and the factory concentrated on the war effort. Post-war car production commenced in 1946 with updated vehicles based on the pre-war designs. The Saloon and Sports were luxurious and sporty vehicles, and were popular, but expensive selling for over \$4,000 a very high price at the time. Eventually an improved chassis with independent front



The 1950 Lea Francis 2.5 Liter Sports

suspension and hydraulic brakes was introduced and in 1950 the more powerful 2½ liter “Big Four” engine was introduced.

Financial difficulties ended production in 1954.

The Race Entry and Results records maintained by HRC shows the entry of a Lea Francis by Garrett Fuller and Arthur Iselin, Jr., both from Geneva, NY. The record does not specify the

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model but as it was entered in Class 4, the 2.5 liter class, it is likely to have been the 1950 2.5 Liter Sports shown here on page one. Garrett Fuller entered and raced in the Novice Event finishing first in class and fourteenth overall. Arthur Iselin, Jr. entered and raced in the Main Event but had mechanical difficulty in lap two and had to drop out of the race.

Today the Lea-Francis Owners' Club has an ever growing membership of around 340 members who own around 420 cars.

There are doubtless more Lea-Francis vehicles somewhere in the world, as the cars were successfully exported in a variety of other markets.

PRESERVATION NEWS

Fall Dinner Meeting

The Fall HRC Dinner Meeting was held at Siebkens on September 14th. Sixty-two members and guests were present and enjoyed a full course pork sirloin dinner skillfully prepared by the Siebkens' kitchen staff.



Jeff Zwart, guest speaker at the Fall Dinner

The guest speaker for the event was Jeff Zwart, seven times a class winner at the Pikes Peak Hill Climb, the only true remaining open road race in the United States. Jeff enthralled the audience with his experiences driving in the hill climb and directing film and commercial production for Porsche, BMW, Ford, CART and Xbox Forza.

HRC Annual Board Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the HRC Board of Directors took place October 14th at Road America. John Calhoun was re-elected to a five year term as a Director and as Chairman of the Board for 2015. Officers elected were:

President - Tom Hollfelder

Vice President – George Bruggenthies

Secretary/Treasurer – Spencer Chapple.

A committee consisting of Chairman Calhoun, incoming President Hollfelder and incoming Vice President Bruggenthies was appointed to review the current Membership Program, Dinner Program and other related programs to recommend necessary changes for Board approval. Decisions are expected by year end and will be covered in the spring newsletter.

Preservation Protocols Followed in South Lake Street Resurfacing

As many of you may have noticed, the Village of Elkhart Lake has resurfaced South Lake Street from the Osthoff Resort to the intersection of CTH AJ. The street is part of the historic race circuits and protected under State and Federal. Prior to the start of construction the Village submitted the project to the Wisconsin State Historical Society for review. The Society found that the project had no adverse affect on the Historic Circuits. Construction was carried out by the Sheboygan County Highway Dept. who also communicated with HRC to insure that no damage to the historic circuit would result. HRC was pleased that preservation protocols

were followed and a cooperative effort to maintain the historic circuits as preserved in 2006 was the result.



Resurfaced South Lake Street in front of Fireman's Park.