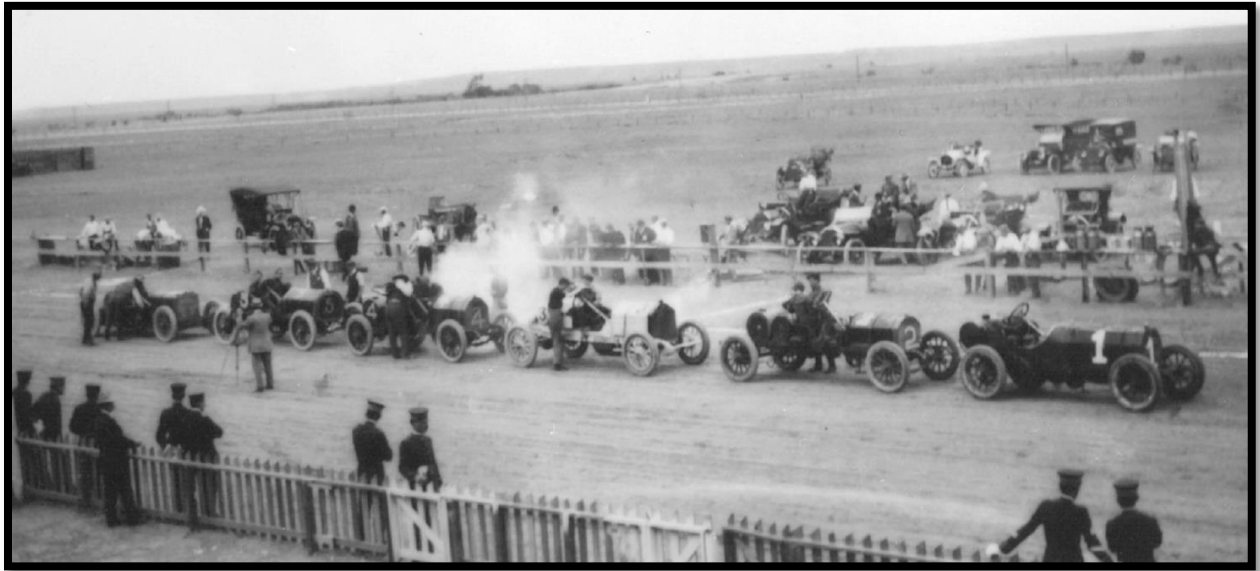


Cheyenne Motor Club Races – Part 2

Additional Information researched and compiled by:

Robert L. Rampton
5430 S. Hugoton Dr.
Taylorsville, UT 84129
801-349-5975
rrampton@comcast.net



The above photo, found in the Wyoming State Archive photo collection was taken on August 23, 1910 and depicts the starting line-up of the second 200-mile race, run on the first day of the Frontier Days wild west celebration. The Cheyenne Motor Club (CMC) promised an exciting race and announced improvements to the 4 miles per lap course. A large crew of men with teams and road leveling equipment were hard at work getting the track in perfect shape for the race. To increase safety and afford the drivers an opportunity to really let their cars loose, the big curve heading into the homestretch, right in front of the grandstand was being banked high. The lower curve, exiting the homestretch was also being banked higher than previously. The hope was that these improvements and changes would make the track faster than it was in May when Barney Oldfield and his big Blitzzen set new mile and half mile records.

Crowd control and security would also be beefed up, compared to 1909, with the announcement that 2 troops of uniformed cavalry from Camp Otis would be stationed along the homestretch up to the box office and throughout the stands. Absolutely no spectators would be allowed in the infield, only officials, referees, course stewards and support crews.

This time around, each car was assigned a number that indicated its starting position. Car #1, was a monster 60 hp, 6-cyl, chain-drive Thomas, entered by Denver's famous Thomas Flyer dealer, E. Linn Mathewson. Mathewson was not only famous for his auto racing record on the Overland Park track and in regional road races, all with big Thomas stock cars, but also as another one of the drivers of the New York-

Paris Thomas Flyer in 1908. As an influential Thomas dealer, he was tapped to drive the car across Wyoming, from Cheyenne to Ogden UT, covering some of the worst trails yet encountered in the race, while providing the factory with lots of valuable publicity. His influence with the factory also gained him access to the company's stable of specially built racing equipment to use for publicity purposes.

Once shipped from the Buffalo factory and in his possession, Mathewson chartered a special express car, at "horrendous expense", to safely ship the valuable race car from Denver to Cheyenne. The car would be driven by James (Red) McDonald, of Denver with Steven Bourne as mechanic. McDonald was riding mechanic with Martin Fletcher aboard last year's winning Oldsmobile. Both were handpicked by Mathewson.

At the #2 position was a 45 hp Apperson Jackrabbit, one of two Apperson's entered by W. J. Carter, manager of the Overland Auto Company in Denver. Driver was C. J. Corkhill and mechanic was H. C. Faceler, both from Denver.

#3 car was a light gray, 40 hp National, another entry from Denver driven by Eaton McMillan with Grover Young as riding mechanic.

The #4 position was occupied by the other Carter backed Apperson Jackrabbit, this one a larger 55 hp, chain drive machine driven by Harry Ball, last years second place finisher. His mechanic was James Allen, both from Denver.

#5 was a 30 hp Buick, likely that same car that raced the previous year since it boasted a local Cheyenne crew with Lisle Brannon as driver and J. T. Cain as mechanic.

Last, but not least, car # 6 was the local favorite. Sometime between the 1909 and 1910 races, Harold Brinker had pulled up stakes in Denver and moved to Cheyenne as part owner of The Capitol Garage, Cheyenne's oldest and most well-known auto repair shop. It was also an agency dealing in American and Everett automobiles.

Everett autos were quite unremarkable and modestly priced machines, but Americans were the complete opposite of an Everett. Big and fast at 60 hp, they were powerful and low to the ground due to their underslung chassis. Stock Americans rode on enormous 40-inch wheels. They were finished with the finest equipment and accessories available, often nickel plated, and could be had with unusual color combinations and leathers. American automobiles turned heads where ever they went.

In the summer of 1910, Brinker ventured to Galveston, TX to compete in the beach races there with an American race car. The car was modified with smaller wheels that made it even lower to the ground, and Brinker did well with the car. Local papers all reported that Brinker was now fast a work in his repair shop, completely overhauling the Galveston beach racer to run in the upcoming Frontier Days 200-miler. His shop foreman, Ed Pavelka would be his mechanic.

With the drop of a flag, the cars were sent off one, just seconds, after the other. Away first, McDonald in the Thomas 60 set a furious and brutal pace, completing the first 4 mile lap in 3 minutes, 8 seconds. The next 4 cars away set equally fast laps all just over 3 minutes. The lead changed several times, but the big Thomas gained the lead and stayed there, much to the delight of Linn Mathewson.

But then things started to fall apart. Mechanical troubles began plaguing all the cars resulting in longer and more frequent pit-stops. Tires were also being destroyed at a high rate. Brinker's American began overheating and he slowly fell to the back of the pack, never to regain any kind of lead. The Buick and National both had engine trouble. Despite all the problems, no accident or loss of life marred the race, but there was an unexpected bit of controversy that changed the outcome of the race.

At about lap 108, the AAA judge declared the big Thomas 60, the current leader, disqualified because of a damaged rear wheel and a collapsed spring. A horrified Mathewson waved McDonald in for emergency repairs, replacing the damaged wheel. But the judge refused to let the car back into the race, declaring it unsafe. At the same time, Brinker's American finally conked out for good on the far side of the track. Mathewson demanded that it be inspected by the AAA judges to determine its mechanical fitness. The judge refused, sending Mathewson into a rage.

With half the cars already out of the running, the officials called the race and counted the laps. When the dust cleared, Harry Ball and his big Apperson Jackrabbit was declared the winner. As reported in the local papers, there was a dispute as to second place. Some placed the Thomas in second, while others gave it to the other Jackrabbit. Third place went to the National even though it limped along for quite a while with a bad oil leak. Whatever the outcome, the winner pocketed \$500, second place got \$300 and third \$200. The below photo shows a very dirty and oil soaked Harry Ball and his mechanic James Allen being certified as the winner by the AAA official. Allen looks quite spent, and who wouldn't be with all that exhaust smoke blowing into your face.



Eventually, Linn Mathewson filed a protest over the disqualification of his car and the conduct of the judges, all of which was rejected. And so, ended the second 200-mile race at the Cheyenne dirt track.

As far as I can tell, no race was held in 1911. The Cheyenne Motor Club seemed to have lost some of its fervor and enthusiasm for staging auto racing. At its first meeting for the year in early 1911, no business was conducted because hardly any members showed up. At a later meeting (presumably with more club members present) an August race date, just prior to Frontier Days, was decided upon. It was also decided to extend invitations to nationally known drivers to come race in Cheyenne. At the top of the invite list was Ray Haroun, the recent winner of the Indy 500. A committee was formed to make contacts and bookings, but the wind seemed to go out of the idea when Haroun responded to the invitation that it would take \$1,000.00 in appearance money, plus expenses for him to bring a car and race in Wyoming. Little appears about local auto racing in the local papers from that point on.

The local racing scene also lost one of its biggest names to a quite different pursuit. It came to light in 1911 that Harold Brinker was a bird-man, and had spent the better part of the last year in a shed on the Frontier Days grounds designing and building an airplane with his assistant Ed Pavelka. The biplane was along the same lines as a Curtiss, powered by a Hall-Scott engine. The machine was almost completed and it was Brinker's intention to roll it out on the track straightaway and start conducting test flights. He planned to have the plane sorted out and successful enough to conduct exhibition flights later that summer as part of the Frontier Days festivities.

He did fly, after several accidents, but determined his engine was not powerful enough after a crack-up damaged his propeller. He ordered a new engine and prop but they did not arrive in time to be fitted to the plane or tested. He never did fly for the Frontier Day crowds. I think, if I remember correctly, a more serious crash got him out of the flying game and back racing cars.

I'm still looking into the later dates to 1915 to see if I can add more information.

Bob