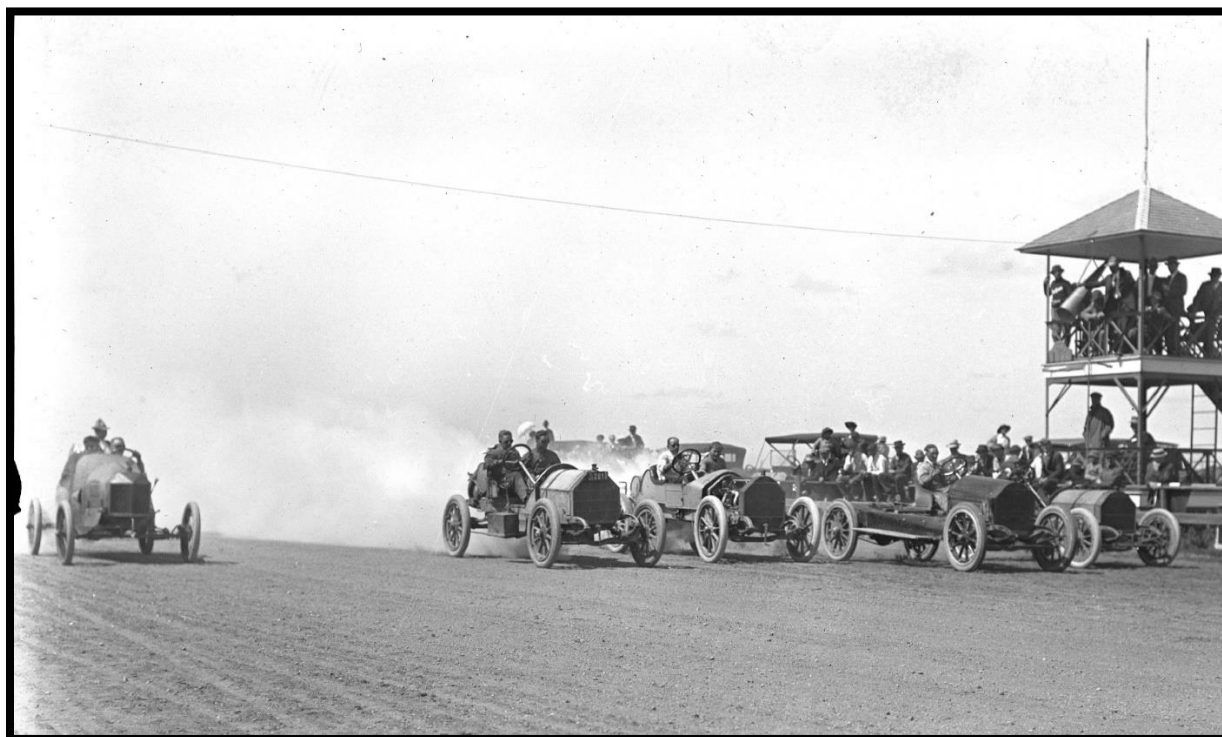


## Cheyenne Frontier Park Track, 1915 – Part 3

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The above photo, found in the Wyoming State Archive photo collection was taken on July 21, 1915 and depicts the starting line-up of one of several races, of various duration, staged at the Frontier Park race track, in Cheyenne. This event, which alternated with motorcycle races, was promoted as the “curtain raiser” for the upcoming Frontier Days celebration.

By 1915, the Cheyenne Motor Club had morphed into more of a tourist bureau and lobbying force for the good roads movement in eastern Wyoming than an organizer and promoter of costly auto races on a large, expensive to maintain, race track. Instead, auto racing, mostly with a local flavor, became an integral part of the Frontier Days celebration and was planned and promoted by the Frontier Days committee.

From right to left, I have identified the cars and drivers as follows: In first position is a low-riding Amplex driven by Art Wagner, from Denver. In the number 2 position is a well-known favorite, touted in all the local

papers as the "Barney Oldfield of the West", Harold Brinker, now of Denver. Brinker was behind the wheel of his famous, stripped down, V-8 Cadillac stock car. In the third spot is Ed Pavelka, from Cheyenne in a stock Velie. In fourth position is Pete McMartin, also a Cheyenne boy, in an aged Apperson Jackrabbit racer. And on the far left is James Nisbet, in his little Model T Ford speedster. One car that is missing in this photo was a Peerless stock car, driven by F. G. Foster, of Cheyenne.

A word about the track. As the Cheyenne Motor Club had changed, so had their impressive, 4-mile dirt track. After 1911, the course had been slowly chiseled away until all that remained was a 1-mile oval. The homestretch was still in front of the grandstand, but now shortened. Spectators could now easily see all the action taking place on the backstretch. The track became the home for many of the signature events of the Frontier Days Wild West show which included a rodeo and wild chuck wagon races.

The day contained a full card of race events warming up with a 5-miler, first for motorcycles and then for the cars. This first event was won by famous former "boy auto-dealer" Floyd Clymer in the saddle of an Excelsior. The auto race started with a bang as Brinker and his "Cad" shot to the lead and stayed there. Not long after, McMartin in the Apperson, developed a case of "motor-ataxia of the rear wheels" and was out after one lap. The Amplex shortly followed. Ed Pavelka in the Velie placed second, followed by the Nisbet Ford in third.

Up next, the motorcyclists launched into a 15-miler. There were only 3 machines in this race, but they paced each other, in a tight formation, for the entire race. It was a close finish, with Clymer walking away the winner in the second event.

In the 15-mile auto race, Brinker, one again, bolted to the head of the pack. But in the time between the auto races, Art Wagner had managed to get his Amplex running strong and was now camped firmly on Brinker's tail, and stayed there for the entire race. Brinker won, with Wagner a close second and Pavelka, behind just 2 laps, took third.

During the next feature race, the motorcycle 20-miler, called a "breath-taker", Frank Kuntz, riding an Excelsior, managed to break Clymer's winning streak by lapping the mile oval in less than a minute. Clymer took second and W. G. Rycken on a Harley took third. The only other rider in the race, Art Smith, took his Cyclone to the pits on lap seven and never returned.

The 20-mile auto race, once again, was Harold Brinker's to win or lose. This race began with a spectacular rolling start of one lap to the starting flag. Brinker set a fast pace as the leader, but now, F. G. Foster in his Peerless, managed to give Brinker a run for his money. Foster found a spot right next to the Cadillac and paced it for much of the race. In the end, Brinker poured on the gas and inched ahead of Foster. 5,000 frenzied spectators cheered as Brinker edged him out and finished first. Foster came in second and Nisbet in his Model T took third.

The final event on this day of racing thrills was an Australian Pursuit race with just 3 cars entered, Brinker's Cadillac, Foster's Peerless and Nisbet's Ford. In this type of race, the cars are sent away one at a time, the slowest car first, the fastest last, 20 seconds apart. The first car to lap the other cars twice is declared the winner. Brinker won this event with little effort and was hailed by the crowd for sweeping the meet with firsts in every race. For his efforts that day, he pocketed \$435.00 in prize money. Attention was also focused on James Nisbet and his scrappy little Ford. While everyone agreed it was not fast, it ran steady

and enduring, completing all the races, along with Brinker's Caddy, without any mechanical troubles or tire failures.



Just a few words about this photo also. Of course, this is Harold Brinker, at speed in his Cadillac "8", heading into the south curve at the end of the home straightaway. Sources from the time indicate the car was painted a sinister "coal-black". Model 51 Cadillacs, with a 314-cu. in., L-head V8 were introduced model wide in September of 1914 and marketed as 1915 cars. They were rated at 70 hp. and had a wb of 122 in.

Brinker piled up lots of fame in this car in Colorado and Wyoming setting speed records in city-to-city runs, racing locomotives, speed carnivals at Overland Park track in Denver and match races whenever he was challenged. The car appears to be bone stock, with the fenders peeled off and the body, whatever it was, removed. An old bucket seat mounted on 2x4s appears to be bolted to the frame. There is some evidence to support the notion that Brinker was lured back to Denver with a handsome salary to drive this car for the Cadillac Motor Company of Denver to promote the speed and reliability of this new chassis.

Eventually, Brinker's reign of terror with this car came to an end during Denver to Cheyenne race in 1916. After overturning the car twice and upending it in a ditch, a rock pierced the crankcase, ruining the engine. There is no mention of driving a Cadillac after that point.

Brinker went into business and opened an auto repair and machine shop in Denver. He continued to race cars of various makes including Chalmers and Mercer until 1918 when he was drafted and departed Denver on a train with 329 fellow conscripts for Camp Travis in Texas. I do not believe Brinker went overseas or saw combat of any kind. I believe he remained in Texas and taught auto mechanics to his fellow soldiers. He returned to Denver after the war and picked up where he left off with his auto racing exploits.

But that is a whole other story, perhaps for another time.