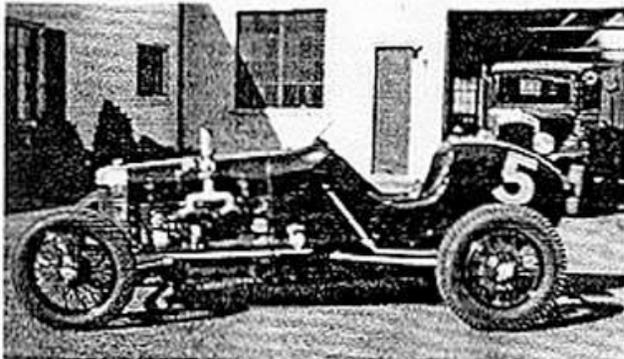


Updated The Briggs Cunningham Special Revisited



"Ed" Coffey driving No. 5 Special on Monroe's 3/4 mile dirt Speedway. He holds the track record of 45 seconds.



The No. 5 Special owned by Briggs Cunningham, millionaire sportsman of Greens Farms.

1,100 SEE AUTO RACES AT MONROE

Wild Bill Holmes Sets New Track Record As Speedway Is Opened.

MONROE, Oct. 16—(Special to The Post) The new Monroe Speedway was used for the first time on Sunday when more than 11,000 people were present and over 500 cars passed through the gates.

The new track speed record was established by Wild Bill Holmes of Brewster, N. Y. in 45 1-5 seconds; Edward Coffey special No. 5, Bridgeport 46 3-5 seconds; Fred Meyers No. 44, Bridgeport Duesenberg special, 51 2-5 second; Bill Miller, Danbury, 52 1-5 seconds; Rex Beach, Bedford Hills, N. Y., 53 seconds; Howard Wood, Greenwich, Conn., Valley Special No. 56 in 54 3-5 seconds.

The race of four fastest over eight laps was won by Bill Holmes in 6 minutes and 17 1-5 seconds; Ed Coffey was second; Bill Miller third; and Fred Meyers, fourth.

In the second event five laps won by Bill Miller in 4 minutes and 19 seconds; Rex Beach was second; Floyd Canfield third; and Howard Wood, fourth.

The third event was a matched race between Bill Holmes and Ed Coffey and Coffey won in 2 minutes and 26 seconds.

Bill Holmes won the 10 lap feature in eight minutes flat. Other participants were Coffey, Miller, Beach and Wood.

After a recent post here about the Briggs Cunningham's DOHC Frontenac Ford "T" sprint car, information has come to light about many of the details surrounding the car. Racing historian Michael Ferner has identified the driver as "Ed" Coffey and the builder of the car as well. Michael tells us:

"The Cunningham-Fronty was built by R.T. Jackson of Dayton, Ohio. See the article in "Speedway Magazine," March 1933, covering the car. It was driven by Ed Coffey of Connecticut while owned by Cunningham, and perhaps others. Cunningham sold the car to Gil Pirrung of Missouri the following

year, who had Doc MacKenzie, Billy Devore and Babe Stapp drive the car. In 1936 he sold it to Joel Thorne."

DAYTONIAN FINISHES NEW CAR

Technical dope on the car in above photo would interest the readers of the Magazine, the editor requested its builder to prepare the following description.

By R. T. JACKSON

PRESUMING that word economy will be welcome, the writer ventures to provide the following details with slight introduction.

In starting to build this car, assuming that it would be operated in the eastern section, the choice of transverse front spring followed, as that seems to be the favorite front end with drivers in those parts. Also, the selection of steel material for body panels was a consequence, since, during races, the surfaces of tracks in this vicinity often break up into hard particles kicked up by the wheels, and these clods and small stones soon damage aluminum bodies by denting. While steel will dent under the same conditions, it does not do so nearly so readily.

The car, therefore, is fitted with transverse suspension, front and rear, and the body is all steel with the exception of the fire wall and instrument panel, which are of duralumin, of suitable gauge. The frame, of special construction, is rectangular in plan form at the front, with short radius round corners. At the rear, the rails extend backward from the cross member which carries the spring. This improves appearance and provides very good support for the tail and gas tank. The front end of the frame is attractive because of its round corners and neat spring mount-

ing, which departs from the conventional through carrying the spring above instead of below, resulting in a shorter and therefore lighter Z plate. The shock absorber brackets in front are mounted right on the round corners, thus stiffening the frame as well as themselves by virtue of the shape at that point. The radius rods at the front are of familiar type, while those at the rear are mounted at their front ends on ball joints at the frame and located concentric with the axle of the universal joint. At their rear ends they are secured to the rear axle housing by two bolts so spaced as to provide a substantial attachment.

Both front and rear axles are stock car parts with slight changes required to render them suitable for use on this car. Although the rear axle requires slight comment, it should be noted that the front axle carries quite large spindles and arms, the latter connected by a tie rod on ball joints. At this point, it will not be amiss to explain that the tie rod is kept straight, no drop for clearance being required because the frame is straight across at its front. This construction affords enough space beneath the Z plate to clear things nicely, and adds to appearance as well.

Connection from the knuckles to the steering gear is by a drag link

threaded at each end to the ball joints, thus furnishing means for adjusting the length of the link. The modified Franklin steering gear is mounted, trunnion type, at its lower end on welded sheet steel fittings, and at its upper end in a live rubber bushing carried in a welded-up fitting of the split clamp type bolted to the inside of the instrument panel. This furnishes a certain amount of flexibility desirable at this point because of body and frame distortions which may occur here. The steering wheel, seventeen inches in diameter, is hand sawed from a single sheet of vanadium alloy spring steel, twelve gauge, and has but three spokes. The rim, comfortably narrow to the grip, is formed by riveting an aluminum casting to each side of the spider, which is continuous around the entire circle, then taping and lacquering the assembled rim. This makes up a very neat wheel, with no wood which might splinter in case of a crash, and the rivets used are of such small size that failure of the spider near the holes through which they secure the rim is unlikely.

In the design and construction of the chassis structure, every effort was made to approximate, by estimate and assumption, the values of the loads to be carried by its various members and to provide plenty of material in

each to carry the additional loads imposed by accelerations and shock. Of course, lacking complete engineering knowledge, no calculations above simple arithmetic could be used. At the same time, a good deal of thought and care was devoted to preserving clean design and providing for convenience in maintenance in repair.

The tanks are worthy of some description. The gas tank is trunnion mounted on steel tube transverse members attached to the frame rails. It is of all welded sheet steel, no solder used, and has a large hand hole for the clean-out and repair. The air line, of small steel tube, enters the tank from its under side, and the steel gas line carries the gas away through a Monel metal finger screen and a valve in the bottom of the tank. The oil tank, in the cowl, is similar except for capacity, it carrying but three to four gallons, while the fuel tank will hold between thirteen and fourteen. Both tanks are cadmium plated inside and out as protection against rust.

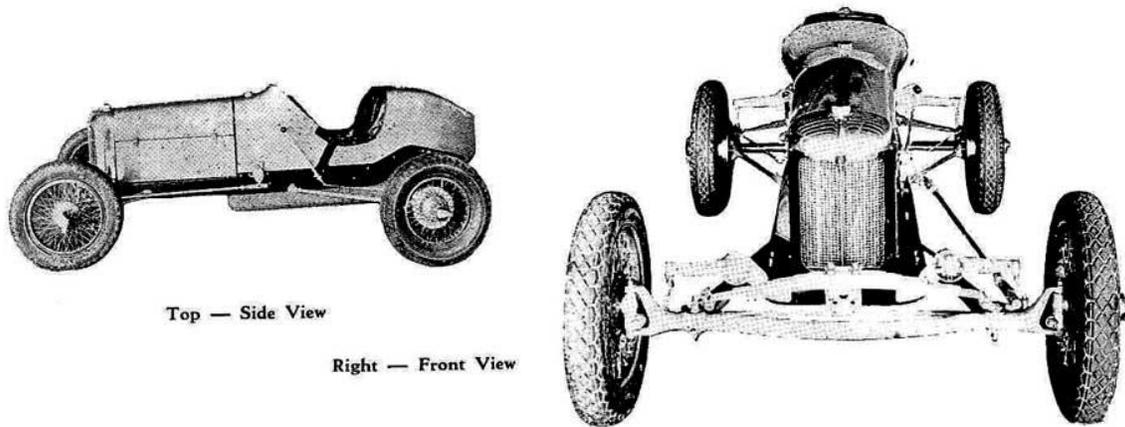
The radiator rests on rubber pads and the studs which fasten it to its cross member are provided with springs against which to pull up the nuts. It is carried in a shell of the two piece type, which is a trifle out of the ordinary in that the top piece is an aluminum casting of thin section. While the shell really carries the radiator, the lower tank of the latter rests on a piece of sponge rubber.

The general appearance of the body is apparent in the illustration. One note-worthy feature is the width of the cowl at the steering wheel. At this point it is wide enough to allow the steering wheel to be set about level with it, and still have sufficient room for the driver's hands to pass the cowl edge when the wheel is turned. This makes it much easier to get into and out of the driver's seat. The edge of the cowl is almost parallel with the steering wheel, and the latter is mounted at an angle which affords the maximum of ease of control and comfort, if the latter

be possible in a race car. In general, it is but truthful to say that this car appears to be much smaller than it really is, and this condition is but the direct result of careful proportioning in the design. Appearance was not emphasized, however, at the expense of any other desirable factors, since the body construction is beefy enough to provide durability and strength, although with the minimum weight possible for such characteristics.

The finish is quite pleasing. The color is vermillion, and as the picture indicates, a great deal of plating was done on the parts that show up most. The plate used is cadmium, except for the radiator shell which is chromium.

In conclusion the writer wishes to state that, these details total up, with the remainder of the job, into a very neat little race car, one which no owner need feel apologetic about when he sets that big new "220" or "255" in.



Top — Side View

Right — Front View

The "Speedway Magazine" of March, 1933 covered the construction details.

Reader Carl Schultz took the identification of John "Ed" Coffey as the driver a bit further and contacted his son, Edward Coffey, who has written a book titled *A Glimpse of Old Monroe* (Connecticut). In it, Coffey included the newspaper article with two photos from October 16, 1933 about the inaugural event at the track you see at the top of this post. The bottom photo was clearly shot in the same setting as in [our earlier post](#) on the car.

As often happens in this field, the answer to one question often brings information to light that might be helpful in another's research. Publisher and racing historian Joseph Freeman, who is working on a book about the racing Duesenbergs, has asked if anyone can provide further information about Fred Meyer's No. 44 Duesenberg from Bridgeport, Connecticut. The *Monroe Speedway* appears to have

been a short-lived operation, as it is not mentioned in any of the books covering old racetracks that we have come across. Can any of our readers tell us more about the track and how long it remained in operation?



The Monroe Speedway, April 1934, courtesy of Kevin Daly.

Update Thanks to reader Kevin Daily who has sent us the photo above and the information below about the track:

"My information came directly from my extensive correspondence with Lois Hurd-Hayden. Lois is Ben's daughter and was the little girl who sat on her daddy's lap bulldozing all those old Yankee stonewalls into the trenches. She has little memory of the active days of the track, other than perhaps selling hot dogs to those in attendance, but she certainly still remembers transforming the track into the airport in the late 30's.

Just below is an aerial image of Monroe Speedway taken in April of 1934. You can see what appears to be the flag man's podium on the eastern straightaway at the mid-track infield. I sent this image to Lois about five years back and she was floored. She'd never seen the image before, nor had our Historical Society or Historian. It caused quite a stir within the Hurd Family and she still stays in touch from time to time from her home in Florida. The speedway/track is a cemetery today but you can still see the northern curve of the track in the grass if you know where to look, and the eastern straightaway is a quiet walking/bike path in the woods.

Remnants of the smaller Huntington Speedway just a mile to the Southeast are also still visible if you know where to look.