



"Poison Lil" on display at the IMRRC. The Maserati V8RI Built in 1936 led the first competitive lap at Watkins Glen in the 1948 "Junior Prix".

Photo: Andrew Zierter

Legendary Cars on Display at the IMRRC during Vintage Grand Prix Weekend in Watkins Glen Sept. 6-9, 2018

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y. (Aug. 29, 2018) - The International Motor Racing Research Center has two rare and historically significant race cars on exhibit starting in early September. The cars will be on display to coincide with the dates of the 2018 Grand Prix Festival taking place on Friday, Sept. 7, and the weekend-long Hilliard United States Vintage Grand Prix at Watkins Glen International. The cars can be seen at the IMRRC Visitors Center at 610 S. Decatur Street in Downtown Watkins Glen. Exhibit hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily with extended event hours on Friday Sept. 7, when the Center will be open until 9 p.m.

Both cars have long and storied careers that directly relate to the history of racing in Watkins Glen.

"Poison Lil," built in 1936, is one of four Maserati V8RIs made. Originally designed by Ernesto Maserati, the V8RI was intended to compete with the German race cars of the

time. After limited success in the European Grand Prix circuit, all four Maseratis went on to race in other venues over the next few decades.

The 1952 OSCA MT4, which will temporarily leave the Center to participate in Friday downtown festival events, is also a product of the Maserati family. O.S.C.A. (Officine Specializzate Costruzione Automobili) was founded by Earnesto Maserati and two of his brothers in 1947. The company made racing and sports cars until 1967. The MT4, the first of OSCA's production models, was incredibly successful at racing venues throughout the world. In fact, one of its most prominent wins was the 12 Hours of Sebring race in 1954 driven by Stirling Moss and Bill Lloyd.

Poison Lil had an amazingly long career racing in the United States. Built as chassis number 4504, it was driven by "Raph" (the Marquis George Raphael Berthenod de las Casas) in the 1936 Vanderbilt Cup in Nassau County on Long Island, New York. It competed again at that race the following year with Mauri Rose behind the wheel. The car was driven by Henry Banks at the the Indianapolis 500 in 1938 and again in '39. After World War II, George Weaver purchased the car for use at Sports Club of America events. Weaver campaigned the car at Watkins Glen from 1948 through 1955. In fact, he led the first competitive lap at Watkins Glen in the 1948 "Junior Prix." Both he and the car later won the Seneca Cup in 1949 and again in 1951.

"These cars have incredible historical context," says IMRRC Visitor Experience Coordinator, Kip Zeiter. "Poison Lil opened the door by leading lap one at Watkins Glen in '48 and the OSCA took the checkered flag at the last completed race in 1952." Zeiter went on to explain that while there was another race, it was never completed due to the accidental death of a fan. "After 1952, racing moved from the streets up the hill to a more closed circuit. It was the end of an era."



#82 Bill Spear in his OSCA on his way to winning the 1952 Queen Catharine Cup Race at Watkins Glen.

Photo: Courtesy of Bill Green

The OSCA MT4 was purchased by William (Bill) C. Spear to race in Sports Car Club of America events. In his first race with the car, Spear took the checkered flag at the 1952 Kimberly Cup race in Elkhart Lake, Wis.

Spear's next race brought the OSCA to Watkins Glen for the SCCA national event on Sept. 20, 1952. In a race shortened due to delays, the number 82 OSCA won the Queen Catharine Cup with an average speed of 72.3 mph.

The Queen Catharine Cup was the second race run that day following the Seneca Cup. In a tragic turn of events, the Watkins Glen Grand Prix which started after Spear's win was not completed. An accident at the start of the second lap took the life of spectator. That led to the cancellation of the race. Therefore, Bill Spear and his OSCA took the final official checkered flag on the streets of Watkins Glen.

Zeiter, while standing within inches of Poison Lil, sums up the significance of being able to show both cars together, "It's really an incredible experience. It's not every day you can get this close to something with this much history."

The Racing Research Center is an archival library dedicated to the preservation and sharing of the history of motorsports, of all series and all venues, through its collections of books, periodicals, films, photographs, fine art and other materials.

For more information about the Center's work and its programs, visit www.racingarchives.org or call (607) 535-9044. The Center also is on Facebook at "International Motor Racing Research Center" and on Twitter at "@IMRRCatWG."

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