



International Motor Racing Research Center
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Watkins Glen, New York 14891
(607) 535-9044 • research@racingarchives.org
racingarchives.org

The International Motor Racing Research Center collects, shares and preserves the history of motorsports. Spanning continents, eras and race series, the Center's extensive historical collection embodies the speed, drama and camaraderie of amateur and professional motor racing throughout the world. The Center welcomes serious researchers and casual fans alike to share the stories captured on our shelves and walls, and brought to life through a regular calendar of public lectures and special events.



Watkins Glen Chamber of Commerce
Schuyler County Visitors' Center
214 North Franklin Street (NYS Route 14)
Watkins Glen, New York 14891
(607) 535-4300 • info@watkinsglenchamber.com
explorewatkinsglen.com

Instrumental in organizing races on the original circuit, the Watkins Glen Chamber continues in its role to promote motorsports and the region's racing heritage. It supports and advocates for its nearly 500 members including local wineries, businesses of all sizes, and non-profit organizations, advancing economic success in the region. The Chamber serves as a resource for the community and for visitors to the area who want to explore the natural beauty, entertainment, cuisine, and culture of the Finger Lakes.



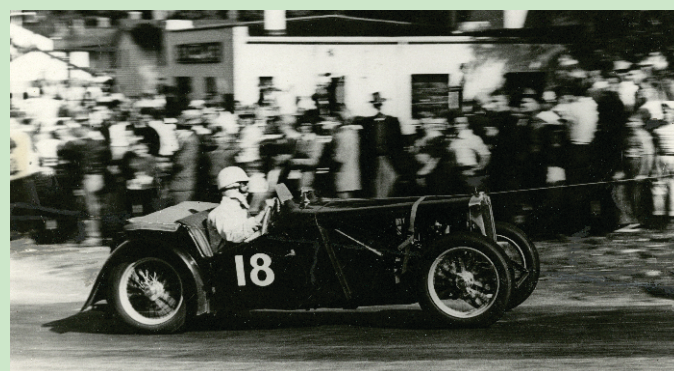
Watkins Glen International
2790 County Route 16
Watkins Glen, New York 14891
(866) 461-RACE (7223) • racing@theglen.com
theglen.com

The first permanent racing circuit, now known as Watkins Glen International, was constructed on Route 16 in the Town of Dix in 1956. Watkins Glen International continues to serve as the venue for racing events and premier motor racing series every race season from April to October.



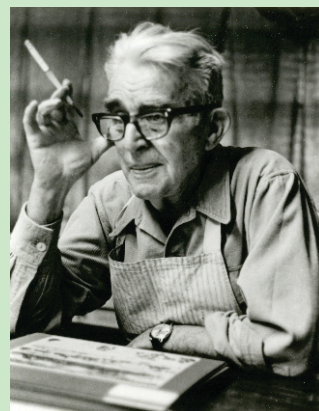
Watkins Glen Grand Prix Festival
c/o Watkins Glen Promotions
211 North Franklin Street
Watkins Glen, New York 14891
(607) 535-3003 • events@watkinsglen.com
grandprixfestival.com

A day-long festival held annually since 1993, the Grand Prix Festival of Watkins Glen celebrates the region's motor racing heritage. A highlight of the Festival is a tribute to the original Grand Prix featuring race cars and drivers roaring around the 6.6-mile historic road course. Join the tribute events on the original start-finish line! Other festivities including the Walk of Fame award ceremony; *"The Legends Speak,"* an interactive panel discussion with racing legends from *"the Glen"*; and a variety of special driving tours and vintage car shows.



"The spark that was struck in 1948 has brought examples of the finest and fastest sports cars in the world to run before a throng among the largest groups of spectators ever assembled in the history of the country." – John Fitch, American race driver who entered races held on the original circuit 1948-1952.

Peter Helck (1893-1988), noted magazine illustrator and motorsports artist, graciously provided the artwork for the covers of the Watkins Glen Grand Prix programs in 1948 and 1949. They are reproduced here on the front of this cover with the kind permission of his family.



Photographs illustrating landmarks on the circuit are from the collection of the International Motor Racing Research Center and the

William Green Motor Racing Library (private collection).

This brochure was made possible through the Tourism Assistance Grant Program of the Watkins Glen Area Chamber as the Tourism Promotion Agency of Schuyler County.



For more information visit racingarchives.org/old-course/

SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF THE ORIGINAL



WATKINS GLEN GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT



"The old circuit, [with] its varied corners and surfaces, made it unsurpassed as a challenge to car and driver." - Cameron R. Argetsinger, designer of the original road course.



Visitors may follow in the tire tracks of America's pioneering road racers by driving the original 6.6-mile circuit through the village of Watkins Glen, around the

spectacular gorge in Watkins Glen State Park, and over surrounding farmland. Markers designate the course, starting at the original start-finish line in front of the Schuyler County Court House on Franklin Street. From 1948 to 1952, cars raced over asphalt, cement, and dirt roads, up and down hills, crossing a stone bridge and the New York Central's rail line along the original circuit's demanding loop.

An "outlandish dream"

On October 2, 1948, Watkins Glen served as the venue for the first post-WWII American road race. This inaugural race attempted revive road racing in the United States, bringing the excitement and prestige of European road racing across the Atlantic. Cameron Argetsinger's outlandish dream of creating an international road racing circuit in the remote Finger Lakes of Upstate New York required the support of local and racing communities to implement. It brought together members of the fledgling Sports Car Club of America, Watkins Glen community leaders, the Chamber of Commerce, and local journalists and boosters. Village automobile garages and car dealerships served as team headquarters and provided technical support. State, county, town, and village governments as well as the park service supported the effort, granting permission to racers to run their cars over roads maintained by multiple jurisdictions. Residents welcomed, housed, and fed visitors; admired the fast, beautifully-designed sports cars; and cheered the racers. It sparked the long

tradition of hosting motorsports events and the racing community in village of Watkins Glen and the surrounding area.

Driving the historic road course

On the National Register of Historic Places, the circuit is largely preserved in its original form. The entire course is now paved, parts of the road widened, and the curves at the White



House 'S' were straightened for the safety of contemporary motorists. New York State Department of Transportation signs along the roadside note mileage and landmarks. The brown markers for the "Watkins

Glen Historic Road Course" are ornamented with a distinctive logo, featuring an outline of the course and Frank Griswold's inaugural race-winning Alfa-Romeo.

Facing south, begin at the start-finish line on Franklin Street (Rt. 14), in front of the Schuyler County Courthouse between 9th and 10th streets. Drive 1/4 mile, crossing the bridge over Glen Creek, to Old Corning Hill Road (Rt. 329) and turn right up the steep hill. Continue straight (bearing left) at the junction with Walnut Road (Rt. 419). Keep to the right at the intersection with Rt. 17, continuing on Townsend Road (Rt. 329) through the White House 'S' and under the railroad underpass to School House Corner at the junction between Townsend, Meads Hill and White's Hollow roads. Take a sharp right downhill on White's Hollow Road to cross Cornett's Stone Bridge and continue on, following the serpentine road to Archy Smith's Corner. Turn right at the 'T' onto Station Road (Rt. 409), going down the straight and over the railroad tracks. Continue this mile-long descent into the village, around the sharp curve at Milliken's Corner, turning right onto Franklin Street at the traffic light, and back to the start-finish line.

For the safety of all, please observe posted speed limits around the circuit and enjoy the landmarks along the original road course at a leisurely pace.

CIRCUIT LANDMARKS

0.0 START-FINISH LINE

The brick memorials on either side of Franklin Street in front of the Schuyler County Courthouse mark the location of the start-finish line for the old circuit. Race officials waved green and

checked flags at this start-finish line from the first race in 1948 to 1952.

0.07 TURN ONE

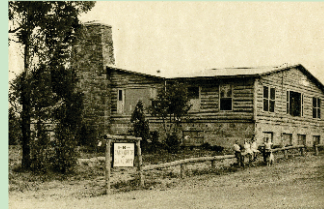
William Milliken, an engineer as well as a racer, wrote about the first turn: "From a driver's viewpoint, nothing can be compared to having been in the midst of that snarling pack as it slid through the 'S' turn off Franklin Street, and accelerated up the long hill."

0.1 OLD CORNING HILL

This steep road starts the 670-foot climb in elevation from Franklin Street to the high point of the course at 1140 feet above sea level.

0.6 TOWNSEND ROAD CORNER

Local roads often derive their names from their end points. The south part of the circuit follows a portion of Townsend Road (Rt. 329) which leads to Townsend, small community in the Town of Dix, located to the west.



0.7 SENECA LODGE
A family-operated restaurant, inn and motorcourt, Seneca Lodge has served as a social center for the racing community since the first road race in 1948. The Lodge's tradition of hosting race teams and fans visiting for events at the track continues today.

1.3 WHITE HOUSE 'S'

This point marks a series of uphill curves near where a white farm house stood in 1948. The original house is no longer there. The name takes poetic license from White House Corner at the Le Mans circuit in France.



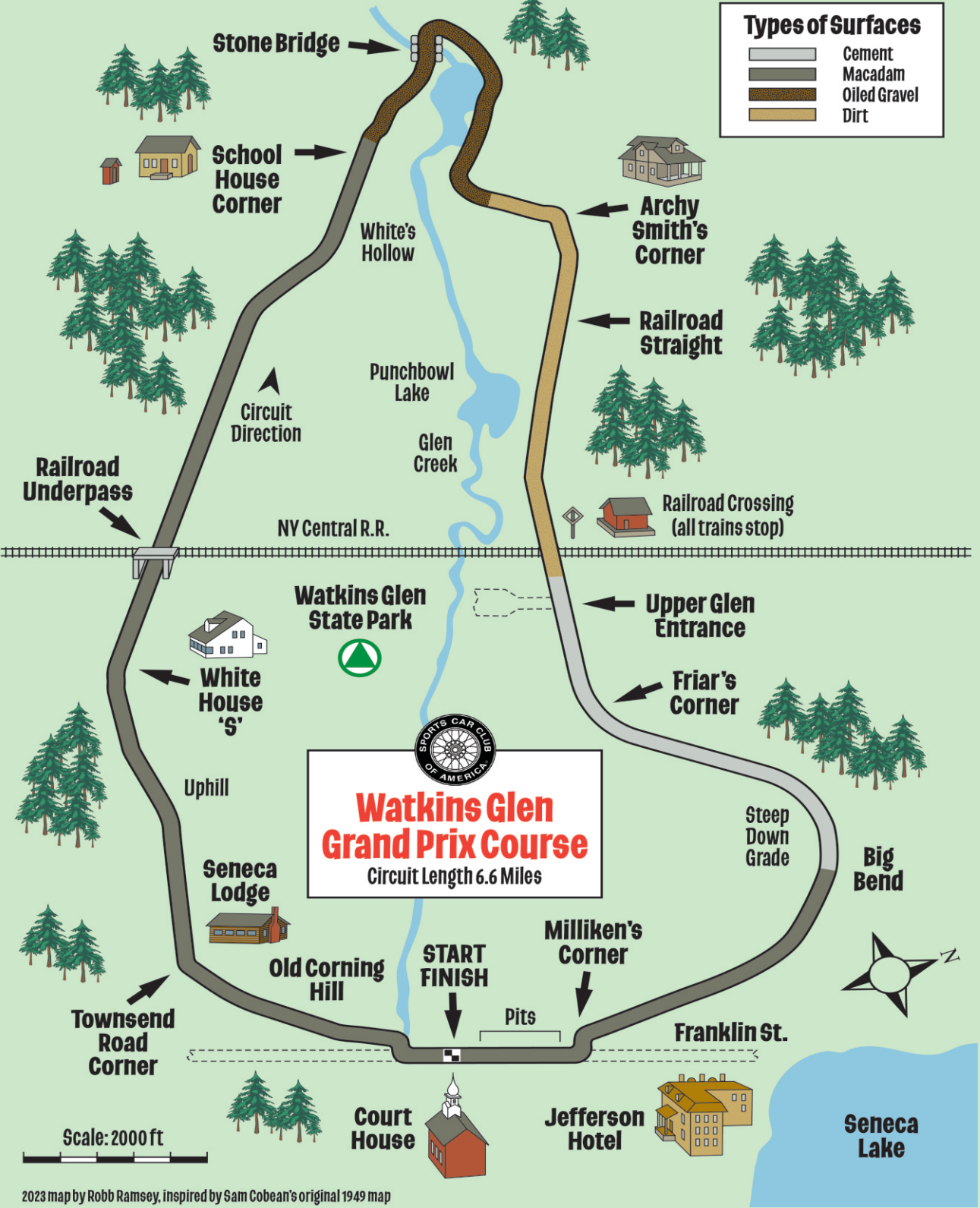
1.6 RAILROAD UNDERPASS

A steel beam and girder bridge carried the New York Central Railroad's trains over the roadway and became a highly sought-after viewing spot for spectators. With the trains temporarily halted during the races, fans crowded the bridge and concrete abutments.



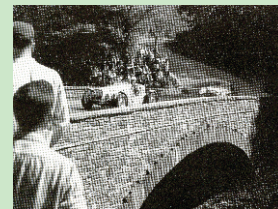
2.3 THE COLLIER MONUMENT

A native granite boulder with a bronze plaque memorializes the victory and tragedy of the Collier brothers, who both raced on the original course. Miles Collier drove a spectacular race in the 1949 Grand Prix, coming from behind to steal the win in the final lap. His younger brother Sam, while leading the Grand Prix in 1950 at over 120 m.p.h., skidded and lost control of his Ferrari, crashing in the adjoining field. He later died of his injuries.



2.7 SCHOOL HOUSE CORNER

This junction marks the start of the dramatic, abrupt descent into White's Hollow. The structure on the knoll on the southwest corner served as the Glen Creek School, a rural one-room schoolhouse. Remodeled, it is now a private residence.



3.0 CORNETT'S STONE BRIDGE

The single-arched fieldstone bridge over Glen Creek became known as Cornett's Stone Bridge after a racing mishap. In the 1948 qualifying race, Denver Cornett flipped his MG into the dry creek bed 20 feet below the bridge. After he was extracted and the car righted, Cornett borrowed parts from his fellow competitors, and was ready to race in the Grand Prix that afternoon.

3.7 ARCHY SMITH'S CORNER

The extant stucco house at the intersection on the left belonged to a dairy farmer named Archy Smith. Smith, like other enterprising property owners on the route, turned their yards into paid parking lots and viewing spots for the growing number of spectators. Attendance for the races swelled annually and was estimated at 10,000 in 1948 to 150,000 on race day in 1952.



4.0 RAILROAD STRAIGHT

Cars went at maximum speed on this stretch, braking for the bump at the railroad tracks that often sent a vehicle airborne. New York Central Railroad's Train Master secured approval to "stop the trains" for the duration of the sports car races, providing safe crossings over the active freight line.



5.0 FRIAR'S CORNER

The descent into the village begins here. The curve received its romantic name from the bordering tract of land, an extensive property occupied by St. Anthony of Padua Minor Seminary & Prep School, a Catholic high school operated by the Order of Friar's Minor from 1949 to 1970.



5.4 BIG BEND

This section of the course presented an inspiring view of Seneca Lake harbor. It offered a breathtaking experience for the driver, with maximum speeds on the downhill descent.

6.2 MILLIKEN'S CORNER

Named for William Milliken, who flipped his Bugatti in the last lap of the 1948 Junior Prix while vying for 3rd place in the last minutes of the race. Milliken landed in the haybales lining the street and crawled out unharmed, to the applause of spectators across the street. "Thrill corner," the tricky turn into the village still marked by the triangular-shaped Flatiron Building, was renamed "Milliken's Corner."



6.6 FINISH LINE

Frank Griswold, driving his 1938 Alfa-Romeo, took the first checkered flags in Watkins Glen, winning both the qualifying race and the inaugural Grand Prix. Twenty-three sports cars gridded for the qualifying race including 9 MG TC midgets, many pre-war European factory-produced cars, and a couple homemade specials. Ten cars finished the arduous course.

