

# Art and the French Grand Prix, 1921

by Gary D. Doyle



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Few races in the history of motor sport have attracted as much interest from automotive artists as has the French Grand Prix of 1921. The artistic focus on the dramatic Duesenberg victory began in 1921 and continues today. What intrigues the artists also motivates automotive historians to investigate this most significant race.

While remembered as part of the “Golden Age” of automobile racing the 1921 Grand Prix was the first “modern” event. Prior to WWI the Grand Prix was the most prestigious race in the world and 1921 was the first running since 1914. It was high drama, at least for the French, given the results of the 1914 race in which Germany finished 1-2-3, and the legendary, national hero Georges Boillot on Peugeot (winner of the 1912 and 1913 races) suffered equipment failure on the last lap of the race. Many historians believe that the Germans used team tactics for the first time in 1914, to wear down the Peugeot entrants, particularly Boillot. Mercedes had five cars in the race and it did appear that they responded to direction from the team leader in the pits. The German victory was less than a month before the outbreak of the Great War and the initial military offensive was to see the German Army 75 miles from Paris before the end of the year. With the difficult Germans banned from participation because of the aftermath of the War, the French believed 1921 would mark their return to automotive racing dominance. That did not happen.

An American car equipped with new technology and a gutsy driver won. This new technology was the in-line 8-cylinder engine, which would dominate racing power plants for the next decade. All but two cars running at Le Mans had this configuration. The 8's first appeared at the 1919 Indianapolis Motor Speedway powering both the major manufacturers, Ballot and Duesenberg, that would contest the 1921 “dust up” in France. As is the case many times in racing, the breakthrough technology did not win the Indy 500 in 1919 or 1920. While the Ballot's were particularly fast, updated 4 cylinder engines powered the victors (a “historic” Peugeot in 1919 and a new Frontenac in 1920) and 1921 saw a Frontenac 8 “steal” the race from the faster Ballot and Duesenberg's in a magnificent drive by Tommy Milton.

Car racing, at this time, like today, was an international sport and Europe had routinely sent equipment and drivers to America to contest Indianapolis, on

purse of any race in the world. (\$20,000 to the winner) European drivers and or cars had won from 1913 to 1919. Perhaps the most colorful was Jules Goux (a driver at Le Mans) who won in 1913 by a wide margin and refreshed himself with Champagne at his numerous pit stops! Vive la France! There were some instances of American's racing in Europe, but no cars or teams until 1921. Since 1920 the engine formula was the same for both Europe and America at 183 cid or 3 liters. The stage was set for an



Fig. 1 Jules Goux at one of his many stops. Fred Stout

American effort in Europe and Duesenberg took up the challenge. To win a formula grand prix race with a 100% American car and driver, historically never duplicated, was significant. Shortly after 1921, the racing on both continents would diverge and neither European nor American cars would be competitive out of their unique venues, board tracks and ovals here and road racing there.

The artist's have recognized and depicted the 1921 contest as part of the “heroic” age of motor racing. The cars and drivers were accessible and revealed in a way that contemporary racer's suffer by comparison. Big plastic helmets, corporate logo's, ground effects, and chassis attachments obscure today's subject matter and as a result they are not as interesting. There is something compelling about unprotected drivers who we see manhandling vintage machinery on courses that were not perfect, doing there own pit work, because the rules required it, and the show was all out in the open for us to see.

The artists have found the mixture of history, drama and subject matter compelling. Every historically significant automotive painter has contributed to the mix and many have fashioned multiple images. They are beautiful to view as

mix and many have fashioned multiple images. They are beautiful to view as art and interesting historical documents. Only Gordon Crosby, Bryan De Grineau and Peter Helck had the opportunity to be on hand for the race. The rest of the artists have had to rely on contemporary photographs for inspiration. While drawing and painting car details, road conditions, the crowd, buildings, atmosphere and course particulars the artists have functioned as historians by selecting what facts to present and interpret. Cumulatively, while not traditional history, these interpretations begin to give a feeling for the cars, competition, drivers, atmosphere and the times. The art also overlay's emotion and feel that photograph's don't convey.

Historians generally do not rely on art to tell and support their story. They are much more accustomed to printed records that help supply the narrative line, though pictures can help the story by illustrating basic facts and answering who, what, and where questions. Also, the technical requirements of printing works against the inclusion of artwork in most accounts because of cost. When paintings are included it is usually isolated from the text in a special section of the publication. The circumstances and interests of the recorder, of course, result in an interpretation. Before discussing the artwork, a brief summary of the race follows for context.

## The Race

It was decided that Duesenberg would contest the 1921 race sometime in 1920 or early 1921. The entry fee's had been paid as of March 1, 1921. Four cars were manufactured in Elizabeth, New Jersey and finished at the new Duesenberg factory in Indianapolis, Indiana. They were then shipped to France and driven from Le Harve to Le Mans. The drivers were all on hand by mid-July and practice commenced. The entered cars at this point were Duesenberg (4), Ballot (4), STD (7), Mathis, (1) and FIAT (3). Neither all of the teams nor all the cars made the start. FIAT withdrew at the last minute because of political turmoil in Italy and STD had numerous problems, which resulted in only 4 of the 7 cars making the show.

Practice indicated that the Duesenberg's were quick and both Joe Boyer and Jimmy Murphy, two of their four drivers, were turning laps at over 84 mph. The Ballot and Sunbeam, Talbot and Darracq (STD) cars were also fast. The race was run on Monday, July 25, 1921 and was for 30 laps or 321.78 miles. The cars went away in two's from a standing start at 30-second intervals. Duesenberg went to the front early and had part of or the lead from lap 1 to lap 12. Boyer (car #6) was tied with Ralph De Palma (car #1) who was driving

a Ballot, at the end of lap one. Jimmy Murphy (car #12) gained the lead on lap 2 and held it until a pit stop on lap 12. He was pressed by Jean Chassagne (car #8) driving a Ballot who then led from lap 12 to the end of 17 when he retired with a broken car. Murphy regained the lead and held it to the end though not without problems in the form of flat tires and a punctured radiator towards the end of the race. Jimmy Murphy won with an average speed of 78.1 mph with a lap record of 83.2 mph, which lasted on this course until 1930. The second place car a Ballot, with Ralph De Palma driving, was 15 minutes behind. Jules Goux was third in a Ballot, was the first French driver to finish and had no time for champagne this trip. The STD cars proved to be uncompetitive because of their tires which did not hold up well on the course. Henry Segrave, one of their drivers and future winner of this race in 1923, and Land Speed Record holder, changed tires 9 times.

All the cars had brakes on all four wheels. The Duesenberg's had hydraulic versions made by Lockheed, of future airplane fame, and most consider it the American cars competitive advantage. The brakes were so effective stopping the cars it allowed the four Duesenberg drivers, Murphy, Boyer, Guyot and Dubonnet to drive much deeper into corners. Murphy was particularly adept at the technique and could pass others as they applied their mechanical brakes approaching the turns. All the machines had straight 8 engines save the Mathias and Goux's Ballot, which had 4 cylinders. The Goux car was a substitution because one of the 8 cylinder Ballots had been destroyed in practice. The principle problem during the race was the course itself. The roads, never fully recovered from the military activity of WWI, quickly disintegrated from the pounding delivered by the cars. The surface was strewn with rocks, some the size of tennis balls, which battered the machinery and the participants unmercifully. Two mechanics were actually knocked unconscious during the race. Looking at the paintings and pictures one has to wonder how the participants ever were able to race and attain the speeds they recorded on this surface. They were routinely going over 100 mph in some sections of the course. A "heroic" race for the ages and the artist's.

## The Legend

Frederick Gordon Crosby was born in 1885 and died in 1943, chronically ill and despondent over the death of his son in World War II. From 1908 to his death he was the house artist for *The Autocar*. He was working at the beginning of the automotive era and matured with the industry. While he had no formal training as an artist, engineering and drafting were in his background. It allowed him to be technically accurate and have a mechanical feel for the

subject matter. His color paintings were done in special portfolios called *The Endless Quest for Speed*, that were published as supplements to the magazine. These gouache, conte and wash drawings captured the feel for the era and the special circumstances of each race. Fig. 2 is an example of such work. He emphasized powerful machines with big long hoods, heroic drivers and would occasionally include onlookers to focus attention. This color painting was done circa 1922. It accurately reflects the tree-lined course, the road surface and the livery of the #12 car. It could have been at anytime during the race. Murphy is seen having passed Jules Goux and the luckless Segrave in



Fig. 2

the background.

Most of Crosby's work was done for *The Autocar* though he did some commissions. There are some 400 examples of his work in existence. Peter Garnier, who was an editor of *The Autocar*, and wrote *The Art of Gordon Crosby*, says that Crosby always liked the less finished look of the charcoal sketches. The magazine covered everything about cars: camping, racing, advertisements, vehicles for sale, new technology, car shows and the like. These articles would occasionally be accompanied with drawings. Fig. 3 and 4 are examples. They forcefully and successfully convey the sensation of movement and speed. Fig.3 is at Arnage corner and captures sometime during the race when Murphy and Boyer in their Duesenbergs catch Ralph De Palma in the Ballot and pass him. Fig.3 shows Murphy dueling with Segrave and is probably on the same corner. Both cars have come sweeping into the turn, kicking up rock, dust and mayhem. Both cars are depicted technically correct in the loose style of the

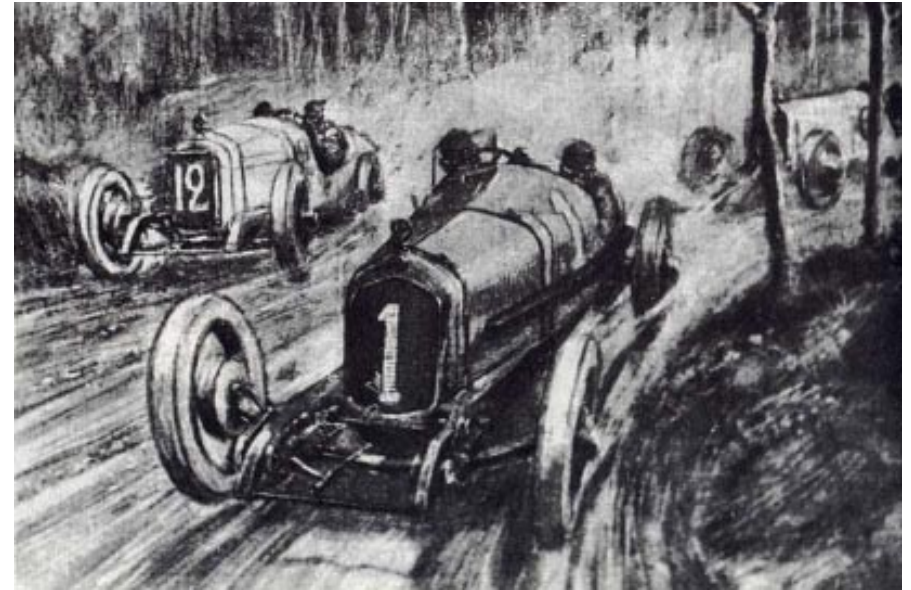


Fig. 3

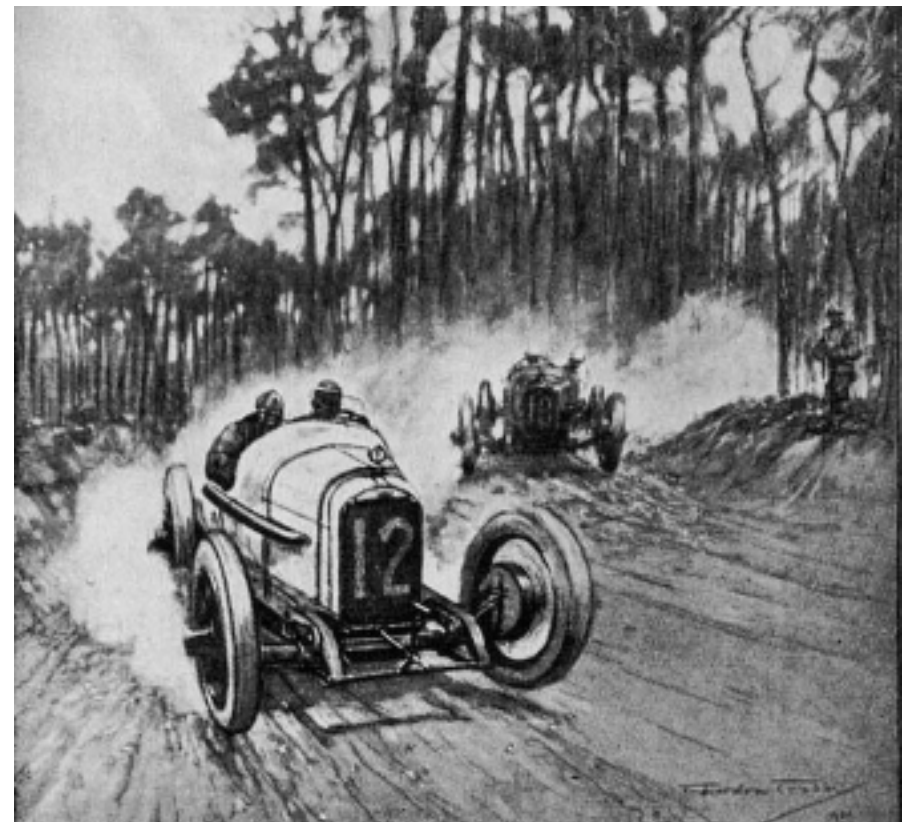


Fig. 4

charcoal sketch. This particular scene was reproduced by Duesenberg and appeared in their first sales brochure for the Model "A" passenger car. It was described as "the first and only American car to win a European Classic."

The pencil sketches by Crosby were done to meet a publishing deadline. In the case of *The Autocar* it was at the newsstands on the Friday following race weekend. Because of a deadline the drawings had to be preplanned with the most likely corners sketched beforehand and the details of the car action filled in either by observation or descriptions from spectators. Because *The Autocar* had the most circulation of any of the motor magazines, Gordon Crosby was and is perhaps the best known motoring artist of his or any era.

## The Baron

John D. Bryan worked on the staff of *The Motor*, which was the rival publication to *The Autocar*. As well known as Crosby, two contemporaries, he did not leave as many images behind and as a result is not as widely known today. Bryan was born in 1882 and died in 1957. *The Motor* published on Tuesday and he was even more rushed to get his drawings completed to meet this deadline. He would literally be sketching in the pits.

Bryan changed his name, at his wife's suggestion, to Bryan de Grineau in 1918 for professional reasons. His wife felt it sounded better. Because of a



Fig. 5

mix-up at a hotel registration desk when a clerk made a mistake and thought he was a royal, many of his travelling companions began calling him "Baron". De Grineau never published large collections of colored prints like Crosby so we are left with pencil drawings for the most part. He was as technically competent as Crosby and just as dramatic. The car looks correct, the roadway and trees are certainly as others depict them and there are people for scale and interest. Unfortunately this is all we have by de Grineau on the French Grand Prix. D. B. Tubbs in *Art and the Automobile* talks about de Grineau as very personable and in the motor scene for the companionship and travel as much as anything. Tubbs describes a couple of trips to the South of France where de Grineau was as much interested in the performing arts and peripheral events as the racing. Bryan had a vast network of acquaintances and friends that he apparently got around to on a regular basis. There are several other examples of his work in *Art and the Automobile*.

## The British Master

Regarding paintings of the French Grand Prix, 1921, Roy Nockolds has been the most prolific of the professionals discussed here. He completed five that I can trace and there may be more. Four are included here.

Nockolds was born on London in 1911 and died at 68 years of age, after a short illness in 1979. He was self-taught as an artist, much like those that went before him. He was also an illustrator, which seems to be a common theme with the automotive artist's, then as well as now. He worked for a time with both *The Autocar* and *The Motor*. He is most known for his oil paintings though pencil sketches do exist. He was getting his pictures on motoring art published as early as 1926. Nockolds had a very productive career, was collected by corporations and individuals all over the world and was as well known for aeronautical paintings as for the cars.

During World War II he painted battle scenes for the military and the general information of the public. His most productive time for car painting was after the war. His special focus was on the movement of racing cars at speed. He never did much on the static views of cars in the pits, for example. He seldom dated his work so one is left to guess approximate times pieces were painted. He was influenced by Gordon Crosby, as many British automotive artists have been. As well as cars at speed he was particularly good with light. (See Fig.11). Fig.6 & 7 I believe were painted before the other work shown here. Roy Nockolds was meticulous with research on cars and races in order to get



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

details right. In Fig.7, for example, he paints the bodywork crack that developed on Murphy's car from all the pounding it took from the road surface. This is on the side of the car below the steering wheel. He renders the driving uniforms and helmets, livery of all the cars, the road surface, buildings and chassis configurations all correctly.

He is the first artist to use photographs for inspiration. He has to have seen the series of photographs done on the race by Agence De Reportage Photographique, "Meurisse". (Frederick Usher, a contemporary automotive historian talks about this collection in Griffith Borgeson's book *The Golden Age of the American Racing Car*, 2ed. in appendix VIII, though under the name of the Branger Collection.) The photo in Fig.8 or one like it has to have been the model for the painting at Pontlieue Corner (Fig.7). Nockolds adds other cars and places the people differently. Chassagne and Segrave once again trail. Andre Dubonnet, gentleman driver extraordinaire, resplendent in a blue silk uniform and cap, follows.



Fig. 8

Dubonnet had originally bought one of the STD rides (reportedly for 1000 pounds or about \$4100 in 1921 dollars.) but his car was not going to make the starting line. He then made a deal (more money, reportedly \$5,000) with Duesenberg to replace Louis Inghibert, gentleman driver, who had been hurt in practice. Inghibert had paid 50% of the entire Duesenberg entry fee to the Grand Prix for the privilege of being one of the *chauffeurs*. He wound up in a ditch with Murphy and his car on top of him. Jimmy was giving him a few on course pointers because in practice he had not been as fast as the professional drivers. Murphy was also hurt and started the race being taped from his armpits to his waist. Dubonnet finished fourth. Anyone for a "Dubonnet"? Fig. 9 shows another view of a corner with the same car lineup which shows action and

movement and the cars in close competition. Jean Chassagne and Henry Segrave must be getting tired of this. I believe Nockolds best painting of the 1921 race is Fig.11 of Murphy at *Maison Blanche*. It captures everything he was trying to execute with his later paintings. His representational style leaning towards soft impressionism captures the excitement of road racing. The light plays on the ground, the hood of the car and buildings. He highlights the motion and attitude of the car. He controls the focus of the foreground and background elements to emphasize the car's speed and motion. Altogether, a wonderful piece that in my mind is every bit as good as his acknowledged masterpiece, Richard Seaman in the Mercedes winning the 1938 German



Fig. 9

Grand Prix. (See *Art and the Automobile*, p.105) Chassagne trails again and I believe the painting is based on the photograph in Fig.10. The scene is rendered from a different angle but everything from the fence to the vine growing on the roof is the same. While interpreting the facts of this piece of roadway Roy Nockolds has not trashed the historical scene while giving us his impressions in an emotional way with artistic insight. There is no comparison between the photo and painting as to which makes you feel more a part of the action.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

## The American Master

Peter Helck was born in New York City in 1893 and lived until 1988. He is one of the central figures in automotive art. He had a very long career compared to Crosby and Nockolds and a productive one. He estimated his lifetime production of oils, sketches, and prints to be between 3500 and 5000 pieces.

He learned his trade as an illustrator working in New York and Europe. He drew for *The Autocar* and throughout his life, worked on advertising campaigns for such clients as Mack Trucks, General Motors, Campbell Soups and others. He occasionally illustrated books and articles for friends. An example is Fig.12 which appeared in an article by W. F. Bradley on Ernest Ballot, his cars and the French Grand Prix of 1921. The article was in the September, 1959 issue of *Sports Car Illustrated*. This is a detail from a larger black-and-white drawing.



Fig. 12

His paintings tend to be classical in feel and character with tightly controlled lighting, form and color. He admired others who painted in a more impressionistic style but he never moved in that direction. On Walter Gotschke, who painted Fig.13, Helck said after looking at a 1963 article on his work in *Automobile Quarterly*, “This thrilling display knocked me flat. Here was a chap who certainly knew cars but was in no way inhibited by this knowledge, no stagnating of his intuitive and dashing application of pigment. For him verve, movement, the aspect of speed are impulsively projected, achieved in a frenzy of haste, yet the cars, also rendered with consistent daring, are immediately identifiable. Gotschke and I became pen pals, exchanged sketches and



Fig. 13

gossip.” I guess we could all agree this is a fair assessment of Gotschke’s style! The quotation was from Helck’s autobiography; *Seventy-Five Years with Palette, Paintbrush and Wheels* published in a number of issues of *The Bulb Horn*; more on the autobiography later.

Peter Helck wrote two histories of auto racing, which he also illustrated. *The Checkered Flag* and *Great Auto Races* are accounts of early American racing from 1895 through 1916 in the case of *The Checkered Flag* and all topics to about the 1960’s in *Great Auto Races*. They are magnificent, well researched samples of his work. No other artist has left as complete a record and with a history bonus. The research that is evident in the stories contained in these books and what he did prior to painting is impressive. I am sure the historian in Peter Helck caused him to paint with such authenticity to details; the cars, costume, people and backgrounds. While getting the details right he interprets with power. His racing cars depict flat-out action. Driver and mechanic are intensely focused on their jobs with dirt and oil flying. “Peter’s depictions of various racing events...all bear certain similarities: skidding cars, flying gravel, intent drivers, hunched mechanics and excited spectators. Speed and action were very special to him, and he made the most of



Fig. 14

both.” ( Marvin ). Fig.14 embodies it all. Poor Jean Chassagne, again... This picture was painted in 1967 for a Humble Oil calendar presumably published in 1968. The painting speaks for itself, and it is interesting to note the moving picture camera platform. The race had extensive coverage with this relatively new medium. In terms of composition, color, road-surface, attitude of the cars, the dust, costumes, and crowd and above all, accuracy, Fig.14 is a great painting. You can feel the speed and the intensity of Murphy and Olson. The crowd is a little laid back, Mon Dieu! we are not winning! Fig.15 is a preparatory sketch for the Humble Oil calendar piece.



Fig. 15

Helck’s autobiography, *Seventy-Five Years...* is a disappointment. It could have been so much better and revealed more about him. It lacks any in-depth discussion of his style, focused point of view and conclusions as to his significance. It meanders along talking about his travels, commissions and the like. Only occasionally does it offer any insights into his contemporaries.

Refer to the observation on Walter Gotschke quoted earlier. More often, it is like his comment on Carlo Demand, who will appear shortly: “Two of Gotschke’s countrymen deserve comment, and their work also seems less Teutonic than French in spirit, Hans Liska and Carlo Demand. Both have done notable work for Mercedes-Benz. Both have that ‘done-with-ease’ magic one hesitates to associate with the German temperament.”? Demand, while born in Germany, had French parents and was an American citizen by 1951. Maybe Peter Helck did not know this. Throughout the autobiography, Helck really does not delve into any detail on whom he studied under and influenced his style. He does mention the racing prints of E. Montaut, a French illustrator known for his watercolors of early automobile racing. He admired the delicate shades of color and the brute action Montaut rendered. He also mentions the masters at the Prado! The whole thing is like a travelogue punctuated with either lunch or dinner with friends or whom he was working for at the time. There is little in-depth insight into his art, soul or character, though we know him to be a kind, gentle, man. Maybe the autobiography was not intended to discuss these things. It does display a prodigious amount of his artwork. The range is astonishing and with the two books provides a reasonable *Catalogue*

*Raisonne* of his work. Unfortunately, because of cost, the art was not printed in color. Someone should edit the autobiography to tighten it up, re-assemble the art and re-publish in full color. Peter Helck is the giant in automotive art. He was most comfortable with the “heroic” age with its big, powerful machines and men to match. He, like many automotive artists, could not become very excited about today’s more obscured machines and drivers.

## Carlo Demand



Fig. 16

Carlo Demand has done one color painting on the French Grand Prix, 1921, which is in a private collection. Fig.16., a charcoal sketch, was probably based on the famous photograph that most accounts of the race include of the winning Duesenberg crossing the finish line with Ernie Olson’s arm in the air and the track official waving the big flag. Demand’s sketch is in his book of racing drawings called *Motor Racing Sketchbook* and also, *La Grande Course: L’Histoire Des Grande Prix Automobiles*. He was born in 1921 in Frankfurt, Germany and died in early 2000. He had French parents and was an American citizen since 1951.

He studied at the Stadel Academy of Art in Frankfurt and later worked as a freelance artist illustrating stories in magazines and daily newspapers. Sound

familiar? It seems this has been the path most of the automotive artists have taken. He also worked as the civilian graphics chief for the United States Army Special Services in Europe in the 1950's.

In addition to *Motor Racing Sketchbook* he has illustrated a number of books on other topics such as airplanes and tanks. He has also published several coloring books based on his sketches. The airplane book, *Conquerors of the Air: The Evolution of Aircraft, 1903-1945*, is very interesting. The illustrations are very dramatic. Carlo's drawings have been published in *Motor Trend*, *Hobby*, *L'Auto Journal*, *Motor Revue* and many others.

### Fred Stout

Fred Stout has been painting as a professional motor-sports artist for over ten years. He is represented in corporate and private art collections around the country. Prior to painting full time he was working as a commercial artist and racing automobiles. He is the only artist represented who has been on the business end of a racecar steering wheel. His career came to an abrupt end with an accident in 1990. He was seriously injured and wears an eye patch as a lingering result. He humorously calls himself "America's Foremost One-eyed Historic Motor-sports Artist." I guess we shouldn't argue I don't know of another. As a driver he had 79 wins at various levels of racing. His art has been published in *Open Wheel*, *Road and Track*, *Sports Car International*, *Victory Lane* and has appeared in articles in the Sebring and Indianapolis 500 programs.

On historic subject matter he works from black-and-white photographs for reference but try's not to duplicate or compete with them. He strives for correct details and is on the realist side of things. He has painted several images of the French Grand Prix, 1921. Mostly they are side views of Murphy in various corners' or at speed. The painting included here is much more dramatic in terms of composition, attitude of the cars and action. Fred claims the image was inspired from a segment that was in the Shell series, *A History of Motor Racing*. The cars are in a full dirt track type cross-wheel slide. There were probably several corners where this was possible and some of the Nockolds paintings allude to it in that Murphy is loose. Who wouldn't be given the country dirt roads they were racing on? Other details in this painting worth noting are the white trees that appear in many of the contemporary photo-



Fig. 17

graphs and I believe were done to support posters and advertising for the race, the picket fencing that was used out on the course as opposed to the wood barricades used in the corners, the Pirelli banner signage that seemed to be everywhere, the dirt banking in the corner and of course Jean Chassagne.

Pirelli was the best tire in a race where tires proved to be important. As mentioned earlier, the STD team had a great deal of trouble with their selection, Dunlop. The Duesenbergs used Oldfield Cords and they proved to be good enough. While De Palma and his Ballot visited the pits on occasion, it was not to change tires. They were using Pirelli's. As to Jean Chassagne, he led the race from lap 12 through 17 and his car was fast and well prepared. The pounding from the road ultimately dislodged the fuel tank dropping it on the propeller-shaft. The hole it created could not be repaired. Chassagne was out of the race. The French fans in the grandstands went crazy. His, along with Joe Boyer, driving the #6 Duesenberg, was the most competitive car to Murphy's.

## Peter Hearsey



Fig. 18

Peter Hearsey is the only artist included here to focus on a Ballot car instead of the Duesenberg of Jimmy Murphy. This particular car, driven by Louis Wagner finished in seventh place. Wagner was a great driver and was picked up at the last minute by Ernest Ballot when the FIAT cars did not run. Hearsey's style is very impressionistic.

Everything is recognizable and all the details are correct on the car, including where the spare wheel is being carried. The Duesenbergs did not carry one as was customary for road racing cars at this time. In practice they found out that it was quicker to drive the car on the rim to the pits if a tire disintegrated rather than stop on course to change. The only Ballot car to not carry the spare wheel was the American driver Ralph De Palma. One of the few arguments he won with Ernest Ballot. In the end it did not make much difference since the only entry changing a lot of tires was STD. Hearsey really has control of his subject matter and his style conveys power, speed and motion in a very unique way.

Peter Hearsey was born in 1944 and lives on the Isle of Man. His background is as a commercial artist. He attended Kingston-upon-Hull College in their fine arts program studying illustration, etching and graphic design. He started a small advertising agency in 1977 on the Isle of Man, which he sold in 1991.

“Hearsey derives much of his inspiration from studying old books and photographs, particularly racing scenes.” (Zolomij ) The photograph seen here is the basis for the painting in Fig.18. This is taken at the *Maison Blanche* section of the course and is most instructive as to the roadway. Nockolds, if you remember, in



Fig. 19

Fig.11 has this spot from a slightly different perspective. Hearsey has added some people for interest but has rendered the scene fairly closely. His handling of the road is very good and projects power and speed much more satisfactorily than the photograph

Peter Hearsey us a member of the Guild of British Motoring Artists and shows regularly with the Automotive Fine Art Society (AFAS) at Pebble Beach.

## Barry Rowe

The cover art, “The Duesenbergs Invade!” is the work of English artist Barry Rowe. He is a much respected and popular motorports artist who is a

member of the Automotive Fine Arts Society. He displays regularly at Pebble Beach and painted the 1998 and 1999 *Concours* posters. Rowe has been a fulltime automotive artist since he won the prestigious Transport Trust Competition at Sotheby's in 1994. Barry was raised in Coventry, England and studied graphic design there at The College of Art. He worked in advertising agencies and illustration for over 30 years before pursuing full time the painting that he loves.

Rowe has stated that the effects of light and shade around cars are what inspire him. Most of his paintings are period scenes with crowds of people around racing machines. He handles dawn and dusk particularly well. The cover piece contains all these elements. Barry uses photographs, like most of

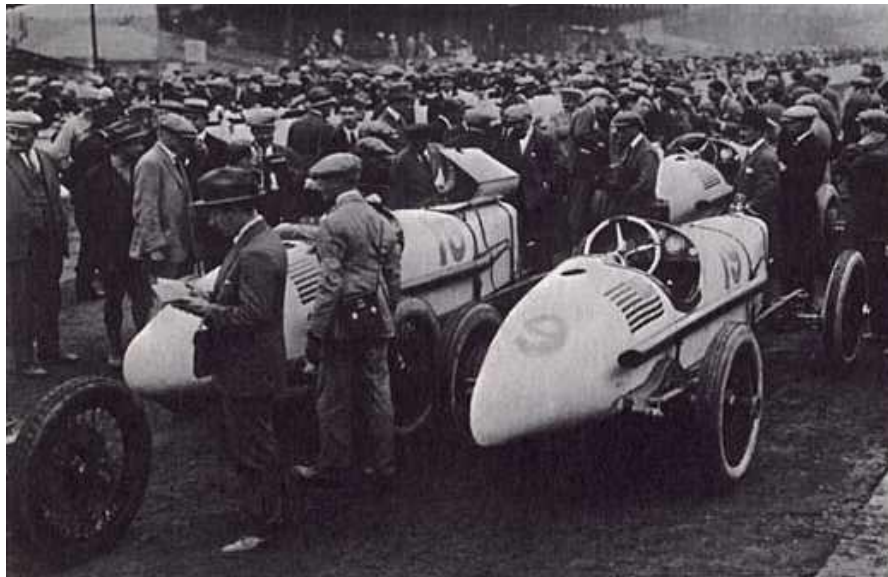


Fig. 20

the artists here, for research on scenes he intends to do and freely changes details to interpret his painting. The details of the car, period dress and atmosphere are usually not affected. His work is almost Art Deco in feel, though Jonathan Stein sees a combination of “strokes and under-painted colors of impressionism with Art Deco influences.” He paints primarily with acrylics on canvas and prepares part of the surface with black or dark paint, which leads to some very interesting effects.

Barry is best at depicting the days when racecars smelled of castor oil and the fans as well as drivers were properly attired. It does not show in any of the images in this article but Jimmy Murphy and Ernie Olson began and ended a 321-mile race, which lasted 4 hours, 7 minutes and 11.4 seconds in shirt and tie! All the drivers did. The last image is just recently finished by Barry Rowe and shows the Murphy car, (looking, to me, a lot like the car painted by Gordon Crosby in Fig.2) at speed somewhere on the course with the crowd looking on.



Fig. 21

So we come full circle from the first artist to the last. This race was almost 80 years ago and still captures our interest and attention. It was one of the greatest automobile races of all time. It was a technological departure from what had gone before, was won by an American Car and Driver, a car that would add a phrase to the English language and in an age that has come to be called the “Roaring Twenties”. This was a defining moment in an era that was filled with dramatic sporting events and personalities. It also may be one of the last major professional sporting contests that did not have prize money associated with it, required an entry fee and all the winners received for their considerable efforts was a mere medal. Griffith Borgeson in *The Golden Age of the American Racing Car* has said that if they made a movie no one would believe it. It was a “Duesey!”

## Bibliography

There are not many sources on the individual artists mentioned in the article. They have not written autobiographies, for the most part, and collections of their paintings or sketches have not been published. Most of the relevant material is found in periodical literature and most of it in *Automobile Quarterly* or *Automotive Fine Art*, the journal of the Automotive Fine Arts Society (AFAS). There are a couple of useful survey type books noted below. Some artists have illustrated their own or others' publications. Peter Helck and Carlo Demand are the most notable in this regard. It is interesting to look at these to develop a sense and feel for the artists range of work and to see where their efforts on the French Grand Prix, 1921, fit into their overall production.

**Browning, Ken**, "Peter Helck", *Autographics*, summer, 1977.

**Campbell, Shaun**, "The Art of Autocar and Motor" *Haymarket Magazines, LTD*, September 4, 1991. A good article on the sketches done by Crosby and De Grineau in the *Autocar* and *Motor*. Gives insight on how they had to work to meet deadlines.

**Clark, Tony**, "Roy A. Nockolds: The English Artist. His Work and Career", *Automotive Fine Art*, Number 24, 1998. Basic coverage of Nockolds career and the article is illustrated with his best work.

**Davidson, James West and Lytle, Mark Hamilton**, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1982. Interesting book on historiography and how historians use various sources including photographs and paintings.

**Demand, Carlo**, *Motor Racing Sketchbook*, Foulis, London, 1956. A collection of Demand's sketches on motor racing. Hard to find

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**Stein, Jonathan**, "Light fantastic: Automotive Artist Barry Rowe", *Autoweek*, April 10-16, 2000. More analysis of Rowe's style and subject matter.

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