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MISSION STATEMENT

A) To discover, identify, gather, preserve, and display documents, records, items, etc. pertaining to eastern auto racing facilities, competitors, personalities or events.

B) To assist writers to publish and/or research articles regarding historical eastern auto racing topics.

Our organization collects & displays articles dealing with any eastern auto racing facilities for any racing enthusiast to enjoy. Please consider either joining our organization or contributing to our projects.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

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AREA OF INTEREST: _____

_____ \$25 SUPPORTER
Non-voting supporter of the mission statement of the EARHS. Admission to showroom by appointment.

_____ \$40 INTERNATIONAL
Non-voting international supporter with basic benefits.

_____ \$250 CORPORATE SUPPORTER
Corporate supporters are non-voting supporters whose contribution to the EARHS will be permanently noted in the EARHS showroom. Contributions will be used to develop additional displays, catalog information collected, and to defray expenses in pursuit of the mission statement.

PLEASE MAIL TO:

EARHS, P.O. BOX 333, OREFIELD, PA 18069
Make checks payable to EARHS.

For additional information
call 610 395-5303 or 610 398-2188

**EARHS is recognized as a federally tax exempt charity by the IRS under section 510c(3).

EARHS
P.O. Box 333
Orefield, PA 18069



Eastern Auto Racing
Historical Society

Newsletter Vol. XVI 2019 Ed. #3

So what event from eighty years ago still affects some of us today?



Williams Grove Speedway opener - 1939

In the fall of 1937 local big car owner, Emmett Shelley, convinced Roy Richwine, owner of Williams Grove Park in Mechanicsburg, PA, the vacant field across the road from his amusement park was the perfect spot to construct a half mile dirt track dedicated to auto racing. Richwine was convinced the racing venue could not only attract more visitors to Williams Grove Park, but also stand on its own as a top tourist attraction in the Harrisburg, PA area.

By the spring of 1939, the half mile dirt was ready and Tommy Hinnershitz made his first of many entries into the Williams Grove record books by taking the May 21st AAA big car feature event before a standing room only crowd. After a three-year government hiatus to preserve essential war supplies (6-'42 through 8-'45), the AAA national stars and the passionate crowds returned to the 'Grove'. In 1947 lights for night racing, a pedestrian tunnel under turn one, and the iconic pedestrian bridge across the backstretch were added.

In the 1950s AAA sprint car, midget, and occasional championship car programs dominated the Williams Grove schedule and when the United States Auto Club took over for AAA in 1956, the best open wheel drivers in the country continued to appear before the PA fans.

On the local level, jalopy stocks had top billing on Friday nights in the early 1950s. The stock cars transitioned into cut-down square coupes, then on to 30"x90" supermods, or 'bugs', with unlimited engines, and finally on to full-blown sprint cars. The pits were



Tommy Hinnershitz was a fan favorite at 'The Grove' from his opening day win in 1939 to his retirement in 1960.

By the 1960s Friday night sprint car fields swelled to over sixty top teams battling for 24 feature event starting spots. In 1963 'The Grove' invited the nation's best sprint car and supermodified teams for the 100-lap Williams Grove National Open. Michigan racer, Gordon Johncock, was the first winner of the classic and went on to score two Indianapolis '500' victories.

Through the '60s, '70s, and '80s the weekly Friday night programs of winged sprint cars were hailed as some of the best in the nation. Local racers like Ray Tilley, Bobby Adamson, Johnnie Mackinson, Bobby Hersh, Mitch Smith, Smokey Snellbaker, Lynn Paxton, Steve Smith, Kramer Williamson and dozens of other local talents held the fort against invaders from across the nation like Jan Opperman, Kenny Weld, Bobby Allen, Doug Wolfgang, Bobby Davis, Jr., Van and Dub May, Ralph Parkinson, Jr., David James, Herman Wise and many more.

When the World of Outlaws visited 'The Grove' with plans to snatch all the money, the locals formed the 'PA Posse' to defend local honor and retain as much of the purse money for PA-based sprint car teams. When the USAC sprint cars came to town, few locals were ready to take off the wings and join them. The notable exception was Mitch Smith, who joined the fray on a temporary permit and left the USAC national stars in a state of shock, winning several events with bone-chilling performances to post popular wingless wins.

While many speedways have difficulties transitioning to a new generation of headliners, the '90s, and 2000s gave the Williams Grove faithful new stars to cheer. Keith Kauffman, Fred Rahmer, Lance Dewease, Don Kreitz, Jr., Billy Pauch, Chris Eash and others became the standard bearers for the Beer Hill Gang and traveled to many of the top sprint car venues in the country to serve as PA ambassadors to the sport.

Williams Grove Speedway continues to maintain its 'must see' status for sprint car fans from all over the world, not just the USA. In addition to its weekly sprint car programs, 'The Grove' has continued to present midgets, late models, super sportsmen, as well as World of Outlaws and All-Stars sprint car programs and USAC champ dirt car events. If you haven't been, make it happen at your earliest opportunity.

EARHS Fall Open House Sunday, October 27, 2019

10 am – 5 pm

5080 Kernsville Road, Orefield, PA 18069



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From Freddy's family, friends, and fans



Your monetary support in any denomination or donations of historically significant items, photos, documents, etc. toward projects undertaken by the EARHS are welcomed and encouraged. EARHS is recognized as a federally tax exempt charity by the IRS under Section 501c(3).

EARHS "wants and needs"

Wanted: Racing photo collections – share and preserve programs. If you have vintage racing photos, EARHS would like to be able to scan and copy these items. All items will be returned intact and we can provide you with a computer disc of those items from significant collections.

We are especially interested in Dorney Park items from the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's and all Allentown Fair items, including indoor racing events, but all items are welcome.

Wanted: Showcases and display cases. Often cases of unusual configuration can be used for displays of trophies and memorabilia.

Group tours of the EARHS showroom are available by appointment for civic and auto related groups, car clubs, etc.

Call 610 398-2188 or 610 395-5303 for details.

We continue to fill our showroom—all members are invited to visit and check our progress. Please call Pete Trumbauer (610 398-2188) or Paul Weisel (610 395-5303) to arrange a time to visit.