

HISTORICA

WHO'S ON FIRST – TWO FERRARIS COME TO AMERICA

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FIRST FERRARI TO MAKE LANDFALL... BY MICHAEL T. LYNCH

From the arrival of the first Ferrari to be imported into America, the enthusiast press has often misstated which car it was. Before we sort through the evidence, it's worth a quick review of the man who was responsible for placing the first two Ferraris to be sold to American buyers.

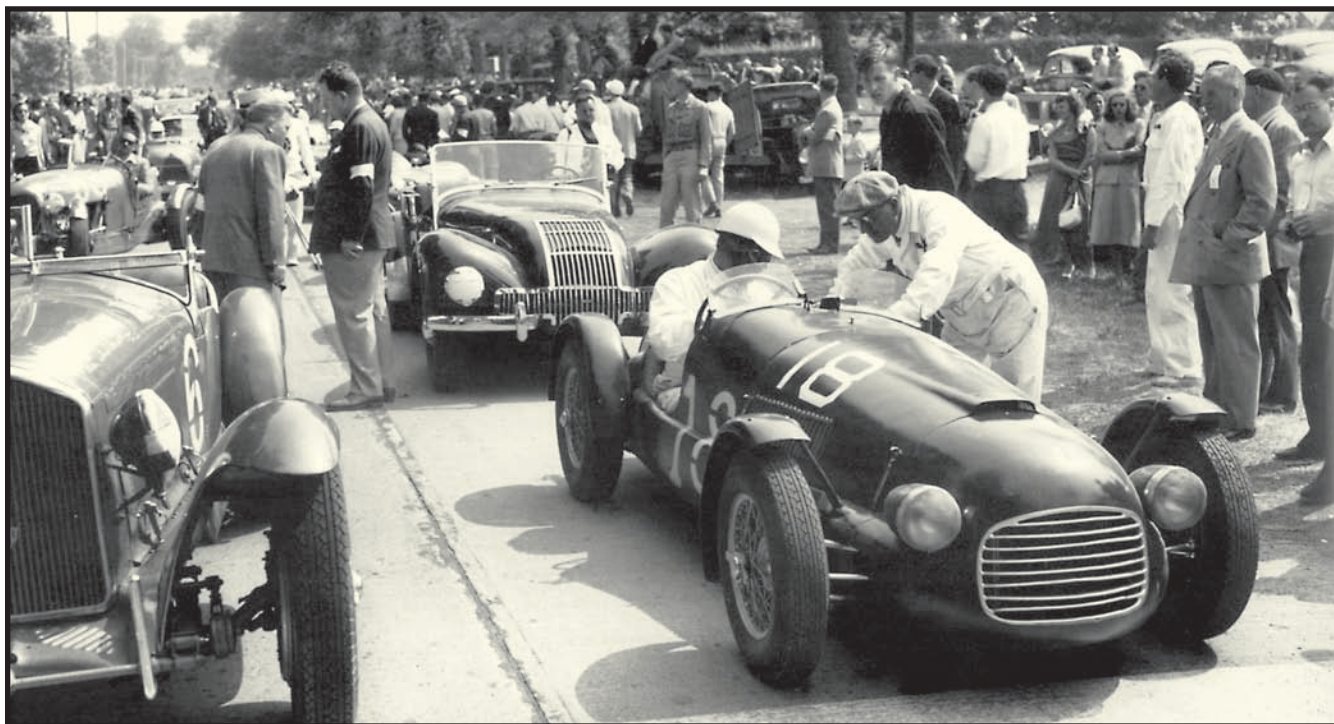
During the 1930s, Italian

Lago name. Chinetti sold Talbots and also represented the coach-builder Figoni and Falachi, selling their designs, on Talbot and other French chassis, to his customers. In 1940, Chinetti came to America with an American woman then resident in Paris, Lucy O'Reilly Schell. He was part of her racing team, which entered two Grand Prix Maserati 8CTFs in that year's Indianapolis 500. After the race, Chinetti stayed in America and disposed of the two Maseratis to American buyers.

twelve hour race at Monthléry in September and setting various speed/distance records in November at the same venue. Chinetti was then splitting his time between Paris and New York, brokering exotic cars to the coterie of wealthy sportsmen that he had built up over the years. Among the cars he was selling were those beginning to be made by his old associate, Enzo Ferrari. Chinetti would go on to become the sole American Ferrari importer for many years.

In 1949, Connecticut sports-

Chinetti when it became obvious that his Jaguar would miss its intended arrival date, and Chinetti agreed to sell his Ferrari to Cunningham. The Ferrari was rushed to New York and was entered by Cunningham at Bridgehampton for George Rand to drive. In the race, Rand led easily until an oil line came loose and the car retired. However inauspicious the result, this was the first competition appearance of a Ferrari in the United States. It was an important date in Ferrari history,



Smith Hempstone Oliver Image; Courtesy Michael Lynch

born Luigi Chinetti was living in Paris. He had been uncomfortable with political developments in Italy and moved to France as Alfa Romeo's representative there. He also became a French sports personality when he won Le Mans in 1932 and 1934, and finished second in 1933, driving Alfa Romeos. During this era, he made a wide circle of international acquaintances whose members were inveterate buyers of exotic cars. After he left Alfa, he worked for Tony Lago, who was making sporting cars in Paris under the Talbot

Chinetti had known Enzo Ferrari when he worked at Alfa Romeo. He was the first owner of the car that is often referred to as "the first Ferrari in America." It was 166 Spyder Corsa, s/n 016 I. Chinetti was aware of Ferrari's penchant for selling refurbished team cars as new. When Chinetti ordered the Spyder Corsa, he gave specific instructions that it was to be delivered new and unraced. 016 I was the last Spyder Corsa built.

Chinetti raced the car in Europe in 1948, winning a

Above, the first Ferrari to race in the United States was the 166 Spyder Corsa, s/n 016 I, seen here at its first race at Bridgehampton on June 11, 1949, driven by George Rand.

man Briggs Cunningham thought he was going to take delivery of a new Jaguar XK-120 and actually entered one for the June 11, 1949 Bridgehampton race on Long Island. This would be the second race of the American road race revival, which began at Watkins Glen the previous October. Cunningham called

because America became a prime market for Ferrari automobiles.

The date of the s/n 016 I's arrival in the U.S. can be gleaned from Smith Hempstone Oliver's Bridgehampton race report in the September 1949 issue of *Speed Age* magazine. In it, Oliver writes that the car was picked up from the New York docks on the Tuesday before the race. Since the race was on Saturday, we can fix the car's arrival, or at least the Cunningham crew's retrieval of it, on June 7, 1949. John