

Racing History Revived: Oldest Known NASCAR Champion Car Featured in Documentary, on Display at Henry Ford Museum

Hagerty Drivers Foundation explores the birth of stock car racing and the outsized impact of Hudson carmaker with free, in-depth film on the history of the Hudson Hornet



Traverse City, Mich., July 17, 2023 – The Hagerty Drivers Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, debuts its documentary on the history of the oldest known NASCAR championship car, titled “The Fabulous Hudson Hornet.”

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIRbVNantc>

The film uncovers the serendipitous turn of events that led the small Detroit manufacturer to become a standout champion in the emerging stock car racing craze of post-war America. Combining some of the best drivers of the day, with support from an automaker that quickly came to understand the mantra, “win on Sunday, sell on Monday,” the influence of this chapter of motoring history sets the stage for modern day racing.

At the center of the story is a humble, self-trained racer named Herb Thomas, one of stock car racing’s first stars. To this day, Thomas retains the highest win percentage of any NASCAR driver – most of which was done at the wheel of Hudson Hornets. Featuring Thomas’s sons and grandson, Jay Leno, Richard Petty, NASCAR historians, Pixar’s Jay Ward, and Hudson experts, the film gives a fresh perspective on the early days of America’s beloved stock car racing sport. Many may be familiar with aspects of the story, as it was popularized in Pixar’s *Cars* franchise that drew inspiration from Thomas’s career and the Hudson racing program for its character “Doc Hudson.”

“Herb Thomas set the standard for what a great race car driver was in the early 1950s: the combination of car and driver – Herb Thomas and Hudson – transformed the sport. Because of this and his incredible race record, Thomas was inducted to the NASCAR Hall of Fame in 2013 and we are excited to see his only remaining Hudson get the recognition it deserves as well through this documentary and the National Historic Vehicle Register inclusion,” said Tom Jensen, Curatorial Affairs Manager, NASCAR Hall of Fame.

A special exhibit at the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation opened this past weekend in conjunction with the debut of the documentary. The influential race car featured in the film, will be displayed at the museum until October 22, 2023. The rotating exhibit is part of a partnership between The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation and the Hagerty Drivers Foundation to display cars from the National Historic Vehicle Register that tell the story of the automobile in American history.

The 1952 Hornet, owned by Michigan collector Al Schultz, was inducted into the National Historic Vehicle Register in **2022**, and is the only remaining factory racing Hornet and the oldest NASCAR winning car known to exist. *The Fabulous Hudson Hornet* is available for free on the Hagerty Drivers Foundation’s YouTube channel to further its mission to preserve America’s automotive past for future generations.

Additional photos of the Hudson Hornet can be found [here](#).

About Hagerty Drivers Foundation

The Hagerty Drivers Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit launched in 2021 by Hagerty. With the purpose of shaping the future of car culture while celebrating our automotive past, the Hagerty Drivers Foundation provides scholarships for students in the automotive field of education, as well as students seeking formal driver education training. In addition, the Foundation continues to build a federally recognized program – the National Historic Vehicle Register – that documents and records the important history of our automotive past. For more information, please visit <https://driversfoundation.org/>.

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