

Ted Wilson

by Norm Bogan

Ted Wilson is somewhat of a mystery man. While it is known that he resided in San Jose, California, during his period of notoriety, much of his personal background is very obscure. Wilson did most of his shooting in the 1920s and '30s at tracks in the San Francisco Bay area, like the famed Oakland Speedway, the Alviso Speedway, and the San Jose Speedway at King Road and Alum Rock Avenue.

Wilson produced high quality photos that were acquired by many collectors throughout the country, who praised the sharpness of the photos. Wilson worked with 4" x 5" film, which was quite popular during that era.

Wilson was known as an early pioneer in marketing his photographs and ran ads in the racing periodicals of the time. Selling photos of drivers and cars to fans and family, his photos had a distinctive TW stamped on the back. He began purchasing negative collections, maybe a dozen at a time, to expand his availability of driver photos. Wilson advertised photos for sale, and buyers might request a shot of 'Rex Mays at Legion Ascot' or 'Fred Agabashian at Oakland'. Wilson would dig through his photo logs and select a negative, then fill the buyer's order.

After Carroll Studio closed down around the start of World War II, Roy Richter purchased their collection in 1942. Richter later sold it to Wilson. Ted also purchased several extensive collections, including the Crest Collection, the Douthat Speed Photo Collection, and the Hughes Photo Collection. As Wilson grew older, he sold his total collection to Bruce Craig and Vincente Alvarez. The massive collection, after the deaths of Alvarez and then Craig, was sold by Bruce's widow, the former Jeannie Hinnershitz, and business partner Dale Snyder to the Florida-based Collier's magazine family, who took the collection private.

It is believed that Ted Wilson passed away in the late Sixties, but his photo collections have lived on and contributed to several books covering midget and 'big car' racing during the first half of the Twentieth Century.