

# THE FIRST FERRARI



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Franco Cortese drives the first Ferrari at Piacenza, May, 1947.

## Chapter One

**INTRODUCTION:** As a writer and historian of motor racing, I am not particularly interested in Ferraris as cars of the highest technical caliber. They have, and have had, too many dubious qualities for my liking. There have been many other cars, such as Porsche, Jaguar and Ford who beat them on the racetracks in their day. Indeed, it can be argued that Ferrari was at his most successful, racing-wise, when every other serious manufacturer had pulled out of racing.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** 01C, the very first Ferrari built by that fledgling Company in 1947 has, by a miracle, survived to the present day. Many people have carried out much research to establish its history and bona fides. I must thank the following for their help in compiling this book. David Seielstad who wrote a most complete set of articles in “Prancing Horse”, covering the early cars. Bill Noon of the Symbolic Motor Car Company of La Jolla, California, through whose hands 01C/010I passed, and who discovered the original chassis number. Doug Nye, the noted British motor racing historian who, in 1994, interviewed Prince Igor Troubetskoy, the first private owner of 01C. John Wyer for his memories of the car whilst in his friend, Dudley Folland’s ownership. Peter Sachs for permission to reproduce Louis Klemantaski’s photographs. Chris Renwick for permission to reproduce some of the book: “Ferrari - Fifty years on the track” and Jack Boxstrom of the R.M. Car Auction company for urging me to write this history.

**THE BEGINNINGS** One morning in July 1945, Enzo Ferrari met Gioacchino Colombo to discuss an important new venture for Ferrari. Although probably neither of the two men realized it, it was, (with hindsight), to be an epochal moment in the history of the motorcar in the twentieth century. Every single car that would emerge from Ferrari’s factory in Maranello from this moment on would bear some trace of what was discussed and arranged that day.

Neither man was in the flower of youth; Colombo was in his forties and he had met and worked with Enzo Ferrari before the war. He was best known as the designer of the Alfa Romeo 158, this being the voiturette racing car into which Alfa Romeo had placed their energies after having been soundly trounced by the formidable Grand Prix cars of Mercedes and Auto Union.

Enzo Ferrari was 47 years old (he had been born on 18 February 1898). As a boy, he had shared a room with his brother Alfredo over their father’s engineering workshop, next to the

Ferrari's family home in Modena. Enzo Ferrari saw his first motor race at the age of ten when his Father took the young Enzo and his brother to watch an event at the Circuit of Bologna. Ferrari had always wanted to be an opera singer or a journalist and to somehow be involved with motor racing. Oddly, it was the third choice that was to dominate the major part of his life. Opera singing was soon out of the question as he discovered that he simply did not have an ear for music.

Ferrari had had a difficult yet successful commercial career, his whole life having been devoted to motor racing. As a young man he had been, first of all, a chassis tester for C.M.N. and then a racing driver, finishing his career with Alfa Romeo. In later years, Ferrari did fulfill his ambition to become a journalist, as he wrote and published several newsletters and magazines concerning the achievements of his racing team, the Scuderia Ferrari. Ferrari had a keen eye for publicity and no doubt understood the attention this brought to his successful team.

There are several conundrums to Ferrari's earlier life. In his book, "My Terrible Joys," Ferrari would have us believe that he came from a relatively poor background, but by the age of 13 he could already drive his Father's car. This in 1911 when the possession of a car marked out a wealthy man in Italy. Incidentally, his Father's business had branched out from working for the Italian State Railway to working on motorcars, and Enzo was soon involved in working in his Father's shop, although he did not serve a proper engineering apprenticeship. During the First World War, Enzo Ferrari was called up for military service to the army and he became a shoer of mules in the Third Mountain Artillery Regiment. Later on, when that Unit became mechanized, he became a mechanic.

At war's end, Ferrari went to Turin to try to get a job with Fiat, even then emerging as THE Italian motoring giant, but he had no luck. However, he did get a job testing lorry chassis and, in his journeys in these to the carrozzerias, (body builders), in Milan, he met and became friends with Ugo Sivocci, the chief tester of C.M.N. and he joined that Company as a mechanic. Somehow, Ferrari was invited to drive for C.M.N. in the Palma to Poggia Di Berceto Hill Climb, where he finished fourth in his competition debut in 1919. Shortly thereafter, he took part in the Targa Florio in Sicily where he managed to finish ninth.

Alfa Romeo, in 1920, was the Company to work for if you were at all enthusiastic about motor racing and Ferrari joined them as a driver and tester as soon as he could. Driving in the Targa Florio once again, this time in a Tipo 20/30, he came second overall and won the Aosta-Gran St Bernard Hill Climb. In 1921, he came second in the Circuit of Mugello and he won the Circuit of Savio in 1923, as well as the Coppa Acerbo in 1924, and the Circuits of Savio & Polesine. Additionally, he won the 1927 and 1928 Circuit of Modena events. Driving an 1100cc Talbot, he also scored two more second places in the Circuit of Montenaro & Pescara in 1931. In 1932, he took his last win as a racing driver in the Bobbio-Pellice race, once again in an Alfa Romeo.

During 1923, whilst driving and winning at the Circuit of Savio at Ravenna, Ferrari was introduced to Count Enrico Baracca, whose son had been Franco Baracca, Italy's top scoring fighter ace of the First World War. Before he was killed in 1918, Baracca had sported, on the side of his French-built SPAD XIII fighter, the Prancing Horse emblem of his squadron. Ferrari was given permission to use this Cavallino Rampante for himself and he placed it on a yellow shield with the green, white and red bars of the Italian national colors above it. This Prancing Horse emblem was to be seen on all of Ferrari's cars from 1933 as the official badge of the Scuderia Ferrari.

Never having been in the first division as a driver, Enzo Ferrari realized that his talents lay in organization. He had managed, first of all, "Alfa Corse", the factory-entered team of Alfa Romeo. After this he founded and headed the Scuderia Ferrari in 1929, a private team based in Ferrari's garage in the Viale Trento Trieste of Modena, which prepared a succession of the racing Alfas of the 'Thirties for wealthy private entrants.

As an aside, it is curious that one of Ferrari's greatest rivals, Porsche, uses a prancing horse as the center of its own badge, representing the coat of arms of Stuttgart, where the Porsche factory is based. Bugatti, in his day, had always used the term "Pur Sang," or thoroughbred, an allusion to his love of horses where his cars were concerned.

By 1932, the Scuderia Ferrari had effectively replaced the factory Alfa Romeo team, and Ferrari himself was now a director of the factory with interests in several agencies. In 1938, Enzo Ferrari returned to Alfa Corse, as the manager of the factory racing team but he walked out in 1939 after disagreeing with their then designer, the Spanish engineer Wilfredo Ricart. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that Ferrari, seeing that his days of influence with Alfa Romeo were over, left before he was pushed out. Certainly, Ferrari did leave Alfa Romeo with a good (for him!) severance agreement.

Ferrari retreated to his headquarters in Maranello where he had built a factory as the war in Europe began. Just before the darkness fell over Italy, he produced two "815" (eight cylinders, one and a half liters) sports-racing cars for two wealthy clients, the Marchese Lotario Rangoni Machiavelli and Albert Ascari. This AAC (Auto Avio Costruzione) 815 had been an attempt by Ferrari to see how well he could do with a racing sports car in the one and a half liter class in the Mille Miglia of 1940. Ferrari had to name the cars under the AAC banner as he had been forbidden by his separation agreement with Alfa Romeo from using his own name on a car for four years.

Two cars had been hurriedly constructed, borrowing heavily from current Fiat componentry but neither finished the race, Alberto Ascari retiring early on with valve problems and the Marchese Lotario Rangoni dropping out later on with rear axle failure. The cars had been designed and engineered at Modena under the auspices of two engineers, Alberto Massimino and Vittorio Bellantani.

Massimino had worked in the Fiat racing department during their period of dominance in the 1920's before moving into the aeronautical field. In 1938, Massimino moved to Modena to work with the Scuderia Ferrari and was one of the team that created the Alfa Romeo 158. Bellantani was one of the few engineers who had not worked for either Alfa Romeo or Fiat; after obtaining his diploma in engineering studies in Modena, he underwent further tutelage at the University of Freiburg in Switzerland before working at Guerzoni and Guarinoni, a company that produced the Mignon motorcycle.

These two 815's were numbered 020 and 021, possibly as a reference to the Alfa Romeos which the Scuderia Ferrari had raced in the 'Thirties. These all had chassis numbers of their own, as opposed to the numbers which the factory gave them, the Tipo B's being numbered SF33 to SF50 whilst the 412's had been numbered from SF52 to SF54.

During the war, Ferrari manufactured a copy of the German Jung grinding machine without a license and, apart from selling these machines, he also supplied Breda with components for machine guns, the contact having been arranged by Franco Cortese who was to drive for Ferrari in 1947. Cortese also arranged that Ferrari should make reduction gears for the MZ landing craft the Italians built for a proposed invasion of Malta. Cortese later recounted that, as Enzo Ferrari refused to travel from Modena, the board of Breda was forced to travel to him to sign the contract for this deal! Of course, Malta was never invaded but these landing craft were later used between Sicily and the Islands and between Civitavecchia and Sardinia. Ferrari at this time, as we have seen, had a factory he had built on some land bought from a miller on the Abatone Inferior in Maranello, a suburb of Modena. Enzo Ferrari and his small factory (160 workers at the height of the war) was seen to possess the very best technicians and metal workers in Italy during this period, a reputation no doubt built up by the Scuderia Ferrari's racing exploits.

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