

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

J. ALEX SLOAN

John Alexander Sloan was born in 1880 in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and he was a college football star at Ohio Wesleyan University. After college, he became sports writer, then editor, of the "St. Paul Daily News".

In 1905, J. Alex Sloan first became interested in automobile racing and formed a partnership with William Pickens, staging races first at the Minnesota State Fair and then all over the country with such famous drivers of the day as Louis Chevrolet, Earl Kizer, Ralph DePalma, Eddie Rickenbacker and Barney Oldfield. Sloan's circuits eventually gained international exposure.

After this ten-year association, Sloan moved to Chicago and helped form the

International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) in March, 1915 with Ralph Hankinson, Verne Soules and the Freidman brothers. Most IMCA races were run at state, county or local fairs and expositions. The first-ever IMCA race was held May 30, 1915, at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit. All participants and officials of this event were "banned for life" by the reigning national sanctioning body, the American Automobile Association (AAA).

In 1922, Sloan and one of his contracted drivers Sig Haugdahl built the airplane-motored "Wisconsin Special" and Haugdahl drove it to a record speed of 180.27 mph at Daytona Beach, Florida (although not recognized by AAA). Sloan was known as "The Maker of Champions" for his promotional genius in work-

ing with the likes of Haugdahl, George Stewart (alias Leon Duray), Tommy Milton, Fred Horey and others. Sloan usually had his troops travel in Pullman train cars, with their racers hauled in cattle or baggage cars. It is said that J. Alex Sloan was promoting more races (113 county fair races in 27 states and Canada) at the time of his death in 1937 than all of the other promoters in the United States put together. John A. Sloan, Jr. took over as president of his father's American Booking Agency that year and continued the tradition until he entered the service during World War II. After the war, South Dakota State Fair promoters Frank Winkley and Al Sweeney took effective control of IMCA.

J. Alex Sloan and his wife, who was killed in a house fire in 1918, had three children, Naoma, Malissa Jane, and John.
