

# NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

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## AUGUST & FRED DUESENBERG

Fred Duesenberg was born on December 6, 1877 in Lippi, Germany, while brother August was born on December 11, 1879. The Duesenberg family moved to this country following the father's death, and they settled in Rockford, Iowa in 1885. Around the turn of the century, Fred became involved in bicycle racing and the bicycle business. Following that, he worked in Kenosha, Wisconsin for an auto-maker before moving to Des Moines, Iowa in 1904. The next year, builders Fred and "Augie" formed their own racing team, with Fred as driver. They lured Eddie Rickenbacker, who had been banned from American Automobile Association (AAA) competition for his "out-law" non-sanctioned racing activity, to join this effort in 1913. Together, they captured many races throughout the country, including a \$10,000-to-win race in Sioux City, Iowa the following season.

The Duesenberg race car would eventually win the Indianapolis 500 on three occasions and the French Grand Prix once. That win by Jimmy Murphy at Le-Mans in 1921 in a Duesenberg guaranteed the term "It's a Duesey" a rightful



**August & Fred Duesenberg**

A - C - Duesenberg Museum Collection

place in the English language book of slang forever. Although Fred and Augie didn't produce a passenger car until 1920, their Model "J" (which debuted in 1929) is what they are perhaps best remembered for by the American public. However, American racing fans will best remember Fred and Augie Duesenberg for their pioneering efforts in building open wheel racing cars in the Teens, Twenties and Thirties.

While older brother Fred is famous for his designing and driving abilities in the early years of the "Golden Age", Augie gained his real recognition later in life. As chief engineer at Duesenberg's Indianapolis (IN) factory, Augie designed and constructed the "Duesenberg Special" (later renamed the "Mormon Meteor") in 1935. This behemoth set world land speed records in 1935, 1936 and again in 1937 on the Bonneville (UT) Salt Flats. In '36, Egbert "Babe" Stapp was a co-driver of the record-setting machine. A second Duesenberg was constructed by Abbot "Ab" Jenkins and Augie in 1938 and it ran at Bonneville in 1939 and 1940. It's 1940 land speed record stood until earlier this year.

Fred passed away in 1932, while Augie lived for nearly three decades longer. The Duesenberg family remains scattered throughout the midwest today, with Fred's son Denny living in Indiana, and relatives Milton and Harlan living in Iowa and Illinois, respectively.

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