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Who built the first Cobra, and where?

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Ak Miller

Eastern US (Shelby had not yet “invented the name Cobra”) in exchange for doing the initial installation and sales.



CSX 001, the first Cobra sold by Ed Hugus.

No question that Carroll Shelby “invented” the Cobra sports car with the idea of installing a V8 Ford engine in an English AC Chassis, but he wasn’t the first to actually do it! If we forget the name Cobra, which defines this question, we have to acknowledge the first man to put a Ford V8 in an AC chassis to go racing. Famed California “Hot Rodder” Ak Miller had completed the project with an AC-Bristol sports car (same chassis that would be delivered to Shelby months later) he’d acquired to run on the dry lakes east of Los Angeles well over a year before Shelby put his deal together with Ford and AC to build his cars in limited production.

What’s even more interesting is that Shelby didn’t actually do the first Ford V8 installation in an AC supplied chassis. At the beginning, Shelby had no facilities or even a talented fabricator/mechanic to do the job. Instead, Shelby made a deal with well experienced eastern foreign car importer Ed Hugus to be his partner in the Cobra project. Shelby offered Hugus the distribution for his cars in the



Ed Hugus

Hugus completed the job on chassis number CSX 001. This chassis was sent to Ed Hugus, purely by chance, as no one was looking at chassis numbers on AC’s first shipment of two cars to America. Hugus had “built” and sold CSX 001, the first “Shelby” weeks before Shelby had received his first chassis, CSX 000, when we moved into Dean Moon’s small shop in California.

Once Shelby had completed this first car (and come up with the Cobra name) he painted it bright yellow and sent it to the NY auto-show to be displayed on the Ford stand. He got enough orders from that initial showing to take up all of AC’s initial production. At that point there simply “weren’t enough cars to fill Hugus’ orders” so the hand-shake “partnership” was dissolved and Shelby continued on by himself.



CSX 000 in Dean Moon’s shop.

15 thoughts on “Who built the first Cobra, and where?”