



CELEBRATING  
55 YEARS

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**Come see The Great Race start at Rocky Point on June 18th -  
by Frank Picozzi**

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Frank Picozzi

In the 175 years since William Winslow first began bringing steamboat passengers to enjoy dinner and on-site amusements, Warwick's beautiful oceanside Rocky Point Park has been the place for any number of unique events – Rutherford B. Hayes made the first Presidential phone call there, the famous saltwater pool was the site for the U.S. Men's Olympic Swim Trials 1936, and legendary "Babe" Ruth joined his Providence Gray teammates for games on the baseball field. Now, on June 18, Rocky Point will again be the place to be for The Great Race's inaugural run in Rhode Island, when some 120 antique automobiles will arrive for the start of a 2,300 trek to Fargo, N.D.

Now in its 39th year, the nine-day event was founded by Tom McRae in 1983, with its name inspired by the 1965 movie based on an actual race from N.Y. to Paris in the early 1900s. This year, teams from all over the U.S., as well as Japan, England, Australia, and Canada, will travel to a total of 19 cities throughout R.I., CT., N.Y., PA., OH., IN., IL., WI, MN., and N.D. in a quest to win the top prize of \$50,000. The total purse is \$150,000, and this year's race marks the final two states that were missing from the list of the 48 contiguous states that have been locations for the event.

Spectators who arrive at Rocky Point – and those in other communities along the race route – will be treated to the first-hand sight of cars manufactured before 1974 at race stops that are open for free to the general public. The majority of the automobiles were made prior to World War II. This year, the oldest cars expected to take part in The Great Race include a 1916 Hudson Pikes Peak Hillclimber, a 1917 American LaFrance, and a 1917 Peerless racer. Last year's race saw a 1932 Ford as the victor in an event that stretched from San Antonio, TX. to Greenville, S.C.

The Great Race, unlike many auto races, isn't based solely on speed, but instead a combination of time, speed, and distance, with a goal of cars starting and finishing one minute apart. Secret check points throughout the route determine whether a vehicle is penalized with a point for each second they are early or late, and the race winner is ultimately the team that earns the lowest score. The car's driver and a navigator are charged with following detailed, down-to-the-second instructions, while, in many cases, they are also working diligently to meet the challenges of coaxing old cars to complete each day's course.

The city's Dept. of Tourism, Culture, and Development has been working hand-in-hand with race organizers, including the Providence/Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau, which secured the event for Rhode Island, as well as the Central R.I. Chamber of Commerce and the R.I. Commerce Corp. on promotion and planning for the Warwick leg of the event. There's already a great deal of excitement around the state as we prepare to welcome The Great Race participants, and all are welcome to attend. Cars will begin arriving at Rocky Point at 8 a.m., with the race start slated for 10:30 a.m. We invite you to join the more than 500 people who comprise The Great Race entourage, and local spectators at this special event.

For more information visit [warwickri.com](http://warwickri.com).

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

