

7500044

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

NL FEB 27 1987

1. Name

historic Indianapolis Motor Speedway

and or common same; "The Brickyard"

2. Location

street & number 4790 West 16th Street not for publication

city, town Speedway vicinity of

state Indiana code 18 county Marion code 97

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Automobile

Race Track

4. Owner of Property

name Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation

street & number 4790 West 16th Street

city, town Speedway vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office, Marion County, Indiana

street & number City-County Building, Market & Alabama Streets

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Annual Preservation Report for
title Indiana, 1973-1974

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis 253 state Indiana

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Representation in Existing Surveys

Title: National Register of Historic Places

Date: 1974

Depository for survey records: National Park Service, 1100 L Street, NW

City, Town: Washington

State: DC

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary

The basic course configurations, grandstand layout, pit layout, and garage arrangement of the Indianapolis Speedway are very similar to the Speedway as conceived in 1909.¹ The track itself is the principal feature contributing to the Speedway's historic significance.

The Track

The predominant physical feature of the Speedway is its 2-1/2-mile curved track. The track has two long stretches (1,100 yards each); two short (220 yards each) straight stretches, or chutes; and four (440 yards each) turns, each banked at a maximum angle of 9°12'. It is between 50' and 60' wide, being broader on the turns. Built in 1909, the track was originally surfaced with macadam, but that same fall was resurfaced using more than 3 million brick paving blocks. This surface underlies the present asphalt surface, which was put down in the backstretch and turns in 1937. One yard of brick was left exposed at the start-finish line.²

With the exception of periodic asphalt resurfacings, the last in 1977, and banking and safety aprons on the turns. (1935-36), the former to render them uniform in slope, the track is in its 1909 configuration. The track's site is essentially flat except for a small creek that runs from west to east; the track crosses it on two reinforced concrete heavy-duty bridges.

The "Pits"

The "pits," which include 33 service areas for racing automobiles (the number permitted in the race), are lanes along the main straight stretch between Turns 4 and 1 on the infield side. Originally, they were crude refueling and maintenance stations. Before the end of World War II, they were separated from the infield by a board fence. Since then a concrete retaining wall has been added on both sides.

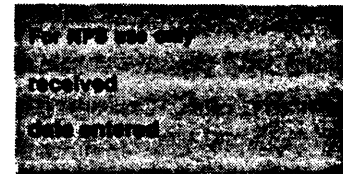
The pit procedure is essentially identical to procedures used in early racing. The service crews for each racing car are stationed in the car's pit during the race. When the car needs fuel or repairs, such as a tire change, it pulls off the track into its pit position, where the crew can fill the car with fuel and perform maintenance. The entryways and exits to the pit area, commonly called "aprons," have been extended and widened in recent years for safety reasons.

The Stands

The original grandstands, constructed in 1909-11, on the west side of the straight stretch between Turns 1 and 4, were wooden single-deck stands, with wooden roofs, extending north and south. After World War II, these grandstands were gradually replaced by modern steel and concrete stands, including four of the double-deck

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variety marked by (*) in this Description. Those along the main straightaway between Turns 1 and 4 were labeled Grandstands A*, C, H, and the Paddock*. Grandstands B*, E*, and the Southwest Vista extend around the south edge of Turn 1. Grandstand G and the Southeast Vista border Turn 2. Grandstands L, M, and L South extend around Turn 3. Grandstand K is on the north short straight stretch. Grandstand J and the Northwest Vista are along Turn 4. Recently, enclosed glassed-in boxes for VIPs have been added in the vicinity of the Southeast Vista stands.

The Scoring Tower

The first scoring tower was a 1-story wood frame platform used in 1909-11. It was replaced by a wooden 4-deck hip-roofed structure, with an hexagonal roofline, commonly called the "Pagoda." This structure burned in 1925, and was rebuilt the same year. In 1957, it was replaced by the current 7-story steel frame and concrete scoring tower, with accommodations for radio representatives, timing and scoring persons, the safety director, and special guests.

"Gasoline Alley"

The garage area reserved for the use of racing teams for working on their cars and for parts and car storage has long been nicknamed "Gasoline Alley." This garage area, erected in 1915, was originally two rows of wood frame 1-story roofed garages, each row including some 20 units, each 16' x 20'. In 1941, a large number of these garages were destroyed by a spectacular fire. Rebuilt and enlarged periodically, with some in concrete block, they can now service some 88 cars.

Office Building and Museum

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation offices and museum are housed in a 2-story building completed in 1976. The Speedway Museum contains many vintage racing cars (including those that have won 29 of the 500s), the trophies awarded to winners, and racing memorabilia.

Chevrolet Memorial

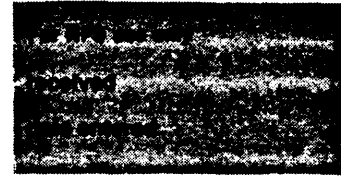
A handsome Greek-style exedra just southwest of the Office-Museum building in the track's infield honors Louis Chevrolet and many other race drivers and automotive pioneers.³ It features four bronze panels depicting Louis' greatest accomplishments and his associates in them. A bronze bust of Louis is mounted on a pedestal in the center. The bronzes are by sculptor Adolph Wolter.

Other Facilities

A 9-hole golf course (1929) is laid out inside the race course and an 18-hole championship course (1965) outside the track, parallel to the backstretch. Both are used throughout most of the golf season. More than half the available land

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space of the Speedway is devoted to parking facilities, which are situated both inside and outside the track area. Concession stands, repair shops for Speedway maintenance machinery, a field hospital (rebuilt in 1948), a 96-unit motel (1963), and other accessory structures complete the facilities of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Footnotes

¹This Description, except where noted, is an edited version of the corresponding section of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form prepared by J. Reid Williamson, Executive Director of the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, et al., in 1974.

²Terry Reed, Indy, Race and Ritual (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1980), p. 23.

³Louis Chevrolet Memorial Committee, The Louis Chevrolet Memorial, Indianapolis Motor Speedway (Indianapolis: 1976).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	communications	industry	politics-government	transportation
		invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				Recreation
Specific dates	1909	Builder/Architect	Park Taliaferro Andrews	(automobile speedway)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary¹

Auto racing is the second most popular sport in the United States, attracting more than 40 million paid attendance each year.² The Indianapolis Motor Speedway, long the premier auto racing site in the United States, is also the only reasonably intact early 20th-century high-speed auto race course in the country. It is the oldest continuously operated automobile race course in the world.

Memorial Day in 1986 will be the 75th anniversary of the Indianapolis 500. With an attendance of some 300,000, it is, in most years, the largest single-day spectator sporting event in the world.

The prestige of the race is emphasized by its worldwide media coverage. It is a live 4-1/2-hour program carried by more than 750 stations in the United States, the Voice of America, the entire Armed Forces Network, and overseas foreign language broadcasts.

In addition to its premier place in the sport of auto racing, the Speedway has made significant contributions to automobile design, performance, technology, and safety.

Designed to accommodate race speeds of 75-80 miles per hour, it is currently used for racing at or near 200 miles per hour. The 9°12' turns are considerably different in design from later courses such as Daytona, Pocono, and Talladega Raceways, and from the very high banked turns of the old board speedways of the 1920s. As an example of a specialized industrial and technological problem met by the best engineering of the pre-World War I period, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is unique. The Speedway is a singular example of American auto racing architecture; it is also the prototype for the post-World War II speedways. It is therefore an extremely important example of integration of engineering and landscape architecture for a singular purpose.

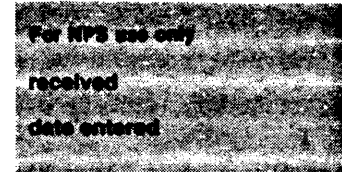
History

I would rather win that race than anything in the world. I would rather be Ralph DePalma than President. --- Ernie Pyle³

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway was developed in 1909 by Carl G. Fisher, James A. Allison, Arthur C. Newby, and Frank H. Wheeler, all of whom were automobile manufacturing figures in the city and interested in racing.⁴ Fisher (who was also the

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prime promoter of Miami Beach in the late 1920s) and Allison were partners in the Presto-Lite Corporation, which manufactured carbide automobile head lamps. Newby was an officer of the National Motor Vehicle Company, an automobile maker. Wheeler owned most of the Wheeler-Schebler Carburetor Company.

The partners purchased 320 acres in December 1908 for the site of a high-speed auto racing course. The first track, a four-sided 2-1/2-mile track of crushed stone and tar, was laid down early in 1909. The first race took place August 19 of that year. Earlier that summer, the track had been used for a series of motorcycle races and as the starting point for a balloon race.

The track almost immediately went to pieces under the pounding of racing machines, and three fatal accidents prompted the owners to rebuild the track. Using 3.2 million 10-lb. brick paving blocks, this job was completed by December 17, when the track was reopened for high-speed performance runs. The 1910 season consisted of several short distance auto races in May, July, and September. In the fall, Allison and Fisher decided to start a 500-mile stake race for cars of 600-cubic-inch displacement to be held on Memorial Day 1911.

This first 500-mile race drew the best drivers of the era. Ray Harroun, who had retired, came back to compete against such drivers as Ralph DePalma, Teddy Tetzlaff, Bob Burman, Ralph Mulford, Howdy Wilcox, and Eddy Hearne. Harroun, driving a black and yellow Marmon Wasp, won the race with an average speed of 74.59 miles per hour.

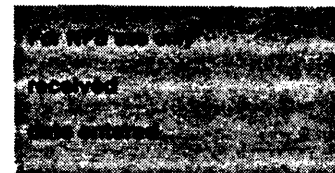
The Memorial Day 500-mile race quickly became an international classic. Many were highly exciting. For example, in 1912, Ralph DePalma led up to the 198th lap. His Mercedes broke a connecting rod and Joe Dawson sailed by in a National to win; DePalma and his mechanic forlornly pushed the car for the last mile and a half. When they finally arrived at the finish line, still one lap short, they were greeted by an unprecedented cheer.⁵

The 1913 race was dominated by the French Peugeot team. Jules Goux won. Rene Thomas of France won the 1914 race in a Delage. DePalma, again in a Mercedes, won the 1915 race, making up for his heartbreaking 1912 failure. The races were suspended in 1917-18, because of the war effort.

In 1920, Gaston Chevrolet won in a Frontenac designed by his brother Louis -- one of many Chevrolet-designed cars that competed at Indianapolis. Louis himself was in the race and had competed at Indianapolis in 1909 in the 250-mile inaugural race and in 1910 and in the 500s in 1915, 1916, and 1919, but never won.⁶ Tommy Milton won in 1921 in another Frontenac. The 1922 race was taken by Jimmy Murphy in a Duesenberg, built by Fred and August Duesenberg in Indianapolis. Tommy Milton won his second 500 in 1923 in the Miller Special, made by Harry Miller of California. Ralph De Palma's nephew, Peter DePaolo, the winner in 1925, was the first driver to finish at an average speed in excess of 100 miles per hour.

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Carl Fisher and his associates sold the Speedway to Capt. Edward V. ("Eddie") Rickenbacker in 1927. Rickenbacker had raced in the first 500 in 1911 and others, before he became an air ace. Rickenbacker remained the owner until 1945.

Louis Meyer won the Memorial Day race 3 times (1928, 1933, and 1936). Wilbur Shaw (1937, 1939, and 1940) and Mauri Rose (1941, 1947, and 1948) both also won three. The 1947 race was a battle between Bill Holland and Mauri Rose, teammates driving identical cars. On the 193rd lap, Rose passed Holland to take the lead. The Blue Crown pit crew gave ambiguous signals to the drivers. Holland assumed he was in the lead and slowed his machine, thinking Rose was one lap behind. Rose took the checkered flag for first place 28 seconds ahead of Holland.

The Speedway's post-World War II history -- it was closed in 1942-45, inclusive -- has been as exciting as its earlier history. In 1953 and 1954 Bill Vukovich won two consecutive races; he was killed racing in 1955, in the lead, trying for a third consecutive win. Rodger Ward won twice (1959 and 1962). A.J. Foyt has won four times (1961, 1964, 1967, and 1977). Al Unser has won the 500-mile event in 1970, 1971, and 1978; Bobby Unser in 1968, 1975, and 1981. No woman has yet won the 500; Janet Guthrie was the first to compete, in 1977.⁷

The Speedway was acquired from Rickenbacker in 1945 by Anton (Tony) Hulman, Jr., of Terre Haute, Ind. Wilbur Shaw, the 500 winner, had interested Hulman in the deal, and became the president and general manager. Hulman continued to operate the Speedway until his death in 1977; its ownership remains in the Hulman family. The Hulman era has witnessed extensive renovations and improvements.

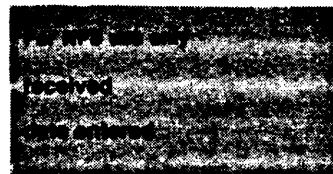
The Speedway's contributions to automotive design, performance, and technology bear mention here.⁸ The shock-testing ability of high-speed racing has permitted advanced automotive technology to be thoroughly proved before its introduction in products sold to the general public. Before the development of private test facilities by automobile manufacturers after World War I, the track was America's primary proving grounds for the automotive industry; it is still used regularly for test purposes.

In this fashion, the track has made important contributions to the development of such automotive components as high compression engines, superchargers, overhead cam shafts, hydraulic shock absorbers, advanced carburetors, fuel injection systems, hydraulic brakes, tires, magnetos, spark plugs, piston rings, and suspension systems.

By making their use mandatory in Indianapolis races, track officials have also hastened public acceptance of safety devices, including crash helmets, safety belts, shoulder harnesses, fire-resistant clothing, and rupture-resistant safety bladders inside fuel tanks.

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Footnotes

1 With the exceptions noted below this statement of Significance is an edited version of that appearing in the National Register of Historic Places nomination cited in full in Note 1 of the Description.

2 Herbert Kamm, ed., The Junior Illustrated Encyclopedia of Sports (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1970), p. 3.

3 Cited in Terry Reed, Indy, Race and Ritual (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1980), p. xi.

4 The data on the races and competitions has been updated using Reed, Ibid., and Indianapolis Motor Speedway, 500 Souvenir Book (Speedway, Ind.: Carl Hungness Publishing Co., 1983), passim, as sources.

5 Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, "Ralph de Palma's Glorious Failure," pp. 118-120, in Esquire's Great Men and Moments in Sports (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

6 Louis Chevrolet Memorial Committee, The Louis Chevrolet Memorial, Indianapolis Motor Speedway (Indianapolis: 1976), unpaginated.

7 Reed, op. cit., p. 33.

8 Keith W. Jennison, "Automobile Racing," The Concise Encyclopedia of Sports (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1970), p. 40.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property approximately 560

Quadrangle name Indianapolis West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	1 6	5 6 1 6 2 1 6 1 5	4 1 4 0 1 6 6 1 7 0	B	1 6	5 6 5 3 1 2 0	4 4 0 4 2 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 6	5 6 5 1 2 1 5	4 1 4 0 4 2 2 0	D	1 6	5 6 5 0 1 7 0	4 4 0 5 6 4 5
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overliapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization National Park Service, History Division date October 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date _____

38° 48' 34" N. LAT.
88° 13' 32" W. LONG.

38° 48' 33" N. LAT.
88° 14' 21" W. LONG.

**INDIANAPOLIS
MOTOR
SPEEDWAY**

UTM References:
A 16/566 265/4406 670
B 16/565 320/4404 260
C 16/565 125/4404 220
D 16/565 070/4406 645

38° 47' 14.5" N. LAT.
88° 14' 20" W. LONG.

38° 47' 15.5" N. LAT.
88° 13' 31" W. LONG.

264

830 000
FEET

