

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Occonechee Speedway

other names/site number Orange Speedway

2. Location

street & number East of Elizabeth Brady Road, 0.3 miles North of US 70 Business n/a not for publication

city or town Hillsborough n/a vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Orange code 135 zip code 27278

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Geoffrey Crow SHPO 3/5/02
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other,

(explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Occoneechee Speedway
Name of Property

Orange County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
1	0	sites
1	3	structures
0	0	objects
3	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/conservation area

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Wood
Tin
roof Tin
other Metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation _____
 Social History _____

Period of Significance

1948-1956 _____

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C moved from its original location.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

N/A _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation

N/A _____

Architect/Builder

Unknown _____

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Occoneechee Speedway
Name of Property

Orange County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 41.98 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>672840</u> Easting	<u>3994120</u> Northing	3	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>672290</u> Easting	<u>3993120</u> Northing
2	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>673040</u> Easting	<u>3993300</u> Northing	4	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>672480</u> Easting	<u>3993900</u> Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Martin and Sarah Woodard, EPEI, Inc.; Virginia Freeze, Intern, Ayr Mount Historic Site
organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. date August 1, 2001
street & number 5400 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 412 telephone (919) 785-9702
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27612

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Classical American Homes Preservation Trust
street & number 376 St. Mary's Road telephone (919) 732-6886
city or town Hillsborough state NC zip code 27278

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Occoneechee Speedway occupies a roughly forty-two acre tract just inside the southeastern town limits of Hillsborough, the seat of Orange County. The Eno River, flowing from west to east and eventually emptying into the Neuse River, forms approximately one-half mile of the property's northern and eastern boundary. The Mountain View subdivision is on the opposite side of the Eno, but not visible from the speedway parcel. An office park and a small portion of Elizabeth Brady Road delineate the western boundary, while dense woods and farm pasture land abut the southern boundary. Ayr Mount (NR, 1971) and Montrose (NR, 2001) are northwest of the property and across the river. Although the nominated property is within the legal town limits of Hillsborough and dense development has occurred on the eastern side of the Eno River, the setting of the speedway is rural and quiet.

The property is accessible from the west via Elizabeth Brady Road, a paved road that intersects with the north side of U.S. Highway 70 Business. From Elizabeth Brady Road, the original dirt entrance road used by competitors to access the speedway veers to the northeast from a point three-tenths of a mile north of the intersection with U.S. 70 Business. The entrance road connects to the southwestern curve of the oval track, or the original first turn. This dirt road remains at a fairly level altitude with the track. Access to the original exit road is gained through an office park located further north on Elizabeth Brady Road. The exit road runs along a ridge that is at a higher altitude than the racetrack.

The nominated property is roughly oval to rectangular in shape with an elongated parcel or "dogleg" extending from the southwest corner of the property; this tangent contains the entrance originally used by racing competitors. The acreage encompassing the speedway is wooded with hardwoods and pines. During the period of significance, the track, infield and hillside to the west of the track were clear of any vegetation. Judging from the maturity level of the vegetation west of the hillside, it appears the area surrounding the buildings, structures and circulation network was also originally free of trees and other mature plant life during the time the property functioned as an auto racing track.

The elevation of the speedway site varies dramatically from east to west. The lowest elevations exist along the Eno River. Hardwood trees, especially poplar, hickory and beech, grow here. From the river, the topography rises dramatically to form a mostly level man-made plateau on which the track is sited. The topography rises sharply just west of the track. This hillside held spectators and grandstands. Above the hill, a gently sloping plain contains the four historic buildings, a metal fence and a network of dirt roads historically used to enter and exit the property.

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The most conspicuous difference between the appearance of the speedway during its period of significance and today is the vegetation growth now present in the infield and around the track, on the hill overlooking the track and on the plateau containing the support buildings, roads and fence. Because the property was used for car racing and spectators were an integral part of the sport, the site was open and clear of vegetation, except along the river where hardwoods stood and continue to grow.

Despite the growth of young trees and low-lying shrubs and bushes, the Occoneechee Speedway retains distinct landscape features associated with dirt track auto racing in the postwar period. The portion of the property that the racetrack occupies is a wide flood plain. A recent aerial photograph demonstrates that the 0.9-mile oval dirt track itself remains nearly clear of tree growth and is completely visible along its entire length. Only on the east and north sides of the track have trees begun to encroach. The orientation of the track is north-south, and a thick line of trees separate the track from the river on the north and east sides. Young pine and cedar trees fill the infield. Generally, the track remains equally wide along its length except at the southwestern curve where it widens at a fork leading to the original competitors' entrance road that connects with Elizabeth Brady Road. The dirt banks designed to prevent racecars from driving into the Eno remain intact, but partially covered with vegetation. Three galvanized steel culverts on the eastern side of the track are original features of the site and were used to drain the infield. The original entrance and exit roads used by both contestants and spectators remain clear, but have been encroached upon by vegetation. The spectator parking lot is fully overgrown with trees and brush.

Trees and low-lying growth cover portions of the hillside on the west side of the track from which spectators enjoyed racing events. From this former vantage point, the whole of the track is not visible because of tree growth; only the portion of the track at the bottom of the hill can be seen. A late 1950s concrete grandstand measuring 208 feet in length and 18.6 feet in height is clearly visible on the hillside and declines down the ridge in a step formation. The canopy of trees opens up here completely, except for a few young pines no taller than four feet. Clumps of moss, grass, weeds and other low-lying foliage grow on the steps of the grandstand and tall pines border the edges of the concrete structure.

Above the hillside, four buildings originally associated with the speedway stand in various stages of preservation. The men's restroom, the northernmost building, is the most intact. The nearly square building retains a pyramidal roof and a sheet metal exterior. To the southwest, the ticket office has partially collapsed, but retains a sign on its west gable end indicating its original

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function. Approximately twelve feet from the eastern edge of the building is the original main spectator entrance through a five-foot break in a fence. The fence is constructed of wooden posts supporting sheets of metal that originally stood approximately eight feet tall, but have buckled over time and stand at only half that height now. This fence line begins at the lower edge of the property where the southern curve of the track meets the dirt road from Elizabeth Brady Road. It continues to the north, breaks at the entrance near the ticket office, and then continues to the northern edge of the speedway property stopping approximately ten yards short of the river at the natural ridge line. The women's restroom, located southeast of the ticket office and inside the metal fence, is nearly ruinous, but continues to evince its original function. The concession stand, located east-northeast of and downhill from the women's restroom, stands in poor condition. It retains its cinderblock foundation and some of the original wooden wall material.

INVENTORY

The buildings and structures in the following inventory are described beginning with the easternmost resources. The inventory then proceeds to the west. Each resource is assigned a letter that is then keyed to the site plan included in this nomination. Each inventory entry includes the date of construction of the resource, its description and its contributing status to the significance of the Occoneechee Speedway. A resource's contributing or noncontributing status depends on its age and/or integrity. If its date of construction falls outside the period of significance, it is listed as noncontributing. A resource that has lost integrity because of extreme deterioration will be deemed noncontributing.

- A. Track Structure
1948
Contributing Structure

The racetrack, dirt banking and culverts form the track structure. A continuous dirt bank extending north to south along the eastern edge of the track was built to prevent cars from going off the track while at the same time allowing them to maintain their speed in the corners of the track. The banks are approximately four feet wide and two feet higher than the track and seven feet higher than the Eno River plain in most places. While vegetation grows on portions of the banking, it remains visually prominent.

Three small round culverts used to drain water from the inner field into the Eno River remain intact in the dirt banking on the east side of the track. Evenly spaced along the banking, the

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culverts helped prevent standing water in the infield. Each galvanized steel drainage pipe measures approximately eighteen inches in circumference and remains free of rust.

The 0.9-mile hard-packed dirt racetrack served as the centerpiece of the Occonechee Speedway. Historically, the dirt track was clear of any vegetation and there was never fixed curbing separating the track from the infield. Photographs from the early 1950s show that the infield was grass and that a metal chain-link type fence, oval in shape, enclosed about half of the infield. The track's original width varied from forty-five to fifty feet and wider along the pit, which was attached to the inner western straightaway.

Today, while trees encroach on portions of the east straightaway and northeast and northwest turns, the oval is discernable from the air and on the ground. The width of the track varies from approximately five feet in portions of the northern section to as wide as forty feet on the southwest corner. The overgrowth around the track and in the former infield consists of young trees, mostly pines and cedars, briars and bushes.

- B. Lightpost
Ca. 1958
Noncontributing Structure

Orange County school officials installed the lightpost around the time it began leasing the track from Bill France Sr. for local high school sports events. The structure stands near the northwest corner of the track. Spotlights set in rows rest atop the tall wooden post. There is evidence of other lightposts, but this is the only one that remains standing.

- C. Grandstand
Ca. 1958
Noncontributing Structure

The concrete grandstand measures 208 feet in length, forty-four feet wide and approximately 18.6 feet in height. The structure was built into a steep hill just west of the track facing the Eno River. Although race fans used the grandstand, this permanent seating was installed when the county began using the property for sporting events.

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- D. Concession Stand
1948
Noncontributing Building

The rectangular building measuring forty feet long and twelve feet wide features a cinder block foundation and the remains of wooden walls and a tin roof. It stands in a ruinous condition.

- E. Women's Restroom
1948
Noncontributing Building

The twenty-two feet by thirteen feet rectangular building is frame and covered with weatherboard with cornerboards and a cinderblock foundation. A door pierces the east elevation. Inside, four concrete cylinders stand approximately two-and-a-half feet high and have deep holes through the center of them to a large pit below. The building stands in deteriorated condition with no roof and collapsing walls, but continues to convey its original function.

- F. Ticket Office
1948
Noncontributing Building

Measuring forty feet in length and twelve feet in width, the ticket office is frame construction, is covered in weatherboards and rests on a cinderblock foundation. It stands just outside the metal fence. The western wall is the most intact side of the structure; the other three elevations have deteriorated and fallen into the building. The roof, originally sheathed in metal, has partially collapsed.

- G. Men's Restroom
1948
Contributing Building

The ten by fourteen foot building is constructed of studs, but sheathed in metal and covered with a standing seam metal roof. The building rests on a cinderblock foundation and stands to the east of the fence. Typical of the era in which it was built, a message painted on the east elevation reads, "no Negroes allowed." The interior contains an elevated platform over a hole that leads to a pit dug several feet below ground level.

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H. Overall Site
1948
Contributing Site

The speedway site consists of the road network and the fence.

The fence is constructed of wooden posts supporting sheets of corrugated metal that originally stood approximately eight feet tall, but have buckled over time and stand at only half that height now. This fence line begins at the lower edge of the property where the southern curve of the track meets the dirt road from Elizabeth Brady Road. It continues to the north, breaks at the entrance near the ticket office, and then continues to the northern edge of the speedway property stopping approximately ten yards short of the river at the natural ridge line.

The speedway property contains a system of one-lane dirt roads, now narrowed by encroaching vegetation resulting from disuse, that allowed drivers, support staff, race officials and spectators to enter and exit the facility. The original entrance route is the most visible corridor and it extends from Elizabeth Brady Road in a northeastward direction until it empties on the southwest turn of the track. The exit road, which also served as the route spectators took to the parking lot that was located between the entrance and exit, is more overgrown and narrower and extends from the entrance road northward, taking a sharp west-northwest turn just south of the ticket office and exiting the property in the paved parking lot of an office park located at the northern end of Elizabeth Brady Road. Although encroaching vegetation resulting from disuse has narrowed these roads, this system was a crucial part of the smooth operation of the Occoneechee Speedway.

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Summary

Occoneechee Speedway, a historic automobile racing complex located within the incorporated limits of the town of Hillsborough in Orange County, is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for its association with early organized stock car racing in piedmont North Carolina. Occoneechee Speedway is significant at the state level in the areas of social history and recreation for its association with a sport with roots in the bootlegging activities of rural North Carolina where "trippers" transporting illegal liquor in cars with modified engines and beefed-up transmissions attempted to outrun revenuers. Stock car racing, according to historian Pete Daniel's recent study of the South in the 1950s, provided an outlet for working-class whites in the South in the post-war period and in "the wild and frenzied infields and grandstands at stock car races, southerners found the space to reclaim their wildness." Occoneechee Speedway was one of eight East Coast racetracks that hosted the first National Association of Stock Car Automobile Racing (NASCAR) events and it remains the only NASCAR dirt track that has not been destroyed or paved. Bill France Sr. of Daytona Beach, Florida, along with four North Carolina race organizers, established Hillsboro Speedway Incorporated in September 1947, three months before France held the meeting in Daytona Beach at which NASCAR was formally organized. France and his associates opened Occoneechee Speedway on June 27, 1948, with an estimated 20,000 in attendance to witness Fonty Flock, a member of an early racing dynasty, take the flag. In 1954, the racetrack became known as Orange Speedway when Hillsboro Speedway, Inc. dissolved. Despite protests against auto racing by Orange County clergy in the late 1950s, the speedway operated until 1968 when the Talladega Speedway in Alabama replaced it on the NASCAR circuit. Throughout its twenty-year history, Occoneechee hosted NASCAR's most successful drivers, including Richard "The King" Petty, Fireball Roberts, Junior Johnson, Ned Jarrett and Lee Petty. The period of significance is 1948 to 1956, the latter year marking the end of Orange Speedway's major role in a sport that had become professionalized with faster, paved tracks replacing earlier, more modest venues like the one in Hillsborough. The speedway meets Criterion Consideration G as a rare surviving property type that achieved significance within the past fifty years.

Although overgrown with trees and foliage, significant intact structural features convey the property's history and significance as an automobile speedway, including the hard-packed dirt track, prominent dirt banking that prevented competitors' fast-moving cars from careening into the Eno River, culverts used to drain water from the infield, the hillside on the west side of the track from which spectators watched races, separate entrance and exit roads for competitors and fans, and the metal fence used to keep out non-paying fans. Modest buildings standing in various

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stages of repair, as well as a concrete grandstand occupy the west side of the forty-two acre property.

Recreation and Social History Context: The History of Stock Automobile Racing in the South

Organized stock car racing's roots lie in the notorious bootlegging trade of the early twentieth century, mainly the 1920s to just after World War II, when many residents of the mountains and foothills of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia made and hauled illegal alcohol from isolated stills to cities and towns. These drivers, known as trippers, were masters behind the wheel, skilled at speeding along mountain roads in specially modified cars. Many were talented mechanics and those who were not, employed expert mechanics who were often simultaneously beefing-up the cars local law enforcement agents used to chase the trippers. Cars were overhauled for optimum speed, handling and hauling capacity. From the outside, these cars looked like the common cars of the 1930s and 1940s, but raise the hood or go under the car and one would find a modified engine, high-quality brakes, a souped-up transmission and a heavier suspension.¹

From these high speed chases came informal competitions that exhibited and tested the skills of both drivers and mechanics and drew onlookers searching for diversion from the tedious days of farming or factory work. Eventually, local entrepreneurs, recognizing the money-making opportunities these races afforded, built tracks and formalized the events somewhat, charging admission and sometimes building wooden bleachers. Although most of these impermanent sites have been lost, the foundations for NASCAR were laid on these dirt tracks in the 1940s.²

The more formal organization of auto racing in the United States took shape in the first half of the twentieth century. Indianapolis Motor Speedway opened in 1909 and the first Indianapolis 500 took place there in 1911. By the early 1940s, many sanctioning bodies were organizing races throughout the United States. The American Automobile Association (AAA) staged open-wheel, open cockpit racing and eventually became known as the USAC/CART league (Indy-car racing). Also operating were the United Stock Car Racing Association, the National Auto Racing League

¹ Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 94-95; and Sylvia Wilkinson, *Dirt Tracks to Glory: The Early Days of Stock Car Racing as Told by the Participants* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1993), chapters 1 and 2.

² Dan Pierce, "The Most Southern Sport on Earth: NASCAR and the Unions," *Southern Cultures*, (Summer 2001): 10.

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and the American Stock Car Racing Association. The National Stock Car Racing Association operated in its home state of Georgia. The Daytona Beach Racing Association was responsible for that city's races. Each organization had its own rules, competition criteria and racetrack design standards. Drivers from coast to coast were following an array of rules on tracks of varying size, quality, layout and surface.³

The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), the body that organized races at Occoneechee, grew from racing events held in the 1920s and 1930s on the long flat beaches of Daytona Beach, Florida. Tourists came to the beach to watch the races, but when, in the mid-1930s, cars began to reach speeds that made the beach an unsuitable surface, local officials were faced with the prospect of losing the racing tourist. To keep race fans coming to town, the chamber of commerce decided to organize a race. In 1936, a 3.2-mile course was laid out incorporating the beach and the highway beside it. The event was a disaster. Cars got stuck in the sand and rolled over in ruts and the incoming tide cut the 250-mile race short. Spectators easily watched the race without paying for tickets. It took four days for officials to declare a much-disputed winner. Another race failed the next year. In 1938, the chamber of commerce tried again, this time inviting local service station owner and sometime racer Bill France Sr. to be the promoter. France attracted a large crowd, sold tickets at fifty-cents apiece and kept close tabs on the laps completed by each driver to reduce controversy over the winner.⁴

Meanwhile, both formal and informal races continued in the South, as did the real-life races between revenueurs and trippers. Race organizers, drivers and mechanics were generally an uneducated lot and the organizers in particular, could be unscrupulous, ignoring safety concerns and track maintenance while failing to pay prizes.⁵ Of drivers and mechanics, historian Pete Daniel writes that despite their lack of education and manners, they "were proud, many were extremely resourceful and some were brilliant. They intimidated competitors, abused their automobiles (and those of rental companies), drank both on and off the track, flirted with women, fornicated and fought over any slight."⁶

Bill France Sr., the Daytona Beach mechanic who had efficiently organized that town's 1938 race, wanted to bring order to the broader, chaotic racing world. William Henry Getty (Bill)

³ Mike Calinoff, "NASCAR: The Beginning," Decades of Racing, May 5, 2001 < <http://decadesofracing.net> >.

⁴ Matt McLaughlin, "In the Beginning..." Fifty Years of NASCAR Racing, SpeedFX.com, December 18, 2000, < www.speedfx.com/history/1211beginning.shtml >.

⁵ Daniel, 96-97.

⁶ Ibid., 97.

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France was one of the most influential figures associated with organized stock car racing in the United States. Born in Washington, D.C. in 1909, France became interested in racing in the mid- and late-1920s when he attended board track races in Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C. and New Jersey. Cars raced around tracks surfaced in wood and banked at the outer edges to prevent the racers from going off course. France dropped out of high school and worked in auto garages where he built racecars and occasionally raced them. In 1931 France married an Ashe County, North Carolina, native and after having a son, Bill France Jr., the couple moved to Florida in 1934 in search of a warmer climate. In 1936 France competed in the disastrous Daytona Beach Chamber of Commerce Beach Road Race, after which he became involved in race promotion at the urging of a friend and because of a lack of organization in the sport. Following World War II, France and his wife Ann staged races on a one-mile former horse track outside of Orlando, events that proved exceedingly popular and well attended.⁷

Throughout 1947, Bill France conducted approximately thirty-five stock car races in the Deep South under the National Championship Stock Car Circuit (NCSCC), a loosely organized pre-NASCAR touring series. From these races, France recognized the potential of organized stock car racing to create drivers who would appeal to a growing sports-minded society.⁸ At the end of the NCSCC's first season in December 1947, France called a meeting of thirty-five leaders from numerous racing associations. The group, which included drivers and racing promoters, met for four days at the Streamline Motel in Daytona Beach, setting rules and standards for the races, modifications to cars and driver safety. The new organization was named the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing or NASCAR.⁹

NASCAR initially established three divisions for races: Roadster, Modified and Strictly Stock. Popular in the Northeast and Midwest, the Roadster division was never successful in the Southeast where fans labeled it a "Yankee" sport. The Modified division consisted of older cars that had been souped-up, much like the high-performance cars created for and by the trippers. The Strictly Stock division was for cars that the average person could buy off the showroom floor. The cars were to be street legal, family sedans built since 1946.¹⁰

⁷ Wilkinson, 19-27.

⁸ Greg Fielden, *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing, Volume I: The Beginning, 1949-1958* (Surfside Beach, South Carolina: The Galfield Press, 1987), 31-32.

⁹ McLaughlin, "In the Beginning . . .".

¹⁰ Calinoff.

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The first NASCAR race was a Modified race held at Daytona on February 15, 1948 and NASCAR was officially incorporated days later on February 21. The Modifieds raced on fifty-two dirt tracks in the first season.¹¹ Occoneetchee Speedway was one of eight North Carolina venues hosting races during that first season. The first race at Occoneetchee took place on June 27, 1948; a double-header race was staged in September of that year at the Hillsborough track.¹²

In 1949, the Strictly Stock division had its first race. Because of post-war demand for new cars, France initially felt that people who were on long waiting lists for their own automobiles would not want to see new cars being banged and beaten on the short dirt tracks. The inauguration was delayed until 1949 when France heard rumors that a rival promoter was organizing a similar stock car association. The first official Strictly Stock race was held on June 19, 1949 at the original Charlotte Motor Speedway, which was located on Wilkinson Boulevard near the present-day intersection of Little Rock Road and I-85. The track was described as “a rough three-quarter mile dirt track surrounded by scraggly fences of undressed lumber.” Fans flocked to the race to see drivers competing for \$5,000 in prize money in cars like those they owned or could own.¹³

Eight tracks were on the first Strictly Stock schedule in 1949: Charlotte Motor Speedway; Martinsville Speedway in Martinsville, Virginia; Occoneetchee Speedway; Daytona Beach Road Course; Heidelberg Speedway in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; North Wilkesboro Speedway in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina and tracks in Langhorne, Pennsylvania and Hamburg, New York. All of these tracks were dirt. By the end of the 1949 season, the success of the Strictly Stock division made it the premier class of NASCAR.¹⁴

In 1950, the name of the Strictly Stock division was changed to the Grand National Circuit reflecting its elite status in the world of stock car racing. Also in 1950, peanut farmer Harold Brasington hosted a NASCAR Grand National race on his newly completed, paved, mile-and-a-quarter superspeedway in Darlington, South Carolina. An estimated 20,000 people watched the 500-mile race which had a purse of \$25,500, the largest ever in a stock car event. When Darlington opened, it was NASCAR’s only completely paved track and was the first southern speedway, but Smokey Yunick, one of NASCAR’s legendary mechanics, described the track as a

¹¹ McLaughlin, “In the Beginning . . .”; and Chengelis.

¹² The other North Carolina towns hosting races were Greensboro, North Wilkesboro, Wadesboro, Lexington, Charlotte, Elkin and Winston-Salem, Fielden, *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing, Volume 1*, 48.

¹³ Fielden, *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing, Volume 1*, 7.” McLaughlin, “In the Beginning....”

¹⁴ Fielden, *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing, Volume 1*, 9.

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poor facility, "run by a bunch of farmers" with only one toilet, one spigot for drinking water and one telephone.¹⁵ The final race of the 1950 season and the one that would determine the overall points leader for that year was held at Occoneechee. Although Lee Petty won the race, Bill Rexford took the title for the year.¹⁶

NASCAR, and the Grand National division, proved successful almost immediately upon its establishment. The overriding reason, according to one historian, is that fans in the Southeast in the early 1950s identified the Grand Nationals as a truly southern sport. The region lacked any representation in major sports; major league baseball and professional football and basketball did not come to the South until the 1960s and 1970s. Even mainstream auto racing scheduled few events in the South, except for occasional Indianapolis-type open wheel racing at Atlanta's Lakewood Speedway.¹⁷

Although fans flocked to Grand National races, racing venues remained modest and paved tracks were slow to become the standard. In 1954, the Memphis-Arkansas Speedway, billed as the largest stock car racing facility in the country, opened with a one-and-a-half-mile dirt track as its centerpiece. In 1955, only three Grand National tracks were paved—Darlington, Raleigh and Martinsville, the latter two established as dirt tracks originally. As late as 1958, only twenty-four of fifty-one venues were paved.¹⁸ Meanwhile, advances in racing equipment were made in the mid-1950s when companies began producing specialized racing equipment such as tires, helmets and fireproof coveralls.¹⁹

A turning point for came in the late 1950s as NASCAR and stock car racing emerged as a more professionalized sport. Much of the mystique of its bootlegging roots faded as tracks improved, corporate-sponsored teams dominated and safety became a chief concern. Throughout the 1960s, NASCAR slowly began moving into mainstream American culture, although its roots and much of its fan base remained in the Southeast. In 1960, CBS aired a pair of twenty-five-mile pole position races at Daytona. The following year, ABC televised the Firecracker 250 from Daytona. In 1979, the Daytona 500 became the first nationally televised NASCAR race. Richard Petty

¹⁵ Daniel, 99.

¹⁶ Fielden, *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing, Volume I*, 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁸ Golenbock, 95.

¹⁹ Fielden, *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing, Volume I*, 141.

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won the race and CBS won an Emmy for the production. In 1985, the Grand National Circuit was renamed the Winston Cup.²⁰

Just as NASCAR was making its way into popular culture, popular culture was having its effect on the sport. NASCAR reflected an element of southern society that found itself dissatisfied, frustrated and trapped by increasing prosperity and the accompanying pressure to become "presentable." These were the farm families who had come to the mills and were finding it difficult to conform to the regimented workday. These were also the farmers and urban workers who were gaining a measure of prosperity and were now expected to be ruled by the clock and the dollar.²¹ Historian Pete Daniel asserts that although the repetitive nature of racing around a track could seem to suggest those regulated elements of the urbanizing, working world, racing actually suggested just the opposite. The drivers repeated tasks, like a mill hand, but cars often "bumped or crashed into each other, interrupting the cycle, destroying sponsors' investments and sometimes injuring drivers. . . . Skilled drivers at the edge of control constantly suggested that escape was possible for those with enough talent or nerve."²²

Fighting was common at NASCAR events of the 1950s and 1960s, as was on-track retribution. While drivers and crew members engaged in all-night parties that sometimes continued into the race day and generally included alcohol, women, fights and wild, untamed behavior, the race-day behavior of fans was no different.²³ Infield parties featured sex, drinking, guns, knives, fights and country music. "The racetrack offered an unpoliced space for uncivil behavior and vile language . . . The farther people moved from the country and its cycles into hourly work and consumer culture, the more they needed a fix of racing, wildness, fun and laughter."²⁴ Fans "scorned polite society and were in revolt against the constricting forces that threatened to tame them and rob them of the spontaneity. They were rude, violent, uncouth and proud of it."²⁵ At Darlington, an infield jail was necessary.

As increasing prosperity and urbanization was threatening the wildness of southerners, those same forces were marginalizing women in every aspect of society, including NASCAR, where in

²⁰Chengelis.

²¹ For a discussion of this theory, see Dan Pierce, "The Most Southern Sport on Earth: NASCAR and the Unions," *Southern Cultures*, (Summer 2001): 8-31.

²² Daniel, 96.

²³ Daniel, 113-117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

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its early years, women had raced alongside men at venues including Occoneechee Speedway. Ethel Flock Mobley, named for the high-test gasoline, was the sister of famed racers Tim, Bob and Fonty Flock. She raced modified cars before taking on stock cars. At the 1949 Daytona Grand National race, she finished eleventh, beating brothers Bob and Fonty. Sara Christian raced competitively in 1949. She won NASCAR's Woman Driver of the Year award and finished thirteenth in the national points standing. In the first Strictly Stock race in Charlotte, she finished fourteenth. Louise Smith was also an accomplished driver with a reputation for drinking, cursing and fighting with the men. At Langhorne, Pennsylvania, Christian finished sixth, Smith sixteenth and Mobley forty-fourth in a 200-mile race on September 11, 1949.²⁶ Women were banned from NASCAR pits, including Occoneechee, in the early 1950s, as NASCAR, like southern society, was becoming more organized and thus, more restrictive. The initial common sight of a female driver was reduced to an unusual spectacle as women were generally relegated to the role of race queen.

African American drivers were part of racing's early days as well. In 1956, Charlie Scott became the first African American to compete in a NASCAR race.²⁷ Wendell Scott (no known relation to Charlie Scott) was NASCAR's only full-time, African American driver and of the African American drivers, he was the most successful. Like his white counterparts, Wendell Scott was a tripper well known by the area police. When a local racetrack owner went to the Danville, Virginia police station in search of an African American driver to use as a promotional gimmick, they recommended Scott, a Danville native.²⁸ Scott raced on dirt tracks throughout the South, including Occoneechee Speedway and moved to Grand National racing in the 1960s. He was never able to secure a major sponsor, but he finished as high as twelfth in the points in 1964. Other African American racecar drivers existed, but their lives and careers have not been documented.²⁹

Bill France was concerned about his drivers and their safety, but in practice he was most concerned about business, regardless of the human toll and he created an atmosphere in which complaints were subverted with paternalism.³⁰ Although France did improve conditions for NASCAR drivers in the early 1950s by ensuring that prize money was paid, requiring roll bars and locking seats that would not slide on impact and partnering with Pure Oil Company to

²⁶ Ibid., 104.

²⁷ Chengelis.

²⁸ Wilkinson, 115; Daniel, 104-107; and Golenbock, 17.

²⁹ Daniel, 104-107 and 117.

³⁰ Pierce, 12-14.

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develop the first tires made especially for stock car racing, drivers still had complaints.³¹ Prize money had hardly risen through the years and NASCAR gave no assistance to the families of drivers who died on the track or to injured drivers, but revenues were growing exponentially.³² France engaged in capricious rule bending to the greatest personal and professional benefit. Dirt tracks remained plagued by holes, ruts, mud and dust while the asphalt on paved tracks was prone to failure as speeds increased in the 1960s. While NASCAR promoted and demanded increased speed, the skill of drivers and mechanics, safety measures and track construction technology were not given an opportunity to develop correspondingly.³³ NASCAR drivers attempted to unionize in 1961 and 1969, but their efforts, like those of the mill workers of the 1930s, were met with the same reaction: union organizers, participants and sympathizers were successfully strong-armed, intimidated, blacklisted and threatened. Today, NASCAR stands as the only major sporting organization without significant representation by competitors.³⁴

Safety concerns still arise, usually after the deaths of high-profile drivers such as Adam Petty and Dale Earnhardt, but the use of helmets and fireproof suits continues to be encouraged rather than required. The France family still controls NASCAR and the majority of its tracks. Bill France Sr. remained at the helm of NASCAR until 1972 when his son, Bill France Jr. took over. The elder France died on June 7, 1992.³⁵

NASCAR is the fastest growing spectator sport in the United States today. Between 1991 and 1998, attendance at NASCAR events increased seventy percent, almost four times faster than the National Basketball Association.³⁶ The first Strictly Stock race in Charlotte attracted several thousand fans. Today the Lowe's Motor Speedway, the modern name for the Charlotte Motor Speedway, seats 133,000 people and has sold tickets to fans in all fifty states and fourteen countries.

From its roots, NASCAR has grown into a multi-million dollar industry in which drivers are synonymous with their sponsors and all races are televised. The Darlington infield, where a jail was required to help maintain peace, has been divided into the President's Suite, the Azalea

³¹ Ibid., 13.

³² *Charlotte Observer*, August 10, 1961, A-1, cited in Pierce, 14.

³³ Pierce, 22.

³⁴ Ibid., 30.

³⁵ Chengalis and Pierce, 31.

³⁶ Robert G. Hagstrom, "Driving America Wild," *National Geographic* (on-line version), May 9, 2001 www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/9806/forum/caessay.html.

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Terrace, where tickets cost \$500 and the Fourth Turn Club with a large corporate tent.³⁷ Fighting incurs a \$10,000 fine and drivers work to personify an image or lifestyle approved of by their sponsors. In the words of Junior Johnson, "It's all been tamed now."³⁸

Of the original eight Strictly Stock race venues, which collectively form the birthplace of modern-day NASCAR Winston Cup Racing, only the North Wilkesboro track, Occoneetchee Speedway and Martinsville Speedway are extant. The North Wilkesboro Speedway was paved in the 1950s and was a NASCAR Winston Cup track until it was closed in 1996. The Martinsville Speedway, paved in 1955, still hosts Winston Cup races. The other five tracks were demolished.³⁹

Occoneetchee Speedway as a Rare Property Type

As stock car racing evolved in the decades after World War II, racing venues improved and moved from rural areas to larger towns and cities. In the late 1950s and early 1960s drivers on the professional circuit preferred paved tracks to the muddy, pothole filled tracks of the sport's early years. As the sport's image improved, promoters began erecting more attractive seating areas and facilities and the dirt tracks, with their rudimentary restrooms, ticket offices and concession stands, could not satisfy most NASCAR fans. When speedways like those at Daytona, Talladega and Charlotte emerged, the small venues, like Occoneetchee could not compete.

The early tracks associated with NASCAR's beginnings have long since been abandoned or developed for commercial or residential purposes. The last race at Occoneetchee took place in September 1968. That year, dirt track races were held in Columbia and Greenville, South Carolina and Richmond. Those three tracks no longer exist. The last year dirt tracks were used for Grand National Racing was 1970 when two events were held in Columbia and one took place in Raleigh. A city-owned maintenance yard stands at the former site of the Raleigh track. Occoneetchee is a remarkable survivor in that it is the only remaining dirt track from NASCAR's early years. Although overgrown with trees and native bushes, the site continues to project its original function. Its rarity as a property type should mitigate the issues of integrity that arise

³⁷ Daniel, 119.

³⁸ Ibid., 120.

³⁹ Martinsville Speedway, 9 May 2001, www.martinsvillespeedway.com/wc1949.html; and Mike Hembree, "The Birth of Stock Car Racing . . . NASCAR Style," January 1, 2001, www.nascar.com/news/1998news/October/23/00899204.html.

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because of the poor condition of some of its associated buildings and the overgrowth of plant life, the latter condition being reversible. At present, the property is under the care of Classical American Homes, Inc., whose staff respects the speedway's history and is actively attempting to save it from the threat of highway development.

A Brief History of Occoneetchee Speedway

The Occoneetchee Speedway occupies a portion of the former late-eighteenth century plantation of James Hogg, an original trustee of the University of North Carolina. Hogg built three homes on the Eno River, one of which, Poplar Hill, passed to his daughter Robina and her husband William Norwood. In the 1890s, businessman and philanthropist Julian Shakespeare Carr of Durham purchased Poplar Hill and its surrounding acreage from the Norwood family and renamed it Occoneetchee Farm after a local Indian tribe. Carr made additions to the plantation house and built a clubhouse for entertaining. He grew crops and raised livestock, notably racehorses for which he built a racetrack that later became the site of Occoneetchee Speedway.⁴⁰

In November 1923, Carr's estate was divided into seventeen tracts and sold at public auction. John Graham Webb purchased two tracts totaling two hundred acres including one parcel containing the house, clubhouse and racetrack. T.H. Webb acquired the two hundred acres in 1927. The property conveyed to E. Buchanan Lyon and his wife in July 1945. One year later, W.S. Murchison and J.R. Rogers of Raleigh purchased the farm tract at auction for \$10,000.⁴¹ The tract contained a large barn, tractors and other farm equipment and "200 acres of excellent farm land."⁴² In the late 1940s, auto racing organizer and avid pilot Bill France Sr. of Daytona Beach, Florida noticed the Occoneetchee Farm racetrack while flying over Orange County and in 1947 approached the owners about selling the property to him.⁴³ On January 27, 1948 Murchison and Rogers sold the two hundred acres to Hillsboro Speedway, Inc.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *The News of Orange County*, March 20, 1980.

⁴¹ E. Buchanan Lyon and wife, Nancy Camp Lyon to W.S. Murchison and J.R. Rogers, July 26, 1946, Book 124, p. 366 orange County Deeds orange County Register of Deeds, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

⁴² *The News of Orange County*, August 1, 1946.

⁴³ William Crowther, correspondence to Jennifer Martin, Raleigh, N.C., November 27, 2001.

⁴⁴ W.S. Murchison and J.R. Rogers to Hillsboro Speedway, Inc., January 27, 1948, Book 129, p. 131 orange County Deeds orange County Register of Deeds, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

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Five men interested in bringing automobile racing to central North Carolina incorporated Hillsboro Speedway, Inc. on September 18, 1947.⁴⁵ Upon filing papers with the North Carolina Secretary of State's office, the principals, Bill France, Ben Lowe of Burlington, Dobe Powell and Enoch Staley of North Wilkesboro and Joe Buck Dawson of Chapel Hill, announced a plan to build a one-mile oval racetrack with a 5,000-seat capacity.⁴⁶ The Occoneechee Speedway was to be the third one-mile oval track on the east coast; the other two were in Atlanta and Langhorne, Pennsylvania.⁴⁷ In December 1947, three months after the announcement to build the track outside Hillsborough, Bill France Sr. convened a group of racing promoters from across the Southeast at the Streamline Hotel in Daytona Beach where they formed NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing). The organization was incorporated on February 21, 1948.⁴⁸ The first NASCAR race was held on the beaches of Daytona in February 1948.⁴⁹

The Occoneechee Speedway opened on June 27, 1948 with a one hundred mile NASCAR race. The event attracted an estimated 20,000 fans. The facility offered one hundred acres of parking, wooden grandstands for 10,000 spectators and sloped hillsides for 25,000 additional fans. Fonty Flock, a member of one of racing's most prominent families, won the first race at Occoneechee.⁵⁰ The second and third races at Occoneechee were a scheduled double-header, anticipated by a local newspaper to be, "the greatest ever held in the State." The double-header took place on September 19, 1948 with Fonty Flock winning both events.⁵¹

On August 7, 1949, Occoneechee hosted a "Strictly Stock" division race in which street-approved cars competed. The NASCAR sanctioned race was the third of that division and only

⁴⁵ Orange County Records of Incorporations, vols. 2-3, 1878-1952 (microfilm), State Archives, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; Sometime during the nineteenth or early twentieth century, the spelling of the name of the town of Hillsborough was unofficially changed to "Hillsboro." In 1965, the name officially reverted to "Hillsborough," which had been the original spelling when the town was renamed from Childsburg to Hillsborough in 1766. Throughout this nomination, the current official spelling will be used.

⁴⁶ Three of the original principals eventually sold their interests in the track to France and Staley who remained associated with the corporation throughout its history.

⁴⁷ *The News of Orange County*, September 25, 1947; at the time it opened, Occoneechee Speedway was measured at one mile. In 1956, it was remeasured at 0.9 miles.

⁴⁸ Peter Golenbock, *American Zoom: Stock Car Racing From Dirt Tracks to Daytona* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1993), 72.

⁴⁹ Angelique S. Chengelis, "Take a Ride Down Memory Lane: NASCAR's First 50 Years," *The Detroit News* (online version), June 11, 1998 < <http://detnews.com/1998/motosports/9806/11/06150013.htm> > (July 9, 2001).

⁵⁰ Ed Sanseverino, "Occoneechee-Orange Speedway, Hillsboro, North Carolina," Booklet (by the Author, 1995), 1.

⁵¹ *The News of Orange*, September 16, 1948.

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one of eight Strictly Stock races ever held before the division's name was changed. Two other Strictly Stock races were held in Charlotte and North Wilkesboro that year. Over seventeen thousand fans attended the August 7 race, an event fraught with wrecks that devastated many of the twenty-eight cars in contention. The field included Sara Christian, an early female NASCAR driver.⁵²

For the 1950 season, the Strictly Stock division became the NASCAR Grand National Circuit. Of the 1950 season, the local press proclaimed, "the speed demons will attempt to break the Flock monopoly on races at the famous mile speedway." The Flock brothers—Fonty, Bob and Tim—dominated the top events held at Occoneechee in the first few seasons.⁵³ The highlights of the August 13, 1950 race at Occoneechee were twenty-one-year-old Fireball Roberts' first victory and the entry of Louise Smith of Greenville, South Carolina, who drove a brand new Nash Ambassador. At the October 29 race later that year, Lee Petty of Greensboro won the two hundred mile race and eventually went on to become one of NASCAR's most successful drivers. Petty, the progenitor of auto racing's most famous family, was the father of legend Richard Petty, grandfather to champion driver Kyle Petty and great-grandfather to Adam Petty, who before he was killed during a practice run in New Hampshire, was the first fourth generation professional athlete in the United States.⁵⁴

The ownership and name of the speedway underwent a change in the early 1950s. On July 25, 1952 Orange Speedway, Inc. formed with Bill France, Sr. as president, Ann France as secretary-treasurer and Enoch Staley as vice-president. The other three original owners—Powell, Dawson and Lowe—were no longer associated with the track. In January 1953, Ann France filed an affidavit with the North Carolina Department of State to dissolve Hillsboro Speedway, Inc. Beginning in 1954, the racing complex was known as Orange Speedway.⁵⁵ After the 1955 season, the Orange Speedway was shortened from one mile to nine-tenths of a mile in length.

⁵² Chengalis; Matt McLaughlin, "Occoneechee Speedway, Fifty Years of NASCAR Racing," SpeedFX.com, April 4, 2001,

< www.speedfx.com/history/050798hillsboro.shtml >.

⁵³ *The News of Orange County*, June 15, 1950.

⁵⁴ Matt McLaughlin, "Tales from Days of Yore: Fifty Years of NASCAR Racing," SpeedFX.com, July 9, 2001, <<http://www.speedfx.com/history/050798hillsboro.shtml>>.

⁵⁵ Orange County Records of Incorporation, Book 3, page 307-312 orange County Register of Deeds, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

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While historian Pete Daniel asserts that respectable people condemned racing and the behavior that often accompanied it Orange Speedway is one of only a few early NASCAR track that met with organized protests in the 1950s. Racing proved popular with many local residents, but others saw the sport in a less positive light and expressed those feelings openly. In April 1956, Rev. C.H. Reckard, pastor of the Hillsboro Presbyterian Church, delivered a sermon critical of local stock car racing and its effect on area young people. Protests by Reckard and other area clergy culminated in the passage of a bill on May 8, 1957 which banned racing on Sundays.⁵⁶ Apparently, the ban on Sunday racing did not endure, because Sunday races were announced in an October 1961 edition of *The News of Orange County*.

In 1958, Bill France leased the track to the Orange County Board of Education for \$100 per year for ten years so that local athletic teams would have a venue for their games.⁵⁷ For every race he held at the speedway, France paid the school board \$250. By this time, only three or four races per year were held at the track.⁵⁸

For local residents one of the highlights in the speedway's history was the appearance of Hollywood starlet Jayne Mansfield in the pace car for a race held on March 10, 1963. A local newspaper reported that Mansfield, in North Carolina for a nightclub appearance in Greensboro, "skillfully signed autographs continuously throughout the entire time, while keeping tabs [sic] on the cars whirling around the dust choked track below."⁵⁹

Throughout its twenty-year history as an official NASCAR venue, the Occoneetchee Speedway hosted automobile racing's greatest figures. Richard Petty, the Randleman native known as "The King" for his dominance of the sport for nearly two decades, raced at the Hillsborough track throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as did his father Lee Petty. Among other prominent racers who regularly competed at Occoneetchee were Ned Jarrett, known as "Gentleman Jarrett" for his kind demeanor off the track; Junior Johnson; Fireball Roberts and Curtis Turner.

The final Grand National race at Orange Speedway took place on September 15, 1968. One NASCAR historian characterized the race as "an epic, fender crunching, bumper banging, paint swapping war out on the track" in which Richard Petty eventually dominated by a seven-lap margin. The traditional fall Grand National race that had always taken place at Occoneetchee

⁵⁶ *Session Laws and Resolutions of North Carolina*, 1957, c.588, s. 252.

⁵⁷ *The News of Orange County*, March 20, 1980.

⁵⁸ *The News of Orange County*, September 14, 1961.

⁵⁹ *The News of Orange County*, March 14, 1963.

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since the founding of NASCAR was transferred to a new track Bill France Sr. had built at Talladega, Alabama.⁶⁰

On May 19, 1984 Orange Speedway, Inc.'s three shareholders, Ann and Bill France and Enoch Staley, voluntarily dissolved the corporation.⁶¹ In June 1997, France Staley, LLC, the corporate interest with title to the track sold the property to the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina (PNC), a statewide historic preservation nonprofit corporation.⁶² Preservation North Carolina then sold the property to the current owner Classical American Homes Preservation Trust in November 1997.⁶³ The property is currently under protective deed restrictions to preserve it from development.

⁶⁰ McLaughlin, "Occoneechee Speedway."

⁶¹ Articles of Dissolution, Book 466, page 406 orange County Deeds orange County Register of Deeds, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

⁶² France Staley, LLC to Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, Inc., June 3, 1997. Orange County Deeds orange County Register of Deeds, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

⁶³ Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, Inc., to Classical American Homes Preservation Trust, November 25, 1997 orange County Register of Deeds, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for Occonechee Speedway is indicated with a black solid line on the accompanying Orange County GIS tax map drawn at a scale of 1 inch = 2,400 inches (200 feet). The nominated 41.98-acre parcel is a portion of a 193.03-acre tract (#4.37.C.11) owned by Classical American Homes Preservation Trust.

Boundary Justification

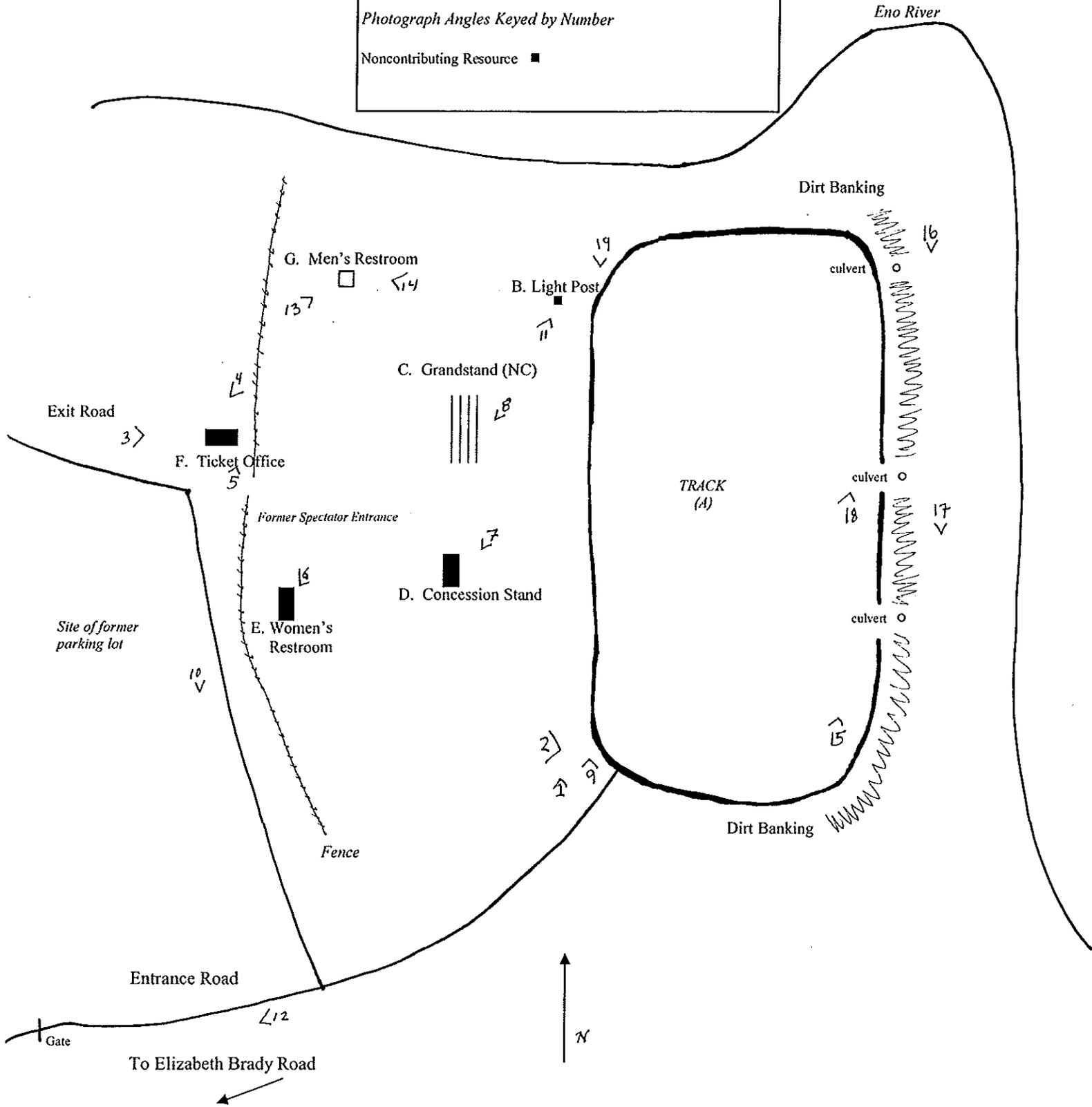
The boundary includes the oval racetrack, buildings, roads, dirt banking, culverts, fence and designed landscape features (such as the plateau containing the track and hillside west of the track that held spectators) originally associated with Occonechee Speedway. These elements contribute to the property's significance as an eligible site. As a whole, the property retains integrity of setting, materials, workmanship, location, design, feeling and association. The boundaries also include an overgrown area that originally served as a parking lot for spectators. This roughly rectangular portion of the property is west of the track and the concentration of buildings. It is contained in the nominated area because it is wedged between the entrance and exit roads which are an integral part of the overall site.

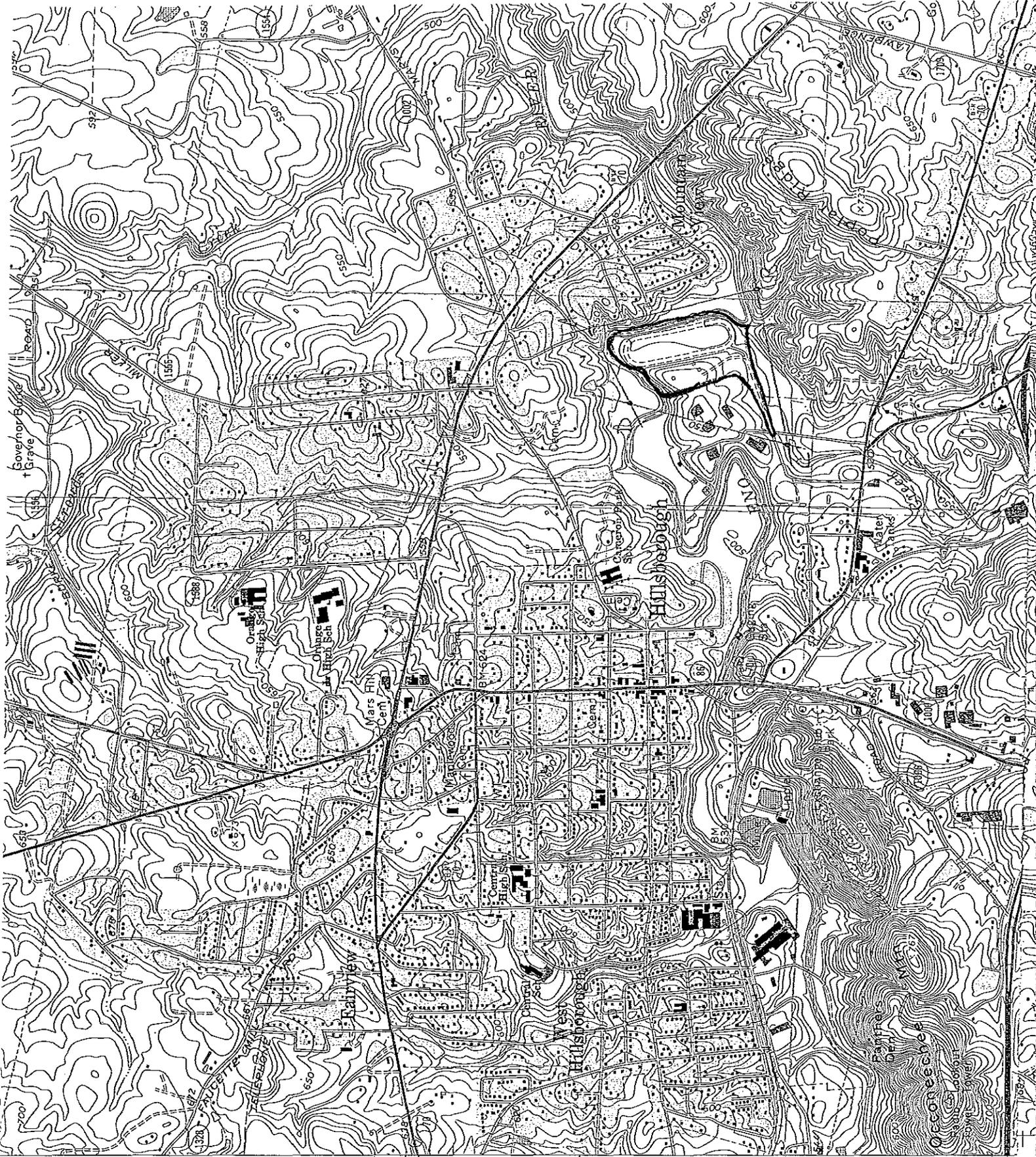
OCCONEECHEE SPEEDWAY
Orange County, NC

Schematic—Not to Scale

Photograph Angles Keyed by Number

Noncontributing Resource ■





Occonechee
 Speedway
 Hillsborough
 Orange Co, N
 Zone 17
 Hillsborough
 Quad

A: E 672 840 5'
 N 3944 120
 B: E 373 040
 N 3993 200
 C: E 672 090
 N 3993 120
 D: E 672 480
 N 3993 900

396

BURLINGTON 20 MI.
 EPLAND 45 MI.

396

5156 II SW
 (EPLAND)

266