



The Beverly Hills Speedway was an enormous 1.25-mile racetrack made of wood that once stood south of Wilshire Boulevard and above what is today Olympic Boulevard, between Beverly Drive to the east and Lasky Drive to the west. The board track was oval shape with an incline of 35 degrees along the straightaways and greater banking angles at the turns. It was the first track in the U.S. to be designed with banked turns that incorporated an engineering solution known as a spiral easement or track transition curve. In all, the entire speedway site was comprised of roughly 200 acres that was once used for growing beans and was enclosed with fencing for safety, security, and boundary marking.

The primary public entrance into the site was through a two-block long, 600 foot wide landscaped paved drive (between what is now Roxbury and Peck drives) off Wilshire Boulevard that extended several hundred feet south through a long linear grove of tall mature eucalyptus trees (which became a portion of Charleville Boulevard) and into a sprawling oil paved parking lot just behind a large tiered bleacher structure (referred to as Grandstand “B”). A second, less formal, entry was located at the southeast corner of the site at the present-day northwest corner of Beverly Drive and Olympic Boulevard. This entrance was used by the automobile racers, officials, and those spectators with reserved seating in the semi-covered, multi-story grandstand that was situated on the south side of the track (Grandstand “A”). Open parking near Grandstand “A” was also accessed from this lower entry drive as well as from smaller entry points along the east side of South Beverly Drive and what is today Lasky Drive.

The infield of the course was reached by six concrete tunnels that ran under Grandstand “B” as well as under the racetrack at various points along the course. Some of the tunnels were for use only by pedestrians accessing the infield as general admission ticket holders. Parking for the site accommodated 11,000 automobiles. Four thousand cars could be parked within the inside rim (infield) of the track, while 7,000 could park outside the track to the north, south, and east, but within the fenced enclosure of the speedway grounds. The racetrack was engineered by Arthur C. Pillsbury, who was the civil engineer for the City of Beverly Hills early-on. Pillsbury was an avid race car enthusiast and recognized racetrack engineer who also served as an officer of the Los Angeles Speedway Association. The grandstands were designed by architect W.J. Dodd and engineered by Williams Richards, both of Los Angeles. The long, multi-story Grandstand “A” adjacent the south side of the racetrack’s straightaway was roughly 800 feet in length and featured a cantilever roofing system for unobstructed

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viewing, tiered reserved seating that accommodated 15,000 spectators, boxed seating for VIPs, restrooms, and a luxurious clubhouse. Grandstand “B” or also referred to as the bleachers was similar in length and spectator accommodation, but was on the north side of the track and faced south (into the sun). Grandstand “B” offered unreserved seating and lacked many of the special amenities offered at Grandstand “A.” Dodd and Richards, acting as the formal architect of record, also assisted in the aesthetic design of the racetrack, scoreboards, and overall site, as well as designed the ancillary structures such as the garages, tunnels, utility buildings, storage tanks, and 100,000 gallon concrete reservoir. Jack Prince (John Shillington “Jack” Prince), a former British high wheel bicycle champion from the 1880s and saucer shaped board track builder, served as construction manager.

The Beverly Hills Speedway, sometimes referred to as the Los Angeles Speedway, was built at a time when auto racing was extremely popular, so popular in fact, that the races were filmed as news clips for public viewing in the silent movie theaters and live radio broadcasts were made from the speedways. Constructed in 100 working days, its opening day event on February 28, 1920 was a 250-mile long race that featured 18 of the top recognized race car drivers in the country and was sanctioned by the Automobile Association of American (AAA). At one point, California had seven wooden track speedways, also known as “board track” or “toothpick track” speedways. The Beverly Hills Speedway was multi-functional and was also used for the Beverly Hills horse show, the flower show, polo games, and other events that brought thousands to Beverly Hills. An increased demand for residential development in the area led to the Los Angeles Speedway Association selling off the race site in the fall of 1923 for \$2,000,000 to Walter G. McCarty, a prominent Los Angeles realtor and developer. The last race was held in February 1924 and the entire site razed less than a year later for McCarty’s sprawling residential tract referred to informally as the Speedway Tract. El Camino Drive took its original name, Speedway, from the racetrack that was enthusiastically patronized only a few years earlier. Some of the other streets within the neighborhood are named after early members of the Los Angeles Speedway Association who built the famous course.

As a side note, the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, built in 1928, was not constructed on the site of the former Speedway, despite prior references stating as such. Though located along the south side of Wilshire Boulevard, it was actually situated several blocks east (and north) of the site between Speedway Drive (now El Camino Drive) and Rodeo Drive. In addition, there was no direct access to the speedway from the area near the hotel at El Camino Drive and Wilshire Boulevard.

*Proposed Plaque Copies:*



Plaque A:

“This marks the main public entrance of the legendary, 80,000-capacity Beverly Hills Speedway. The oval-shaped, 1.25-mile racetrack was located on a 200-acre site south of Wilshire between Beverly and Lasky drives from 1919 to 1924. The all-wooden "toothpick" speedway was the first in the nation designed with steep banked turns using a spiral easement curve.”



Plaque B:

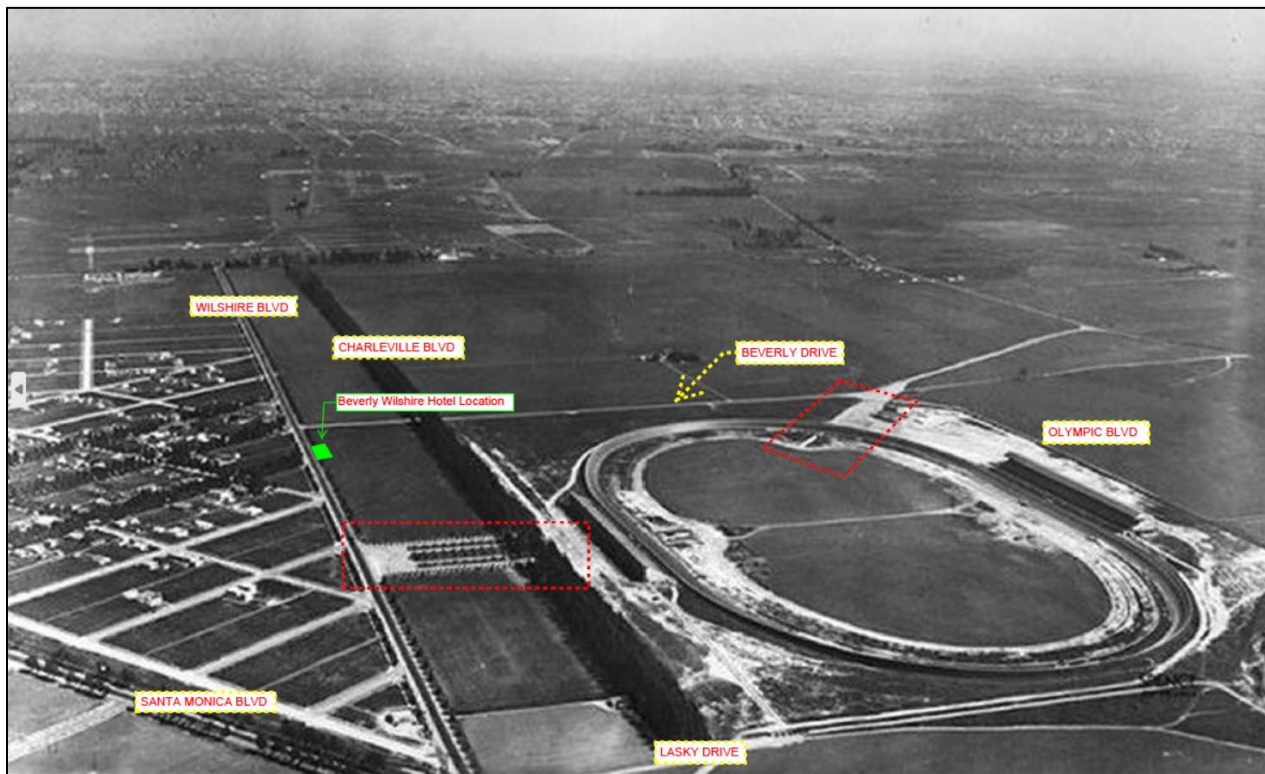
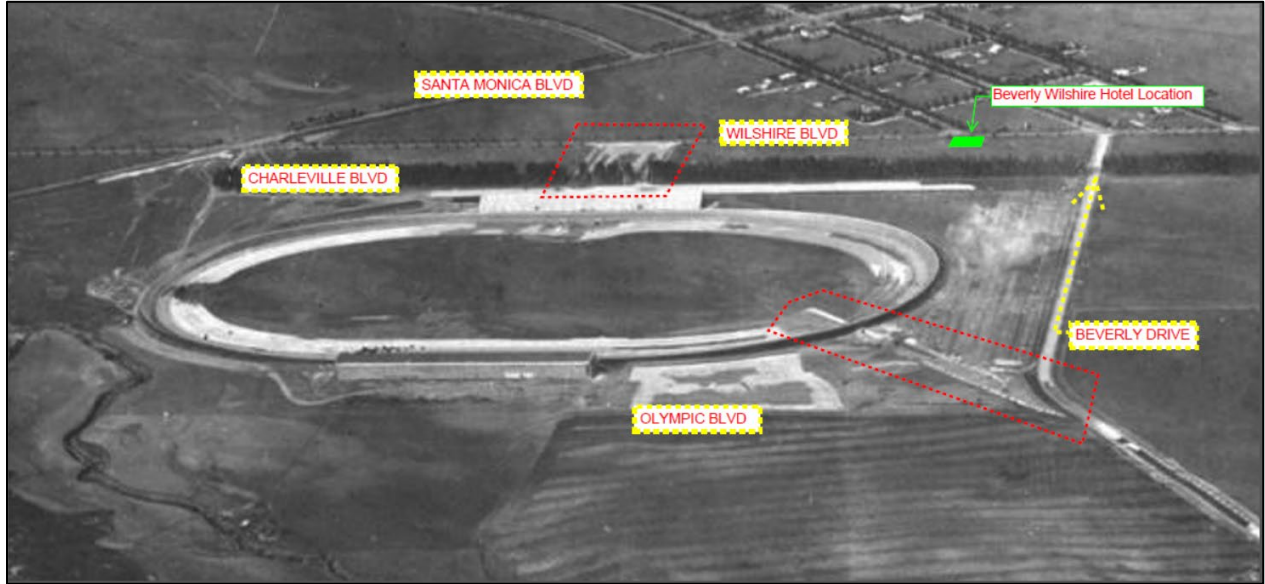
“This marks the VIP and driver entrance of the legendary, 80,000-capacity Beverly Hills Speedway. The oval-shaped, 1.25-mile racetrack was located on a 200-acre site south of Wilshire between Beverly and Lasky drives from 1919 to 1924. The all-wooden "toothpick" speedway was the first in the nation designed with steep banked turns using a spiral easement curve.”

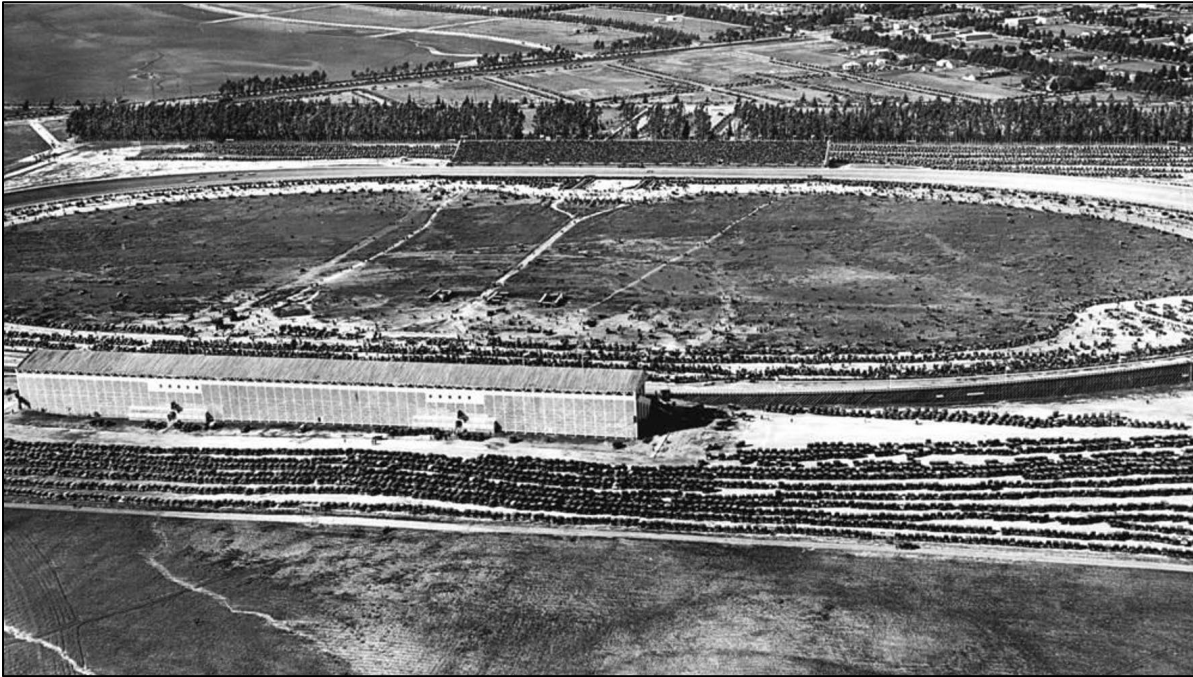
*Recommended Placement Locations:*

Two plaques proposed within public sidewalks. One plaque at either the southwest or southeast corner of Bedford Drive and Wilshire Boulevard to indicate the center point of the 600-foot-wide formal entry drive into the speedway grounds. A second plaque placed at the northwest corner of Beverly Drive and Olympic Boulevard indicating the racers’ entrance driveway into the Speedway.



Photos:





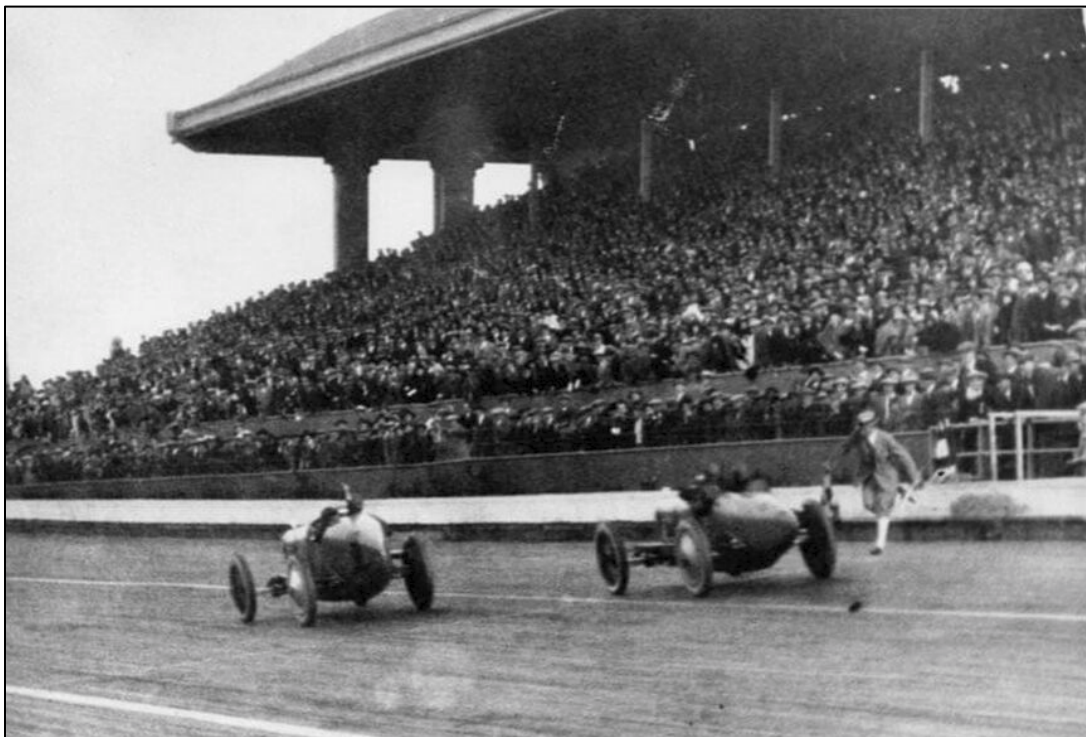
Busy day at the races (note the long lines of parked autos), looking north

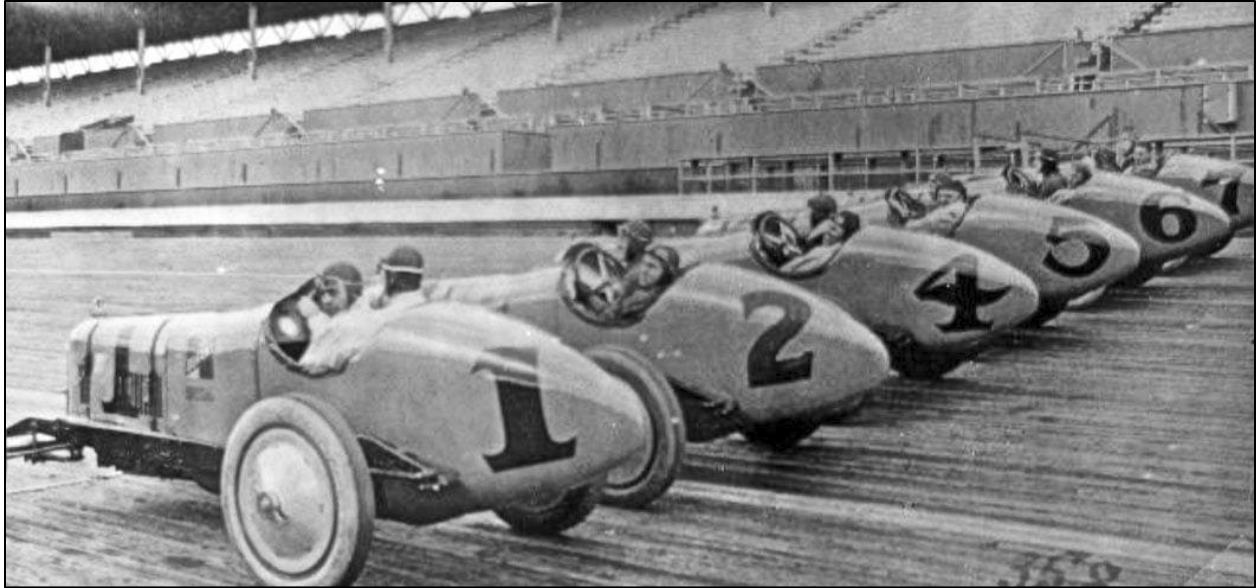


Aerial view of Grandstand "B," race track, parking area, and main entry drive, looking east



West end of Grandstand "A," looking northeast

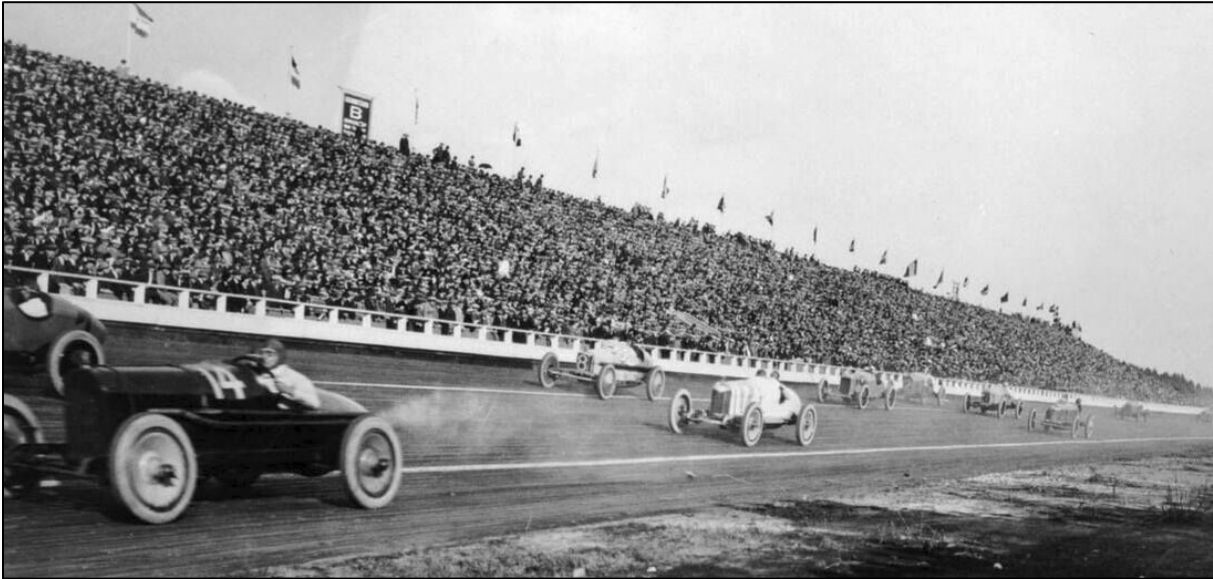




Time trailer race at the starting line in front of Grandstand “A”



View of race from Grandstand “A,” looking northeast



Auto racers pass Grandstand “B” (the bleachers)



Racing along at the northeast bank of track





Beverly Hills Speedway site, aerial 1927



Beverly Hills Speedway site, aerial 1928