

THE LEGENDARY BRICKS OF INDY

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway has had many nicknames over its colorful history but none more fitting than "THE BRICKYARD."

In 1908, Carl Fisher proposed to three other Hoosiers involved in the automobile industry, James Allison, Arthur Newby and Frank Wheeler, that a large racetrack and automobile testing grounds be built to help promote the sale of autos. The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation was founded on February 9, 1909 by these four men who began immediately to put their plans into operation. The Corporation purchased 320 acres of farmland northwest of Indianapolis, Indiana on which a 2 1/2 mile race facility was built. The surface of the track was a combination of asphalt and crushed stone which the founders hoped would make an ideal racing surface. The first auto race was a five mile event held on August 19, 1909. This race was part of a three day meet which proved to be a failure when the surface of the track broke up and a driver, two mechanics and two spectators were killed.

The founders, in order to prevent a future disaster, decided to have the track paved with bricks before the upcoming races to be held on December 17-18, 1909. Beginning right after Labor Day and continuing 63 days, approximately 3.2 million paving bricks were laid in the track and remained the main surface until the 1930's when all but the main straightaway was paved over with asphalt. In 1961, the rest of the track was asphalt paved with only the famous yard of bricks at the start/finish line left intact.

Although there has been much written about the history of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, not much has been documented about the famed bricks laid in the track in 1909. Recent research, however, has uncovered the following facts:

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation contracted with the Wabash Clay company in Veedersburg, Indiana to provide the paving

bricks needed to totally cover the 2 1/2 mile track. The Wabash Clay Company in turn contracted with various other brick companies to help fill this massive order. So far, thirteen different kinds of bricks from five different companies have been identified. The Wabash Clay Company itself provided what is believed to be the greatest number of bricks which are marked "W.C. CO., CULVER BLOCK, PAT. MAY 21, 1901." In addition, the company also provided the "WABASH" brick and three different versions of the Veedersburg brick, one labeled "VEEDERSBURG PAVEN", another marked "DUNN PATENT, VEEDERSBURG, DUNN PATENT," and the other "DUNN PATENT, THE VEEDERSBURG PAVEN CO., DUNN PATENT." The latter two have the unique characteristic of having the name of the company stamped on the end of the brick instead of on the side.



W.C. CO., CULVER BLOCK, PAT. MAY 21, 1901



VEEDERSBURG PAVEN



WABASH



DUNN PATENT, VEEDERSBURG, DUNN PATENT



DUNN PATENT, THE VEEDERSBURG PAVEN CO., DUNN PATENT



POSTON, CRAWFORDSVILLE, IND.



W.C. CO., POSTON BLOCK, PAT.



C.E. POSTON, POSTON PAVER, ATTICA, IND.



POSTON'S KNOBSTONE BLOCK

Other companies providing bricks were the Indiana Block Company, Brazil, Indiana whose bricks were stamped "BRAZIL", and "IND. BLOCK, BRAZIL, IND.", Marion Brickworks Company, Marion, Indiana who provided the "MARION PAVER" and the Terre Haute Vitri-fied Company, Terre Haute, Indiana who supplied the "TERRE HAUTE BLOCK."



BRAZIL



MARION PAVER



IND. BLOCK, BRAZIL, IND.



TERRE HAUTE BLOCK

The bricks themselves measured 9" long, 4" wide, 4" deep and weighed 10 pounds each. They were laid into the track on their side, not face down as you might expect, and then cemented together. This plan provided a much safer and more durable racing surface.

What other types of bricks may have been used in the paving process of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1909, no one knows for sure, however, speculation does exist that there may yet be other types of bricks not yet identified. As future construction is done on the track and more bricks are unearthed, the mystery that has sparked the curiosity of race fans for decades may be finally solved.