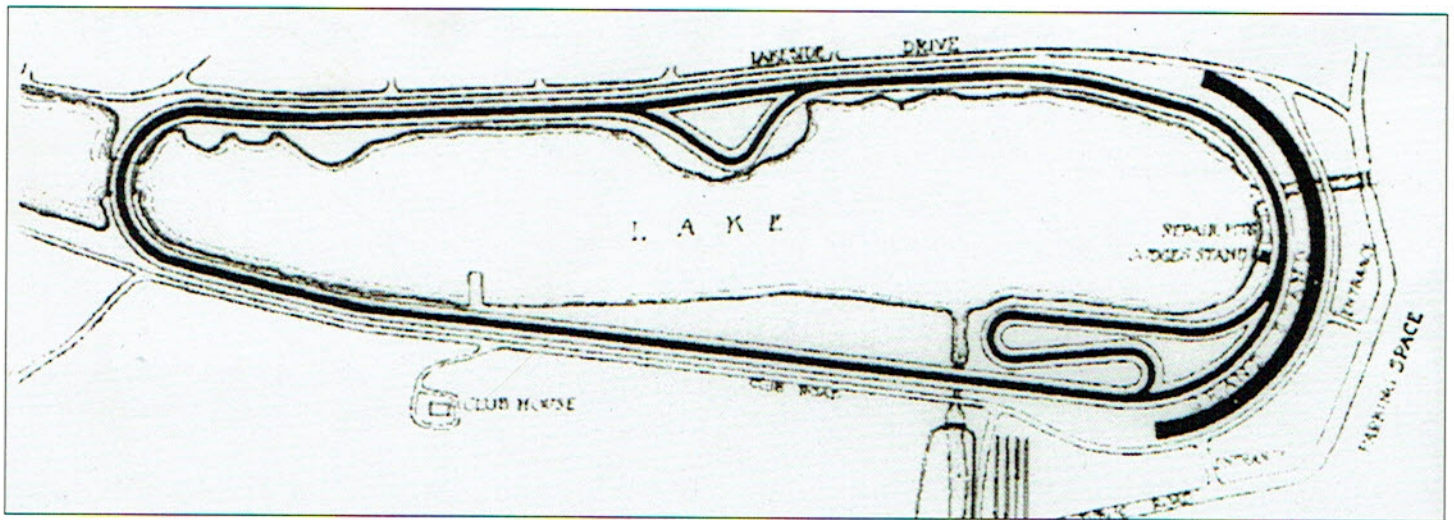


## Looping the Lake: From Raceway to Community Gatherings



In 1915, developers of the Edgewood Lake graded a racetrack near the lake to entice motorists to drive to their 400 acres of Shades Valley wilderness, buy residential lots in this scenic country setting, and race their automobiles. This was a novel idea at this time when both cars and drivers were few in Birmingham, an urban area then superbly served by streetcar transit. The graded speedway around the lake would become today's Lakeshore and South Lakeshore Drives.

ABOVE: The Indianapolis-style motor speedway. *MOTOR AGE*, MARCH 30, 1916.

Birmingham's first automobile race track—the Birmingham Motor Speedway—was to be “one of the greatest speedways anywhere on earth.” The 40-foot-wide track tightly encircled the lake. At its western end near today's Old Green Springs Road were parking, a grandstand to seat 50,000 spectators, a scoring tower, and the pit area. Grading work on the nearly 3-mile track was almost complete in 1916 when investment money ran out.

BELOW: Graded speedway along today's Lakeshore Drive, before Shades Creek was dammed. ALVIN HUDSON COLLECTION, BPL ARCHIVES, 1914.

