

### Mount Clemens Race Track

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*Aerial view of Mount Clemens Race Track about 1955 shows the lagoon between the ovals*

**M**ount Clemens Race Track was located on a 55-acre site along North River Road near the I-94 freeway. The property was purchased after World War II by Mount Clemens resident **Dr. Clayton T. Stubbs** and his wife **Ruth**, for use as a private pheasant hunting preserve.

The land was an old harness racing site, the Clinton Driving Park, which had not been used for racing since about 1925. Dr. Stubbs discovered the old track, which had been erected in 1916 by the Mount Clemens Driving Club, overgrown with brush. About 1950, some local race drivers who were using the track to practice for their races at the **Motor City Speedway** approached Dr. Stubbs about cleaning up the track and offering races there. Dr. Stubbs agreed to their proposal, and the Mount Clemens Race Track was born. The first public race was offered on September 3, 1951, with 5,000 fans on hand.

For years, the raceway attracted crowds for MMSRA stock car races on Sunday nights during

the summer (in later years the schedule would change to Thursday and Saturday nights), as well as the occasional crowd-pleasing demolition derby. Grandstands seating 5,500 featured an adjacent picnic and playground area, as Dr. and Mrs. Stubbs wanted their racetrack to provide entertainment for the entire family. The grounds included half-mile and quarter-mile ovals and a figure-eight track.



Driver Burns Crossland became a member of the "Upside-Down Club" during a race on June 16, 1952  
(photo courtesy of *The Macomb Daily*)

For the opening of the 1954 season, a man-made lagoon was created at the race track, and Dr. Stubbs announced what was thought to be a first in racing history: Mount Clemens Race Track would feature auto races and boat races! Small outboard craft were set to race on the lagoon, and to top it all off, the [Tommy Bartlett Water Show](#) from Cypress Gardens, Florida, was brought in to entertain the crowds with acrobatic water skiing. The water show opened on July 11, but the premiere was marred by an accident in which one of the performers fell and was mangled by the twin propellers of the tow boat. The skier recovered from the deep lacerations on his back, and the water show went on through the summer drawing good crowds, but it was not repeated the following year. The little lake became a landscape decoration thereafter.

During the 1950s an effort was made to re-introduce harness racing at the track, but the plan was stalled for years after the Racing Commissioner denied a permit on the grounds that local officials were opposed to the idea and because the track was too close to **Selfridge Air Force Base**. Legal wrangling went on for some time, and the proposal eventually fizzled.

In June, 1977, Dr. Stubbs sold Mount Clemens Race Track to **Dr. Henry J. Winkler** and his wife, **Cynthia**, who continued to operate the track much as the Stubbs family had. Cyndy Winkler eventually became owner and manager of the track, and was at the time one of only two women among the owner/managers of the 900 racetracks in the U.S.

The track was always popular and continued to make a modest profit, but overhead costs in the form of property tax and liability insurance were an increasingly heavy burden, and the value of the prime real estate upon which the raceway was situated eventually exceeded the value of the business. Cyndy Winkler placed the race track on the market in 1985, and sold it to the city of Mount Clemens in March, 1986, for the sum of \$725,000. The track equipment was sold at auction the next month and Mount Clemens Race Track ended its 36-year history.

The city of Mount Clemens sold the race track property in 1987 to **Gebran Anton** and his **Riverside Associates** development firm. Riverside leased the property to **James A. Koester**, who built **Gibraltar Trade Center North** at the location in 1990.

For more information about Mount Clemens Race Track, we recommend:

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- "Small Lagoon Should Make Skiing Tricky," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, July 9, 1954, p.18, col.2.
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- "Record Crowd Views Initial Hard Top Card," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, September 4, 1951, p.12, col.4.
- "The Races: Large Crowds in Attendance, Eminently Good," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, February 2, 1917, p.1.
- "The Race Course: Mt. Clemens Driving Club Organized," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, March 10, 1916, p.4, col.2.