**Track History**

Drag racing made its New England debut at the old Newington Airport in 1953.  Although the tenure of organized racing was short lived at the Newington location, it did set the wheels in motion for locations all over New England.  None of these were more important to the history of New England Dragway than Sanford, Maine.  Members of the NEHRC (New England Hot Rod Council) initiated racing at Sanford Airport in July of 1955.  For ten years some of the greatest names in drag racing helped shape the legendary facility.

As the mid-sixties approached, members of the NEHRC knew they needed to find a permanent home.  They began searching for land suitable enough to construct a permanent drag strip.  In 1963 Council members began talking with local realtors in the seacoast region of New Hampshire.  They wanted a piece of land that was about a mile long.  “When we told realtors about our requirements, they laughed and said good luck,” explained New England Dragway, Inc., Treasurer Ed Bernier.  One realtor didn’t laugh, though and took the folks from New Hampshire seriously.  Within a few weeks real estate agent Ben D’Agostino called with some good news.

”D’Agostino found some land that would meet our needs.  But, he had to do some work because it consisted of two separate parcels owned by different people, in two abutting towns. One piece was owned by the Trefetherens and the other by a guy who lived on an island off the coast of South Carolina.  We took a look at the land and told him to go for it,” said Bernier.

The location was ideal.  It was relatively close to Boston and other major population centers of eastern New England.  Route 27, the road passing along the front of New England Dragway was easily accessed off Route 95. That meant an easy haul for most of the former NEHRC members and racers.  It also provided a significant spectator base to draw upon.  Both towns (Epping and Brentwood) were receptive to the prospect of a major tourist attraction.

Thousands of yards of dirt were moved as heavy equipment thrashed away to get the track ready for a September opening in 1966.  While crews were taking care of the roads and track surface, shareholders were wheeling and dealing to find what it would take to make opening day a success.  Stockholders logged countless man-hours dismantling used bleachers, hauling them to Epping and reassembling them.   Crews built a tower, installed fencing and applied more than a few gallons of paint.  It turned out to be a tremendous effort.  On September 11, 1966, New England Dragway was ready to open the gates for the first race.

Today, New England Dragway, still owned by many of the racers who built it along with a new crop of shareholders, is the only 1/4 mile drag strip in New England.  It is open four days a week from the beginning of April through the end of October featuring everything from grudge racing to world class events like the its annual NHRA New England Nationals.

Following it’s credo, “Built by racers for racers,” New England Dragway continues improving its facility in order to keep pace with a new generation of racers who bring faster and more complex machines to race at its legendary quarter mile.  New grandstands have replaced many of the old bleachers purchased used from a Massachusetts university. It’s old PA system gave way to a state of the art sound system featuring Bose acoustics.  In 2010 the concrete pad was extended from 745 feet to 1320 feet followed by a specialized finishing process to make the entire quarter mile smooth and fast.   Net result?  A New England Dragway that is ready to usher in a new era of drag racing excitement!