

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Historic Track

AND/OR COMMON  
Historic Track

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Main Street

CITY, TOWN Goshen VICINITY OF 26th  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE New York CODE 36 COUNTY Orange CODE 071

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: race track

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Orange County Driving Park Association

STREET & NUMBER  
Park Place

CITY, TOWN Goshen VICINITY OF STATE New York

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Orange County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Goshen STATE New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Historic Track has changed little since 1911. Now, as then, the oval dirt track is enclosed by a white railing on either side. On the inside of the railing across the track from the grandstand is the judges' platform. Just to the north of it is the bandstand, and just north of the latter is the tote board. The stables are situated behind the grandstand, as is an old barn, known as Buckley Barn.

At the head of the track's home stretch is an oak tree beneath which, according to Goshen tradition, Messenger, the horse from whom American trotters are descended is supposed to have grazed.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) recreation
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1854

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The sport of harness racing originated in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century, and within 70 years had developed into a popular form of recreation throughout most of the country. Although harness racing never received widespread recognition outside of the United States, the American standard-bred trotter is always in demand, and ranks as an important contribution to the types of domestic livestock.

Historic Track at Goshen, New York, has been associated with trotting for over a century. Although not the first trotting track in the country, Historic Track is one of the oldest active courses in the United States and has been the showcase for such famous trotters as Hambletonian and Dan Patch.

The half-mile oval track and grandstand are located in Goshen, New York.

## HISTORY

Trotting was a popular diversion by the time of the construction of Historic Track in the 1850's. The first race course in the present United States was laid out in 1665 by Governor Richard Nicolls, of New York, on Salisbury (now Hempstead) plain, Long Island. That course, and the subsequent development of interest in horses on Long Island, made the island a center of racing and breeding for many decades. Trotting, then done under saddle, also became popular. The first track built for trotting probably was constructed between 1806 and 1810 in New York City. It came to be known as the "Red House Track" and consisted of a half-mile oval. Around 1810, the initial full mile track for trotting appeared in Philadelphia, the Hunting Park Track. Additional trotting tracks then arose in the country, including Historic Track at Goshen.

In 1768, Messenger, a famous English thoroughbred, was brought to this country and crossed with native mares to produce the "standardbred." According to tradition Messenger was at Goshen at one time. Messenger's most famous descendant, Hambletonian, who sired over 1,200 foals and remains the greatest of all the progenitors of American harness racing horses, was stabled near Goshen and was often shown at Historic Track.

(Continued)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

S. Sydney Bradford, "Historic Track," National Survey of Historic Sites and Places form 10-317, 2/17/66.

John Hervey, The American Trotter (New York, 1947).

John Hervey and Edwin Keller, American Harness Racing (New York, 1948).

Elizabeth Sharts, Cradle of the Trotter, A Goshen Turf Record (Goshen, 1948).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 22 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	8
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5	5	7	3	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	8	4	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 

1	8
---	---

5	5	7	3	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	8	3	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

1	8
---	---

5	5	6	6	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	8	3	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

D 

1	8
---	---

5	5	6	6	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	8	4	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

12/9/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/3/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST Bill Kibovich  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/3/78

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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Races were held in the eighteenth century on what is now Goshen's main street, and a race track, Fiddler's Green, had been opened by the end of the century. By 1805, there were three tracks in or near Goshen. The tracks, apparently, prospered until 1832, when they were discontinued, but unofficial races continued to be held on the roads of Orange County.

Trotting gradually became the most popular form of racing in and around Goshen during the three decades before the Civil War. The first scheduled trotting race was sponsored by the Orange County Agricultural Society Fair at Goshen in 1824. The horses probably used Main Street for the course. Subsequently, both official and unofficial trotting races were held on Main Street, creating dangerous conditions for all concerned.

The rising popularity of trotting undoubtedly spurred the development of what is now called Historic Track. The first race on the site of the present track occurred in 1838. That was some sixteen years before John Minchin constructed the first track on the site. He operated the one-third-of-a-mile-long course for several years after 1854. By 1858, the track had been entirely rebuilt. It was then a half a mile and rectangular. In 1874 the track was turned into a half-mile oval and a grandstand for 800 people was erected. Some years later, in 1884, the course was entirely rebuilt. The track, still half a mile, itself has been little changed since then. Despite the improvements of 1884, the track probably would have closed in the 1890's but for the appearance of E. H. Harriman, the railroad magnate and a lover of horses, upon the scene.

Harriman saved the track from closing in the nineteenth century's last decade and the Harriman family controls the course today. The elder Harriman leased the course in 1894 and acquired control of the corporation that owned the track, the Orange County Driving Park Association, in 1909. He installed a friend, Renssalaer Weston, as the track's manager in 1909 and he retained that position until 1920. It was Weston who gave the track its current name and who vastly improved its plant. A major improvement occurred in 1911, when Mrs. E. Harriman presented the present steel grandstand to the track.

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The boundaries of the national historic landmark are coterminus with the property lines of the Orange County Driving Association holding.

Beginning at the intersection of the southern curb of the entrance road to the track with the eastern curb of Main Street, proceed southeast along said southern curb to the outside curb of the Historic Track, continue south along the outside curb for 1000 feet, thence southeast in a straight line to the western curb of South Street running east of the track. Proceed northeast along said curb to the rear property line of the houses to the north of the track, thence northwest along said property lines to the rear property lines of the private houses on the eastern curb of Main Street, thence proceed southwest along said property lines to the northern curb of the track entrance road, thence north along said curb to its intersection with the eastern curb of Main Street, thence south along the eastern curb to the point of origin.

These boundaries enclose the Historic Track and the associated racing facilities.