

Message From The President

Hello to all members and friends. Happy New Year and welcome to the Fall 2025 - Winter 2026 edition of our newsletter. Please forgive me for publishing this so late. Hopefully, it will contain some interesting tidbits. In Historical Society news, our membership currently stands at 47 members. We are just beginning 2026 and there is still time to join so please tell your friends. Please use the 'RESEARCH' and 'SUSSEX BORO DEED EXTRACTS' sections on the website to view some interesting documents like school year books, commencement programs, play programs, etc., as well as interesting deed extracts from around the Boro. Please let me know if you have any difficulties using the website so I can address them. Please be sure to follow the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society and the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum Facebook pages. Anything new will always be listed there. The Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum at 37 Main Street in Sussex Borough is open every Sunday from 12PM - 3PM. Stop in and say hi. I would love to see you and to show you around. Just a reminder that all our funding comes from membership dues and donations, so I cannot tell you how much I appreciate our members and those who donate when they are able. That is how we keep the website and the Society up and running. As you all probably know, we lost an iconic landmark in Sussex Boro. The Fountain Square Inn was razed. The history of the property is my first article in this issue. If anyone has any stories to share about this building, starting from the beginning until the very end as the Fountain Square Inn, please share them with me. Finally the light poles on Main Street in Sussex Boro are starting to get repaired. The Boro has received the custom made stainless steel mounting plates from R.S. Phillips Steel and JCP&L has begun working with the Boro DPW to remove the poles, remove the old rusted and rotted mounting plates, and start to reinstall the streetlights. I am hopeful that by the spring, all the light poles on Main Street will be refitted with the new mounting plates so that we can get the Hometown Hero banners back up in time for the Revolutionary War 250th Anniversary celebration. I am looking for ideas on how we can celebrate it so please reach out to me with any ideas that you may have. Well, that is about all that I have to report for now. As always, I welcome all ideas and suggestions for programs at the Museum, or let me know if you have a program that you would like to present. Mario

**2026 Annual
Meeting—Sunday,
May 17, 12PM at the
Sussex-Wantage
Historical Society
Museum.**

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The Loss Of An Iconic Landmark

The Fountain Square Inn - The last In Line



The Fountain Square Inn on its final day standing

It was a frigid day on Tuesday, January 13, 2026. The sun was shining brightly, and it looked like a perfect winter day ahead. But soon, the roar of an excavator's motor would roar, and what was left of one of not only one of Sussex Borough's most iconic landmarks, but Sussex County's as well, would be coming down. The once great building with so much history was now nothing more than a shell. Once a beautiful inn that welcomed people from near and far, now crumbling and falling apart. It is not a new story. It happens all the time. Years of neglect will do this. It is nobody's fault really. Maintaining a building of this size is not cheap, and things always are breaking. A lot can happen to a building over two hundred years. "Somebody should have saved it", I always hear. The costs that would surround a nonprofit like a Historical Society trying to restore a building like this would be astronomical. Even if it were donated for free. When buildings like this are saved from the 'wrecking ball', it is usually by organizations with deep pockets and resources. None of that existed here. So, rather than wallowing with the loss, let us look back at this great building's history, and what the future of this site looks like.

It was just about 8:00 AM when the mighty excavator makes its first swipe at the back of the building. I was there, being allowed to stay on-site, and documenting it all with over 150 photos. Slowly, and with great precision, the building began to come down. Finally, by about 1:00PM, it was done. Just a pile of rubble remained. I was there for the whole thing. So, what now?

Well, let us start at this storied buildings beginning. According to Charles E. Stickney, a very respected historian and former publisher of the Wantage Recorder amongst many other things, Peter Decker's son Samuel built the first hotel at this location. He does not give the year, and while 1823 seems to be floating around, I doubt it was as late as that. You see Samuel was born on September 27, 1749. That would make him 74 years old in 1823. It was likely a little earlier than that. Stickney recalls that Mrs. Lot-tie Cole, who would have been eighty-seven when he wrote his articles about the history of Deckertown in the Wantage Recorder, said that the building was there around 1820. This still would have made him about seventy-one, but hey, who am I to question how old is too old to build a hotel. Samuel did have four sons. Going back to the version of the beginnings that the original hotel was built by Peter Decker's grandson, maybe one of them fits. I do not think so because Stickney mentions Samuel Sr. on several occasions, and not any of his sons as the builder. Personally, I subscribe to the thinking that it was built by Samuel in 1810, as mentioned in a "Did You Know" article in the January 23, 1925, Wantage Recorder. Maybe it is more likely that he sold it in 1823. More research is needed.

The Loss Of An Iconic Landmark

The Fountain Square Inn - The last In Line

Continued

Until I can uncover more data to support something else, I am sticking with Samuel. Anyway, it was the second hotel built in Deckertown, and only the second wood frame building. The other was the Vibbert Hotel, which stood on the opposite corner, across the square. Now I know that this building is talked about as the first inn in both the Borough and the County, so I do not know where that comes about, or maybe there is a distinction between an inn and a hotel. I am also not sure if the original hotel was called an inn or a hotel. It is referred to as a hotel by Stickney, so I guess I will go with that. The hotel would not have looked like it did now, as a walk through the Fountain Square Inn before its demolishing clearly showed signs of expansion over the years with evidence of barnwood being used to accomplish that in areas. Sometime after he built this hotel, it changed hands and Jackson D. Jay bought it. It remained the J.D. Jay Hotel at least thru 1860 as indicated on a hand drawn map by Thea M. Coykendall, and copied by former Sussex Borough Historian, Howard Case, which shows Deckertown from 1840 thru 1860 with the J.D. Jay Hotel on one side of the street and the Vibbert Hotel on the opposite corner. (This map is on display at the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum). I do not have the exact year, but at least in 1873, as noted in the Midland Railroad Guide, it was the Chrisman House, owned by Jonas Chrisman with Gilbert Chardavoyne as its proprietor. I can't say if this building was a double tiered balcony design as the final building was. I don't know. Camera's were in there in infancy and I have never seen a photo of it, or read a description either. In 1875, Judson Wickham bought the Chrisman House and named it the Wickham House. He only remained as its proprietor for two years when he traded it to Dr. J. "Doc" Warner of Craigville, Orange County, NY for his farm. The hotel was now the Warner House. It remained that way until 1882, when Walter DeCamp bought the hotel from "Doc" Warner's widow, Ann Warner. I know that many of you have seen 1877 as the date that DeCamp bought the hotel, but what DeCamp bought in 1877 was the residence next to the hotel. It was the residence of Jacob Gould. He paid \$5,000 and it would be called the "Annex" to the hotel later on. The building still stands today. Then in 1892, DeCamp sells the DeCamp House to Robert D. Conger for the sum of \$18,000. Soon after, Conger becomes paralyzed and cannot go through with the sale, and he returns the property back to DeCamp. On April 1, 1892, DeCamp sells the hotel, minus the "Annex" to Dester S. Goble, who has been boarding in the "Annex". Goble then buys the "Annex" in 1897. He continues to operate the hotel as the DeCamp House until he announces, in an advertisement in the November 2, 1906, Wantage Recorder that the name has been changed to the Goble Inn because he felt that the DeCamp House name had outlived its usefulness.

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Robert Holowach - VP

Russ Eaton - VP

The Loss Of An Iconic Landmark

The Fountain Square Inn - The last In Line Continued



Judson Wickham traded his hotel to “Doc” Warner for his Orange County Farm in 1877

William J Howey, who with his wife Bertha would run it from 1930 through at least 1934. In 1936, it got a new roof, replacing the original slate roof. Interestingly, while replacing the roof, the workmen came across old papers. They had to do with Wantage Township, including several bonds filed by township officers with William E. Wickham, clerk, before the Civil War and other papers over one hundred years old at the time. No one knows how they got there but they were all given to the Sussex County Historical Society. In 1937, Dexter Goble advertises that he plans to apply for a plenary retail consumption license to the Mayor and Council of Sussex Borough, in the June 5, 1936, Wantage Recorder.

He would take out several more ads in the weeks to come announcing the same. Goble would manage the hotel until April 1, 1915, when he leases the Goble Inn to Harry Harrison. Goble would lease the Inn to several others through the years, but the name always remained the Goble Inn. In 1917, he and Clarence Smith would build the Crescent theater, a stone’s throw away in the square. He also managed the Goble Inn again in 1935. In 1921, on April 1, Theodore S. Kimble rented the Inn and became the proprietor and in 1922, the Goble Inn was “overhauled, painted and improved inside and out”, under the care of its new proprietor, Mr. Ruban. 1925, the Goble Inn got a fresh coat of paint. It was now a dark gray with white trim.



Walter DeCamp bought the hotel from Ann Warner and named it the DeCamp House

The Loss Of An Iconic Landmark

The Fountain Square Inn - The last In Line Continued

Dexter Smith Goble was a very activate man in the community. He was a Sussex County Freeholder and a Sussex Borough Councilman. He dies at the age of seventy-eight on March 18, 1941, leaving the Inn to his wife Eva Little Goble. I was told by her great niece that Eva would live at the Inn until her death in 1949, but in 1946, Eva would sell the Inn to James & May MacFarlan. Well, it looked more like a transfer than a sale since the consideration was only \$1.00. I do not know if the Goble Inn name remained with it or if it was changed to something else. In January of 1956, James & May MacFarlan sold the Inn to Mathew & his wife Adelaine Orr and Charles & his wife Adelaine Moeller, once again for the consideration of \$1.00. Later that year in April, Mathew & his wife Adelaine Orr and Charles & Adelaine Moeller sold the Inn to the ORMO Corporation for, you guessed it, \$1.00. One can pretty easily see that this was a transfer to a business or corporation that both families started. The name is a combination of the first two letters of their surnames. On March 10, 1965, there were two deeds created. One between the ORMO Corporation to the Fountain Square Inn, Incorporated, and the other from the ORMO Corporation to Mathew and his wife Adelaine Orr. Both deeds for the consideration of \$1.00. I am assuming that this is when the Fountain Square Inn got its name. Things went along like this until December of 2016, when the Fountain Square Inn fell behind with paying its taxes and Dan Faber bought the tax lien for \$10,365.00. He held that lien until September 18, 2019, when he officially foreclosed on the Fountain Square Inn. Faber held the property util June 28, 2021, when he sold it to the 82 Fountain Sq, LLC for \$150,000.



Dexter S. Goble bought the hotel from Walter DeCamp on April 1, 1892. Later that year, on September 28, 1892, He marries Eva Littell. They would spend the next 49 years together until he dies March 18, 1941. Eva would so on to live until June 2, 1949, when she dies. She lived in the hotel until she died.

The Loss Of An Iconic Landmark

The Fountain Square Inn - The last In Line

Continued

Before we talk about the future of this property, let us take a moment to fill in a little Deckertown and Sussex history that surrounds the hotel. In the heyday of the stagecoach, the hotel served as a stagecoach horse headquarters and a change station for the stagecoach line running from Newton to Sussex, then on to Port Jervis and Middletown. The hotel was here to see the building of two railroads with each having its own terminal. Many visitors arriving on the NYS&W railroad stayed at the DeCamp House and Goble Inn.

On September 8, 1895, the horse shed behind the DeCamp House were destroyed by fire. That along with several other fires including the silk mill burning down on January 24, 1896, leaving fifty people without a job, prompted Deckertown to form a fire protection company. Thus, in February of 1896, the Walkkill Hose Company number 1 and the Protection Hook and Ladder Company were formed. Deckertown now had fire protection, and a gravity fed water supply originating from Lake Rutherford in High Point State Park, through Colesville to feed the new fire hydrants.

DeCamp Place gradually became renamed as Fountain Square. The earliest documented word that I could find as to when that happened is in an advertisement in the December 1, 1905 Sussex Independent by a Orville Blanchard Fountain Square Barber shop, under the Independent building. You may remember that the fountain in the center of town, now Fountain Square, was donated by John S. Martin in 1902, and the hotel was there for that.

This great structure has seen the parading county firemen in 1912 (Fireman's Day. Not an official county parade), 1924. 1931, 1960, 1966, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2007, 2016 and 2021. Unfortunately, it will not see this year's 2026 parade.

So many other events have taken place since this great building was erected, it would take a book to review them all.



So, what now? Well, the plan calls for a 12-dwelling unit apartment building to take its place. It consists of five two bedrooms, six one bedroom and one affordable two-bedroom apartments. It will have two retail spaces on the ground floor and twenty-six off-street parking spaces for the residents. The front of the building will be designed to resemble the old hotel very closely, keeping with the historical feel of the borough. It will cost about 5.2 million dollars to build.

We certainly wish the new owners well and we hope that construction will begin soon. This should be a vital part of Sussex moving forward and keeping up the momentum that surely has shown over the past few years.

The following was submitted by Valerie Desharnais, who is the Regent of the Minisink DAR. In light of the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War, The Sussex-Wantage Historical Society is teaming up with the Minisink DAR to get the word out about the Battle of Minisink, which is the closest Revolutionary War battle to us. Soldiers from Sussex County fought there. You will be seeing communication from us in the future and we will be looking to set up a committee to coordinate the commemoration of the battle and the restoration of the monument in Goshen, NY. We are happy to participate because our base area of Sussex and Wantage is in the Minisink Valley so it is entirely appropriate.

It should be noted that the Minisink DAR has already raised \$22,000 and the Orange County Legislature has approved a \$250,000 bond for the Battle Of Minisink Monument Restoration Fund and it is hoped that they will be able to go out to bid very soon and the Monument will be fully restored in time for the 250th anniversary of that battle on July 22,

Battle of Minisink Monument - Erected July 22, 1862, the 83rd Anniversary of the battle



This monument marks the resting place of the remains recovered of the brave men of Orange County, NY, Sussex County, NJ, and surrounding areas that died in the vicious Battle of Minisink.

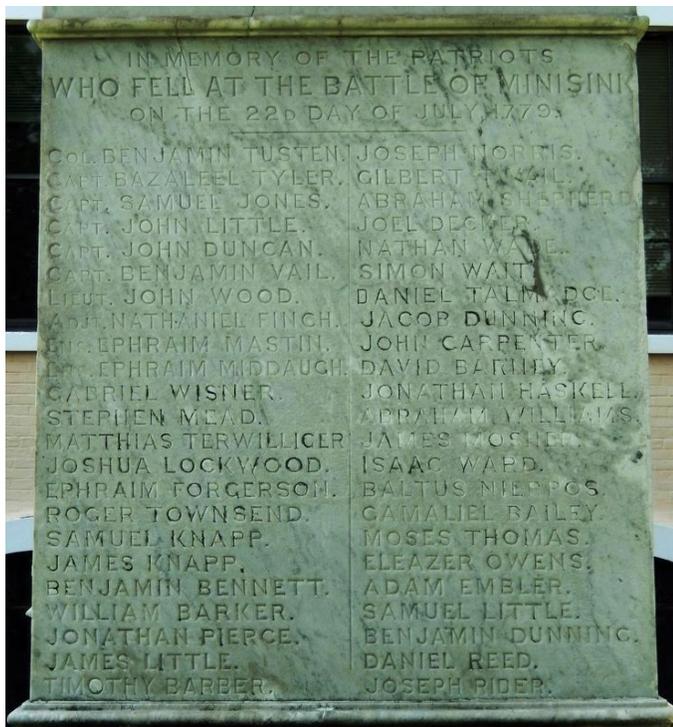
The monument is now 162 years old and in dire need of cleaning and repair. The Minisink DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Chapter is heading the project to restore and preserve this monument and to perpetuate the memory of those who fought and died in this battle.

In 1862 the public, along with a generous bequeathment from Dr. Merrit H Cash, raised the funds to build this monument. The public can once again unite and raise funds to restore the monument, honor our American Revolutionary war history and those who fought so valiantly for our freedoms.

It is the Minisink DAR Chapter's goal to raise enough money to have the monument completely restored to its original glory in time for the Battle's 250th anniversary on July 22, 2029. Donations can be sent to Minisink DAR Chapter, P.O. Box 704, Goshen, NY 10924

A brief history on the Battle of Minisink

Joseph Brant, a Mohawk Indian loyalist, led British raids along the Delaware River (the areas around Port Jervis). In response to these raids, the 3rd Regiment (Goshen) of the Orange County Militia, led by Lt. Col. Benjamin Tusten, the 4th Regiment (Warwick) of the Orange County Militia Regiment led by Col. John Hathorn, the 2nd Regiment of the Sussex County Militia led by Major Samuel Meeker, the 2nd Regiment of the Ulster Co. Militia led by Capt. Abraham Cuddeback and members of Pawling's Levies organized. In all, an estimated 120 militiamen were led by Col. John Hathorn to intercept Brant. On **July 22, 1779**, the Patriots' plan to ambush Brant on three fronts was thwarted by an errant gunshot, alerting Brant. Brant's forces gained the higher ground blocking Hathorn's attempts to regroup. The battle took place in what is now Barryville, NY in Sullivan Co. After several hours of exchanging shots and hand-to-hand combat 46 militiamen perished. The names of those killed are inscribed on the Battle of Minisink Monument.

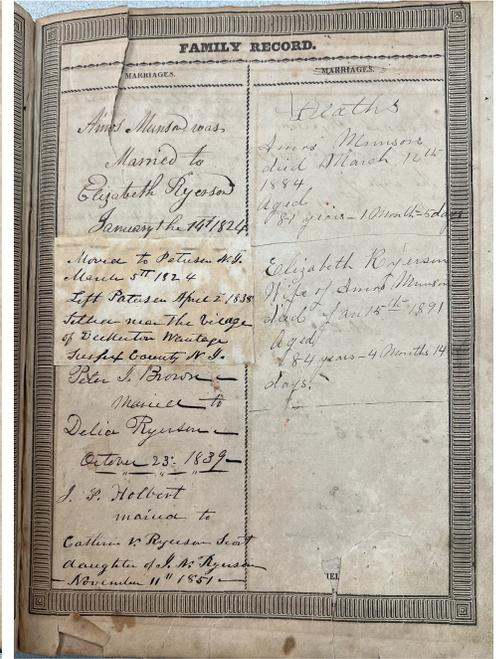
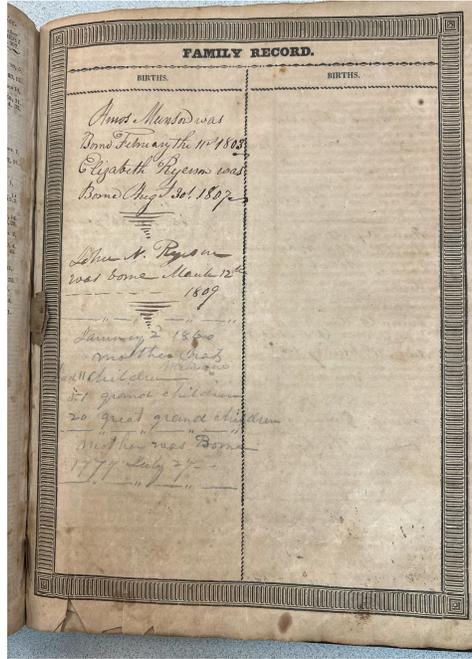
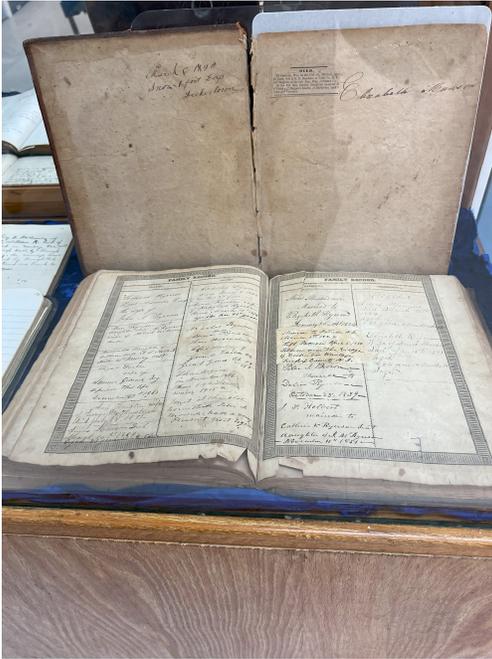


Any questions or if you have information to share about the battle and those that fought, please email: BattleofMinisinkMonument@gmail.com
The actual battlefield is now called Minisink Battlefield Park and is open to the public.

Museum Spotlight

Munson Family Bible

Every newsletter will include a 'spotlight' on a particular item in the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum.



The Munson family bible was kept by Amos Munson's wife Elizabeth (Ryerson). It documents important family events such as when Amos Munson was born (February 11, 1803) and when Elizabeth Munson was born (March 12, 1809), as well as other births, marriages and deaths. She notes on the inside cover that on March 6, 1890, she measured a foot of snow. The bible also contains some newspaper articles that must have had some significance to the family. While the bible sits in a showcase, I have taken pictures of the significant pages which sits on top of the showcase so you can view them. Amos Munson contributed greatly to Deckertown. He grew up on the family farm in Hardyston. He married Elizabeth January 18, 1824 and they soon moved to Paterson. He became very successful running a butcher business and in 1838 they moved to Deckertown where he bought 144 acres of farmland and built their house. He was very successful at whatever he set his mind to and eventually owned so much land in Deckertown, that he is known as a founding father because of all of it he contributed towards the growth of the town. Some of these were, he contributed to the building of all of the churches and the schools in the town. He also worked diligently to advance the material, educational and social interests of the town. He knew that bringing the Midland Railway into Deckertown would make it a hub and increase business. He thought it so important that he gave \$1,500 of his own money to the project, which was no small amount in the day, as well as giving 2572 feet of his farm property to be used as the railroad right of way. On part of that right of way is where the Depot was built. Much more of his vast land eventually became Sussex's current streets, including the one named for him and the plots where homes are built. We hope to see you at the Museum soon so you can view some of the other amazing artifacts, documents and photos that we have on display, in our table binders and in our research file cabinets. We are open every Sunday from 12PM - 3PM or by appointment for groups.

Goldsmith Maid – “Queen of the Trotters”

Born on a Wantage Farm

Goldsmith Maid's story begins with a farmer named John B. Decker. He had a farm on what is now Unionville Rd in Wantage Township. She was born back when trotting was in its heyday. It is a pretty interesting story. It was 1853. John B. Decker would watch a hat peddler named Vermeule come across the township in his cart. Decker really liked the way his horse pulling the cart looked. After learning a little bit about her, Decker bought the mare from the peddler and bred it with Alexander's Abdallah. Maid, as she was originally called, was born, or foaled, in 1857 on Decker's farm. He had hoped to make a trotter out of her but that would have to wait. He had a large estate left to him by his father that needed attention. It included a store, a clover mill, a grist mill, a distillery, a herd of sheep and a large stable of horses. No, she would just be another unbroken colt on the farm until she was six years old. Decker father was a large slave holder and many of the slaves, and their children, remained on the Decker farm. It was they who enjoyed riding her, and the other unbroken colts, as their amusement. As luck would have it, someone spotted 'Maid' on one of those rides and noticed that she had the look of a fine trotter. Word started to spread that this was a great horse.

In 1863 or 1864, Deckers's wife convinced him to sell 'Maid' to his nephew, John H. Decker, for \$260.00. A few days later, he sold it to "Jersey Bill" Thompson, who was a harness racer. He would drive her at both Middletown and Goshen tracks. He would later sell her in 1865 to Alden Goldsmith for \$650.00. He changed her name to Goldsmith Maid and put her under trainer William Bodine. They took her to Chester NY and named Budd Doble as her driver. She ran well. She would go on to break several records at other tracks. Goldsmith would sell her to her Budd Doble in 1868 for a reported \$20,000.00. She was 11 years old at the time. She would race under Doble for another 6 years, continuing to win races.

She was eventually sold to Henry N. Smith in 1874. He had a stud farm named the Fashion Stud Farm in Trenton, NJ. She was 17 years old. Smith bred her to General Knox. She raised two colts. They would never achieve the greatness that she did. Goldsmith Maid died September 23, 1885, at Fashion Stud Farm and was buried there.

Over her career, she won over 350 heats and won 92 out of 121 races, earning \$364,200 over her career which was a record that stood until the 1950's.

Today there is a Sussex County Historical Marker at the old John B. Decker Farm in Wantage where she was born. The marker was placed in 2009 to commemorate her great legacy.

Some of her accomplishments were:

1865 - Track records set at Goshen (2 minutes, 26 second mile in three heats)

1868 – Track record at Mystic Park racetrack in Boston (2 minutes, 21.5 second mile)

1871 – Track record at Lucy, Milwaukee (2 minutes, 17 second mile)

1874 - World track record in Boston (2 minutes, 14 second mile)



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**MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM (JANUARY 1, 2026 THRU
DECEMBER 31, 2026)**

(Please Select): **MEMBERSHIP** **RENEWAL** **DONATION**

MEMBERSHIP TYPE:

- INDIVIDUAL \$15**
- STUDENT \$10**
- SENIOR INDIVIDUAL \$10**
- FAMILY \$25**
- BUSINESS MEMBER \$150**
- DONATION- \$_____**

NAME _____

COMPANY _____

STREET _____

CITY/TOWN/STATE _____

ZIP _____

PHONE _____

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(PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK OUT TO SUSSEX-WANTAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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