

Celebrate Fourth of July in Goshen

by Ellen Harvey, Harness Racing Communications

Freehold, NJ --- The Fourth of July celebration in Goshen, N.Y., might be just 90 minutes from New York City, but it's 150 years back in time.

The county seat of Orange County, Goshen is home to the 34th annual Great American Weekend celebration -- two days of activities that celebrate the nation's independence on July 4 and 5. Activities for the whole family are centered in and around the town's tree-ringed nine acre green, surrounded by stone office buildings, churches, and Queen Anne-style homes dating to the late 1700s.

Goshen is home to Historic Track, a harness racing facility that opened in 1838 and is the country's oldest active horse racing track. There's been trotting horse racing on the streets of Goshen since the Revolutionary War era. True to history, there is no betting and stables are open to the public. The track, at 44 Park Place, is on the National Park Service's registry of historic landmarks.

There will be harness racing for purses as large as \$20,000 and the four day meet starts on July 2 at 1 p.m. as part of Goshen's Fourth of July celebration. Admission is free for children 12 and younger, adults are \$5 and admission price includes a racing program. The stable area is open for visitors to see the racehorses up close as they prepare for competition.

Great American Weekend events are either on or a short walk from the town green, running from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday (July 4) and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday (July 5). Events include continuous musical entertainment, a 150 vendor craft show, book sale at the library, walking tour and food tent with festive fare.

Adjacent to the racetrack is the Harness Racing Museum and Hall of Fame, at 240 Main Street. Housed in a 1913 Tudor carriage house, the museum interprets the history of harness racing and is home to priceless collections and interactive exhibits. The museum has what is believed to be the largest single collection of Currier & Ives equine prints.

The museum's most popular exhibit is the racing simulator theater, where guests get a 3-D presentation of racing as if they're driving in a race, feeling the wind in their hair and jiggling along with every step of the speeding horse.

Here's a day by day list of what's going on in Goshen this year:

Goshen Harness Racing Schedule – Museum and Historic Track – 2015

Thursday, July 2: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Harness Racing Museum at 240 Main Street, Goshen, open and free to all visitors.

1 p.m. Grand Circuit racing at Goshen Historic Track, 44 Park Place, New York-sired fair races. Free harness racing tote bag giveaway to the first 250 paid fans, plus 10 of the bags will contain \$25, \$50 and \$75 gift cards for area businesses. General admission is \$5 for adults, includes a program. Children 12 and under are free.

Friday, July 3: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Museum open and free to all visitors.

1 p.m. Grand Circuit racing at Historic Track. Excelsior Series for New York-bred pacers.

Saturday, July 4: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Museum open and free to all visitors.

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Great American Weekend festivities, First Presbyterian Church Park in Goshen. 150 craft booths, antique show, entertainment, children's rides, road races.

1 p.m. Grand Circuit racing at Goshen Historic Track. Landmark Stakes and amateur driving races. Retired pacer Whiskey Pete will be on hand to stand politely for petting and selfies.

Sunday, July 5: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Museum is open.

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Great American Weekend festivities continue.

1 p.m. Grand Circuit racing at Goshen Historic Track. New York State Excelsior series, under saddle races for Standardbreds, Hall of Fame drivers race. Drivers sign autographs and greet the public after their race.

5:30 p.m. Hall of Fame induction festivities begin with the cocktail hour in Haughton Hall at the Harness Racing Museum; for tickets call 845.294.6330.

Hashtag for all Goshen harness racing events is #harnessgoshen.

Goshen Historic Track, www.goshenhistorictrack.com, 845.294.5333

Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame, www.harnessmuseum.com, 845.294.6330

Great American Weekend, www.goshennychamber.com, 845.294.7741