

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

other names/site number Fleischmanns Park

name of related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

street & number Wagner Avenue and Ballpark Avenue [] not for publication

city or town Fleischmanns [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Delaware code 039 zip code 12430

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ron David Huey
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/30/2020
Date

TSU PO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [] entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined not eligible for the National Register

[] removed from the National Register

[] other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☐ district
☒ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

1

2

3

buildings

sites

structures

objects

TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave
- ☐ **D** a cemetery
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance:

1895-1914

Significant Dates:

1896, 1903

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by historic American Building Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office

- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.12 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 538423 4667186
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

2 18

4 18

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Collin Miller edited by Erin Czernecki, NY SHPO

organization Mountain Athletic Club Vintage Base Ball date May 12, 2020

street & number 566 McMurdy Hill Road telephone 607-760-4882

city or town Hobart state NY zip code 13788

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** of historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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Section 7 Page 1

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

Herkimer County, New York

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Narrative Description of Property

The Mountain Athletic Club Grounds occupies most of Fleischmanns Park in the center of the village of Fleischmanns, Delaware County, New York. Fleischmanns is sited in the southeastern corner of the county near the Ulster County line. The village was established in 1913 from the hamlet of Griffin Corners and sits among the steep mountains of the Catskills. Once isolated, the village became a summer resort area after the construction of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad heading west from Kingston in the 1870s. Many hotels and residences were built along Wagner Avenue, which runs east-west through the village and parallel to the Bushkill. Fleischmanns Park is bounded on the south by Wagner Avenue, on the north by the Bushkill, a stream that flows in a westerly direction through the village and eventually empties into Dry Brook, a major tributary of the East Branch of the Delaware River. To the east of the park is the National Register-listed Congregation B'nai Israel Synagogue and to the west are private residences. The village of Fleischmanns has potential for listing as a historic district after a survey and evaluation have been completed. The boundary encompasses the original parcel purchased by the Fleischmann family and donated to the village in 1914.

Narrative Description¹

Fleischmanns Park is a 5.12-acre community park in a flat, trapezoid shape following the curve of the Bushkill, in the middle of the village of Fleischmanns. The park land was purchased in 1894 by Charles Fleischmann so that his two sons, Julius and Max, could play baseball on a flat surface. The family, which constructed a series of five large summer residences in the mountains to the south of the village, spent thousands of dollars taking out boulders on the property and flattening the field. A 100-foot-square dirt baseball diamond was built along with a wooden grandstand behind home plate for the family and their friends to view the games. Improvements were made to the entrance driveway and maple trees planted both along the entrance drive (Ballpark Avenue) and along Wagner Avenue. The park was used as a place for the Fleischmanns' baseball team, the Mountain Athletic Club, to play games with visiting teams. By 1914 the Fleischmann family deeded the land to the village to be used as a municipal park. Baseball has continued to be played on the field since it was established. The current park includes the baseball field, tennis court, playground, and restrooms. The historic grandstand and original backstop are no longer extant.

The Field – 1895 (contributing)

The baseball infield (one-half acre) is the site of the historic Fleischmann baseball diamond. As far as can be determined, home plate (which is located in the north center) remains almost as originally established when the park was built. The entire infield is natural grass and a chalk outline is drawn on in the shape of a regulation diamond for games. The outfield (two and one-half acres) is a well-graded, entirely turf-surfaced expanse, which provides the baseball outfield but also serves as a

¹ This description is almost entirely derived from R.M Toole, "Historic Analysis Existing Conditions and Schematic Planning for Fleischmanns Park Fleischmanns, NY," 2009.

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

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regulation-sized soccer field (oriented east-west) in the spring and fall. It is also the largest open area in the park and provides a generous venue for general play and special events. Also included in this area is a buffer zone along Wagner Avenue on the south. This street edge is dominated by large maple trees and the formal entrance to the park is from Wagner Avenue, through a maple tree-lined driveway (Baseball Avenue).

Tennis Courts – 1990s (non-contributing)

The Fleischmanns Park tennis courts (two-thirds of an acre) are located on the west side of the park. There are four courts with an asphalt surface. The courts are fully fenced with a narrow area on the east side, outside the court's perimeter fence, specified as a spectator's zone, fitted with sitting benches and a commemorative plaque related to the courts. Tennis Courts can be seen in historic photos in the southwestern corner of the site; the current ones (one non-contributing structure) were installed ca. 1990.

The Playground – 2015 (non-contributing)

The accessible playground (one non-contributing structure) was rebuilt after Hurricane Irene on the site of a basketball court. An earlier playground, which was located closer to Wagner Avenue, was not considered ideal for the community park. The playground has a poured rubber surface, interactive play areas, and wheelchair accessible ramps. To the northeast of the playground is a one-story, non-historic concessions building (one non-contributing building) made of fully reinforced concrete, flood gates with collapsible doors, full code-compliant accessible restrooms, and a commercial kitchen.

The Riverside (about one and one-third acres: (non-contributing)

This area encompasses the park's 700-foot-long northern edge on the Bushkill. On the western end, the stream bank is wooded (about 200 feet). This area is located just north of the tennis courts. There is a narrow, isolated piece of lawn between the tennis court fence and the wood stream edge. Wooded conditions are also present beside the Bushkill on the eastern side of the park (about 100 feet). In turn, this edge melds with the neighboring parcel (outside the boundary) owned by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. West of this, a substantial stone embankment wall (too small to count) follows the Bushkill (about 200 feet). Built in the 1990s to buffer the flow of the Bushkill, this wall line has the potential to serve as a dramatic edge, but at present, it is adversely impacted by the adjacent vehicles and parking. Finally, near the center of the park, where the Bushkill bends from the southeast towards the southwest, the bank of the Bushkill has been rebuilt and reinforced after damage from Hurricane Irene in September 2011. A substantial portion (about 50 percent) of the riverside zone is taken up by a loosely defined expanse of asphalt and gravel intended for vehicular access and parking for park users. This area reaches the center of the park on the northern side, edging the Bushkill along almost 400 feet of the park's total 700 foot frontage.

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Integrity Assessment

The Mountain Athletic Club grounds at Fleischmanns Park retains good overall historic integrity. The principal character-defining feature – the baseball field – occupies the same area and has the same configuration it did historically, although the original grandstand is gone (possibly lost in the 1940s). A comparison of historic and contemporary images demonstrates that the orientation of the field and the location of home plate in relation to the steep mountainside and the adjacent brook are almost exactly the same today as they were originally, providing for a remarkable understanding of historic location, setting and feeling. In addition, the relationship to Wagner Avenue, with its historic residences/boarding houses and the adjacent National Register-listed synagogue also survive. Located in the center of the village between its two most important transportation features, the park was an important visual landmark in Fleischmanns. Trees planted along the border to augment the natural landscape have matured, setting the park off as a formal civic space. The baseball field itself was not overly designed. Although the historic grandstand and backstop have been lost, there are plans to reconstruct compatible replacements. Adjacent recreational features such as tennis courts, were historic, even though their locations have changed and the facilities themselves have been updated. And finally, a professional landscape plan has been prepared to improve any spaces now not compatible with the historic park. Historic baseball is still played on the field and the Mountain Athletic Club retains integrity as a small, informal village baseball park associated with one of the village's most important families and pastimes.

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

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Statement of Significance:

Summary

The baseball field at Fleischmanns Park, located in Fleischmanns, Delaware County, New York, was established in 1895 as the home field of the Mountain Athletic Club, the private baseball team of the Fleischmann family, owners of the Fleischmann Yeast Company, of Cincinnati, Ohio. Organized by Julius and Max Fleischmann on property their father, Charles, purchased in the village then called Griffin Corners, this team was unusual in that it was a privately owned team with two of the owners playing on the team. Because its owners were the wealthy and well-connected sons of a well-known industrialist, the amenities and pay offered to players during their time with the Mountain Athletic Club were incomparable to anything being offered to semi-professional players at the time. Therefore, the team became a spectacle of talent, drawing in thousands of spectators and a whole host of collegiate players, minor league stars, and future and former major leaguers. The Mountain Athletic Club Grounds at Fleischmanns Park meets National Register Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/ Recreation for its association with community baseball in what is now the village of Fleischmanns and for the Fleischmann family's significant contribution to the development of recreation and tourism in the village during the historic period. The period of significance begins in 1895, when the first summer game was played at the Fleischmanns' park, and ends in 1914, when the land was deeded to the village and the Fleischmann family was no longer involved with the community. Although local teams continued to play at the facility after 1914 and, in fact, historic baseball continues in Fleischmanns today, this later period has not yet been studied.

Village of Fleischmanns and the Catskills²

The village of Fleischmanns is located in the town of Middletown, in southeastern Delaware County. Middletown, located in a mountainous area of the western Catskills, is generally characterized by steep, rocky hillsides traversed by numerous narrow river and stream valleys of the Delaware River and its tributaries. Originally part of Ulster County, Middletown was incorporated in 1789. It is one of the oldest towns in Delaware County and once encompassed most of the southern half of the county. The town falls within Great Lots 7, 8, 38, 39, and 40 of the Hardenburgh Patent, a large early eighteenth century land grant (1708) that encompassed much of the land between the Rondout and the Delaware rivers. The earliest documented European settlers in the Middletown area were Dutch farmers who arrived ca.1763. During the Revolution, the town became a Tory stronghold, and most of the early settlers were driven off. Many returned after the war, however, and permanent settlement was established by the early 1800s.

² National Register of Historic Places, B'nai Israel Synagogue, Fleischmanns, Delaware County, New York, National Register #02NR04909

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The village of Fleischmanns is located on the Bushkill, one of the town's major streams. The Bushkill runs east-west, connecting Fleischmanns and Arkville to the Delaware River near Margaretville. Settlers appeared in the village around 1800. A grist mill was established in 1802 and a distillery in 1804. Star Mills, a steam-powered sawmill, was built in 1829 and a carding mill in the same period. The village was known as Griffin [sometimes Griffins or Griffin's] Corners until 1914, when it was renamed to honor Julius F. Fleischmanns. The Griffin family included some of the village's early and important citizens. Matthew Griffin, a merchant and a prominent lawyer, was especially well known. Griffin ran a store and established Griffin's Corners Hotel c.1848; the same year, he also helped to establish a village post office. He served as postmaster until 1879, when he was succeeded by his son, Dewitt Griffin.

A turnpike had been built connecting the village to Pine Hill in 1834, and the Delaware and Arkville Turnpike, chartered in 1840, was completed in 1849. However, it was the arrival of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad in the 1870s that had the largest effect on the village's future. The Ulster and Delaware originated in Kingston and traveled northwest through the Catskills to Oneonta. One of its largest stations was at Phoenicia (in nearby Ulster County), from whence the line ran to Pine Hill, Fleischmanns and Arkville, where it turned north towards Kelly's Corners, Halcottville and Grand Gorge. The railroad was intended to provide a route for coal from Pennsylvania to the Hudson; however, it proved perhaps more important in transporting fresh milk and other local products to urban markets. In this capacity, it allowed farmers to move into commercial production and rejuvenated the region's agricultural economy. Of equal significance, the railroad was perhaps the single most important factor in opening the Catskills to tourists and effecting the region's transition into one of the country's major resort regions. After the Fleischmanns station was completed in 1871, the area became a popular tourist destination. Fleischmanns initially attracted a number of very wealthy people who built larger, more elaborate summer homes in the hills above the village. However, as more vacationers arrived, different types of accommodations were developed to serve tourists from different classes and income levels; homes were enlarged to take in borders; bungalow colonies were constructed and hotels were built. The influx of summer visitors also sparked development in the village; farmers and merchants were busy meeting the summer demand and new businesses included restaurants, casinos, bowling alleys, and other entertainment-related facilities. In the 1910s, Fleischmanns was thriving and prosperous, serving Catskills vacationers of every economic status and, by the early 1920s, the village was one of the fastest growing resort communities in the Catskills. In its heyday, Fleischmanns boasted more than one hundred hotels.

Jewish Settlement in the Catskills

There were Jewish settlers in the Catskills as early as 1720, when Louis Moses Gomez, a Sephardic Jew, settled near Newburgh to trade with the Indians. Jewish peddlers, primarily of German extraction, abounded in the area in the early nineteenth century, and in 1837 an experimental farming community was established at Sholam, northwest of Ellenville. However, this community failed and most late nineteenth century Jews in the region were not farmers. It was another half-century before the western Catskills region became a center of Jewish agricultural activity.

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In ca. 1883, Charles F. Fleischmann, a Hungarian immigrant who founded the Fleischmann Company (famous for its yeast), purchased property west of the village near the village railroad station. The Fleischmann estate was lavish, including a deer park, riding stable, heated pool, and trout pond. The Fleischmann family was followed by other well-known and/or wealthy vacationers, including New York Governor Herbert Lehman, the Liebman family (owners of Liebman Brewery), Anton Seidel, a conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, coloratura soprano Ameilta Galli Curci (Amelita Galli Curci Residence, NR listed), and Shakespearean actress Julia Marlowe. The village of Fleischmanns was also home to Gertrude Berg, popularly known as Molly Goldberg, of radio and television fame. Other important summer visitors included Dr. Alexander Johnston Chalmers Skene and his wife, Annette Wilhelmine Lillian Van der Wegen. Dr. Skene was a Scottish immigrant who founded the American Gynecological Society and opened his own sanatorium in Brooklyn.

Around 1900, Jews emigrating from eastern Europe began coming to the Catskills to pursue agriculture. Actively promoted by Jewish resettlement societies, farming offered immigrants a chance to escape the unhealthy and overcrowded conditions in Manhattan's lower east side and the opportunity to raise their families amid the fresh air and open spaces of the mountains. In 1908, one source reported that of 648 Jewish farmers in New York State, five hundred of them were in Sullivan and Ulster counties.³ This new settlement group was attracted to the area known as the "lower Catskills," between the Shawangunk Mountains and the high Catskills, because of its proximity to New York City, easy access via the railroad, and the congenial environment created by its growing Jewish population. The new farmers developed an active Jewish community, forming ties through social organizations, schools, synagogues and shared cemeteries. The establishment of several Jewish aid societies, such as the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, helped to create an integrated, visible Jewish agricultural and cultural network in the region. Fleischmanns became not only a service community for farmers, resort operators, and their patrons but a resort destination for middle-class Jews in its own right.

Fleischmann family

Born in Jägerdorf (Krnov), Austria, in 1834, Charles Louis Fleischmann was the second of seven children, a son of a distiller and yeast-maker. At age thirteen Charles was apprenticed to a Hungarian nobleman with distilleries in Prague and Vienna. During the apprenticeship, he learned the localized "Hungarian Process" of fruit fermentation and distillation. Eventually Charles was put in charge of running yeast production for his employer.

In 1866, with their country at war with Prussia over German territories, Charles and younger brother Max left Austria to visit their older sister, Josephine, who had immigrated to New York City ten years prior with her husband. The brothers found employment with a distillery in New York and secured an American patent on the Hungarian Process, new to the United States at that time. An interest in the patent was purchased from a Bavarian immigrant, Julius Freiberg, who operated a vinegar and whiskey distillery in Cincinnati. By 1868, Freiberg – a friend and financier – had convinced Charles to

³ Abraham Lavender and Clarence Steinberg, *Jewish Farmers of the Catskills* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1995), 37.

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move to Cincinnati, where he found a post-Civil War reconstruction taking hold and a sizable German and Jewish population ready to appreciate European-style baking. With significant financial backing from a partner named James Gaff, Charles co-founded the Gaff, Fleischmann & Co. in 1868. Impressed with the fine-crumbed quality of Vienna baked goods while on a tour of Hungarian distilleries in 1870, Gaff returned with a sense that Charles's knowledge of the old-world yeast-making process – quite different than the “salt-rising” and “sourdough” baking common in the Eastern U.S. at the time – could enable U.S. bakers to use Fleischmann's yeast products to cater more to the tastes of European immigrants. Later that year, the men secured twelve acres just west of Cincinnati to build a manufacturing facility. They enlisted the help of other Fleischmann brothers, Max, Henry and Louis, and developed several more yeast-making patents common in Europe but not yet known in the U.S. Their compressed, foil-wrapped yeast-cakes became wildly popular in Cincinnati, but nothing catapulted the company into household name status quite like their Vienna bakery-themed debut at America's first World's Fair Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. Attended by over 10 million people – 20 percent of the U.S. population at the time – their success at the Expo led to openings of the *Fleischmann's Vienna Model Bakery* cafés in Philadelphia, New York, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Chicago, making them America's first chain restaurant.⁴

Louis Fleischmann ran the bakery in New York. At its peak, his 210 bakers were producing 15,000 loaves a day delivered through the city in thirty-eight horse-drawn wagons.⁵ Louis became most famous for his generosity in handing out free loaves of day-old bread to masses that would gather in “bread lines,” where he provided the hungry men with coffee every day beginning at midnight.

Fueled by the explosive growth in the New York market in the 1880s, the company built a second manufacturing plant between Brooklyn and Queens in present-day Long Island City. Max Fleischmann was tapped by Charles to run production for the company's new Eastern Division and their brother-in-law, Leopold Bleier, ran operations.

By 1883 Louis Fleischmann and his wife partnered with the Bleiers to purchase 160 acres of land from a John Blish along a hillside overlooking the Ulster and Delaware Railroad outside the village of Griffin's Corners to establish a summer retreat in the Catskills. Charles and Max soon followed their siblings into the fresh mountain air and by the end of the 1880s, the family had built a compound of five mansions, a trout pond, a heated spring water pool, and an indoor riding arena.⁶ Max passed away in 1890 and, by 1891, it was clear that Charles had developed an acute respiratory ailment. In 1894, he appointed his son Julius as general manager of the family enterprise at the age of twenty-two. Julius had been groomed for company leadership since his graduation from preparatory school at age sixteen.⁷

⁴ P. Christiaan Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One* (St. Louis: AB Mauri Food Inc., 2019), 10.

⁵ Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One*, 11.

⁶ Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One*, 16.

⁷ Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One*, 24.

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By the time Charles's sons, Julius and Max C. (younger brother by four years), started vacationing in Griffin's Corners with the rest of their family, bat and ball games were prevalent in the Catskills. In fact, the National Pastime in Delaware County can be traced all the way back to the summer of 1825 – fourteen years before Abner Doubleday was credited with “inventing” baseball in Cooperstown, NY. On July 12, 1825, a call to action appeared in the *Delhi Gazette*, where nine men from the “newly formed Town of Hamden” challenged men from other towns in the county to a game of “BASS-BALL” for the sum of one dollar per game. Although the *Dickson Baseball Dictionary* defines “bass-ball” as a variant of the English game of rounders, baseball historians regard this early reference as “a significant finding.”⁸

In the 1890s, baseball – whether playing or watching – had become a common pastime for community life on the weekends in the rural Catskills, as it was for much of the country. Travel by way of the Ulster & Delaware Railroad connected teams from Kingston, Delhi, Treadwell, Hamden, Roxbury, Hobart, and Stamford to other towns from places like Oneonta, Ilion, Little Falls, and Johnstown in counties north and west. Box scores and articles in the *Pine Hill Sentinel*, the *Windham Journal*, the *Stamford Recorder*, and others from 1894 through 1897 illustrate that the Fleischmanns team played contests with teams from Walden (Orange County, NY), Phoenicia, Shandaken, Roxbury, and Windham, among others in the team's formative years. However, in later seasons of the 1890s and early 1900s, these other clubs would prove to be no match for the Fleischmann team, as Julius began to stock his team with the best talent he could find. No other team in the Catskills, or any other town as small as Griffins Corners for that matter, could boast a team with as many ringers as the team of Julius and Max Fleischmann.

Mountain Athletic Club

In 1895, the brothers begun constructing a proper baseball diamond like they had become accustomed to in Cincinnati during their formative years. The early field was a diamond-shaped, dirt infield of unknown measurements. At this time in baseball there were no specific requirements for regulation fields. There was a tremendous discrepancy in field dimensions depending on where one played, as the modern-day 330-400-330 average in right-center-left had yet to be fully established. At some early ballparks, the center field line went out as far as 600 feet from home; down the lines, they could measure more than 200 feet, leading to ground rules where cheap home runs were declared to be doubles.⁹

The Fleischmanns' new athletic grounds were constructed on much flatter ground than what they had been using at the family's encampment on the hill. A column titled “*Millionaire Fans*” in the *Delaware Gazette* on July 26, 1899 referred to the challenges of playing on a slope, “where a hit in any direction would yield a home run.” The *Gazette's* recall of the Fleischmanns' private ballpark continues

⁸ Rosie Cunningham, “Hamden: Town's Historic Roots Run Deep with Baseball,” *Reporter*, April 3, 2018, 17.

⁹ “1860s-1900s Lumber and Crossed Fingers.” Accessed May 14, 2020. www.thisgreatgame.com/ballparks-eras-1860s-1900s.html

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Baseball was a go. Church deacons, farmers, country sports and summer sports all became wild over it. So, Charles Fleischmann looked about and finally found a four-acre tract that did not have more than a dozen hills and valleys on it and purchased it for his sons. Many thousands of dollars were spent in leveling this ground and blasting out the bowlders [sic.] so that in the summer of 1895 the team had a real ball ground to play upon.

John Blish, original owner of the Fleischmanns' estate on the hill, was designated grounds keeper.¹⁰

Formal improvements and the construction of physical structures were likely held off until Julius properly acquired title to the land (previously referred to as the "Allen Lasher Plat") in August 1896.⁶ On May 11, 1897, the *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise* reprinted details from the *Kingston Leader* of all the plans for the upcoming season, referring to the manager's investment in provisions for the team and accommodations for spectators:

Granville Whitaker, the renowned base ball catcher, yesterday received from Julius Fleischmann, Cincinnati, a long letter regarding the arrangements being made for the Fleischmann Baseball club for the coming season. Beautiful new blue uniforms with maroon trimmings have been secured, besides a complete assortment of bats, masks, gloves and all other accessories. Everything is of the best and the very finest quality. As [sic.] well known, baseball grounds and a bicycle track, second to none in the state, are now being completed at Fleischmann's [sic].¹¹ Besides a big grandstand, there is a band stand where the Fleischmann band will render music at every game, or on important athletic events. Besides Whitaker, "Eddie" Winter, and "Pete" Cregan, formerly of this city and well known here, are also members of the team. They will open the season at Fleischmann's [sic] about the middle of next month.

A follow up to that in the *Pine Hill Sentinel* promoting the start of the season on June 23, 1897, has Julius referring to opening his "new grounds." Following that season opener, where they defeated Phoenicia by a score of 16 to 4, the first written reference to what became the team's formal name, the Mountain Athletic Club, appears.¹² Later that summer, the Mountain Athletic Club faced off in Fleischmanns with the famous barnstorming Cuban X Giants – an all-black team derivative of the Cuban Giants. The Mountain Athletic Club dropped both games by a score of 16 to 4 on August 20, and 12 to 6 on August 21.¹³

¹⁰ John Blish's great-great grandson still does the mowing at Fleischmanns Park today.

¹¹ Julius was an equestrian breeder and avid owner of thoroughbred racehorses with twenty-two kept at a Somerset, NJ, farm in 1899. In addition to the riding stables previously constructed on the family estate, a modest horse track (the "bicycle track" previously referred to in the 1897 article) was constructed around the ballpark (no longer extant).

¹² *Pine Hill Sentinel*, July 17, 1897.

¹³ *Pine Hill Sentinel*, August 28, 1897.

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In December 1897, Charles, the patriarch and leader of the Fleischmanns Co., passed away and research did not yield an account of any happenings at the grounds in 1898. Perhaps this was due in part to the patriarch's death and that Max, then twenty-one years old and an outfielder on the ball club, had recently graduated from the Ohio Military Institute, enlisted as a reservist in the Spanish-American War and was stationed in Jacksonville, Florida.¹⁴

In 1899, Julius began stocking his Catskills club with star-power from Cincinnati. Arthur Reynolds, a career distiller in the Fleischmanns' Peekskill malting plant, who organized the team for the Fleischmann brothers, sent a letter to player Granville Whitaker of Kingston years later detailing the origins of how a more competitive Mountain Athletic Club came to be. The letter recounted that after a return from Oneonta following a string of three consecutive losses, Reynolds proposed to Julius that they properly recruit for better players to strengthen their club.¹⁵ Which season it was that a newly improved Mountain Athletic Club formed is unknown. However, by the spring of 1899, newspapers from Seattle to New York were running similar stories of how the fortune of "crank" (nineteenth-century term for a baseball fan) Julius Fleischmann had developed a beautiful private ballpark at his estate and furnished a team of crack players. It was also the first year that professional and semi-professional ball players appear in written accounts of the Mountain Athletic Club.

The Fleischmann's team of 1899 featured several minor leaguers and a few that had or would spend time in the major leagues. Fresh off the heels of his tenth and final season in professional ball, Cincinnati Reds centerfielder James Wear "Bug" Holliday joined the club.¹⁶ Holliday was the first player to win home run crowns in two different leagues (1889 American Association, 1892 National League) and the first player in major league history to make his professional debut in post-season play when he was called up to the Chicago White Stockings in September 1885.¹⁷ Tom Colcolough, (pronounced "Coakley") a former pennant-winning pitcher who had been released in July by the New York Giants, also played that summer for the Mountain Athletic Club at the price of \$50 per game plus travel allowances.¹⁸ Another MLB hopeful on the club was Kingston-born infielder "Peekskill Pete" Cregan, who appeared in one game for the NY Giants in September 1899 after a solid showing with the Mountain Athletic Club.¹⁹ Cregan was a consistent player in several Mountain Athletic Club seasons. He roomed with Max C. Fleischmann on road trips and was called back up to the big

¹⁴ Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One*, 28.

¹⁵ Charles J. Tiano, "Fleischmanns Baseball Legend," *Kingston Daily Freeman*, April 24, 1964.

¹⁶ *Jersey City News*, August 23, 1899.

¹⁷ John F. Green, "Bug Holliday," Biography – Society of American Baseball Research (SABR).

<http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/5b06bc9d>; Bug Holliday – Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bug_Holliday

¹⁸ Due to the appearance of "Coakley" in the M.A.C. box scores of 1899, some previous accounts of the club had confused future MLB Pitcher Andy Coakley with former New York Giant pitcher Tom Colcolough. Coakley's SABR biographer Tara Krieger found documentation (*The Sporting Life*, 10 August 1895) for the changed spelling and also commented in personal communications with the author that the real Coakley would have been only 17 years old and still living in Providence, RI. No other documentation of Coakley's appearance with the M.A.C. was found. *New York World*, August 20, 1899.

¹⁹ "Pete Cregan," Baseball Almanac. <https://www.baseball-almanac.com/players/player.php?p=cregape01>

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leagues in 1903 for a short stint with the Cincinnati Reds.²⁰ Following his professional baseball career, Cregan held a position of store clerk in the Fleischmanns' Peekskill plant for many years.²¹ Numerous accounts from the 1899 season suggest that the improved Mountain Athletic Club was tearing up the competition on the barnstorming circuit. As word spread through the Catskills that the team had become virtually unbeatable, it was becoming more common for the club to have to travel to find opponents. On road trips, the Mountain Athletic Club was appropriately wined and dined while travelling in a private luxury Pullman rail car.²² In anticipation of a match with the Jersey City Jerseys, the *Jersey City News* on August 23, 1899 shared excitement for the coming of the M.A.C.: "*The Mountain A.C. is the most prominent of any of the professionals that have visited this City....they should prove the best attractions thus far represented this season on the Johnston avenue ground.*" Behind great pitching from Tom Colcolough, the M.A.C. trounced the Jerseys by a score of 33 to 3 with scribes in *Jersey Journal* the next day dubbing the event, "Jersey's Waterloo."²³ The Mountain Athletic Club would beat the Jerseys again at home later that summer.

A team photo taken around this time depicts Julius and Max Fleischmann, among others, in uniform with the great shortstop for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Honus Wagner.²⁴ Wagner is among baseball's most revered players of all time and a member of the first class of ball players inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936. The photo is all that has been uncovered to date alleging proof of Wagner's connection to the Mountain Athletic Club. Wagner's tie to Fleischmanns is shrouded in mystery, as there is no other account, written or oral, documenting the association. Major league baseball's official historian, John Thorn, suggested that Wagner may have been playing with other semi-pro teams at the time and played unofficially at Fleischmanns during an off-season trip, perhaps even under an alias. The Fleischmanns club is known to have played well into the fall. Or perhaps he was a personal friend of Julius Fleischmann. This aspect of the team's history remains undocumented.

Another famous entrepreneur with Ohio roots, Harry M. Stevens, also appears with the Fleischmanns in the same photo. Stevens – sometimes called the "Rockefeller of peanuts" or "the Hot Dog King" – was a former steelworker turned stadium concessions magnate credited with such ballpark innovations as the modern scorecard and the drinking straw.²⁵ But of all Harry M's contributions to sporting events, the "hot dog" is by far the most transcendent. The vending mainstay has become synonymous with baseball and virtually every major sporting event in America. Stevens was reported to have umpired the game that day.²⁶

²⁰ *Sporting Life*, May 9, 1903.

²¹ Pete Cregan file at National Baseball Hall of Fame Library.

²² *Seattle Daily Times*, August 27, 1900, 12.

²³ "Jersey's Waterloo." *Jersey Journal*, Jersey City, NJ. August 28, 1899

²⁴ Personal communication and copy of original M.A.C. team photograph provided by Jane Ebberts, grand-daughter of late John Kelly, former postmaster of Griffin Corners. February 2020.

²⁵ Vince Guerrireri, *The Legacy of Harry M. Stevens*, July 2018. <https://www.ohiomagazine.com/ohio-life/article/game-changer-the-legacy-of-harry-m.-stevens>

²⁶ Tiano, *Kingston Daily Freeman*, April 24, 1964.

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Meanwhile in the family business, the rapid growth of the Fleischmann brand of products in the New York market and elsewhere led to a major company expansion. In 1900, with unfettered access to transportation via rail and barge and fresh water for their processes, they met the growing consumer demand for bakeries in Eastern cities by opening "the world's largest yeast manufacturing plant" along the Hudson River in Peekskill, New York. They appropriately named their new 65-acre tract Charles Point in honor of their father.²⁷ This factory would eventually include over 140 buildings and serve as the city's largest employer until its closing in 1977.²⁸

Like his father, Julius Fleischmann was very involved in pursuits outside of yeast-making and distilling. He served as president for several other manufacturing companies, two banks, and a college. He was also active in the Ohio Republican party, serving on the staff of two Ohio governors.²⁹ Aided by the Republican party boss and a city largely populated with pro-drinking German-immigrants during the temperance movement sweeping through America at the time, Julius, at the age of twenty-eight, was elected to the first of two terms as the youngest mayor in Cincinnati history in 1900. As mayor, Fleischmann promoted education, created public parks, and supported continued investment in local railroad lines.³⁰

By 1902, Mayor Fleischmann purchased a controlling interest in the Cincinnati Reds along with George Cox and Garry Hermann; his brother Max had been named vice president two years prior. Then, in 1903, the brothers bought stakes in the Philadelphia Phillies – a practice of syndicate ownership that has long since been forbidden in the major leagues.³¹ The Fleischmanns gave the chair to Hermann, who presided over a national commission that ruled baseball from 1903-1920; they were part of the group that created the first modern World Series in 1903.³² An attempt was made by the Fleischmanns to buy another syndicate stake in the Chicago Cubs in 1912 from Charles Taft, brother of President Taft, but that never came to fruition and the brothers sold their interests in the Reds in 1915.³³

As a big city mayor and major league ball team owner's private baseball club should be, the Mountain Athletic Club of 1900 was seemingly unstoppable. Charles "Red" Dooen was a catcher for the Mountain Athletic Club in 1900. The small-statured backstop claimed to be the first professional ball player to wear protective shin-guards.³⁴ Dooen also held a 91-year franchise record for most games

²⁷ Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One*, 25.

²⁸ In 2019, a celebration for the 150th Anniversary of the company's founding was held at the former bottling plant – one of the only remaining buildings left of the original factory – with a formal presentation given by local historians from the Peekskill Museum.

²⁹ Klieger, *Fleischmann's @ 150: Still the One*, 24.

³⁰ "Julius Fleischmann." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Fleischmann

³¹ *The Saint Paul Globe (Saint Paul, MN)*, March 3, 1903.

³² John Saccoman, "Garry Hermann" Biography, SABR. <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/d72a4b39>

³³ Facebook message from John Thorn, MLB Historian, April 27, 2020.

³⁴ Don E. Blasenfelder, "Dooen Claims He Was First Catcher to Wear Shin Guards," March 5, 1936. Clipping from unknown newspaper obtained from Dooen's file at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library.

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caught during his run with the Philadelphia club from 1902-1914.³⁵ In a 1936 interview, Dooin recalled that Julius Fleischmann took over a semi-professional team that had been called Spinney's Specials run by sporting-goods store owner John Spinney. With the acquisition, the mayor had stacked his Catskill team with at least nine men (as with Dooin, most were Cincinnati homegrown talent) that had played or would soon play in the major leagues. One *Sporting News* clipping had the club winning 56 out of 60 games, including one where the Mountain Athletic Club beat the Cincinnati Reds by a score of 4-3 in an exhibition held in their own ballpark in Cincinnati.³⁶

In 2004, John Thorn published an award-winning essay about Fleischmanns and the Mountain Athletic Club called *Mangled Forms* in which he reprints a description from the *New York Sun* on July 12, 1900 befitting of the M.A.C. Grounds in all its splendor:³⁷

The diamond is at the base of the mountains and the field has been laid out with no sparing of expense. The grounds are inclosed [sic] with a wire-netting fence and there is a small grandstand, which is always devoted to the Messrs. Fleischmanns' guests. Guarantees, as much as \$150 a game, are paid to the clubs to play there, irrespective of the small gate receipts. The players are quartered at a first-class hotel and are serenaded by a band once a week.

In other written accounts, the clubhouse at the grounds had three dressing rooms and an attendant. Mountain Athletic Club players were getting paid roughly \$150 per month (\$4,600 in 2020 dollars) which was higher than many professional contracts being offered at the time.³⁸ Among the soon-to-be major leaguers on the 1900 Mountain Athletic Club team were three players who later contributed significantly to the 1906 World Series Champion Chicago White Stockings: Guy Harris "Doc" White, Nick Altrock, and George "Whitey" Rohe; the latter two were from Cincinnati. Doc White was a crafty southpaw from Washington D.C. picked up by the Fleischmanns fresh out of Georgetown University.³⁹ In 1904, Doc pitched a string of five shutouts – a major league record that stood until it was broken by Don Drysdale in 1968. White also led the American League with a 1.52 ERA (earned run average) in 1906, twenty-seven wins in 1907, and he was the third winningest left-handed pitcher of the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ Nick Altrock, also a left-handed pitcher, was also upstate with the Mountain Athletic Club later that season in 1900.⁴¹ During his professional career, Altrock played for three different World Series championship teams over his twenty seasons in the big leagues and still holds the record for having been the oldest professional ball player to hit a triple in the major leagues at the age of forty-eight.⁴² After retirement from four decades in professional baseball, Altrock became

³⁵ Larry Shenk, "5 Catchers Who Left a Mark on Phillies," November 4, 2015. <https://atmlb.com/2yEbWD9>

³⁶ "Jack Keenan's Triumph," *Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania) Record*, October 18, 1900.

³⁷ John Thorn, *Mangled Forms*, 11 October 2016 (updated from *Woodstock Times*, 2004), <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/mangled-forms-b7f73a2e40d9>

³⁸ Brian McKenna, "Mountain Athletic Club," 13 June 2011, Blog: <https://bit.ly/2zqUS3w>

³⁹ John Bennett, "Doc White" Biography, SABR. <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/c752107c>

⁴⁰ Baseball-Reference.com. <https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/w/whitedo01.shtml>

⁴¹ *Sporting Life*, December 1, 1900.

⁴² Baseball Reference.com. <https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi?id=altroc001nic>

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best known for his antics at the ballpark, performing for many years as a vaudevillian clown entertaining legions of fans with comedic partner Al Schacht.⁴³ According to Altrock biographer Peter M. Gordon, "at his clowning peak, Altrock enjoyed a salary that rivaled Babe Ruth's." Lastly, George "Whitey" Rohe, a utility infielder with a relatively brief major league career, was most famous as having a terrific World Series in 1906, leading Chicago's "Hitless Wonders" with a .571 slugging percentage (two triples, a double and four singles) to upset the highly favored Chicago Cubs in the first World Series between two teams from the same city.⁴⁴ Other future pros would suit up for the Mountain Athletic Club in 1900, including Barney McFadden, who had a solid year with only one loss out of fifteen games pitched, and "Black Jack" Keenan, who was the pitcher of record in the October win over the Reds in Cincinnati.⁴⁵

Another future star that took the field with the Mountain Athletic Club in 1900 was the small-framed second baseman and would-be Hall of Fame manager of the New York Yankees, Miller Huggins. Huggins was another native Cincinnati, like Dooin and Rohe, who had come over in the acquisition of Spinney's Specials. In his early days as a semi-professional, Huggins's box scores (including some with the Mountain Athletic Club in 1900) listed him playing under the pseudonym "Proctor" to hide his playing from his father, a strict Methodist who was not amused with the frivolity of baseball. Huggins had a solid thirteen-year-career as a second baseman with the Reds and St. Louis Cardinals, but he is best remembered with plaques in Cooperstown (inducted to the Hall of Fame in 1964) and Yankee Stadium's Monument Park for his managerial career. Huggins led the Yankees' "murderer's row" teams of Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig to three World Series titles in 1923, 1927, and 1928. Huggins had garnered so much respect across the baseball world that on the day of his New York funeral in 1939, all major league games were postponed.⁴⁶

Following the smashing success of the 1900 campaign, the Mountain Athletic Club grounds at Fleischmanns Park suffered about \$1,000 in damage (\$30,000 in today's dollars) from flooding in April 1901. This likely explains why there was comparatively few references to baseball in Fleischmanns that year. However, Brian McKenna's research for a 2011 article on the Mountain Athletic Club claims that the club won the local championship that year.⁴⁷ The Mountain Athletic Club of 1902 won twenty games with only four losses, two of which came at the hands of Hobart.⁴⁸ One of those wins was over Oneonta's Company G during a contest at the Mountain Athletic Club grounds;

⁴³ Al Schacht also played semi-professionally in Delaware County in 1910 for Abe Goldberg, manager of the Walton Rifrafs, and a former star centerfielder and pitcher for the M.A.C. Schacht won thirteen consecutive games for Walton that year and Walton was where he first started experimenting with his in-game comedy acts. (Source: Ralph Berger, "Al Schacht" SABR Biography: <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/04d01542>)

⁴⁴ Bill Johnson, "George Rohe" SABR Biography: <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/5eedcc45>

⁴⁵ *The Plain Speaker (Hazelton, PA)*, September 7, 1900, 4.

⁴⁶ Steve Steinberg, "Miller Huggins," SABR Biography. <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/7b65e9fa>

⁴⁷ Brian McKenna, "Mountain Athletic Club," 13 June 2011. Blog: <https://bit.ly/2zqUS3w>

⁴⁸ *Hobart Independent*, September 13, 1902.

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Mountain Athletic Club won by a score of 18 to 5 on August 3, 1902.⁴⁹ During the winter of 1902-1903, the ballpark was rebuilt with seating expanded to accommodate 5,000 spectators.⁵⁰

The Mountain Athletic Club season of 1903 included games versus the visiting Oneonta Stars and the Brooklyn Field Club (a semi-professional team), among others, and winning ten out of eleven games at one point mid-way through the season.⁵¹ A special Fourth of July day of baseball at the Mountain Athletic Club grounds had the Fleischmanns team facing the Weingart Institute of Highmount (a once-prominent nearby summer camp for young men) followed by an afternoon match against the Jasper Athletic Club from New York City. The games on the fourth were followed by the "usual grand display" of fireworks that evening from the Fleischmanns Hill complete with a speech from Julius Fleischmann.⁵²

Of most note in 1903 were the games held at the Mountain Athletic Club grounds on August 10 and 11, when the Cuban Giants – America's first all-black professional team - came upstate.⁵³ The Mountain Athletic Club won the first contest by a score of 3-1.⁵⁴ However, they but dropped the next day's match by a score of 6-3 in seven innings.⁵⁵ The second baseman that weekend for the Giants was Canadian-born, Bill "Hippo" Galloway. Not only was Galloway the *first* African American to play professional hockey in 1899, but the following year he would also become the *last* African American to play professional baseball until Jackie Robinson broke in with the Brooklyn Dodgers 47 years later.⁴⁹ Infamously, Galloway had been ousted from the Woodstock Bains of the new Canadian League when a new player objected to playing with a Negro.⁵⁶

A star centerfielder and pitcher with the Mountain Athletic Club that weekend was a player named Goldburg – oft referred to by the folks in Delaware County as "Goldie." Goldburg apparently hailed from New York City and was likely recruited to the mountains by the Fleischmanns, just as others had been in prior years. A 1909 photograph of the Delhi Base Ball team at the Delaware County Historical Association shows Goldburg with at least one other former Mountain Athletic Club player donning their Mountain Athletic Club pea coats. While the Mountain Athletic Club had the reputation for having expert players, Goldburg was the captain of the Delhi team in 1909 and went on to manage the Walton Rifraffs the following year.⁵⁷

One local player of significance on the Mountain Athletic Club team who drew the attention of professional scouts around 1905/06 was Jay Kirke. Kirke was born in Allaben/Shandaken (Ulster

⁴⁹ Scorecard displayed at the Fleischmanns Museum of Memories, Fleischmanns, NY.

⁵⁰ By this time, news of Griffin Corners and Fleischmanns as a resort community had spread and summer populations were swelling to almost 10,000 people with dozens of hotels were springing up to meet the growing demand.

⁵¹ *Catskill Mountain News*, July 31, 1903, 1.

⁵² *Hobart Independent*, June 27, 1903.

⁵³ Cuban Giants: Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Giants

⁵⁴ Scorecard displayed at Fleischmanns Museum of Memories, Fleischmanns, NY.

⁵⁵ Scorecard reprinted in *Fleischmanns Flyer*, No. 19, 1976. 2.

⁵⁶ Gary Cieradkowski, *The League of Outsider Baseball*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 178.

⁵⁷ *Catskill Mountain News*, June 3, 1910.

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County) in 1888 and resided in Griffin's Corners. An extensive biography written by Stephen V. Rice for SABR's BioProject asserts that Kirke achieved a .315 career batting average and collected 3,511 hits in twenty-three seasons with stints on the Detroit Tigers, Boston Braves, Cleveland Indians, New York Giants; however, he mostly spent many successful years in the American Association (the equivalent of today's high minor leagues). Rice's research found a quote from a sports reporter in the Mid-West stating, that Kirke hit the ball "as hard as anyone who ever swung a bat." In 1915, playing with the Indians, he went 4 for 6 in the first game of a double-header and 3 for 4 in the second game against the great future Hall of Famer Walter Johnson. Despite his success at the plate, Rice states, "Kirke's erratic fielding limited his major-league opportunities." Kirke retired from organized baseball in 1927 at age thirty-nine. For several seasons after that, Kirke was the manager and first baseman of a semi-pro team in Fleischmanns, with his son Judson Jr. at shortstop or in the outfield.⁵⁸

After the Fleischmanns

By the mid-1910s, the Fleischmann brothers were busy with other endeavors. Julius was in his second term as Cincinnati's mayor and Max was spending more time traveling and was often on the west coast. Author P. Christiaan Klieger writes that Max's pursuits went far beyond baseball. He married in 1905 and embarked with his wife on expeditions to the Arctic Circle that year and African safaris in subsequent years. In 1909, Max took up the hobby of hot air ballooning and won an aero race from St. Louis to the Atlantic Ocean. Max's journeys continued through Africa, Asia and Russia. He was promoted to major during the first World War as commandant of the Army Aeronautical School in Couperly, France, in 1917, and he finished out his command of the U.S. Army Balloon School in 1918 after a gassing led to severe disabilities. Max ultimately settled in the Santa Barbara, California, area pursuing his passions for travel and yachting among other leadership roles in the family business. Julius began to spend more time in the summers pursuing his other passion of yachting aboard his 170-foot yacht the *Hiawatha*, harbored in Wickford, Rhode Island.⁵⁹

On May 11, 1914, Julius sold the Mountain Athletic Club grounds to the newly incorporated Village of Fleischmanns, named to honor his family, for the sum of one dollar. The board accepted the offer

...upon the condition that this property shall always be used for a public park and athletic purposes and no other purpose; that it shall never be sold or sublet; that it shall always be free of access to the public at large...and that they shall always keep the property in good condition...

⁵⁸ Steven V. Rice, "Jay Kirke," Biography – Society of American Baseball Research., <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/72ecb5a6>

⁵⁹ "The View From Swamptown: Julius Fleischmann and the yacht Hiawatha were a summertime staple in 1930s Wickford," *Independent*, 26 May 2016. https://www.independentri.com/independents/ind/columns/swamptown/article_196f1988-92d1-5f78-bb83-e6bff0a6280f.html

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Not much is known about how Fleischmanns Park was used by the village after this time. Baseball was played sporadically by local teams and the grandstand built by the Fleischmann's came down sometime in the 1940s. An interest in vintage base ball (nineteenth-century style baseball) has been gaining popularity over the last twenty years with the establishment of the first club in 1999, the Mutual Ball Club of New York, at Old Bethpage Village Restoration, as an outgrowth of an educational program. The Mountain Athletic Club vintage base ball team was formed in 2007 and was inspired by a club in Roxbury, NY. A local businessman, Todd Pascarella, started the team underwritten by the A. Lindsay & Olive B. O'Connor Foundation. Following a six-year hiatus due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Irene on Fleischmanns Park in 2011, the team regrouped in 2017 with funding support from the community and has been playing every summer since then.

In 2014, the village celebrated its centennial since its incorporation as Fleischmanns. In the summer of 2019, the A.B. Mauri – a division of Associated British Foods and current owners of the Fleischmann's Yeast brand – hosted a gala celebration at Fleischmanns Park called Founders' Day marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of the company. In addition to a Fleischmann's Yeast juried bake-off, an 1895-style baseball contest was played by the revived Mountain Athletic Club and the Bovina Dairymen and attended by several hundred people. On the eve of the event during a public reception held at Spillian (National Register eligible) – the last of the five Fleischmanns family mansions that once lined the hilltop south of the village – major league baseball historian John Thorn read aloud a resolution from the National Baseball Hall of Fame honoring Fleischmanns' Founders Day. The resolution noted that Julius Fleischmann, president of Fleischmann & Company in 1897, had developed "a keen interest in the game of baseball, supporting the Mountain Athletic Club which once included the great Honus Wagner on its roster" and that Julius had an ownership interest in the Cincinnati Reds in 1902. It also noted that "the Cincinnati Reds held pre-season training in Fleischmanns, New York at Fleischmanns Park" and closed by saying that the "National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum recognizes and celebrates the history of the Fleischmann family and their support for our great National Pastime." It was signed by Jeff Idelson, president of the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum.

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Name of Property

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Verbal Boundary Description

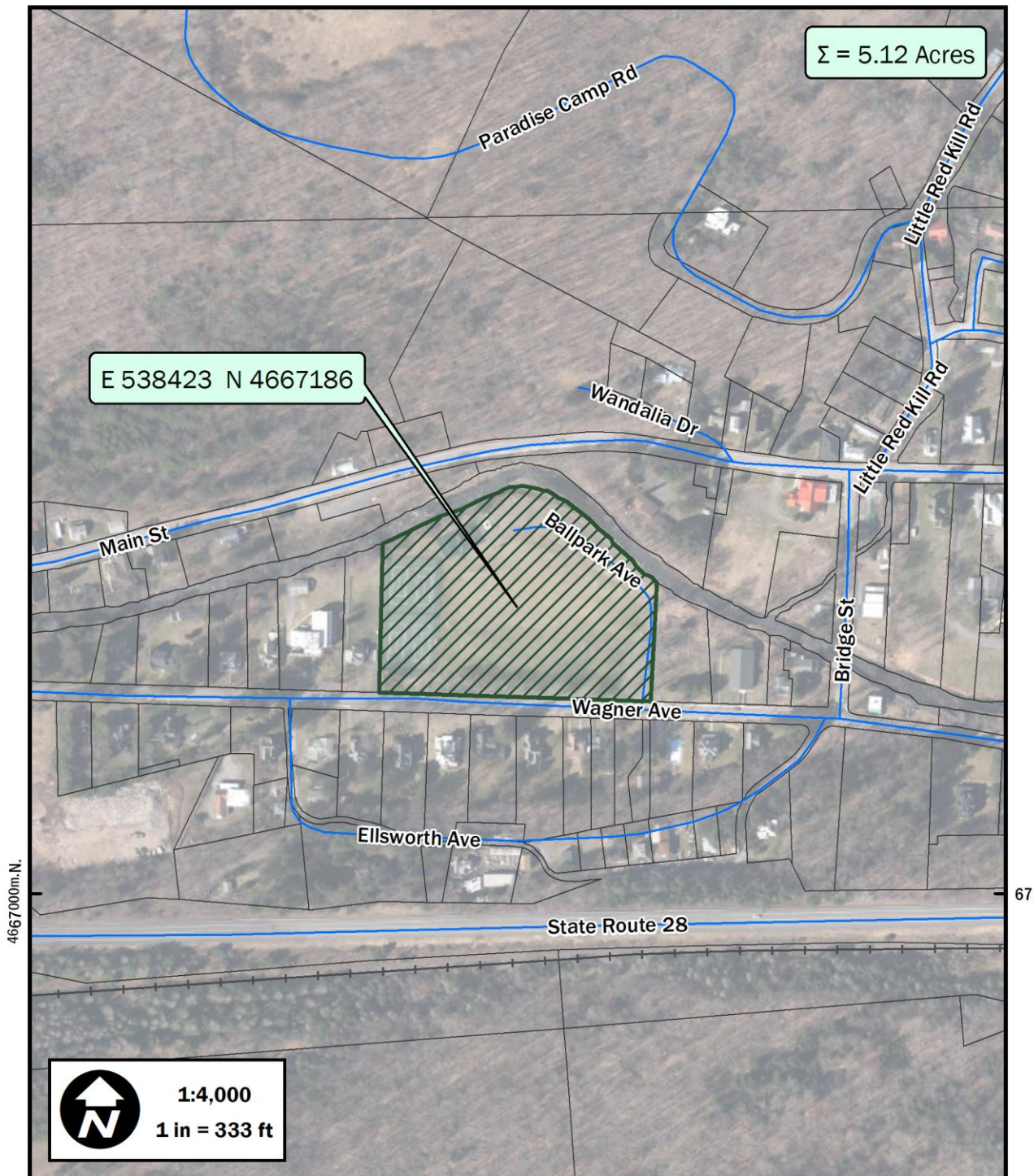
The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the historic grounds of the Fleischmann's park and the current boundary of Fleischmann's Park, which is the original parcel purchased by Charles Fleischmann.

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds
Village of Fleischmanns, Delaware County, New York

Fleischmann Park
Fleischmanns, NY 12430



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 100 200
Feet

 Nomination Boundary



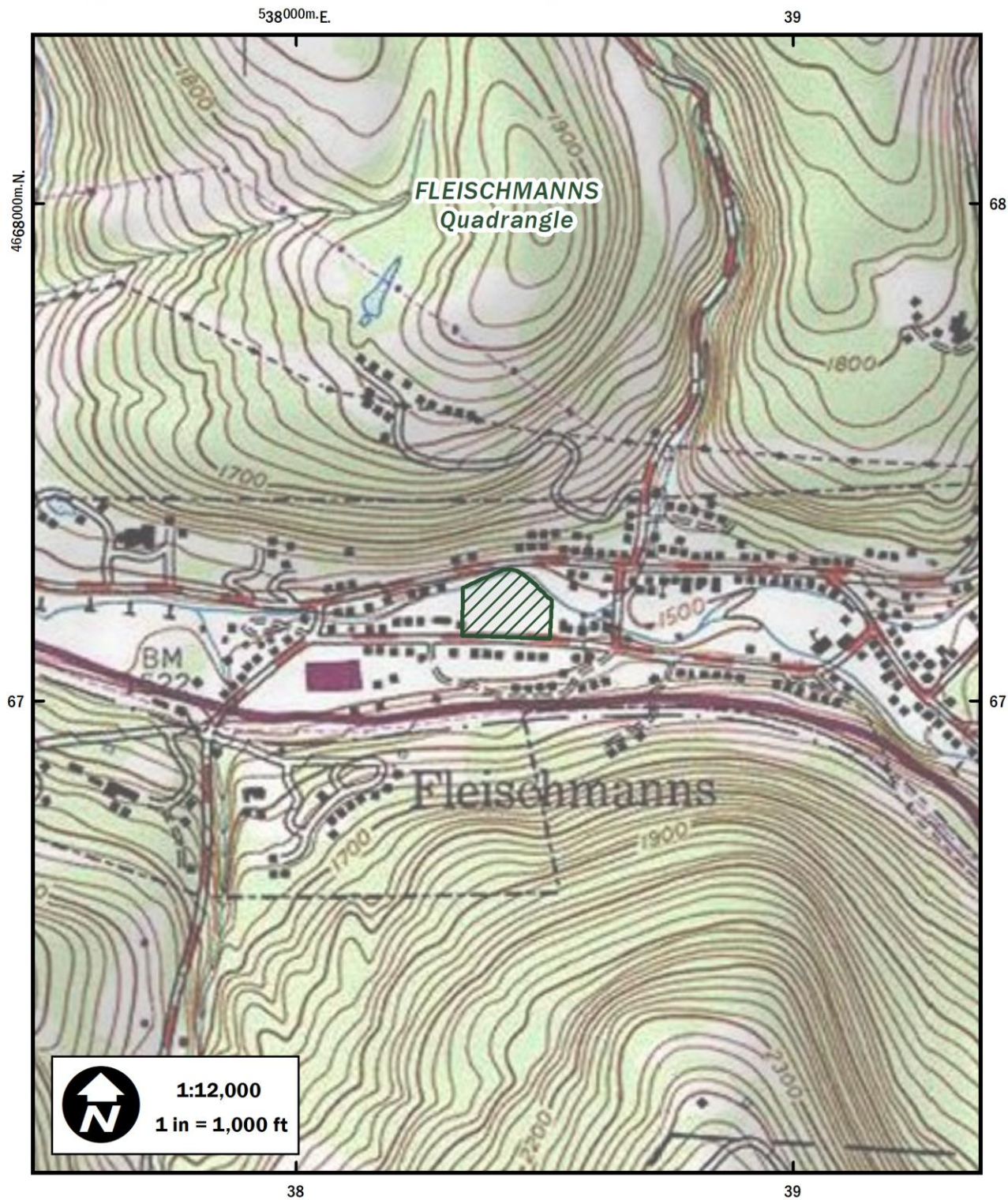
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds
Name of Property

Delaware County, New York
County and State

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds
Village of Fleischmanns, Delaware County, New York

Fleischmanns Park
Fleischmanns, NY 12430



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 250 500
Feet

 Nomination Boundary



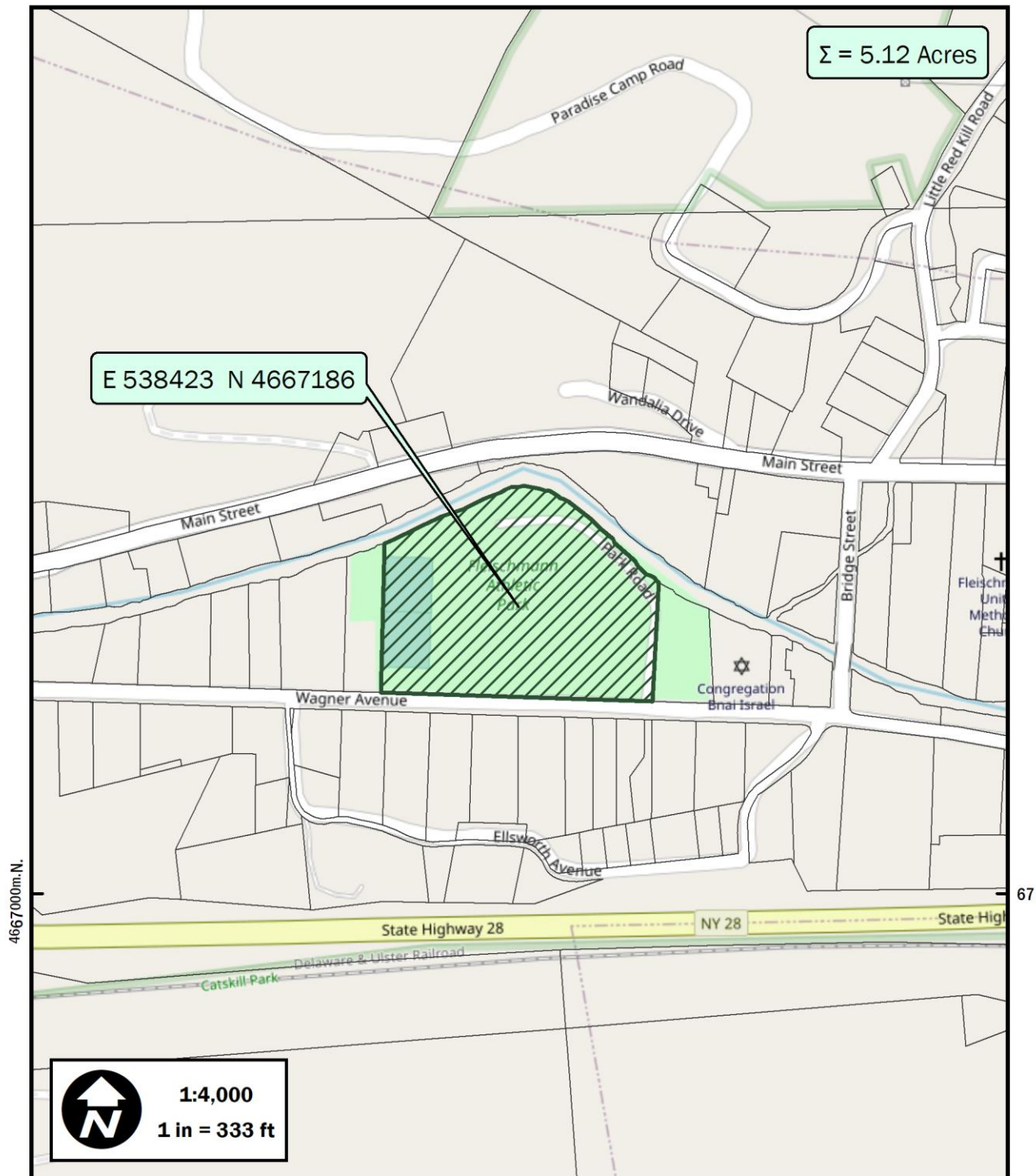
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds
Name of Property

Delaware County, New York
County and State

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds
Village of Fleischmanns, Delaware County, New York

Fleischmann Park
Fleischmanns, NY 12430



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 100 200
Feet

 Nomination Boundary



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

Delaware County, New York

County and State

Photographs

Name of Property: Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

City or Vicinity: Fleischmanns

County: Delaware State: New York

Photographer: Collin Miller

Date Photographed: May 8, 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0001

View of Mountain Athletic Club grounds from the north looking south toward Wagner Avenue, summer 2019.

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0002

View of Mountain Athletic Club grounds from right-centerfield looking north toward homeplate and the Bushkill.

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0003

View of Mountain Athletic Club grounds looking south across the Bushkill.

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0004

View from park bench (southwest side of park) in right field north toward home plate.

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0005

View from access road behind the backstop looking south.

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0006

View of playground (northeast corner of park).

NY_Delaware Co_Mountain Athletic Club Grounds _0007

View from right field looking northeast toward home plate.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503.

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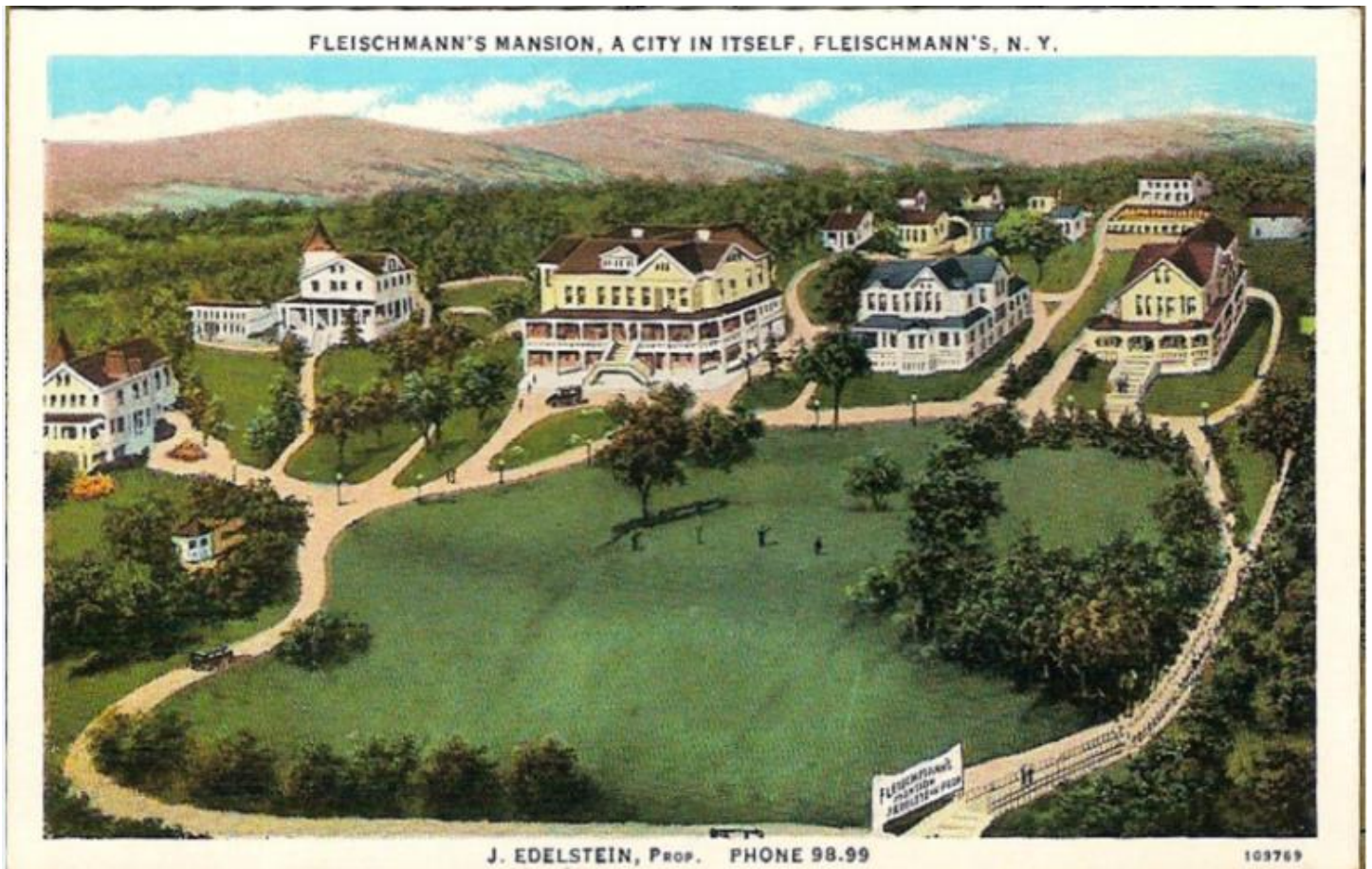
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Postcard of Fleischmann family compound in Griffin's Corners, n.d.

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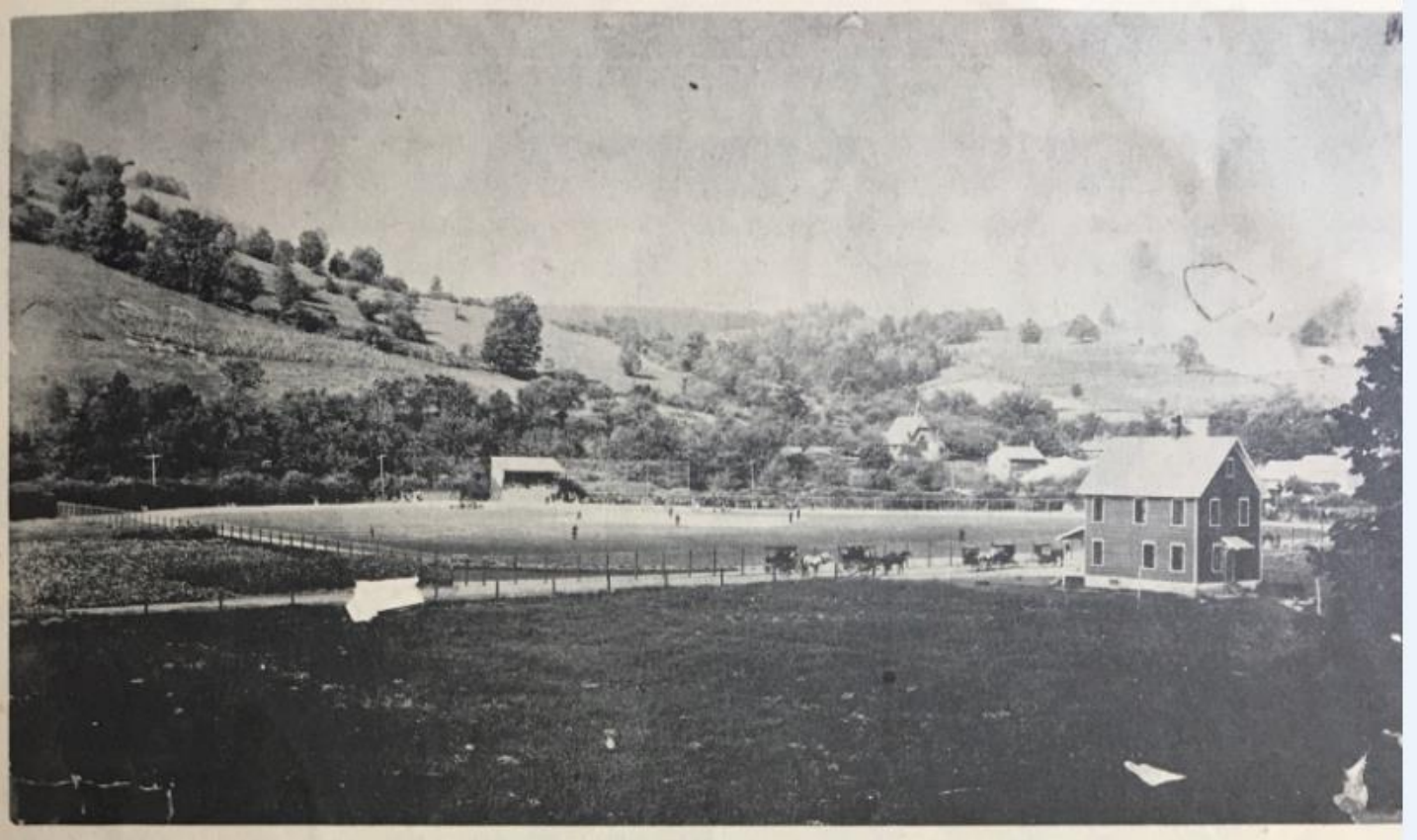
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View of Fleischmann's base ball field, c. 1890s

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

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Mountain Athletic Club team photos, c.1899

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

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View south looking at Wagner Avenue, c.1900s

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

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View of Fleischmann's base ball field, 1899

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

Herkimer County, New York

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Name of Property

Herkimer County, New York

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Name of Property

Herkimer County, New York

County and State



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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

Herkimer County, New York

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

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Herkimer County, New York

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Mountain Athletic Club Grounds

Name of Property

Herkimer County, New York

County and State

Village of Fleischmanns
Town of Middletown/Delaware County
Fred Woller, Mayor

June 5, 2020

Mr. R. Daniel Mackay
Deputy Commissioner & Deputy Historic Preservation Officer
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
Division for Historic Preservation
Peebles Island State Park
PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188

RE: MAC Grounds at Fleischmanns Park
191 Wagner Avenue
Fleischmanns, NY 12430

Dear Mr. Mackay,

I am writing to express enthusiastic support for the designation of the Mountain Athletic Club Grounds at Fleischmanns Park as a historic site worthy of state and federal recognition in the registry of historic places. Over a century has passed since the generous contribution of the ball park by the Fleischmann family. Today, it is appreciated as a core historical asset by this community and a center of Village life. There are several other registered historic places in the Village and nearby which are a complement to this potential listing. However, this would be the first official site (save for the name of the Village itself) that is directly tied to the impact of the Fleischmann family on this small rural Village at the turn of the last century and its broader contributions to early baseball in the region as well as the National Pastime in general. The play of nineteenth-century baseball on the field in present day further underscores its importance to local historic preservation and history-based tourism.

We look forward to your review and determination and thank you for your consideration of this special historic public space.

Sincerely,



Fred Woller,
Mayor of Fleischmanns