

SUSSEX/LK NEEPAULIN TOUR

RIDE NOTES:

Historic Sussex, an old but well-kept cemetery, Lk Neepaulin, a winery

DISTANCE: 10.8 mi

ELEV: 802 ft

This ride begins on Ryan Rd at the Clifton E. Lawrence School parking lot. Don't park here when school is in session; a better place to park is the Tractor Supply Store at Rt 23 and Ryan Rd, about a half mile away.

0.0 From the Clifton E. Lawrence parking lot, turn left onto Ryan Rd.

The K—2 school here was named for Clifton Lawrence. Cliff Lawrence was a well-known, well-loved principal and superintendent in the Sussex-Wantage School District. Anyone growing up here in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s will speak fondly of his strong leadership, love of community, and no-nonsense discipline. All who knew him have a story to tell. Mr. Lawrence hired me in 1973 to teach third grade at the Wantage School. He retired in 1974 and died of a heart attack in 1975.

0.3 Bear right onto Layton Rd.

0.8 Look for the abandoned New York, Susquehanna, and Western railroad bed. Try to imagine a steam locomotive rumbling past.

0.9 Turn right onto Rt 284.

This is a fairly busy road, but there is a paved shoulder. Use it.

1.6 Fairview Cemetery

This is a scenic, well-maintained cemetery. Take a short loop through to look at some of the old gravestones. You can search for Louis Larsen's (Lawritz Larsen Mossige) grave. Larsen is considered one of the most colorful historical characters of the Sussex area. He was a house painter who, after painting a house, would offer to make a framed oil painting of the fresh-looking home. His paintings, many of which were found in attics, basements, and under porches are now sought after and highly esteemed. His work can be seen in the tome *Country Lanes* by William Truran, available to borrow at the Sussex-Wantage Library.

Opposite the cemetery is the site of the Wantage Race Park, a venue for horse racing that was extremely popular here more than 100 years ago. Some great pictures can be found in the book *Sussex and Wantage* by William Truran which can be reviewed at our local library.

1.8 Bear right onto Unionville Avenue.

Welcome to Sussex! The town of Sussex is less than one square mile and is one of New Jersey's "doughnut towns", being completely surrounded by Wantage Township. Although the school district is consolidated, attempts to join the municipal governments of Sussex and Wantage have thus far failed.

2.0 Turn right onto Church St.

Stop to look at the round, stained-glass window of the First Presbyterian Church of Sussex. Notice the name "Deckertown." Sussex was originally named Deckertown after its first white settler, Peter Decker. In 1902, the town of Deckertown was changed to Sussex in an attempt to be named the county seat. The plan didn't work--Newton won the prize.

As you coast down Church St, check your brakes! On Dec. 31, 1978, a car's brakes failed and the car hit and dragged 70 year-old Dorothy Henry 500 feet and pinned her against a storefront at 75 Main St where she died. Dorothy Henry was a librarian with the Sussex County Library in 1942 when our county's library system was formed. She inaugurated the county's first bookmobile program. The library in Vernon is named for her.

2.1 Turn left onto Main St.

Stop in town to eat or browse through the shops. You'll want to pick up a "Self-Guided Walking Tour of Historic Sussex Borough" at the Sussex-Wantage Library and return for a more in-depth study of Sussex.

2.16 Turn right onto Newton Ave.

2.2 At the blinking light, walk your bike across Rt 23.

Before you cross, notice the building on the corner. How many buildings have you seen constructed of chimney tiles? This was once the "Ford Garage."

After crossing the street, notice the building next to the Clove Brook. This building, one of the oldest in town, was the home of "The Wantage Recorder" newspaper from 1894—1944.

2.3 Pass the Sussex Middle School

Until High Point Regional High School was built in the late 1960s, this was the Sussex High School. Students from Sussex and Wantage attended high school here.

As you pedal up Newton Ave, notice the architecture of the 19th and early 20th century homes. Look for the "date block" at the apex of the brick home at the top of the hill. This is an

example of the kind of stuff you don't see when you're driving by in a car.

3.0 Make a right onto Newman Ave.

(The Sussex Airport and Sussex Airport Diner are just down the road. If you want a side excursion, turn left here and look for the planes. If you're so inclined, you can even go sky diving.)

3.3 Turn right onto Neepaulin Dr.

3.9 Look for the newly-constructed dam at the lower end of Lake Neepaulin. The construction of the dam and costs incurred were a source of conflict and disagreement among Wantage Township residents.

Lake Neepaulin was built in the 1950s. Most of the homes were built as summer vacation homes. Many, if not most, have been converted to year-round residences.

The road name changes here to South Shore Drive.

4.35 Bear right to stay on South Shore Dr.

4.47 Turn right onto Old Clove Rd.

4.5 Turn right onto Libertyville Rd.

4.6 Turn left onto Lowe Rd.

- 5.6 Turn right onto Smith Rd.
- 5.8 Turn right onto Rt. 23.
- 5.9 Turn left onto Central School Rd.
- 6.0 The homesite on the left was the site of Central School, one of the 17 one-room schoolhouses that existed before the Wantage Consolidated School was built in the late 1930s.
- 7.8 Turn right onto Rose Morrow Road

Who was Rose Morrow? Back in the days when there were one-room schoolhouses, each district had a “clerk” in charge of the school. Rose was the district clerk of the Clove District School and the first female district clerk in the county. Who knew Wantage was so progressive?

- 8.6 Turn right onto Wantage School Road.
- 9.5 Make a left onto Layton Rd.

Stop to look at the DeWitt-Hardin Farm that dates back to the 1700s. An interesting historical article can be found in the July 3, 2016 copy of the New Jersey Herald. Archived NJ Herald articles can be reviewed at the Sussex-Wantage Library.

- 9.9 On your left is Ventimiglia Winery, open for tastings on weekends. The Ventimiglias are amiable and knowledgeable. Plan a trip here!
- 10.5 Turn right onto Ryan Rd.
- 10.8 Arrive back at C. E. Lawrence School.