

Kid's Newsletter-Fall 2015

Introduction

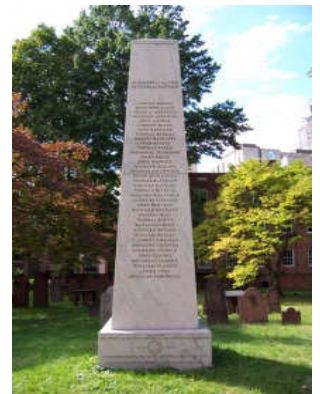
Welcome back to another exciting and educational school year! We at the Avon Historical Society hope you had a fun Summer. Now it is time to hit the books and, in your free time, read this newsletter filled with interesting stories drawn from Avon's history as well as fun features designed just for you-our junior citizens. Remember History Rocks!

The History Corner...

The Pickin' Patch Farm on Nod Road

Did you ever grow your own vegetables? It is really fun to plant the seeds and watch the vegetables grow right before your eyes until they are ready to pick and eat. If you don't have your own garden, there is a farm right here in Avon known today as the 'Pickin Patch' farm on Nod Road. This farm lets people either buy their farm produce in their farmstand building or you can go with an adult out into the fields to pick your own!

This is a historic farm that was started way back in the year 1665 by Joseph Woodford, Sr., the son of Thomas Woodford, who came to Hartford with Hooker's Expedition in 1635. The Woodford name, as one of the original settler families, is on the Founder's Monument in Hartford. (See photo) Joseph Sr. was given a land grant in Nod (early Avon) from the King of England between the Farmington River and Avon Mountain. The Woodford family has worked this land for 350 years!

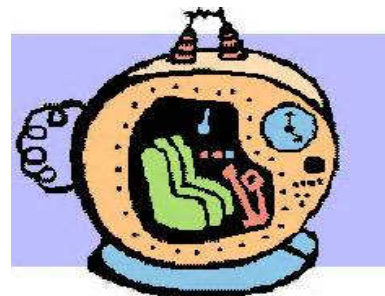


In the Fall, the farm produces vegetables, including squashes. Did you know that pumpkins are actually a member of the squash family? They also have apple cider made from the presses of the old Avon Cider Mill and colorful mum flowers. There is something so special about going to a real farm to pick out the perfect pumpkin with the nip of crisp air tickling your nose and frosting your toes! It is the perfect way to celebrate the Fall season and to see a real working farm, one of only a few left in Avon.

HAPPY FALL TO ALL!

The History Corner...

A Time Machine Trip Back to Avon in 1830



Cliparts.co

Suppose there really was a time machine and you could take a trip back in time to Avon in the year 1830. That was the year Avon became its' own town, breaking away from the 'mother' town of Farmington. What might you see? What might you hear? What might you smell or taste or touch? Let's take a pretend trip back in time to the center of town right at the intersection of Main Street/Rte. 44 (then Albany Turnpike) and Old Farms Road and use our imagination to think about what our five senses-sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch might encounter.

LOOK OUT!!! You are standing in the middle of the dirt road-yes dirt-and almost got run over by a horse pulling a farm wagon! Now that you are standing off to the side, the first sight to catch your eye would probably be the tall spire on the beautiful New England-style white church built in 1819. If you could climb up into the bell tower and look out, you would see trees, only six houses on the "main street", a warehouse, and a few shops. People would be walking around with their children and others would be riding in carriages and wagons. In the distance you would see fields and barns as Avon was a farming community back then.

From the tower looking north and south, you could see where the Farmington Canal comes into Avon, right along Old Farms Road, going *under* "main street", and then continuing up North toward Simsbury. When you come back down to street level, what might you smell? Perhaps manure from all the horses as they pull wagons and carriages through town. Stinky stuff!

What might you hear? Maybe the horn blown by the captain of one of the canal boats as he approaches the canal warehouse where he will dock. You might see passengers getting on or off dressed in old-fashioned cloths. You might hear the men on the dock talking as they load and unload cargo of vegetables, cheese, wood shingles and cider in barrels. Maybe the church bells will ring to announce the noon hour. The bells are loud but very pretty to hear.

Now that it is lunchtime, you might be hungry. What might you taste? If you go across the road diagonally, there is the Case & McChesney General Store where you might buy some sweet taffy. While there you might see some old men playing a game of checkers set up on a wooden barrel and listen to them talk about local town's goings-on. Back outside as you walk across the corner headed North at Old Farms Road, you would come to the Woodford Hotel. Maybe you see folks are sitting on the porch in rocking chairs. You go inside and see ladies and gentlemen, some out-of-town folks, who just arrived on the canal boat registering for a room. Perhaps there is a Hartford Courant newspaper, the oldest continuously published newspaper in the nation, on one of the tables. You pick it up and smell the ink and feel of the newsprint paper with your fingers.

You go back outside and walk past Phineas Gabriel's house, the local shoemaker. You can smell the leather used for making shoes and boots. You cross the road to the old tavern for some 'supper', a late afternoon meal. Maybe you order some home-fried chicken-no Chicken McNuggets in those days and some fresh-from-the cow milk-no Coca-Cola yet either! The food tastes so good and you are now full and ready to go home.

It is time to get back into the time machine and set it for September 2015-hurry or you will be late for school! Don't forget to tell your classmates about your trip back in time to Avon in 1830 and about all the sights you saw, things you tasted, smells you noticed, sounds you heard, and things you touched. It is my guess that they probably wouldn't believe your tale of a trip back in time to early Avon, but it sure is a good story to tell!

THE HISTORY CORNER (cont'd)...



Courtesy of Simsbury Historical Society, Lucius Bigelow's wagon from which he sold goods in Avon and other towns.

"...A Foot in Every American Door..." - When the Yankee Peddler Came to Avon

Today we have cars to take us to any store we wish to go to and to buy whatever we need or want. Back in the days before modern transportation, to move people to stores at will and move merchandise to stock those stores, the Yankee peddler was a valuable supplier of many personal and household items brought right to your door!

The peddler man had a very large wagon and a good horse to pull it as it was weighed down with all kinds of items. Some peddlers carried wooden Hitchcock chairs, some dealt in clocks, and some brought 'luxury' items to the farms. O'Dell Shepard relates in 'Connecticut Past and Present' that peddlers brought items from other territories such as beaver hats, plated silverware and tinware. They were known to travel hundreds of miles from their homes up and down the east coast and as far west as the Ohio River Valley.

Farmers in Avon's early days grew and produced what the family needed for survival and were called 'subsistence' farmers. The Yankee peddler brought things the farmer couldn't grow. For instance, for the ladies, his wares included "fancies" such as lace handkerchiefs, hair ribbons and hair combs. There was fabric for sewing, pins, needles, scissors and accessories like hats, shoes, combs and brushes. For the men, he carried farm tools, axes, house nails and saddlery. Children might also get a small treat. But books were one of the most anticipated items the peddler brought as they opened the world to the small town farm family.

Some men from Avon set out for other territories to sell goods; some met with misfortune and never returned. Ammi Derrin, who lived in the Derrin farmhouse which is located today at 249 West Avon Road, went West to sell clocks. It is recorded in the history room files at the Avon Free Public Library that Oliver Thompson's father remembered seeing Ammi load up his wagons with those clocks to sell off. In those days, having a clock was a sign of wealth. Some families could only afford the clock's movement and hung only that on the wall. It was called a 'wag on the wall' because of the exposed pendulum's back and forth movement. The wood case was the most expensive part of a clock and those who could afford it, had complete clocks such as mantle clocks or floor models like grandmother and grandfather clocks. Ammi did return home to Avon and lived at the farmhouse until his death in 1872. His time had run out.

Though peddlers carried many items in their 'department store on wheels', the average peddler earned only about \$40 a month, according to Ellsworth Grant in 'Yankee Dreamers and Doers.' The peddler was not only a purveyor of goods but he also brought news from other townsfolk that provided a communication link between towns...a forerunner of social media! Some peddlers had scurrilous reputations, but their ability to distribute goods far and wide stimulated the economy and his shrewd ability to talk people into buying his goods was the stuff of legend. As Mr. Odell Shepard noted in his book, "Yankee peddlars(sic)...[had] a foot in every American door..."

Kids fun page



UNSCRAMBLE THESE FALL-THEMED WORDS:

1. AYH IDER _____
2. LEAPP REICD _____
3. NAFLILG SLAEVE _____
4. NPMIUPKS _____
5. CASCRWOSR _____

HISTORY CHALLENGE QUESTION ABOUT AVON NAMES:

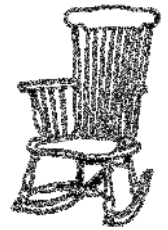
1. Name what these three working farms in Avon sell: Sunrise, Smith, Pickin Patch?

2. Name where baseball games (not school) are played in Avon? (www.avonct.gov)

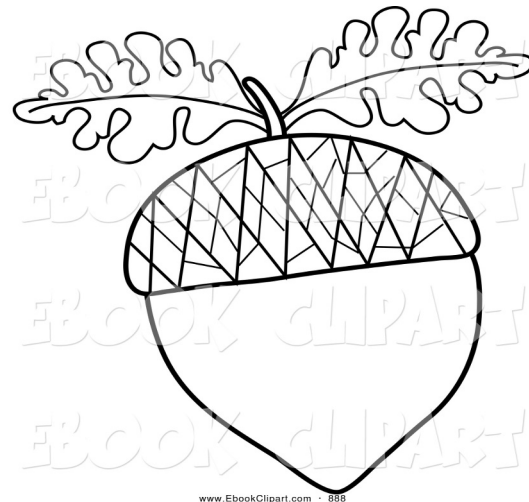
3. Name where soccer games (not school) are played in Avon?
(www.avonct.gov) _____

4. Name where the giant rocking chair in Avon is? _____

5. Name the four town Fire Department stations: (go to www.avon.vfd.org)



COLORING FUN FOR FALL





The Adventures of Abigail Fieldmouse -The Squash Boat Race

It was finally here! The season has changed to beautiful Fall in Avon and Abigail has been looking forward to a fun event with her friends who lived near her home at the Pine Grove School House. It was an event just for small animals and ones who could swim well. It was the annual Squash Boat Race held on the stream at nearby Beaver Pond!

The idea was that each animal had to make their own squash boat...could be a yellow crookneck squash, or a green zucchini squash, a butternut squash or a small pumpkin (which is also a squash). Each entrant in the race had to design their own boat by chewing the squash to shape it and hollow it out. Then the squash half was left to dry a bit in the sun and a coating of egg white was painted on the 'hull' to make it watertight. The drawing above shows Abigail trying to choose just the right pumpkin.

The big day of the squash boat race arrived and Abigail was all dressed in her red corduroy long skirt, white blouse, and straw bonnet as there was a nip in the air. All the boats were made in the garden at Sunrise Farm across the road from the school house so they would be close to the stream. Each animal had put two twigs under their boats for easy rolling over the land and down to the stream. What a sight to see with all these different kinds of squash boats and their furry 'captains' awaiting the whistle to blow to start the race! Abigail got into her boat with her home-gnawed twig paddle and then.....TWEEEEEEEEET, TWEEEEEEEEET! They were off!

The current of the stream was swift so a racer had to be careful to keep his or her boat from flipping over. The finish line for the end of the race was an old oak tree that had fallen across the stream. First boat to cross under the tree was the winner. So here they all came, paddling as fast as they could, trying to avoid obstacles in the water such as rocks and branches, and trying not to get dumped into the cold water!

Benjamin Bunny was in the lead with his butternut squash boat and Abigail was in second place in her sugar pumpkin boat. They were both furiously paddling and then it happened....Benjamin's boat got snared on an underwater rock and he was stuck. So Abigail cruised right on by him and was fast approaching the tree! Go Abigail!!!

But there was a problem....how to stop the boat after you crossed the finish line? The animals hadn't thought about that part. So Abigail's pumpkin boat kept heading down the stream going faster and faster all by itself....oh, my! She was headed right for the grain gristmill at Harvey Derrin's mill. She might get pulled into the sluice (a wooden trough that directed water into the mill to turn the shaft of the grinding stones), or she might be dropped into the grain bin and onto the grinding stones and would wind up as pumpkin bread! Oh, my again! Luckily for Abigail, the crisis was averted. Skeeter, a farm cat, was watching the race saw what was about to happen. She hung, using her sharp back claws, off the fallen tree and caught Abigail before she headed to the mill. Abigail's boat was the first to cross the finish line anyway and she got the blue ribbon! How great to have friends always there to help you.

Thanks Skeeter!