



**Avon Historical Society  
Annual Meeting, April 27, 2010  
President's Report  
[www.avonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.avonhistoricalsociety.org)**

***AVON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION: to identify, collect, preserve, utilize, publish, display, and promote the history and heritage of Avon. (Approved by the AHS Board, Jan. 10, 2001)***

**Happy 36 Years Old!**

**The Society was founded in 1974 by some forward thinking individuals who wanted to make sure the history of Avon was not forgotten during the celebration of our nation's Bicentennial in 1976. For that we thank them and today I will share with you a President's report on the past year to show that we have that spirit with us.**

**PROPERTIES:**

Living Museum – As the Society's "headquarters" it maintains and stores the archival collection of the Society. On display are items representing life in 1830, when the town was named. Also contains history of the Farmington Canal. Activities in 2009 included the scrapping, priming and painting of the fence along Route 44 by a team of nine wonderful volunteers and members of **The Avon Lions Club!** After what looked like a washout every weekend, they persevered and completed the project in a collective 68 hours in time for Fall. We appreciate the cooperation and partnership with this local community organization in keeping our property look clean and neat! As well a group of gardening volunteers, led by Lesley Mancini, worked on their hands and knees in the pocket park and around the building's entrance to help maintain the flowers and plants there. More work is expected to take place this summer. Monthly meetings of the Society are held at the Museum on the second Wednesday's of every month at 7:00pm. Everyone is welcome.

Pine Grove Schoolhouse – Our most visited property, it is interpreted as a schoolhouse at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The biggest activity there in 2009, financed by the **Farmington Savings Bank Foundation**, was the lead paint remediation on the exterior of the building and later painting the whitewash that currently is seen. With additional funds raised by the Society over the past several years, the exterior painting will be completed very soon. But there is always more to be done! There is a side door that needs to be replaced; property behind the schoolhouse cleaned up and inspection of the privy done to ascertain its value and need. Most all of this is underway and we hope to be able to report in future newsletters very soon. To thank the FSB Foundation and celebrate the new look of the School House, we will have a celebratory OPEN HOUSE on Sunday, June 6 from 2-4pm. Details will be in the next newsletter.

A newly formed Grounds and Garden Group (GGG) led by Lesley Mancini will work with members of the West Avon Garden Club this spring and summer on restoration of the outhouse (privy) behind the schoolhouse and cleaning up of the grounds and plantings around the area.

Derrin House – A very exciting Open House event occurred at the Derrin House this past summer. On Sunday, August 23 about **125** visitors braved the heat and humidity to see the continued restoration and participate in a guided tour by Len Tolisano of the first floor, cellar and grounds. The guest book showed we had visitors from all over the Valley with many of them writing that they were pleased to see the work and glad we were

saving this piece of local history. Restoration is on-going and Len has many projects for volunteers and will be providing some work for a local Eagle Scout candidate. And thanks to a generous donation from the Garden Club of Avon, the GGG will be able to have new plantings for gardens that have been dug by the house to show a historical house garden of the time.

Marion Hunter History Room – As many of you may know, the Hunter History Room at the Avon Free Public Library is staffed by volunteers and provides a well-needed and well-used service for those interested in genealogy, historic house hunting, old map viewing, old newspaper reading, etc. It's a plethora of wonderful local history and it is being overseen by the Library and, thanks to their planning, will be moved into much more visible space when the new library is built. The room is scheduled to be on the first floor with glass walls allowing for display space and visibility of items kept there. We are excited by the possibility it will offer and very grateful for the vision and foresight the Library Board has to promote our mission of keeping local history alive and available to future generations.

#### **MEMBERSHIP/MARKETING:**

One year ago we were able to announce the launching of our new website – [www.avonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.avonhistoricalsociety.org). Thanks to webmaster, Peter Wright, we have an interactive, alive site! We can't thank him enough for this effort. He is open to suggestions and ideas to make it better. So, if you are so inclined, let him know your thoughts by sending him an e-mail through the Society's general e-mail address /link on the website.

This year I am pleased to announce that we are in the process of creating a newly designed general Society brochure and 3 property specific brochures that double as a walking guide through each building. These new brochures will serve 2 purposes – to give visitors a walking guide to the exhibits and to give greeters a way of showing our buildings without worrying about memorizing everything that is in place. They will be ready for our opening day this June 6<sup>th</sup>.

#### **FUNDRAISING:**

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cow Chip Raffle took place on Saturday, October 17 at 2pm at the Simmons Family Farm on Tillotson Road. We estimated about 50 people, including kids, braved the cold wind to have fun waiting to see who would be first! It took just under 2 hours. We raised \$2,300. Prior to that was the AVON DAY and selling of Cow Raffle Tickets at Walmart. Thanks to all the volunteers who wore cow bandannas and especially to Len Tolisano and Ben Isaacson who wore a tux! How classy is that??? **This year's event will be on Saturday, October 16 at 2pm.** We hope you will all buy tickets and attend to join in the festivities.

Another small fundraising effort we have ongoing is postcards. If you haven't yet seen these wonderful full color professionally printed cards, you are missing out. They are selling at CVS, Walgreens and various small shops and some of the hotels in the area. Again, thanks to Peter Wright for being our "selling" guru and handling all the negotiations.

#### **UPDATE SINCE LAST ANNUAL MEETING:**

1. The Board held 1 planning session last summer and made a decision to focus on working with all the local schools on having students K-12 involved in the Society's activities. Curriculum development, contests, etc are part of the long range planning. Thanks to Wendy Zacchera for chairing the committee working on this project.
2. The Board welcomed a visit by the new Superintendent of Schools and the new Town Manager Brandon Robertson to meetings this year to meet the Board and talk about activities and projects underway in town. Both supported the many projects and ideas generated by the Board at those meetings.

3. The Society co-sponsored three events with the Library – “Family History: Document and Preserve your Family’s Story”; Interpretive Discussion of the Life and Works of Louisa May Alcott by Ruth Crockett; “The Old Leatherman, historical accounts of the Connecticut and New York Legend” by Dan Deluca.
4. The Society partnered with the VFW Post 3272, Avon, CT to host a commemoration of the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the Old Farms Convalescent Hospital for Blinded Veterans at Avon Old Farms School during WWII. Two events took place in November: one at AOF School for the 450 students on Veterans Day and a second public event later that month which featured one of the blinded veterans trained there as well as some of the local volunteers and staff who worked there.
5. This year the Society mourned the passing of one of its earliest benefactors, Robert August, who was an early supporter, generous donor of time, money and artifacts to our collection including the diaries of Rev. Rufus Hawley covering the time period of 1763- 1812 which is being transcribed by Nora Howard our Town Historian. The diaries are in the Hunter History Room along with other items they have donated throughout the past 36 years. We thank him and will miss him.
6. A recent article in the local papers seeking volunteers for the Society was very successful. We received calls from a handyman, greeters and gardeners. Everyone has been contacted and you will be meeting them soon.

**SAMPLE OF PROJECTS/GOALS FOR 2010-2011:**

1. Strong focus on marketing the Society in order to: (1) grow membership and more volunteers for our projects, (2) sell our merchandise, (3) encourage more attendance at our fundraisers, (4) have more families participate in our school events & (5) partner with other clubs/organizations on appropriate programming.
2. Create projects/activities for all the schools, K-12, with curriculum ideas, events, etc.
3. Continue to provide the public with educational programs that impart something about local Avon history or that of the region. (Next one is scheduled for May 11 at 7:30pm at the Avon Library. Sarah Melcher will discuss New England’s participation in the French & Indian War of 1754-1763 with some emphasis of “Northington” residents who participated.)
4. Participation in the Farmington Valley Visitor Association’s Historic Sites Committee’s “Historic Barn and Working Farm Bus Tour” on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Details are in the most recent newsletter.
5. Hold an OPEN HOUSE at the Pine Grove School House on June 6th.
6. Strong participation in the Avon Day on September 25<sup>th</sup>
7. **SUCCESSFUL COW CHIP RAFFLE on October 16<sup>th</sup>.**

If you have any questions, please call Terri Wilson at 860-674-9769.