



**Avon Historical Society President's Report
38th Annual Meeting, June 21, 2012
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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)

The Society was founded in 1974 by a group of 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. This report will show that we have that same spirit with us today.

**PROPERTIES: PGS AND DH ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON SUNDAYS FROM 2-4PM,
JUNE 3 – SEPT. 30, 2012**

Living Museum (LM) – 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. There is also a history of the Farmington Canal. On June 28, 2012 we will dedicate the marker next to the museum on the site of the crossing of the Farmington Canal. Due to the LM being used as a staging area for exhibit development, it will no longer be open on Sundays to the public. Therefore, it is open only by appointment until further notice.

Pine Grove School House (PGS) – Our most visited property, it is interpreted as a school house at the turn of the 20th century. On June 3rd we held a ribbon cutting of the restored early 20th c. outhouse that has been on the property for almost 100 years. The school house contains desks, school books, slates, and a pot bellied stove. Children especially enjoy visiting.

Derrin House (DH) – This will be the 2nd full summer the DH will be open to the public for a summer season! Continued restoration is on-going and Len Tolisano has many projects for volunteers. Thanks to donations and assistance from a local Girl Scout troop last summer, two raised garden beds (medicinal and herbal) were planted. A brick walkway (with donated bricks and wooden forms) was laid that leads from the parking lot, through the gardens and to the entrance of the building. Work will continue on site and volunteers are always welcome to assist.

Horse Guard Barn (HGB) – Now in the 2nd year of a lease from the State Department of the Military, many donations of equipment, labor and money have allowed us to put a tarp on the roof, clean out the 2 floors, reclaim metal from the interior and successfully receive our first Barn Grant from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation. A focused effort is being made in 2012/2013 to raise money to stabilize and reconstruct the south wall which is expected to cost \$50,000 plus.

Marian Hunter History Room (HHR) – The Hunter History Room at the Avon Free Public Library is staffed by volunteers and provides a much-needed and well-used service for those interested in genealogy, historic houses, viewing of old maps, the general history of the town, its citizens and businesses past and present. It's a plethora of wonderful local history and it is being overseen by the Library and, in their wisdom, has been relocated to more visible space on the first floor with a beautiful display case (generously donated by Monte and Cindy Hopper) allowing for the visibility of the items which are housed there. On June 10th the Marian Hunter History Room was rededicated in its new space with members of the Hunter Family present. Thanks to graduate student Rachel Koladis and an undergraduate student, Francis Russo, from Trinity College, ten themed exhibits have been planned that will be exhibited from 2012 - 2014 that will feature various aspects of Avon's history. The Avon Sesquicentennial Committee of the Civil War, was pleased to present the inaugural exhibit in the display case of "American Women on the Home Front" which was conceived, researched, created and mounted by members of the Sesquicentennial Committee. They will be displaying various Civil War-themed exhibits from time to time throughout 2015.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

At the Annual Meeting in 2011, the membership voted to extend the number of members of the Board of Trustees from 12 to 16. After advertising in the local media, we are pleased to announce that much interest was generated and at this 2012 Annual Meeting we will be electing a full complement of 16 Trustees to the Board serving either a one or two-year term. This is a very big step for the Society and one that will bring lasting benefits.

MEMBERSHIP/MARKETING:

One of the biggest challenges of any historical society is growing its membership. The Avon Historical Society is no exception. With the addition of several new members of the Board of Trustees for the 2012-2013 year it is hoped that this will mark a new beginning in membership growth. The Society's growing activity in projects around the town has raised the level of awareness that is unprecedented. With the new Marian Hunter History Room being placed on the first floor of the Library we have a tremendous opportunity to promote the Society and its activities including membership growth. The Society is open to any suggestions or ideas that will help us with this mission.

Our website is in its 3rd full year of operation and, thanks to Peter Wright, it is a well used and much more accessible marketing tool for us. The local media has also been very receptive to printing our press releases and announcements of events. Adding to the marketing effort is Janet Connor who has volunteered on a new committee for Special Projects, including the redesign of our quarterly newsletter and other upcoming projects. New ideas and fresh suggestions are to the benefit of everyone and we always welcome your thoughts and ideas.

AVON HIGH SCHOOL CLUB:

Thanks to Board member Rachel Neuhoff, a graduating senior at Avon High School, there is an Avon Historical Society Club at the school. Rachel and her successor, Mary Margaret Stoll, have been working on recruiting members and identifying projects which will benefit the Society. We are pleased Rachel has led this club for the past two years and we wish her well in her future endeavors, and, we look forward to working with Mary Margaret and other students as they are our future!

FUNDRAISING:

Last fall our 4th Annual Cow Chip Raffle took place on Saturday, October 1st at 2pm at the Simmons Family Farm on Tillotson Road. About 50 people, including kids, came out and had fun waiting to see who would be first to make the deposit! It took just 90 minutes. We raised \$2,900. Prior to that was the AVON DAY and selling of Cow Raffle Tickets at Walmart. **This year's event, our 5th annual, will be on Saturday, October 6 at 2pm.** We hope you will all buy tickets and attend to join in the festivities.

UPDATE SINCE THE LAST ANNUAL MEETING IN APRIL 2011:

1. In 2011 the Society joined with the Avon Free Public Library and the Avon Senior Center to assist in the planning and execution of a series of events for the statewide 150th commemoration of the Civil War. Thanks to a grant from the Avon Education Foundation and the American Library Association given to the Avon Free Public Library, there were book talks, presentations, exhibits, etc., that brought the history of the Civil War to the residents of town. As a result, an active Avon Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee was formed and meets regularly to plan future events and displays for the display cases in the History Room. It is expected that these Civil War events will continue as it is a national commemoration that runs through 2015.
2. Thanks to several new volunteers, the Society's booth at AVON DAY in 2011 was a huge success! Highlighted were rain barrels made from reclaimed plastic barrels found during the cleaning of the Horse Guard Barn. They were sold with proceeds benefitting the Barn project. There may be one rain barrel left if anyone is interested!
3. The Avon VFW Post 3272 purchased GAR Medallions and the Society participated in the placement of the medallions on Civil War soldier's graves in all of Avon's cemeteries prior to Memorial Day in 2011. Flags were also put on those and all soldier's graves. These medallions will be used each Memorial Day.
4. Nora Howard, Town Historian, published *Catch'd on Fire*, the transcription of the almost 50-year diaries of Rev. Rufus Hawley who served as minister for Northington, and later Avon. The book is available through the Society's website.
5. Second grade students from Pine Grove School visited the Pine Grove School House in early June 2011 and received a lesson from former teacher Jeannie Parker.
6. The Society, VFW and Library were the recipients of an Eagle Scout project by Harrison Stewart of a detailed photographic and written database of all the graves in 18th c. Greenwood Cemetery on Lovely Street. This kind of information is vital for genealogical research, identification of veteran's graves for proper marking, etc. Copies of the database are available from all three organizations.
7. The Society bought a personalized brick for the patio of the new Avon Free Public Library. Bricks were sold as a fundraiser for the new construction.
8. Thanks to several donations of time, labor and materials the early 20th c. outhouse behind the Pine Grove School House was moved, restored and relocated to its original location.
9. The Horse Guard Barn received a visit from the Connecticut Circuit Rider program over the winter. This is a program of the CT Trust for Historic Preservation. Circuit Riders visit historic sites and record their condition for possible future grant funding.

10. Just prior to Thanksgiving the Avon Historical Society took part in a weekend long event at Miller Foods on Arch Road in order to raise awareness of the Horse Guard Barn.
11. Thanks to a grant from Northwest Community Bank in 2011, the Society was able to re-print its Avon brochure for use with the general public. Another grant has just been received again for re-print of Avon brochures for 2012/2013. This ongoing support is vital to our marketing efforts and we thank NCB for this funding.
12. Last summer, at the end of the school year, the Avon High School club for the Historical Society ran a photography contest encouraging photos of historic sites in Avon. Over 25 incredibly beautiful photos were received. The judges had a hard time choosing the top 3! Those 3 were later used for the printing of postcards that are now on sale through the Society. Scenes are Countryside Park, the exterior of the Derrin House and the interior of Pine Grove School House.

SAMPLE OF PROJECTS/GOALS FOR 2012-2013:

1. Strong focus on marketing the Society in order to: (1) grow membership and more volunteers for our projects, (2) sell our merchandise creating a steady stream of income, (3) encourage more attendance at our events, (4) have more students participate in our events & (5) continue to partner with other clubs/organizations on appropriate programming.
2. Continue to provide the public with educational programs that impart the local Avon history or that of the region. For this year this will include continued association with the Civil War commemoration.
3. Continue to support the HGB project with fundraising, events, and work projects.
4. Continued participation in the Farmington Valley Visitor Association's Historic Sites Committee's events.
5. Dedication of stone markers identifying the crossing of the Farmington Canal. over East Main Street (Route 44) in the original Avon Center on June 28th at 7pm.
6. Participation in Antietam Day in Avon at the Avon Free Public Library and West Avon Cemetery on September 8th.
7. Strong participation in Avon Day on September 29th.
8. SUCCESSFUL COW CHIP RAFFLE on October 6th.

Thank you for attending the 38th Annual Meeting of the Avon Historical Society.

**If you have any questions, please call Terri Wilson at 860-678-76 or e-mail at:
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