



**Avon Historical Society President's Report
39th Annual Meeting, April 9, 2013
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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.

**NOTE: PGS AND DH ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON SUNDAYS
FROM 2:00 – 4:00 PM, JUNE - SEPTEMBER**

School House #3 (formerly called Living Museum) – As the Society's "headquarters" it maintains and stores the archival collection of the Society. In 2012 the Trustees voted to close the building as a museum due to lack of annual visitors. The only permanent display is about the history of the Farmington Canal. On June 28, 2012 a marker was dedicated next to the museum on the site of the crossing of the Farmington Canal. And thanks to Society member, Stephanie Pratt, a 1985 diorama of the Canal, made by then Eagle Scout Mark Ruppert, was restored with new grass and 19 trees. The building 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. J&A Construction of New Haven and Avon restored the early 20th c. outhouse that has been on the property for almost 100 years. The Town of Avon, at the request of the Society, created curbing narrowing the entrance side of Harris Road to keep trucks from cutting through the property. An Eagle Scout project will have an informational kiosk placed on the property this summer for visitors to the property. The school house contains desks, school books, slates, and a pot bellied stove. Children especially enjoy visiting.

Derrin House (DH) – This will be the 3rd year the DH will be open to the public for a summer season! Continued restoration on this 19th c. farmhouse is on-going and Len Tolisano has many projects for volunteers. Thanks to donations and assistance from a local Girl Scout troop in 2011, two raised garden beds (medicinal and herbal) were planted. Two Eagle Scout projects created a wooden deck over the concrete side porch, a blue stone walkway between the gardens and the trail leading up behind the house, called Horse Guard State Park, was cleared and an informational kiosk will be placed there for visitors. Work will continue on site and volunteers are always welcome to assist.

Horse Guard Barn (HGB) – Now in the 3rd year of a lease from the State Department of the Military, many donations of equipment, labor and money from the public have allowed us to put a tarp on the roof, remove the south wall and purchase the siding for the south wall. We were successful in raising the match needed for our first Barn Grant from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation which was

received earlier in 2012. A focused effort will be made in 2013/2014 to raise money to replace the roof which is expected to cost +/- \$30,000.

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. The Avon Sesquicentennial Committee of the Civil War, was pleased to present the inaugural exhibit in the display case entitled “American Women on the Home Front” and the later “Lincoln and Connecticut” along with companion exhibits inside and outside the HHR done by the Special Projects Committee. Currently the Special Projects Committee has mounted an extensive display through May about the Farmington Canal. The VFW Post 3272 will have a display about the 60th Anniversary of the Vietnam War later this summer. The Sesquicentennial Committee will be displaying various Civil War-themed exhibits, including Gettysburg this summer, and from time to time throughout 2015.

ACQUISITIONS TO THE COLLECTION:

This year has been a very busy year with many new acquisitions including items from the Case, LeGeyt and Stowe families, originally of Avon. Descendants of all three families have been very generous in donating photos, a quilt, clothing, books, etc. Other items from local families have been given as well that we will list in an upcoming newsletter.

AVON HIGH SCHOOL CLUB:

This is the 2nd full year that there is an active Avon Historical Society Club at the school. Mary Margaret Stoll served this past year with us on the Board and is organizing an art contest to redesign our notecards. Mary Margaret is going to attend Amherst College this Fall and we will miss her. Her sister, Kate Stoll, who is a rising junior will take her place on our Board.

FUNDRAISING:

Last fall our 5th Annual Cow Chip Raffle took place on Saturday, October 6th at the Simmons Family Farm on Tillotson Road. About 40 people, including many families, came out and had fun waiting to see who would be first to make the deposit! We raised \$2,700 which was dedicated to the Horse Guard Barn project. Prior to that, was AVON DAY where we sold several of our books and notecards and Cow Raffle tickets. We are unsure we are able to use the Simmons Farm this fall, so we will need another fundraiser soon. Any ideas or suggestions are welcomed.

UPDATE SINCE THE LAST ANNUAL MEETING IN JUNE 2012:

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 through January 2013. 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 the committee's Civil War events will continue as it is a national commemoration that runs through 2015.
2. The Special Projects Committee, headed by Janet Connor, created a new design of the quarterly newsletter starting with the Summer edition. We hope you all enjoy the new look and the many new stories.
3. In September the Society participated with the Library in Antietam Day commemorating the battle where many Avon men fought. An exhibit in the HHR display case entitled “Avon Men in the Civil War: Connecticut's Sacrifice at Antietam” was mounted by the Sesquicentennial Committee.
4. The Society had a very beautifully decorated booth at Avon Day, thanks in large part to the fall decorations from Janet Connor. The booth drew a lot of attention and praise from many of those who attended.

5. The Cow Chip Raffle was held in October.
6. Six of the Society's quilts in the collection were prominently displayed at the first annual Harvest Quilt Show at the Avon Congregational Church. Susan Elliot, organizer of the event, made sure they were showcased among the over 200 quilts on display!
7. The Avon Historical Society mourned the passing of Francis MacKie, author of the definitive history of Avon she wrote and published in 1988 for the Society. We made a donation to the library, in her name, of other town's local histories as she was devoted to the topic. In addition, the Board is investigating reprinting her book in paperback form as the supply of hardcover books from 1988 are running low.
8. Thanks to a 2nd grant from Northwest Community Bank last summer, the Society was able to re-print its Avon brochure for use with the general public. This ongoing support is vital to our marketing efforts and we thank NCB for this funding.
9. Most recently the Society held a talk by Carl Walter, noted expert and historian of the Farmington Canal. The event had 158 attendees many of whom visited the extensive display about the Canal in Avon inside and outside the HHR.

SAMPLE OF PROJECTS/GOALS FOR 2013-2014:

1. Redesign of our website and Facebook page.
2. Strong participation in Avon Day on September 21st.
3. 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.
4. Continue to provide the public with educational programs that impart the local Avon history and that of the region.
5. Continue to support the HGB project with fundraising, events, and work projects.
6. Continued participation in the Farmington Valley Visitor Association's Historic Sites Committee's events.
7. Plan for events for our 40th anniversary in 2014!

Thank you for attending the 39th Annual Meeting of the Avon Historical Society.

**If you have any questions, please leave a message at 860-678-7621 or e-mail at:
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