

EARLY AVON MILLS AND THE WATERWAYS THAT POWERED THEM

EXHIBIT OPENING: JULY 2, 2018/ EXHIBIT: JULY 2 - AUGUST 30

HISTORY CORNER at the AVON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

281 Country Club Road, Avon, CT 06001

PRESENTATION: TUESDAY, JULY 3, 2018 @ 7:00 P.M.

In the Community Room at the Avon Free Public Library - Open to the public • Free of charge



J&H Gristmill 1908, Hadsell collection, AFPL

In the early days of homestead settlements every community required the establishment of a gristmill to grind grain for household use and feed for livestock. Sawmills were built to saw timber into planks for framing homes and barns. Gristmills employed heavy flat stones, turned by a shaft connected to a series of gears that rotated a large, wooden waterwheel. Sawmills were most likely a vertical sawblade powered by a smaller water wheel, that created the energy to saw through trunks of trees that were fed onto rollers. Both grist and sawmills required more volume and higher velocity water flow therefore were located higher up the brook. These mills were necessary for a community's survival.

Later, other mills were developed to save farm labor in the production of textiles such as carding machines (mills) that combed wool fibers for easier spinning onto wheels to make yarn. A fulling mill washed the lanolin out of wool and then large hammers, driven by water power, mechanically pounded the fiber to soften the wool in preparation for being made into cloth.

Early Avon, then Northington, had two main clusters of mills, one on Nod Brook in East Avon and one on Old Farm Brook (now Thompson & Chidsey Brooks), in the former Sleepy Hollow section. There were other smaller mills, such as a sawmill that ran off a hand dug canal. Distilleries were also part of Avon's early history and used waterways for their products.

Please join us for an interesting two-part presentation on **Tuesday, July 3rd at 7:00 p.m.** in the **Community Room**. The first part on the history and location of Avon's early mills will be presented by Janet M. Conner of the Society. The second part will be presented by Mr. Alan Perrie, retired world geography teacher from Northeast Middle School, Bristol. Perrie has extensively researched the Unionville feeder canal of 1828 that powered the early mill manufactories (starting in 1780) as well as other local power canals that provided hydropower. Perrie's presentation will highlight the use of hydropower, dams, crib dams, and the efficiency of these early mills in the production of products ranging from nuts and bolts, to paper and steel. He will also share what he has learned about Avon's longest power canal.



Mr. Alan Perrie, presenter on July 3rd.