

# Early Avon Distilleries + THE 1840's TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Exploring Cider Brook's rarely seen cider mill ruins

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2017 @ 7:00 PM START**

**AVON SENIOR + COMMUNITY CENTER**

635 West Avon Road, Avon, CT 06001

Avon and Farmington were agricultural communities with many taverns and cider houses. From the Colonial days people believed that drinking cider was safer than water to prevent diseases such as dysentery so cider was served at every meal, including to children. In addition to growing food for themselves and their livestock, many farmers grew crops specifically for distilling and food preservation. Apple orchards yielded fruit for cider, which became alcoholic after only 12 hours of fermentation, while grains such as wheat, rye and buckwheat could be distilled into spirits.

The Temperance Movement was an attempt to show farmers how to profit from their land without producing this "moonshine" or hard cider. Temperance was more than a religious response to encourage abstinence from "the drink". It was also an effort to prevent drunkenness that led to people becoming unemployed, idle, indigent and a burden to the community.

In the Fall of 2016 Avon's Town Historian, Ms Nora O. Howard, secured permission from property owners in Avon's Cider Brook area to examine and photograph the remains of two old cider mills. In conjunction with Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni, retired State Archaeologist, they ventured into the woods to get photos of a concrete dam with remnants of an old sluice gate. Come to this presentation to view the photos and to hear Dr. Bellantoni's findings.



*Pictured left to right: Ms. Terri Wilson, President of the Avon Historical Society, with Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni and Mrs. Janet M. Conner following Dr. Bellantoni's presentation to the Society on December 5, 2015. At that time he returned several archaeological artifacts unearthed during a dig at the Derrin House in 1995. Thankfully these items escaped the fire that caused such devastation on May 11, 2016.*

**Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni**, State Archaeologist Emeritus, UCONN Storrs (retired), served with the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History and Archaeology in the College of Liberal Arts & Science and was an adjunct faculty member in the Anthropology Department amongst many other roles over the years. In his capacity as State Archaeologist from 1987-2014, Dr. Bellantoni gained a wealth of experience and knowledge about our State's history. He lives in Newington and knows the Avon area well, having supervised a dig at Derrin House.

**Janet M Conner**, Head of the Special Projects Committee for the Avon Historical Society, will co-present this program. Originally from NJ, Mrs. Conner has been an active volunteer with the Avon Historical Society since 2012. She is also a member of many other local historical organizations including the Stanley Whitman House, the Association for the Study of Connecticut History and the Connecticut Historical Society. Mrs Conner designed this "Tapestry of Topics" Fall series, has been published in *Connecticut Explored* and is the author of the highly popular "Abigail Fieldmouse" childrens' stories.