



# Summer 2011 Newsletter

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Open every Sunday now through September from 2:00—5:00 p.m.** — Living Museum, Pine Grove School House & Derrin House. Greeters will provide walking tour brochures.

**Saturday, September 24—AVON DAY**— 11:00 a.m.— 6:00 p.m. Stop by the Society's booth and say hello. Buy Cow Chip Raffle tickets there also!

**Saturday, October 1** starting at 2:00 p.m.—**COW CHIP RAFFLE** at Simmons Family Farm. See details on Page 3.

**Tuesday, October 4, 1:00 p.m.**— “An Afternoon with Walt Whitman” a dramatic one-man performance by actor, Stephen Collins. Whitman wrote “Leaves of Grass” and was a nurse to wounded Civil War soldiers. Event will be held at the Avon Senior Center.

**Thursday, October 13, 7:00 p.m.** - “Up Close and Personal: The Everyday Life of the Union Soldier” presented by Jim Genco from letters of Pvt. Eugene Hawley of Avon who served three years in the CT 5th Regiment. Event will be held at the Avon Free Public Library.

**Saturday, October 15, 10:00 a.m.** — “Catch'd On Fire: 1763-1812 Rufus Hawley's Remarkable Journals Yale 1767 and Avon, Connecticut” book discussion by local author Nora Howard based on Rev. Rufus Hawley's diaries while Avon minister from 1763 to 1812. Books will be available for purchase and signing. Event will be held at West Avon Congregational Church where Rev. Hawley served as minister!

## President's Message

It's summer time and the weather is turning warmer which makes it the best time to visit our properties! We extended our hours on Sunday; we are now open from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. While you are at it, it is also a good time to buy one or more Cow Chip Raffle tickets! If you haven't received yours in the mail, see Page 3 and find out how you can get yours. And, please don't forget to fill out the enclosed membership form to renew your commitment to local history and the activities of the Avon Historical Society. We need each and every one of our members to renew so that we can continue to hold events, continue with care of our collection and archives, maintain our buildings and start with the restoration for an “adaptive reuse” of the Horse Guard Barn. (see Page 3 for more details.)

But, most importantly, we want to be sure that YOU our member feel that we are achieving our mission for the town, its residents and our visitors. We are proud of all we have accomplished in almost 40 years and we promise to make sure to keep doing what we do. But it can't happen without you! So please take a few minutes now to fill out the membership form enclosed and send it in with your payment. An additional donation is always appreciated! We hope to see you on Sundays this summer at our Living Museum, Pine Grove School House and Derrin House. Stop by to see the Barn while you are at it if you see us working there. It's well worth it! Thank you for your support.

*Terri Wilson, President*

## JOIN US AT AVON DAY — Saturday, September 24

What better way to spend a late summer Saturday than by attending AVON DAY! This year will be the best ever because the Avon Historical Society has created partnerships with the Avon Free Public Library, the Avon Land Trust and the Avon VFW Post 3272 showing our shared commitment to serve the community with quality events and opportunities that express our collective interests in the history of our town. Not only do our organizations work well together, we have simi-

lar missions and are supportive of each other's goals. And, don't forget, AVON DAY is the perfect day to buy your COW RAFFLE tickets! Still only \$5 per square with all of this year's proceeds to benefit the adaptive reuse of the Horse Guard Barn. If you can volunteer an hour with us in our booth, please let us know or just stop by the booth, say hello, see our display and buy some tickets!!!

## *From Avon to Appomattox: Lives and Legacy of the Civil War*

As has been reported in our recent newsletters the Society has teamed up with the Avon Free Public Library, Avon Senior Center, Avon VFW Post 3272 and, with funding from the Avon Education Foundation, are able to provide many events surrounding the 4-year national commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War. This "Sesquicentennial Committee" has planned several events (see Page 1) but there are more in the planning! Thanks to the hard work of Patrice Celli and Tina Panik at the Library, there are more events

planned for 2012 and beyond. Included are book studies, school programs, musical productions, etc. There will be continued occasional 2-3 case exhibits in the library following the Civil War events in chronological order all with a local Avon story.

The 1860 census shows that Avon had 1,059 residents: 515 were male and only 113 of those were between 15 and 30-years old. A total of 94 Avon men, both black and white, served in the Union army. Their names are on the Honor Roll at the Avon Town Green.

The 94 Avon soldiers sacrificed a great deal:

- 2 were killed in battle
- 23 died of wounds and disease
- 18 were wounded but survived
- 16 were permanently disabled
- 15 were captured POWs
- Only 34 finished serving without becoming a casualty of some sort

Many familiar local families sent several men to the war: seven Woodfords, four Harts and three Ryans. Nine families sent two members each.

May 13, 2011—At the invitation of the Avon Historical Society, Gordon Woodford, descendent of Corporal Harrison Woodford, placed an American flag and GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) medallion on his ancestor's grave to honor his more than two-years of service in the Civil War in the 16th CT Regiment. Thanks to the 31 letters Harrison had written back to his family in Avon, we have a vivid account of the living conditions, supplies they used, battles fought and details about his capture in April 1864 and time spent in Andersonville Prison. Corp. Woodford returned to Avon, married and lived out his life here. His grave is in West Avon Cemetery. Standing by his grave (the stone on the right) are students of Avon High School, members of Avon's Sesquicentennial Committee, a Civil War re-enactor and members of the Avon VFW Post 3272. The VFW purchased and placed 85 GAR medallions with American flags on all Civil War soldiers buried in four of Avon's cemeteries in time for Memorial Day.



Shown left to right: Rachel Neuhoff and Kara Dillaway, Avon High School students; Patrice Celli, Avon Free Public Library; Terri Wilson, Avon Historical Society; Sal Carmosino, Civil War re-enactor; Gordon Woodford, descendent of Harrison Woodford; Lee Wilson and Bill Newman, Avon VFW Post 3272.

### **The Hawley Family in Avon**

Timing in life is everything! This October that will become very evident! Ten years ago local author and Town Historian Nora Howard began the painstaking task of transcribing more than 40 years of journals written by the Rev. Rufus Hawley who served as Pastor of Northington from December 1769 to December 1817. The outcome will be a book published this Fall entitled, *Catch'd on Fire: 1763-1812 Rufus Hawley's Remarkable Journals Yale 1767 and Avon, Connecticut*. We have been eagerly awaiting this book as it may be the most comprehensive colonial journal in print!

One year ago, when the Sesquicentennial Committee formed in Avon to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, they found that the Library's Hunter History Room contained letters by two of Avon's Civil War soldiers—Harrison Woodford and Eugene Hawley. A local resident, Jim Genco worked many months on transcribing Eugene Hawley's letters and will be presenting them to the public in both exhibit form in September and orally in October. Turns out Eugene is the great grandson of Rufus! Also we learned that the very first person to volunteer to serve in the CT militia

when the state agreed to join the Union was Charles Hawley, most likely a distant relative. The Avon Historical Society was informed that the 81st annual reunion of The Society of the Hawley Family (an international family organization) will be held in Farmington & Avon this October 13-15! What incredible timing with both Rufus and Eugene Hawley's stories being told by Nora Howard and Jim Genco! Their events and ours will coincide and we will meet each other and share in the incredible contribution this family made not only to Avon but around the world! Timing is everything.....

## 2nd graders visit PG Schoolhouse & Girl Scouts plant gardens at Derrin House

On May 2nd and 3rd, 140 second grade students from Pine Grove School in Avon visited the Pine Grove School House over the course of two days and were treated to a lesson by Jeannie Parker, who portrayed a teacher from 1900. Elena Musto, a teacher from Pine Grove School, organized the visit with Rachel Neuhoff, a junior at Avon High School who is also a member of the Society's Board of Trustees. Mrs. Parker, who attended the Pine Grove School House as a child, also gave a first hand account of what it was like to go to a one-room school house and a bit about Avon when she was growing up!



This spring the Derrin House became more inviting with the addition of 2 gardens planted by Avon 7th grade Girl Scout Troop 66872. The girls researched 19th c. working gardens (herbal and medicinal) and, thanks to a donation by Sunnybrook Farms Garden Center, planting took place in early June. They also designed layouts so the plants can grow properly. An earlier donation by the Garden Club of Avon will be used for additional plantings as needed and the printing of an informational flyer describing the various plants that would have been used by an 19th c. family. The gardens will be maintained by the Troop and anyone who would like to help are encouraged to contact Troop leader Sharon Lopreiato at 860-329-5275. See the photo on Page 4 of the girls hard at work, but enjoying every minute! Thanks girls!

## Help Us Save "This Old Barn"

As has been reported and no doubt you may have observed if you drive down West Avon Road, the Horse Guard Barn is in need of immediate repair. We are aware of the situation and have begun a 2-year "Adaptive Reuse" of the structure. We did not receive the state grant we had expected, therefore we have begun an aggressive campaign to raise the anticipated \$3,000 to professionally tarp the roof. As of the date of this publication, \$1,800 has been raised by private donations, other organizations in town and by metal reclamation from what was left in

the barn. If you are willing to help, you can make a SECURE online donation at: [www.avonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.avonhistoricalsociety.org) or by sending a check to: Avon Historical Society, P.O. Box 448, Avon, CT 06001. We thank all those who attended the first open house/tour of the barn that coincided with the Miller Foods "Waggin for Wheels" fundraiser on June 18th. And thanks to Board member Ben Isaacson for guiding the tours in his tux! It was a touch of class! As you will read below, all the proceeds of the Cow Chip Raffle in October will be used for this barn



## Our 4th Annual COW CHIP RAFFLE - Oct. 1



**HELP US SELL COW RAFFLE TICKETS AT WALMART ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 27 OR SEPTEMBER 17. CALL SHARON GENEVESE TO SIGN UP TO HELP US. 860-677-4690**

The annual Cow Chip Raffle Fundraiser is being held on Saturday, October 1 at the Simmons Family Farm on Tillotson Road beginning at 2pm. A grid of 810 squares will be painted on a field across from the farm and three well-fed cows will be let loose on the numbered grid to "let their chips fall where they may." Tickets are \$5 per square. Each ticket sold will have a corresponding square on the field. First prize (first cow to drop her chip) is \$250, second prize is \$100 and third prize is \$50. This year's proceeds will be dedicated to the

"adaptive reuse" of the Horse Guard Barn on West Avon Road. (see story above) Tickets will be sold at various locations this summer as well as at Avon Day. If you want to order tickets or help us sell them to others, we would be happy to mail them to you. Contact Sharon Genovese at 860-677-4690 to order yours! If you haven't been to a farm lately, the Simmons Family invites you to tour their barns, try their increasingly popular yogurt (soon to be sold in over 400 stores in New York State) and meet the cows! Families are more than welcome to help us cheer on the cows that day as well—what better way to spend an early Fall day.



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**The Mission of the Avon Historical Society, founded in 1974, is to identify, collect, preserve, utilize, publish, display and promote the history and heritage of Avon.**

**Officers:** Terri Wilson, President  
 Pam Fahey, Vice President  
 Wendy Zacchera, Secretary  
 Monte Hopper, Treasurer

**Directors:** Ben Isaacson  
 Glenn Lawrence  
 Liz Neff  
 Rachel Neuhoff  
 Jim Putnam  
 Krystyn Hastings-Silver  
 Len Tolisano  
 Peter Wright

## Special Thank You's and Other News

Special THANKS to Avon resident **Steve Read** who made three donation boxes to be used at our buildings. They are hand made wooden boxes with a slot and padlock to make sure our donations are safe and secure!

Thanks to **Dunning Sand and Gravel** of Farmington for donating stone dust for the brick walkway at the Derrin House.

Thanks also to **Sunnybrook Farms Garden Center** of Avon for donating plants for the Girl Scouts to use in the



historic gardens at the Derrin House. Photo above of Avon Girl Scout Troop 66872 who researched, designed and planted two working gardens at the Derrin House. Notice the new brick-walk way in between allowing guests to walk through the gardens to enter the house! We appreciate all their efforts and will look forward to seeing the garden grow!

One of our Society Board members, **Rachel Neuhoff**, a rising senior at Avon High School, has started a club at the school for the Society. Joining her in this venture is **Beca Lichtler**. Both students, along with Board member and local author Peter Wright, organized and ran the first **Avon Historical Society/Avon High School Photography Contest** in order to choose three photos of local scenes for use on post cards sold to benefit the Society this year. Eight students submitted 32 wonderful photos of many local scenes. On Saturday, June 18, all the photos were on display at the Living Museum and several local residents were invited to "judge" them to choose the best. We are pleased to announce the top three winners are **Gigi Digiuseppe** for her interior view of the bridge at Countryside Park; **Jeff Lewis** for his view of the Derrin House; **Ellen McNeill** for her interior view of the Pine Grove School House. All three photos will be printed in color on postcards and ready to be sold in July. Honorable mentions go to **Giorgina Paiella** and **Rob Chamberlain**. Thanks to all the high school students who participated. We hope to make this an annual event! Stop by any of our properties to buy the postcards and see for yourself the wonderful talent of these young adults in Avon.

**GREETERS WANTED:** This summer, spend a Sunday afternoon with us at any of our properties—Living Museum, Pine Grove School House or Derrin House—as a Greeter. **What is a Greeter?** Someone who welcomes visitors and invites them to walk around to see the displays explained in a walking tour brochure. Our buildings are open on Sundays from June through September from 2:00 -5:00 p.m. If you would like more information, please contact us and we will be happy to tell you more.

You are invited to attend "**Hoof Prints in Time—East Granby Coach & Wagon Rally**" on Saturday, October 8th. Sponsored by the East Granby Historical Society (with a few items donated by Avon residents) this event will feature over 20 historic horse drawn vehicles including a Vintage Concord Coach (c.1849), a variety of wagons, a vintage hearse, milk wagon, fire wagon, antique sleighs and others. This is a family event open to all ages. If you have a vintage vehicle that you would like to show, or for more details on time and location, contact Vi Beaudreau at 860-658-0869.