



# Winter 2011 Newsletter

## EVENTS 2011:



**Tuesday, February 8, 7:30 p.m. — "The Shady Art of the Silhouette" presented by Joy Ruskin Hanes. Will be held at Carmon Family Center, 301 Country Club Road. Refreshments will be served. Open to the public.**

**Monday, April 11, 1:00 p.m. — "Civil War Quilt Program" to be held at Avon Senior Center. Open to the public. Co-Sponsored with Avon Free Public Library.**

**Wednesday, April 13 — Avon Historical Society Annual Meeting. This is a potluck supper and meeting. Time to be determined. Speaker will be Virginia Vocelli, Director, Avon Free Public Library. Formal announcement will be in the Spring .**

**Sunday, June 5, 2:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.— opening day for Living Museum, Pine Grove School House and Derrin House. Avon Then and Now book signing at Living Museum.**

## President's Message

Happy New Year! Since the last newsletter many exciting events have taken place. In November, Ginny Vocelli, Director of the Avon Free Public Library, and I had the pleasure of accepting a book containing the written histories of 18 veterans from VFW Post 3272 for inclusion in the Marian Hunter History Room. After meeting with each veteran, Bill Newman, former Post Commander, who compiled the histories into book form, made the presentation. A photo of the presentation appears later in this newsletter. In December we were pleased to receive AvonThen and Now, a book of photographs of old and present Avon compiled and written by Peter Wright, a member of the Society's Board of Directors!

The Society is selling the book for \$22. For more information or to order the book, visit our website: [www.avonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.avonhistoricalsociety.org)

What a year 2011 will be! Starting in April, we will begin a multi-year commemoration of the start of the Civil War with many events and programs. Then in December we will mark the 70th anniversary of the US entrance in WW II. In both wars, Avon sent it's men and women in rather large numbers for the size of the town. And the lease agreement on the Horse Guard barn is moving forward. So, here's to a wonderful New Year!

*Terri Wilson, President*

## The Shady Art of the Silhouette

The first program for 2011, presented by the Society, will be held on *Tuesday, Feb. 8, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Carmon Family Center*. It will feature Joy Ruskin Hanes of Old Lyme, CT, who is an antiques dealer, appraiser and researcher. She will present a one-hour lecture covering the history of silhouette cutting and painting from the 18th century to the

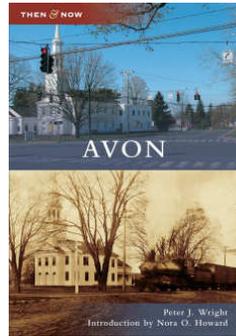
present and its development in the U.S. as an art form. She will also explain how to tell an American silhouette from a British or Continental silhouette. She will focus on the rise of August Edouart, the most brilliant of all cutters, and his travels throughout the U.S. cutting silhouettes of the rich and famous as well as more humble citizens.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their silhouettes for her inspection and comments.

## **AVON Then & Now just published**

A new book, comparing photos of Avon from 100 years ago with today, is now available for purchase through the Avon Historical Society. This new book, entitled Avon Then and Now, published by Arcadia Publishing, highlights many of the views we recognize today and shows you what they were like almost 100 years ago. Peter Wright, a member of the Avon Historical Society Board of Directors, researched and collected the old photos from private collections and from the Marian Hunter History room at the Avon Library, then he

took today's photos himself and wrote all the captions. Similar in style to AVON, the book by Nora Howard and published by Arcadia in 2000, the old photographs are in sepia tone while



today's are in black and white to show the contrast. They tell a wonderful story of how the little farming town of long ago grew to be the suburb it is today. Any reader will recognize today's locations and we are sure they will be very surprised by how Avon looked in previous years. The Society is pleased to be able to make this book available, signed by the author, for only \$22.

To order this book or any other item we have, please visit:  
[www.avonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.avonhistoricalsociety.org) today!



April 11, 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War. In the Great Rebellion, as it is often known, some 620,000 Americans both Union and Confederate lost their lives. When the war began, Connecticut regiments were called to arms by decrees by both President Abraham Lincoln and Governor William Buckingham, who served as the state's chief executive throughout the war. Connecticut offered 55,000 men, some 10% of the state's population. (A total of 94 from Avon joined in 1864. The 1860 census showed 1,059 residents in Avon.) These troops served in every engagement of the war, and the state's industrial capacity, especially the arms

industry, was essential to the North's success. Yet there was considerable opposition within Connecticut to both the war and the Lincoln administration. In many ways, Connecticut serves as a microcosm of northern society during the Civil War.

In order to prepare for this commemoration, the State of Connecticut, under legislative order, will kick off a five-year commemoration on April 16 & 17, 2011 at Central CT State University led by CCSU history professor Dr. Matthew Warshauer, who was chosen by Governor Rell to coordinate all statewide events. For more information on the state's events, please visit: <http://finalsite.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=4633>

### ***From Avon to Appomattox: Lives and Legacy of the Civil War*** **Call for artifacts and local events surrounding this commemoration**

Thanks to some wonderful planning by Patrice Celli of the Avon Free Public Library, and with the help of others, you will be able to participate in the 150th commemoration of the Civil War through many events planned over the next several years. The Avon Historical Society is going to co-sponsor most, if not all, of them. They range from a talk on quilts made during the Civil War, a changing display of artifacts from the period, to a presentation of the more than 60 letters written by Avon resident Eugene Hawley who served and was impris-

oned during the war. Local residents and civil war "buffs" Norm Sondheimer and Jim Genco, with help from Paul Kramer who transcribed these letters, will bring Hawley's story to life through displays and presentation. A grant is being written to cover the expenses of these events and, if received, will also bring author and CT's Civil War Commemoration Coordinator, Prof. Matthew Warshauer, to Avon to talk about the state's events as well as speak on his soon-to-be-published comprehensive book on the state's involvement in the Civil War. How can you take part?

If you have any artifacts related to the Civil War that you are willing to loan for a short period of time, we want to know about them! Norm and Jim are working on several displays with various themes over the next two or more years. Please contact them as soon as possible so they can determine how to use them most appropriately. Here's how to reach them:  
Norm Sondheimer—860-539-9335 or [sondheimer@cs.umass.edu](mailto:sondheimer@cs.umass.edu)  
Jim Genco—860-678-7109 or [james.genco@comcast.net](mailto:james.genco@comcast.net)

## Gardens, Outhouse, & Brick Walkways

During this coming year, you will see a good deal of work going on around the exterior of our properties. This is thanks, in part, to the tireless efforts of several Society members and Board members with the help of local residents and other organizations. A Girl Scout Junior/Cadette Troop will plant an herb and cut flower garden at the Derrin House. Plants and seeds will be bought thanks to a grant from the Garden Club of Avon. In between the gardens will be a new brick walkway with bricks donated by a local resident, framing materials



donated by Don Moore from Moore's Sawmill in Bloomfield and process donated by Dunning Sand & Gravel in Farmington. Labor is donated too.

Thanks to a state grant received by the Town of Avon for installation of new decorative street lightening, the Living Museum was the recipient of a new brick walkway (see photo) which goes from the sidewalk, to the front of the building and around to the back.

A team of Board members is working on plans to restore the original out-house behind the Pine Grove Schoolhouse. Several options are being considered and local experts have been consulted on stabilizing it. More to come on this project as well.

## Update on Horse Guard Barn

As of this writing, the Avon Historical Society and the State of Connecticut Military Department have come to a verbal agreement about the details to include the Horse Guard Barn at 232 West Avon Road within the existing lease agreement of the Derrin House. We are awaiting the final paperwork and will hold a signing ceremony once it has been reviewed and finalized by the Board of Directors. In anticipation of the lease agreement being signed, the Society will be applying for a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation to seek matching funds

for a Conditions Assessment. This will allow us to have funds to assess the overall condition of the barn prior to a feasibility study on the structure. If received, the Society will have one year to raise the matching funds and complete the assessment. We are excited by this opportunity that will allow us to inspect the barn inside and outside in order to help us create a plan of restoration. Future grants will need to be sought to work on each phase. Stay tuned as this project moves forward.



## Special Donation



We have received a donation and hope that you, our readers, can help us compile further information about it. This is a photo of a reed organ made by the Smith American Organ Company of Boston, MA which operated from 1852-1930. It was donated by St. Anne's Catholic Church. They have been storing it having received it from "the daughter of the organist when the church was located on Mountain View Avenue." From records at the Library, the parish organist prior to 1947

was "William O'Leary who played and directed the choir at St. Ann's and St. Patrick's in Collinsville. It is noted that Mr. O'Leary shared the keyboard with Mary Brunoli whose blindness proved no obstacle to her sensitive fingers." It is now on display at the Derrin House. We appreciate the church's donation and look forward to receiving any memories from readers about this organ and/or the years it was played at St. Ann's Church on Mountain View Avenue. Please let us know if you have memories or comments to share.



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  
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Peter Wright

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**www.avonhistoricalsociety.org**

**NOTE: Annual Meeting, Wednesday, April 13.**  
**Mark your calendar now!**

## Special Thank You's and Other News

Thanks to Don Moore, Moore's Sawmill, Bloomfield, CT for lumber for brick walkway at the Derrin House. This is Don's second donation of lumber and we are very grateful.

Thanks to Dunning Sand & Gravel, Farmington, CT for stone dust and other material for the construction of the brick walkway at the Derrin House.

Thanks to the Garden Club of Avon for holiday greens with bright red ribbons placed on the Living Museum, Derrin House, Horse Guard Barn and Pine Grove School House. We appreciate their generosity and hard work to make our properties look festive during the holiday season.

Richard Bremkamp's 5-story box set of CDs (or individual CDs) of Stories of the Farmington Valley is now available

through the Avon Historical Society. A donation to the Society will be made for every CD sold. The five "novelettes" are historical fiction stories of events from Avon, Farmington, Simsbury, and the Farmington Canal. Entire 5-story box set is \$34.99. Single CD is \$9.99. Contact the Society for more details.

**HELP WANTED!!** The Marian Hunter History Room at the Avon Library is in need of volunteers to staff it on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00—4:00 p.m. with expanded hours when the new library opens in 2012. Training is available. This is a wonderful way to work "hands on" with local Avon history. You will learn how to research the files for genealogy, property or document requests that come in daily. Please contact Terri Wilson for more details.



Presentation of local Veterans histories to the Hunter History Room at the Avon Free Public Library by VFW Post 3272.

Author Peter Wright signs Avon Then and Now books at Borders in December.

