



Spring 2012 Newsletter

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 12—1:00 p.m. Meet General Robert E. Lee at the Avon Free Public Library. Part of the Civil War programs funded by the Avon Education Foundation.

Sunday, June 3 from 2:00—4:00 p.m. Opening day for the Pine Grove School House and Derrin House. Both are open on Sundays through September. Living Museum open only by appointment. It is expected that there will be a ribbon cutting to showcase the newly restored outhouse at 3pm on June 3rd at the Pine Grove School House.

Thursday, June 21— 7:00 p.m. Avon Historical Society ANNUAL MEETING to be held at the new Avon Free Public Library. Tour of the new Marian Hunter History Room included. Refreshments will be served.

Thursday, June 28th at 7:00pm— Dedication of plaques designating the crossing of the Farmington Canal on Route 44 exactly 184 years to the day the first packet boat was launched on the Canal! Event at the Living Museum. View canal artifacts and diorama and enjoy wine and cheese.

Visit the Avon Free Public Library to see the exhibit "American Women on the Home Front" depicting life in Avon during the Civil War. (see Page 2)

President's Message

It's Spring and everything is turning a lovely shade of green and flowers are blooming. This seasonal change is why I love New England. And so this change in seasons brings new life to the Avon Historical Society too! It was a busy winter preparing for 2012 and I hope you will enjoy learning about all the projects and programs we have to offer this year. And I am pleased to announce that I will be staying on as President for one more year as we transition our Board of Directors from 12 to 16 members. We also say goodbye to longtime Treasurer Monte Hopper who served us well for the past six years in keeping us

on the positive side of the balance sheet every month. Thank you Monte for your support of the Society's mission and goals!

And we invite all our members to the Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 21 at the new Avon Free Public Library. You will be stunned at the beautiful new building and facilities including the newly repositioned Marian Hunter History Room on the first floor! This Local History Room is a welcome addition to town. We hope you will agree!

Terri Wilson, President

ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, June 21 at 7:00 p.m.

You are invited to the Avon Historical Society Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the Avon Free Public Library.

This year we moved the meeting from April to June so that our members can view the new Marian Hunter History Room located on the first floor of the new library. We will have a brief meeting and hold elections in the Conference Room prior to touring the Local History Room. The meeting will be for announcements and elections of the Board of Trustees and Officers.

Of special note will be the display in the exhibit case of the History Room. The Avon Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee spent a great deal of time organizing and mounting a special display entitled "American Women on the Home Front." Much research and effort has been put in to this exhibit which opened on April 23rd. (See Page 2 for more details.) Please RSVP to: Pam Fahey, Vice President, at 860-678-7621 or ahs.mail.1830@sbcglobal.net by June 18 so we can plan the refreshments.

Dedication of Farmington Canal crossing in Old Avon Center

On Saturday, June 28, 1828 the first packet boat launched in New Haven, CT on what became known as the "Farmington Canal." Packet boats were flat, long boats pulled by horses along a towpath. These boats could carry goods, people & animals north and south from New Haven, CT to Northampton, MA. Built by mostly Irish immigrants, the Farmington Canal operated until 1847 when the much faster railroads took over America. But during those years Avon was the beneficiary of strong trade of

goods such as cider and cheese. Due to the rise in the landscape from New Haven to Northampton there were 28 locks built. One today is visible in Cheshire. When the packet boats came through Avon they went north and south roughly along Route 10 and behind the houses on the south side of Old Farms Road. It crossed Route 44 at what is now daCapo's Restaurant in Old Avon Village and through the property of the Living Museum! In order to commemorate that path, the Avon Historical Society is dedicating two plaques on red sandstone

outside both locations on Thursday, June 28 at 7:00 p.m. The event is open to the public. A brief talk on the Canal will be given by local historian Dr. Lawrence Carlton. The beautiful plaques were made and donated by Avon native Sherry Eastwood Hertzler of Mystic River Foundry. Thanks to a grant from People's United Bank, the location of the stone by the Living Museum was made possible. After the event the public is invited inside the Living Museum to view a restored 1985 diorama of the Canal crossing in Avon.

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

View new exhibit on "American Women on the Home Front" at the Library

In further observance of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the Avon Historical Society has the honor of placing the first exhibit in the new display case of the Marian Hunter History Room at the newly expanded Avon Free Public Library. "American Women on the Home Front" was conceived, designed and mounted by Society Board member Elisabeth (Liz) Neff, local Civil War experts Norm Soundheimer, Jim Genco and display designer Jane Lowerre. Most all items on display are from the collection of the Avon Historical Society with one very prominent piece on loan—an 1850 women's dress worn by Sophia Evans Wells who was born in 1835 and lived in Gorham, NH. This item is on loan from Pat Small, her great grand-daughter, from Burlington, CT. In researching information for this exhibit, Liz used a variety of historical data to put together the story of women

who helped with the Civil War effort back home. In Avon the women participated by contributing medical supplies and other goods to the Hartford Union League in order to support the US Sanitary Commission. A typical activity of Avon's Relief Society might be rolling bandages, collecting scrap lint to pack wounds, and making comfort bags which might contain tea, needles, thread, buttons, etc. Of the 94 Avon men who served in the Civil War, only 34 survived. A letter to Miss Carrie Case of Avon in 1865 by John W. Clark of the 1st CT Calvary, noted his gratitude to her for the comfort bags for their troops. Unfortunately we know that Clark was killed in battle only a few weeks later. The exhibit at the Library can be seen through June. This is one of several that will be placed on display during the course of the next three years as Avon continues to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

Avon Girl Scout Gold Award Project

The Avon Historical Society is pleased to announce that Avon resident Alice D'Arcangelo of Avon Girl Scout Troop 61119 working with Rochelle Murphy, her advisor, will be working on a Gold Award Project to create a *Driving Tour Map of Avon* highlighting local historic sites and useful information and facts about Avon's parks, biking and hiking trails. This map is expected to

be available as a PDF download on the Avon Historical Society website as well as possibly be in printed format for distribution. The Gold Award is the highest award in the Girl Scout Program and is earned by girls in grades 9-12. Alice will be a junior at Northwest Catholic High School in the Fall. She will be working on this project over the summer months and provide the final project to the Society sometime in September. She will engage several Avon residents in the research of the map as well as the

and marketing of it. A photo contest by Avon High School students is planned for use on the map. Alice is responsible for every aspect of this project. The Society started this project over 10 years ago but it was not completed. Alice will bring this project to reality and we appreciate her interest and effort. Through the Society's website, anyone will be able to read and download this valuable information and visit the sites listed. A final report on this project will be made in the Fall newsletter.

HELP WANTED—Volunteers needed for Hunter History Room

On Sunday, June 10 the Avon Free Public Library will officially open the newly renovated and expanded library. On the first floor is the new Marian Hunter History Room! The purpose of this newly expanded and repositioned room is to provide residents and visitors with access to historic records and documents for research.



The Society has been asked to assist the Library in finding volunteers to staff the History Room during regular operating hours. Below is a “job” description of what a volunteer will need to know and do to be part of this exciting new facility.

Purpose: History Room volunteers will assist visitors in the Local History Room. They will work on the conservation and cataloging of the collection in order to make it more accessible to visitors.

Activities and Duties: Assist visitors; indexing of archival material; research individuals, businesses, houses and organizations; prepare and catalog materials for the vertical file collection; help preserve archival material in acid-free enclosures; transcribe letters and other 18th and 19th century documents in collections; assist with public reference and research inquiries; photocopying and filing; and maintain the policies of the History Room.

Qualifications: A desire to learn more about Avon’s past; Participate in a training program; Enjoy working and helping people; Good oral and communication skills; Ability to work independently as well as with others; Knowledge of office equipment such as computers, copiers, scanners and microfilm readers will be helpful (but will train)

Time commitment: 3-4 hours per week

If you are interested in being a volunteer in the Marian Hunter History Room, please contact the Avon Historical Society (see contact info on Page 4) or the Avon Free Public Library at 860-673-9712 or Pam Fahey at ahs.mail.1830@sbcglobal.net.

P.S. Don’t forget to stop by and see the inaugural exhibit “American Women on the Home Front” focusing on what Avon women did during the Civil War to support the troops.

THANK YOU for donations to match CT Trust Grant for Barn

THANK YOU! As a result of a story in the *Hartford Courant* and other local newspapers in February, donations made to the Society for the Horse Guard Barn have generated enough to match a Barn Grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. The Barn Grant is a collaborative historic preservation technical assistance program of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, with funding from the Connecticut General Assembly. The Society was awarded the Barn Grant on March 1, in part due to the contributions received by local and regional donors.

Funding will be used to reconstruct the south wall that has been badly damaged by water from seasonal rains and the hurricane last year. Tarps were placed on the roof of the Barn in January to stop future damage. However, this south wall project costs more than the money

raised to date. Therefore, the Society is actively seeking other matching grants and hopes to be able to begin work later this year. If you would like to make a **secure** online donation, please visit our website at: www.avonhistoricalsociety.org/HorseGuardBarn.htm or send your donation to: Avon Historical Society, P.O. Box 448, Avon, CT 06001.

The Society thanks Len Tolisano and Peter Wright for their fundraising and project managing of the Barn to date.





Avon Historical Society
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www.avonhistoricalsociety.org

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
 Krystyn Silver
 Len Tolisano
 Peter Wright

REMINDER—Dues notices will go out soon. Please respond quickly to the request to join again!

Special Thank You's and Other News

SUPER THANK YOU to J&A Construction Co., New Haven and Avon for donating material and labor to restore the outhouse at the Pine Grove School House! More details will be forthcoming in the Summer newsletter.

SUPER THANK YOU to Society member Stephanie Pratt, for cleaning and restoring the diorama of the Farmington Canal in the Living Museum. Originally constructed by Mark Ruppert for his Eagle Scout award in 1985, the diorama has been a focal point of the Canal exhibit in the Museum. She recreated the grass areas and installed 19 new trees. A donation by the Ruppert family was made for materials for the restoration. It will be available for all to view at the June 28 Canal plaque dedication.

SUPER THANK YOU to Monte and Cindy Hopper for their very generous donation of the exhibit case at the Marian Hunter History Room at the Avon Free Public Library. Thanks to the Hoppers, the Society

will have plenty of space to showcase rotating exhibits!

The Avon Historical Society was pleased to participate in lending support to **Old Avon Farms School (AOF)** for a grant application to the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation to underwrite an investigation of the exterior deterioration of its historic Water Tower, Chapel and Smithy. The grant of \$13,375 was awarded to the school in April. AOF was constructed between 1918 and 1927 and is on the CT State Register of Historic Places.

Thank you to Avon native **Dave Romani** and his family for a donation of a large amount of household items and printed material from their family's historic Chidsey home in Avon. Most of the items will be on display at the Derrin House. The printed material will be donated to the Marian Hunter History Room of the Avon Free Public Library.

SAVE THE DATE - Saturday, October 6 beginning at 2:00 p.m. will be the 5th Annual Cow Chip Raffle at the Simmons Family Farm on Tillotson Road. Proceeds to benefit the many programs of the Avon Historical Society. Tickets become available in July. More details to come later.

REMINDER—Membership renewal is due July 1. The Society relies on your keeping current on your dues!

This year's dues are:
 \$25 for individual
 \$20 for senior citizen or student
 \$35 for family
 \$100 for corporate

NOTE: The Society's logo (above and on first page) is a silhouette of the Farmington Canal. Note the horse pulling the packet boat. This is the symbol of when commerce and the world came to Avon in the 1830's and 1840's making this town a vibrant, enjoyable place to live and work!