



Springtime has arrived. You can tell by the stampede to the garden centers! The sun is again warming our faces, warming the earth for the flowers and creatures, and sweetness is in the air once more. Please enjoy reading our newsletter full of Avon's rich history and Avon Historical Society happenings.



Hear Ye, Hear Ye -Upcoming Events



April-Mid June 2014 'Gardens of Avon'-a visual feast for the eyes after a long winter. This exhibit at the Avon Free Public Library will be in the glass display case outside the Marian M. Hunter History Room. It will feature beautiful photos of flowers from around town and in private gardens. Also available will be a private collection of gardening books to peruse. In addition, there will be historical information from both garden clubs of Avon. Please stop by and enjoy while learning a bit of history too!

June 2014—September 2014 The Avon Historical Society welcomes visitors to the Pine Grove School House, 3 Harris Street (West Avon Road/Route 167) and the Derrin Farm-House, 249 West Avon Road, this summer on Sundays from 2:00 – 4:00pm. Greeters are needed; training is available. Send an e-mail with your interest and we will be in touch!

June 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.—"Myth, Maggots, Minie Balls, Gangrene and Glory – A Civil War Medical Program" - a talk on Civil War medicine presented by expert re-enactor and noted Civil War Historian, Carolyn Ivanoff at the Avon Free Public Library Community Room. Refreshments will be provided.

November and December 2014: "Sacrifice" This exhibit will highlight the sacrifice of individual Avon and Farmington Valley soldiers in the Civil War. The exhibit will tell the story of the CT16th, the prison camps, and Civil War medicine with guest speakers TBA.

THE HISTORY CORNER....



Historic Bell at Pine Grove Elementary School

In the courtyard of the Pine Grove Elementary School on Scoville Road sits a historic bell. This bell used to be in the tower cupola of the Huckleberry Hill schoolhouse for many years and was saved before it was demolished. This bell was made in the Meneely Bell Foundry at Troy, New York, one of only three bell foundries in the Northeast. The Meneely Foundry was started by Andrew Meneely. He was originally an apprentice in the shop of the original foundry started about 1790 by Col. Benjamin Hanks, at Hanks Hill, in the town of Mansfield, Connecticut. In 1808 Hanks moved to Gibbonsville, near Troy, New York in partnership with his son Julius, brother Alpheus, and Ephraim Gurley of Mansfield. The company was then called Hanks, Gurley, and Co. Mr. Hanks was related to Abraham Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd, through her mother Nancy Hanks. In it's career The Meneely Bell Foundry cast 65,000 bells, one of which is the replacement of the Liberty Bell!

SPOTLIGHT ON....

One of our Avon residents has a unique career that has historical significance. He is a pipe organ specialist, known as an organbuilder! This is the tuning and renovation of pipe organs both in churches and schools. This writer has had the privilege of meeting this gentleman, Mr. Bon Smith, to hear him play some music. The occasion was at the Avon Congregational Church where the AHS was hosting a program. Mr. Smith invited me to the balcony where the organ is located and let me see him



play. What a treat! Mr. Smith is a specialist in the repair and voicing of Austin pipe organs. He is active in his business, Austin Service Organ Company. He has lived from the west to the east coast in his lifetime. One of his first jobs was installing and voicing large Aeolian-Skinner organs at churches across the country. He apprenticed with an organ installer who was foreman of the Mormon Tabernacle organ. He and his two associates, Alex Belair and Michael Tanguay, installed the Austin pipe organ at St. Ann's Church. They have also redesigned, rebuilt and revoiced the Austin pipe organs at Avon Congregational Church and West Avon Congregational Church. They also tune and maintain more than 100 pipe organs throughout southern New England. Not only does he work with pipe organs, he is also quite an accomplished organist in his own right. His wife Susan K. Smith, an active attorney in Avon, and is also Director of Music and Organist at Avon Congregational Church.

AHS NEWS....



Benjamin Mione, Michael Crutcher, Ann Moine



Descendants of the CT 29th at Pvt. Holden's grave

As part of the Society's Civil War exhibit, "Freedom of The Liberty of Your Race," two events were held during Black History Month thanks to a grant from Connecticut Humanities. The first was a visit on February 4th with the 'spirit' of Frederick Douglass, Mr. Michael Crutcher. His moving presentation put everyone in attendance in a moment in time that was difficult, to say the least. February 22nd was the rededication of the grave of Pvt. Leverett Holden who is buried in East Avon Cemetery. Holden was a soldier from the CT 29th Volunteer Regiment (Colored).



The AHS is pleased to announce a much needed donation. Len Tolisano worked with Maher's Paint & Wallpaper, LLC in Avon on behalf of the Benjamin Moore Paint Company to secure a donation in the amount of \$1,834 to benefit the on-going work being done on the c. 1880 New England gable entry bank barn known as the Horse Guards Barn on West Avon Road. This is a part of Benjamin Moore & Co. 'Your Main Street Matters' program that works with individual Benjamin Moore retailers to revitalize communities.

A historic artifact that has been in storage will be put on public display in the coming months. This artifact is the cupola, formerly on top of the Towpath School since 1949, saved before the school was demolished in 2006. Thanks to the efforts of Avon school superintendent, Gary Mala who is organizing other volunteers, they are scraping and repainting this treasure. It eventually will be placed near the Board of Education building on Simsbury Road which is not far from the long gone towpath for the Farmington Canal which passed through that land. The weathervane that used to top the dome, was donated to the Society and is on display in Schoolhouse No. 3. It is a depiction, aptly, of a canal boat, being towed by horses on the towpath!



WORTH NOTING.....

It is time for Spring elections for the Board of Trustees and Officers of the Avon Historical Society. We have a 16 member Board of Trustees with 4 officers in the positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary and 12 Trustees. The elections will be held on April 8th, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in Building No. 1 at the Town Hall of Avon. All Avon Historical Society members with paid membership dues are eligible to vote for the new Board.



The Simsbury Bank and the Town of Avon have each featured one of the Society's properties in their 2014 calendars. We are delighted about this! The Bank is already looking for ideas about future photogenic sites in Avon for their 2105 and 2016 calendars. If you have suggestions for their photographers of a great site or interesting angle, please forward your suggestions to the AHS email address. Thank you!

Special thanks to John Forster, Jeannie Parker and Ben Isaacson for their invaluable input and service in helping with various aspects of a grant application to restore and replace the 14 windows (112 panes) of the Pine Grove Schoolhouse. The Avon Historical Society is still seeking donations from the public toward the match needed for the restoration of these original windows at the historic 1865 Schoolhouse located at the corner of Harris Road and West Avon Road. Thanks also to Ed and Carol Reller for their donation of period window glass for this project. All donations will contribute toward a grant application being submitted by the Town of Avon (owner of the building) on behalf of the Avon Historical Society to the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. In addition, the AHS is looking forward to the completion of the informational kiosk this spring at the Schoolhouse by Eagle Scout Ryan Tyler.

This academic year the Special Projects Committee of AHS has had the extraordinary opportunity to bring local history via exhibits and in-person presentations to each of Avon's public schools! Mr. Gary Mala, Superintendent has been supportive of this new partnership between AHS and the schools. He has visited these exhibits to show his continued support. The exhibits for the schools have been:

Thompson Brook School – 'Farm to Table – What Foods Were Grown on Avon Farms?'

Avon High School – 'The Benevolent Burnham Family of Avon' and 'History of Avon High School'

Pine Grove Elementary school – In commemoration of President's Day – A Revolutionary War soldier's campsite and President George Washington's dining table. Avon Men in the American Revolution bulletin board display and 'The Fight For Independence' glass display case.

Avon Middle School – Avon ca. 1840-1850, the Age of Early Mechanization and Industrialization including river trade in March/April.

Roaring Brook School – 'A History of Lovelytown' in May.

THE HISTORY CORNER (cont'd)...

The Cider Brook Section of Avon

The Cider Brook section of Avon is the town's oldest. The town in early documents was known as the 'Land at Nodd,' and the original proprietors of Farmington moved further north in search of more farmland here. Originally they would have to travel to their outlying lands to tend their herds and crops and some camped out overnight. In fact, this very practice is what saved the life of one of the Hart family's young men who stayed overnight in Avon when the rest of his family perished in a house fire in Farmington.



The Cider Brook Cemetery is located in this area far back from Waterville Road (Route 10) on a steep hillside. Some of our town's earliest citizens are interred within these reverential grounds. There are at least a dozen Revolutionary War soldiers buried here with venerable old family names of Northway, Andrus, Bishop, Wilcox, Woodford, Miller, Woodford, and Hart. (Photo credit: Jan Franco)

According to Fran Mackie's book, 'Avon, Connecticut an historical story' the Cider Brook area gets its name from the tale that a farmer crossing the brook (now Cider Brook) had a barrel or two of cider fall off his wagon and break into the water, hence the name stuck. There was a one-room school house in Cider Brook as early as 1747!

The Wadsworth Tower In Days Of Old

Some folks may not know that there were formerly four other towers on the ridge of Talcott Mountain before the current Heublein Tower. The first tower was built by Daniel Wadsworth who inherited the family property there known as Monte Video. Mr. Wadsworth is also the namesake of the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford. The original wooden tower was built in 1810 and was hexagonal in shape, sixteen feet in diameter and stood between 50 to 55 feet high. It had a spiral staircase with 80 steps to reach the top. The view was spectacular of the Farmington Valley and panoramic views towards New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. There is an artist's conceptualized painting of the Wadsworth Tower and Monte Video in Fran Mackie's book on page 85. A book entitled "Talcott Mountain: Yesterday and Today," by Nancy Jean Grissom details the history of the towers. The Wadsworth Tower stood for thirty years, according to an article in the Hartford Courant in 1985 by Kathleen Gorman, until it was blown down by high winds. For more information about Heublein Tower go to www.friendsofheubleintower.org



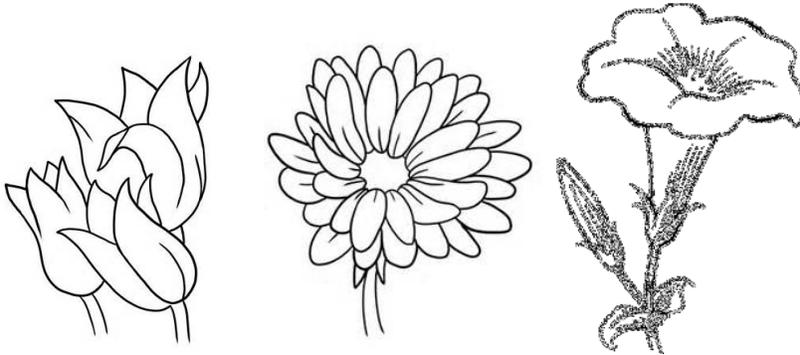
ANSWERS TO KID'S PAGE on Page 6

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Bee, caterpillar, robin, pansy, sheep

UNSCRAMBLE: butterfly, tulip, bunny, garden

KID'S PAGE

Color these flowers for Spring!



Fill in the blanks:

1. What insects fly from flower to flower gathering pollen? _____
2. Before it becomes a butterfly, what insect do you see first? _____
3. Which bird do we often see first when Spring arrives? _____
4. What kind of flower seems to have a little face? _____
5. What animal born in the Spring gives us wool? _____

Unscramble these Springtime words:

_____ Y B T U T R E F L

_____ P I T U L

_____ B Y N U N

_____ A R D N G E

Make Tissue Paper Flowers:

Ask mom and dad to get these supplies for you: colored tissue paper, tape, pipe cleaners, green construction paper. Layer two or three colors of tissue paper. Then fold one inch wide accordion-style, back and forth until you get to the end. Next use some tape to go around the center to secure it. Now turn the flower sideways and carefully open up each layer of tissue petals. Next bend each side of the flower toward one another and wrap pipe cleaner around the base. Cut out big green leaves and tape to the underside edge of the flower. Now you have a pretty Spring flower!



ABIGAIL'S SPRINGTIME ADVENTURE

Springtime had finally arrived in Avon and the last of the snow had melted. There was that certain sweet smell to the air and crocus were already peeking out of the soil. Abigail, the little brown mouse who lived under the floorboards of the Pine Grove School House, was ready for an adventure. She planned to take a train ride! First she would have to hop on a wagon headed for town to get to the train station. She put on her shawl and her straw hat and picked up her basket that she had packed her lunch of crackers and jam. She didn't have to wait long for a wagon to pass by headed North into town and she scrambled onto a rock and hopped on the wagon. She hid in the back under some lumber. Sure enough, the wagon stopped at the station to unload its cargo. Abigail lept off the wagon and hid behind a barrel as she waited for the train. Soon, she heard the WOOOOO, WOOOOO of the whistle and the train pulled into the station. After the passengers got off and others boarded, Abigail saw her chance to scurry up the steps of the coal car. In those days, locomotive engines were powered by coal fired steam. She hid in the coal bay and got quite dirty! She was lucky she didn't get shoveled up and put into the hot fire of the boiler! The train started off....CHUGGA, CHUGGA, CHUGGA...and they were off! Oh what fun she was having...the wind tickled her whiskers and she had to hold onto her hat as they traveled briskly along. Soon they approached a water tower for the engine to take on water from which to make the steam that powered the train. The train came to a stop to take on the water. Abigail, being the curious creature that she was, climbed up to the top of the water tank to watch the water spout fill up the big tank. Then they were off once more! From up there, Abigail could see what was coming up. They were approaching a mail bag hanging on a hook...they didn't even stop by slowed down and the conductor grabbed the bag as they went by! Coming around the bend, Abigail saw their stop ahead...Plainville! Abigail had a cousin in this town and she had gone to enjoy lunch with her. Her cousin's name was Prudence. She was not a very pretty mouse...her teeth were bucked out a bit and her fur was rather dull, but she had the most beautiful singing voice. Prudence lived in the root cellar of the General Store. Here she had all the food a mouse could eat! She and Abigail shared their lunch and laughed when recalling family stories. It was so good to see her again. But soon it was time for Abigail to head home before the last train of the day. She said goodbye to Prudence and headed back to the train station in Plainville to catch the 4:00 p.m. train home. The train pulled into the station and Abigail waited for just the right moment to hop aboard. This time she was at the back of the train in the caboose. It had been a long day and Abigail was tired. She found a comfy spot, hidden away in a train conductor's hat that was left on the seat. Soon she fell fast asleep. Would she awake in time for her stop in Avon? If not, where would she wind up? Oh my! Find out what happens to Abigail in the Summer newsletter!

DID YOU KNOW?

The Avon Historical Society is celebrating a special anniversary this year! The actual date when the Society incorporated is December 5, 1973, but their first public meeting was in 1974, it's the 40th anniversary! The Society was formed for the purpose of preserving the town's heritage. The manuscript and photographic collection is housed at the Marian M. Hunter History room of the Avon Free Public library. The room is staffed by volunteers who can assist in answering local history questions and researching requests. Some early artifacts of the town are stored in Schoolhouse No. 3 (former Living Museum) including some Farmington Canal educational materials. These can be viewed by appointment by calling the Society at the number below. Your membership in the Society and other contributions enable the Society to continue its' mission of historic preservation of both its' properties and the town's collective history. Your \$35 family membership and/or donations are greatly appreciated. Please support us in our endeavors to make our 40th anniversary year the best yet!



Avon Historical Society

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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.

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