

Upcoming Events – Join Us!

Saturday, June 8 at 2:00pm, Community Room of the Avon Free Public Library – “I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone™” presented by critically acclaimed actress Judith Kalaora from History at Play. This fiery first-person portrayal of Lucy Stone is about the first woman to earn a college degree in Massachusetts who became a scholar in Greek and Hebrew and challenged the writings of the Bible. Judith will bring to light the many sides of Stone – leader, patriot, abolitionist, suffragist and feminist. Co-sponsored by the Avon Historical Society and Avon Senior Center with the Avon Free Public Library.

Thursday, June 27 at 7:00pm, Avon Senior Center – Book talk – “The Long Journeys Home: The Repatriations of Henry ‘Ōpūkaha’ia and Albert Afraid of Hawk,” by author Nick Bellantoni, state archeologist emeritus. The moving stories of two Indigenous men and their repatriations from Connecticut. Co-sponsored with the Avon Senior Center. Reception, with book signing, will follow the presentation.

Pine Grove Schoolhouse opens for the 2019 visitor season!



The seasonal opening of the 1865 Pine Grove Schoolhouse will be Sunday, June 2. Visitors can come by on Sundays, June through September from 2:00 – 4:00pm. Volunteer greeters will be available to welcome visitors. Back by ‘popular demand’ will be another scavenger hunt of items in and around the building and grounds. This year there will be a more challenging hunt for older children and adults and an easier one for younger children. Last year many visitors enjoyed the experience, especially families, and spent more time learning about the items in this one-room schoolhouse of about 1900. Make it a point to stop by and test your knowledge with the scavenger hunt of your choice!



Upcoming exhibits in the History Corner at the Avon Free Public Library

May through June – 75th anniversary of the Garden Club of Avon. Enjoy reading about their beginnings and the many community garden projects they provide to the Town of Avon.

July through August – DUAL EXHIBIT! – 200th anniversary of the Avon Congregational Church & the 100th anniversary of the Church of St. Ann. Both will provide exhibits on their respective history and upcoming celebrations.

September through October – McGuff Girl Scout Museum in New Haven, CT will present the history of Girl Scouts in Connecticut and the special connection to Avon's founder of the Museum and girl scouting.

Special thanks....



To American Eagle Financial Credit Union for a donation of \$2,000 donation presented at the ribbon cutting of their new office on West Avon Road.

To the 140 members of the Farmington Valley Quilters Guild for their donation of \$100 toward the continued preservation of the historic quilts in the Society's collection. This donation was made possible from proceeds of their semi-annual quilt show.

To the Society members who took the time to fill out the forms from their employer, Aetna Insurance Company, for a matching contribution!

The Society also thanks the families of Anthony O'Neill, Carl Candels and Paul Kramer who donated various items from their father's collections to either the History Room at the Library or for the archival collection of the Society. We are saddened by the sudden passing of Paul Kramer and Cliff Alderman this winter who were uber local historians and friends to the Society in many ways. Their legacies will live on in their donations and strong impressions they left with many of us.

We also wish to thank the many sponsors of the 2nd annual Tablescapes which was held in March. A story with photos of that event will be in the Summer newsletter...due out soon!



Zach Gleit (center) created Apollo 11 exhibit

Thanks to Zach Gleit, Avon High School senior, for researching and mounting an exhibit this winter in the History Corner of the Library commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing on the moon on July 20, 1969. He was advised by Gene Macy, Society Trustee and Avon Middle School history teacher. It also included loans for the exhibit by John Cudworth who built a model of the rocket; the Cathcart and Hart families and Terri Wilson for memorabilia such as posters, newspapers from that week and authentic NASA artifacts from that space mission. The exhibit was open March through April.

Avon Historical Society 45th Annual Meeting

The 45th Annual Meeting of the Avon Historical Society took place on April 24 in the atrium of the Avon Free Public Library. This venue allowed the public to listen or attend. In attendance were 14 Society members & three guests. After a brief meeting and announcements, the election for Officers and Trustees was held. Those elected are on the last page of the newsletter and will serve through April 2020. There are up to six openings on the Board of Trustees as well as the position of Secretary on the Board of Trustees. Anyone interested in serving, please contact the Society and leave a message at: 860-678-7621 or at info@avonhistoricalsociety.org The 2018-2019 Annual Report will be available on the Society's website very soon.

Derrin House update

Three years ago in May an accidental fire broke out on the first floor of the house that spread quickly to the second floor. The damage was extensive, but not detrimental. Thanks to the quick response by the Avon Volunteer Fire Department, with mutual aid from neighboring towns, the fire was quickly extinguished. The state fire marshal deemed it a sound structure after the origin of the fire was determined. The house is owned by the Military Department of the State of Connecticut and the Society has a long-term lease to use the property as it sees fit. The Society's insurance paid for repairs and remediation of the smoke damage. However, the interior is missing several walls due to the fire and needs some foundation work in the cellar (not from the fire) and on the first floor before it can be safely reopened. Currently, the Trustees are in talks with another state agency on a plan to reopen it as a community space for events. More details to follow as negotiations are ongoing.

In addition, the Horse Guard State Park (located behind the Derrin House) is one of 14 listed on the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection's (DEEP) 2019 "The Sky's The Limit Hiking Challenge" for this calendar year. This challenge is designed to promote hiking in CT's State Parks and Forests. To learn more how to participate in this challenge visit: www.ct.gov/deep

New book coming out soon!

As many of you have heard by now, the bicentennial of Avon's two congregational churches are in 2018 (West Avon CC) and 2019 (Avon CC). Thanks to the over one-year effort by historians, archivists and authors, Marj Bender, Jeannie Parker and Nora Howard from both churches, a new book will be published this fall with the story of how both came to be established in our small town two-hundred years ago. *A Tale of Two Meetinghouses and their Communities, 1746-2019* will contain over 150 photographs and narrative chronicling their respective stories. The Avon Historical Society has the privilege of introducing the book and is a sponsor. To help underwrite the cost of publication, the two churches are offering \$50 sponsorships for anyone who would like to have their name printed in the book for future generations. Part of the sponsorship can be claimed as a donation. Acknowledgments will be sent with every sponsorship received. Please contact Nora Howard, Town Historian, at nakeshoward@aol.com for details before July 1, 2019. A book selling and signing event by the authors will be on Saturday, Sept. 28 from 11am – 1 pm in the atrium of the Library.

Avon Historical Society in the Avon Schools

Once again Society member and volunteer, Janet Conner, spent the year mounting exhibits and providing presentations in some of Avon's schools. This has been a challenge this year due to scheduling and demands on the curriculum. However, she was able to provide five presentations in the lower schools on the Farmington Canal; Evolution of Education in Avon from one-room schoolhouses to modern day schools; early mills and trades in Avon; Avon's role in the Underground Railroad; and the story of captive people in early Farmington and Avon.



Trustee and teacher Gene Macy with Janet Conner preparing for their presentation on the Underground Railroad at the Avon Middle School

After working within the Avon schools for the past five years, Mrs. Conner has been provided the opportunity to share how she does this at two prestigious venues:

1. Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences has asked her to present her work in schools at their last meeting of the academic year. CAAS has a very distinguished history going back to 1799 "...to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest and happiness of a free and virtuous people..." It is the third oldest learned society in the United States. Mrs. Conner was recently inducted into CAAS which is allowing her to pursue her research and writing of local history at a very high level.

2. Connecticut League of History Organizations is providing the Avon Historical Society time to participate in a panel discussion on the same subject at their annual conference in early June. Mrs. Conner, along with Society volunteer Norm Sondheimer, will be on hand in the exhibit hall and at the panel discussion to tell the story of how Avon students learn about local history. Norm will be bringing several of the 12 pop up banners on local history touring around the town in local restaurants, business lobbies and schools which provide a brief moment in Avon history to the general public.
3. Lastly, Janet will once again represent the Society as a judge at the annual Connecticut History Day competition at area schools and has recently been named contributor of the Avon History Page of the newly published magazine *AVON TODAY* which is mailed to all Avon households monthly. She is coordinating the monthly articles submitted by many members of the Society as well as from the public.

Coming soon: *DEEDS NOT WORDS: 100 YEARS OF THE VOTE FOR WOMEN*

Next year is a big anniversary year for many reasons. One of the most important to our country, and its every evolving democracy, is the centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment which gave women the right to vote. This ended a very long 75+ year struggle that took on various forms across our country. The Avon Historical Society, the Avon Senior Center and the Avon Free Public Library once again will be joining forces to spend one year studying and exhibiting how this monumental event unfolded from local, state, national and international perspectives. For more than four months a committee has been meeting regularly to create a series entitled *DEEDS NOT WORDS: 100 YEARS OF THE VOTE FOR WOMEN*. In our very succesful style, this series will run 12 months and contain features such as book talks, first person portrayals, movies, musical event, distinguished lecturers, exhibits in the gallery of the library, history corner, possible bus trips to locations that bear witness to women’s participation in American history and more! We are collaborating with other organizations to make sure we are presenting this topic in a wholistic way. This summer we will be writing for several grants to cover the costs but donations are always welcome. Our lauch event will take place November 2019 at the Library.

The suffrage movement began in the 1840s when married women still had no right to property or ownership of their wages; the domestic life was their rightful place in society. The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, which was created to deal with many of these issues, saw the passage of a resolution for suffrage, but with dissenters. This was the beginning of a 75+ year movement that had its bright and dark times not only in the United States but in the United Kingdom, Australia and other countries where women were fighting the same causes.

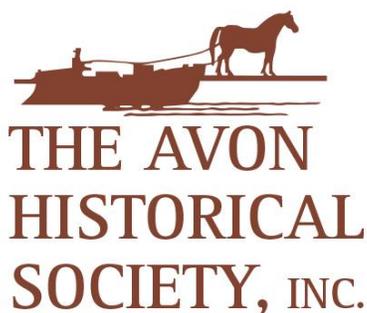
The Avon series will be groundbreaking in that it will cover not only the Avon women who were Pro or Anti, but also those who, on a state and national level, used their voices for the causes so important at that time such as child welfare, labor laws, equal wages, workplace hazards and prohibition. For many women 100 years ago local garden clubs, private homes and tea rooms were the only place to meet and organize – and they certainly did. We hope you will join us.



Quick updates

The Town of Avon was not successful at winning a grant from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation to replace the windows of Schoolhouse No. 3 (built 1823) this summer. Next step is to apply to the CT Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program for energy conservation projects as part of the planned four-year adaptive reuse to make this building a museum again in 2023 for its 200th anniversary. If funded by a business entity, this may include not only replacement of energy efficient windows, but also new exterior siding, HVAC system, security system and repairs to the handicapped ramp, bathroom and roof.

As was mentioned on Page 3, the Society is need of volunteers who are willing to serve on the Board of Trustees. Our ByLaws allow for up to 16 members. We have had as many as 14 in the past but are now down to 8. We know this is not unique to the Society as many non-profits are having trouble finding committed volunteers. Our community is changing and the way in which we work has become more social media based, but those of us who enjoy each other's company prefer to get together to talk out the issues before us. The Trustees meet monthly and handle the policy issues of the Society. No previous experience is needed, but a strong interest in the promotion of local history, enjoyment of being part of a team, and willingness to take on a project or two is most appreciated. If you are interested or want more information, please contact Terri Wilson at president@avonhistoricalsociety.org Thank you.



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.
2019-2020 Officers and Board of Trustees

Officers:

Terri Wilson, President
Dr. Helaine Bertsch, Vice President
open, Secretary
Eric Thronson, Treasurer

Trustees:

Mary Harrop
Gene Macy
Carolyn McGrattan
Cal Miller-Stevens
Sebastian Saraceno

Do you shop Amazon? If you do, please go to: <http://smile.amazon.com> and CHOOSE the Avon Historical Society, Avon, CT to have .5% of your purchase donated to us! It's simple and free.

PO Box 448, Avon, CT 06001-0448, 860.678.7621 • avonhistoricalsociety.org

