



Winter 2020

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ENCOUNTER EARLY NATIVE AMERICAN SITE IN AVON**

From the Connecticut Department of Transportation, November 2019:

At some point around the end of the last Ice Age—just about 12,470 years ago in fact—a group of nomadic individuals set up camp and built a fire on the sandy banks of an upland watershed in what would eventually become the modern town of Avon, Connecticut. A few of them broke out a kit of stone implements and began working, or rather reworking, the cutting tools they had carried along from very far afoot. Quality stone was scarce in these parts, so the toolmakers were careful to make the most efficient use of the material they had on hand. There was little room for waste. They made repeated use of small stone scrapers, pointed graters, and a very distinctive form of lanceolate-shaped projectile point with a long groove, or 'fluted' channel that rose up from the base of the blade. For reasons that are not entirely clear, these people made relatively little use of locally available stone—such as quartzite—instead preferring rhyolite from present day northern New Hampshire, jasper from eastern Pennsylvania, and chert/flint from along the Hudson River in upstate New York.

This group appears to have been among the first to populate the region we recognize today as southern New England, and the watercourse they camped adjacent to is now called the Farmington River. At the time, the Connecticut environment may have been similar to what we today would call boreal forest—cold, dry and lightly covered with pine forest. The site where they chose to make their camp was revisited several times by people of the region over the next couple thousand years, which is an epoch of time archaeologists refer to as the 'PaleoIndian' Period. The encampment eventually became buried more and more deeply as alluvial sands were washed up over the banks by occasional floods of the adjacent river. For whatever reason, the spot became less attractive over the following several millennia until a nearby area was again occupied briefly during the Middle Woodland Period about 2,000 to 1,200 years ago.

How do we know about this ancient campsite on the banks of the Farmington River? Recent archaeological investigations conducted in preparation for a Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) project, funded in part by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), encountered the deeply buried site just ahead of construction of a new footing during reconstruction of the Old Farms Road Bridge near Route 10. The cultural resource consultant firm that investigated the site, Archaeological and Historical Services (AHS) operating out of Storrs, Connecticut, discovered the remnants of suspected hearth features and associated artifacts at some six feet below the present ground surface. Over 15,000 artifacts were recovered from the site, many of which are characteristic of the Early and Middle Paleoindian periods. Artifacts recovered from the site are almost exclusively lithic (stone), as organic material tends not to preserve from this great age and pottery had not yet been invented in this part of the world. The lithic collection, however, includes projectile point and biface fragments, small thumbnail sized scrapers, pointed graters, and 'channel flakes'—diagnostic by-products removed from 'Clovis style' fluted points characteristic of the early Paleoindian Period—as well as numerous other small waste chips produced from stone tool manufacture or resharpening. In addition to the artifacts, at least 27 cultural features, including hearths and postmoulds thought to represent imprints from temporary or short-term shelters were also found. The estimated date of the site comes from a carbon sample obtained from burned wood charcoal found within one of the suspected fire-pits. Radiocarbon analysis results suggest that the site represents the earliest documented human occupation to date of the area now comprising the State of Connecticut.

AHS worked diligently throughout the winter of 2019 in order to accomplish a complete excavation of the affected area of this newly discovered site without major disruption to the project schedule. As part of the effort to resolve adverse effects to this significant historic property mandated by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, FHWA and CTDOT intend to provide for in-depth scientific analysis and reporting of the site and its contents to further our knowledge about this remote period of North American history. Consultation with stake holding parties, including the Town of Avon, the State Historic Preservation Office, and modern Native American Tribal authorities, has also led to an agreement to develop future educational displays for the general public about the site. After full analysis, the collection itself will for the most part remain with the Office of the State Archaeologist at the University of Connecticut for students to use in future archaeological research. The CTDOT Office of Environmental Planning is pleased to have had this opportunity to contribute to general knowledge surrounding the deep history of the native peoples of the State of Connecticut, while advancing the goals of the agency's transportation mission. ###

The Avon Historical Society is pleased to be part of an adhoc group with the Town of Avon and Avon Free Public Library on next steps in this process. We are discussing potential future exhibits and will be waiting for a narrative and scholarly insights from AHS (Archeological and Historical Services). This is an ongoing process that will take up to two or more years to complete. It is expected a series of public presentations will be made in Avon about this incredible discovery as soon as February 2020. Please watch local media for more information.

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

**November 2019 – November 2020**



**CT**humanities

The yearlong series, ***DEEDS NOT WORDS: 100 Years of the Vote for Women***, has launched with presentations, exhibits, talks, movies and more. Of great interest was the gallery exhibit researched and mounted by the reference staff of the Avon Free Public Library. It was on display from November through December 2019. It contained details on both the Pro and Anti suffrage movements, the national, state and local leaders, many images of suffragists and suffragettes, and more. Included were two seven-foot tall banners, one entitled YES (for suffrage) and one entitled NO (against suffrage), that will be used in various venues during the the year. And we have a life-size cutout of a suffragist to use as a selfie putting your head in place of hers! Sending it out on social media will help market this series. JOIN US in any or all events this new year. Here are the upcoming ones for the winter months:

**January 30, 2020 at 2:00pm** – Presentation at the Avon Free Public Library entitled “The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment: A Tale of Suffrage, Sacrifice & Success” by Mariann Millard, a licensed guide to Washington DC. This will be a lively and engaging conversation to better understand and appreciate how difficult and how long the fight was for all women to become fully-fledged citizens of America.

**February 21 at 2:00pm** – Join us at the Avon Senior Center for a lively musical presentation entitled “From Seneca Falls to the 19th Amendment: Songs of the Woman Suffrage Movement” being led by Rick Spencer and Dawn Indermuehle. Music was one of the significant tools used in the crusade for a woman's right to vote. Songs were composed to advance (and to oppose) the agenda that culminated in the 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. This program presents some of the most engaging and interesting songs of the movement, with historical commentary, in commemoration of the approaching centennial of a woman's right to vote. Please note: that due to the 72-year struggle for woman suffrage, this program runs 70 minutes.

**February 26 at 6:30pm** – “Meet Isabella Beecher Hooker: one of Connecticut’s suffragettes” presented by Susan Campbell, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. Her book *Tempest Tossed: The Spirit of Isabella Beecher Hooker* is the first biography of the passionate, fascinating youngest daughter of the Beecher family. Books will be for sale and signing after her presentation at the Avon Free Public Library.

**March 28 at 2:00pm** – Meet Susan B. Anthony as portrayed by Sheryl Faye, historical woman performer who has appeared previously at the Library. Susan was one of the most famous women in American history as vocal leader of activities in support of racial, gender and educational equality. Her work as a suffragist is most widely known. Come to learn about her at the Avon Free Public Library.

**March 30 beginning at 4:30pm** – Suffrage debate (pro and anti) with Women’s Studies students of Tunxis Community College. Event will be held at the Senior Center and will open with complimentary pizza and soda dinner. Debate will begin at 5:00pm. Audience participation will be encouraged.

Suffrage themed films – All films begin at 1:30pm in the Avon Library Community Room:

**January 8, 2020 - *The Divine Order*** The Suffrage movement in Switzerland where women got the right to vote in 1971 (2017; NR; 1 hr.36 min.)

**February 5 - *Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony*** Two women, one allegiance (2004; NR; 3 hrs.)

**March 4 - *One Woman, One Vote*** PBS documentary chronicles the 70 year struggle leading up to the passage of the 19th Amendment (2005; NR; 1 hr.) shown with: ***Equality*** Contemporary women introduce women of the past (2007; NR; 30 min.)

### **Society won a grant to install a National Register District sign in West Avon**

The Society is pleased to announce it won a grant of \$1,100 from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, Syracuse, NY for a 18" x 32" roadside marker that is brown, with white highlighted lettering and border, on a 7' aluminum pole to be placed in Avon's only National Register District located in West Avon. The district is named "Pine Grove Historic District" and was designated by the National Park Service in 1980. It encompasses 6 structures: four 19<sup>th</sup> c. homesteads; one 18<sup>th</sup> c. house; and the 1865 Pine Grove Schoolhouse. The official address of the district is 3 Harris Road, location of the schoolhouse. The official placement will take place when the ground thaws before the summer opening of the schoolhouse on June 7, 2020. Watch for it!

## **Avon Historical Society working with Town of Avon on adaptive reuse of Schoolhouse No. 3 for it's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2023**



In just three years, the small white one room schoolhouse on East Main Street (Route 44) in Avon will be 200 years old! It is the Town of Avon's oldest building not on its original footprint. It was moved to this location by the Avon Historical Society in 1985 to be used as a "Living Museum." A long-term lease between the Society and the Town was signed which is in effect until 2084. Relocating it to this new location made room for the building of the brand new Avon Free Public Library on Country Club Road, which is also the geographic center of the Town of Avon.

Schoolhouse No. 3 was built in 1823 in a Federal/Greek revival style, serving the children of West Avon until 1938 when it was closed due to the consolidation efforts and the students were moved to the modern Huckleberry Hill School. (When it was built the town was called Northington, a part of Farmington. It wasn't until 1830 when Avon was granted its own parish by the General Assembly and took the name 'Avon.') The years when it was Avon's Living Museum (1986-2012) it had annual visits by school students and welcomed hundreds of visitors over the summer months. Included is a detailed static exhibit about the Farmington Canal which traveled right through the property. The Society welcomed traveling exhibits and special exhibits of various kinds such as Avon's veterans, the flood of 1955, and holidays in Avon. However, due to lack of attendance and the need to update the static displays, the Board of Trustees of the Society voted to close it in 2012 and look for a new use for it in time for it's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

But there's more! The property it now sits on is not without deep history for the town. Schoolhouse No. 3 is on the site of the original Avon Town Hall (1891-1967) and across the street from the site of the former Farmington Canal Warehouse, where the Farmington Canal (1828-1849) and later the New Haven/Northampton's Railroad's north-south route intersected with the Albany Turnpike. Today Route 44 is Avon's main thoroughfare, running east-west from Plymouth, MA through northern Connecticut and ending in the Hudson Valley in New York state.

The Avon Historical Society and the Town of Avon recognize the significance of both the Schoolhouse building and the parcel on which it stands as integral to the history of Avon; a community that grew up along the banks of the Farmington River and the Farmington Canal. Therefore, a Capital Improvement Plan has been written that will provide for an adaptive reuse of the building which means it will undergo full renovation, not restoration. It will not be returned to a schoolhouse, yet it won't look new or be altered beyond it's current footprint. It will become a modern, energy efficient museum and storage.

After 18 months of planning, partnering with the Town, the Society will assist to determine the lighting, environmental, ADA compliance, HVAC system, fire suppression, and storage needs of the building while it is undergoing various stages of work. The Town is applying for various grants to help with the work that needs to be done over the next three years. The Society has agreed to match

various projects such as window replacement, roof and siding repair and a flexible interior design for future exhibits. It will also be applying for grants for the archival collection, including a possible long-term fundraiser for the matching funding. It is expected that the first stage will begin Spring 2020 and go on for two more years. Watch the progress as you drive by!

**THIS JUST IN....**The Society won a grant from Yankee Gas Service Company dba Eversource Energy of over \$7,000, through the 2019 Connecticut Neighborhood Assistance Act, toward the energy efficiency improvements for the building. In addition, the Town of Avon, as owners of the building, has submitted a Letter of Intent to Preservation Connecticut (formerly the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation) for a \$10,000 grant for similar improvements. Stay tuned as this project moves forward in 2020.

### **Derrin House has gutters and rain barrel for care of the raised gardens!**



Although the Derrin House has not reopened since the fire in May 2016, there is quite a lot of planning going on for an adaptive reuse of the property since an official trailhead to Horse Guard State Park has been opened in 2019 behind the house by the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection. First step is to spruce up the property. Longtime Society members Lesley and John Mancini have a plan to return the raised garden beds back to life by summer 2020. But access to water has been an issue since there is none on the property. The solution is a rain barrel fed by gutters running along the front of the house. Trustee Gene Macy (Avon Middle School History Teacher) and his colleague from Avon High School, John McLaughlin, spent their Columbus Day off installing gutters. The rain barrel will be put in place to collect rainwater with a spicket at the bottom for Leslie and John to use to water the gardens when they are replanted. THANKS to everyone for this project. It's been many years in the planning and fun to see it finally take shape!

The Society is interested in ongoing talks on various options for the house with the DEEP and State of Connecticut. As those plans materialize, you will be informed. Thank you for your continued patience with this project.

## TABLESCAPES IS BACK – FRIDAY, MARCH 20 AND SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020



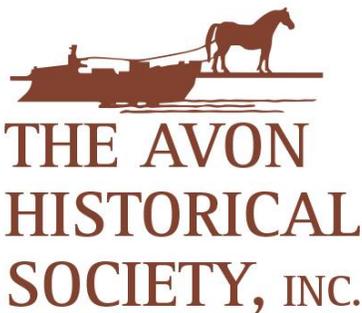
This will be the third annual fundraising event that brings together 30 of the Valley's most creative decorators, florists, garden clubs, Society members and others who know how to make a table shine! This year there will be a few with a statement to share and others will be pure fun! The event will once again take place in the luxurious Belle Ballroom at The North House in Avon. Tickets will be available for sale in February. Watch your mail or local media for details!

### 2020 Exhibits in the History Corner of the Avon Free Public Library

January through February – *Set My Place: Napkin Rings from Around the World* presented by Cyndi Larsen, Reference Librarian, Avon Free Public Library.

March through April – Commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Avon Middle School

May through June – DEEDS NOT WORDS Exhibit #1 – *When Women of the World Won the Vote!*



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  
Heddy Panik  
Brian Malone  
Carol Bradovchak

**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](http://avonhistoricalsociety.org)

