



P.O. Box 448, Avon, CT 06001
www.avonhistoricalsociety.org

October 2016

Dear Member/Avon resident,

"History is not just something that happened long ago and far away. History happens to all of us all the time. Local history brings history home, it touches your life, the life of your family, your neighborhood, your community."

This great quote is from Thomas J. Noel, Denver author and historian. It occurs to me that this really says it all for those of us who support the Avon Historical Society with annual memberships and contributions to our many activities!

Hello. My name is Terri Wilson and I am the President of the Avon Historical Society. I am writing because now is the time of year we request new or renewing membership with the Society. We hope you will join and take an active part in our events, fundraisers and by visiting our properties. Volunteers are always welcome as greeters, gardeners, committee members or event assistants. (Please note on the enclosed application if you need more information.)

As many of you know the c.1810 Derrin Farmhouse at 249 West Avon Road, part of the Avon Historical Society, suffered severe fire damage on Wednesday, May 11th. Thanks to the very quick and precise response by the Avon Volunteer Fire Department, with mutual aid from Simsbury, Canton and Farmington, the structure was saved and it is structurally sound. The cause was deemed to be an accident - spontaneous combustion of oily stain soaked rags left in a plastic garbage pail from some volunteer work done the day before the fire.

We have set up a funding site for donations and I am asking you to consider a donation and to share this site with your contacts who might be interested in donating. And if you are on Facebook, we would very much appreciate it if you posted the site on your Facebook page letting others know of the opportunity to save this over 200 year old structure.

The site is: www.gofundme.com/derrin. Or donations can be made to: Avon Historical Society, P.O. Box 448, Avon, CT 06001. Note on the memo line: Derrin House. All contributions are tax deductible.

As part of background on the Derrin Farm House, the Society does not own the building. It is leased from the CT Department of the Military because the last family to live in it (not Derrins) were the caretakers of the First Co. Governor's Horse Guards which is located across the street. We have had the lease since 1996 and there has been a large team of volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the past 20 years restoring the house with grants, private donations and lots and lots of donated materials. The lease requires the Society to carry insurance, which we do. But, as you can image, no amount of insurance can replace what was lost. So we are seeking donations to help this process move forward. We will be updating the Society's website and Facebook page with more details, but the GoFundMe page has photos and explanation of what happened.

We had planned a grand re-opening event on June 12th to mark the 250th anniversary of the Derrin Family signing a deed taking over the land that this house is on today. The work being done inside was getting ready for that day of celebration with the opening of a new Visitor Center. The Derrin family owned three houses and farms on West Avon Road from 1766 until the 1940's. Many of you may know the "flower house" on the same road just south of our Derrin House. That house was also a Derrin Family house and farm.

But that is not all we do. The Avon Historical Society has been a presence at all of the Avon Public Schools for the past few years. We have occupied the display cases and set up exhibits at all 5 of the schools to help educate our children on Avon's history:

Roaring Brook Elementary School - "Where Did Milk Come from in the Olden Days?" including The History of the Avon Creamery. Display boards showing Avon's former dairy farms, a process of milk being turned into cream/cheese/butter, and history of the Avon Creamery were presented. A walk-in store window display was made to accompany this featuring a 3D Guernsey cow in a dairy farm scene and a model of the Avon Creamery.

Pine Grove Elementary School - "The Reagan's State Dining Table" facsimile was recreated as a backdrop to an in-person presentation by Janet Conner. A kid's challenge game to recreate a place setting from memory was a fun activity.

Thompson Brook School - "History Doors" bulletin board in main lobby. Students opened doors which had a question on the outside and answer on the inside. The topic was the Pine Grove Historic District.

Avon Middle School - A photographic exhibit with captions was done in two glass display cases outside of the school library. One featured 'Famous People from Avon'; the other was 'Avon Disasters' including floods, hurricanes, train wrecks, plane crashes, etc. to show students that there is a lot of history about our town.

Avon High School - Two large glass display cases in the lobby were used for related topics. Case one "Do You Know Who You Are" helped student learn how to trace their family heritage using various examples of research including primary and secondary sources, family records, online sources, census records, etc. The second case was about Avon's Demographics including both immigration and population changes and growth over time to show the town's cultural makeup and heritage.

We also maintain the 1845 School House No. 3 on East Main Street and the 1865 Pine Grove School House on the corner of Harris and West Avon Road. In addition we oversee the exhibits outside the Marian Hunter Local History Room in the Avon Free Public Library. Some exhibits are from the Society and others mounted by other local organizations or the Library itself for special occasions.

We are an active organization of volunteers who appreciate and value local history. So we thank you for considering a donation, which can be anonymous, on the funding site or via the mail. Or, if you do not donate, but can pass on this information to others, we would very much appreciate it.

The Historical Society is not financially supported by the Town and is only supported by volunteer efforts, memberships, donations and event earning. Please consider joining or continuing to support the Society. None of this can happen without the new or continued support of our many members. So won't you please take moment to fill out the attached membership form and join us in continuing our mission to "identify, collect, preserve, utilize, publish, display and promote the history and heritage of Avon." Use this link to [Join Us - Become a Member!](#)

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Terri Wilson
President

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