

AVON HISTORY MUSEUM renovations begin!



Exterior siding removed on Day 1, July 11, 2023

Excerpt from a July 5, 2023 press release:

In partnership with the Town of Avon, The Avon Historical Society, Inc. is happy to announce that renovations of the 200-year old one-room schoolhouse, located at 8 East Main Street (Route 44), have commenced! Set in Avon's original and historic center, the **Avon History Museum** will open in 2024.

Schoolhouse No. 3, also called Center School, was originally built in the geographic center of Avon on Country Club Road where the Avon Free Public Library stands today. For 126 years, from 1823-1949, students of West Avon were educated in this schoolhouse. To commemorate 200 years of the Town of Avon's oldest-owned building, the Avon Historical Society approached the Town five years ago with a long-range vision of establishing a state-of-the art museum in the footprint of the schoolhouse.

Background: In 1980 the Avon Historical Society signed a 99-year lease with the Town of Avon to maintain the schoolhouse as its headquarters and to use it for public exhibits. After an archaeological dig was done in 1981 by the University of Connecticut yielding many interesting artifacts, it was relocated in 1982 from Country Club Road (on land needed to build the new Avon Free Public Library) to 8 East Main Street opening it as "The Living Museum" in 1983. A cellar was created for storage with a display area for artifacts built on the main floor. For twenty years, Avon's elementary school students visited the Living Museum to learn about the town's early history and spend the day being a student in a one-room schoolhouse. The Living Museum was open for 29 years during the summer months to thousands of visitors. Due to regular wear and tear and several maintenance issues, such as lack of proper climate control for the rapidly growing archival collection of textiles and other objects stored there, the museum was closed in 2012. The Society returned to calling it by one of its 19th century names, "Schoolhouse No. 3."

Fast forward to 2018 when the Society approached the Town with a vision to once again turn it into a museum and update it to make it modern and usable for proper storage of artifacts and textiles, as well as a meeting space for the Trustees and a studio for the newly created *AVON TALKS* podcasts. A cost sharing agreement was reached, funding to transform the exterior was raised and the work has begun.

The next step is the interior which will be curated by a professional company that specializes in creating interactive museum quality exhibits in small spaces. This will include local history of Avon from the time English settlers came to the Farmington Valley in the 17th century. At that time, this land was called "Nod," later "Northington" (a daughter town of Farmington) and in 1830 named "Avon." In addition there will be a section devoted to the 2019 discovery of the Brian D. Jones Paleoindian Site along the Farmington River. To pay for the interior, the Society has launched a "Buy a Brick" fundraiser (see Page 7) that will enhance the patio and seating area next to the museum over the original towpath of the Farmington Canal. Follow the activity at the Society's website or Facebook page...and Buy A Brick!



AVON TALKS, a new monthly podcast launched on July 4th is available on many streaming services! This new podcast is produced and edited by Avon resident, Ethan Guo, a rising freshman at Tufts University. He is focusing on four main themes: Avon Historical Narratives, Avon Historic Buildings/Landmarks/Sites, Avon Historical Events and Modern Avon History. The first 35-minute podcast was an introduction to this new service by Terri Wilson and Nora Howard providing a brief history of Avon, some information about the Brian D. Jones Paleoindian Site and how the Society works within the Town of Avon to promote and educate about Avon's past and present. The second podcast will be available in early August and will feature Cal Miller-Stevens who will talk about the history of the 70+ years of Miller Farms in Avon. Each month there will be new and exciting discussions that you can listen to at your leisure. This is a link to the first podcast on Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/6K9vvvh6EEg1B1YK23VomL?si=zsdhvxCrS9mHBCODOI06JA>

Native American artifacts brought from far and wide

On Saturday, June 24, the Society held a 2nd annual Artifact ID Day at the Avon Senior Center as part of the *Unearthing History* webinar series that features presentations about the Paleo time period of 12,500 years ago. The ID event is a way for archaeologists from the Institute of American Indian Studies, a partner of the webinar series, to help identify possible Native American artifacts found here in the Northeast. Dozens of people came in with boxes, bags and just handfuls of items they were hoping would be something special. Of course, not everything is as it seems!!



Native artifacts found in New York State



Handmade bowl possibly from 19th century – not necessarily Native American



This Avon family found they had a simple river rock.



Variety of Native and non-Native American artifacts

The 1865 Pine Grove Schoolhouse is open for the season!



We are open for the visitor season on Sundays from 2:00-4:00pm through September. Volunteer greeters will be on hand to welcome everyone to this lovely one-room schoolhouse set up as classroom of 1912. New this year are Edwardian-style electrified sconces on the walls, an authentic chalkboard to draw upon as well as a scavenger hunt for families to enjoy while learning what is around the room.

The Society is pleased to announce it has won a grant from Connecticut Humanities entitled "CT Summer at the Museum Initiative" to support the operations of the 1865 Pine Grove Schoolhouse during the summer months. The grant is to encourage families to attend historic sites and museums with FREE admission for children under the age of 18 with one accompanying adult. Most historic sites and museums are participating in this initiative. The Pine Grove Schoolhouse is free for all visitors, open Sundays from 2-4pm through September. There is a donation box on site and items from the Society's gift shop are available for purchase. And there is a Little Free Library on site for everyone to give and take books to share.

Thanks to this team of volunteers, Jeannie Parker, Gene Macy, Ben Isaacson, Vicky DiCenso and Mary Harrop who spent hours washing and cleaning the interior floors, walls and desks as well as painting the exterior sign by the road and the bannister leading up the stone steps. A grant is being applied for to have the exterior painted later this year. If won, it will give the Town-owned oldest building, in its original location, a fresh new look!

UPDATES, EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Society is happy to announce conservation is completed of their oldest textile in the collection! A silk dress worn in a 1794 wedding in Northington (the previous name of Avon) was painstakingly restored by a professional textile conservator in Connecticut. A grant from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), through the Abigail Phelps Chapter in Simsbury, paid for half of the cost of

the restoration. The dress is in proper storage and will be put on display in the new Avon History Museum next year.

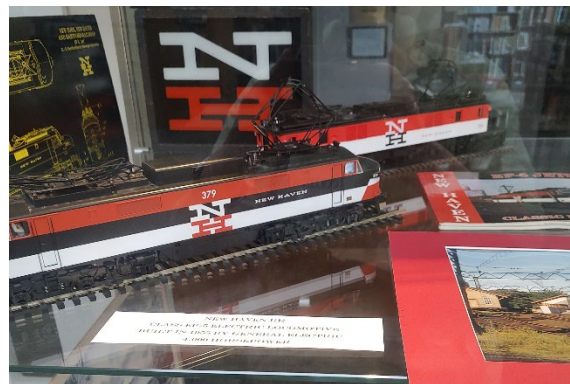
- If you are shopping at BIG Y in Avon in July, please buy a Community Shopping Bag. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the green and blue bags, will benefit the new Avon History Museum. They are located in the self-check out aisle! Thanks.



- The fourth webinar in the *Unearthing History* series entitled "Paleoindian Sites, Stone Patterning and Travel Corridors along the Southern Arm of the Champlain Sea" will be on Thursday, September 21 at 7:00pm. It will be presented by Jess Robinson, Vermont State Archaeologist. He will compare and contrast Paleo sites in Vermont with the Brian D. Jones site here in Avon. Register through the Avon Library website (see below). To date, over 14,000 views have been logged of previous year's webinars!
- The fifth webinar in the series is entitled "Update on the Scientific Analysis of the Brian D. Jones site in Avon, CT." This annual update will be held on Thursday, October 12, during Connecticut Archaeology Month! To register for either webinar, or to view past webinars in the series visit: <https://www.avonctlibrary.info/2023/01/unearthing-history-2023-virtual-lecture-series/>
- The History Corner exhibit in the Library for July through August is all about the "New Haven Railroad" (steam and electric) by historian, Rick Abramson of New Haven, CT. His series of talks on transportation at the Library in May was very well received. He retired from the New Haven RR after a 44-year career (including as a locomotive engineer) and over 50 years of modeling all modes of transportation. Included is his collection of signs, posters, old train artifacts, model trains, time tables and more. Please visit before the end of August during regular Library hours.



Sample of RR memorabilia on display

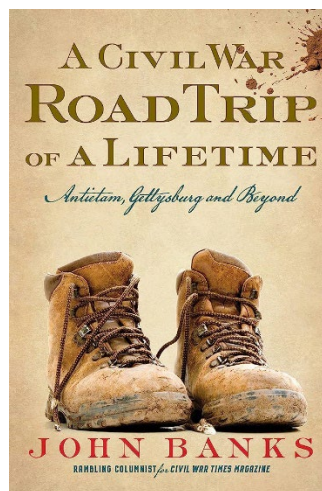


Model of New Haven RR Class EP-5 Electric Locomotive

- The History Corner exhibit for September and October is entitled, "Shopping Bag Art" from the collection of Joyce Baldwin. Similar to what museums around the world have shown, the artwork on shopping bags, starting in 1961 from stores such as Bloomingdales and Macys, are now considered colorful and unique. There will be familiar shopping bags from Connecticut stores and a scavenger hunt for kids to find certain items on certain bags! Check out what's to come with these bags!!!



- If you live in the area you may have noticed the Derrin House on West Avon Road is looking a bit lighter in color! That is because it had a gentle power wash recently in order to be ready for scraping and painting. The Society Trustees have decided to make the house into it's own "artifact" and have the inside rooms set up as if the family was living there. Visitors can view "in from the outside" to see the farmhouse and artifacts and read about its history on exterior and interior signage. More to come, watch the local media for its progress.
- NOTICE: The dues structure of the Society has changed slightly. On Page 8 is the new list of member categories and pricing. And this is a reminder to everyone that it's the time of year for dues renewals. Reminders will be sent out, but if you want to avoid receiving it, feel free to pay your membership dues via our website or by mail. Paying online is convenient and easy at:
<https://avonhistoricalsociety.org/membership/>



- Co-sponsored with the Avon Library is a virtual talk by former Avon resident and Civil War historian, John Banks. It will take place on Tuesday, August 1 at 7:00pm to share his new book "A Civil War Road Trip of a Lifetime: Antietam, Gettysburg and Beyond." John Banks has crisscrossed the country exploring battlefields, historic houses, forts, and more. He rode on the back of an ATV with his "psychotic connection" in Mississippi, went under the spell of an amateur hypnotist at a U.S. Army fort in Tennessee, admired a sunset from the grounds of the notorious Andersonville prison camp in Georgia, prayed during a tense boat ride in Charleston Harbor in South Carolina, and briefly interviewed Louie the wild boar in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Join him on a road trip like no other. Register through the Avon Library's website at:
<https://www.avonctlibrary.info/event/civilwarroadtripjohnbanks/>

- The Society is the beneficiary of a two-year federally-funded *Save America's Treasures* Grant won by the Avon Free Public Library last Fall. The project is to professionally record and archive for storage the over 800-piece collection of the Society's artifacts. To date, over 100 items have been researched, photographed and properly boxed. Each item's detailed information is now being entered in a new Connecticut Collections database through the Connecticut State Library. This grant and the creation of the cloud-based collections database were very timely. When completed in late 2024 the database will allow anyone, mostly researchers, to know what we and other museums and historical societies have in their vast collections. This activity is a partner of the Connecticut Digital Archive database, <https://ctdigitalarchive.org/>. The Avon Library has already scanned, digitized and uploaded over 10,000 items such as photos, maps, deeds and more for ready access by anyone wishing to research Avon's history. To provide a sneak peek of unique items they are entering in to the CT Collections database, visit: <https://www.avonctlibrary.info/2023/04/avon-library-receives-a-save-americas-treasures-grant/>
- The CT State Library recently announced that the database of Avon's ephemera collection of photos, papers, deeds, diaries, etc., through the CT Digital Archive database (mentioned above), is the THIRD MOST VIEW COLLECTION from June 2022 – May 2023. A total of 118,474 views were made of the Avon Library's digital collection! They came in just after University of Connecticut Library Archives and the Connecticut Historical Society, now named the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History. WOW, that's a lot of people researching Avon's history in one year!
- Earlier this year the Society won a \$5,400 grant from Connecticut Humanities entitled "Connecticut Cultural Fund Operating Support Grant for FY23." These grants are designed to help the state's museums, cultural, humanities, and arts organizations maintain and grow their ability to serve their community and the public and improve their information technology and digital infrastructure. This grant is administered by CT Humanities (CTH), with funding provided by the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)/Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) from the Connecticut State Legislature. In total \$8.5M was granted to 723 cultural organizations statewide in 2023. The Avon Historical Society's grant is covering reopening expenses for Pine Grove Schoolhouse, programmatic expenses such as another set of Brian D. Jones Paleoindian site pop up banners, digital software costs for production of the AVON TALKS podcast, and utility expenses at the leased properties. This is the second operating support grant the Society received since the reopening of sites during the pandemic. The Society thanks all involved in making these funds possible for our operations this year.
- A recent announcement was made that Town Historian Nora Howard and Society President Terri Wilson were awarded a Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists third place Award, in the Government category, for their joint article entitled "Resolving Town Center Debate" which appeared in TODAY Magazine in 2022. Last year Wilson won First Place for her article on Avon's only Black Civil War Soldier, Pvt. Leverett Holden, CT 29th Regiment, who lived in Avon before and after his service. It was published in the February 2021 TODAY Magazine. Pvt. Holden is buried in East Avon Cemetery and his gravesite was recently added to the Connecticut Freedom Trail. A ceremony for the dedication on the Trail will take place on Saturday, September 23 at noon at the gravesite. Plans are underway right now for a ceremonial event. Watch the local media for details.
- Special thanks to Society member and volunteer, Norm Sondheimer, who is in charge of 18 pop up banners that are now visible in many public areas of Avon such as lobbies of restaurants and medical centers, town offices, coffee shops and more. Twelve are entitled, "Moments in Avon's History" and six are entitled "The Brian D. Jones Paleoindian Site in Avon." We hope the public is enjoying learning history as part of their busy days.



THE AVON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Help Us Pave The Way!

Buy an engraved brick for the new **Avon History Museum**



Rendering by Jay T. Willerup

Join us as we transform this 200-year-old schoolhouse into a new museum featuring Avon's rich history. Located in Avon's original center, with a planned 2024 grand opening, the Avon History Museum will be accompanied by a brick path and sitting area. Proceeds will benefit the creation of permanent and temporary exhibits inside the new museum.

Memorialize a loved one, your family, an ancestor, your business or yourself!

Personal: 4" x 8" for 3 lines (\$100) **Business:** 8" x 8" for 6 lines (\$250) of text

20 characters per line, including spaces and punctuation. Provide your name or message below:

Purchase online at www.avonhistoricalsociety.org or mail this form with your check, payable to:

The Avon Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 448, Avon, CT 06001



AVON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION: to identify, collect, preserve, utilize, publish, display, and promote the history and heritage of Avon.
(Approved by the AHS Trustees, Jan. 10, 2001)

ABOUT US: We work to deliver transparent, fair and inclusive processes and experiences, free from discrimination of any form. We seek to build a culture of inclusion within our members, volunteers, visitor experiences, organization events and our community. (Approved by the AHS Trustees, March 9, 2022)

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MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

**Dues can be paid online through our website, clicking on the QR code above,
or by mail at: P.O. Box 448, Avon, CT 06001**

MEMBERSHIP DUES SCHEDULE:

\$25 INDIVIDUAL
\$50 HOUSEHOLD
\$25 SENIOR CITIZEN (60+)
\$100 CORPORATE
\$300 LIFE (precludes future dues)
\$20 STUDENT

All donations are tax deductible according to law and are acknowledged in writing upon receipt.

Member of: www.farmingtonvalleyctheritage.org

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