

Spring 2023

## The “Avon’s Brian D. Jones Paleoindian Site” banners have arrived!!!

The Avon Historical Society and its partners, the Avon Free Public Library and Avon Senior Center, along with the Town of Avon, are pleased to announce they have produced six seven-foot tall pop up banners highlighting the Paleo period of the Northeast. These banners were inspired by the find in 2019 of the 12,500 year old Paleoindian site along the Farmington River in Avon, which is currently the oldest known human occupation site in southern New England. The text, funded by the Society’s 2023 Operating Support Grant from Connecticut Humanities, was written by archaeologists who were part of the discovery. Production cost for the banners was funded by the Town of Avon, Avon Free Public Library, the Society and an anonymous donor. These banners, like the “Moments in Avon’s History” banners made in 2016, will rotate around the town in various public locations such as lobbies of restaurants, town hall, schools, etc. These banners are part of the ongoing mission to educate the general public about the site and what life was like in this region after the last Ice Age. They are a complement to the ongoing *Unearthing History* webinar series that is in its third year. For more information about the Brian D. Jones Paleoindian site, visit the Society’s website.



The six banners that will be rotating around Avon in public places. A QR code on each takes the reader to the Avon Library’s You Tube channel which contains the recordings of all the *Unearthing History* webinars to date.

## Work to create THE AVON HISTORY MUSEUM is about to begin!



Rendering of The Avon History Museum by Jay T. Willerup

Many of you may recall that in the mid 1980s this one room schoolhouse of 1823 originally stood on Country Club Road where the Avon Free Public Library is today. After signing a long-term lease with the Town of Avon, it was meticulously taken down by Society members and moved to 8 East Main Street on Route 44. It is next to Lumani's Barber Shop and across from DaCapo's Restaurant in the original and historic center of Avon. Shortly after being renovated, it became "The Living Museum," open to the public and school children. Due to the building's deteriorating condition and lack of a proper HVAC system to house the thousands of artifacts stored there, it closed as a museum in 2012. Discussions began on how best to utilize the Town of Avon's oldest structure. In 2018, the Avon Historical Society and Town of Avon created a vision to turn the building into a modern museum of Avon's history. Thus began a partnership to renovate the now 200-year old "Schoolhouse No. 3," it's original name, to become **The Avon History Museum** in 2024.

Recently, the Town of Avon signed a contract with Pioneer Builders, Newington, CT to be the contractor for the renovations. Electrical work will be done by Northeast Tradesmen. New siding, windows, and doors have been ordered. Upgrades to the interior and exterior lighting will be done soon. New HVAC and a security system will be installed. The cellar was fully renovated during the pandemic by the Town of Avon Public Works Department with a new kitchenette, bathroom, floor and walls. Funding for the exterior renovations were secured thanks to donations from private donors, foundations, grants, the Society and the Town of Avon. The building, on long-term lease to the Society for use as a museum and its archival storage and headquarters, belongs to the Town of Avon. The collective vision is to have this new museum be a tourist attraction and venue for rest and relaxation with a new paved seating area. A separate section of the new museum will be dedicated to the Brian D. Jones Paleoindian Site curated by the Institute for American Indian Studies, Washington, CT. The Society's own indigenous artifact collections will be housed there also. The Institute is a partner in the *Unearthing History* webinar series and hosts what is now becoming an annual Artifact Identification Day for local finds.

The next big step will be to install a professionally curated set of exhibits in the interior. The Society has hired a firm from Fairfield, CT to create the exhibit spaces, interpretive signage and interactive areas. To pay for this portion, the Society is announcing the launch of a BUY A BRICK fundraiser as outlined on Page 7. As reported in the Winter newsletter, we have a jump start with an anonymous \$15,000 donation. To allow everyone to participate, we encourage you to consider buying a brick, or two, to be placed in a benched seated area in an upgraded pocket park adjacent to the new museum. A donated Little Free Library will also be placed there for everyone to enjoy.

**The Avon Historical Society thanks the Town of Avon for its continued and unwavering support of promoting our local history to visitors and residents.**



## **OPEN HOUSE on Sunday, June 4 of the 1865 Pine Grove Schoolhouse**



Join us for a family-friendly OPEN HOUSE on Sunday, June 4 from 2-4pm at the 1865 Pine Grove Schoolhouse, corner of West Avon and Harris Roads. As we do every year, we welcome visitors to sit at the desks, look through the books, ring the teacher's bells and find some unique 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century treasures within its walls. Additions this year include a working, movable chalkboard with hidden cabinet behind and new Edwardian era electrical lights donated by the grandson of the last living student who attended all grades in this school. There will be puzzles for the students to enjoy and more. Visit with members of the Society who can answer questions and show you the Little Free Library just outside the door. The Schoolhouse will be open on Sundays from 2-4pm through September. Donations are welcome.

Last Fall the Society returned two school desks that were in Pine Grove Schoolhouse to their rightful owner, The Ethel Walker School in Simsbury. Another late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century desk, that had no information with it, was donated to the Children's Room of the Avon Free Public Library. It has a hole for an ink well and space below the desktop for books and supplies. It had most likely been donated in 1976 when the Society was outfitting the schoolhouse for viewing during the U.S. Bicentennial. The desk was thoroughly cleaned by Ben Isaacson and both chair and desk mounted by Lee Wilson in order to stand sturdy and strong for any child to sit and envision themselves in an early American classroom.



Visit this 19<sup>th</sup> c. school desk in the Children's Room of the Library!

## WINNERS OF *TABLESCAPES* 2023



Tracy Murphy was the first-place winner, chosen by attendees, with her table entitled "A Sneak-Peek SPRING!" Murphy, a resident of Avon, was sponsored by Services for the Elderly of Farmington. Proceeds from the event benefit the renovation of what is becoming the Avon History Museum scheduled to open in 2024. Second place was entitled "Merry Christmas" decorated by Avon resident Laura Hunt. Third place was entitled "What's the Buzz?" decorated by members of The Garden Club of Avon. Honorable Mention went to the duo of Marie Speich & Ann Ryan from Adventures in Decorating LLC for "WITCHES." The Society thanks the North House, all the exhibitors, attendees, tag sale and event volunteers for making this 4<sup>th</sup> event their best ever! Their next *TABLESCAPES* event will be held March 15 & 16, 2024 in the Belle Ballroom of The North House in Avon, CT.

## UPDATES, EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- At the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Members Meeting of the Avon Historical Society on April 19<sup>th</sup> we welcomed Avon resident Vicky DiCenso as a newly elected Trustee who will also become the Society Treasurer. We also gave a heartfelt thank you to Eric Thronson for five years of exceptional service as Treasurer. And we thanked Trustee Carolyn McGrattan for her ten years of service as a Trustee, and one-time Secretary, on the Society's Board of Trustees. We will greatly miss both Eric and Carolyn.
- At the Annual Meeting the Members present voted to approve and accept as presented new Avon Historical Society Bylaws and Amended Articles of Incorporation. Over the years, Society member Glenn Lawrence has been the one who reminds us of our duty to update the Bylaws every five years.

Last year, he reminded us that it was time again and that our Articles of Incorporation had not been amended since they were originally filed during incorporation fifty years ago! Therefore, a Bylaws Committee was formed, chaired by Glenn Lawrence and consisting of Mary Harrop, Marsha Fried-Scherer, Ben Isaacson and Eileen Riley. They enlisted legal help through Pro Bono Partnership. The Society now has updated Bylaws and Amended Articles of Incorporation that have us in good standing as a non-stock corporation with the State of Connecticut, Internal Revenue Service and granting organizations that require these important documents. We thank Glenn and committee for more than four months of diligent meetings, readings of clauses and phrases and re-writing as needed. Request copies at: [info@avonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@avonhistoricalsociety.org)

- The third webinar in the Unearthing History series entitled "The Big Importance of Small Things: Microscopic and Blood Residue Analysis of Ancient Stone Tools" will be on Thursday, May 11 at 7:00pm. It will be presented by Prof. Heather Rockwell, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Cultural and Historic Preservation at Salve Regina University. Please join us as she unveils how ancient DNA can identify certain species from the Paleoindian period. Register through the Avon Library website.
- The History Corner exhibit in the Library for May through June is entitled "Titanic and her Sisters" by CT historian Phil Vitiello. The July and August exhibit be about the New Haven Railroad (steam and electric) by historian and former employee, Rick Abramson.
- The Avon Library's SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURE'S grant work has begun! This two-year federal grant is allowing the Society's over 900 piece artifact collection to be properly archived and recorded in the new CT Collections Database. The Library has been issuing "Spotlight" posts on their website of unique 19<sup>th</sup> century items in the collection. A quick search on their website will direct you to these fun and educational posts. More will be reported in upcoming newsletters as this work progresses.
- Later this year the Avon Free Public Library will be announcing that they are a recipient of a traveling exhibition entitled, "Exploring Human Origins: Promoting a National Conversation on Human Evolution" presented by the American Library Association in collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History Human Origins Program. The Library was only one of six libraries nationwide to receive this traveling exhibit. It will be mounted in the Community Room of the Library for December 2024 through January 2025. The timing on this is perfect and the Society is very pleased to be a partner with them in this endeavor.
- The Society is a co-sponsor with the Library for a virtual book talk entitled, "First Family: A Conversation with Historians Cassandra A. Good & Alexis Coe" on Thursday, June 8 at 7:00pm. The author of "First Family" is Cassandra A. Good, who researched the outspoken stepgrandchildren of George Washington from the Revolution to the Civil War. She will be joined by presidential historian Alexis Coe. Register on the Library website. Provided by the author: *While it's widely known in America that George and Martha Washington never had children of their own, few are aware that they raised numerous children together. In "First Family," we see Washington as a father figure to the children of Martha Washington's son by her first marriage—Eliza, Patty, Nelly and Wash Custis. Raised as the country's first "first family," they remained well-known as Washington's family and keepers of his legacy throughout their lives. By turns petty and powerful, glamorous and cruel, the Custises used Washington as a means to enhance their own power and status. As enslavers committed to the American empire, the Custis family embodied the failures of the American experiment that finally exploded into civil war—all the while being celebrities in a soap opera of their own making.*



# Unearthing History: The Discovery of a 12,500 year old Paleo-Indian Site Along the Farmington River in Avon, CT

## Artifact Identification Day!

**Saturday, June 24, 2023**

**1:00-4:00 pm**

**at the Avon Senior Center**

Bring your artifacts for identification!

Presented by archaeologists and volunteers of the Institute for American Indian Studies, Washington, CT and Friends of the Office of State Archaeology (FOSA). The Institute will have selected items from various time periods on display for viewing.

### Details:

Institute and FOSA staff and volunteers will examine and identify objects in 15-min time slots. No appraisals will be made. Limit 12 items per person – no large collections please. Artifacts should be archaeological materials from New England or North America, preferably the East Coast, such as ceramics, stones, arrowheads, baskets, beaded items, clothing, etc.

### REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Visit <https://www.avonctlibrary.info/event/artifact-id2023/>  
to select a specific time slot



Avon Senior Center  
635 West Avon Rd.  
Avon, CT 06001

Spear point, broken during manufacture, recovered at the Brian P. Jones site



Photo provided by Archaeological  
and Historical Services, Storrs CT

Watch the webinars from the 2021-23 series  
on the Avon Library's YouTube Channel:  
[www.youtube.com/user/afplct](https://www.youtube.com/user/afplct)

In partnership with





THE AVON  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Help Us Pave the Way!

### BUY A 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 grand opening planned in 2024, the Avon History Museum will be accompanied by a brick path and sitting area.

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

- Two sizes: 4" x 8" for three lines (\$100) or 8" x 8" for six lines (\$250) of text.
- 16 characters per line, including spaces and punctuation
- Provide your name or message here (use space on back for 6 lines of text for larger paver)


Proceeds will benefit the creation of permanent & temporary exhibits inside the Avon History Museum. Join in the fun by buying a brick today!

Visit our website to purchase online or mail in this form with your check made payable to:

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

[www.avonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.avonhistoricalsociety.org)



# THE AVON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**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)

## 2023-2024 Officers and Board of Trustees

### Officers:

Terri Wilson, President  
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Vicky DiCenso, Treasurer

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**MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Contact the Society for details.**

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

**Member of: [www.farmingtonvalleyctheritage.org](http://www.farmingtonvalleyctheritage.org)**

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