

## Chapter 6 Historic Resources



### History

In 1645, several families settled in the peaceful valley of Tunxis, commonly called the Tunxis Plantation. This village was originally known as Northington, or the North Parish of Farmington. In 1830 this area was incorporated as a separate Town. Avon took its name from the Avon River in England.

In 1830, the Town's population numbered 1,025 residents, increasing to 1,057 by 1880, and 3,171 by 1950. In 1960, the population numbered 5,273 and in 1990, the count reached 14,000. The 2000 census placed the population of the Town at 15,832. The current population is estimated to be 17,000.

Avon's local government organization is established by Home Rule Charter, adopted in 1959 and amended in 1962, 1969 and 1975. Effective July 1981, the revised charter provides for a Town Manager, Town Council, Board of Finance, and Town Meeting.

### Historic Resources

Historic resources are an important link with Avon's heritage that helps define community character. Historic resources include buildings and sites of both historic importance and cultural significance.

Avon has a number of historic buildings and sites. A Town-wide Historic and Architectural Survey was conducted by Historic Resource Consultants, Inc. in 1997. This survey was funded by the Connecticut Historical Commission. Over 175 properties were inventoried. Most were residential but the inventory also included churches, social halls, small bridges, school houses, agricultural complexes, and also included notable landscape features such as the entrance gates on Old Farms Road to the Old Farms School, various picturesque structures such as stone faced culverts in the vicinity of the Riverdale Farms shopping complex, and three Ensign-Bickford company-housing developments. All sites were inventoried on standard forms in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation. Each site was also photographed and plotted on a map.



Town Hall/Former Climax Fuse Company

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One of the purposes of conducting such a survey is to identify resources which appear to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Recommendations were made to nominate the following buildings or structures to the National Register:

- Avon Old Farms School
- West Avon Congregational Church
- District No. 3 School, 8 East Main Street
- Climax Fuse Company/ Ensign Bickford, Climax Heights. Rehabilitated for re-use as an office and commercial development.
- Woodford Tobacco Farm, Nod Road
- Prince Thomas of Savoy Club, 32 Old Farms Road
- Two stone bridges on the former railroad right-of-way, near 136 Simsbury Road.
- 72 Cider Brook Road
- 281 Old Farms Road
- 184 Waterville Road
- 200 Waterville Road
- 99 West Avon Road
- 607 West Avon Road
- 563 West Avon Road
- 289 West Avon Road
- 361 Lovely Street
- 290 Waterville Road
- 226 Avon Mountain Road
- 55 Bishop Lane



Avon Congregational Church listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Several structures in Avon have already been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. These are:

- Avon Congregational Church, Listed 1972
- Pine Grove School Historic District, West Avon Road, Listed 1980
- Three sections of the Farmington Canal, Listed 1985

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Two properties were identified as having significant associations with prominent women: Avon Old Farms School, because of its architect, and the 1932 MacDonald Memorial on Avon Mountain Road, produced by the prominent sculptor Evelyn Beatrice Longman.

The survey also called attention to several historic preservation tools which might have some usefulness in Avon. These include:

- Scenic road designation (state and local).
- Local Historic District for Avon Center.
- Town Planning and Zoning. Incorporating historical characteristics into design considerations (especially appropriate in Avon center).



Avon Old Farms School

The report also identified a possible eligible Historic District in Avon Center, including parts of East Main Street, West Main Street, Simsbury Road, Old Farms Road and Woodford Avenue.

As a follow up to this report, a second consultant was engaged in 2002 to inventory properties in Avon Center for possible nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC completed a survey of Avon Center and submitted an application for nomination in 2003. Subsequently, public hearings were conducted by the State Historic Commission. As more than 50% of the property owners within the proposed district delivered a written objection to the proposal, the district was not established. However, the National Park Service (The Federal Agency responsible for administration of the program) has determined that the proposed district meets eligibility criteria should this nomination be again submitted at a future date. During this process it appeared that a majority of residential property owners within the district were in support of the nomination while the majority of commercial property owners were in opposition. One option to consider is the reshaping of the proposed boundaries to better reflect the opinion of the affected property owners.



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### Historic Pictures of Avon Center



Avon Center circa 1890-1910



Avon Center in 1899



Avon Center in 1962

### Some of Avon's Historic Structures



Living Museum



Pine Grove School



Derrin House

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## Goals and Policies

**Goal:** Encourage protection of Avon's historic resources.

### Policies:

1. Utilize the most recent town-wide inventory of historic structures to identify whether development proposals contain such resources.
2. Encourage the preservation of historic structures in Avon.
3. Encourage the re-use of historic properties where economically and physically feasible.
4. Develop zoning regulations which provide incentives to property owners who provide significant and exceptional preservation efforts of historic properties.