

Unearthing History: The Discovery of a 12,500 year old Paleo-Indian Site along the Farmington River in Avon, CT **webinar series continues into 2022!**

The Avon Historical Society, Avon Library, and Avon Senior Center have successfully concluded a 2021 webinar series, **Unearthing History: The discovery of a 12,500 year old Paleo-Indian site along the Farmington River in Avon.** This series of five lectures, sponsored by a grant from Farmington Bank Community Foundation, covered the archaeology, geology, and anthropology of life along the Farmington River, including the Brian D. Jones (BDJ) Paleo-Indian discovery in Avon. It was attended by 820 people, 91% from Connecticut; 62% from the Farmington Valley (Avon, Canton, Simsbury, West Simsbury, Farmington). We have list of over 740 unique emails for this series, and attracted viewers from greater New England, Colorado, and Minnesota. The recordings of the webinars are posted on the Avon Library's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/afpct/playlists>. As of November 1, 2021, the series has been viewed 3,204 times.

Unearthing History will continue with another five webinars in 2022, covering genetics, ice age animals, trade routes, foodways and another update on the BDJ site. We are pleased to announce the 2022 series will be funded by a grant from the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee which receives its funding from the National Park Service. And we welcome new partners for 2022: The Avon Land Trust, Farmington Valley Watershed Association and the Institute of American Indian Studies, Washington, CT. The series will begin in March. Watch local media and this newsletter for details on dates and times.

The Society invites the public to visit our new website page on the BDJ site as well as a detailed FAQ section: <https://avonhistoricalsociety.org/paleo-indian-site/>

We wish to thank the planning committee for helping us with the 2021 and 2022 series. Their insights are invaluable throughout the process in many ways:

Marc Banks, PhD, Archaeologist

Nancy Najarian, Institute of American Indian Studies, Washington, CT

Howard Wright, Science Department Head, Renbrook School, West Hartford

Beckie Sahl, Board member, Farmington River Watershed Association

David Leslie, PhD, Senior Prehistoric Archaeologist, Archaeological and Historical Services, Storrs, CT

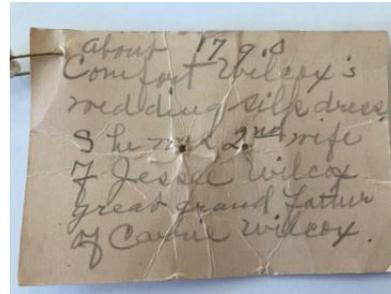
The next step in the process is to nominate the BDJ site for a Connecticut State Register of Historic Places and State Archaeological Preserve designation. Thanks to a grant to the Town of Avon from the CT State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc., Storrs, CT was hired as the firm to complete the study and create the nominations. The process is to do a field survey of the site, analyze the data, meet with key stakeholders and submit a report to the Town of Avon, Avon Historical Society, and others for review in 2022. Once all stakeholders have reviewed the report, it will become the basis for the nomination to SHPO. The boundaries agreed to for the site, based on the ground survey and analysis of core samples will be made public by the Town of Avon and the Avon Historical Society and used in educational and marketing materials about the Site for the public and future research.

RECENT GRANTS APPLIED FOR BY THE SOCIETY

This fall several grants have become available from various sources for projects that benefit the Society's mission. Below is a list of those applied for and some already awarded!

- Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee Grant to fund the 2022 ***Unearthing History*** webinar series; \$3,530 to cover costs associated with speakers, upgrade to Zoom account and online and print ads in related publications. Grant awarded November 18, 2021.
- Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Historic Restoration Grant through the Abigail Phelps Chapter, Simsbury, CT to fund the restoration and display of a late 18th century dress in the collection of the Society. It is the oldest textile in the collection, donated by a descendent about 40 years ago. According to a detailed analysis by Sandra C. Aho, Textile and Costume Conservator and Accredited Textile Appraiser, Manchester, CT, it is a full length iridescent brownish light peach colored handmade silk dress. Thanks to two forms of provenance, we know it was worn by Comfort Peck for her wedding on February 5, 1794 to Jesse Wilcox in Northington, CT (original name of Avon.) The wedding was performed by Rev. Rufus Hawley, the long-time minister of Northington whose diaries are archived in the History Room of the Avon Library. His diaries were translated and published in 2011 by Nora Howard, Town Historian. The grant request is for \$10,000 for the professional treatment and preservation of the dress as well as purchase of a museum mannequin case for display. It is intended that the dress will be on display in the new museum at Schoolhouse No. 3 when it reopens in 2024. The National DAR will announce grant winners in May 2022. The Society thanks the Abigail Phelps Chapter for supporting this grant application.

Close detail of the dress and provenance



In Rev. Rufus Hawley's journal of February 5, 1794

Wednesday Fair, very windy & extream cold. The Associatn Spent the forenoon in religious conversatn, broke up p.m. I rode home. Married Jesse Willcox of Northington (Widoer) & the Widw Comfort Peck of Bristol.

- CT Cultural Fund Operating Support Grants Program through CT Humanities, in partnership with the CT Office of the Arts, is providing up to \$16M in general operating support grants to help the state's 700 museums, cultural, humanities and arts organizations maintain and grow their ability to serve their community and the public, connect K-12 teachers and students to strong humanities and arts content, and improve their information technology and digital infrastructure. This funding from the CT State Legislature became available earlier this year. The grant application process opened in October with a deadline of November 15. As an incentive, every organization applying will receive a minimum grant of \$5,000. The application asks many operations questions will be used to produce a report in early 2022 for the Legislature to learn about this cultural, historic and arts industry. In addition, each organization can explain their mission and chose three unmet goals based on a list of priorities of the grant

program. Answers to those will be scored and funding announcements, above the initial \$5,000 minimum grant, will be made by December 24, 2021. The Avon Historical Society's submitted the following three main goals to fulfill unmet needs in their mission:

- Collections Management – hire a Curatorial Consultant/Archivist to help us gain intellectual control of the collection inventory (approximately 800 material objects), provide guidance on how to survey each item and process it into the CT League of History Organization's Connecticut Collections cloud-based management system and instruct us in proper storage methods and techniques utilizing existing space available in two of our buildings.
- Exhibit Management - hire a Concept Development Consultant to create the theme for the new museum in Schoolhouse No. 3 when it opens in 2024. This person would have to become familiar with our local history, key moments, objects in our collection and help design the space.
- Curriculum Development - hire a Curriculum Consultant who knows where the Brian D. Jones Paleo Indian site fits in to the CT Social Studies guidelines and the new Native American requirement which will begin in Connecticut schools in Fall 2023. In addition, this person should become familiar with our local Avon history and assist in finding the proper grade level to present it and how with artifacts and narrative.

Lastly, the grant allows organizations to propose a "big idea" for potential funding at a later date. The Society expressed interest in participating in the State Historic Preservation Office's Shared Stewardship & Partnership Program by requesting they work with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the State Military Department in a plan for the 18th c. Derrin House (a state building) to become a community space. The idea is to form a partnership to look at this house, sitting on State Park land, to become a community space jointly operated by the Avon Historical Society and DEEP for exhibits, classes, and other community uses on a seasonal basis. It is a large, ambitious goal that would require three state agencies to come together, partnering with the Society as a non-profit, in shared stewardship of a state building on state property.

- Save America's Treasure grant (federal government grant through National Park Service) – written and submitted by the Avon Library for \$50,000 to expand History Room digitization of the collection not yet done & launch a companion program for the Avon Historical Society for uploading to CLHO's CT Collections cloud-based management system. Funds being requested includes hiring a traveling archivist to assist the Society with professional assessment, organization, storage and digitization of an estimated 800-piece object collection. Four criteria are required to be explained in detail: National Significance of the collection; Need/Urgency/Threat to the collection; Mitigation of Threat; and Feasibility of accomplishing the project over two to three years. The Society has provided letters of support for the Library's application. Award announcements will be made summer of 2022.

SAVE THE DATE

"The Cultural War over Race in America: From the Civil War to 21st Century America" – a presentation and discussion with President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, moderated by Prof. Matt Warshauer, CCSU. This event will reprise the visits during the 150th commemoration of the Civil War (2011-2015) with scholarly performances by Michael Crutcher as Frederick Douglass and Howard Wright as Abraham Lincoln. This event will take place at the Avon Congregational Church, 6 West Main Street, Avon, CT in February where, historically, many speeches and public discourse on these topics took place in the 19th century. This in-person event (Covid rules permitting) will have a per person charge to attend with a reception to meet the presenters after in the Fellowship Hall. Registration will open in early January. Watch your email and local media for details on how to register.

HISTORY CORNER EXHIBITS

The following exhibits can be viewed at the Avon Free Public Library outside the Local History Room.



History of Santa exhibit on loan from the Joyce and Jim Baldwin Christmas Collection now through December 31 featuring objects dating from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. Visitors will view many postcard images of Santa in a number of guises, including the jolly fellow flying in an airplane, riding a donkey and driving a car. Book lovers will also enjoy an array of illustrated children's books, including an 1893 edition of "The Santa Claus Story Book," and 1900 editions of "The Night Before Christmas" and "A Visit from Santa Claus." Rare antique die cuts or "scraps" of the jolly fellow will also be on view. The nickname, "scraps," is a nod to the custom of pasting these cut outs into scrapbooks. An antique sled reminiscent of the "Rosebud" sled that appeared in the Orson Welles' 1941 landmark movie "Citizen Kane," will be included together with a feather tree decorated in early 1900s ornaments.

CBT Memorabilia will be on view January through February 2022. Returning exhibit with new items, the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company was one of the largest banks in Connecticut and held the state's oldest bank charter, dating to 1766. People still remember Barney ATMs, which were some of the first in the state.

Titanic and her Sister: White Star Lines Olympic Class Ships will be on view March and April 2022. Returning with a new exhibit is CT historian Phil Vitiello who will share his personal collection of memorabilia from the various ships that sailed the open ocean a century ago.



Can you guess what this photo, courtesy of Nora Howard, is showing?
See page 6 for the history of what was here over 120 years ago!

SAVE THE DATE

Tablescape

An opportunity to create, display and enjoy table settings

FRI MARCH 18 + SAT MARCH 19, 2022

10AM-5PM FRI + SAT in the Belle Ballroom at Avon's
historic **NORTH HOUSE** Rt 44, Avon, CT



2 day Fundraiser for the AVON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
More information coming in the near future...

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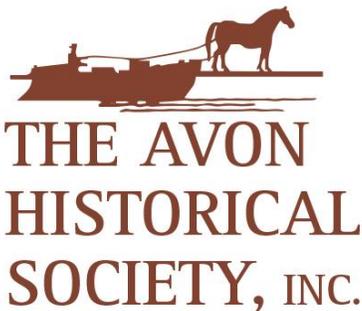
The Society website has downloadable forms for registering as an exhibiter, sponsor, and more details of this fundraiser from previous years. Attendee tickets will be available soon. All tickets purchased and sponsorships made for the canceled event in 2020, will be honored in 2022. Plan to join us for this spectacular event.

Cider Brook Road Bridge Construction Project

The construction of the bridge, a project of the Town of Avon, Cardinal Engineering and Dayton Construction of Watertown, CT, is expected to be completed in December 2021. The old bridge was built in 1900 and rebuilt in 1934 and was deemed "functionally obsolete" and "structurally deficient" by the CT Dept. of Transportation. The new bridge was designed to maintain the area's rural character. The work is being done in a way to protect the area immediately adjacent to the bridge from damage during construction, as it contains remnants of the historic Ben Miller cider mill. *From the Town of Avon website*



"Sluice at Ben Miller's Cider Mill," by Clinton Hadsell, Nov. 25, 1899.
Collection of the Avon Free Public Library, Marian Hunter History Room



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.

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

The Avon Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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

**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!
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