



# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 31, No. 1 | February 2018

## Oak Openings and the Legacy of James Wadsworth

“Oak openings” are natural communities consisting of oak-dominated savannas or prairies with less than 50% tree canopy coverage. They are found most readily in the Midwest, where grasslands are naturally occurring biomes. However, Avon and surrounding towns such as Geneseo and Rush are notable for their oak communities in a striking, pastoral setting – open expanses with only a few large trees or clumps of trees. The pastures along Route 39 around Geneseo are famous for their oak pastures, and Oak Openings Road in Avon is named for this interesting balance of tree and grassland.

James Wadsworth, the pioneer of Geneseo, has been long held as the single person responsible for the establishment of the scenic vistas we still enjoy today. Having visited England, he was apparently taken by the rolling landscapes dotted with magnificent trees, conserved for hundreds of years on grand estates. When he began leasing farmland to tenants in the Geneseo area, James Wadsworth’s leases contained provisions for preserving existing ancient trees, and when clearing forested land, he prescribed leaving at least one solid specimen on every couple of acres. This was for the purpose of shade, but it also helped to build up the appearance of a grand estate, such as those in England. Wadsworth was a man of great influence. Besides deftly promoting the sale and development of land in the 1790s and advocating for comprehensive common school education for both boys and girls, his policies on land practices were lauded. One aspect is that the oak-sprinkled grasslands around Geneseo were entirely attributed to him.

Recently, however, there has been more scrutiny of this claim. David Robertson, a professor in the Geography Department at SUNY Geneseo, has for a number of years been interested in the oak openings. Using knowledge of pre-European-settlement Seneca land management practices coupled with documentary evidence from late 18th- to early 19th-century art and accounts, he has posed a hypothesis. He believes that the oak openings are remnants of Seneca land management, with emphasis on use of fire as a key element in that management. The Smokey the Bear in all of us may bristle at the thought of uncontained fires, but historically fire was utilized by the Iroquois to clear land for agriculture and to maintain open space.

Interestingly, though, not all tree species deal with fire in the same manner. Trees such as maples and beeches are quickly overcome by the heat of fire, but oaks and hickories, for example, are able to better tolerate it. Therefore, the periodic burning of land will maintain certain grass species, promoting those that tolerate or need occasional clearing, and foster the growth of certain trees, including oaks. Oak openings can be the result in either naturally occurring grassland fires, such as those caused by lightning strikes, or by intentional fires set by humans.

Dr. Robertson has also exposed faults in the time-honored timeline of James Wadsworth initiating the pastoral landscape in Livingston County. Some translations of Seneca names for the area around Geneseo deviated from the accepted “pleasant valley” to “clear opening” and even “trees burned.” Furthermore, from accounts of those visiting the Genesee Valley in the early days, be they traders, soldiers, or land agents, we know that there were already sweeping views of grassland sparsely spotted with giant oak trees. The diaries of men in Sullivan’s Expedition in 1779, eleven years before James Wadsworth ever set foot at Geneseo, mentioned the unusual open lands. The expected composition of the land here was densely forested cover, with old trees and thick underbrush. Travellers all took note of the beauty of the valley and recorded their observations.



Photo: [geneseevalleyconvervancy.org](http://geneseevalleyconvervancy.org).

The recent research suggests the error that history has handed down to us. As wonderful a man as James Wadsworth was, and as laudable his contracts with farmers, he alone did not create the pastoral oak openings we continue to preserve today.

It seems obvious from the early accounts and other sources that this beautiful valley was already home to grand spreading oaks when Wadsworth arrived to claim it and sell it to white settlers. While he did ensure the legacy through his practices, the real people to credit are likely the Seneca.

*Continued on next page...*

Currently, Dr. Robertson, with Dr. Steve Tulowiecki of Geneseo and Dr. Chris Larsen of the University of Buffalo, are conducting research through a National Science Foundation grant focusing on oak communities in the eastern United States. One aspect of the research in Livingston County focuses on oak specimens that may have been alive during Seneca occupation. A goal of this examination is to determine the extent of fire utilization. Since fire usually leaves a scar in the tissue near the base of the tree, core samples can reveal much history of the tree and surrounding landscape. The broad objective of this study hopes to reveal factors in the decline of oak communities, and illuminate ecological as well as societal niches that oak forests can fill. Using evidence they mine from living trees as well as the famous Big Tree section that is still kept by the Livingston County Historical Society Museum in Geneseo, they also hope to discover more about the impact that the Seneca had on the land in this area. The Seneca lived relatively lightly on the land in some ways, but it is a common misconception that they left no trace. The oak

openings may attest to this fact if the hypothesis of Seneca fire management is upheld. We may use bush hogs instead of flames to maintain the open space beneath our oaks today, but we still gaze in awe at these venerable old beings. They may have much to teach us yet.

- Holly Watson, Editor

#### Sources:

*"Geography Faculty Members Earn NWF Grant to Study Oak Forests." SUNY Geneseo. geneseo.edu. 4 January 2018.*

*"National Science Foundation to Support Oak Tree Research." Genesee Valley Conservancy. geneseevalleyconservancy.org. 31 January 2018.*

*Robertson, David. "The Genesee Oaks and the Palimpsest Nature of Landscape Change." PowerPoint Presentation.*

*Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.  
"Oak Opening." www.dnr.wi.gov. 2017.*

## Facebook Page

This great image was shared via the AP&HS Facebook page recently. It was shot by Jack Haley and shows the iconic Five-Arch Bridge from above – a new view.



That's impressive!

- Peggy B.

Interesting perspective, and a good composition.

Thanks for posting, I love it!

- Patty M.

Trains once traveled over the bridge. Route 39 at one time went under one of the arches, way back when my Dad was a kid!

- Dale B.



# George Hosmer (1781-1861)

The esteemed lawyer George Hosmer, son of Timothy Hosmer and Elizabeth Smith, was born in Farmington, CT, coming with his family to Avon when he was a boy of twelve. In 1811, he married young widow Mrs. Elizabeth Berry Ellsworth, daughter of pioneers Gilbert and Maria Berry.

After primary schooling and studying the classics, George began legal instruction in the Canandaigua law office of the pioneer lawyer Hon. Nathaniel W. Howell in 1799. In November 1802 George was admitted to practice law at Canandaigua, where his father, Timothy Hosmer, was then the presiding judge.

Young Hosmer practiced a short time at Canandaigua, and then opened a law office in Avon, the first opened west of Canandaigua. He soon took a leading position as a lawyer, his retainers extending into all the adjoining counties and his associations in important trials taking him as far as Albany and Buffalo. He was regarded as brilliant in the estimation of the people and courts, but especially in the estimation of his Scottish neighbors and friends. They often referred to him matters about which some of them differed and his decision generally ended the controversy. They loved and esteemed him for his clear, prompt, and impartial decisions.

In 1812, Hosmer served on the frontier conflict as the aid to Major General Amos Hall of Bloomfield, NY. Unfortunately Hosmer's friend, Maj. William Howe Cuyler, was killed at Black Rock, and to honor his fallen friend, George named a son after him, the noted local poet W. H. C. Hosmer.

Hosmer remarked,

"I narrowly escaped myself, the mounted officers being marked objects for the Indian sharp shooters. My horse was wounded in two places and a spur was knocked from my heel by a bullet from the enemy. In the retreat I rode side-by-side with Col. Seymour Boughton until the path diverged round a wooded swamp. My companion did not rejoin me at the point of reunion of the forks—being killed, as was afterwards ascertained, a few minutes after our separation. With great exertions I collected a few of our men and returned the fire of the Indian pursuers which checked their further progress." [McKenzie, 17]

In General Hall's official report of the Battle of Black Rock, he remarked on the meritorious services of his aids, saying,

"To my two aids de camp, Majors George Hosmer and Norton, I cannot withhold my warmest thanks for their cool deliberate bravery and the alacrity with which they executed my orders from the first movement of the troops in the morning to the close of the day."

After the war, Hosmer returned to law, and in 1821, when Livingston County was formed from Ontario County, Hosmer was appointed its first District Attorney. Having been succeeded in this position in 1824, he became a member of the assembly from Livingston County. He was honored with the position of Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and lauded in every way imaginable by historians, claiming his impressive debating skills, oration, even his "powerful voice melodious in its inflections." His legislative career terminated with the close of the year 1824 when the post of District Attorney reopened, and Hosmer was immediately appointed once more. [Proctor]

He discharged the duties of the District Attorney until January 1836 when he resigned, refusing reappointment. He said, "I never had an indictment quashed by the court." The following resolution was passed by the Court and Bar of Livingston County on the occasion of Hosmer's resignation:

"The members of the Court and Bar of Livingston County, having heard with regret the determination of George Hosmer Esquire to retire from the office of attorney...cannot allow the occasion to pass without a feeble expression of their commendation and regret. Therefore resolved that the members of said Bar of Livingston County entertain an exalted opinion of the private character and professional skill of their fellow citizen George Hosmer Esquire, late District Attorney of the county, that while the public have found a safe protector and zealous and efficient advocate, the defender of the unfortunate criminal has recognized in him an uniformly urbane and highly honorable antagonist."

George continued to practice at the bar actively until old age fell upon him. He was always honored and held in high esteem by the bench and the bar, and when finally he left that arena where he had so long and successfully and brilliantly contended, he was regarded as a legal gladiator resting beneath his panoply. [Proctor, 10]

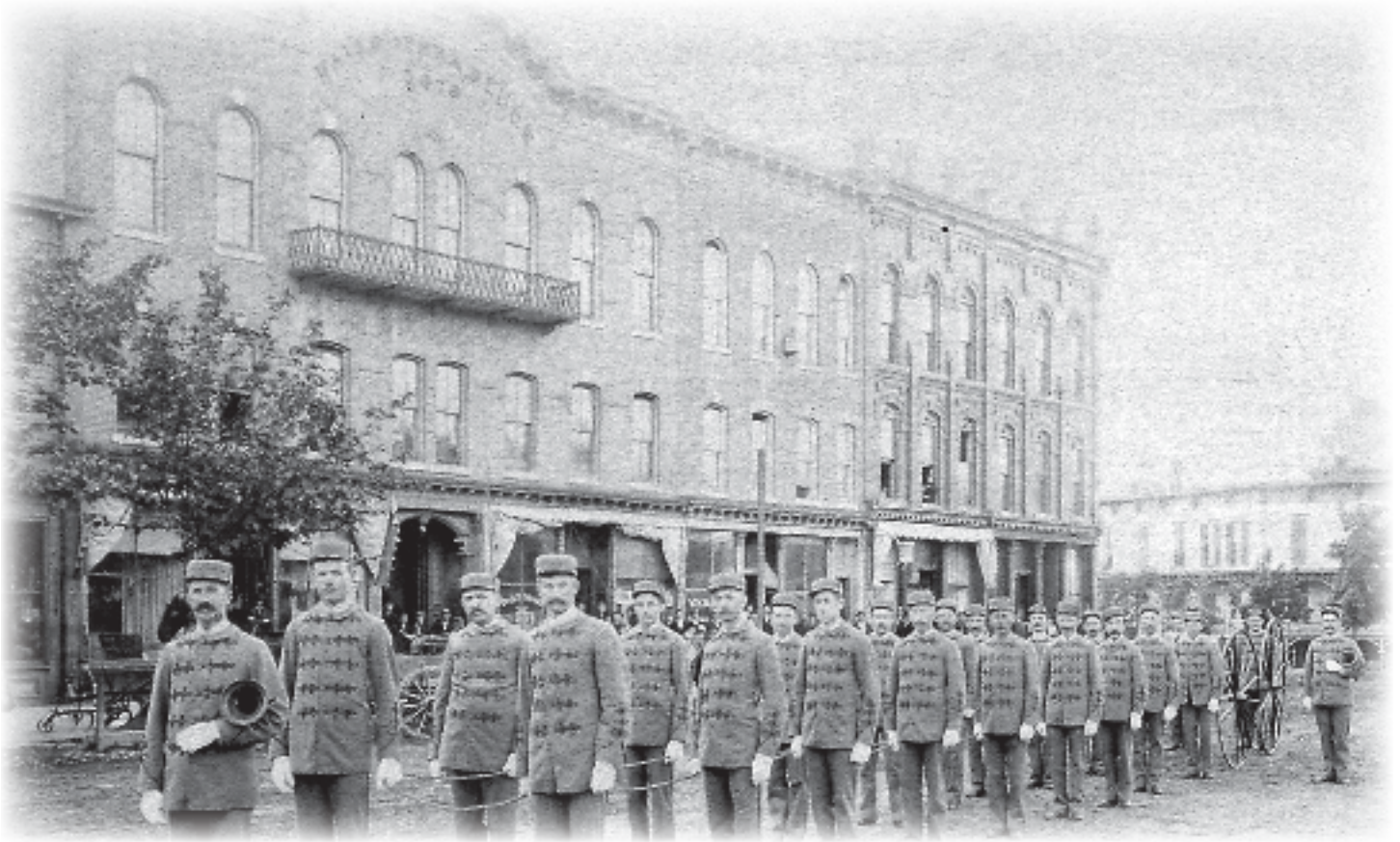
-Philip Parr, Caledonia Correspondent

## Sources:

McKenzie, Donald. "An Early History of the Caledonia Area, c. 1803-1857."

Proctor, L. B. "George Hosmer." *Third Annual Meeting of Livingston County Historical Society*. 1879.

# Hall's Opera Block



*Hall's Opera Block, circa 1906. AP&HS Collection*

In 1876, a new three-story brick building was constructed on the corner of Genesee Street and Main Street. William Hall hired two Avon residents, Benjamin Long and Myron Watkins, to design and build the cornerstone structure. In June 1876, two railroad cars of bricks were arriving every day, and by October Hall's Opera Block was finished.



*The original building on the same site.*

*The wood framed United States Hotel had burned in 1874.*

*Photo courtesy of the Livingston County Historian*

Avon is fortunate the Opera Block remains intact at the center of the village. What had become a deteriorated building by the early 2000s transformed into a rehabilitated Avon Town Hall by 2009. However, a remarkable event had to take place first. The Town purchased the Opera Block in 2005, but chose to give the residents a choice: Do you approve of rehabilitating the Opera Block as a town hall, or should a new structure be built alongside the town barns on Agar Road? The February 2007 vote resulted in an astonishing 624 to 624 tie. Choosing to retain the building, the Town Board reduced the cost of the proposal by restricting the upgrades to only the first and second floors, leaving the third floor auditorium space untouched. The re-vote brought out rally cries from both sides. Some thought it too costly to bring life back to the old building, and some thought it better to protect the historic village core and reuse an existing structure. The second resolution passed in August 2007, 878 to 572, allowing Bero Architecture to proceed with the project. Previous efforts to have the building listed on the National Historic Register in 2006 proved important. Grants specifically for historic buildings were thus secured, covering a significant portion of the entire project. The Opera Block embodies important architecture coupled with community use, significant of the times. The National Historic Register outlines the chosen criteria for the listing:



“Hall’s Opera Block is an excellent example of a late nineteenth-century, multi-purpose, commercial and community building that was commonly called an opera house. It maintains a high degree of integrity of materials and finishes on both exterior and interior. The building also has a long history as the social and cultural center of the village, and is representative of the position such buildings held in communities across the state.”

The Italianate style is highlighted by the elaborate wooden cornice and projecting brickwork over the windows. Corinthian pilasters, the eight cast iron columns lining the front of the building, are the supporting framework for beams and the brick wall above.

The Avon Opera Block is one of only twenty-five remaining opera houses of the 110 in our ten-county area. And remarkably, the third floor is largely in its original state. The color scheme and stenciling have not been lost to time. The stage and dressing rooms remain, adorned with 1870s graffiti by early travelling performers. Defying a declaration by the original owner, William Hall: “Ples (sic) Do Not Mark on The Wall”, autographs and statements were scribbled on walls and doors: “This is a rotten show town – 1907”. The huge trusses supporting the ceiling above eliminate the need for obstructing columns below. With no fixed seating and room for up to 600 people, the Opera Block served as the focal point of Avon’s recreational and social activities for over 50 years. The first public event took place on Nov. 1, 1876 sponsoring a political rally for Hon. E.G. Latham. Women’s rights activist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and former slave Sojourner Truth are the most prominent figures to visit the Opera Block. There would be benefit concerts, roller-skating, the 1899 high school graduation ceremony, and the Avon Springs Minstrels performing in 1906. Opera halls, though not known for grand operas, were used to distinguish the entertainment from tavern ballrooms and entertainment that was thought to be less reputable during those times. These buildings served as social centers regardless of social status.

The third floor has remained historically intact largely due to diminished use. Building a new high school and St. Agnes School in 1907 and 1908 respectively decreased the need for auditorium space.

***...The Avon Opera Block is one of only twenty-five remaining opera houses of the 110 in our ten-county area...***

Uses for the first and second floors historically included businesses, vendors, and offices, and Orange Sackett’s Billiard Hall. In 1918, it was said that Dr. Frederick A. Strassenburgh, who had an office on the second floor, was known to remove children’s tonsils with the help of his teenage son. Later, these offices were turned into apartments. Groceries occupied the first floor, as did a hardware store, which lasted from the early 1900s to 2003. When the final owners, Sally and Ray Leonard, reluctantly closed their doors, the hardware had been the longest continuous business in the building.

The Avon Preservation and Historical Society is honored to lease museum space on the ground floor of this historic building. The museum houses Avon artifacts and is open to the public on Thursday and Sunday, from 1 – 4 pm. Free tours of the third floor are offered during the Corn Festival in August, and by special appointment. There is renewed interest in securing additional grants to complete the restoration of the third floor to its original use: community space for recitals, lectures, and programs. If successful, Hall’s Opera Block may once again be a cultural center for Avon.



*Present Opera Block*

Acknowledgements: National Register of Historic Places application, prepared by Martin Wachadio of Bero Architecture. Debbie Morrow, author of “History Restored”.

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee

*Help the AP&HS!*

**We are seeking a small dehumidifier for our archival storage area. Please contact us if you have a working one that needs a new home! Email us at [avonpreservation@gmail.com](mailto:avonpreservation@gmail.com) or call 226-2425 x22.**

# The Rope Ferry: a Theory

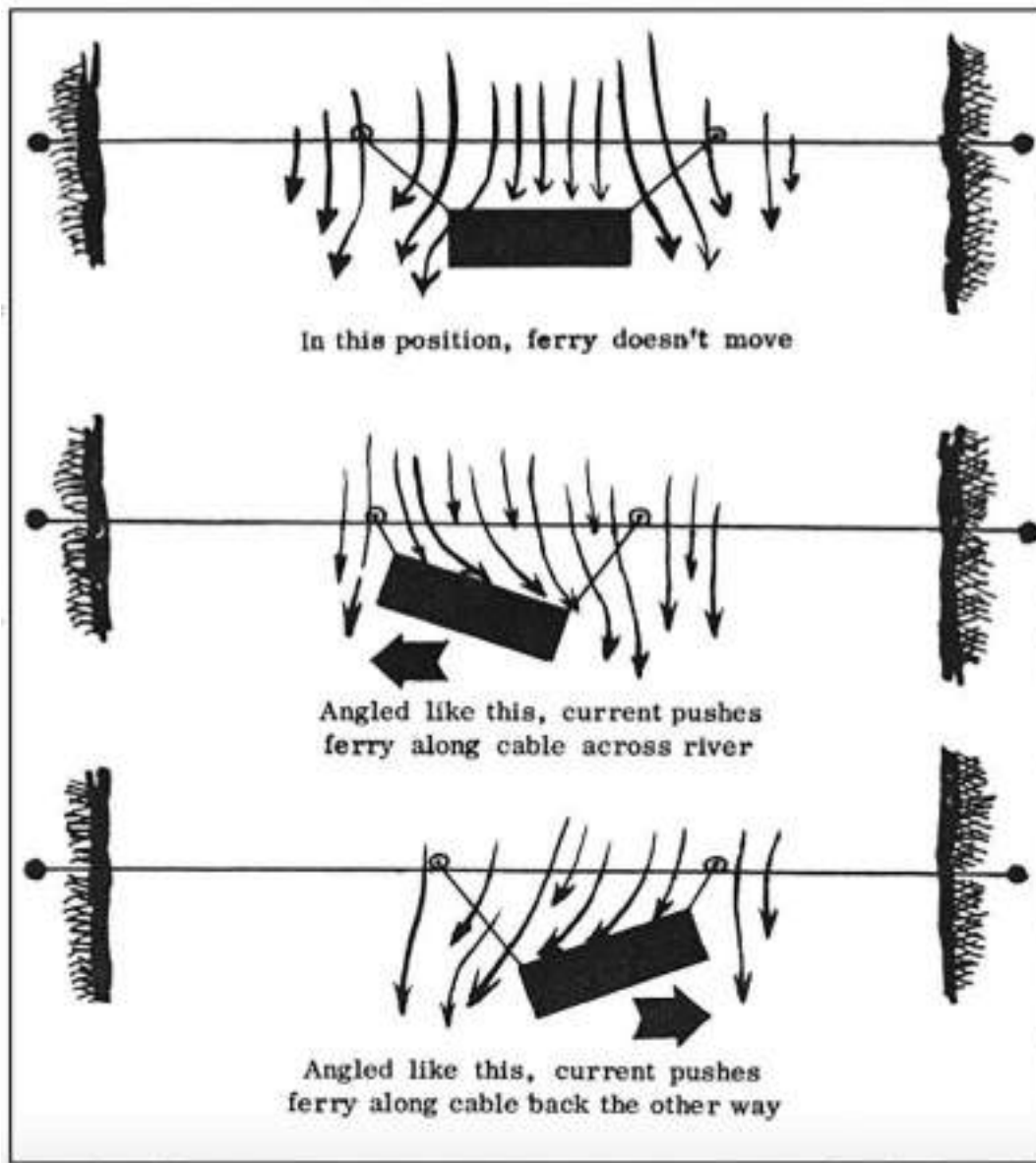
Recently, someone asked about the propulsion system for Gilbert and Maria Berry's well-known rope ferry across the Genesee River. It's been determined that the ferry was established in the early 1790s on the east bank and that Maria operated it for a time after her husband's death in 1797. But besides it being described as a "rope ferry" little documentation can be found about what the ferry was like. Fares for horse and oxen-drawn vehicles, which were about 25 cents in 1808, suggest that the flat-bottomed, raft-like ferry was probably rather substantial if it could transport such items. Considering that the Berrys were the first permanent settlers of Avon, their technology was probably somewhat rough, even with the couple's impressive trading abilities.

Also, since the Genesee River has a decent current most of the year, it is probable that the method of propulsion came from the river itself.

Maria would have had a hired man to assist with loading commodities and guiding the ferry across the water. In times of low water, it is said there was a ford nearby that may have been used for passage, or perhaps a pulley and crank system was indeed employed to hurry up the ferry. But due to the power of the river on most days, one imagines that the tethered ferry would have almost have taken itself across the expanse.

- Holly Watson, Editor

**This diagram helps to illustrate how this method would have worked:**

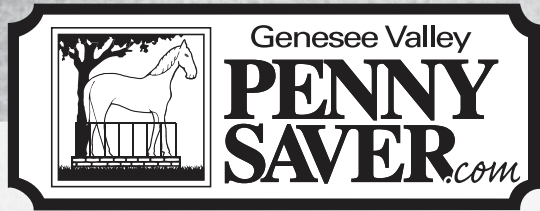


*Image source:  
"Ferry Boats."  
Prospector.  
Idaho State  
Historical  
Society Junior  
Historian  
Program.  
April 2007.*



# AP&HS Programs: 2018

We have a fantastic line-up of programming this year – join us!



*History of the Penny Saver*  
Sunday, February 11, 2018 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm  
Presented by Steve Harrison,  
2nd generation owner of the Penny Saver

## *Review of Seven Avon Churches*

Sunday, March 18, 2018  
2:00 – 3:00 pm  
Presented by Church  
Representatives



*History of the New York State Troopers*  
Sunday, May 20, 2018 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm  
Presented by Albert Kurek,  
NYS Trooper Historian



*Livingston County in WW I*  
Sunday,  
September 16, 2018  
2:00 – 3:00 pm  
Presented by Amie  
Alden, Livingston  
County Historian

Poster created by R.H. Porteous and  
published by Edwards and Deutsch  
Litho. Co., Chicago, 1917



## *Bottles: All Shapes and Sizes*

Sunday, November 11, 2018  
2:00 – 3:00 pm

Presented by James Bartholomew,  
local bottle collector

All programs will be held at the Avon Village Hall,  
74 Genesee St., Avon, NY 14414

Programs are free, open to the public, and handicap accessible.

Light refreshments will be served.



Donations most gratefully accepted, so that we may continue to provide our programming.



**Avon Preservation and Historical Society**

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414

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## Address Service Requested

**Museum Hours:**  
**Thurs. & Sun., 1-4, or by appt.**

*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2017-18 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours

### Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
AVON PRESERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10     (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20     (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

(   ) Yes     (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: clefeberhayes@gmail.com

## *A Friend's Wishes*

*Wm. H. C. Hosmer (1814-1877)*

I wish you joy and health, my boy!  
A purse with gold well lined;  
To bless thy life, a virtuous wife  
Of cultivated mind!

May peace attend thy cruise, my friend!  
Down life's swift rolling stream;  
No cloud on high to rob thy sky  
Of sunlight's cheerful gleam.

May age to thee no winter be,  
But life the summer glow;  
And song and fame light up a flame  
Beneath thy locks of snow;  
And Heaven thy soul, when reached time's goal,  
Receive within its bowers,  
To meet once more friends gone before,  
Crowned with unwithering flowers.







# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 31, No. 2 | May 2018

## *A Brief Review of Mail Service in Avon*



*Post Office in East Avon, NY. Courtesy of the Livingston County Historian*

Going to our mailbox, be it at the end of our driveway, our porch, or at the post office, is just another chore in our day. When routinely sorting out the junk mail, we don't take time to remember that over 300 years ago the procedure of safely delivering a private letter took an Act of Congress. The implementation of this service had a major impact on the early development of our country.

Virginia was home to the first established U.S. post office system in 1692, when a postal rate was authorized, accompanied by an effort to establish a post office in each town. As the system grew, it was decreed in 1775 that the federal government create the United States Postal Service, with Benjamin Franklin as the first postmaster general. A law created in 1792 provided subsequent expansion of the post office network. Post roads, along which mail coaches travelled, were expanded. Because of the difficulty in reaching remote areas, waterways and, later, trains were also declared postal routes. A fast and convenient communication system provided pioneers an easy way to encourage family members to join them.

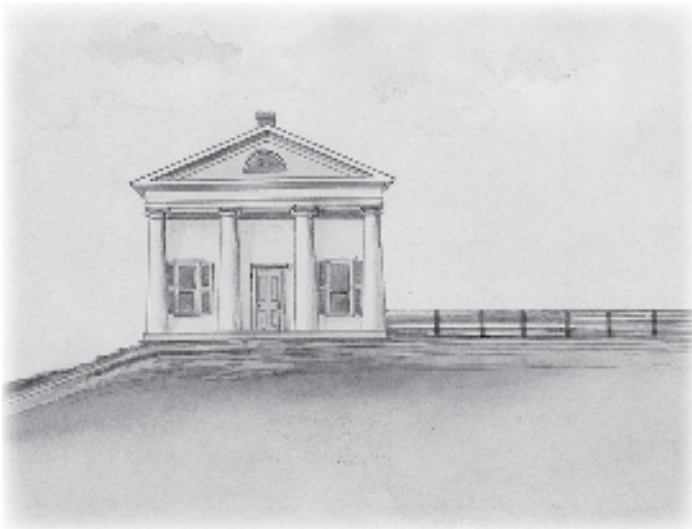
Businesses were able to develop and maintain relationships, increasing the movement of goods to the west. Politicians coordinated efforts through the circulation of newspapers. Overall, increased communication boosted a sense of nationalism.

The Pony Express is often considered as playing a large role in the history of mail service, probably due mostly to romanticism of the Wild West. It actually was short-lived, operating only between April 1860 and October 1861, covering a 1,900 mile route from Sacramento, California to St. Joseph, Missouri. The service was replaced by the much quicker telegraph.

Prominent residents often held the respected position of postmaster. Locally, Job Pierce in 1797 was the first appointee, just a few months after the town was established as Hartford. However, that meant there were two towns named Hartford in New York

State. It is likely the confusion of delivering mail that inspired the change of name of Hartford to Avon in 1808. The mail coach routes throughout the state were listed in the July 8, 1825 issue of the *New York Evening Post*. The mail coach for western New York left Albany every day at 3 pm, traveling only during daylight hours. The first stop for lodging was in Amsterdam, then on to Utica, Auburn, Geneva, Canandaigua, Avon East Village, Avon, and on to Buffalo by the fourth day. East Avon had a post office due to the commercial activity concentrated at the crossroads of the two main thoroughfares: the State Road (Rts. 5 & 20) and Rochester Road (Rt. 15). Over the years, the post office location in Avon – known in 1839 as "West Avon" (*Livingston Register*, November 1839) - would move from a general store to a hotel to a storefront, mostly downtown on Genesee Street. There was also a post office located in the hamlet of South Avon, which had an office until June 1905 (*Avon Herald*, June 10, 1905).

*Continued on next page*



This early Avon Post Office, circa 1865, stood on the corner of West Main Street and Prospect Street, on the present site of the Avon on the Green Apartments. Painting by John Lyth, Courtesy of the Avon Town Historian.

As post offices became established in towns, residents were required to pick up their mail there, which could be some distance for remote homesteads. Because it was the recipient who would pay the postage, the post office would print a notice in the local newspaper alerting recipients to retrieve their unclaimed mail if it lingered too long. Then, in 1896, Rural Free Delivery service began delivering mail directly to rural farm families. The town of Elba was the first post office to establish a rural delivery route in New York, on October 25, 1896. Avon started free rural delivery in 1904 (Mt. Morris Enterprise, Aug. 31, 1904). However, this new service concerned both farmers and village businesses alike. In the May 26, 1900 issue of the *Avon Herald News*, an observation was published:

"Several of the towns that have rural free mail delivery appear to be dissatisfied with it. The merchants in the villages are displeased because the farmers do not come into town as much as formerly, and the farmers are displeased because they do not have an excuse to go to town."

Mail service is based on Constitutional authority, guaranteeing the right to personal privacy. An article on January 16 of 1910 in *The Telegram* reports that privacy was breached in Avon with serious consequences:

#### AVON PRISONER.

#### DANIEL REED STOLE A LETTER ADDRESSED TO C.S. PERKINS - SENT TO PRISON.

Daniel Reed, a young man who formerly resided at Avon, Livingston County, N.Y. admitted in federal court on Wednesday, that he took a letter addressed to Charles S. Perkins, of Avon, from



The Avon Post Office was located in the building on the southeast corner of Genesee Street and Park Place, from 1919 to 1961. Photo from "A Tribute to Downtown," published by AP&HS, Aug. 2005.

the Avon post-office, and, breaking the envelope, took out a check, which was made payable to Mr. Perkins, and called for \$182.84. The young man had never before been convicted of a crime. Judge Hanel sentenced Reed to one year in the Elmira reformatory.

Changes in the postal service were a constant. The East Avon Post Office was discontinued on May 30, 1915 (*Buffalo Evening News*, May 27, 1915), shifting the responsibility to the Avon Post Office. Rates were raised to help fund the delivery of mail to village homes and businesses, as described in an article from the *Avon Herald News*, Dec. 28, 1945:

#### City Mail Delivery Starts New Year's

##### Postage Rates Raised to 3 cents

The city mail delivery will officially start in Avon on January 1, 1945. However, being a legal holiday there will be no mail delivery on that day but the first mail will be carried on Tuesday, January 2.

The carriers will be Marvin Jobses who will have route 1 and Joseph Pusateri with route 2. William Twamley will be substitute carrier. The



The present building on Prospect Street was built in 1961. Postcard courtesy of the Livingston County Historian.



same employees will remain in the post office. Every householder must have a mail box. No mail can be left if there is no receptacle. Five letter boxes have been placed around the town for the convenience of mailing. These are located at the corners of High St. and E. Main; Clinton and Temple; Spring and Genesee; Rochester and West Main and Isham and Wadsworth Avenue.

Mail will be delivered to residences once a day. It will be carried to the business places twice, morning and afternoon. The lobby of the post office will be open on Sundays from 10 to 12:30. This delivery service raises the postage rate. All first class mail will now cost 3c. It has been sent locally for 1c. There will be no more 1c postage in Avon after Dec. 31. All greeting cards may still be sent unsealed for 1 1-2c.

Patrons are urged by the Postmaster, Joseph Mattes, to notify correspondents of street and number in order to facilitate the mail delivery.

Residents of Avon have waited for a long time for the mail delivery and we know that everyone will cooperate in every way possible. Remember these mailmen will have a lot of walking to do this winter so try and keep your sidewalk shoveled for them."

The mail service encouraged pioneers to push into the wilderness, assisted the development of businesses, and provided readers with informing newspapers. Nowadays, with the introduction of email, the USPS has seen a 25% decrease in mail and small post offices have been closed. Though the price of a stamp continues to rise, it is rather extraordinary that we are still able to receive mail from afar, delivered right to our door. It is worth every penny.

~ Clara Mulligan, Trustee

## 20th-Century Businesses in Avon

Calling contributors! The theme for the August 2018 edition of the AP&HS newsletter will be businesses in Avon, with a special emphasis on 20th-century family-run enterprises that were anchors in the community. If you have photos or stories to share, we would love to hear about your family's venture or even just memories of a favorite business.

Please contact the AP&HS via email at [avonpreservation@gmail.com](mailto:avonpreservation@gmail.com), on Facebook, or swing by the Museum during office hours, Sundays and Thursdays from 1 to 4pm with your idea or written piece. The deadline for submissions is July 8th, 2018.

## March Program

### History of the Avon Churches

On behalf of the AP&HS, I would like to thank the seven Avon churches and the Interfaith Council who made this program such a roaring success. We had 95 attendees, our biggest turnout in over a year. The speakers were wonderful, informative, and held our attention for over two hours – twice as long as our usual programs. They deserve a shout-out (as the kids say today):

- Mike Meath, Zion Episcopal Church;
- Nancy Toland, First Presbyterian Church;
- Rev. Carin Farmer, Central Presbyterian Church;
- Maureen Kingston, St. Agnes Church;
- Susan Moses and Alex Albany, United Methodist Church;
- Gloria Reynolds, Wesleyan Church;
- Rev. Clinton Zuber, Lutheran Church of the Epiphany;
- And last but not least, Rev. Dr. Thomas Taylor, who talked about the beginnings and successes of our wonderful Interfaith Council.

#### Some other special thank-yous:

- Marty Graham for putting me in touch with the Interfaith Council and getting in touch with Rev. Dr. Taylor;
- The Village of Avon for the venue and providing extra chairs;
- Joan Reid for the great story boards; I know how much work those were. Also thanks to Dan Cochran and Jim and Geri Brewer for all they did to assist her;
- Carole Hayes for the raffle and membership work;
- Mary Primm and her refreshment committee for the nice spread.

We are so fortunate to have such a strong faith community here in Avon with church leaders who do so much to promote understanding and harmony. We'd love to hear some feedback on this program and hear from you for programs you'd like to see in the future – send us an email at [avonpreservation@gmail.com](mailto:avonpreservation@gmail.com) or stop by the Museum.

Please join us for our next program on May 20th at the Village Hall. Our speaker will be Albert S. Kurek, New York State Trooper Historian, on the History of the NYS Troopers. See you there!

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

# In Memoriam

## Hoyt R. Mason



Hoyt R. Mason, 96, of Lakeland, FL, died January 18, 2018. He was born and grew up in Rochester, NY, the oldest of four children. He was a Marine during the Pacific Campaign in WWII. He had a life-long love of farming; however, banking became his profession. He was a certified agricultural banker, manager of the Genesee Valley Union Trust Co. with an office in Avon, later becoming president of Marine Midland Bank. He moved to Lakeland in 1971 and became manager of the First State Bank, then vice-president of the Barnett Bank. Hoyt was a Rotarian with perfect attendance throughout his membership. He was presented with the Four-Way Test Award in April of 2017 by the Lakeland Rotary Club. He was also a Freemason and a member of the Avon Springs Lodge. Hoyt was a devout Christian and a member of the First Presbyterian Church. He was a do-it-yourselfer with a large collection of tools. He loved to tell stories about his early years and his relationships with many of his customers at the bank. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Nancy, and his second wife, Doris. He is survived by his wife Paula Beikirch, his children Linda Lindstrom, Hoyt R. Jr., Paul (Sandy), Carol Kahlenberg, Tom (Pam), Betsy (Mike) Godwin, 11 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

Source: *Legacy.com*

## Dick Harrington

We at the AP&HS were saddened to learn of the passing of Richard "Dick" Harrington this past February 21st after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease. Originally from Pierre, SD and Kadoka, SD, he went to work for General Foods Birds Eye Division after graduating from Oregon State University.

He and his wife, Jean, moved all over the northwest and to Florida and back before finally landing in Avon, where Dick oversaw production for the Avon and Fulton, NY General Foods plants.

Dick and Jean really took to Avon. They were very involved in our community, always there with their time and generosity. They raised their seven children here.

My wife, Gail, and I, along with my parents and Dr. Richard and Mary Collins, spent a lovely summer day with the Harringtons at their cottage at Rushford Lake several years back. A very happy memory. Dick was a wonderful friend and neighbor.

After Dick's retirement, the Harringtons moved to North Carolina but maintained their ties to Avon, visiting every summer for several years as long as Dick was able. They would always stop by and say hello during the Corn Festival.

Dick will be buried in Avon in St. Agnes Cemetery sometime in the coming months. A memorial was held in North Carolina on March 10th.

Our condolences go out to Jean and their five surviving children, as well as their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was a good man.

- *Bob Westfall, AP&HS President*

## Put a Plaque On It

Are you proud of your home, and want the community to know? Put a plaque on it! A build date, even an approximate one, acknowledges your home's journey through history. Whether your house is historic (50 years or older qualifies as historic – that means your 1968 ranch is technically historic as of this year!) or recently constructed, you can purchase a plaque to promote historical awareness and pride in our community. The plaques are handsome and made of long-lasting bronze, bringing elegance and continuity to the celebration of homes in Avon.

To purchase a plaque, pick up a form at the AP&HS Museum during open hours and indicate the year you want inscribed. Plaques are \$85, payable to the AP&HS by check or cash.

If you don't know the exact date your home was constructed, a "circa" date is fine. To arrive at that date – if you're itching for a project – you can trace owners and property histories, build family trees, and inspect the building itself for clues to conclude at least an approximate year in which your home was constructed.



For assistance with this project, please feel free to contact the AP&HS, Avon Town Historian and/or the Livingston County Historian's Office. These offices have resources to help researchers and are happy to assist!



# Upcoming AP&HS Programs



## *History of the New York State Troopers*

**Sunday, May 20, 2018  
2:00 – 3:00 pm**

New York State Trooper Historian, Albert Kurek, will present the history of the police force that serves our area. A retired officer and accomplished author, Mr. Kurek will share his historical research gained from personal interviews, court records and newspapers, highlighting the Western New York area that he served for forty years.



*Poster created by R.H. Porteous and published by  
Edwards and Deutsch Litho. Co., Chicago, 1917*

## *Livingston County in WW I*

**Sunday, September 16, 2018  
2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Amie Alden,  
Livingston County Historian*



## *Bottles: All Shapes and Sizes*

**Sunday, November 11, 2018  
2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by James Bartholomew,  
local bottle collector*

**All programs will be held at the Avon Village Hall,  
74 Genesee St., Avon, NY 14414**

**Programs are free, open to the public, and handicap accessible.**

**Light refreshments will be served.**



**Donations most gratefully accepted, so that we may continue to provide our programming.**

## The Funny Side of Rationing



Red and blue OPA points. Image courtesy of Wikipedia.com

If there is a funny side to rationing  
I swear I haven't found it.  
For no matter how hard I try  
I just can't get around it.

When I go into the grocery store  
This is what I get.  
"You can't have any butter today  
The OPA hasn't priced it yet."

The butcher says "20 red points please,"  
For a darn little piece of steak  
And I can't have cheese any more  
Less the OPA gives me a break.

And when I ask for sugar  
The clerk gives me a cramp.  
She looks me up and down as says  
"Have you got your sugar stamp?"

Our tires are worn, our gas is gone  
Now I don't think that's so funny.  
I need a new rubber girdle  
But can't get it for love or money.

But I guess maybe I can take it  
And not do too much kicking  
If the things I have to do without  
Will help give the Axis a licking.

For they have synthetic rubber now  
For tires and heels on shoes  
And if I can't get sugar  
There's a syrup I can use.

And as long as rubber girdles  
Are still a thing of the past,  
I'll just patch up the old one  
And try to make it last.

Now I know it's all necessary  
But how happy I will be.  
When the OPA and ration books  
Are just a memory.

But I have a good sense of humor  
So I'll just laugh it off and say,  
"Till the fight is won, and the foe on the run  
Three cheers for the OPA."

- E. Meachum, Avon NY  
(Courtesy of the Livingston County  
Historian's Office, Mt. Morris)

**Editor's note:** This poem was likely written during the WW II era and captures both the sentiments of frustration with rationing as well as patriotism. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) set prices to fight inflation and oversaw rationing of staple goods to support the war effort from 1941 to 1947.

## The Telephone Girl

The telephone girl sits in her chair,  
And listens to voices from everywhere.  
She knows who is happy and who has the blues;  
She knows all the gossip, she knows all the news;  
She knows our sorrows, she knows our joy;  
She knows the girls who are playing with toys;  
She knows every time we are out with the boys.  
She knows the excuse each fellow employs;  
She knows our trouble, she knows our strife;  
She knows the man who is mean to his wife.  
If the telephone girl should tell all she knows,  
It would turn our friends into bittersweet foes.  
She could sow and that would soon be a gale,  
Engulf us in trouble and land us in jail.  
She could get our churches mixed in a fight,  
She could start a story which gaining in force,  
Would cause many wives to sue for divorce;  
She could turn our day into sorrowing night.



Image source: Chronicle Herald Archives, [thechronicleherald.ca](http://thechronicleherald.ca)

In fact she could keep the town in a sew,  
If she told one-tenth of the things she knew.  
Gee! Doesn't it make your head just whirl,  
When you think what you owe to the telephone girl.

- Author unknown; provided by Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator



# Twin Swan Motor Court

Most people will remember the Twin Swan Motor Court (with the little cabins) that was next to the Avon Coppersmith for many years.

The beginnings of the motor court are hazy, but Prentice Cooper expanded and opened the cabins as the "Twin Swan Auto Court" in 1950. The property passed to Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Cooper, who ran the court until September 29, 1957 when they turned over ownership to Mr. & Mrs. John Barend.



Mr. & Mrs. Barend ran it until 1971, when they sold the business to their son, John Barend, Jr. The interesting part is that John Barend, Jr. was a retired professional wrestler who went by

*Johnny Barend and Buddy Rogers. Photo courtesy of the Wrestling Revue Archives: [www.wrestlingrevue.com](http://www.wrestlingrevue.com). Via [slam.canoe.com](http://slam.canoe.com).*

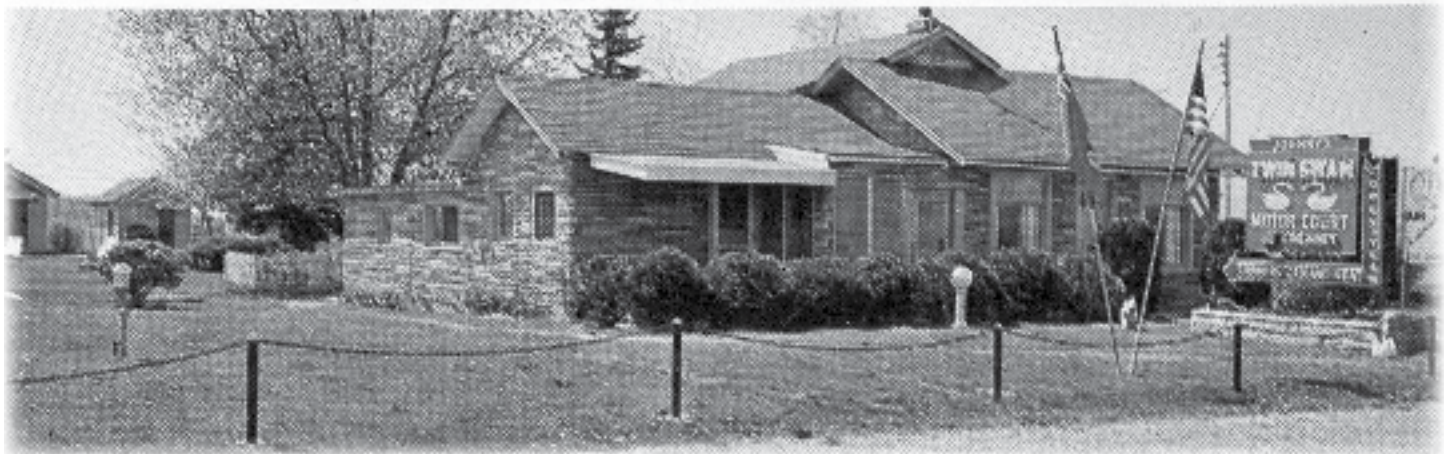


*Annie and Johnny Barend, Jr., with Joy, in May 2008. Photo by Andrea Kellaway. Source: [slam.canoe.com](http://slam.canoe.com).*

"Handsome Johnny Barend." He made quite a name for himself and often wrestled with "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers, who was the Hulk Hogan of his day. Johnny Barend, Jr. died in 2011 in Avon.

Not sure when the motor court ended business. The Avon Veterans Hall is pretty much on the same space now.

*- Doug Morgan, former Lima Town Historian*



*Twin Swan Motor Court as it looked in 1960*



# Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414

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*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours

### Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
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AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10     (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20     (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

(   ) Yes     (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: clefeberhayes@gmail.com

## Facebook Page



Bob and Bud Carlin at Davin Implement in East Avon, c.1990-91 (right before the auction)

- Photo shared by Mary L.

Thanks for these pictures Mary, spent some time in that shop being schooled by both of those gentleman. Great Guys. - John B.





Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 31, No. 3 | August 2018

## AP & HS Programs 2018

*We have a two more programs this year – join us!*

NEXT UP:

### Livingston County in WWI

Sunday, September 16, 2018 • 2:00-3:00pm

*Presented by Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian*

New York, with the rest of America, came late to the fighting in World War I. Following President Wilson's message to Congress and the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, New York mobilized. Eventually, over 500,000 New Yorkers were in military service, the largest contingent from any state. Led by strong government promotion, communities statewide rallied to support the troops and the Allied cause. Citizens signed on to local defense committees, joined the medical corps or the Red Cross, bought Liberty Bonds, worked the farms, knitted socks, conserved food and fuel, and kept an active home vigil.

Approximately 1700 men from Livingston County left their families and work behind to answer the call to duty along with an untold number of women who served as nurses at home and overseas. More than 50 soldiers, sailors, and marines from this area paid the ultimate sacrifice and hundreds returned home with physical and emotional scars. Men, women, and children who served on the home front also endured tremendous hardship.

The Livingston County Historian's Office is fortunate to have a large archival collection related to World War I and is grateful to past and present historians for preserving these important artifacts that help to tell the story of the war to end all wars.



Homecoming parade for the troops at Avon, 1919

### Bottles: All Shapes and Sizes

Sunday, November 11, 2018 • 2:00-3:00pm

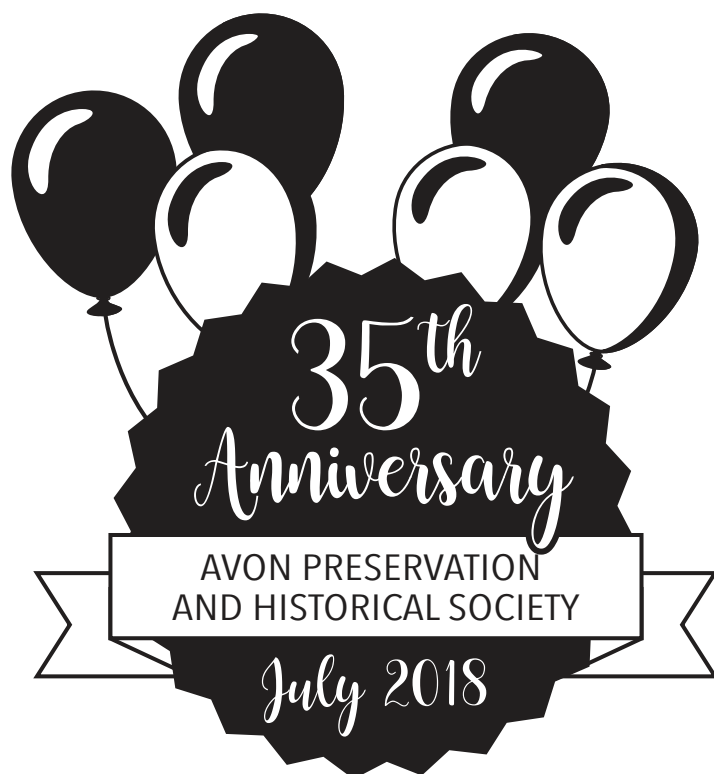
*Presented by James Bartholomew, local bottle collector*

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## The Avon News Room

Growing up in Avon in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s brings up so many wonderful memories. Some of these memories center around the stores on Genesee St. There was of course the Park Theater (more on that in an upcoming newsletter) and the legendary Woodruff's Ice Cream, better known to us all as Woody's. Going to Davin's meat market with my dad where Mr. Davin always gave me a cold red hot to eat while he got our order ready.

But one store that I remember very fondly was the Avon News Room. It was a long narrow place filled with the smell of pipe tobacco and cigars. And it was filled with a huge selection of candy, comic books and novelties. It was managed by a man named Mr. McKay, who tolerated kids unless they were in a noisy group of four or more.

In the summertime, we would ride our bikes up to the News Room where there was one of the old open-from-the-top Coca Cola chests where you could pick out an ice-cold Orange Crush or my personal favorite, cream soda. Also a freezer filled with Popsicles, Creamsicles and other frozen treats.

A special memory for me, the music lover: every Friday there was a vendor who would bring in the latest 45 rpm records. To my recollection the Avon News Room was the only store in town that sold records. I got to know the man and he would give me a free single for helping him bring in boxes and telling him what songs were HOT in Avon. I suspect this was to humor me.

I've not been able to find much historical background on the News Room; I know that at one time it housed a harness maker's shop owned and operated by Steve Stephenson's grandfather. It was later owned by a Mr. George Sweet and later by Margret McGinty. In its final days it moved next door to where the flower shop now sits - I don't recall this, but I was gone by then. If anyone can fill in some gaps, please let me know. Its establishment and closing dates would be of interest.

My thanks to Steve Stephenson and Dan Cochrane for helping with some of the background.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

*This newsletter was designed  
and printed by Penny Lane Printing*



Frank Leslie Durkee

## An Enterprising Avon Chiropractor

Frank Leslie Durkee was a chiropractor in Avon in the 1930s, running his practice out of his home on Genesee Street, located just to the left of the Methodist Church.

Per information as told by his son, Preston Durkee, Frank "would rub Vona on a person's back and eventually it would become quite sticky at which time he would, as I recall the way it was said, 'perform a cupping motion' with his hands over the area and the result would be that it would clean out all the pores in a person's skin leaving the area bright and pink. Then, washing the area down with I believe soap and water... cleaning the pores like this helped the skin to breathe so would improve the health." Frank would also "use the product when a person had a bad cold and apply it to the neck and chest then wrap the area with a cloth."

Vona was made up of a combination of glycerin, sugar, Epsom salts and water and when cooled, Vona had the consistency of a syrup and was tacky.

- Stephanie Dempsey

*The author is a great-great-great-grandniece of Dr. Durkee; Frank Leslie Durkee was a brother to her great-great-great-grandmother, Helen Mae (Durkee) McMaster. There were 14 children in the family all growing up Livonia, NY.*



# Avon Rotary Corn Festival

This classic Avon event returns for its 32nd year on August 11, 2018, 10am-10:30pm, with fun for the whole family! It is free, accessible for all people, and proceeds go to the Avon Rotary Club. Rotary supports numerous organizations including the Boy Scouts, the Avon Rotary-Lions Ambulance Service, Avon Food Pantry, Teresa House, literacy programs, and many more.

Arrive at 10am to check out the wares, watch the famous corn-eating contest at noon, play games, and sample food from the numerous food vendors all day until 6pm. Nine local bands will be playing on three stages throughout the day, interspersed with dance performances and other fun events. The day will culminate in a street party with music by the Skycoasters from 7:30-10:30pm.

The AP&HS will have a tent as usual near the Avon Free Library, with books, collectibles, and other items for sale. A raffle will be held for chances to win toys kindly donated by LandPro Equipment and a unique ceramic piece generously donated by Mike Carroll of Studio Sales Pottery of East Avon. Drop by to renew your membership or purchase a membership for a friend and say hello!

Tours of the Third Floor of the Opera Block will be led by AP&HS President, Bob Westfall, at 10am, 12pm, and 2pm. There is elevator access to the Third Floor, and you can see for yourself this incredible space with lots of history and potential.

See you there!



*John Deere toy raffle prizes waiting to go home with a young farmer.*



*Mike Carroll, local potter and owner of Studio Sales Pottery, will donate a special creation just for the AP&HS raffle.*



## *What Is It?*

This item is in the collections at the AP&HS – but we do not know what it is! Can any of our readers tell us? Drop by, email, or call us, and we will publish your answer (hopefully the correct one!) in our next issue.

# *The Miller Family: Over a Century of Business on Genesee Street*

Driving by 121 Genesee Street many point and mention, "I had my senior pictures taken there," or possibly, "that is the place where my engagement pictures were taken." Yes, each of the "Miller children" have heard this with pride and a smile on our faces.

Our grandfather, Henry S. Miller, began the legacy of Miller businesses on Genesee Street with his jewelry store, which he opened sometime between 1908 and 1912. He was a watchmaker and managed a jewelry store, later adding appliances. His store was over the present laundromat on Genesee Street. Later, he moved across the street to a building known as the Opera House, which he shared with E.C. Clark's hardware store. He passed away in 1944. His three sons followed in his footsteps, each owning businesses in Avon. Doug Miller had a refrigeration repair and sales business with his father and later owned a gun shop for several years. Bill Miller was an authorized Thermo King repairman and trucks would stop in front of his house on West Main Street for repairs to their units.



*Norm Miller*

Norm Miller began his photography business in his parents' home at 65 East Main Street. After marrying, Norm and Lois moved into 121 Genesee Street and were the second owners of the house, which they purchased from Dorothy Salley in 1953. The studio was located in the front of the home with the dark room tucked away in the basement. The family business was always a partnership between Norm and Lois, Norm taking the photographs and working the darkroom with Lois greeting customers, taking orders, and doing the books for the business. As each of us grew, we learned to flip prints in the developer, pack and carry equipment, drive to the color lab, put orders together and lastly and possibly most important, greet customers with a smile and positive attitude. Miller Studio really was a family endeavor.



*Henry Miller at his store*



*Henry Miller and E. C. Clark*





Miller Studio, 1967

Lois quickly learned Norm's part of the business after his sudden death in 1977. With three of us still in junior high and high school, Lois decided to continue the business with the support and hands-on lessons from local photographers across western New York. This began a second career for her. It grew into her commitment to educate other females in business as well as her continued love for the art of photography.

Lois continued Miller Studio until her 75th birthday. She was able to enjoy her retirement and her remaining years at the same location until close to her death in late 2017. After 52 years of Miller Studio and over a century of Miller businesses on Genesee Street, it was an end of an era.

- Clara Miller Onderdonk, Norma Peterson, Alice Miller Nation, and Ralph Miller, children of Norm and Lois Miller



Lois Miller on the cover of the PPSNY (Professional Photographers' Society of New York) Journal in 1996, the year she was President of the association

## Threshing in Avon

These two images were published in an August 1938 issue of the *Democrat and Chronicle* and depict the hard work of threshing on the Edward D. Mulligan Farm in north Avon. Threshing, meaning separating grain from a plant stem, was back-breaking, hot, and dusty work. These crews would often move from farm to farm during the harvest.



George Behnk of Rush takes a drink of water while overseeing the threshing.



A threshing crew works on a hot day. The machine is powered by a nearby tractor with the use of a large belt, seen in the foreground. Horses were still being used, bringing wagonloads of bundled oats or wheat to the stationary equipment for separating the grain from the stems. Photo by Syd Weinberg for the D & C.

## Joyce Woodruff - A Son's Remembrance



My mother was born Joyce Elizabeth Woodruff in January of 1932. She was one of six children in the family on High Street in Avon. I was born too late to know her mother, Blanche, or her father, Winfield, but I had 54 wonderful years with her.

She passed away in February of this year at the age of 86 having gained two additional last names along the way. She married my father, Ted Harrison, in 1950 and, after he died in 1976, she married Andy Cornish (from Sarasota, FL) in 1985. She was widowed again in 1995.

I traveled from Florida with my family in May to bury her ashes next to my father's grave in Castile. The trip gave me time to reflect on the town of Avon and what it meant to her and me.

Avon was, except for a couple years living in Rochester, her childhood home and she shared many stories of the twenty years she spent there. I was born in Parma, Ohio, so always experienced Avon as a visitor, a guest. As a family, we would make frequent trips to Avon, especially in the summer when school was out. My sister, Julie, and I sat in the backseat of our green station wagon while Dad drove us the five or six hours to Avon.

Most of Mom's siblings still lived in the area, so we had lots of aunts and uncles and cousins to visit. Her older sister, Vivian, lived on Genesee Street in a house that backed up to the railroad tracks. I remember sneaking down to the tracks and putting pennies and nickels on the rails to flatten them when the train came rumbling through.

An older brother, Ralph, lived across the street from Vivian, and we would spend many happy hours visiting with him and his wife, Kay, and their five boys. Ralph and his sons were all nicknamed Woody. This caused no end of confusion when the phone rang and someone asked for Woody.

We would also visit another older brother, Ken, his wife Ruth, and their three kids. My fondest memories of Ken and Ruth were our visits to their cottage in the Thousand Islands. Ken taught me to sail there and I still reminisce over spotting the ocean-going ships and "lakers" in the channel.

When we visited as youngsters, Mom's younger sister, Carol, lived in Penfield – and later West Henrietta – with her husband Ed Morse and their three kids. Ed had grown up on High Street as well, right next door. He didn't have far to walk when he was "courting" Carol!

Mom's younger brother, Don, lived with his wife Ella, and their four children, in South Carolina, so we didn't visit them as often. Our two families did have a memorable vacation on the Outer Banks of North Carolina one summer, however, and many details from the trip are still fresh.

When we brought Mom's ashes home to New York in May, I saw the town through the lens of childhood nostalgia and through her eyes as well. She would reminisce fondly about her Aunt Viola's downtown ice cream shop, Woodruff's Ice Cream. She would frequently stop in for a free ice cream cone, but Aunt Vi would caution her to not ask for a free one when she came in with her friends, lest they want one on the house as well.



*Joyce Woodruff and Ted Harrison  
on their wedding day, 1950.*



Woodruff's Ice Cream Shop is no longer there, but the Avon Inn is. As a kid, we would frequently drive past its stately white columns. Mom and Dad had fond memories of parties and dances there in the 1950s. It was only during this last trip that I finally visited the storied Avon Inn and it did not disappoint. My cousin Kim (on my father's side) and her husband Jerry acted as tour guides, introducing us to the manager and pointing out new architectural features and the historic photos on the walls.

Our visit also included a lunch at Tom Wahl's, always a favorite. My Uncle Ralph worked there for a time when I was a teenager. I was visiting from Ohio and, during the obligatory stop for a Hollywood Burger, I noticed a sign on the counter, "Try Woody's Garbage Soup!" That sounded wholly unappetizing until I took another look and realized that it said "Cabbage Soup."

Visits weren't limited to Mom's side of the family. Even though Dad was from Castile originally, his older brother Roger and his wife Jane lived in Avon, also on High Street. It was thrilling as a kid to tour the Penny Saver and see the presses running; my cousins Steve and Kim now own and operate the paper.

My mother worked at the Penny Saver in its early days, helping with assembling the pages and, later, typesetting the ads. My father worked there as well. Mom also worked at the Birdseye plant (now Kraft). And thanks to my Aunt Jane, Dad began working at the salt mine in Retsof. He started as a shipping clerk and they eventually moved to Detroit when he was transferred. Another transfer moved them to Cleveland, where I was born.

I never lived in Avon, but have visited so much over the years – especially as a kid – that I came to feel like an honorary resident. The area has a magical feel to it, one I explored extensively in my first novel. Although I probably should have written about where I grew up, i.e. Northeast Ohio, I felt a greater pull toward Western New York and the Avon area.

In my first book, one of the main characters reflects how beautiful and tranquil the drive is along Route 39 between Geneseo and Avon, overlooking the river valley to the west. The verdant farmland, silos and barns dotting the countryside, has always appealed to me.

Another must-stop was the iconic Five Arch Bridge. We would picnic there occasionally as kids, enjoying homemade egg salad sandwiches. We stopped there again this trip to explore a little (sans the egg salad). I worked the Five Arch Bridge into my second book, setting some of the action there and featuring it on the cover.

Perhaps it's just the tug of nostalgia or a son's final letting go of his mother, but Avon is a special place. The scenery, the people, the history, are all woven together to create a magical, small-town fabric that is unique and lasting.

– Robert Harrison, Spring Hill, FL  
Author of *The Onyx Seed* and *Onyx Rising*  
senecacreative@gmail.com



Woodruff family, 1949



**Avon Preservation  
and Historical Society**

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23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414

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Indicate desired membership level  
(   ) Individual \$10     (   ) Business \$30  
(   ) Family \$20     (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?  
(   ) Yes     (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22  
Email: clefeberhayes@gmail.com

*Facebook Page*



This bonus image, provided by the Miller family, was shared on our Facebook page to promote the newsletter and membership. It shows Norm Miller with his photobooth. Who remembers having their portraits taken by Norm?

Share memories (or even portraits!)  
on our Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety).





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 31, No. 4 | November 2018

## 35th Anniversary of the AP & HS

On Sunday, September 9th, 2018, the Avon Preservation and Historical Society held an open house and reception to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the AP&HS. Board member Ellen Zapf spearheaded this event, which we held in the lobby of the old Avon Bank side of the Town Hall in the Opera Block. A wonderful spread of hors d'oeuvres and desserts was put on by Kristen Arnold and her daughter, Emma, and the tables were decorated with beautiful fall flower arrangements supplied by Avon Floral World.

We were privileged to have Robert Hoffman, one of the original charter members of the AP&HS and its first president, come and speak. He spoke of the formation of the organization, the early days, and remembered the founders very emotionally, many having passed on. He was very pleased to have been invited and remarked at what a beautiful museum we have. Next, Maureen Kingston, Town of Avon Historian, talked about some of the early events and progress made in those first months in 1983. Finally I, as current president, spoke about some of the things we are presently doing, such as working with the Village of Avon and the Landmark Society of Western New York to identify and document historical structures, buildings, and sites with the hope of establishing an historic district or districts within the Village. The museum remained open during the event and a tour of the third floor of the Opera Block was offered at the end.

A few words on our beginnings 35 years back, adapted from a summary by Maureen Kingston: on July 27, 1983, a small group met to discuss Avon's heritage and how best to document and preserve it. Oral histories and written documentation and research were also discussed. In attendance were Kay Clark, Robert Hoffman, Maureen Kingston, William Morrissey, Duane Westfall, and Jean Harrington. They met again on August 8, 1983 and discussed a public meeting and publicity, and established October 8th as Heritage Day. Various committees were formed at this time. This was followed by a meeting on August 22, and another on September 20, culminating with a successful Heritage Day that October 8th.

Over the next 20-plus years, many artifacts, photographs, and documents were obtained and preserved by many volunteers. For a short period of time, a physical museum was open at the old train depot (now Duffy's), but mostly things were stored at various locations around Avon until the Opera Block was restored and the Town Board generously provided the beautiful space that we currently occupy. Both the Town and Village have been very supportive of us through the years.

So, how are we doing, you ask? Well, we have an outstanding board which works very hard keeping things humming. Joan Reid, Jim and Geri Brewer, and Dan Cochrane work tirelessly on keeping our museum and window displays looking tidy and interesting. They work on documenting and cataloging everything that comes in and a hundred other things. Thanks to Carole Hayes, along with Dan and Geri, our membership is at an all-time high (real go-getters that bunch!). Clara Mulligan does our Facebook page and website and is a real idea girl. Jim Gerace keeps a close watch on the purse strings. Ellen Zapf and Mary Primm are always there for whatever needs to be done, and if you are reading this newsletter then you know what a great job Holly Watson does as editor. Me, I show up and watch in awe.

As for our future, we will try to continue to bring you interesting programs and speakers. Let us know if there is a subject of local interest you'd like to see. We will work very hard to educate and work with younger people about history so this will carry on. Preservation and restoration is important to us and we will continue to be involved (my pet project is that historic and beautiful third floor in the Opera Block building). And of course, collecting stories, artifacts, and information on our wonderful Town and Village.

And finally, to all the people who came before and who have passed on, thank you. I hope somehow they are watching and know how grateful we are for what they started.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

## Last Program of 2018



Image: sha.org

### Bottles: All Shapes and Sizes Sunday, November 11, 2018 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Come learn about the wonderful world of bottle collecting, and about some of the types of glass vessels used in Avon's past – bottles containing everything from medicines to milk to sulfur water!

Presented by James Bartholomew, local bottle collector

**Programs are held at the Avon Village Hall,  
74 Genesee St., Avon, NY 14414**

Programs are free, open to the public, and handicap accessible. Light refreshments will be served. Donations most gratefully accepted, so that we may continue to provide our programming.

## In Memoriam: Doris Gillard

Doris Gillard, 92, passed away on June 30, 2018. With the exception of a few years in the 1950s when she and her first husband, Jack Ryan, lived in LeRoy, she was a lifelong Avon resident. She was the youngest child of John and Louise (Williams) Hodgeman. Doris graduated from Avon High School in 1944 and worked at General Railway Signal for a number of years.



Doris Gillard on her 92nd birthday

After she was widowed in 1964, Doris worked for Albert Burke at his local insurance agency and raised her three children. In 1986, she married Tod Gillard, a widower with four grown children. For many years, they enjoyed their extended family and being part of the Avon community. Tod, a dedicated volunteer for the Avon Rotary-Lions Ambulance, passed away in 2006.

Doris was an early and active member of the Avon Interfaith Council and was the Council's treasurer for many years. In addition, she volunteered with the Avon Food Pantry and brought her children into the activity. In 1995, Doris and Tod were jointly honored by the Avon Chamber of Commerce as "Citizens of the Year" for their years of service to the community.

- Chris Ryan, daughter of Doris

## AP & HS Holiday Gift Store

The AP&HS annual Poinsettia Sale will begin November 1, 2018! Choose from red, white, pink variegated, or red and white variegated for just \$9.00 each. Delivery of plants will be on December 7. Contact Geri Brewer at 226-2729 today to place your order!

Also on sale will be this year's ornament and 2019 calendar, both featuring the Avon Inn. Keep your collection up-to-date (and your schedule on track!) and commemorate the reopening of this



historic landmark! Ornaments are available at the Museum – drop by, say hi, and grab yours for the holidays!

Don't forget that history fanatic on your list – handsome custom house plaques are available! Already popular for historic homes (50 years or older),

these commemorative signs are wonderful on any home, even if the construction date is recent. Time flies, so it's never too soon to install a durable and classy plaque! Contact us for details and to order.





# Recognizing the Historic Resources in Our Village

During the month of October you might have seen a young fellow walking the village streets looking at homes and businesses, smart tablet and camera in hand. His name is Tyler, and he works for the Landmark Society of Western New York, based in Rochester. Thanks to a \$10,000 *Preserve New York* grant funded by the Preservation League of NY, Tyler has been hired by the Village of Avon to perform an inventory of buildings older than 50 years old within the village boundary. He is looking at the exterior of buildings, noting their architecture and how they might broaden our understanding of Avon's past. He will also be visiting sites, including the Avon Driving Park, which was established in 1836, and monuments in the Village Circle Park. The end result is a comprehensive summary of the history, development patterns, and physical character of the village, along with maps, photographs and recommendations for preservation.

Why is this happening? Here are some long-range benefits this project will provide:

- Increasing public awareness and appreciation for properties that reflect our local history
- Land-use planning: directing new development wisely
- Encouraging re-use of historic buildings
- Establishing priorities for preservation projects
- Promoting tourism
- Identifying properties that may be eligible for National Register listing and therefore may be able to make use of commercial and homeowner tax credits and grant programs.

The first thought is usually "Don't tell me what to do with my house!" No worries. This first step only produces the comprehensive document. If, after the



*East Main Street. Photo by H. Watson, 2018.*

completion of this study, the community wishes to pursue a National Register listing, commercial property owners, houses of worship, and homeowners could benefit from tax credits and grant programs when making repairs to their buildings.

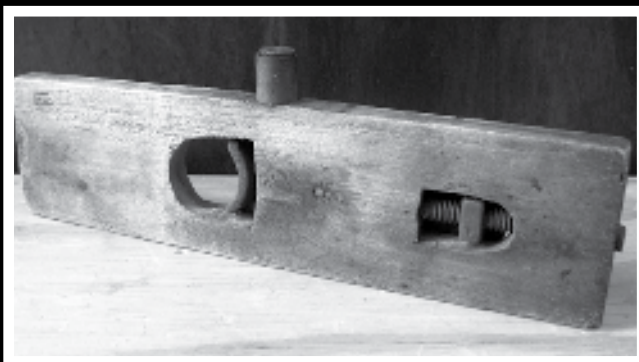
Preservation efforts in Avon have resulted in huge success stories. The Five Arch Bridge, Opera Block, Avon Inn and the Erie-Attica Trail have all become historic anchors in our community. Being located on a major highway, Avon is easily accessed by travellers who are intrigued by unique historic buildings, sites and monuments. Identifying and protecting these resources can benefit our village for a long time to come.

So, if you saw Tyler on your street, know that he was gathering only physical and geographic data from the public right-of way. If you have more information about your home's background, he will be happy to know what you have to share.

Thank you for helping preserve the Village of Avon.

*- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee*

## What Is It?



Another mystery item from the Museum's collections – can you help us? The item is about 8 inches long and both sides are pictured. The flat edge of the metal panel is not sharp.

Drop some knowledge on us at the Museum or on Facebook!



## Movie Theaters & Air Conditioning & Popcorn, Oh My!

On July 30, 1938, a parade formed at Avon's Circle Park and marched down Genesee Street to celebrate the grand opening of the Park Theater. Marching in the parade were Avon Mayor Stapley, local dignitaries, and the owner of the Park Theater, Claire Meachum, along with his wife, escorted by five usherettes. The Park Theater actually replaced another movie theater, also known as the Park Theater, located across Genesee Street at the present site of Avon Massage Therapy. There were many movie theaters built at this time as the popularity of movies for entertainment soared. Sound had been added to movies in 1927. This opened films up to a much wider audience, as literacy was no longer required. By 1930, attendance to movie theaters had reached 90 million per week. A wider audience meant bigger profits.

Theaters were also a popular project for communities looking to offer affordable entertainment to their citizens during the Great Depression. The first movie shown was "Goodbye Broadway." The parade was captured on film by Charles Mason. Mr. Mason worked for Fox Movietone filming footage used in newsreels that were shown before and between movies.

In the days before television, newsreels were a form of short documentary film, containing news stories and items of topical interest, which were prevalent between the 1910s and the late 1960s. By the late '60s, television had become so prevalent that newsreels were no longer needed.

In the early 1940s, the Park became part of the Kallet chain of movie theaters. At its peak, the Kallet chain was comprised of 57 theaters, and provided a cost-effective means of distributing and advertising movies, as there would be as many as eight different movies per week that played in the theater. The Kallet chain included theaters in Dansville, Warsaw, Brockport and the nearby Palace and Riviera Theaters in Genesee. While the Kallet chain actually survived until 2001, beginning in the early '60s, its theaters began to fall by the wayside. As televisions became more common in U.S. households, small town single-screen movie theaters were especially hard hit. Many were demolished; of the ones that remained, many were gutted and bear little resemblance to their former use. The Park Theater represents a rare glimpse of a Depression-era movie theater.



*Postcard image of the New Park Theater, c. 1940.*

In 1964, the VFW took over the Park Theater and showed movies up until 1997. The Park would survive showing movies under two different owners until 2003. Time-wise, this coincides with the switch to digital format. Studios stopped releasing content to theaters on film, rendering analog projectors obsolete.

The Park Theater and movie theaters in general might not have succeeded were it not for the incorporation of air conditioning and popcorn.

In 1902 Willis Carrier invented the first modern air conditioning system. The mechanical unit, which sent air through water-cooled coils, was not aimed at human comfort; it was designed to control humidity in the printing plant where he worked. In 1922, he followed up with the invention of the centrifugal chiller, which added a central compressor to reduce the unit's size. Movie theaters of the 1920s had a problem. Summertime's hot, sticky temperatures combined with collective body heat of an audience crammed into a confined space created an insufferable environment for moviegoers. As a result, theater owners saw the size of their audience, and consequently their profits, slump during the summer months. In 1925, Carrier persuaded Paramount Pictures Corp. to install his system in their flagship Rivoli Theater in New York's Times Square. The experiment was a success. People flocked to the Rivoli, as much to enjoy the cool relief as to see the movie. Over the next five years, Carrier installed his climate control technology in 300 movie theaters across the country. The Park Theater was one of the first movie theaters in the Rochester area to offer air conditioning. The cooling technology transformed the summer months from a financial write-off for the movie industry to the most profitable season of the year!





*Park Theater, summer 2018*

Popcorn first came into popularity in the mid-1800s. In the beginning, movie theater owners wanted nothing to do with popcorn because they were trying to duplicate what was done in “real” theaters. They had beautiful carpets and rugs and didn’t want popcorn being ground into them. Movie theaters were trying to appeal to a highbrow clientele, with popcorn seen as a “lowbrow” snack. They also didn’t want to deal with the trash or the distracting noise that eating popcorn during a movie would create.

During the Great Depression, audiences flocked to the movies looking for a cheap diversion. At 5 to 10 cents a bag, popcorn was a luxury that most people were able to afford. Initially, enterprising street vendors bought their own popping machines and sold popcorn outside the theaters. Movie theaters had signs hung outside their coatrooms, requesting that patrons check their popcorn with their coats. Popcorn was the original clandestine movie snack. Eventually, theater owners leased “lobby privileges” to vendors, allowing them to sell popcorn in the lobby of their theater for a daily fee. Before long, owners realized that if they cut out the middleman, their profits would skyrocket. For many theaters, the transition to selling popcorn helped save them from the crippling effects of the Great Depression.

In March, 2018, the village of Avon was awarded a Restore New York grant to assist with the extensive renovations and repairs needed to restore the Park Theater into a working theater. The Park Theater will become a lively arts center that will help to revitalize our “old” downtown, showcasing movies, documentaries, live theater, and art.

The Park Theater will become a lively arts center that will help to revitalize our “old” downtown, showcasing movies, documentaries, live theater, and art.

- Ann Younger

## Family Reunions



*Williams Family Reunion at Avon Driving Park, 2018*

***Family reunion – a chance to share history – a reason to celebrate our past – a time to welcome our future as a family.***

Many families gather for reunions during the summer. One of the families that gather in Avon every summer is the Williams family. They are the descendants of Justus and Jane Ann Hogmire Williams, who were married in 1847. Their farm was located on Farmer’s Lane near the Genesee River. It is no longer there. Only remnants of a foundation can be found. Jane Ann is a source of pride for the Williams family because she lived to be 102 years old - unusual for the time.

In recent years, the Williams family has gathered for reunions at the Avon Downs. A favorite reunion place for many years was Avonola.

The family has a wonderful time reconnecting, sharing photographs and reminiscing. This year we shared many fond memories of Doris Gillard. It was our first reunion without her.

You may not hear the name Williams as much in Avon these days, but if you hear Rowe, Ryan, Parks, and LeFeber, you’re talking to a Williams.

Does your family have a reunion in Avon? Our newsletter would welcome the opportunity to share your pictures and information. It would be nice to make this a regular column in our newsletter. Please contact the Historical Society office if you’re interested in sharing about your family reunion.

- Carole LeFeber Hayes, AP&HS Trustee



## "Our Library"

A library in any town is a very welcome center,  
Where young and old alike may come and everyone may enter.

The background of this one of ours to some may be a mystery,  
So I will try to tell you a little of its history.

Way back in nineteen 'leven, a small group made a try,  
to organize a library but plans all went awry.

When later on they tried again: nineteen fourteen was the date.  
but not 'til two years later, "T" was accepted by the state."

It started in a simple way, in a room, not very large.  
Ruth Frost was the first librarian, then Miss Hocmer was in charge.

And then among librarians another name appears.  
Gertrude Hocmer served efficiently for all of fifteen years.

Then the High School took her from us. Sally Simmons came along.  
She organized the Book Club which still is going strong.

Mary Ames and Nancy Taylor were with us for a time,  
and now our Mrs. Strassenburgh should get into this rhyme.

Since back in nineteen thirty, an assistant's work she's done.  
She's now been our librarian since nineteen forty-one.

For her untiring effort, she merits all our cheers.  
We hope she will be able to carry on for years.

A word about this building - of which we are so proud.  
The fine library proper where we mustn't speak out loud.

The recreation room below, with kitchen quite complete,  
where the Book Club has its meetings, with something good to eat.

The Swing Club and Home Bureau can hold their meetings there.  
In fact, it is a pleasant place that everyone can share.

This building was made possible by Aaron Barber's will.  
On this twentieth anniversary we're grateful to him still.

On April 12 in '28, just after its erection,  
the library was furnished and opened for inspection.

Mrs. Selden, who was president, was presented with the deed.  
a wonderful memorial to fill a long felt need.

By the way, it's Children's Book Week, a special time you know,  
Mrs. Strassenburgh has lots of books that she would like to show.

*- Written by Clara C. Westfall on the 20th Anniversary  
of the Barber Memorial Library, Children's Book Week,  
November 15, 1948. Poem shared by Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator.*



Thank you to these local  
businesses and organizations  
that have become members of  
the AP&HS! We are grateful for  
your support and community.

Aaron's Auto Body  
Avon Central School  
All Season Wine & Spirits  
American Legion  
Avondale Pub  
Avon Feed & Supply  
Avon Fitness and Tanning  
Avon Floral World  
Avon Free Library  
Christopher Robin's Pet Care  
Compeer of Livingston County  
Countywide Glass  
Genesee Valley Motors  
Genesee Valley Penny Saver  
Johncox Trucking  
LeFeber Farms  
Lima Carpet  
Livonia, Avon & Lakeville Railroad  
Paul Tilly Agency  
Pizza Land  
Platinum Limousine WNY  
Rich's Power Equipment  
Scottie's Detail Auto Body  
Stephenson-Dougherty  
Funeral Home  
Studio Sales Pottery  
Tom Wahl's  
Village of Avon  
Village Restaurant  
White Horse Sales and Service



# *The Discovery of Killer River and Dream Valley*

## *Memories of the 1960s*

One warm spring day some friends (George and Dan Collins, Bob and Jack Wells, possibly more) and I ventured out behind my house on E. Main St. and ended up just below the Case house. There we discovered a small stream and began to investigate. My mom remembers the day because Dan Collins got his brand new shoes soaked.

While we enjoyed our new find, the snow had begun to melt and the small stream became a raging river, in our eyes, and quickly rose above its banks and surrounded us. There we were stuck on an "island." We started to panic and one of the Wells boys fell in the stream. To us younguns it looked like he had just gone over Niagara Falls. We managed to pull him to safety and now had to figure out how to get off the island. Well, the water that had surrounded us was only about a foot deep and once we realized that, we just walked across. That adventure resulted in naming this little creek "Killer River." When we discovered "Killer River" we had no idea of the multitude of memories and adventures that we were about to enjoy.

Each trek involved a bit more investigation. Eventually we searched every inch of that stream from the Davin farm down to Horse Shoe Pond, catching frogs, fish, and turtles along the way. As we discovered these wonderful areas we began to name them. We already had Killer River; eventually we made it up to the small dam next to the road at Davin's farm. We promptly named it "Hoover Dam." We spent many a day swimming in that water.

Downstream from Hoover Dam were all sorts of semi-deep holes, bends, and many just plain neat things to see. We learned the names of different types of birds, dragonflies and butterflies. Such a large world in such a small area.

Continuing downstream was a wooded area full of large oak, hickory and maple trees. Not dense growth but a beautiful open woods. When we called to each other you could hear the echo all through the woods. Hence, "Echo Forest" was born. The crows were always

letting everyone and everything in the area know of our arrival there. Many times we could see the deer exit the woods toward Davin's.

North of Echo Forest was a clearing, including a vast valley with some steep cliffs and cow trails up and down both sides of the of the stream. This was a beautiful area. It soon got its name, "Dream Valley." Yes, we named it Dream Valley! It's hard to believe that this name would stick for all these years but it has. I heard that in later years Dream Valley took on a different meaning with it becoming known for drug use. Sad.

North of Dream Valley was a wooded area that went down to Rochester Street. That area was never much of an adventure and we didn't spend much time there. Past Rochester Street was Horse Shoe Pond.

East of Dream Valley a ways was the Davin farm and after that the Steele farm in East Avon. The first time I went up to that area I was with our family dog, Ginger. We came upon a wooded area with a swampy spot in the middle surrounded by some dead farm animals. It was a very eerie area and I was scared to death. This became "Dead Man Swamp." Already frightened, I looked up and saw a tree house like no tree house I have ever seen. I just knew some old tramp lived there. I ran all the way home and got friends to go back with me. As it turned out no one lived there and we had our very own tree house to spend many a day in. I heard that the helpers from the Steele farm had built this wooden wonder years before. It started with a ladder up to a landing about 22 feet up. From there two "bridges" went in opposite directions to landings about 20 feet in each direction. At the middle landing the ladder continued up to the main house which was about 6'x6' with a door and window. We later measured and found the floor of the main house was 44 feet up. When we told our parents of the size, my mom made my dad go out to confirm. He did and came home with a worried look on his face.

We spent a lot of wonderful times at these locations hiking, camping, hunting, and just living life to its fullest.

- Tom Mulvaney





## Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414

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### AP&HS Board of Trustees 2018

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### Museum Hours:

Thurs. & Sun., 1-4, or by appt.

This newsletter is designed & printed by  
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(585) 226-8111 • 1471 Route 15, Avon

*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2017-18 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours

### Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
AVON PRESERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

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Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10            (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20                (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

(   ) Yes                        (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: clefeberhayes@gmail.com

## Address Service Requested

### Facebook Page



Our "What Is It?" from last issue garnered some comments on Facebook, where our readers offered an answer:

It's a pot lifter. To lift pots with handles from a fire or stove without burning yourself. - *Chad W.*

To get pots off a fireplace arm. My Grandma and mom used them a lot. - *Kelli H.*

Exactly! - *Martha S.*

Share memories on our Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety).





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 32, No. 1 | February 2019

## Message From the President

A while back three friends, Ashley Comeau, Jessica Soucy, and Becky Ryan, were discussing how much they enjoyed those Hallmark Channel Christmas movies. You know the ones—the general plot usually goes something like this: a man or a woman comes to a beautiful small town from a big city at Christmastime. The reasons vary. Sometimes they grew up there or spent time there, or maybe something sinister happened like people were laid off or the local plant was shut down. Of course, the man or woman meets an old or new flame and sparks fly. (I only know all this because my wife watches them!) Anyway, the movies always lead up to some big Christmas event, the people realize they can't live without each other, and a happy ending ensues.

Well, the subject came up that wouldn't it be nice if Avon had something to kick off the holiday season, and so the idea for the first annual Avon Holiday Spectacular was born. December 1st, 2018 was chosen as the date for the event, being far enough from Thanksgiving and before things really got hectic for people. It was a rousing success.

Over 1,000 people attended this event. Money was raised for several charities and organizations. The Boy Scouts, the Avon Food Pantry, Avon Community Cares, and the Humane Society all received donations. Toys were collected at the fire hall.

Speaking for the AP&HS, we had over 100 visitors and made quite a bit through sales, new memberships, and donations. This will help us continue to bring you wonderful programs and maintain our beautiful museum.

The hand stamps for passports were a great idea—you had to get stamped at several different places in order to get a passport. Then you would qualify for drawings for prizes donated by Monks Bread, Van Allen & Hoffman,



*Display of Christmas nutcrackers at the AP&HS Museum on Genesee St. during the First Annual Avon Holiday Spectacular.*

Welch's, and Commercial Bank. There was also Santa for the kids, good food from the Village Restaurant and Rotary, and live music at the Park Theater provided by Avon Central School. Congratulations to Ashley, Jessica, and Becky. I understand that the Avon Holiday Spectacular 2019 is already in the planning stages and promises to be even bigger.

On a related note, there are currently more storefronts occupied along the commercial section of Genesee Street than there have been in quite some time. Soon to come is a restored Park Theater. And check out the new face of the Village Restaurant. Looking good, Avon.

*- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President*

## J. Francis Kellogg House

Avon is home to eight properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Five Arch Bridge, Avon Inn, Avon Free Library, Barber-Mulligan Farm, First Methodist Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church of Avon, Opera Block, and the J. Francis Kellogg House. The Register is administered by the National Park Service, and is responsible for identifying significant cultural and architectural sites and buildings throughout the country that play a part in American history at a local or national level. This newsletter series has focused on each of the listed Avon properties, using their respective nomination forms as the main source of information. The information for each property can be found on the AP&HS website at [www.avonpreservation.org/buildings](http://www.avonpreservation.org/buildings).

This issue will focus on the J. Francis Kellogg House, which can be found at 255 Genesee Street. It was listed on the National Register in 2003 for the architectural style and the famous architect responsible for the design. The present owners are Deborah and Paul Drozdziel, who are well known for providing a favorite local summer gathering spot, Sprinkles Ice Cream. The shop is located in the renovated knitting mill, built in 1922, at 184 Spring Street, just around the corner from their magnificent home.

The National Register form is filled with detailed information about the exterior construction, interior design, architect, and the owner, offering the reader a clear understanding of the significance of this structure. In the case of the J. Francis Kellogg House, the well-known and respected architect, Claude Bragdon, designed this 1908 property, resulting in "an outstanding example of early 20th-century residential architecture in the village of Avon that combines the Colonial Revival style and the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement." It is a two-and-a-half story square frame residence situated on a double-wide lot, surrounded by middle- and upper-class late 19th- and 20th-century homes. It has a flat-topped hipped roof with dormers, and a port-cochere on north side. The west (back) side has a two-story porch, the second floor being a sleeping porch providing healthy fresh air, which aligned with the health consciousness of the time. The exterior is clad with cedar shingles of alternating eight- and four-inch exposed widths. The front entrance porch showcases four Doric columns flanked by a decorative wood railing, which is topped with an iron railing. This patterned element is repeated on the other porches of the house.



*J. Francis Kellogg home, photograph provided by Wikipedia*

The interior is noted for its "high degree of craftsmanship and the use of top-quality materials," featuring built-in bookcases with leaded glass doors, paneled wainscoting, and a decorative plaster ceiling. Original light fixtures have been retained, as well as the dumb waiter, which operates between the full basement and the second story. It has been said that the windows on the street side of the house have 1/4" plate glass to help reduce any sound of the road. All of the others have 1/8" float glass, which is typical for most house windows.

When the house was built, the Village of Avon population was increasing, so that by 1910 there were 2,053 residents. Commissioned by the owner, J. Francis Kellogg, a local banker and businessman, the house was an example of "high degree of sophistication compared to other new residences at the time."

The Kelloggs were early Avon settlers, coming from Connecticut in 1811. J. Francis's father farmed in Caledonia, and his mother was a Hogmire descendant in South Avon. J. Francis was born in 1871, going to local grade schools. He studied business at the Rochester Business University. In 1892, at 21 years old, he became an assistant cashier at the State Bank of Avon (now the offices of the Town of Avon), and continued in the position until the bank closed in 1931. He married Kate Washburn of Maine and they had five children.

J. Francis bought the property for his new home in 1908. He hired Claude Bragdon to design the building, and construction started the same year.



## Cullinan Family Reunion



*First Cullinan Family Reunion at Avon, 1923*

In the early 1860s, three Cullinan brothers, Timothy, Jeremiah, and Daniel, settled in the Avon/Caledonia area and worked as farmers. In 2018, the descendants of these brothers gathered at the Avon Downs for a reunion. Third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth generation members of the Cullinan line attended. The Cullinan family genealogy has been well documented. This allows the American Cullinans to stay connected to the ancestral Cullinan families of Ireland.

*- Richard Burke, AP&HS*



*Cullinan Family Reunion at the Avon Driving Park, July 28, 2018*

Has your family had a family reunion in the past year? Submit a photo or two and a little caption for publication in a future issue of the newsletter! Drop off a hard copy at the Museum, email us, or drop us a line on Facebook. Thanks for your participation!

*- Holly Watson, Editor*

The Kelloggs lived in the home for only 10 years. In 1918 they moved to a more modest house on Lacy Street, likely due to financial strain. He established an insurance and real estate office, and was a member of the Masonic order and the Central Presbyterian Church of Avon. He died at home in 1942, his obituary not stating his status in the community.

The architect, Claude Bragdon, was born in Ohio in 1866, settled as a young man in Rochester in 1884 and subsequently trained as an architect through the apprenticeship system. He partnered with several architects and in 1896 built the Colonial Revival style front addition to the Livingston County Courthouse in Geneseo. Several of Bragdon's major commissions have also been recognized in Rochester: the First Universalist Church built in 1908, Rochester's New York Central Railroad Station in 1913, which has been since demolished, the Rochester Chamber of Congress, the Bevier Building of the Rochester Mechanics Institute, and nearly 50 residences and public buildings in the region. Bragdon designed two other homes in Avon; one was a Dutch Colonial located on High Acres, which was built in 1898, but burned in 1934 due to a chimney fire. He also contributed to the large yellow home known as "Fair Acres" at 104 East Main Street for which he designed a new main entrance and added a second story to the east wing.

The National Register application respectfully describes Claude Bragdon:

"Bragdon was a multi-talented designer with wide-ranging interests in philosophy, eastern religions and culture, and mathematical theory, which led to his becoming a theosophist, lecturer, writer, and stage designer, as well as an architect of broad scope. His residential designs have an organic complexity in massing, an imaginative control of space and light, a totality of design that often included the entire property and furnishings, and fine workmanship."

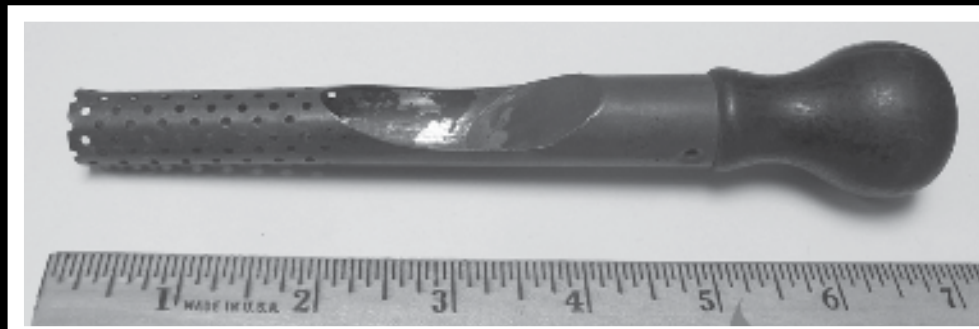
Avon is fortunate to have such a treasure as the J. Francis Kellogg house in our village.

*~ Clara Mulligan, Trustee*

## What Is It?

Another mystery item from the Museum's collections – can you help us?

Drop some knowledge on us at the Museum or on Facebook!



# AP&HS Programs: 2019

Our schedule of presentations have just been announced, and we have some wonderful programming this year – join us!

We hope you enjoyed the first program of the year, Cynthia Howk's discussion on "Historic Avon: Preservation Benefits for Our Community" on January 27th, 2019.

*Our next programs are as follows:*

## Funerary History in Avon

**Sunday, March 3, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Steve Stephenson and Jerry Dougherty*

The Stephenson-Dougherty Funeral Home has been laying Avon residents to rest for generations and helping grieving families honor the memory of their loved ones. Come learn about the cemeteries and memorial traditions of our town.



*Avon Cemetery, overlooking the LA&A Railroad along Rochester St. Source: <http://elevation.maplogs.com>*

All programs will be held at the Avon Village Hall, 74 Genesee St., Avon, NY 14414

Programs are free, open to the public, and handicap accessible. Light refreshments will be served.

Donations most gratefully accepted, so that we may continue to provide our programming.



## Wells Barns of Western New York

**Sunday, May 5, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Wells Barns enthusiasts and experts Richard Thomas, Katie Andres, and Wheatland Town Historian Barb Chapman*

What is a Wells Barn? These cathedral-like buildings are fairly unique to our area, particularly concentrated in northern Livingston County and southern Monroe County.

There are even a couple in Avon! In this talk you will learn about the Wheatland native who patented a beautiful laminated truss system for the barns' beams, and why he designed them this way. You are also sure to hear about the exciting ways some of the barns are transitioning to the 21st century!



*Interior of a Wells barn*

## If Knives Could Talk

**Sunday, September 8, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Tom Kalcevic*

Renowned collector Tom Kalcevic will show and tell about his locally made Robeson knives. The Robeson Cutlery Company made both cutlery and pocketknives for over 100 years. This fascinating lecture about sharp tools will illuminate many aspects of life in the past when knives were part of many people's daily activities.





# History of East Avon Fire Department

Sunday, October 6, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Presented by Mary Morey, Exterior Firefighter with EAFD

Since 1926, the East Avon Fire Department has been serving the Avon community. The Department was formed when the Van Zandt Hose Company donated chemical fire trucks to them, and the East Avon Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. was formed in 1939.



Today the East Avon Fire Department responds to emergencies of all kinds, not just fires, covering about 38 square miles in the Avon area. Come learn more about this vital part of the Avon community directly from a member of the EAFD. Perhaps we will even get an update about the restoration of "Old Henry," their antique fire truck!



"Old Henry," from eastavonfd.org

# Memories of Life in Avon

Sunday, November 3, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Presented by Ted Coyne and his son, David Coyne

The Coynes have been in Avon for generations. Sit and listen a while!



Avon Central School 7th-grade class, 1935  
Courtesy of Town of Avon Historian's Office

# AP&HS Meetings

The AP&HS Board meets at 7:00 pm on the first Monday of each month, unless it lands on a national holiday. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome visitors to join us. If you are interested in working with us to promote local history by becoming a board member, please contact us!

## 2019 SCHEDULE

January 7th

February 4th

March 4th

April 1st

May 6th

June 3rd

July 1st

August 5th

September 9th

(postponed due to Labor Day)

October 7th

November 4th

December 2nd



King Cole Bean Co., 2014 (Photo: H. Watson)

## Letter from Col. Samuel Blakeslee

The following is a copy of a letter from Col. Samuel Blakeslee to his daughter, Asenath, preceding the War of 1812. The ideas of the time about what a young woman should be are clear; though some, such as those alluding to a “subordinate disposition,” may strike today’s readers as old-fashioned, her father’s affection shines through.

The letter was shared with the Avon Preservation and Historical Society by Dr. William B. Chapel, who has preserved the contents of the missive. In about the 1930s, a Chapel cousin in Illinois allegedly possessed the original letter, as well as the saddle upon which Asenath supposedly rode from Connecticut to Avon. Today it is not known where the original letter is kept, if it survives, not to mention the saddle.

Dr. Chapel added the following context for the 1800 letter:

Earlier in his life, Sam Blakeslee served as a drummer boy in General George Washington’s

Revolutionary Grand Army. Later, as a leading Connecticut citizen, he served on the Connecticut State Assembly, resigning from his seat to rejoin the military in service to help defend the country in the War of 1812. He moved his family to Ontario County, New York, of which part is now Livingston County, arriving at Hartford (now Avon) on the 12th of February, 1812. He led the U.S. troops in the defeat of the British at Buffalo and Black Rock and then returned to Avon where he remained the rest of his life. He and his wife, Phebe, are buried in the Avon Cemetery.

Asenath Blakelee Chapel and her husband, Seth Chapel, are buried in the Old Burying Ground (Polebridge Cemetery, aka Johnson Cemetery) along with nine other Chapels. Her grave marker reads, “*Mother thy loss we deeply feel.*”

- Holly Watson, Editor

Addressed to: Asenath Blakeslee  
Colebrook, Connecticut

Camp at Plainfield, New Jersey, April 25, 1800

My Dear Daughter Asenath:

Though I know you want no precepts under your mother’s care to instruct you in all moral and religious duties, yet there are some things she may possibly forget to remind you of which are highly necessary for the forming of your mind, so as to make that figure in the world I could wish you to.



“The Port of Buffalo in 1813.” Source: *The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* by Benson Lossing

I well recollect your age to be about fifteen, and that you from your cradle was a patron of patience and good humor, and as you advanced from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, many amiable, beautiful features bloomed in your countenance and, the subordinate disposition which pervaded your steps from the beginning has been no small source of comfort to your parents.

It is my fortune at present to be deprived of the oversight and management of my family, but notwithstanding all that, my children and their welfare lies very near my heart, and yourself in an especial manner, as your sex are the most liable to be deluded and frowned upon by the dissipated part of the world.

Forty years’ experience has sufficiently taught me the evils and vicissitudes that the young are able to fall into, especially those of your sex by being enamored with the giddy pleasures of a deceiving world, and thereby be led captive to ruin and eventually bring on themselves that sin and disgrace that time can never deface.

My first caution to you, my daughter, Asenath is to be truly virtuous—true virtue is a young lady is like a diamond or pearl, the more it is moved and handled the brighter its luster will glitter and shine.



Let not pride and vanity be predominant in your heart and thereby get the ascendancy over your mind and conduct. But as you were born and brought up as I have some reason to hope by Christian parents, copy their virtues, especially your mother's, which may prove you a bail of innocence.

My daughter, do not be impatient with reading this kind admonition which comes from the heart of an affectionate father, but study to practice these examples of that hereafter contained:

Let industry and modesty be the theme of your actions, and shun everything that will tend to the dishonor of your parents and family of which you are a member.

Give your leisure time to the reading of good and instructive books. I would first recommend to you the Bible as the most useful of all books in the world, especially the writings of Solomon, which are the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, wherein you may find the path of wisdom clearly pointed out, and which if you steadily and perseveringly study well, it will clothe you with jewels of gold and rings set in diamonds, and a



Grave of Asenath Blakeslee Chapel, Polebridge Cemetery, Avon  
Image source: Findagrave.com



Grave of Col. Samuel Blakeslee, Avon Cemetery

golden chain will be about your neck; yes, more, it will clothe you with a white robe which will never fade, and which is more to be desired than all early enjoyments

My dear girl, although I am in the army and in arms for the support of our dear bought freedom and liberty, and am a great distance from you, and expect not to see you for a long time, yet I constantly carry you with the rest of my children in the arms of faith and prayer to the throne of grace, and there leave you in the care of Him who takes care of children, for it is said of Him never to forsake the righteous nor the children to beg their bread, and that He also hears the young ravens when they cry.

I request you read this letter with care and attention, and keep it from being destroyed. Perhaps I may never return home again, as all people are liable to death. If this should be my lot, you may look into this letter, and there you may see.

Please to present my love to your mother, brothers and sister, and write me a letter the first opportunity. I am, my dear daughter, your tender and affectionate father,

Samuel Blakeslee



# Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414  
[AvonPreservation.org](http://AvonPreservation.org)

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Joan Reid <i>Curator, Secretary</i>	Clara Mulligan Pat Murphy
James Brewer <i>Assistant Curator</i>	Mary Primm Ellen Zapf

## Address Service Requested

### Museum Hours:

Thurs. & Sun., 1-4, or by appt.

This newsletter is designed & printed by  
**Penny Lane Printing**  
(585) 226-8111 • 1471 Route 15, Avon

*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2019-2020 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours

### Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
AVON PRESERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10            (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20                (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

(   ) Yes                        (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)

## Facebook Page



The First Annual Avon Spectacular on December 1st was a huge success! The festively-decorated Museum was flooded with visitors and the AP&HS offered a membership giveaway.

*Congratulations to Wendy C. of Avon! She is the winner of the 1 year membership drawing that took place on December 1.*

- Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Share memories on our Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety).





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 32, No. 2 | May 2019

## Message From the President

As many of you may know, restoration of the Third Floor of the Opera Block has long been a dream project of our Society and one very close to my heart in particular.

An historic second vote (the first was a tie) allowed the Town of Avon to restore this beautiful structure for use as Town offices, the Town and Village Court, and the AP&HS Museum. I have given tours of the building since 2006, before the restoration. I have probably taken upwards of 500 people to the Third Floor and the reaction is always the same: "Wow, what a great space," or "You have to do something with this." Never have I received negative feedback.

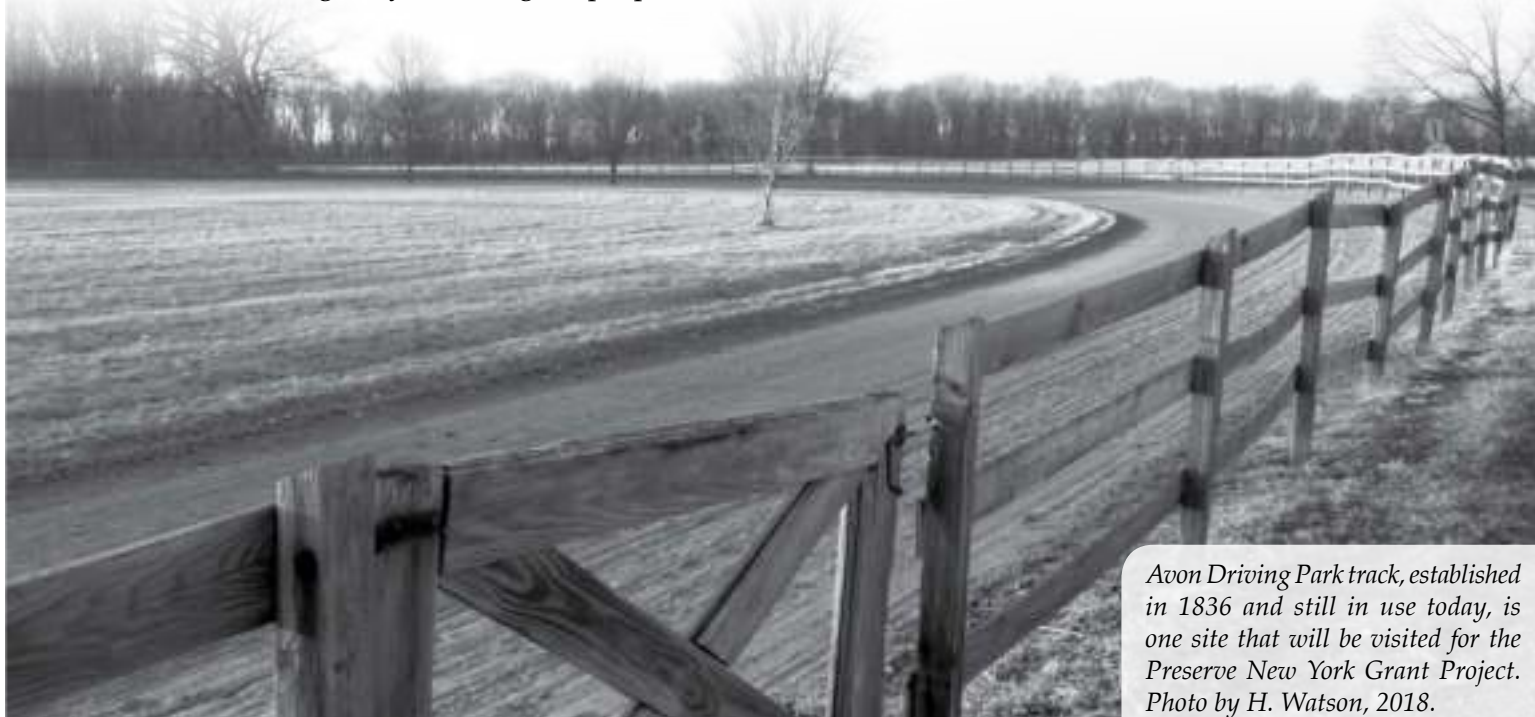
Last year, with the assistance of the County grant writer, Heather Grant, and Kelly Cole, the Town applied for funding for the Opera Block's Third Floor. In February, I got in touch with Chris Quinlan with the idea of forming a committee to help the Town move forward and reapply for this project's funding. A small committee has been formed, and been diligently working to prepare the

application. A big thank you to Heather Grant as she has been a huge help on this project. By the way, letters of support for this project will help with this grant. These should be addressed to Supervisor David LeFeber, Town of Avon, and submitted to Kim McDowell at the Town Hall by June 1, 2019.

We (mostly Chris!) have assembled a top-notch group of Avonites to work on the Third Floor Committee and we leave each meeting with an assignment to do before the next meeting (thanks, Bonnie Davis). We have updated the estimate for the project and are working on the new grant application. Watch this space for updates.

Also, if anyone who has not seen the Third Floor would like to, I'm at our Museum on Thursday and Sunday afternoons from 2PM until 4PM, or I can make arrangements for other times. Just call us at 226-2425 x 22, leave a message, and I'll get back to you.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President



Avon Driving Park track, established in 1836 and still in use today, is one site that will be visited for the Preserve New York Grant Project. Photo by H. Watson, 2018.

# AP&HS Programs: 2019

Our fabulous schedule of programming continues – join us for these great presentations by talented local experts.

## Wells Barns of Western New York

Sunday, May 5, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Presented by Wells Barns enthusiasts and experts Richard Thomas, Katie Andres, and Wheatland Town Historian Barb Chapman

What is a Wells Barn? These cathedral-like buildings are fairly unique to our area, particularly concentrated in northern Livingston County and southern Monroe County. There are even a couple in Avon! In this talk you will learn about the Wheatland native who patented a beautiful laminated truss system for the barns' beams, and why he designed them this way. You are also sure to hear about the exciting ways some of the barns are transitioning to the 21st century!



Interior of a Wells barn

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Robeson knives. The Robeson Cutlery Company made both cutlery and pocketknives for over 100 years. This fascinating lecture about sharp tools will illuminate many aspects of life in the past when knives were part of many people's daily activities.

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"Old Henry," from eastavonfd.org

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Since 1926, the East Avon Fire Department has been serving the Avon community. The Department was formed when the Van Zandt Hose Company donated chemical fire trucks to them, and the East Avon Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. was formed in 1939.



Today the East Avon Fire Department responds to emergencies of all kinds, not just fires, covering about 38 square miles in the Avon area. Come learn more about this vital part of the Avon community directly from a member of the EAFD. Perhaps we will even get an update about the restoration of "Old Henry," their antique fire truck!

## Memories of Life in Avon

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The Coynes have been in Avon for generations. Sit and listen a while!



Avon Central School 7th-grade class, 1935  
Courtesy of Town of Avon Historian's Office



# Sam D'Angelo's Shoe Store

Recently, on Facebook, Robert D'Angelo shared an image of his great-uncle, Sam D'Angelo. It shows Sam in his famous shoe store, once located at 46 West Main St., across from the former 5 and 10 Cent store, now Rivoli Dental. The image was originally published in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* in 1992, and was rediscovered and shared recently with D'Angelo relatives by Steve Bailor. Every mention of Sam's shoe store garners lots of Facebook community response, but this picture brought out over 100 comments, all of them fondly recalling the landmark in Avon.

The majority of reminiscences revolved around the chaos of the shop, and how over the years fallen and discarded boxes and shoes accumulated so that only a narrow path was carved, leading to a single chair for fitting. In a local's words, "I remember climbing over boxes to get to 'the seat.'" The two other chairs on either side of Sam in the 1992 photograph were generally described as being buried in shoes, and one can only surmise that a significant amount of tidying went into preparing for the photo shoot. One popular comment on social media was that a local woman had a dream one night of helping Sam clean the store, only to wake up so exhausted in the morning that she skipped work that day! Despite the disorder of the store, nearly everyone on Facebook who weighed in recalled Sam's ability to find exactly the desired footwear. One commenter recalled, "I'll never forget the pile of shoes in his store. When you found one shoe that you liked on that pile he knew exactly where the other one was."

According to newspaper accounts in Avon and Rochester newspapers, D'Angelo's Shoe Store was established in 1907 by Philip D'Angelo, Sam's father, on Rochester Street. Old maps and other accounts attest to Rochester Street being home for many recent immigrants from Italy, including the D'Angelos. Over his entrepreneurial career, Philip also opened several 5 & 10 cent stores in the Avon area. In 1918, Philip purchased the property at 46 West Main Street (formerly numbered 18



Photograph courtesy of Robert D'Angelo, published September 6, 1992, by the *Democrat and Chronicle*. Photograph by Annette Lein, D&C staff photographer.

Philip D'Angelo's signature, 1921. Courtesy of the Poorhouse and County Home Collection, Livingston County Historian's Office, Mt. Morris.

West Main St.) and moved his shoe store there, planning to reside in the upper rooms. Besides selling popular shoes of the times, D'Angelo also repaired footwear, back when re-stitching and resoling was practical and possible. Today's synthetic composite sneakers simply cannot be repaired the same way as leather and rubber-soled shoes could in the 20th century.

Philip retired from the shoe business about 1936 and passed away in June of 1941, leaving the establishment's operations to his son, Samuel P. D'Angelo. Sam was quoted in the *Democrat and Chronicle* in 1971 as saying, "I'm too old to work, too young to retire." And so it was that he continued the renowned shoe business until his passing in 1993, just short of a year after the photograph of him in his store appeared in the *Democrat and Chronicle*. His shop was afterward converted to a residence, and still stands today, just west of Avon on the Green.

Clearly, memories of his iconic store are still vivid for Avonites, from the back-to-school saddle shoes of childhood to the image of Sam bending over to use the cash register, standing on a sedimentary platform of shoes. With a couple photographs to remind us, stories from our recent past get us talking, reminiscing, and feeling grateful for those good old days.



Avon Herald-News, Oct. 23, 1942

- Holly Watson, Editor

# Family Reunions



*The Shaw family reunion, with all siblings, spouses, and children!*

The Shaws have been celebrating family reunions for over 50 years. It all started with the love of Genevieve and Neal Shaw who had 15 children, 11 boys and 4 girls. Avon was a great place to raise children and still is! We eventually started having our reunions on Avon's Corn Festival day. Relatives came early to enjoy the vendors and music before the Shaw family festivities. We held many of the reunions at the home of Jane Harrison on High Street. The pool and basketball court provided many hours of entertainment. The love and family continues to grow and so do the family reunions!



*Young Shaw children in order of birth.*



*Genevieve and Neal Shaw on their anniversary.*



*The Shaw kids all together as adults.*

Thank you to Kathy Harrison for contributing to this newsletter's family reunion page.

**Does your family have a reunion in Avon?**

Please contact Carole Hayes at [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com). We would love to feature your family in our next newsletter.



## What Is It?

Another mystery item from the Museum's collections – can you help us? The item is about 8" long and consists of a rubber bulb which, when squeezed, blows old, rather acrid rubber-scented air from an array of small holes at the end of the nozzle. What could its purpose possibly have been?

*Drop some knowledge on us  
at the Museum or on Facebook!*



## Poem to Duane, from Mom

Dear Du:

When you get up, if we're not here  
Don't let it worry you, my dear.  
We hope today to make a sale  
Of our "Summer Home" in Lily Dale!  
You have to get your lunch yourself –  
You'll find fresh bread on the breadbox shelf –  
And a dandy ham, all cooked with care  
On a platter in the Frigidaire!  
Two kinds of cookies – white + brown.  
And we'll be back ere the sun goes down!

Mom

*- Submitted by Bob Westfall,  
AP&HS President*

**Editor's note:** this poem was written about 1930 by Clara (Carson) Westfall to her son, Duane C. Westfall. Duane was in Avon High School at the time, later to be Bob Westfall's father. This sweet scrap was likely left on the counter for Duane at their home at 207 Genesee Street, Avon. But now we all desperately want to know – did they sell the Summer Home?

## AP&HS Meetings



*King Cole Bean Co., 2014 (Photo: H. Watson)*

The AP&HS Board meets at 7:00 pm on the first Monday of each month, unless it lands on a national holiday. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome visitors to join us. If you are interested in working with us to promote local history by becoming a board member, please contact us!

## 2019 SCHEDULE

May 6th

June 3rd

July 1st

August 5th

September 9th  
*(postponed due to Labor Day)*

October 7th

November 4th

December 2nd

## Get Well Soon!

AP&HS Vice-President Dan Cochrane is recovering from an injury and will be laid up for a few months. Sending many good thoughts from all of us here!

*- AP&HS Board and Community*

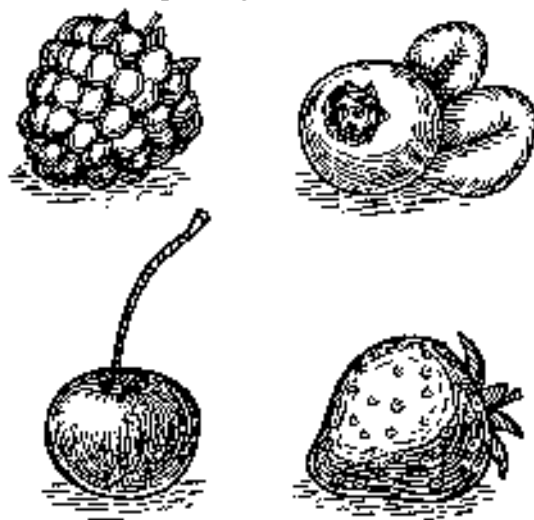
# Berry Picking

Foraging for berries has a long history not only in the Genesee Valley but worldwide. Our ancient ancestors relied on picking and preserving all kinds of local fruit to keep them healthy through the seasons. Today, many find the idea worthwhile whether in your backyard, at an orchard or going afield. The benefits of providing for yourself in the fresh air, sunshine and wholesomeness while doing some light exercising can be an irresistible pull to the outdoors. In addition, if you take along children, they quickly learn how food is grown and may develop a sense of bonding with family and nature. Many have fond memories of picking with Mom and Dad while talking about family issues, history or news.

Berry season runs from spring through fall. You can use this site, [pickyourown.org](http://pickyourown.org), to track when berries are coming due in the Avon area and to find nearby farms that offer U-Pick opportunities.

## *If you are foraging wild berries here are some tips:*

- If located off of your own land and State land, always ask permission of the landowner and/or leaseholder. Respect for the property owner or lessee cannot be overstated.
- Know what the berries look like or accompany someone who does.
- Use sunscreen, keep hydrated and dress in closed-toe shoes, full-length pants and longsleeved shirt with a wide brimmed hat. Some berries are thorny.
- Be sure of your footing and balance. There may be sticks, stones and holes to upset footing.
- Before getting into the car look each other over for ticks and upon return to your home, change clothes, shower and inspect again.



## **Foraging verses U-Pick:**

Many find that wild berries have a more vibrant and intense flavor than cultivated berries. On the other hand, wild berries tend to be much smaller and more time consuming to pick. Finally, some berries may be available in the wild but not for U-Pick, and vice versa. Plan your picking for the enjoyment, purpose and the camaraderie with family and friends. You may soon find it becoming an annual event.

## *Other foraging tips:*

1. Look for berries at the edge of forests and disturbed land. Along and within the boundaries of walking trails, state land and land on which you have permission to walk. Currants, for instance, like moderate shade with well-drained, sandy soil, while black raspberries can take full sun and almost any type of soil.
2. Under telephone/electric wires is a good place where birds will distribute seeds and plants will develop. Elderberries especially propagate well under wires, where there is plenty of water in little low-lying swales.
3. You can locate elderberries easily when they blossom in late June and early July. While driving safely, look for a shrub with white blossom heads that look like Queen Anne's lace but much larger and seem out of place because they are higher off the ground. Queen Anne's lace has much smaller heads, are much lower to the ground and blossom in early September.
4. Wild black raspberries can be semi-cultivated in your yard very easily by transplanting several roots and staking up the canes so they can't run and you can mow under them. The new canes produced each year by the root will only bear fruit the second year so be careful not to trample or break them.
5. Bring wide and shallow containers to carry the fruit. Plastic, metal or wicker. Shallow containers will not allow the top berries to crush the lower berries. If not going directly home from picking, bring coolers with plastic frozen blocks - not ice! - to keep the berries fresh and inhibit mold.

## **Caring for your harvest before processing**

- It is best if you plan your foraging or U-Pick on a day that you can process, to at least some degree, your harvest that night. If left on a counter overnight they will almost assuredly be moldy in the morning.





- Do not wash them until immediately before final processing.
- At a minimum, put them in the refrigerator. They will last 3-4 days if your family will let them go that long.
- They can be easily frozen by placing on wax paper on a cookie sheet and freeze for an hour. Then put into sealed plastic bags and return to the freezer. That way the berries don't stick to each other.

- Most of our berries go to jellies and jams. Mary mashes, cooks and puts them in hanging bags to drain the night they are picked. After repeated heatings and draining, the juice is put into sealed plastic bags and frozen for canning in the fall when the temperature in the kitchen is lower and when her schedule is less crowded.

Berries can, of course, be bought at stores, local stands and farms already picked and in containers. The Rochester Public Market on Railroad Avenue is a very good source at reasonable prices and is open all Saturday mornings. We have seen some of the harder-to-find berries there such as gooseberries, currants (black and red), even elderberries, which are very difficult to source. They don't last long so get there early.

Berry picking, while seemingly "old-fashioned" actually can be a very pleasant and fun event while providing a healthy treat, moderate exercise and a way to bond with family and friends. Enjoy!

- John Liccini, AP&HS Trustee

References: [pickyourown.org](http://pickyourown.org) • [theviewfromgrandisland.com](http://theviewfromgrandisland.com)  
[www.cityofrochester.gov/publicmarket/](http://www.cityofrochester.gov/publicmarket/)

## Membership Committee Update

*"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."-- Helen Keller*

If you are reading this, thank you! You are one of the reasons the AP&HS can do so much. You are a member and your financial support is appreciated. During the past 12 months, the Membership Committee has been very busy. In an effort to track membership trends, a detailed report is presented at monthly meetings. One notable trend is that new members prefer using online options to join. Also, the Membership Committee has started the Family Reunion column in the newsletter. Finally, in an effort to increase membership, we gave two memberships away this year: one during the annual meeting in January and one during the Holiday Spectacular in December. Both were done through drawings. Additionally, if you bought a membership at the Corn Fest, you were given a choice of a free scratch-off lottery ticket or a free corn fritter ticket. Thank you to Avon Rotary for donating the corn fritter tickets!

The Membership Committee is chaired by Carole Hayes. She is assisted by Dan Cochrane and Geri Brewer. Dan and Geri have done a wonderful job of increasing our business memberships. Have you noticed the AP&HS decals on the doors of local businesses? Please look for them. We are thankful for their support.



*The decal given to Business Members shows community support and involvement.*

A benefit to membership is receiving this newsletter. On the last page of the newsletter is a form to become a member. Do you know someone who would enjoy membership in the AP&HS? Consider clipping out the form and sharing it with them or giving it as a gift. Membership levels are as follows: Individual - \$10; Family - \$20; Business - \$30.

Together we are preserving the history of Avon.

- AP&HS Membership Committee



## Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414  
[AvonPreservation.org](http://AvonPreservation.org)

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Dr. Robert Hayes  
John DuBois

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John Liccini  
Mary Lou Miller  
Clara Mulligan  
Mary Primm  
Ellen Zapf

**Museum Hours:**  
Thurs. & Sun.,  
1-4, or by appt.

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*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2019-2020 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours*

### Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
AVON PRESERVATION  
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23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10           (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20             (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

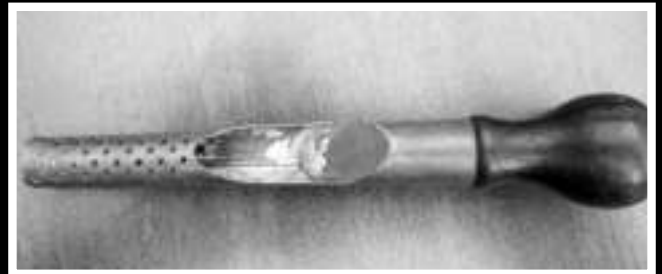
(   ) Yes                   (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)

## Facebook Page

### What Is It?



Our mystery item got votes for apple corer (4 guesses) and cheese tester/corer (5 guesses). Plus some other fun ideas including maple tree tap, hair curler, and Cow Miller (do we want to know??).

#### John L. explains his vote:

*"My opinion. Cheese or butter corer. Buyers from cities would come to farms and randomly sample cheese and butter to ensure it was mixed throughout the wheel or brick and to check for smell and taste. The better the mix, the better the product. Laura Ingall Wilder, Alonzo's early years, near Watertown, Ny. Homemade cheese and butter not for sale would be sampled the same way."*

Share memories on our Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety).





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 32, No. 3 | August 2019

## Message From the President

It's Avon Corn Festival time again! We at the AP&HS really enjoy this event as it gives us a chance to catch up with old friends, make new friends, and share stories about the Genesee Valley and our wonderful town of Avon. As always, we will be at two locations: our booth located in front of the Central Presbyterian Church and at our museum located in the Opera Block, 23 Genesee St. During the day I will be offering several tours of this beautiful historic building which was saved and restored in 2006 and has been a real boon to Avon's downtown. This tour will include the magnificent old third floor auditorium which hopefully will be restored in the next two to three years. Also please take a little time to walk around our museum of which we are quite proud.

At our booth on Genesee Street, our membership chairperson Carole Hayes will be happy to renew your membership or sign you up for a new one. Geri Brewer will be selling tickets for this year's raffle. We have some exciting raffle items again this year: first, a beautiful gas grill, complete with accessories and propane tank, donated by Avon True Value Hardware, and second, a spectacular wall hanging, showing the Five-Arch Bridge, handmade

and donated by Nancy Tompkins. Both of these items are currently on display in the museum window.

Some items we will have for sale at the Corn Festival include: new this year, a recently discovered cookbook from 1927 put out by the ladies of the Avon PTA. Nearly 100 pages long, chock full of recipes, stories, poetry and tons of ads for Avon businesses. Many names you'll recognize. **VERY LIMITED QUANTITIES.** Also new, an attractive refrigerator magnet showing the Five-Arch Bridge.

Also for sale:

- New reprints of Curator Joan Reid's popular book "Avon Recalls the Past,"
- Sale on Christmas ornaments: 2 for \$5;
- Old Avon high school yearbooks, only \$1.00 ea.;
- Updated Spa books,
- And lots more.

So that's it - we look forward to seeing and chatting with everyone.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President



# Avon United Methodist Church

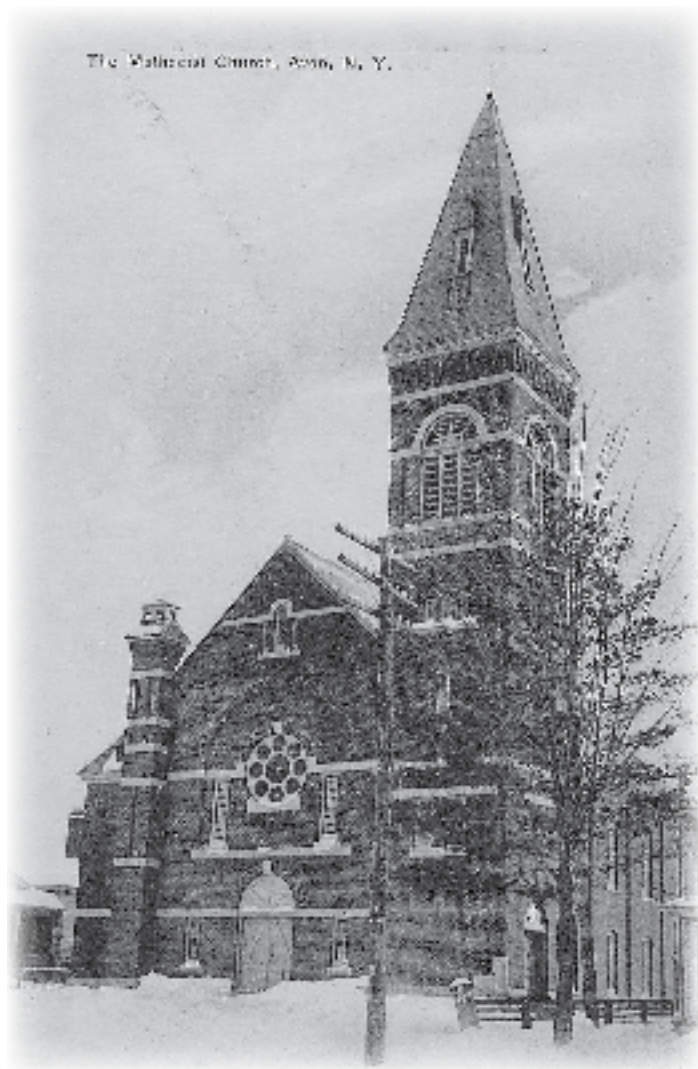
There are eight Avon properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, of which seven have been featured in the AP&HS newsletter. The final of this series will focus on the Avon United Methodist Church, which was listed on the National Register in 2005.

This handsome Late Victorian/ Romanesque brick church is located on the east side of Genesee Street, just south of the business district. Two striking features include the large central oculus window and the tower. A recessed arch accents the round window, composed of eight panes surrounding a central pane. Two vertical windows flank each side. The three-stage tower stands on the south corner, surmounted by a steeply pitched pyramidal roof, and on the northern corner stands a decorative chimney. The building is embellished with rock-faced brownstone band courses. These architectural highlights along with the overall local historical significance are the features that allowed the Methodist Church to be formally listed on the National Register. The application for the National Register provides this overview:

The Avon United Methodist Church is architecturally significant as a representative intact example of a Romanesque style Protestant church building. Designed by prominent Rochester architect James Cutler, the building combines an efficient plan for a multi-purpose building with modest embellishments in the Romanesque style popular at the time of its construction.

Avon's history of rapid development started with the passing of the land rights from the Seneca Nation to Euro-Americans. In 1789, Dr. Timothy Hosmer, Isaiah Thomas, William Wadsworth, Thomas Lewis and William Judd, all of Hartford, Connecticut purchased this area, which was then also called Hartford. With a main trail across New York State, Gilbert Berry settled at the popular river crossing, establishing a rope ferry, store, and tavern to serve the settlers moving west. In 1794, funds were appropriated to upgrade this trail to a major road, eventually becoming known as U.S. Route 20 and N.Y. 5. Hartford was then renamed Avon in 1808.

With the fertile farmland and discovery of mineral springs in 1821, Avon quickly grew. Places of worship were being built to accommodate the religious needs



*Vintage postcard, courtesy of the AP&HS*

of Avon residents, among them the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Avon, as it was then known.

On March 17, 1834 Jonathan Benson and Benjamin Smith were elected to preside at an organizational meeting for the "The Second Society of The Methodist Episcopal Church In The Town of Avon." During the first six years the Methodists met in an old school house on Prospect Street. A storm took the roof off that building, forcing the congregation to worship in homes until 1839 when a wooden building was erected on the premises occupied by the present brick church. The land for the church was purchased from the Wadsworth family of Geneseo for one dollar. With James Austin as the architect and Chester Pratt the builder, the wooden building was completed at a total cost of two thousand dollars.



Architect James Cutler of Rochester was hired to design the present brick church. The construction, sublet to Long and Watkins, started in 1879 and was finished in 1880 for a cost of nine thousand dollars. The original wooden church was moved to the rear of the lot while the new church was constructed. The bricks for the church were made at the Avon Brick Company, located on the east side of the Genesee River.



*Architect James Gould Cutler, courtesy of Wikipedia*

Robert Englert, for the National Register of Historic Places application, writes:

James Cutler, the building's architect, was a prominent figure in the region, particularly in his home city of Rochester. Cutler was born in 1848 in Albany, N.Y., where his father and grandfather were the proprietors of a carriage-making factory. After moving to Rochester and gaining architectural training and experience as a draftsman, he set up his own office in 1872. Until the mid-1890s, he practiced architecture and designed a variety of buildings including factories, private homes and commercial buildings, including the Cutler Building in downtown Rochester. Cutler was the inventor of the mail chute for office buildings, patented in 1883. For three years, he served as president of the State Association of Architects. After retiring from architectural practice, Cutler served on the Rochester Commission of Public Safety between 1900 and 1903, when he was elected mayor for one two-year term. In his later years, he devoted his time to banking interests and the management of the Cutler Mail Chute Company. He died in Rochester in 1927.

Cutler's plan for the building placed both the worship space and the attendant fellowship and education facilities on two floors under one roof, thereby economizing on initial construction costs for excavation and roofing and long-term maintenance expenses for the roof. Although constructed of brick, the building is embellished with asymmetrical corner towers, rock-faced brownstone trim, round arched openings, corbelling and a Romanesque rose window that evoke the appearance of the then-emerging Richardsonian Romanesque style.

The Avon Methodist Episcopal Church remains largely as it was when completed in 1880, especially in its principal worship space, retaining its original non-figural stained glass windows, natural oak pews, pulpit/altar dais, simple plaster mouldings

and tongue and groove wainscot. Also of note is the relatively rare Felgemaker tracker-action organ given to the congregation by Mrs. Alva Carpenter and installed in 1895. The instrument draws organ historians and enthusiasts from a wide area to view and play it. Several years ago the congregation raised thirty thousand dollars to have the organ completely restored. This church continues to serve an active congregation that has carefully maintained its historic appearance for over 100 years.

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee

Source: National Register of Historic Places application, prepared by Robert Englert, Historic Preservation Program Analyst for NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2004

**Sources used by Robert Englert:**

First Methodist Episcopal Church of Avon [Avon United Methodist Church]

Avon Methodist Church, Bulletin, Rededication of the Felgemaker Organ, 1995.

Preston, Marie C. *Avon - Heart of the Genesee*. Avon: Avon Historian's Office, 1958.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathbun Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Facsimile edition. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

*Methodist Church as it appears today.  
Photo: Clara Mulligan, 2019.*



# Emphasizing Livingston County History in Local Schools

My name is Katherine Collins and I am the summer intern at the Avon Preservation and Historical Society. I am a SUNY Geneseo student majoring in history. I am working towards a certification in seventh- through twelfth-grade adolescent education. Avon is a special place to me because my grandfather was born and raised here, and I have many extended family members that still reside here. My primary goal in working with the historical society is to help them use educational outreach to emphasize the importance of local history to the area's youth.

Every year the historical society hosts fourth-grade students from the Saint Agnes School and sixth-grade students from Avon Central School for an end-of-the-year field trip. I was fortunate enough to be included in both events.

The first field trip held this year was for the Saint Agnes students. This program was led by Maureen Kingston, the Avon Town Historian, and Joan Reid, the Curator at the Avon Preservation and Historical Society. Joan taught the students why the first settlers chose to settle in Avon and about the culture of the Genesee Valley's native people, the Seneca Tribe of the Iroquois Confederacy. This tribe happens to be the largest of the six tribes that made up the confederacy. Each student came prepared with a question for either Joan or Maureen. Many of these thoughtfully prepared questions related to the history of the Saint Agnes School, the Iroquois Confederacy, or even which historical figures had traveled through Avon. The field trip concluded with the students getting to explore the museum and having the opportunity to ask additional questions about the displays housed in the museum.

The second field trip hosted by the historical society was for the sixth-graders from the Avon Central School. The historical society was just one stop for the sixth-graders on this field trip. The students visited other important spots in the village which provided them with a rich history- and government-themed field trip. The students rotated through each of the field trip locations in four small groups. While at the historical society, students rotated through a series of four mini presentations. The first mini presentation was given by Geri Brewer. This was a presentation on Woodruff's Ice Cream Store, which opened in 1932 in Avon. This store was open for many years and served as an important gathering place for both the children and adults in Avon. The second mini presentation was given by Jim Brewer. This presentation focused on popular historical toys. Jim talked about the Jack in the Box, Raggedy



*Avon High School, 1948. Courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office, Mt. Morris.*

Anne and Raggedy Andy, Lincoln Logs, Howdy Doody, and the Slinky. He even had some mini stairs set up for the students to try out the Slinky at the end of his presentation. The third mini presentation was about the Avon Coppersmith and was given by Dan Cochrane. He told the story of the Avon Coppersmith and showed the students examples of the coppersmith's work. There is a display of this work in the museum. The final mini presentation was given by Joan Reid on the Native Americans and the first settlers of the Genesee Valley. She discussed the Iroquois Confederacy, focusing specifically on the culture of the Seneca Tribe. The students finished their visit to the historical society by exploring the museum and asking questions about the displays and presentations. After the students had gone to all the field trip locations, they all visited the third floor of the Opera Block where Tops had generously provided ice cream for all the students.

These field trips provided the students with a basic understanding of Avon's history, as well as introducing them to the museum. These field trips also offered the students an opportunity to explore the museum where they were able to see other displays. These field trips helped engage the students in the rich local history of their town, and provided a stepping stone for them to dig deeper into the history that Avon and Livingston County has to offer. As an intern, I look forward to providing the organization with additional educational outreach materials to enhance and extend this experience.

*- Katherine Collins, AP&HS Intern*



# Programs 2019

*Our fabulous schedule of programming continues – join us for these great presentations by talented local experts.*



## If Knives Could Talk

**Sunday, September 8, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Tom Kalcevic*

Renowned collector Tom Kalcevic will show and tell about his locally made Robeson knives. The Robeson Cutlery Company made both cutlery and pocketknives for over 100 years. This fascinating lecture about sharp tools will illuminate many aspects of life in the past when knives were part of many people's daily activities.

## History of East Avon Fire Department

**Sunday, October 6, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Mary Morey, Exterior Firefighter with EAFD*

Since 1926, the East Avon Fire Department has been serving the Avon community. The Department was formed when the Van Zandt Hose Company donated chemical fire trucks to them, and the East Avon Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. was formed in 1939.



Today the East Avon Fire Department responds to emergencies of all kinds, not just fires, covering about 38 square miles in the Avon area. Come learn more about this vital part of the Avon community directly from a member of the EAFD. Perhaps we will even get an update about the restoration of "Old Henry," their antique fire truck!

*"Old Henry,"  
from eastavonfd.org*



*Avon Central School 7th-grade class, 1935  
Courtesy of Town of Avon Historian's Office*

## Memories of Life in Avon

**Sunday, November 3, 2019 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm**

*Presented by Ted Coyne and his son, David Coyne*

The Coynes have been in Avon for generations. Sit and listen a while!

All programs will be held at the Avon Village Hall, 74 Genesee St., Avon, NY 14414

Programs are free, open to the public, and handicap accessible. Light refreshments will be served.

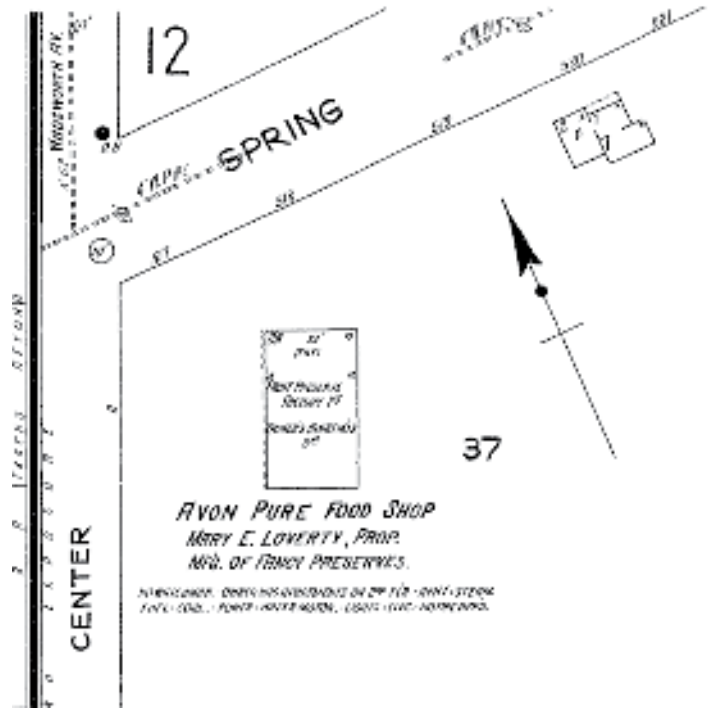
Donations most gratefully accepted, so that we may continue to provide our programming.



# Avon Pure Food Shop

As the 20th century approached, Victorian consumer concerns about food safety increased. With improved transportation and mechanization, food preservation and shipment no longer relied so much on the backyard garden and stovetop canner, farm to pantry. With industrialization, some manufacturers elected to cut corners, leaning more heavily on chemicals. Chemicals and dyes could preserve and alter processed foods, and “even transform ... apple scraps, glucose, coal-tar dye, and timothy seed” into a “strawberry jam.”<sup>i</sup> It’s no wonder that manufacturers of quality products, such as those who made real strawberry jam with fruit, sugar, and pectin, worried about their profits and sales. Unsurprising, too, that alert consumers became concerned about the possible impacts on their health. Certain food fads had been bubbling for years, and some, like the diets promoted locally at the Jackson Sanitorium in Dansville, New York, were designed around simple and natural ingredients. In the end, the Pure Food movement was about quality ingredients, food safety standards, drugs and addiction, and accurate packaging and labeling. It took years, but finally in 1906 the Pure Food and Drug Act was passed, addressing some of these legitimate food and drug concerns.

Enter Avon Pure Food Shop. Operated by Miss Mary E. Laverty in the early 20th century, her brand clearly made immediate use of the Pure Food movement and recent enactment of the law. Buoyed by consumer awareness, her naming choice invited customers to relax with the sense that her fruit products were unadulterated and safe.

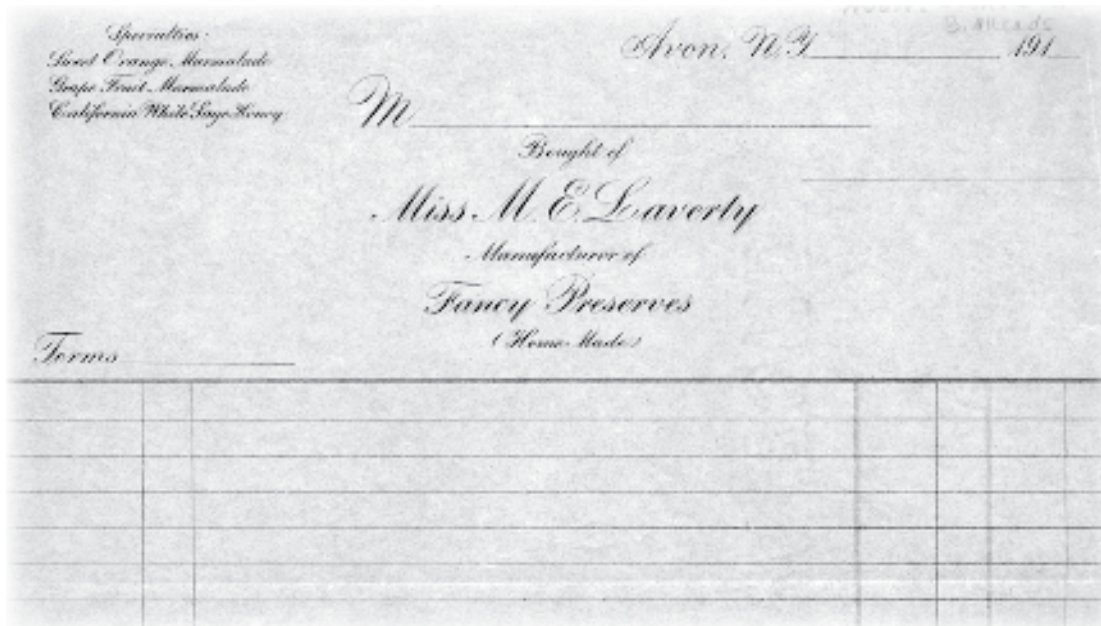


Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1924.

Miss Laverty had lived for a time in Avon with her family before starting her marmalade business on a small scale in Rochester around 1901, when she was about 40 years of age. In 1904, she was trialing white sage honey and grapefruit marmalade, as well as creating pickles and other preserved fruits. An advertisement that ran in a Connecticut paper assured buyers that though the products were not cheap, they were “genuinely home-made” and of the highest quality.<sup>ii</sup> Again, the

interest in promoting solid food unblemished by additives is clearly demonstrated.

In 1910, Miss Laverty expanded her operation, moving out to Avon. She apparently owned a peach orchard, an inheritance or purchase from her prior time in Avon, though the location is unknown. She then bought land



Blank billhead from Miss M. E. Laverty's business, c. 1910. Courtesy of the Livingston County Historian's Office, Mt. Morris.



## Facebook Page

from Herbert Wadsworth of Ashantee to build her preserving kitchen. The building was constructed about 1910 and was located on the southeast corner of Spring Street and Wadsworth Street. This spot is currently the lawn in front of the Kraft-Heinz plant. According to a Sanborn fire insurance map from 1924, she eventually came to live above the preserving kitchen in second-floor apartments.

Miss Laverty was “business from beginning to end” as one reporter described her in 1917. By that time, her operation in Avon had grown to 73 different fruit products, from jellies to jams and every preserved fruit in between. She had received a solid bronze medal at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition for her pickled and brandied fruits, so her reputation for fine products was renowned. She stated that she was content keeping the business at this size, but had recently received an order for 500 dozen cases of raspberry jam, likely for the World War I effort. With 15 employees at busy times and three women year-round, this apparently was not too burdensome a request to fill. She sourced most of her fruit locally, from Herbert Wadsworth’s fruit farm at Ashantee, though orange marmalade continued to be a specialty, made from imported oranges.

By the mid-1920s, Miss Laverty’s operation was still going, though she herself was aging. She placed various classified ads to sell glass jars and the like, though it is unclear whether this was for upgrades to packaging or a signal that the business was winding down. She passed away in 1930, her will going on to be contested on the grounds that she was not of sound mind when she wrote it, some few years before her death. The business did not appear to long survive her in its operation. The building became a machine shop with apartments above by 1944, a home for Leaming Machine Works. It passed through several more hands through the 1950s and possibly into the 1960s and was eventually razed, though the year is not known exactly.

Today, the small property inhabited by Miss Laverty is still on the grounds of a food manufacturing plant, Kraft-Heinz, which was formerly Birds-Eye. Though products include Cool-Whip and other highly processed foods, not currant jelly and peach preserves, Avon is alive to this day with the spirit of regulated and mechanized food production. The 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act was overhauled as time went on, just as Miss Laverty’s time came and went. Time marches on...pass the jam!

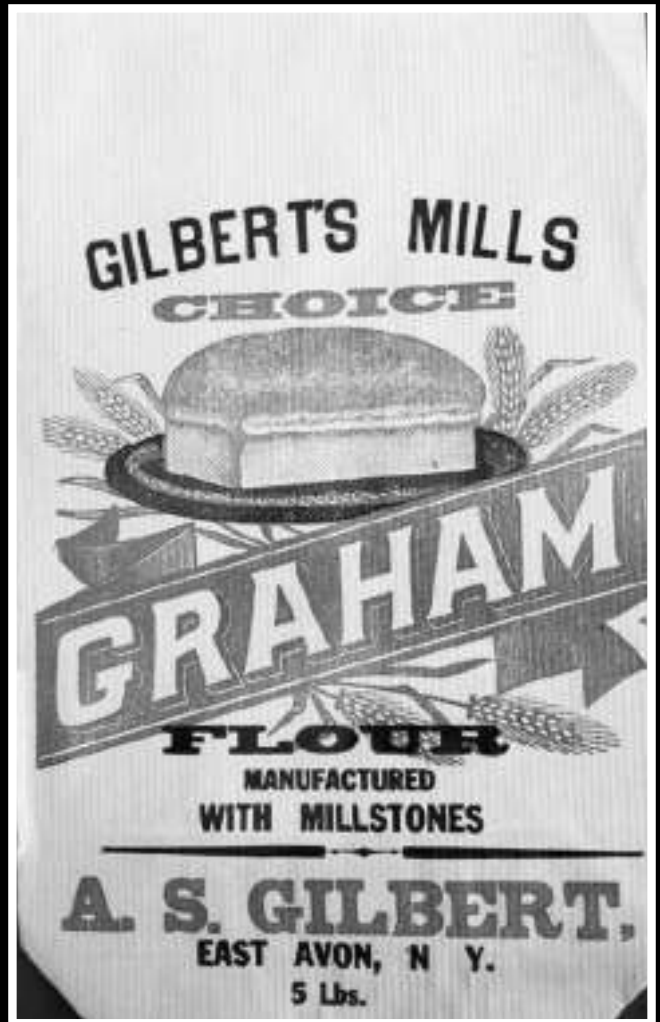
- Holly Watson, Editor

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup>Young, James H. “The Long Struggle for 1906 Law.” The Food and Drug Administration. Hauppauge: Nova Science, 2003. 17-22.

<sup>2</sup>Hartford Courant. 29 Dec. 1904. P. 18.

Article from Avon-News, 1917. Jennings Scrapbook. County Historian’s Office, Mt. Morris.



Brian K. of North Avon shared this image of a flour bag from Gilbert’s Mills. It was given to him by Ken Gernold, the previous owner of the old mill building. Even though the sack is labeled with East Avon, don’t be fooled – North Avon is a proud little community! Graham flour was a popular choice in the late 19th- and early 20th centuries for its perceived health benefits. People concerned with additives in food, the beginnings of the Pure Food Movement, looked for options that were simple and full of nutrients and fiber. Graham crackers, which were invented in Dansville, New York by Sylvester Graham, a food faddist, are a testament to the widespread popularity of this ingredient.

Share memories on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety).



# Avon Preservation and Historical Society

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Maureen Kingston	Barbara Herman
Dr. Robert Hayes	John Liccini
John DuBois	Mary Lou Miller
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	<b>Museum Hours:</b> Thurs. & Sun., 1-4, or by appt.

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AVON PRESERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10            (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20                (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

(   ) Yes                        (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)

## AP&HS Meetings



*King Cole Bean Co., 2014 (Photo: H. Watson)*

The AP&HS Board meets at 7:00 pm on the first Monday of each month, unless it lands on a national holiday. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome visitors to join us. If you are interested in working with us to promote local history by becoming a board member, please contact us!

### 2019 SCHEDULE

August 5th

October 7th

September 9th

November 4th

*(postponed due to Labor Day)*

December 2nd





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 32, No. 4 | November 2019

## Message From the President

Hard to believe we are coming to the end of the second decade of the 21st century already. And more than half that time we have been lucky enough to be in our beautiful home here in the historic Opera Block.

It's been a year of both great progress as well a devastating loss for our Society. Through it all, our board has come together to bring you interesting and enjoyable programs and continue to make our museum one of the finest in the county.

It has also been a time of personal discovery for me. Earlier this year, I found a treasure trove of letters, papers, and artifacts of my paternal grandparents, John L. Westfall and Clara Carson Westfall. I never knew John, as he died when I was four. Clara was around until I was 10 and she was always kind and had a sweet gentle way. What I did not know was that she loved to write rhymes. She wrote them for all occasions: birthdays, thank-yous, and holidays. This being our holiday issue, I thought you all might enjoy two, the first from Christmas 1900 when she was just twenty.



Clara Carson,  
taken September 1900.

*Christmas 1900*  
By Clara Carson

I'm going to write you just a line  
Because it's Christmas, dear  
To wish you a very merry day  
And a happy bright new year  
And may the 20th Century  
Which is coming soon to stay  
Bring you health and happiness  
And success in every way.

This next poem was written to my father, Duane, who was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas at the time. The country was still in shock and mourning the events of December 7th, 1941, which makes this one kind of melancholy.

*Christmas 1941*  
By Clara Carson Westfall

Dear Duane,  
For the very first time since you were born  
I won't be with you Christmas morn.  
I feel quite guilty this is true  
Turning a mother's back on you.  
But there is only one good reason  
I'd leave you at the Christmas season.  
For one dear child, so far away  
That can't come home for Christmas day.  
Remember how we used to rise  
So early for the big surprise?  
And there in line we marched below  
To find the stockings in a row.  
A happy smile on each face  
Logs burning in the fireplace.  
Large gifts or small we didn't care  
For love and joy and peace were there.  
Time marches on, but memories stay.  
And may your home this Christmas day  
Be filled with love and Christmas cheer.  
And we'll be with you all next year.

Lots of love,  
Mom

Have a merry Christmas everyone.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President



# In Memoriam

## James R. Brewer (1940-2019)

After 54 years of marriage, it's hard to look ahead to life without James.

We did so many things together – vacations, yard sales, family events, etc. I learned early that when James had an idea, he would follow through, no matter what, until he was satisfied with the results.

He was very proud of family – his brothers and sisters, and most of all his daughter and grandchildren. If there was a need and he could help, he did – even buying a place for his daughter to live.

He was proud of his Brewer connections and with the help of his siblings put together a Brewer history book and made sure everyone had a copy.

As part of the AP&HS, he made sure each need was covered. He saw the need for a tent that was more easily set up and pushed until it was purchased. He saw a need for tables that were easier to handle and got them, and then got the old tent and tables sold. He shoveled snow to keep the sidewalk safe for the museum visitors.

If a neighbor needed help, he was there to mow lawns or whatever was needed.

He will be missed greatly and remembered by all who knew him. Mostly I will miss him.

- Geri Brewer

My dad loved working with the Historical Society. For as long as I can remember, he always had an interest in history and all things old. We visited many museums when I was a child and searched antique shops and flea markets for treasures. As I got older and would come to the house for visits, he would pull out all the things he had found during that time at different sales and tell me a little bit about them.

He was very active in the community and taught me that if it was in my means to help someone, that I should, and that I should work hard to provide for my family. I miss him a lot and his unusual sense of humor. He was definitely one of a kind.

- Samantha (Brewer) Phillips, James' daughter



*"Let me live in my house by the road and be a friend to man."*

This line from the poem "The House by the Side of the Road" by Samuel Walter Foss reminds me of Jim. The man in the poem strives to be helpful to others every day. That was Jim. Rest in peace, dear friend.

- Carole Hayes, AP&HS Board Member

We will miss seeing him at the Opera Block Building every day as he would walk through just to say hello or to tell a joke. He was always willing to lend a hand when asked, without hesitation, and although most of what he did (shoveling, sweeping, sprucing up the outside of the building) was for the Historical Society, it was appreciated by everyone working in the building.

He was a wonderful man who will truly be missed by all at the Town of Avon.

- The Employees of the Avon Town Offices

When we lost James Brewer recently, we lost the face – and in some ways the heart – of the AP&HS. With a quick wit and amazing work ethic, he was tireless in all he did for us. Jim was already there when I arrived over 10 years ago and I was quickly impressed with how much he knew and how much he did. He mentored new board members (even if they didn't always know it), and was always the first one to arrive and the last to leave. We could always count on Jim. He was at the Opera Block nearly every day and said hello or shared a joke with everyone he ran into. On the day before he passed, we spent the afternoon setting up and getting ready for the sale in Geneseo that upcoming weekend. A good memory. Speaking for our current and past board members, we will miss our friend.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

Thank you to the many generous people who made contributions to the Historical Society in memory of James Brewer. It is a real tribute to James that so many folks sent donations in support of the organization, where he spent so much time and energy.

- The AP&HS



# Update: Avon Historic Resources Survey

On September 19th, a public meeting was held at the Avon Village Hall to inform village residents about the progress of the Avon Historic Resources Survey being conducted by the Landmark Society of Western New York.

Last fall, you might recall the announcement that the Village of Avon was the recipient of a \$10,000 grant funded by the Preservation League of New York. As a refresher, this grant was being utilized to hire Tyler of the Landmark Society to conduct a survey of historic structures in the Village of Avon. By observing the character, architectural details, and embedded social history of existing structures in the Village, Tyler and his team have created a comprehensive summary of the development patterns of the community and provided preservation recommendations.

The presentation given by Tyler and Caitlin, both of the Landmark Society, was a helpful and informative overview of the project, what the report means, and next steps for the Avon community. Here is the report's summary statement:

**SUMMARY:** Based on our historic resource survey of the Village of Avon, The Landmark Society finds (A) basis for a National Register historic district encompassing core commercial, residential, and industrial properties illustrating Avon's dynamic development as a rural transportation network node over more than one hundred fifty years from the 1790s to the 1940s; and (B) basis for sensitivity in local development planning to several additional properties and areas with historic character and significance.

The report they discussed encompasses a solid portion of Avon's downtown area along Main Street, Rochester Street, Genesee Street, and adjacent areas, and told a story of Avon as a crossroads back to the time of Seneca occupation. The existing structural heritage of Avon, especially the heart of the Village, tells a compelling and important tale of industry and manufacturing, especially of agricultural products. The hotels, boarding houses, and residences that stemmed from that boom still stand along our streets.

The area of downtown Avon that hosts the greatest concentration of this structural heritage has been deemed eligible for a National Register Historic District designation, should the community choose to pursue it. If established, this would mean several positive things for residents within the proposed boundaries:

1) Owners of eligible homes or commercial or public structures would be able to access tax credits of 20% of the cost of eligible improvement projects on their buildings.



*Proposed National Register Historic District boundaries from the Avon Historic Resources Survey Final Report, August 2019, by the Landmark Society of WNY.*

2) There is no obligation to utilize the tax credits and there are **no restrictions** for property owners who do not choose to work with the state to obtain credits. There are, however, some requirements in order to access the credits.

3) Individual National Register listings of properties can be time-consuming and standards are much higher; when Historic Districts are designated, all eligible homes within the boundaries are automatically included. That means no work for residents, and access to those tax credits!

The link to the full report by the Landmark Society can be found on the Avon Village website at [www.avon-ny.org/index\\_village.html](http://www.avon-ny.org/index_village.html)

Questions about *community next steps* can be directed to Preservation Planner Caitlin Meives ([cmeives@landmarksociety.org](mailto:cmeives@landmarksociety.org); 585-546-7029 x27); questions about *report content* can be directed to Preservation Projects Facilitator Tyler Lucero ([tlucero@landmarksociety.org](mailto:tlucero@landmarksociety.org); 585-546-7029 x23).

Thank you to all who have participated in this project so far, and we look forward to continuing the discussion!

- Holly Watson, Editor

## An Avon Connection to a Rochester "Legend"

It has always puzzled me as to how, or why, otherwise generally rational men (or women) could determine the need one day to embark on an activity most people would label quite insane. This very thought struck me as I read an article from the July 21st, 1924 Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* that my wife had come across in her research on Livingston County history. According to the article, Leo Light, operator with his brother, William, of the Glen Avon Mills, along with Charles Colvin and Clifford Hartford, decided to set out one day for Honeoye Lake - not to fish, mind you, but to capture rattlesnakes. Did I just see a few eyebrows raise?

Now, today a sighting or capture of a rattlesnake in this area would be considered a rare incident and sure to make local news. But it appears that the sighting and capture of rattlesnakes in this area during the early 1900s was more common, with stories of "hunting parties" being formed to capture these snakes. Most often, any story about rattlesnakes, or any snake, during this period usually appeared in local print with the name of Peter Gruber, or "Rattlesnake Pete" as he was known then.

Peter Gruber was born in Oil City, Pennsylvania in 1857 and learned how to capture and handle rattlesnakes from the local Indians. In 1890, he moved to Rochester and opened a combination museum and saloon that became a very successful business. Not only were live rattlesnakes and copperhead snakes a part of his very unusual "collection" of varied and unique oddities, he actually ran a side business of selling rattlesnake venom to researchers, some of whom claimed the deadly liquid was worth "...a dollar a drop." Of course, his business of capturing and "milking" these venomous snakes



"Rattlesnake Pete" with two snakes; note the embellished fender of his car.



Rattlesnake Pete (left) with two of his St. Bernards, a friend, and, of course, snakes.



RATTLESNAKE PETE AND HIS DOGS  
8 AND 10 MILL STREET  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

did result in him being bitten, according to several accounts, over 30 times.

His reputation for handling snakes actually went far beyond Rochester. The headline of an article in the October 4th, 1894 *Democrat and Chronicle* reads, "Pasteur Wants Snakes" and goes on to tell how the eminent French bacteriologist, Monsieur Louis Pasteur, wanted to obtain a number of snakes as well as a quantity of the "virus" of the snakes and had written to Rattlesnake Pete. Pasteur was convinced that a serum made from the venom could be made into an antidote against the deadly bite. Further down in the article it is stated, "...a quantity of the virus of the rattle snake was shipped by Mr. Gruber to John M. Clark M.D. member of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburg, of London, Eng. This shipment was secured from sixteen of the largest and liveliest snakes in Pete's den of sixty rattlers."

Peter Gruber relished his notoriety, going as far as having a suit and vest made from rattlesnake skins and sporting a large rattlesnake head mounted on each of





*Rattlesnake Pete's Museum, Mill St., Rochester.*

the front fenders of his car. And ever present was at least one of his three St. Bernard dogs.

When he experienced a shortage of local snakes, Peter was known to order them from as far away as Texas. The article says they were delivered in cardboard boxes. I can only imagine the look on the face of the delivery person when it struck him as to what was in the box he was carrying!

Although his reputation as "Rattlesnake Pete" created this novel public image, Peter Gruber was convinced of the medicinal potential of his snakes. According to an article in the *Philadelphia Times* dated August 18, 1901, he claimed he could "cure" a goiter (the swelling of the thyroid gland) by the constriction of a live, non-venomous, snake wrapped around the neck of the patient. After 4 or 5 applications of individual snakes, Peter claimed the snakes usually died of exhaustion. He claimed his treatment was used by the Indians many years ago. On another occasion, an article in the December 1, 1905 *Buffalo Courier* recounts how Peter Gruber attempted to cure a young girl in Geneseo who was ill with consumption, or the "white plague" (tuberculosis), with a treatment that called for the patient to eat the warm hearts taken from two live rattlesnakes.

As recorded in the *Biography of Rattlesnake Pete*, written by Charles B. Stilson, Peter Gruber also had a life-long interest in things mechanical. In a letter he wrote to the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company on March 14, 1912, Peter explained how he had made a nickel-in-a-slot device and installed it in a musical instrument he had, some 18 years earlier, claiming it was the first coin-

operated nickelodeon piano in America. The Rochester distributor of Wurlitzer automatic musical instruments featured the "PianOrchestra" in Rattlesnake Pete's museum on its advertising circulars.

From a three-piece suit that included a belt, shoes and a hat made from rattlesnake skins, to his car with the snake heads on each fender, "Rattlesnake Pete" Gruber was probably Rochester's most colorful personality of the early 1900s. His museum on Mill Street was a "must-see" destination for visitors from all walks of life.

The legend, known as the snake man or Rattlesnake Pete, Peter Gruber, died in his Averill Avenue home in Rochester on October 11, 1932 at the age of 75.

Back in the summer of 1924, according to the article in the *Democrat and Chronicle* that was mentioned at the start of this piece, the Avon men's snake-hunting party was quite successful. Leo and William Light, Charles Colvin, and Clifford Hartford apparently caught three rattlesnakes at Honeoye Lake and brought them home. One rattlesnake, the article said, "...has ten rattles, lacks only an inch of being five feet long." Hey Honey, look what I caught!

The men from Avon must have known who would appreciate their prizes – they presented the three rattlesnakes to Rochester's legendary snake man, "Rattlesnake Pete."

- Vince and Lore DiSalvo, Correspondents

*All photos in this article are courtesy of Lore DiSalvo's personal collection of enhanced images.*



*Glen Avon Mills, on the Conesus Outlet at Littleville, Avon. The mill, operated by the Light Brothers, produced high-quality flour.*

## *Shoutout to the Penny Saver*

The AP&HS would like to acknowledge the Genesee Valley Penny Saver / Penny Lane Printing's continued support in the creation and distribution of this newsletter. We appreciate all you do!



GENESEE VALLEY

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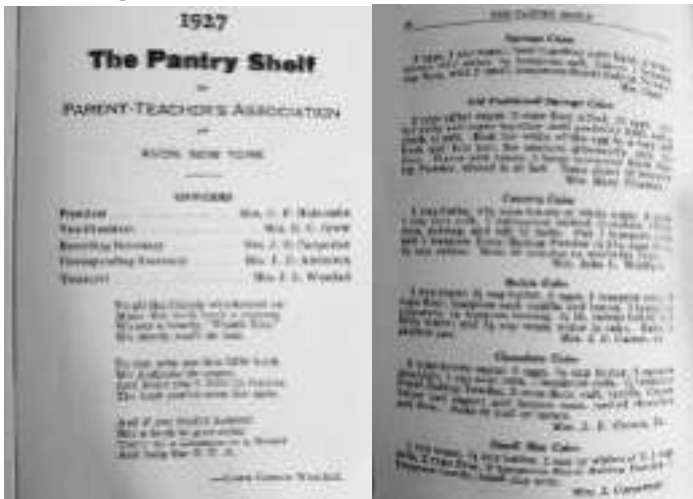
# Holiday Gift Store

## Annual Poinsettia Sale

Poinsettias are here again! Beginning on November 1, 2019, order your white, red, pink variegated, or red and white variegated plant for just \$9.00 each. Delivery date in early December to be announced. Brighten your winter or the heart of a friend and order today – call Geri Brewer at 226-2729.



## NEW in 2019: Vintage PTA Cookbook!



Described as “a hoot” by some, this reprint of a 1927 Avon PTA cookbook makes a unique gift. Bake a “Small Nut Cake” for Sammy’s birthday! Arrange a family cooking contest using only recipes from this cookbook! Read through the advertisements and reminisce, and then eat a candy bar! It’s really up to you. These cookbooks are selling like you-know-whats, so come down to the Museum today to snag a copy for \$15.

## Custom House Plaques

Don’t forget that history fanatic on your list – handsome custom house plaques are available! Already popular for historic homes (50 years or older), these commemorative signs are wonderful on any home, even if the construction date is recent. Time flies, so it’s never too soon to install a durable and classy plaque! Contact us for details and to order.



## 2020 Calendar: Remembering Genesee Street

Isn’t it handy that calendars for the coming year are available for the holidays? Our new calendar features images of Genesee Street from the 1940s through the 1970s, so any Avonite will appreciate seeing old stores, buildings, and even the old vehicles! Available at our Museum, they are \$10 each for a year of memories, and may even help keep your neighbor’s barbecue from slipping your mind...

## Memberships – Always in Season

At the end of your rope for gift ideas? Consider a membership to the AP&HS! Instead of giving more “stuff,” \$10 will provide your giftee with this quarterly newsletter and, of course, will support the AP&HS in programming, advocacy, and education. Perhaps your friend or relative lives in Avon or perhaps they’ve flown to Florida – either way, if they enjoy keeping in touch with goings-on and historical vignettes, a subscription is an easy and fun idea. Just fill out the card on the back of this newsletter and send it in! The next issue will arrive in mailboxes in early February.



## Odds and Ends

In addition to the featured items above, in our Museum you will find commemorative ornaments (dated 2018, featuring the Avon Inn), map reprints, and many history books published in recent years by the AP&HS on sulphur spas, downtown, the Opera Block, and more. Shop local!



## AP&HS Meetings



Photo: Harris and Ewing Collection,  
Library of Congress. 1919.

The AP&HS Board meets at 7:00 pm on the first Monday of each month, unless it lands on a national holiday. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome visitors to join us. If you are interested in working with us to promote local history by becoming a board member, please contact us!

### 2019 SCHEDULE

*Just two more meetings!*

November 4th

December 2nd



## Facebook Page

Our September program by the East Avon Fire Department was a grand success! "Ole Henry," the restored fire truck, made an appearance and was looking fine. Several fans got pictures with him, some of which were shared on our Facebook page.



### COMMENTS:

Wished I'd been there!! Thank you all for your years of dedication and sacrifice to Avon and East Avon! God Bless You All

- Linda R.

"Ole Henry" sure does look good! So many memories; good and bad!! ...You have made me proud to have a Big Sister like you. No matter what the past may have been, I will always have that special honor in my heart for Grandma, Grandpa, Dad, Larry, and you, and everything you all have done for EAFD!!!! Love you, Baby Sis

Xoxoxoxoxo

- Gayle N.

So proud!

- Tammy H.

So sorry to have missed this. These folks have given so much to our community, both as First Responders and as Fire Safety Educators. Thank you is not enough.

- Catherine D.

Share memories on our Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety).



# Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414  
[AvonPreservation.org](http://AvonPreservation.org)

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**Museum Hours:**  
Thurs. & Sun.,  
1-4, or by appt.

## Address Service Requested

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*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2019-2020 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours

### Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
AVON PRESERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

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Indicate desired membership level

(   ) Individual \$10            (   ) Business \$30

(   ) Family \$20                (   ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

(   ) Yes                        (   ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)







# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 33, No. 1 | February 2020

## Message From the President

### Did you know?

There is no question that we have a beautiful museum here in Avon. Rotations of displays, windows that change monthly and always reflect what's timely that month.

But did you know what wealth of research material we have available? We have files on hundreds of Avon families past and present, large binders on long-gone stores and businesses as well as organizations such as Rotary, Lions, and Masons, not to mention churches and schools. We have Avon Central School yearbooks going back to the 1930s and up to the present.

We also have a great staff to answer questions you might have. If we don't know we'll do our best to find out.

We are here Thursday and Sunday afternoons or call to schedule a time you'd like to visit.

### Opera Block Third Floor Update

Early last year, bolstered by positive community reactions to tours of the Third Floor, I went to Chris Quinlan with the idea of forming a committee to reapply for a grant we had previously applied for and lost. Well, she went to work and put together what I can only describe as a Dream Team of Avonites who were all equally passionate about this project. Bonnie Davis chaired the meetings, and I knew we had the right person when her first words after call to order were "OK, everyone needs to leave here with something to do." And we did.

We worked on writing the grant with Heather Grant (honest!) from Livingston County Grants and Public Information and her successor, Julie Barry. I can't begin to describe how helpful she was to us. She got back to us with

answers within 24 hours, helped us with the questions and wording, the support letters we needed to get, and so much more. Thank you Julie!

At the June 14, 2019 Town Board meeting, the Board approved a budget for the project. Then on December 19, 2019 we found out that we were awarded the bid by the NYS Office of Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation. What a Christmas present! There remains much to do, but soon we will see the rebirth of this beautiful landmark.

And let's give a big hand to the rest of our committee, Clara Mulligan, Kelly Cole, Phil Swanson, Jim Biondolillo, and Kim McDowell. And to our Town Supervisor, David LeFeber, who has supported this project right from the start.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President



# AP&HS Programs: 2020

*Our schedule of presentations has just been announced, and we have more wonderful programming this year – join us!*

*We hope you enjoyed the first program of the year, Jane Oakes' lecture on "Hop Growing & Beer Production in the Genesee Country" on January 26th, 2020.*

## OUR NEXT PROGRAMS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

### Discover Avon's Historic Architecture

Sunday, March 15, 2020

2:00 - 3:00 pm

*Presented by Cynthia Howk, Architectural Research Coordinator for the Landmark Society of Western New York*

The Landmark Society was appointed by the Village of Avon to conduct an inventory of buildings 50 years old and older within the Village. The inventory was completed last year, and concludes that a significant area of the business district and surrounding area is eligible to become a historic district. Such a designation would benefit eligible businesses and homeowners with potential tax credits.

Cynthia is a dynamic speaker, with a wealth of historical knowledge. Her understanding of our local history will be brought to life with her quick wit and humor.



High Street, Avon, NY



### Coyne Family Farm History

Sunday, May 17, 2020

2:00 - 3:00 pm

*Presented by Gerry and Carol Coyne*

In 1922, after their marriage, William and Mary Coyne moved to a farm in East Avon, NY. The farm was a gift from William's father, Malachy, who had emigrated here from Ireland in 1886. William started milking 20 Guernseys by hand and also raised some sheep, chickens, and hogs. The original farm was purchased for less than it costs to fertilize it annually today.

Gerry and Carol Coyne, lifetime farmers, will share the family history of this successful Avon farm.

Mark Your  
Calendars!

Join  
Us!

Programs  
are FREE

MAR

15

MAY

17

SEPT

20

OCT

25

NOV

8



# AP&HS Programs: 2020

## Graham's Crackers

Sunday, September 20, 2020

2:00 - 3:00 pm

*Presented by Jane Oakes, local historian*

Meet the Reverend Sylvester Graham, whose radical (sometimes thought of as crackpot) ideas about nutrition took the nation by storm during the early 19th century. His name lives on in our supermarket aisles, but would he be pleased with those crackers as they are today? Come find out!



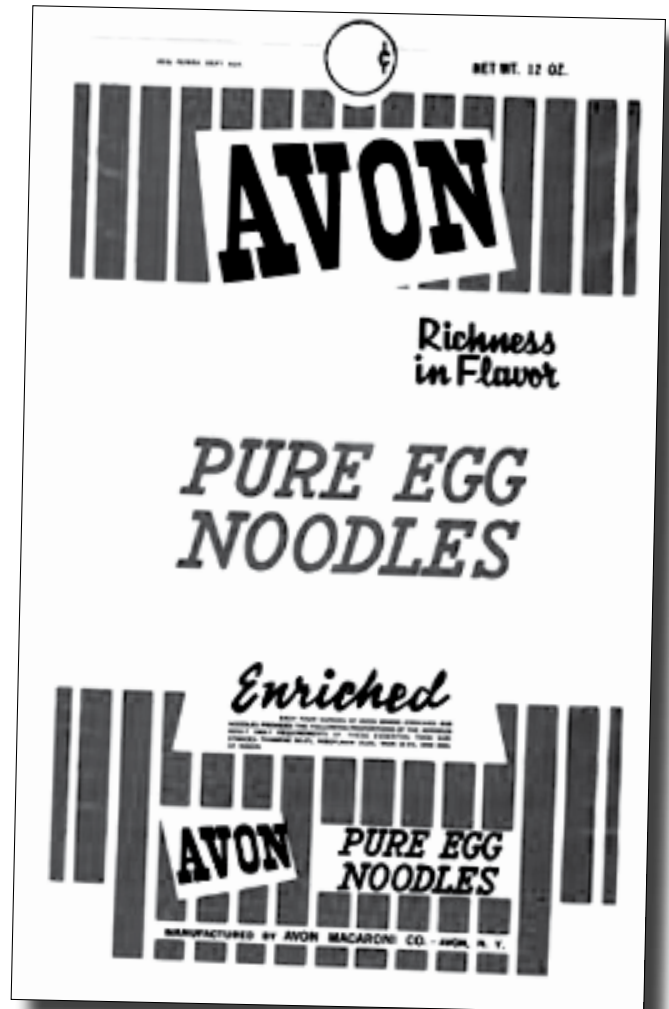
## History of the Avon Fire Departments

Sunday, October 25, 2020

2:00 - 3:00 PM

*Presented by Brian Strozewski, Fire Chief, and Richard Burke, Historian*

Come hear about the development of fire response teams in Avon!



*A bag that once contained local pasta. Image courtesy of the APHS.*

## History of the Avon Pasta Factory

Sunday, November 8, 2020

2:00 - 3:00 PM

*Presented by Jean Schoenthal*

Since 2007, Avon can boast that it is the home of one of two U.S.-based Barilla Pasta plants, a true producer of Italian pasta.

But did you know pasta has a much longer history in Avon? The D'Angelo family owned and operated the Avon Macaroni Company, located on Rochester Street, very close to the Barilla plant.

Come find out more!

*All programs are held at the Avon Village Hall, 74 Genesee Street, Avon NY 14414. Free, open to the public, and accessible. Light refreshments will be served. Donations are gratefully accepted to support future programs.*

# Mary E. Phillips and the Women's Army Corps

On January 9, 1943, Miss Mary E. Phillips enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC). She was about 22, had attended Avon High School and the Wisconsin Vocational School, and had returned home to Avon. She was living with her younger siblings and her parents, John E., Sr. and Annie E. Phillips on Pole Bridge Road and working as a maid for a family. As she prepared for her departure, she was given a surprise farewell party by her sister and brother, Gertrude and John, Jr., who helped decorate the house. It was reportedly "very patriotic," with a large American flag and images of others service members hung around the walls. Large letters, hung from the ceiling, spelled "VICTORY."

Mary made historic news around the area; while other young women from Livingston County had blazed a trail and enlisted in the WAACs before her, she was the first African-American woman to do so. When she left on the train to Des Moines, IA from Rochester in March 1943, she was part of a small contingent of black women from the region. Although they enlisted for many reasons, including family military legacy, African-American women may have also embraced the opportunity to prove themselves and demonstrate ultimate patriotism, or were drawn by the claim that the WAAC would provide an experience of equality.

The WAAC was created after Massachusetts Representative Edith Rogers introduced a bill in 1941, though it took the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of that year to propel the bill into law in 1942. For the first time, women could serve in the Army in noncombat positions other than as nurses. Official status and salary were granted to servicewomen, but because the WAAC was considered a supplement to the Army, full benefits and protections were not provided. In July 1943, when the "Auxiliary" designation was dropped, women in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) were entitled to Army benefits just as male soldiers were.

The idea was that WACs would relieve men in support positions and allow them to enter combat. Most jobs could be grouped into four areas: clerical, cooking, driving, and medical. Thousands of WACs joined and took administrative assignments, though some were selected for special positions, such as air-traffic control and mechanics. Many remained stateside, but some served overseas in North Africa, Europe, and Asia throughout the war.

Although many black Americans joined the war effort, the Army was segregated and instituted a limit on African-American enlistees to ten percent of those inducted, to correspond to the percentage of the national population. During basic training, black WACs participated in segregated drills, ate in separate mess halls from whites, and retired to segregated barracks. Officer candidates and those attending technical schools were integrated during training, but would generally be segregated when assigned to a field post.

Miss Phillips would have completed five-week basic training at Fort Des Moines, which included learning military rules and customs, performing drills, ceremonies, and perfecting administrative and other core skills. As an enlisted WAC, at a rank which essentially corresponded to that of Private, she would have had to live in segregated conditions with other black women from around the country. She evidently entered the Medical Corps, which was part of the Service Forces of the WAAC. This may have entailed further specialized training for her, which may have been integrated.

July of 1943 found Auxiliary First Class Phillips (a rank which was equivalent to Private First Class) at Fort Dix, New Jersey, being promoted to Technical Sergeant. At this time, when the WAAC was about to officially become the WAC, this rank would have now matched men's ranks in the Army. But since she was black, she was not eligible



*African-American WAAC unit in formation at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, 1943. This shows a daily drill in which Auxiliary Phillips would have performed.*

Image courtesy of Pinterest.com.



to serve overseas. WACs of color were eager to serve in the same capacity as their white peers, who had begun entering the war theater in 1943, but this opportunity was not possible for Black units until January 1945.

As far as can be determined, Tech. Sgt. Phillips remained stationed at Fort Dix, N.J., likely serving in a segregated Army hospital, until she was honorably discharged by December 1943. She had served for nearly a year.



Black Army nurses provide medical care to a serviceman. Image courtesy of *The Second World War*, YouTube.com.

After returning to civilian life, Miss Phillips was married to Leslie L. Hedman, probably a native of Jamaica, and gave birth to their first child in Rochester around 1949-1950. While details have not been found, she may have continued in the medical profession. Snippets from newspapers from the 1950s to early 1970s hint at a life in Rochester Housing Authority

apartment units that were constantly in need of repair and where tenants held several rent strikes, demanding rent stabilization and building maintenance. These and other notices suggest that life for the Hedmans, and for their neighbors, was often a struggle. Leslie and Mary had eight living children at the time of their deaths; he passed away in 1974 and she in 1975. Her obituary in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* briefly mentions her service in the WAC. At least one of their daughters also served in the Army.

Though the full details of her military service and especially her personal experience have not been discovered, nor has a photograph of her come to light, Technical Sergeant Phillips' story is an historic one. As the first woman of color to enlist from Livingston County, she demonstrated courage that exceeded the norm. She helped to confront notions that women, and especially black women, were not up to the challenge of skilled military service. Hopefully, we can keep learning about more stories like hers that tell of the determination and bravery of other black women from Avon, in the military and otherwise. Do you have a story to celebrate and honor?

- Holly Watson, Editor

#### Sources:

*Avon Herald-News*, *Buffalo Courier-Express*, *Democrat and Chronicle*, *Livingston County Leader*, *Times-Union*. Articles from 1943-1978.

Mullenbach, Cheryl. *Double Victory: How African American Women Broke Race and Gender Barriers to Help Win World War II*. Chicago Review Press, 2013.

U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. *Life of the Soldier and the Airman*, Volumes 25-26. 1943.

*Women in the U.S. Army*. Accessed 11 Jan. 2020 from [www.army.mil/women/history/wac.html](http://www.army.mil/women/history/wac.html). 2020.

## The Photographer Forgot To Say "Smile"



This historical photo was found at T. Maimone Antiques Store in Mt. Morris.

It was taken during a classroom Christmas Party in the late 1940s or 1950s at a local school. Despite the "MERRY" letters on the back wall, the homemade cakes, and Mission Beverages to enjoy, the students' faces don't portray much merriment.

Do you recognize anything that might help identify the school teacher, students and the location? If so, please contact Loré DiSalvo (585) 226-2126.

## Steamed



1911 gasoline-powered Stoddard-Dayton car on left and 1913 Stanley Steamer on right. All photos courtesy of authors.

The article in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* dated September 15, 1951 read, “Oldsters Whiz into Area in Gas vs. Steam Race.” I feel it safe to say that of all the mechanical and technical designs in our country’s history, the internal combustion engine adaptation to the automobile has truly stood the test of time. Ever evolving and improving, it has met our needs for over 100 years. But, unlike attempts in the late 1800s, in the past decade the internal combustion engine’s foothold in the automobile industry has come under a more serious challenge by cars powered by electricity. With much greater success this time around, the current electric vehicles have enjoyed a greater following with some very impressive technology. It may come as a surprise to some, but this isn’t the first time the gas-powered automobile has faced a new contender. There was a period in the early 1900s when the use of the internal combustion engine actually was challenged by an old technology – steam. And, for a short window of time, the heyday of this period of “steam cars” actually made a stop in our area.

When entering the business district in the heart of Avon’s Village, I have often wondered what traffic must have been like and how many vehicles must have passed through before the New York State Thruway was completed in 1954. Routes 5 and 20 were the major arteries between cities in the west and destinations in the east. Today, during the summer months, many older cars can be seen passing through the village, but in September of 1951, people lined Routes 5 and 20 to see two very special classic cars involved in a unique race.

Sponsored by the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry and carried in newspapers across the country, two retired members of the museum pitted a 1913 Stanley Steamer against a 1911 Stoddard-Dayton in a road race to New York City. It was billed as “Steam Power Verses Gasoline Power.” Whichever vehicle got to New York City first would be pronounced the winner.

Behind the wheel of the 1911 Stoddard-Dayton and accompanied by Eleanor Hall, an employee of the Chicago Museum, was 70-year-old Reuben DeLaunty. The Stoddard-Dayton had a 25 horsepower four-cylinder gas engine

rated at 100 miles on a 15-gallon tank of gasoline. In the early period of the 1900s, vehicles from Stoddard-Dayton were considered some of the finest produced, with painted finishes of 15 to 28 hand-rubbed coats and engines that ranged from 15 horsepower to a 70 horsepower six-cylinder engine. Initially they were also known for their speed. It was a two-seated Stoddard-Dayton that won the first race held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1909 and a Stoddard-Dayton was the Pace Car for the very first running of the Indianapolis 500 Car Race on Labor Day of 1911. As would be the demise of many automobile companies of the time, the “hand-built” cars of Stoddard-Dayton could not compete with the production capability of companies like Ford. The lowest-cost Stoddard-Dayton automobiles sold for \$1,200 to \$1,300, while Henry Ford was selling his Model-T for \$399.

When the United States Motor Company, of which Stoddard-Dayton had become a part, failed in bankruptcy in 1913, the Stoddard-Dayton facility in Dayton, Ohio would eventually become part of the Chrysler Corporation known as Chrysler AirTemp, producing air conditioners.

Closely watching the many gauges on his very busy dash while steering the Stanley Steamer was 76-year-old Jack Brause. Mr. Brause was accompanied by Margaret Harris. The boiler of his Stanley Steamer, located in the front of the car, was heated by a gasoline burner and, with just one look, it is understandable how the owners would often refer to it as the “coffin nose.” In 1902, the twin brothers Francis S. and Freelan O. Stanley sold their successful photographic dry plate business to George Eastman and Eastman Kodak, and began building automobiles powered by steam engines. Over a period of about three years, the Stanley brothers built and sold around 200 vehicles of their first design. They sold the design rights of these automobiles to a company called Locomobile and in 1902 they formed the Stanley Motor Carriage Company. They operated the business together until Francis Stanley’s accidental death in 1918, when he drove his car into a woodpile while attempting to avoid two farm wagons.

The Stanley brothers sincerely believed that automobiles powered by steam were better than the competing manufacturers utilizing gasoline-powered engines. They built vehicles with 10 and 20 horsepower steam engines. The engines were directly connected to the rear wheels by chain, having no transmission and thus making them much lighter than their competition. To stop, the driver would to put the car in reverse as well as apply the brakes, much like a locomotive. Once underway, these cars were quite fast. Probably to the amazement of many owners of gas-powered cars at the time, a Stanley Steamer set a world record for the fastest mile for an automobile in 1906 at 127 miles per hour. I can’t help but wonder if this combination of speed and limited braking may have contributed to Francis Stanley’s death.

But, as with the Stoddard-Dayton, the cost of the Stanley vehicles could not compete in the market with companies like Ford and General Motors. Although they built one simple model that sold for around \$850, most of their models started at twice that amount. And, when electric starters began to





"While still traveling east, Jack Brause's 1913 Stanley Steamer took on water from a helicopter near Buffalo, N.Y."

come standard in gas vehicles, Stanley Steamers also fell victim to the human desire to just "get in and go." To get a Stanley "up to steam" was too tedious and time consuming, taking nearly 20 minutes to build up enough steam to power the vehicle. This didn't sell well in a society now looking to get to their destinations as quickly as possible. The Stanley Motor Carriage Company closed its doors in 1924. Several men would later again attempt the steam engine application in cars but none were successful.

The challenge between the 1913 Stanley Steamer and the 1911 Stoddard-Dayton was as much a "rolling museum" as it was a race, giving many people in Avon and along the race the opportunity to glimpse a piece of our nation's history as it would have been viewed at the turn of the century. Though there were sufficient numbers of gas stations along the route that met the "fuel" needs of both vehicles, the need for water presented some challenges for Jack Brause's Stanley Steamer. This situation led to a special moment caught on film.



"TROUBLE, TROUBLE, TROUBLE - Rube DeLaunty, 70 (left) changes tire on his 1911 Stoddard-Dayton car, as Jack Brause, 76, gives him the ha' ha'." (AP Wirephoto) (1951)

Although many articles and pictures following the progress of the race appeared in newsprint, what has to be the most unique photograph taken during the race is the one depicting a Bell helicopter in flight, supplying water to the Stanley Steamer as it headed toward Avon. Apparently, Stanley Steamer vehicles would only get about a mile and a half to a gallon of water. As it turned out, both vehicles also had to make extra stops in the race due to issues with tires.

And, to their enjoyment, the townspeople of Avon got an opportunity to get a close-up look at the two classic cars when the drivers stopped at the Avon Inn for dinner and lodging before heading out for Syracuse, the next stop on their schedule. The article in the September 15th, 1951 Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* stated that a fair-sized crowd turned out to view the automobiles and greet the drivers.

Although the 1913 Stanley Steamer completed the race first and crossed the finish line in New York City 42 minutes ahead of the 1911 Stoddard-Dayton, the true winners of this unique race were the many people along the race route who got a short glimpse of our country's past.

When the summer months of 2020 come around, everyone should take an opportunity to view these examples of our nation's past at a local rally or classic car show. These cars are rolling relics of periods in our country's history and most of our own histories. Who doesn't have a special memory of a particular car in their life? I would venture to say *everyone* remembers their first "set of wheels." Mobility and a sense of independence have fueled an industry that is a cornerstone of our nation's history. Who knows? Now that electric cars have made a comeback and are now in vogue, will the "steamed" car make a comeback?

Author's note: Jay Leno owns and drives several Stanley Steamer vehicles and his program on YouTube titled "1906 Stanley Steamer Vanderbilt Cup Race Racer - Jay Leno's Garage" will give you a real insight into steam cars and the genius of the Stanley brothers.

- Vince & Loré DiSalvo, correspondents

## AP&HS Meetings

The AP&HS Board meets on the first Monday of each month, unless it lands on a national holiday. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome visitors to join us. If you are interested in becoming a Board member, please contact us!





## Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414  
[AvonPreservation.org](http://AvonPreservation.org)

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**Museum Hours:**  
Thurs. & Sun.,  
1-4, or by appt.

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*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2020-2021 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*  
Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
or stop by during museum hours

## Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
AVON PRESERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
23 Genesee Street • Avon, New York 14414

Name:

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Indicate desired membership level

( ) Individual \$10    ( ) Business \$30

( ) Family \$20    ( ) Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

( ) Yes ( ) No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)

## Address Service Requested

## Facebook Page

A number of fun Christmas photos and videos were shared on our Facebook page, including a tour of the lit village from the front seat of a 1954 Monterey, courtesy of Kyle L. There was also a video, c. 1958, shared by Tom M. that showed children receiving gifts from Santa in the Village Park, as illustrated in the screenshot below. At the end of the film, a small locomotive pulls around the circle – what's this? A little research found that it was probably operated by the American Legion's elite sub-organization, the "40 et 8." The name recalled the cargo capacity ("40 Hommes/8 Chevaux," or "40 men/8 horses") emblazoned on French boxcars in which American soldiers rode during WW I. Railroads, as well as the "French horizon blue" color, became symbols of the society. The little engine, probably a modified car or tractor and not on a rail, made appearances at local parades and events and was run by an officer of the 40 et 8.



### COMMENTS:

Santa is my Grandpa Jack.  
- Jackie R.

Love the hats.  
- Susan P.

Like the hats too. I had one with the long bill and furry fold down ear muffs.  
- John L.





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 34, No. 2 | May 2020

## Message from the President

### COVID-19 & History

I have often spoken of all of the historic events I have witnessed in my nearly 78 years on this earth. I've written about them before, so I won't go over them again here, but they have been world changing. The assassination of world and religious leaders, a man walking on the moon, a war that divided us, wars that united us, 9/11/2001. That's just a few.

But I never imagined an event that would virtually shut much of the world down the way this COVID-19 has. New terms have crept into our vocabulary like "social distancing" and "self-quarantined." And when it will be safe to venture out again remains a mystery.

As I write this, it's the day before Easter Sunday. Yesterday was the first time since I was about seven that I hadn't spent at least some time in church on Good Friday, and tomorrow I will attend Easter services on TV.

I hope all of you and your family members are staying safe and healthy. Please visit our Facebook page and our website for updates. For the time being, our Museum will remain closed, but we are looking forward to seeing everyone again.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

### Livingston County COVID-19 Documentation Project

The County Historian is requesting assistance from the public to help document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please consider sharing firsthand experiences, images, and reactions on how COVID-19 has altered your life and community. All information gathered will become part of the County Historian's permanent archival collection and made accessible for researchers. Stories and images may also be used for future exhibits.

Submit your experiences directly on the County Historian's webpage: [livingstoncounty.us/historian/php](http://livingstoncounty.us/historian/php)

Thank you for helping to share and preserve local history.



### AP&HS Programs & Meetings, 2020

Unfortunately, we will have to postpone the Coyne Family Farm History, which was scheduled for May 17, 2020. We will resume our programming when it is safe to do so. Please watch for updates regarding our fall programs in September, October, and November.

We are also cancelling our board meetings, usually scheduled for the first Monday of each month, until further notice. We urge everyone to stay safe and follow directives to ensure that we can all see each other in person again soon!

## Let Us Remember The Golden Rule

History seems to be repeating itself. In the 1600s, there was the Plague or Black Death. Scores of people died. Little was known about how diseases were spread. People did not practice good personal hygiene, stay away from ill individuals, or have any of the medications available to us today. Following WWI, the Spanish Influenza pandemic occurred with more than 600,000 Americans dying. The 1918 Spanish Influenza (H1N1 flu virus) was the deadliest event of the 20th century. In 1918, New Yorkers were assured that the situation was not as bad as in other US cities. Sound familiar?

Food became scarce and the concept of “Meatless Monday” and “Wheatless Wednesday” was instituted. People were asked to reduce their consumption of key staples so that there was enough for everyone. The effort was overwhelming with more than 13 million families pledging to cooperate. During the Second World War, Americans were asked to make many sacrifices. President F. D. Roosevelt re-launched this concept and it was known as rationing. Many will remember those small burgundy booklets with the stamps for sugar, butter, etc. that were issued May 1942. Americans became very resourceful. They planted gardens, canned their produce, saved everything they possibly could. Nothing was wasted. People worked together, and supported and looked out for each other, just as we are being asked to do today.

Sacrificing some things became the norm and affected every American household. No one considered going to the store and buying everything in sight. They purchased just what their family really needed. That is what we are being asked to do today. So, let’s remember that we are a part of a larger community, learn to be aware of, share and care for each other. In the end we will be all right; if we aren’t all right, it is not the end.

-Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator



## Update: Mary Phillips Hedman (1921-1975)



In the February 2020 issue of the AP&HS newsletter, we highlighted the story of Miss Mary Phillips of Avon, who was the first African-American woman from Livingston County to enlist in the Women’s Army Corps during WWII. After publication, we were in contact with Mary’s family, who added wonderful details to her story and even shared a photograph of Mary in her WAC uniform.

According to her family, after serving in a medical unit in the WAC, Mary continued in the medical profession, working as an LPN at the Rochester Psychiatric Hospital for a number of years. Her encouragement and influence led one daughter to serve in the Army for 18 years, and a son to join the Navy. Another daughter became an LPN. Mary also had the opportunity to represent her Rochester neighborhood at the historic March on Washington in 1963, where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Thank you to the Hedman family for helping us further honor Mary, her bravery, and legacy!



# Railroads in Avon: Part 1, Background

When the Genesee Valley was first opened for white settlement in the 1780s, subsistence farmers flooded into the area, attracted by the rich soil, abundant wildlife, virgin forests, and climate that was potentially well-suited for ideal growing of grain crops. The major crops were corn, oats and wheat. These commodities are heavy and difficult to transport long distances to markets outside the immediate area over poor roads by wagon in summer or sleds during the winter. During spring and autumn, traffic all but ground to a halt due to the rains and mud. This transportation issue stunted land sales, agricultural growth, and industrial growth until the Erie Canal was completed to Rochester, New York in 1823, connecting Rochester eastward to New York City and, by 1825, westward to Buffalo. More importantly, a side cut canal named the Genesee Valley Canal was completed from Rochester to Mount Morris on September 1, 1840, opening the valley for further expansion. A side cut off of the Genesee Valley Canal to Dansville, New York was completed in 1841. The Genesee Valley Canal eventually went as far as Olean, New York but the planned connections to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys were never completed. Canal traffic grew rapidly in a very short time as farmers cleared and cultivated more acreage for grain and more land was sold to incoming farmers. Barrel staves, dimensional lumber, gypsum, and eventually Pennsylvania coal from the Clearfield and McKean County mines were added as products to ship to outside markets once the canal reached Olean in 1856. During 1844 alone, the Genesee Valley Canal brought to Rochester almost 6 million board feet of lumber, over 4 million shingles, 55,555 cords of wood and 613 tons of barrel staves. Merchants shipped into the Genesee Valley tools, supplies and consumer related goods for the farms. Industry was stimulated by the 9-month canal operating schedules and many new industrial manufacturers moved into the area. For the first time, people found it easy to travel and visit families to the east and south, helping to maintain family connections. However, locations away from canal access still had road and shipping issues, and canals proved to be too slow in the face of a growing realization that railroads were soon to burst upon the scene.



## Avon Springs and Water Cure Therapy

It should be noted at this time that the Avon area possesses a unique underground geological fault that causes sulfur to leach to the surface in several natural springs. Native Americans long used these waters for bathing and drinking and claimed the water cured many illnesses and skin conditions. French explorers and missionaries noted the location in the 1600s and also used the springs. White pioneers in the late 1700s took advantage of the waters, and when Richard Wadsworth built a shower box at the Lower Spring in 1821, it marked the start of a thriving health cure industry also known as “water cure therapy” or “sulfur water treatment” that would last until 1915. Many large and fashionable hotels were built to accommodate hundreds of visitors a year seeking relief for many different maladies. To name but a few of the hotels, they included Hosmer’s Stand/United States Hotel (the first such hotel), Congress Hall/American Hotel, Knickerbocker Hall, Livingston House, and The New Sanitarium/Avon Inn, which is the only remaining hotel from this era which is still standing. It is located at 55 E. Main Street. Most of these hotels had water piped to them for bathing and drinking purposes. Doctors, nurses, caregivers, hotel staff, food processing personnel, and livery services proliferated, and even a bottling works was constructed to support this thriving industry. The water cures remained mostly a local attraction attainable only by stagecoach until the arrival of the Genesee Valley Canal in 1840. The arrival of the railroad in 1853 greatly spurred the growth of water cure therapy by vastly improving accessibility and providing a safe and reliable form of transportation. People started arriving from many distant points to seek relief and improve their health.

(Stay tuned for “Railroads in Avon Part 2: Railroad Development” in our next issue!)

-John Liccini, AP&HS Trustee



Congress Hall was near the site of the Driving Park.

# *In Memoriam: Robert (Bob) Francis Carlin*

*January 26, 1929 – January 12, 2020*

“As we look back on our four years of high school, we realize the joy and sorrow we shared. We, the class of 1946, are proud to be the first class to graduate in a world again at peace.”

- An excerpt from the history of the Avon class of 1946 written by Barbara Henty.

Those four years of high school had a big impact on my father. As a member of the class of 1946, he watched our country go through a war and personally knew friends and family going off to war. He understood at a young age the importance of a strong value system, sacrifice, and commitment to family and community. As a young man, these experiences shaped him. And the ideals he developed at that time guided him throughout his life.

My father was born January 26, 1929, at home, on Rochester Road (Route 15) in East Avon to Lucy Davin Carlin and Raymond Francis Carlin. His grandparents, Thomas and Mary Elizabeth Farrell Carlin, also lived on Rochester Road. They farmed what is currently the Steele Farm. He had one older brother, William (Bud) Carlin. For a short time, the Carlin family lived on Oak Street and then moved to a house on what would eventually become Richmond Lane. Their house had an interesting history of having 3 street addresses: East Main Street, Sam's Lane, and finally Richmond Lane. One house, three different street names as time evolved!

Dad attended St. Agnes School and Avon High School where he was best known as Iggie. He was a part of the JV and Varsity football and basketball teams, involved with many intramural sports and clubs, and was class president his junior year. Dad loved to share stories from this time including a favorite story of being served a very realistic looking piece of cardboard cake at the Collins' home at 25 East Main. He said you really had to be on your toes when you ate dinner there. Friendships formed in school lasted throughout his life. The class of '46 had a special bond and gathered regularly for decades after graduation.

Outside of school, my father helped his uncle, Clem Davin, on his farm on Rts. 5 & 20 in East Avon. One of the most memorable tasks was moving sheep from their summer pastures near Honeoye/Canadice all the way to East Avon using a pickup truck and horses that the sheep followed. He also had a part-time job bending neon at a shop in Avon.

From 1955 – 1957, my father was stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia with the army.

Upon returning to Avon, he joined the Lions Club. He was an exemplary member with perfect attendance

for 60 years from 1957 – 2017. Over the years, he held almost every board position. He chaired many committees and was president from 1970 – 1971. Dad truly believed in the Lions motto: “We Serve.”

My mother, Mary Kimmel Carlin, and father were married in August 1958. Mom was from Wayland, NY. A schoolteacher, she taught Kindergarten in Avon for years. My parents built their home on Valley Lane in 1964. My mother passed in 2003 and dad stayed in the home until 2017.

In the 1960s, my father and his brother, Bud, bought Davin Implement from their uncle, Mark Davin. Mark was the original owner and dad worked with him prior to taking over the business. Dad and Uncle Bud sold tractors and farm implements. Minneapolis Moline tractors and Fox Brady were some of the brands that they sold. Dad and Uncle Bud were meticulous in the upkeep of the shop and their records, developing a reputation of honest, reliable businessmen. And, if anything needed repairs, they could do it. They could fix anything.



*Bob and Bud Carlin in the shop*

My father enjoyed getting away. One of dad's favorite places was the family cottage on Conesus Lake. Although he was do-it-yourselfer, always fixing and improving the property, he did find time to enjoy lake living – boating, swimming, and entertaining. My father also enjoyed traveling. He and my mother attended many Lions Conventions in a variety of US cities. He traveled extensively. Africa, France, England, Scotland, Wales, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Turkey, and multiple trips to Ireland were places he visited.



Despite Dad's dedication to work and community commitments, his family was a priority. Mealtimes were important. He understood the importance of family and he put time into making sure we had a close relationship. He valued the time spent with me, my husband, Peter, and our two daughters, Valerie (Thomas Cook) and Jacqueline. Attending his granddaughters' school, sporting, and 4-H events brought him much happiness and pride.

We miss "Da" every day. We're grateful for the memories.

- Mary Carlin Lathron  
With assistance from Carole Hayes



Mary and Bob Carlin

## Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay!

Few people born before 1960 would argue that movie theatres, in a very short period of time, became an institution on the main streets of our cities and villages for many, many years. The movies were the destination of many Avon residents on the weekend. And some will remember the special Saturday matinee shows that would attract young people from miles around.

As Ann Younger continues the restoration of the Park Theatre, a special place in the history of the village and the memories of many Avon residents will soon be frequented by a new generation. As the accompanying picture illustrates, the business district was once again the hub of activity after WWII and businesses were working their way back to pre-war life. This can be seen in the ad for Root's Market in the March 18th 1948 Avon Herald in which owner Don Root posted:

"To the people of Avon: I am happy to announce that I have secured the services of Phil Kless; also Fred Boulden, who prior to leaving for the armed forces, worked for Root's Market on a full-time basis. Also Frank Marschke on a part-time basis. These men will operate the market and I assure you that you will receive courteous service and quality meats at money-saving prices. DON ROOT, Owner."



And on May 23rd and 24th, 1948, people gathered at the Park Theatre to view the movie, *Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay!* Now, if there was ever a movie title that would raise eyebrows, this one certainly did. Why "Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay!"? Well, as it turns out, the storyline of the movie involved the purchase of a mule team. One mule was named Crowder and the other Moonbeam, and they responded to the commands of "scudda-hoo" and "scudda-hay," which meant "gee" and "haw," the teamster's commands for "right" and "left" respectively. According to Wikipedia, the movie starred June Haver with Lon McCallister, Walter Brennan, Ann Revere and a young Natalie Wood.

We have found it is always rewarding to look beyond just the picture itself because there usually are great "treasures" to be found if you are willing to dig a little deeper.

It was interesting to look into the history connected to the pictures and news articles from 1948 and find how the events and influences in our country at that time can be felt in our lives today. Life as they knew it during WWII was about to change - and our lives as we know them are also about to change. As we deal with the current challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our country's history reminds us that we are a resilient nation.

The movie *Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay!* is available to watch in its entirety and free of charge on YouTube.com.

- Lore' and Vince DiSalvo, correspondents



# Trees of Avon

I never was a tree climber. A lot of my childhood was spent in the woods, using loppers to make paths in the dense undergrowth, so, being high up in a tree was of no interest. I liked being under them. I still do.

The satisfaction of watching a tree beat the odds of survival is addicting. Every spring, I find young trees in need of release from the weight of grape vines. Planting trees gives one great hope in the future, even though there is a relatively low rate of success. Then there are the old survivors: craggy sugar maples that once framed an old farmstead, the house and barns long gone. A perfectly lovely village crabapple in full bloom each spring. Of course, the iconic oaks that dot the Genesee Valley. Nothing makes me happier than a thriving tree.

But, protecting them isn't easy. Road salt poisons them, mice and woodchucks chew them, deer mangle them, overhead wire maintenance disfigures them, resulting in a call for dedication and perseverance. What a delight it was to discover an article from the July, 1856 issue of *The Genesee Democrat*, showing that Genesee was dedicated, and had a solution to protecting their village trees:

An Ordinance for the preservation of Shade Trees, in said village, passed July 1st, 1856.

The Trustees of the village of Genesee, do Ordain as follows ;

FIRST—All persons are prohibited to hitch or leave a team where they can injure any Shade Tree in said village.

SECOND—Any person violating this Ordinance for each and every such offence shall forfeit and pay to the Trustees of said villlage the sum of three dollars.

L. TURNER President.

ISAAC NEWTON, Clerk

The value of a \$3 fine in 1856 equals \$300 in today's dollars. Now, that is taking the health of village trees very seriously.

One hundred and seventy years later, awareness of our urban forest is re-emerging. Kudos to the Village of Avon Board for stepping up to a new commitment. In 2019, a group of dedicated folks, led by John Marks of the Avon Park Commission, applied for grant funds to create an inventory of every single street tree and its condition, and then create a plan on how to manage them properly. This effort resulted in a five-year Community Forestry Management Plan. Planting, watering, trimming and removing trees is covered in detail, along with a long-

term goal of maintaining at least 80% of the spaces filled with appropriate trees. The benefits of trees to the community will then be preserved, providing some of the proven benefits we tend to take for granted: cool shade, wind breaks, softening of structural landscapes, soil retention, wildlife habitat, and a general feeling of pleasing aesthetics.

Our urban forest presents us with challenges, too. When the American Elms lining the village streets died of Dutch Elm disease in the 1950s, the replacement of choice was the Norway Maple. They now occupy nearly 40% of the spaces, and have reached their optimum lifespan of 60 years. Additionally, they are non-native and considered an invasive species. This is where a good plan comes in to play. As these failing trees are removed, an appropriate replacement will be chosen, considering overhead wires, road salt, and diversity throughout the village. With a master tree list to choose from, no one species will dominate more than 5% of the spaces, protecting the urban forest from being once again ravaged by disease.

Maintaining our historic park trees is just as important. Circle Park was created as a public common area in the 1790s by town founder Dr. Timothy Hosmer and associates. Civil War troops were mustered there. It hosts many large-diameter trees with a high canopy cover, serving as a gathering place and a welcoming presence to visitors and travelers.

Driving Park has been revived by the removal of ash trees due to the deadly Emerald Ash Borer, and replanted with hundreds of varied small hardwood trees. The 2019 Arbor Day celebration brought in volunteers to plant 26 trees near the park entrance. Maintaining the health of the park's magnificent Bur Oak is highlighted in the Community Forestry Management Plan, for good reason. With a trunk more than five feet in diameter, it has an unmatched presence in the park.



*Driving Park Bur Oak, courtesy of Larry Tetamore, Tetamore Photographic*



Heading out to the country, we also have some magnificent specimens. In 2005, my family had Naturalist Doug Bassett from Letchworth State Park measure an unusual boundary line tree on Mulligan Farm. It turned out to be a NYS Champion Chinquapin Oak. But that accolade only lasted four years because someone else found a bigger one in Onandaga County. Yes, there is a competition for the biggest trees in New York, and nationwide. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) maintains the New York State Big Tree Register, which lists the location by county so as to protect the trees from vandalism. Livingston County has 34 NYS champion trees, some being surprising and some disappointing. Who would guess we had the biggest Paw Paw? Or the biggest American Chestnut? How about the biggest Staghorn Sumac? I was sorry to see we host both the largest Norway Maple and the biggest Buckthorn, another major invasive.



*Barber Road, lined with maples, being grazed by Guernseys in the 1940s.*

Barber Road, on the north side of Avon, will never again have the glorious maple-edged views that Aaron Barber designed in the 1850s. But spending a few hours with my loppers each spring, I will continue to rescue that little hackberry, oak, cherry, or hickory so it can grow above the vines to hopefully mature into something worth enjoying.

*-Clara Mulligan, APHS Trustee,  
Deputy Avon Town Historian*

*Editor's Note: Look for Clara's follow-up article about two remarkable elm trees in Avon in the next issue of the newsletter!*

## Condolences

The AP&HS president and board of trustees extend sincere sympathy to Joan Reid, Curator, for the recent loss of her son, Christopher. We are keeping you in our thoughts.



## Correction: All Steamed up and Ready to Go



*Courtesy of Vince and Lore' DiSalvo*

This photo in the February 2020 issue of the newsletter, associated with the article "Steamed" by Vince and Lore DiSalvo, was inadequately captioned. The photo was taken September 15th, 1951 along Route 5, between Avon and Caledonia during the time the Bell Aircraft's helicopter provided the 1913 Stanley Steamer with water. Avonites lined the road to welcome the "oldsters" as they entered the village and then stopped at the Avon Inn for the evening.

Sponsored by the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry and carried in newspapers across the country, Reuben DeLaunty and Jack Brause, retired members of the museum, pitted a 1913 Stanley Steamer against a 1911 Stoddard-Dayton in a road race to New York City. It was billed as "Steam Power Verses Gasoline Power" and whichever vehicle crossed the finish line in New York City first would be pronounced the winner.



# Avon Preservation and Historical Society

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Avon, New York 14414  
[AvonPreservation.org](http://AvonPreservation.org)

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Phone: 585-226-2425 x22  
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## Address Service Requested

## Facebook Page

Rob DuBois posted:

Before the Erie-Attica trail was put in, the old railroad bridge had a plaque / plate attached to the North pillar on the Avon side. As you can see from the picture it was broken off of the bridge. I looked all around under the bridge but couldn't find it. This was an informational plaque / plate for the bridge. It gave the company that built it, when it was built, along with all the weight limits and other information that pertained to the bridge. If anyone knows what happened to it or if you have it PLEASE PLEASE return it. It is an important part of the history of Avon.

### COMMENTS:

According to comments, the plaque may have been missing as early as 2007 and it has not yet been found. Any information on its whereabouts is welcomed!







# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 34, No. 3 | August 2020

## Message from the President

### State of the AP&HS

Well, 2020 has proven to be a historic year for historical societies. We made the decision in March to close our museum to the public for the time being. We hope to reevaluate in the fall with an eye on mid-October for a possible reopening. We have cancelled our live programs for now. Watch our website and Facebook page for updates.

I would like to thank all of you for the new and renewed memberships and donations. We so appreciate your generosity. Having said that, most if not all our normal fundraising opportunities have gone away for this year. The sidewalk sales, both in Avon and Geneseo, are canceled, and most importantly we do not have the

Corn Festival, where we raise more than half our yearly income outside of memberships (our biggest source of income). We have not yet heard if the Christmas Spectacular will happen this year. We are still planning our annual poinsettia sales in December.

In the meantime, stop by and check out our great window displays, which we change every month. And if you are going through closets and have any old Avon Central School yearbooks to donate, we are looking for 1933 – 1937, 1939 – 1942, 1985, 1994 – 1997, and 2011.

On a personal note, I miss those of you who visit us, exchanging Avon and family stories. In the meantime, stay safe and healthy.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

### In Memoriam: Mary Liz Stanton

Longtime AP&HS board member Mary Elizabeth Stanton passed away on June 29th at the age of 90. Mary Liz served on many of our committees, including executive, membership, and a term as president. She was always helpful to new board members, myself included. At Christmastime she would graciously host our December board meeting at her beautifully decorated home on Oak Street. After we adjourned, she would serve us eggnog, hot chocolate, and an assortment of cookies and candy. A wonderful holiday memory.

Our condolences go out to her husband of 65 years, Richard, her children, and her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

### In Memoriam: Charles Connor

Mr. Connor passed away in Colorado on June 16 at the age of 94. A resident of Avon for many years, it was here that he met and married his wife of 72 years, the former Suzanne Snyder, also of Avon.

Mr. Connor had been member of our society for years and nearly always stopped to see us when he was home for a visit, often donating some piece of Avon history. A very nice man. To his beloved "Suzy," his children, and grandchildren, we send our condolences.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

# Ice Cream - A Summer Favorite

An ice cream-like food was first eaten in China in 618-47 AD. King Tang of Shang had 94 ice men make a dish of buffalo milk, flour and camphor. A kind of ice cream was created in China about 200 BCE when a milk and rice mixture was frozen by packing it in snow.

Roman emperors reportedly sent slaves to the mountaintops to bring back fresh snow which was flavored and served as an early form of ice cream.

The King of England, Charles I, (1600-1649) reportedly offered his chef £500 a year to keep his ice cream recipe a secret.

Marco Polo (1254-1324) is said to have seen ice creams being made during his trip to China and introduced them to Italy. The first official account of ice-cream being offered in the New World comes from a letter written in 1744 by a guest of Maryland Governor William Blandon. The first advertisement appears in the New York Gazette in 1777 by Philip Lanzi saying, "ice-cream will be available almost every day."

Records indicate that President Washington spent about \$200 on ice cream in the summer of 1790. Inventory records at Mount Vernon revealed 2 pewter ice cream pots. Ice cream was made by the "still pot" method. Milk, cream and sugar were placed in the pewter pots and placed in a larger pot filled with ice and salt. It was stirred occasionally and took about 4 hours to harden. President Jefferson was said to have a favorite 18-step recipe for the delicacy that resembles the modern day Baked Alaska. In 1813, Dolly Madison served a magnificent strawberry ice cream creation served at President Madison's second inaugural banquet at the White House.



About 1800, ice houses were constructed to keep ice during the summer months. In 1843, Nancy Johnson invented and patented the first hand-cranked ice cream freezer. The machine reduced the freezing time from several hours to about 20 minutes. In 1851, Jacob Fussell of Baltimore, began manufacturing ice cream. It rapidly became an industry in America. In 1878, William Clewell of Reading, Pa invented the ice cream dipper. Until then, ice cream was spooned.

In 1892 Chester Platt of Ithaca, NY, poured cherry syrup over vanilla ice cream for a customer who named the creation a Cherry Sunday, for the day on which it was served. During the late 19th century, Ice Cream Sundays were served daily until it became illegal to serve Ice Cream Sundays on Sunday in Evanston, Ill. To avoid the issue, fruit flavored syrup was poured over the ice cream and the result was called an Ice Cream Sundae. They replaced the final "y" with an "e" to avoid upsetting the religious leaders.

There is some discussion as to who invented the first ice cream cone. One source says that in 1896, a street vendor in New York City, Italo Marchiony created the ice cream cone. Another source says that during the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, Ernest E. Harnwi is believed to have created it. His waffle booth was next to an ice cream vendor who ran short of dishes. As a favor, Harnwi rolled a waffle to hold his ice cream and the waffle cone was born. Over the years, others have tweaked the design to make it drip free. A driplless cake cone was invented in the 1930s with a larger bowl shape for the ice cream to sit in rather than on top. Another invention, the paper apron designed to catch any drips did not catch on either. The cone is still a friendly form of packaging because you eat the container.

In 1904, pharmacist David Stickler created the first banana split in Latrobe, Pa. By 1905, Walker's Ice Cream in Warren, Pa discovered how to use ammonia brine to operate its freezers to eliminate the need for ice. The availability of ice cream in the 19th century, led to the creation of the soda fountain and the "soda jerk" job was born.

Prohibition arrived and beer makers became ice cream makers. Their advertising dollars prompted America's interest in ice cream.

Ice cream became a morale builder during WW II. Each branch of the service tried to outdo the others. In 1945, floating ice cream parlors were built for the sailors in the Pacific. After the war, America celebrated the victory with Americans consuming over 20 quarts per person in 1946. Today, due to ongoing technological advances, the annual production is now more than 2 billion gallons annually.

-Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator



## Railroads in Avon: Part 2, Railroad Development

From almost the time the canals were opened, competition for canal traffic was growing in the form of the railroad. The New York and Erie RR (NY&E RR) was deeded in 1832 by the New York State legislature to construct a six-foot gauge railroad from Piermont, NY on the Hudson River to Dunkirk, NY on Lake Erie. When completed in 1851 it was the longest continuous railroad in the world. "Railroad fever" in western New York started with the Attica and Buffalo RR (A&B RR) deeded in 1836. The Attica and Hornellsville RR (A&H RR) was deeded in 1845. The Buffalo and Rochester RR (B&R RR) and the Buffalo and Cohocton Valley RR (B&CV RR) were established in 1850. The A&B RR, the A&H RR, and the B&R RR were sold to the Buffalo and New York City Railroad in 1857. The B&CVRR started trains running from Corning, NY to Savona, NY in 1851, the same year it was re-organized as the Buffalo, Corning and New York RR (BC&NY RR). The BC&NY RR completed tracks to Wayland, NY in 1852. It is interesting to note that the first locomotive built by the Schenectady Locomotive Works, later to become American Locomotive Company (ALCO), was purchased by the BC&NY RR in 1851.

### South and West Track Development from Avon

The date of the first train arrival in Avon is unknown, but thought to be late June or early July of 1853. At 8am on July 21, 1853, a passenger train departed from Avon to Corning, thence to New York City. The route was as follows: Avon, Livonia, Conesus, Springwater, Wayland, Atlanta, Cohocton, Avoca, Kanona, Bath, Savona, Painted Post, Corning, Elmira, Binghamton, and finally Piermont, where Hudson River boats transported passengers and freight to New York City.



*The author's favorite photo showing the Pattee House and granary on left, freight station in front of passenger station in middle of photo, and Rochester Street on right. Most likely taken from the top of the coaling tower for locomotives. Trolleys to the left of the station date this photo to c. 1907.*

In 1854, the BC&NY RR laid tracks to approximately two miles west of Batavia, NY and was stalled, pending a dispute with the New York Central Railroad (NYC RR). The BC&NY RR was taken over by the Buffalo, New York and Erie RR (BNY&E RR) in 1857. Straight-through rail service, without interchanging via this line, finally reached North Buffalo on October 29, 1857 after a series of compromises, court orders and mergers with the NYC RR. The BNY&E RR continued to operate the line from Buffalo to Corning until 1863, when it was bought by the Erie Railway Company (ERY).

### North and South Track Development from Avon

The Rochester and Genesee Valley RR (R&GV RR) was deeded in 1851, originally to construct a railroad to connect Rochester to the NY&E RR in Portage, NY and the coalmines of north-central Pennsylvania. After its arrival in Avon from Rochester in 1854, the R&GV RR failed to raise additional funding for the next stage of building from Avon to Mount Morris. In July 1856, the Genesee Valley RR (GV RR) took control of the R&GV RR with a mandate to construct a line to Mount Morris. The line was completed on January 13, 1859. In February 1860, the GV RR was renamed the Avon, Genesee and Mount Morris RR (AG&MM RR).

Avon now had the basic rail configuration that would stay in place until 1941 when the AG&MM RR removed the tracks from Avon to Mount Morris and then when Conrail abandoned the westbound track from Avon to Attica in 1976, removing the tracks in 1988. The north line from Avon to Rochester still exists today as the Livonia, Avon and Lakeville RR (LA&LRR).

The NY&E RR was reorganized in 1861 as the Erie Railway (ERY) and bought both the BNY&E RR and the AG&MM RR in 1863. The AG&MM RR was allowed to keep its name until the Livonia, Avon and Lakeville Railroad (LA&LRR) purchased what was left of the property in 1964.

The Erie Railroad emerged as Livingston County's most important railroad. At its physical peak, c. 1870 to 1940, the Erie's Rochester Division, despite its name, was headquartered in Avon where four Erie routes to Rochester converged: Mount Morris, Dansville, Buffalo via Attica, and Jersey City via Corning.

(Stay tuned for "Railroads in Avon, Part 3" in our next issue!)

- John Liccini, AP&HS Trustee

# Mulligan Farm Marks Centennial Year

In 1920 – practically another world ago – Edward D. and Nancy Taylor Mulligan purchased a beautiful farm in Avon. That was 100 years ago this year, and what a lot has taken place in the intervening time!

Edward D. Mulligan (1894-1964) grew up in Rochester. His father had grown up on a farm in Canada, but did not take to the lifestyle and instead had become a prominent physician; his mother had good social connections. Edward studied agriculture at Cornell University and Nancy also took agriculture classes, as neither had farming backgrounds. After spending a year working and learning on a farm in Phelps, they decided they wanted their own farm. Edward's father's reply was that he could buy a farm "if he wanted to be a damn fool." Undeterred, Ed and Nancy searched for the perfect land. They had an offer from Macedon, and they looked in Caledonia, but it was Barber Road in Avon that got their bid in 1920.

The 640-acre farm they chose was established in 1840 by Aaron Barber and continued by his son, Aaron Barber, Jr. The Barbers, for which the road is named, amassed parcels of choice farmland, cultivated crops, and built a fine Greek revival residence and core of barns between 1852 and the 1880s.

Ed Mulligan bought his first thirty head of Guernseys in 1922 from the Markham and Puffer farm, known as Elm Place, just down the road. He was one of the first in the area to purchase an electric milking machine powered by a gasoline generator.

During the 1940s and '50s, Nancy operated an egg business assisted by 700 laying hens. She crated the eggs and took them to the Avon depot where they were loaded onto a train bound for New York City. She also raised meat chickens, and always had a vegetable garden and bottle lambs in the kitchen.

The Mulligans could never have run the farm alone. Many people from Avon and the surrounding community were employed at the farm, including traveling thresher George Benck, farmhands Frank LaPoma and Jerry Hulbert, and Don and Dovey Monson, who worked in the fields and house, respectively. The Kovals were hired by Aaron Barber and even stayed on after the Mulligans bought the operation.

When Ed died in 1964, his son Mike Mulligan (1926-2011) was next in line. Mike always figured he would be a farmer. One of his earliest memories was being six years-old and driving a team of horses to pick up piles of hay. He milked the Guernsey herd, which grew in size once the parlor was built in 1958.

Pride in the farm has long manifested itself in the theme of land preservation. In the 1970s, one of the proposed routes for Interstate 390 put it through the heart of Mulligan Farm - thankfully it wasn't chosen. This event was a possible catalyst for Mike and his mother, Nancy, who worked to get the farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Finalized in 1980, this is a unique designation because not just the buildings are listed, but the land is, too, as an example of a 19th-century farming complex.

Eventually, Mike tired of the everyday work of milking, so he sold the cows in 1977. It was a hard day seeing the cows auctioned off, and it felt like the end of an era. He stayed involved in farming, but was feeling ready to hand over the reins to the next generation. Nancy died in 1983, leaving the farm to his children, Jeff, Phillip, and Clara. Jeff had gone to college for outdoor education, but he, like his father and grandfather, knew he wanted to be a farmer. So, in 1980, Jeff bought his first Holstein heifers and began a new herd, three years to the day of the auction. Lesa Sobolewski, Jeff's wife, became an indispensable part of the operation while running a B&B business in the historic house.

By 1992, it was clear that something needed to change to keep the farm afloat, and subdividing the land into house lots was not considered an option. Jeff and Lesa, however, enjoyed the dairy business and were willing to expand to make it work. Major farm expansions started in 1993: the herd size began to increase, as did the farm equipment, buildings, and acreage. A new milking parlor was built in 2009, but the same year the historic barn complex was hit by lightning. Within an hour, five barns were gone.

The Mulligans took another step toward preservation in 2010 with the signing of a conservation easement, selling the development rights to 1,200 acres of the farmland and permanently protecting it for agriculture.



*Looking east at the historic barn complex in the 1920s. The barns in the foreground were lost to fire in 2009, but the far right barn remains and is used as a horse barn.*



Today, one hundred years after the Mulligans purchased the Barber farm, Jeff and Lesa head the successful dairy, which has grown to 1,300 cows being milked each day. Everything from the milking parlor to the sand bedding and carefully mixed feed is designed for efficiency and cow comfort. Emilie, one of Jeff and Lesa's daughters, is now herd manager and oversees a herdsman, feeder, several calf managers, and 10 milkers. Clara's son, Forrest Watson, is mechanic and crop manager, and has implemented no-till practices to reduce chemical inputs, avoid soil compaction and erosion, and restore and preserve overall soil health. With computer consoles in cabs and cover crops in the ground, the farm represents both cutting-edge technology and agriculture fashioned after nature. The farm's owned and leased land has grown to 2,800 acres, which primarily feeds the dairy herd.

In 2014, Mulligan Farm joined with seven other local family farms in the region to form Craigs Station Creamery. The milk plant, located at Noblehurst Farms in York, produces a line of cheese and the brand highlights the stories of each family farm, helping to connect consumers with the origins of their food.

Mulligan Farm, now a Century Farm, honors its ancestors every day while looking to the future. It continues to seek ways to protect, preserve, and restore the land it has called home for four generations and to educate by example. Here's to the next century!

- Holly Watson, AP&HS Editor, and Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee



Ed Mulligan grins as he pitches hay in the 1920s. Photo courtesy of the Mulligan family.

## Buzz-Buggy in Avon



Photo courtesy of Vince and Lore DiSalvo and Maria Arrant. Ashantee's Five-Arch Bridge, c. 1907-1917 with "buzz-buggy" entering the northern arch.

As more people began to own automobiles at the turn of the 20th century, the desire to "go for a ride" further fueled the sale of vehicles such as the touring car. This postcard, post stamped from Avon to an address in Syracuse, August 10th, 1914, depicts a chauffeured outing in a touring car. During this early period of automotive history, these vehicles were often referred to as a "buzz wagon" or "buzz-buggy."

An historical note: most cars built in the United States before 1908 were right-side steering, but when Ford introduced the 1908 Model T with left-side steering, it became the American industry's standard configuration.

Taken directly from the *Livingston Democrat*, dated June 17, 1908:

"Seventeen automobiles are owned in the village of Avon, and one of the recent recruits to the automobile society in that village is the Junior editor of the Avon Herald, A. C. VanAllen, who has purchased a Rambler. VanAllen won't ask any odds of the railroad companies

now, as all it will cost him to skip about the country now will be the price of a little benzine. He is the first editor in Livingston County to own a buzz-buggy. The nearest we can get to it is a wheelbarrow."

- Vince and Lore DiSalvo, correspondents



## Trees of Avon Part 2: The American Elm

Back in the days of the American Elm, there were two that made themselves known in this area. At what is now the intersection of Rts. 5 & 20 and 390 there was a lovely umbrella tree, seen by all who passed.



Old State Road (Rts. 5 and 20) looking west toward East Avon. Famous old umbrella tree in center of picture.

The other specimen tree, the Markham Elm, just over the county border in Rush on the East River Road, and was mentioned in many publications, notably "Historic American Trees" in 1922 by Katharine Nicholson, and a 1938 USDA publication, "Famous Trees."

### The Markham Elm, Elm Place

1922, *Historic American Trees*, by Katharine Stanley Nicholson:

"This great tree, believed to have lived through six centuries, stands on the Markham estate two miles north of Avon, N.Y. It is an elm of the variety known as weeping; that is, its long, graceful branches, used as swings by the boys and girls of pioneer times, once hung in graceful festoons to the ground.

"Its trunk measured forty feet around, its height was in proportion, and its shade covered an acre, the immense elm possessed great beauty. The Indians of Western New York held this tree in great veneration and made the spot a favorite camping ground. It also served as a resting place for early missionaries, scouts, and traders.

"William Markham, great grandfather of the present owner of the estate, is said to have first seen the old elm in 1764, while on a mission to the Seneca Indians. In 1794, his son purchased the farm, which has remained in the possession of the family ever since. More than a half century ago, the old tree was accidentally set on fire, according to one story, by a party of sportsmen; this is related to have occurred during

a January thaw, so that the high water surrounding the elm prevented anyone going near enough to extinguish the blaze, which consequently injured the trunk fatally.

"Decay set in, and progressed, so that when the Chief of the Division of Forestry, of the Department of Agriculture, at Washington, wished a cross-section of the trunk for exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago, it was impossible to comply with his request. About this time, the trunk caved in, leaving a space through which a span of horses could be driven. In 1893, the north side of the huge tree blew down; this portion was sawed across, and three hundred and seventy five rings of annual growth were counted. An estimate of the age of the part that had decayed near the center of the tree placed its years at six hundred.

"Still, the veteran elm had not lost its vitality; in the spring of 1920, after bursting into leaf, and then losing every one to canker worms, it rallied bravely and in a few weeks was once more in full foliage."



1955 image of the Markham Elm

May 15, 1955, Democrat and Chronicle:

"...it was...just awarded 'most interesting of all' by the NYS Arborists' Assn."

"Two seedlings from the Big Elm are growing on the homestead lawn. They are beginning to acquire the willowy characteristic of their parent."

No date marked its official demise, but this nationally recognized specimen certainly did not survive the onslaught of Dutch Elm disease in the 1950s.

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee and Deputy Avon Town Historian



# The Zito Family



*The Zito family at Margaret (Zito) Wheeler's wedding, 1956.*

*Front, L to R: Mary, Gertrude, Margaret (bride), mother Maragret, Pauline, Lena.*

*Back, L to R: Florence, Joanne, Sam, Tom, Jack, James, Theresa, Vivian*

John and Margaret Zito immigrated to the United States from Italy in the early 1900s with their three children and settled in Chicago, Illinois. With the Mafia working in the area, the Zito family changed their name to LaRosa, a lesser-known name than Zito.

Al Capone, one of the most infamous characters, carried on a gangster operation in Chicago at that time. He killed many rival gangsters. Rocco Margiotta drove the car for Al Capone during Capone's illegal operations.

At one point, two of Margaret and John's eldest daughters, Pauline and Lena, were washing dishes when the glass window in front of them was intentionally broken by an intruder. It had clearly become time for the family to move.

Having relatives in New Jersey, the family changed their name back to Zito and moved to New Jersey.

The Pusateri family, who was related to the Zito family, encouraged them to move to Avon, N.Y. The Pusateri family also settled in Avon. John and Margaret Zito bought a structure located at 205 Wadsworth Avenue in Avon. The building had formerly been a bar, and they converted it into their home.

John's occupation was painting. During his career, he painted the building now known as the Avon Inn both inside and out three times.

The residence in Avon at 205 Wadsworth Avenue became a miniature farm where chickens, ducks, goats, etc. were raised. Vegetable gardens were also planted and produce was preserved.

Minnie Mehlenbacher, a well-known social worker at the time, was a caring person who worked with the family regularly, ensuring that they had the resources they needed. She was always there to offer help.

John Zito died at the age of 56 in 1941. His wife, Margaret, spent the last years of her life at the Skilled Nursing Facility in Mount Morris, N.Y. Margaret died in 1994 at the age of 104.

*- Mary Ann Margiotta*

Margaret LaCoy (1889-1994) and John Zito (c. 1885-1941) were both born in Italy, were married there, and had the first three of their thirteen children there before immigrating to the US.

## **Children born in Italy:**

Pauline  
Mary  
Lena

## **Children born in Chicago:**

Gertrude  
Vivian  
Jack  
Florence  
Anthony  
Margaret

## **Children born in Avon:**

James  
Theresa  
Salvatore "Sam"  
Joanne



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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate desired membership level

Individual \$10     Business \$30

Family \$20     Donation

Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

Yes  No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)

## Facebook Page

In a post on June 29, 2020, John Barrett wrote:

"Here are a few pictures up close of the statue on top of the monument in the circle park. I took these a few years ago when we cleaned the statue and monument. It's a shame the statue is so high in the air, the detail on it is beautiful to see."



### COMMENTS:

Thank you for sharing. My dog and I walk through the circle almost every day but I had no idea of the beautiful detail.

- Gail W.

My grandfather (Duane Westfall) used to tell me this statue would come to life and come down and have lunch with him.

- Tracy W.

Wow!! Thank you for sharing!

- Stephanie D.





# Avon Preservation & Historical Society

# Newsletter

Volume 34, No. 3 | November 2020

## Updates from the AP&HS

**Museum Reopening:** We are happy to report that we have a tentative plan to reopen the Museum on the second Sunday of each month, starting December 13, 2020, 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Masks will be required. A limited number of visitors will be allowed in the museum at one time. We thank you for your patience, and we'd love to see you!

**AP&HS Programs:** Unfortunately, 2020 programs have been cancelled due to the pandemic. Please check back for upcoming events in 2021.

**AP&HS Meetings:** Regular board meetings have resumed and are held on the first Monday of each month, unless it lands on a national holiday. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome visitors to join us. If you are interested in becoming a Board member, please contact us!

**Opera Block Third Floor Project:** The committee has resumed meetings. We are currently working on an RFQ (request for bid) and hope to have it available by early January 2021.

**Editor's Note:** In the last two issues of the AP&HS Newsletter, we printed segments of a railroad history by Trustee John Liccini. Given the detail of his essay, John is planning on publishing the piece, so keep your eye out for the finished booklet!

**County Bicentennial 2021:** Livingston County Historian calls for biographies of women leaders, achievers, and role models with a connection to the county from all eras. Submit bios by Nov. 15th at [livingstoncounty.us/historian.php](http://livingstoncounty.us/historian.php) or call 585-243-7955 for more information.

**President's Note:** The APHS President, Bob Westfall, would like to give a shout-out to Sarah Westfall for helping out her injured grandfather in September at our Museum. Thanks, Sarah!

## Annual Poinsettia Sale!



Brighten the winter days of a friend, local church or nursing home...or treat yourself! Our poinsettia sale is on now from October 25th – November 30th.

Color options: Pink, red, white, red & white (Jingle Bell) and pink & white (Marble). Plants are just \$9.00 and free deliveries are made to your door on December 4th.

To place your order, call 585-226-2729, email [avonpreservation@gmail.com](mailto:avonpreservation@gmail.com), or mail order and check payable to Avon Preservation and Historical Society to AP&HS, 23 Genesee Street, Avon, NY 14414. Thank you and happy holidays!

# Christmas Lights

Many of us grew up surrounded by Christmas lights. Did you ever wonder where this tradition started? The first recorded information about placing candles on Christmas trees began in Germany in 1660. Nearly 100 years later, in 1747, the Dutch brought perhaps the first official display to America in the "lichstock," a large wooden triangle shape lit by candles. In 1832, Harvard professor Charles Follen would decorate an evergreen tree with candles. While they looked lovely, they often resulted in fires that not only destroyed the tree but sometimes the family's home. Families kept a pail of sand or water at hand in the event of a fire. In 1878, Frederick Artz devised a clip-on candle holder. These were used for the next several decades. In England, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were shown in drawings gathered around a candlelit Christmas tree. In 1879, Edison first demonstrated his incandescent lights. He went on to create long-lasting carbon filament bulbs, which he used to light up his laboratory on New Year's Eve.

The first electrically-lit tree was put together by Edward Johnson, V.P. of Edison Electric Company and used 80 miniature pear-shaped bulbs. The tree also rotated. This earned him the title of "Father of the Electric Christmas Tree." In 1895, President Grover Cleveland requested an electric Christmas light display to please his three young children. In 1901, a GE Bulletin extolled the virtues of lights on a tree – however, you had to make your own string of bulbs. In 1903, GE sold sets of 28 sockets/strings with bulbs for \$12. In 1907, Ever-Ready Co. of NY sold sets of eight sockets in series with the possibility of wiring sets together.

In 1910, GE made a ball-shaped bulb 1" in diameter with a tip dipped in dyed lacquer for color. The problem was, though, that they were too expensive for the average family. In 1915 in Germany, pinecone-shaped bulbs were made. In 1916 the tungsten filament replaced the carbon filament. GE created 1" globes labeled MAZDA. In 1920, GE came out with the smooth cone-shaped bulb, coated with translucent colors known as the C-6. The first Christmas Light Show took place in Altadena, CA. By 1925, people were looking for something different, so GE came up with bulbs with a wrinkled surface. By 1925, Christmas lights were available nationally with the NOMA Company being the largest Christmas light manufacturing company in the world. They would remain the leader for nearly 49 years; in addition, they



*Photo by Greyson Joralemon on Unsplash*

would go on to make many significant innovations. In 1946, they debuted the bubble lights, which we all remember. There were also bulbs shaped like a Santa, a Christmas tree, candy cane, church, etc. The 1950s, with the Space Age, ushered in the aluminum Christmas tree and these lasted about a decade. Then they came in colors, remember! NOMA filed for bankruptcy and GE was back in the Christmas light business. In 1966, GE began the overseas manufacture of Merry Midget lights, sometimes called fairy lights, the price dropped, and the house lighting tradition began. This tradition has taken on amazing and extensive dimensions. Today you can have green for St. Patrick's Day, pastel eggs for Easter, red, white and blue for the Fourth of July, orange for Halloween, and any color for Christmas, as well as icicles & snowflakes. Now LED bulbs are the current bulb of choice. No one knows for sure what lies ahead in the Christmas light business, but the future looks very bright.

*-Joan Reid, Curator of the AP&HS*

## **SOURCES:**

*Chan, Melissa. "Here's How Christmas Lights Came to Be." Time Magazine. Time.com. 2015.*

*Malanowski, Jamie. "Untangling the History of Christmas Lights." Smithsonian Magazine. Smithsonianmag.com.2018.*

*Weinrich, John. Inventory list of private light bulb collection. AP&HS Museum Collection.*





# Avon's Original G-Men



*Photo of Bob and Bruce Babcock, with Bob Westfall in the center, shared by Marilynn (Babcock) Middleton on Facebook group "You know you grew up in Avon NY, when you remember..." on May 12, 2020.*

When I was a kid my friends and I were always looking for ways of making spending money. In grade school, it was shoveling snow, mowing lawns and collecting newspapers and scrap metal and taking it to Spencer's scrap yard. (It took about 100 lbs. of newspaper for about a \$1.00 return.)

Two of my closest friends were twin brothers Bob and Bruce Babcock. Their dad, Charles Babcock, was a general contractor and landscaper. Mr. Babcock had an old truck he wanted to put to better use and since it had a hydraulic bed, he had the idea to start a garbage route. He signed up about 20 customers and decided this would be a great job for his boys to do on a Saturday. It was determined that this was more than a two-man job, so somehow I got hired.

And so on Saturday mornings we would put on old clothes and set out to make Avon just a little cleaner and healthier. Now, these days, watching Shanks and Waste Management, I would guess they can do at least 20 houses in an hour, but it took us from about 8:00am to about 4:00pm to do our 20. One of the problems being that along our route lived several of our friends and classmates. Time would be wasted with all manner of teenage nonsense.

We'd start out on Lake St. at our friend Betty Jane Kurtz's (Rusty's big sister) and later stop by at nextdoor neighbors Bill Lanham's and June Mairs' on North Ave. I think we tried to plan those calls around breakfast and lunch.

Now in those days, most people didn't use garbage bags. All manner of trash was just thrown into the can. This included leftover food, eggshells, fruit peels, etc. This could be pretty nasty, especially in the summer months. Bob Babcock remembers that flies and their progeny would infest the cans, but as he recently wrote, "Don't be concerned about their little lives because we were taking them to the grand buffet where they could eat and grow to their heart's content."

Now remember, this was an open flatbed truck. Two people got to ride in the cab and one person stayed with the garbage to keep the contents from flying off. Let's just say I don't remember ever riding in the cab. Later on we recruited Drew Moran to help out and the two of us were back there doing our best to keep things from blowing off. When the truck got full, it was down to the Avon dump to unload.



Often Bob Babcock would drive the truck to the dump at the Avon Springs Downs. He would need to back the truck to the edge of the dump to unload the trash. Drew and I were allowed to get off the back at this time. Bob Babcock vividly remembers one occasion where he almost backed the truck over the edge. Fortunately, it didn't happen, but he did get it stuck. It took awhile to get it free, but we were able to continue on the route.

When I got home, I was not allowed in the house in my "work clothes." I was instructed to strip down to my skivvies in our little mud room and immediately march down to the basement where my dad had installed a shower stall just for these Saturdays. There would be fresh clothes waiting for me and then I'd be ready for Saturday night. And so that's the story of Avon's first g-men. As nasty as it could sometimes be, it remains for me a very happy memory, having fun with my friends, joking and fooling around.

I'd like to dedicate this article to the memory of my friend Bruce Babcock and his dad, Charles Babcock. I'd also like to thank Bob Babcock for his input.

*-Bob Westfall, AP&HS President, and Bob Babcock*

## Letter from Colonel Blakeslee

In the AP&HS Newsletter of February 2019, we published a letter, shared by Bill Chapel, from Colonel Samuel Blakeslee to his daughter, Asenath, preceding the War of 1812. This letter was written to her just prior to his leaving for the uncertainties of war. As a follow-up to the letter, Bill Chapel has shared an adapted excerpt of "Narrative of Colonel Samuel Blakeslee, a defender of Buffalo in the War of 1812" by Samuel Blakeslee, published 1905.

### The following are in Colonel Blakeslee's own words:

I left Colebrook [Connecticut] on the 20th of January and moved my family to Avon, then Hartford, arriving on the 12th of February, 1812. When the late war broke out, it was thought best by Major General Holt that each town should raise a company from the exempts from military duty. And as I felt a little of the old Revolutionary War spirit enkindled within me, I enlisted a company from the exempts, not to go to war, but to defend off in case of distress.

The alarm came from the westward. I started with sixteen of my men, in a snowstorm, and gave orders for volunteers to come on without description. Before I left Avon I was joined by Captain Tyler with sixteen men from Livonia under my command. We marched on together as far as Batavia. It was ordered that Col. Blakeslee's men should be mustered, reviewed, and armed. I had at this time but thirty-two men. At this time the roads, the taverns and the stores were crowded with a confused mass of people. A thought struck me that it was possible I might stick another military feather in my cap. I drew my sword and marched through the streets of Batavia with martial music, three times crying out: "Who will volunteer with Colonel Blakeslee in a short tour to the westward, in defense to the just rights of our country?" Then I drew up my men on parade, and informed the inspector that myself and men were ready for inspection. I found that I had about two hundred and thirty men, brave and gallant.

I took up my march to Buffalo, after receiving a few arms and a little ammunition, when I was informed that Captain Mackey, commanding a company of Scotch militia from the town of Caledonia, in the county of Genesee (now Livingston), had requested of Major General Hall to be annexed with my company to the Ontario Volunteers. This aroused my military feelings. Knowing him to be a brave Scotsman by birth, not wanting for courage, and knowing his company to be brave Scotsmen, I thought that with captain and men that I should not be afraid to speak with any enemy within the gates.

Accordingly I pressed on my regiment as fast as was consistent until I had overtaken my brave Scotsman, about fifteen or eighteen miles this side of Buffalo. Here he did me the honor of uniting himself and men to my regiment. We took up our march, and arrived at Buffalo about sunset. The troops came in from the eastward, and General Hall directed all the eastern troops to repair to Colonel Blakeslee. That evening and the next day there was added to the regiment all the troops east of the Genesee River. The next day, at evening, I received orders from the commanding General to organize a regimental band, of field staff and field officers.

Accordingly I collected the officers, and after stating to them my general's orders, had them choose for a major, which was done by ballot. Col. Gardner, a volunteer from West Bloomfield, was chosen. Henry Adams, Esq., was chosen adjutant, a brave, active young man, from East Bloomfield, who merits well of his country; Captain Asa Nowlen, of Avon, was chosen quartermaster, and worthy the rank conferred on him. The next day I received orders to prepare my regiment for a general review. Accordingly, I marched my troops onto the Grand Parade, and joined the other regiments that had come from Buffalo. The troops that were reviewed were two thousand eleven, including eighty-three Indians, commanded, I think, by Captain Gordon. My regiment consisted of ten companies, amounting to four hundred and thirty-three men, commanded by the following captains, viz.,

**Robert Mackey**, of Caledonia; **Daniel Bigelow**, of Avon; **Thomas Peck**, of Lima; **Hamlin**, of East Bloomfield; **Moorehouse**, of Victor; **Ezekiel Wadsworth**, of Avon; **Tyler**, of Livonia; **Parish**, of Lima; **Rowley**, of Victor.

Being the largest regiment on the ground, the regiment was filled with staff officers the morning before. The next day there was nothing done worthy of note, until evening, when I received orders in case of an alarm to repair with my men to the Grand Parade. About eleven o'clock the alarm gun was fired. The men were quickly in motion, and on parade. Here my regiment stood ready about four hours. It was a very cold night, the wind was from the lake, and the men were very uncomfortable. However, I dismounted but once in order to take a little spirits.

There had been several unsuccessful detachments sent down to Black Rock. A body of British troops and Indians had landed that evening, and lay in ambush. These detachments of militia had been sent down at the flash of a few British guns. A few wounded men fled back into the woods.





*Image courtesy of Library of Congress*

About four o'clock in the morning, Dec. 30th, 1813 I was ordered to march my regiment down to the Rock, and do the best I could, but be sure to keep good my flanks. I had not ever been at the Rock, and the night was dark. I requested a pilot, and the brave Sergeant Smith volunteered his services and led me safely onto the field of slaughter. A little before I located my regiment, I met Col. Chapin, who had been unsuccessful with his detachment of line. I got information that a small party of the British were landed, and in ambush, and being by some circumstances convinced that there were but few of them, was very urgent that I should destroy them.

We went on till the British fired a few shots on a party of horsemen commanded by Lieutenant Boughton, which was about twenty rods in my front line. There I displayed columns, and formed my regiment fronting the enemy. The regiment was in two battalions, the first commanded by myself and the second by Col. Gardner. In this situation I called a consultation of war, consisting of myself, Col. Chapin, Major Gardner, and Mr. Adams, my Adjutant. It was thought best to attack the British, and not wait for them to attack us. The plan of operation was this, that I should march the first battalion with charged bayonets, and not fire until we had landed our bayonets amongst the British soldiery. And as soon as I had left the ground, Major Gardner was to march his battalion onto the ground that I had occupied, and stand ready to take the second charge, in case I failed in the first.

I gave my orders accordingly. The men being prepared, I gave the word "shoulder arms!" This plan, had it been pursued, would have been very rash, and I should have lost myself and regiment. At the instant that I was going to give the word "charge and march!" Captain Rowley stepped from the ranks to me and said very politely: "Colonel, we are willing to fight, but would it not be more prudent to wait a few minutes? It is almost daybreak, and then we can better know how to fight and what we are fighting." I thought his observations good and embraced them and waited for daylight, which soon came. While we were waiting, the artillery on both sides of the river began to play. The British threw hot shot, spherical and bomb shells, which made a great military display.

I continued my position for about twenty minutes, when an express arrived from General Hall, for me to return for the British boats were discovered to be crossing the river above us, and to meet them at the river's edge, if possible. I immediately wheeled off my regiment by platoons, and with a forced march met them a few rods from the shore, and poured in such a shower of balls among them, that out of three boat-loads, sixty men in each, there were but about fourteen left that were not killed or wounded.

Here I lost a few men. Captain Tyler was shot dead. The British and Indians that I had left behind arose from ambush and followed me to this place. After destroying the men in the boats, I faced the regiment about and attacked them in good earnest. There were, according to the best information I can get, about eight hundred British and two hundred Indians. A number of brave men joined in the action from other regiments that had been scattered in the night. The attack on the British, and their attack on us continued an hour; but we being overpowered by numbers and discipline, a retreat became necessary, which we made in much confusion.

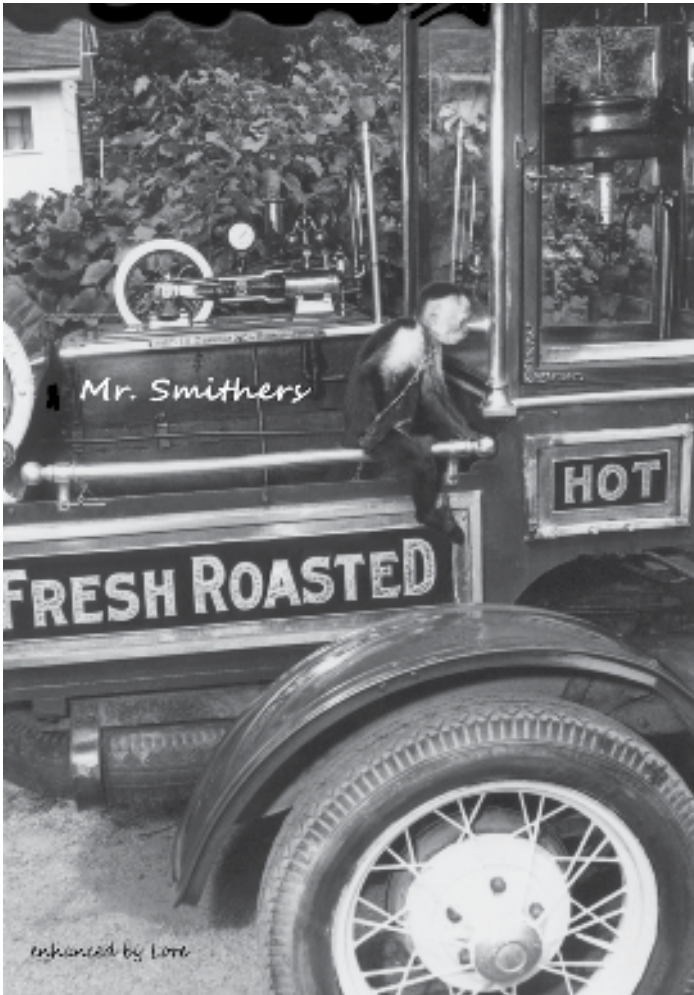
The British set fire to the village of Black Rock and marched to Buffalo, which they pillaged and partly burned, and then recrossed to Canada. Thus the fortunes of the day were against us. My men being scattered, the most of them gone home, I had no command. I stayed at Eleven Mile Creek the next day. The day following, which was the first of January 1814, the British troops came over and destroyed the remainder of Buffalo. But for want of men and ammunition on our part, there was but little fighting done, and but for two or three killed on either side. About eleven o'clock in the evening I set out for home, which I reached safely in about three days.

In the action at Black Rock, Major Gardner was wounded in the thigh and made a prisoner. Captain Robert Mackey and about fifty men were made prisoners, and sent to Montreal. They were taken prisoners because they would rather fight than run. During the action, I being on horseback, the commanding officer of the British, about eight rods distant, observed me, and ordered a volley of balls to be poured upon me, saying, "If that old devil lives we shall lose the day. Kill him and the day is ours." His orders were obeyed, and I received the shot without winking, and received no harm, except a small wound in front of my boot.

There were some families taken over the river from Lewiston. The British officer ordered them to be sent back, and asked them what old man that was that fought so like the devil at Black Rock; and, being informed that it was Col. Blakeslee, that commanded a regiment of federalists from Ontario. "Give my compliments to the old gentleman," said he, "and tell him I would rather fight three democratic regiments than one federalist one, for they fight more like devils than men."

## *There's a Donkey in the Living Room!*

Often, family histories, stories, and pictures include the beloved family pet. Dogs and cats are the predominant pets adopted by families, and it is quite clear that they are truly “members of their family.” To appreciate how important these four-legged companions are, one needs only to visit a local grocery where you will likely find an entire aisle dedicated to the needs of pets.



*Photo courtesy of Ann Meagher. Jim Meagher's pet Capuchin monkey, Mr. Smithers, on the side of the infamous Popcorn Peanut Truck. The original truck was created in 1931 when the son of a Rochester dentist mounted a 1906 Cretors popcorn/peanut machine on a 1931 Model A Ford chassis. The Popcorn Peanut Truck was frequently seen at Avon High School sporting events, Long Point Park, Lakeville Park and local fairs and carnivals.*

In many homes you will also find a feathered friend that brings a certain level of joy to its owner. But, at one time during the mid 1950s, the residents of Avon were introduced to two very unlikely family pets.

At that time, the residents of the Lacy Street area were regularly entertained by the pet Capuchin monkey, “Mr. Smithers,” owned by the James Meagher family. A picture of Mr. Smithers and his friends (local neighborhood children) made the front page of the Avon Herald in January of 1955.

James Meagher purchased Mr. Smithers to attract customers to the peanut and popcorn truck that he operated at many local festivities including Long Point Park and at Avon High School sporting events.

When Mr. Smithers was not available for their entertainment, the children of the village had only to walk to 235 Genesee Street to see the family pets of Hoyt and Nancy Mason. Along with two horses and some chickens, the Mason family had two burros named “Sandy” and “Colombus.” According to Paul Mason, Sandy gave birth to two foals, “Andy” and “Dandy,” who were later sold to other owners. In an August 28th, 1958 article of the Democrat and Chronicle commemorating Avon's Sesquicentennial, Dandy appeared in a picture with Hoyt Mason and his daughter Linda. From family pictures shared with us by Paul Mason, a burro was often allowed to join the family IN their home.



*Photo courtesy of Paul Mason. Mason family in living room at Genesee Street, September 1959. Left to right: Paul, Dandy the burro, Linda, Hoyt, and Carol Mason.*



### Some interesting facts about the donkey:

“Burro” is Spanish for donkey and is commonly used in the United States to describe a small or miniature donkey weighing between 110 to 410 pounds. A full-size donkey can weigh as much as 1,000 pounds. Donkeys can range in height from 31 to 63 inches. The life expectancy of a donkey in poorer countries is 12 to 15 years whereas in prosperous countries they can live to be 30 to 50 years old.

Donkeys typically are very obedient and have been given a false reputation for being stubborn because, unlike horses that will jump or bolt when something scares them, a donkey will freeze and investigate what has scared it. A signature feature of the donkey is its large ears. It is speculated that these serve the donkey in two ways. First, they help to protect the donkey by detecting distant sounds, and secondly, they may help

in cooling the donkey in warmer climates. A black line down the center of its back and across its shoulders is also common in the miniature donkey.

Used for hundreds of years as pack animals, many of the miniature burros in prosperous countries today are kept as pets as they are very social animals that enjoy physical contact and do better when kept with other animals. The best available figures estimate there are 189 breeds of donkeys worldwide and a total of five in the United States and Canada.

The miniature donkey (burro) is a unique breed of donkey originating only from the Italian islands of Sardinia and Sicily. As a popular pet, they come in a variety of colors and are raised by a great number of specialized breeders in North America.

*-Vince and Lore' DiSalvo, Correspondents*

## *Gone but Never to be Forgotten*

It was with a heavy heart that this writer recently found out that the Avon's Veterans of Foreign War (VFW) Post 5292 has ceased to exist. After much deliberation and consultation among the veterans, it was decided that the time had come to dissolve the group and surrender their charter back to the national VFW headquarters in Kansas. Due to its declining membership, the vets felt that they could no longer muster the manpower to run an effective and active organization.

The Post was formed in 1946, shortly after WWII. They were the successor of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Cutler Post that had been formed in Avon after the Civil War, or “War of the Rebellion.” As the Cutler Post veteran membership decreased, they too ceased to be. One of the keys to being a member of the VFW was service in a war theater. Many brave and selfless Avonites over the years have proudly served our country in the Marines, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard throughout our greatest times of need. Some of the stories of valor, bravery, and extraordinary service have come to light over the years, but I suspect that much of what our great VFW members past and present went through and did will only be known to them and their Creator.

In addition to untold hours of community service, the VFW post members (in concert with the American Legion and the Women's Auxiliary) ran the Park Theater; worked with the Boy Scouts; have so respectfully honored all Avon's combat personnel lost each Veteran's Day; conducted flag retirement services; and provided the community with the wonderful VFW Hall, which has hosted so many meetings, dinners, events, and parties in recent years. There are many other events and services attributed to the VFW over



the years, too numerous to mention here. Many of the members of the VFW have been the leaders of our community throughout the decades.

Growing up in Avon, some of my fondest memories surround the Memorial Day holiday. I have always been impressed how the veterans turned the cemeteries into a sea of American flags, remembering those no longer among us and recognizing those who left Avon in our service, never to return. The crowds of people watch the annual parade, cheering and clapping the loudest for our veterans as they proudly pass by. Everyone gathers for the solemn and reverent program in the Circle Park with the speeches and laying of the remembrance wreaths to those who served, concluding with a haunting rendition of “Taps” and a 21-gun salute for the fallen.

As I stated in the title of this article, we must never forget the VFW post and what its members have stood for and done for our community throughout the decades. Many of the VFW members are also members of the American Legion and will hopefully remain active through this fine organization. The VFW has generously donated several of their items to our museum and we will proudly preserve them and display them in the near future. I would encourage everyone to kindly remember the VFW members and say a prayer that they will be rewarded by The Almighty for all they gave, and continue to give, to enrich our community and to keep our country free. Please proudly thank any veterans that you know, as well as any active service personnel you encounter. To the fine members of the VFW, we say: thank you, Post 5292, God bless, mission accomplished.

*- Dan Cochrane, Vice-President of the AP&HS*



# Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall  
23 Genesee Street  
Avon, New York 14414  
[AvonPreservation.org](http://AvonPreservation.org)

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*\*If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2020-2021 membership, the form below can be cut out and used. (One perk is that they will receive the newsletter!)*

*Not sure if you need to renew your membership?*

Contact the AP&HS office at 226-2425 ext. 22  
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Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:  
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Please make check payable to AP&HS

May we contact you to volunteer?

Yes  No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: [clefeberhayes@gmail.com](mailto:clefeberhayes@gmail.com)

## Facebook Page

On September 25, 2020, Town of Avon Historians Maureen Kingston and Clara Mulligan hosted a ceremony dedicating Avon's newest historical marker, which honors Avon's railroad history. The marker is located on the west side of Rochester Street, just across the tracks from the old railroad depot, now Duffy's Pub. Follow us on Facebook for more Avon news, memories and photographs!



Town of Avon Historian Maureen Kingston speaking at the "Avon Railroads" historical marker dedication, Sept. 25, with Village Mayor, Tom Freeman, looking on. Photo by Carole Hayes.