



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Spring 2016

Visit our New Website!

We have a brand new website for the AP&HS! You can find it at AvonPreservation.org.

Look for information about our upcoming free programs, tidbits of Avon's history, and an archive of past newsletters. You can even renew your membership using our online portal.

- Clara Mulligan,
Web Designer





Farewell (For Now) To The Avon Inn

This past New Year's Eve I gathered with about 20 cousins and friends to reminisce and say farewell for now to this historic landmark that has been integral to our community. It was a bittersweet occasion. As we sat around laughing, telling stories and going through wedding pictures, it occurred to me what a big part of all of our lives it has been. It has been the site of so many weddings, parties, ceremonies (citizen of the year comes to mind), meetings (home for years for the Rotary, Lions, etc.), reunions and other celebrations.

It has been there in sad times, too. We have all been there at one time or another after the funeral of a friend or loved one or saying good-bye to someone who was moving away.

For close to 200 years, it has stood as one of Avon's most identifying landmarks along with the Five Arch Bridge and the White Horse. It has survived fires and the Great Depression. It is the last building standing from Avon's spa era. It has been visited by the likes of Thomas Edison, George Eastman, Henry Ford, and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. One of our greatest actresses, Katherine Hepburn, visited at one time.

Hopefully someone will come along to start it up again. In the meantime, speaking for the AP&HS, I would like to thank Linda Moran for all the years she has owned and operated the Inn and for all the memories. I wish her and Don a happy retirement.

*- Bob Westfall,
President of the AP&HS*

South Avon Cemetery Reopens

The Town of Avon recently reopened the South Avon Cemetery located at the corners of Rt. 39 and South Avon Road. It is a small cemetery overlooking the Genesee Valley, on land that was donated by the Paine family and on whose farm it was located.

It was established as a cemetery in 1813, but the oldest grave belongs to a young girl named Anna Sage (age 11) and dates back to 1799. The cemetery was closed after the burial of Alfred Boyd in the early 1940s. The cemetery was run by an association until 1950 when it became an official municipal cemetery.

In the early 1990s, Ken Blakely petitioned the Avon Town Board for permission to be buried in the cemetery, as he lived nearby and cared for the cemetery for many years. His request was granted and he was laid to rest in the cemetery in 1992.

The process to reopen the cemetery was spearheaded by the family of James Hanna, who passed away in 2012. He and his family wished to be buried in the cemetery as it is located near their family farm. In October of 2015 the Town Board passed a resolution to reopen the South Avon Cemetery and Mr. Hanna was buried in November 2015.

The cemetery is now open for cremation burials only. There are 110 sites available and can be purchased through the cemetery caretaker Thomas Crye.

- Ellen Zapf, Editor



*South Avon Cemetery,
photo courtesy Doug Morgan*

Celebrating The Achievements of Avon Women

In 1987, Congress designated March Women's History Month. Presidents issue a proclamation affirming this designation each year. President Carter wrote about the need for a focus on women's history in 1980:

From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well.

Avon has a legacy of women who demonstrate this achievement, leadership and strength.

Gahonnoneh, *She Who Goes to the River* (circa 1725): Held status of *hoya'ne* (of an honored lineage). Mother of Handsome Lake and his halfbrother, Cornplanter, who lived at Canawaugus. Member of the Seneca Turtle Clan.

Maria Berry, also known as **Widow Berry**. (d. 1829): The bridge over the Genesee River at Rts. 5 & 20 marks where Berry's Tavern and rope ferry were established in 1789. After Gilbert Berry died in 1797, his wife Maria continued operating the ferry and tavern. Maria ran the tavern until 1816 when she moved to Rochester to live with her daughter



and son-in-law, Catherine and John Mastic. He was a local lawyer who became Rochester's first attorney after coming to Avon from Rockingham, Vermont to study law with George Hosmer. *At left: Ferry similar to Berry's.*



Louisa Beaman (1815-1850): First plural wife of Joseph Smith, founder of the Latter Day Saint movement. Louisa Beaman was born February 7, 1815 to Alvah and Sarah (Sally) Burtts in Livonia N.Y. She first met Joseph Smith in 1834 when he and several other missionaries stayed in the Beaman home in Avon. Louisa joined the church and moved to Kirtland, Ohio the following year. Following church dissension in Kirtland, Louisa and her mother, Sarah, eventually moved to Missouri, then followed Joseph Smith to a town he named Nauvoo.

After the death of both her parents, Louisa moved in with her sister Mary and brother-in-law, Joseph Bates Noble.



Joseph Smith and Louisa were married on April 5, 1841, "in a grove Near Main Street in the City of Nauvoo, The Prophet Joseph dictating the ceremony and Br Nobles repeating it after him." To help keep the union secret, Louisa wore a man's hat and coat as a disguise.

At Left: Contemporary portrait of Louisa by Leslie Peterson, c. 2015.

After Smith's death, Louisa became the 9th wife of Brigham Young. Louisa bore five children by Young, all of whom preceded her in death.



Julia Wilbur (1815-1895): Julia Wilbur was born in Avon to a Quaker family and taught in the Rochester school system. In 1857 she attended the NY State Teacher's Association meeting, proposing a resolution that the practice of paying teachers one half or one third of the salaries received by men for performing the same services, is unjust and inconsistent; and that if a woman does the same work as a man and does it well she should receive the same pay for doing it. Through the association she met Susan B. Anthony.

From 1862-1865, she relocated to Alexandria, Virginia as an agent of the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, working with newly freed slaves and providing food, clothing and other necessities. While in Alexandria, she lived and worked with Harriet Jacobs, a freed slave and author of Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (1861) under the pseudonym Linda Brent. Together they set up schools for freedpeople. In 1869 she began work as clerk for the Patent Office, perhaps their first female employee, where she stayed for more than 30 years. That same year she joined a group of black and white women who tried to register to vote in the District of Columbia. Wilbur left extensive diaries and letters and is buried in Avon.

Sources for further information:

Faulkner, Carol. *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Julia Wilbur and the Mourning of Lincoln: boothiebarn.com/2015/07/29/julia-wilbur-and-the-mourning-of-lincoln/

Paula Whitacre transcribed much of Wilbur's writings and is writing her biography; her Julia Wilbur webpage: paulawhitacre.com/jw-facts/

- Pat Murphy

There are many more notable women who are associated with Avon. 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote in New York State and the APHS will be doing programming on women's history to celebrate the event. If you have information about a family member or Avon resident who exhibited achievement, leadership and strength and contributed to Avon's history, please contact AP&HS board member Pat Murphy Ph.D. at 245-3975 or patricia.murphy@fllc.edu. We are particularly interested in women active in the abolition or suffrage movements.

In Memoriam: Mrs. Letha Brown Ridley (1911-2015)



Letha Brown Ridley was born July 31, 1911 in Greenville, TN, to Frank and Bertha L. Brown, and she grew up in Winston Salem, NC. She always loved learning and especially reading, soaking up knowledge with great excitement and eagerly handing in every

assignment. She also learned how to work with children, as she was nine years older than her next sibling, and she both taught and managed her brothers. It seemed to come naturally to her. After graduating from high school in 1928, she attended Shaw University for her B.S., graduating with very high honors. Returning to her hometown in North Carolina, she studied at Winston-Salem Teachers' College and began her career in education, teaching eighth- and ninth-grade math and science, a position she held for ten years.

Letha met her future husband, William H. Ridley, Jr., shortly after her arrival on the Shaw campus, but she was not exactly dazzled by her first glimpse of him; she remembered that at the time, "I was nix on boys. I didn't want to be bothered because they would keep me from my work." For his part, Bill thought she was very quiet, and "the countriest city girl I ever met." It was eight years after their first meeting that they were married on June 30, 1937. He was the son of a barber from North Carolina and enjoyed cooking, which she appreciated. Their son, William H. III, was born in 1944. Shortly after his birth, the young family relocated to Rochester for William's engineering work with Stromberg Carlson as a government civilian employee.

Letha's teaching career was restarted in 1947 with a late night call to substitute teach at School No. 9 in Rochester the next day. Though Letha was always less concerned with her role in history than being an effective teacher, she was one of the first black educators in the Rochester City School District, and would later be one of the first black principals. She enjoyed making personal connections with her students, creating a supportive and interactive environment, all the while maintaining the authority that allowed her to manage

even the most troublesome classes. Understanding how children learned and what they needed throughout the day was intuitive for her, and she kept her pupils engaged even when other teachers struggled. She especially enjoyed teaching special education classes, appreciating that she and the children needing extra attention worked well together.

Christmas of 1952 was a special one – it was that morning that Bill surprised Letha with the keys to a country home in Avon he had purchased. Though she never learned to drive, Letha treasured the commute to Rochester with her husband each day, for they both still worked in the city. Letha would call that house her home the rest of her life.

In 1963, Letha became the principal of Henry Lomb School No. 20, serving until her retirement in 1973. The span of over 24 years in the Rochester City School District saw her ascent from classroom teacher to principal. Throughout her career, her excellence as an educator and leader was recognized in numerous ways; of the many honors she received, an early highlight was selection in 1958 by the Rochester City School District as a "representative of the best in the teaching profession."

Many professional and community organizations benefited from her participation and leadership. Letha was co-founder in 1947 of the local chapter of the service sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha and served on many other charity and professional committees throughout her life.

After her retirement, Letha had time to take part in more community activities; she was a deacon and elder, as well as Sunday School teacher in the First Presbyterian Church and was a member of the Women's Club there. Following Bill's passing, she became an avid international traveler, journeying throughout the United States and visiting Russia, New Zealand, Peru, China, Greenland, and the Sahara Desert, among many others. She had visited at least 100 countries and five continents since about 1986.

Many will always remember Letha fondly for her many achievements, attributes, and devotion. We are grateful to her for making the world and our community a better place.

In Memoriam: Richard "Dick" T. Coyne



Dick was a part of the Avon farming community for his whole life, taking on the family farm in East Avon from his father William, who had received it from his father in 1922. With his brother, Jerry, Dick introduced registered Holstein cows in 1945, growing the small herd up to 500 head in 1991; the farm currently milks 1000. His wife of 66 years, Jeanne, has been by his side through it all.

Dick received numerous awards for his role in the dairy business over his life, including Dairy of Distinction, 1992-1993 New York Farm Bureau Good Citizen Award, 2001 Dairyman of the Year from the World Dairy Expo at Madison, Wisconsin, and the 2008 National Holstein Association Distinguished Leadership Award. Dick served on the National Holstein Association Board of Directors from 1984-1992, and was the NYS Holstein Association President in 1977 and 1978. Obviously a farmer to the core, he was able to travel to Madison for the 2015 World Dairy Expo, thanks to his family who accompanied him.

Farmers are integral to their communities in many ways, and Dick was no exception: he served on the Avon Central School Board of Education for five years, Avon Town Board from 1977-1999, and was a member of the Avon Lions Club from 1958-2016, serving as president in 1966.

Dick's knowledge and love of farming will be missed in the community, but his brother, along with his sons and extended family, continue his impressive legacy.

- Holly Watson, Editor



At Left: Joe Stalica at his Shell Station, West Main St., with son, Don, 1951 - shared by Ken Stalica.

At Right: Genesee St., 1941 - shared by Kathy Carlin Salvati.

Senecas of the Genesee Valley

A Presentation by Terry Abrams

A record-breaking crowd of over 90 interested people crammed into the second floor of the Opera Block Sunday, January 31, to hear about the Seneca people's history in the Genesee Valley. Mr. Abrams, who lives on the Tonawanda Reservation and who has identified ancestors who may have once lived in Livingston County, gave an informative presentation on the early history of the Seneca, the westernmost nation in the Iroquois Confederacy. The fraught history and difficult tensions between the native peoples and the European colonists were highlighted, and he discussed the creation and dissolution of the early reservations. One such space kept by the Seneca in 1797 was just on the west side of the Genesee River at Canauwaugus, a name the area still carries today. We at the AP&HS enjoy making these informative and thought-provoking programs available to the community. Thank you for your support!



- Holly Watson, Editor

Facebook Page

Our Facebook page is a hub of interesting articles and themes. This year we will expand our reach by inviting readers to post old photos. Come join the banter about Avon's distant and not so distant past! You can find us at [facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety). See you there!

- Clara Mulligan, Web Designer



Thank You

It is with great appreciation that we thank our 2015-2016 members and supporters. Thank you also to those whose names were not available at press time.

Anderson, Barbara
Antinore, Frank and Marian
Babbitt, Gary and Judy
Babey, Jeff
Bakemeier, Robert
Baker, Jacqueline
Balacki, Gary and Kathleen
Barrett, Norman and Marcia
Bartholomew, James and Diane
Bartolini, Thomas
Bell, Terry
Biondolillo, James and Diane
Brewer, James and Geri
Bristol, Bruce and Anne
Brown, Dwight and Joan
Brown, Russell and Janet
Brown, Gregory and Tammy
Brown, June
Burdick, Thomas and Mary
Carlin, Robert
Cinotti, Steven
Cochrane, Daniel and Deborah
Cochrane, Michael
Cochrane, Daniel
Cole, Carol
Cole, Helen
Cole, Barbara
Cole, Kelly and Jan
Collins, Dr. Richard and Mary
Connor, Charles and Suzanne
Cornish, Julia

Cottone, Carol
Coyne, Edward and Dorothy
Coyne, Richard and Jeanne
Coyne, Gerald and Carol
D'Angelo, Robert
Davin, Richard and Karon
Davin, Michael and Jan
Dean, William and Lisa
DeWaard, Klaas and Aartje
DiTucci, Joseph and Mary Jane
Dougherty, Jerry and Kim
Downing, Robert and Ann
Drexler, Michael and Cindy
DuBois, Robert and Heidi
DuBois, John and Phyllis
Dziekonski, Jake and Beverly
Ellwood, Donald
Faulkner, Larry and Marcia
Feeley, Robert and Jane
Feller, Charles
Figueroa, Shirley
Fischer, Nancy
Fisher, Jean
Forsythe, Howard Jr. and Brenda
Freese, Kenneth and Barbara
French, John
Galbraith, William
Gerace, James and Kathy
Graham, Jack and Marty
Greer, Reta
Gunther, Lori
Haller, Chris and Helen
Hamilton, Mahlon
Harrington, James

Hayes, Timothy and Carole
Hayes, Robert and Janice
Hayes, Dr. Robert and Polly
Herman, Barbara
Hindson, Bradley and Mary Ellen
Hoffman, Robert
House, Robert and Virginia
Hungerford, Robert
Hussong, Joyce
Johnson, David Jr. and Karen
Johnston, Frank
Keyes, Brian
Kingston, Maureen
Knight, Charles and Sharon
Knoblock, Betty
Koomen, Trisha
Koop, Ursula
Korth, William and Gloria
Krause, James
Leonard, Raymond and Sally
Lillis, Kevin
LoCurto, Marilyn
Lynne, Elizabeth
MacIntyre, William
Mack, Dennis
Mairs, Peter
Mairs, Walter
Mairs, Thomas and Liz
Manchini, Carol
Marschke, Stephen
Mason, Hoyt and Paula
Mayoue, Mary
McNinch, Robert
Merrell, Arliss
Meyer, Diane

Miller, James and Mary Lou
Minuto, Elaine
Moran, Patricia
Morey, Roger and Sue
Morgan, Doug
Moses, Roy and Susan
Mulligan, Clara
Murphy, Patricia
O'Brien, Mildred
Offner, Molly
Orman, Mary G.
Orman, James and Joan
Osant, Victoria
Ossont, Brian
Otterbein, Bernadette
Palmer, Carol
Preston, Margaret
Primm, Mary
Prinzi, Joan
Puls, Charles and Elaine
Quinlan, Daniel and Christine
Reid, Joan
Rizzo, Lois
Rogers, Bruno and Joan
Rogers, James
Rowe, Jerry and Wanda
Ryan, David
Ryan, James and Janice
Salvemini, Thomas and Rosemary
Santacroce, Joseph and Jean
Schoenthal, Jean
Scott, Barbara
Secusa, Samuel
Secusa, Carl and Barbara
Settle, Gail
Sherman, Jack
Spezzano, Shelby
Stanton, Mary E.
Stanton, Richard and Mary Liz
Staples, Duane and Jackie
Stephenson, Steve and Carol
Stern, Sandra
Stevenson, Franklyn and Carole

Sutfin, Jerry and Elaine
 Swanton, Susan
 Swift, William and Joanne
 Taylor, John and Carol
 Temperato, Joseph
 Tickner, Thomas
 and Jackie
 Tighe, James and Jean
 Torregiano, Anthony
 Turner, Lorrie Jo
 Valentine, Jerry and Betty

VanSan, Theodore Jr.
 Warriner, Dr. Wayne
 Weber, Aaron
 Webster, Carole
 Weden, Carolyn
 Welch, James
 Westfall, Robert and Gail
 Westfall, John
 Younger, Jeffrey and Ann
 Zito, Sam



Behind the Scenes

*AP&HS thanks these
 fine local businesses and
 organizations for their
 support in 2015-2016!*

All Business Service
 All Seasons Wine
 & Spirits
 American Legion
 Post #294
 Avon Free Library
 Avondale Pub
 Batzel Auto Service -
 Bruce Batzel
 Bob Johnson Chevrolet
 Car Toys
 Covered Wagon Tours
 Davin Corn
 DP Tools & Machining, Inc.
 Frankie's Barbershop
 Gearheadz Auto Repair
 Genesee Valley
 Penny Saver
 S & S Apparel
 Pioneer Printing
 John Cox Trucking
 Lakeland Equipment
 Landon Insurance Agency
 Lattimore of Avon
 Physical Therapy

LeFrois Brothers
 Louie's Pickup
 and Delivery
 McDonald's of Avon
 Mike Driscoll Locksmith
 Partyman, LLC
 Pioneer Trucks
 Platinum Limousine
 of Western NY
 Peppermints /
 STEFCO, Inc.
 Rich's Power Equipment
 Subway
 Star Headlight
 & Lantern Co., Inc.
 Stone Carving Studio, Inc.
 Studio Sales Pottery
 Tilly Agency
 Tom Wahl's
 Tompkins
 Bank of Castile
 Town of Avon
 Valley Dry Cleaners
 Veronica's Hair Salon
 Village Restaurant
 Village of Avon
 White Horse Auto

A warm thank you to all who have given of their treasures to the Avon Preservation and Historical Society. These kind people include James Brewer, Robert D'Angelo, John Gibson, Thomas Cole, Shirley Strassenburgh, and Mark Douglas. The donated items include a yard stick from Clark Chevrolet, items from the Twin Swans, a collection of Girl Scout items, Red Cross items, a White Horse mug, Western Union forms, a check writer from the D'Angelo businesses, an 1872 Livingston County atlas, and photographs from the collection of Dr. F. A. Strassenburgh, including images of the opening of Tops, the destruction after the Coppersmith fire, and local scenes. Also several games were donated, including a Wheaties game, Blox-o, Flinch card game and a new Pinochle card deck. At the fall antique show at the Genesee Armory, we were able to purchase several paper items to enhance our collections.

We want to thank all those who attended Kelly Cole's presentation about the Opera Block in October. We were very pleased with the number of people who agreed to help with the refurbishing of the third floor. It seems there are many who would like to see this project finished. They have a vision of what it could be used for and how it would enhance our community's life.

The programs that we offer and the purchases that we make are made possible by the increase in new and renewed memberships; in 2015, we had 81 Individual memberships, 50 Families, and 40 businesses. Thank you! Additionally, this year we had 337 visitors to the museum. Our sales netted \$1,803.25, and donations came to \$1,106.50. Our volunteers contributed 184 hours and the docents gave 2,060 recorded hours. I am sure that we could probably add another 500 to this number. Congratulations on a great year.

- Joan Reid, Curator



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 2016-17 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

Programs

Dear Friends,

The Avon Preservation and Historical Society programs for 2016 are scheduled as follows. They are all free, open to the public, and handicap accessible. We provide light refreshments at each event. Each program takes place at 23 Genesee Street, in the Avon Opera Block, second floor.

Sunday, April 24, 2:00 pm

*Transportation by Water:
the Genesee Valley Canal*
Tom Cook, author and teacher

Saturday, August 13th

Corn Festival

Sunday, September 25, 2:00 pm

The History of the Avon Inn
Maureen Kingston, Avon Town Historian

Sunday, November 6, 2:00 pm

*The True Story of Thanksgiving:
Pilgrims, Politics and Pumpkin Pie*
Christopher Hensch, Curator for the Toy Hall of Fame
and Spokesperson of the National Toy Hall of Fame



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 28, No. 2 | May 2016



*Visit our
Historical Museum!*

If you're in Avon stop in and visit the Historical Museum located on the circle in the heart of downtown Avon. Come in and view our many interesting displays and visit with our knowledgeable docents who would love show you around and answer any questions you may have.

Admission is always free. The museum is open Thursday and Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 PM or by appointment.

We hope to see you there!

Niles Door Locks



My family and I recently moved into our lovely home in Avon, known by many in town as the “Casaceli house.” It has all the charm and beauty of a turn-of-the-century home—along with some unusual details, including the door hardware. At first glance the hardware looks like any other mortice latch and doorknob from

the era. On closer inspection, however, I discovered they’re quite unusual.

Most doorknobs from the era have a setscrew that locks into a threaded spindle. But when I looked at the doorknobs in our house, I couldn’t see any obvious way to remove them. It seemed strange to remove the escutcheon (the plate that surrounds the keyhole and knob) if the knob couldn’t be removed first.

But that feature, I discovered, was part of the brilliance of the design.

With the escutcheon plate removed, the doorknob came out with a slight twist, and there was no threaded spindle. I remembered thinking it was odd that I’d

never seen a doorknob like this before. I was curious, so I unscrewed the lockset and slid that out of its mortice to get a better look. That’s when I found the words Niles Chicago embossed on the side.

After a little research I realized finding information wasn’t going to be easy. But, then I uncovered the hardware’s history in an archived newsletter of the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America (Vol. 69, Jan-Feb 1995) in an article by Raymond J. Nemec titled “From Niles to Sager: The Story of the Chicago Hardware Company.”

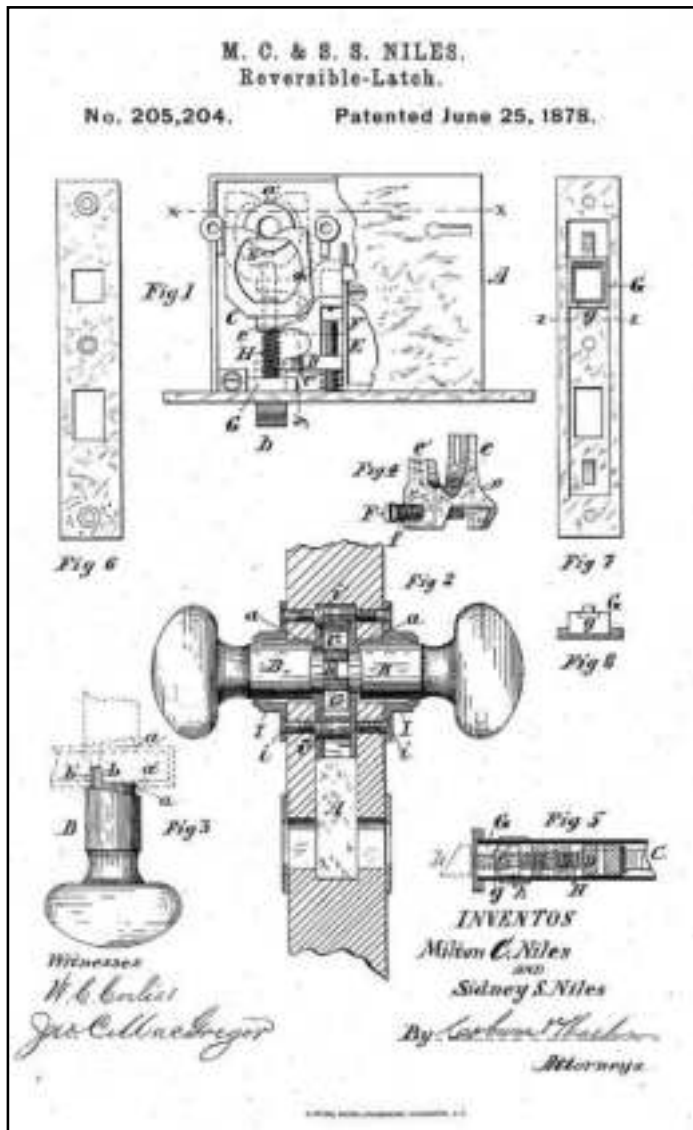
The story of my Niles Chicago lock began with a farm boy from New York State named Milton Niles born in 1827 in Spencertown, Columbia County. At age 21 Milton found life in the east boring and set out for Illinois, traveling by wagon through Canada to Lake Michigan where he took a boat to Chicago. His life story is an American story, from farming to real estate to inventor to businessman. As a young man he did well for himself through investments in land near Chicago. But it wasn’t until age 51 that his experience in farming and then in home building sparked a revolutionary idea on how to design better doorknobs and locks.

The U.S. Patent Office records show on April 3, 1878, Niles and his son Sidney filed an application for a “useful improvement in a door lock and knob.” With the advent of the Niles patent, it was said, one need never have to worry about jiggling handles, door thicknesses, and stripped screws ever again. By that summer the company Niles and Son was selling the Niles locksets.

Niles contracted with several foundries in and around Chicago to manufacture their locksets. Milton Niles then applied for an additional patent for the reversible latch system in 1879. A year later, Milton Niles was officially incorporated as secretary of the Gray Iron Company—later changing its name to the Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company—which became the exclusive producer of the Niles patented lock system.

The company did well with custom design orders for an impressive number of public and government buildings in the Chicago area from about 1880 to 1905. The locksets were used in Chicago’s public schools and in many of the finer homes in Chicago and Milwaukee areas. The locksets were shipped to other parts of the country, including Avon, NY.





A catalog for hardware in 1895 was the last major advertisement seen for Niles locks. They were still being produced 27 years after their introduction, but doorknob collectors say they're rare today. "It would probably be safe to estimate that the Niles hardware captured less than 5 percent of the market, never being accepted by many builders," according to the article by Nemeo.

Our home in Avon has 19 Niles locks, all in perfect working order. I'll admit I have a newfound respect for their design. In an online post titled "Building a Better Mortise Lock: The Curious Case of Chicago Hardware Company," Xavier Blaine of Historic Houseparts in Rochester, NY states: "I've handled these parts, worked on them, tested them out, and honestly believe in the virtues of Niles door hardware. The Chicago Hardware Co. simply built a better mortise lock."

I couldn't agree more.

- Kyle Leonard, AP&HS Member

In Memoriam: Mrs. Mary Finnegan Collins



This past February we lost a founding member of the AP&HS, Mrs. Mary Collins. Born on October 3rd, 1924, Mary was raised in Buffalo but was a resident of Avon for 70-plus years. Mary's accomplishments were many. She was a founding director of Livingston County Homemakers, she served on the Avon Village Planning Board, became a member of the Livingston County Planning Board and chaired that board for several years, and was a delegate and alternate to presidential conventions. Mary was also a very talented soprano, blessed with a beautiful operatic voice. She raised five children, all very accomplished, all while being a very busy doctor's wife.

On a very personal note, I am proud to be her nephew. She was never too busy to talk. I learned so much from her. We would discuss music, books, politics, movies and current events. She was up on everything. I considered her one of the most influential people in my life.

I believe Dr. Michael Collins described his mother perfectly in his beautiful eulogy. I quote, "To know Mary was to have walked into that kitchen, sat at the old maple kitchen table, and discussed, or listened, or problem solved, or be counseled about anything and everything...Vivacious. Yes, and gracious, too."

We will miss her.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

In the Field, near Cassville, Georgia | May 21, 1864

The following letter was printed in the Union and Constitution on Jun. 9, 1864. It was from a soldier in the 136th Regiment to Judge Carroll of Groveland. Reprinted courtesy of John DuBois, AP&HS member.

In the Field, near Cassville, GA
May 21st, 1864

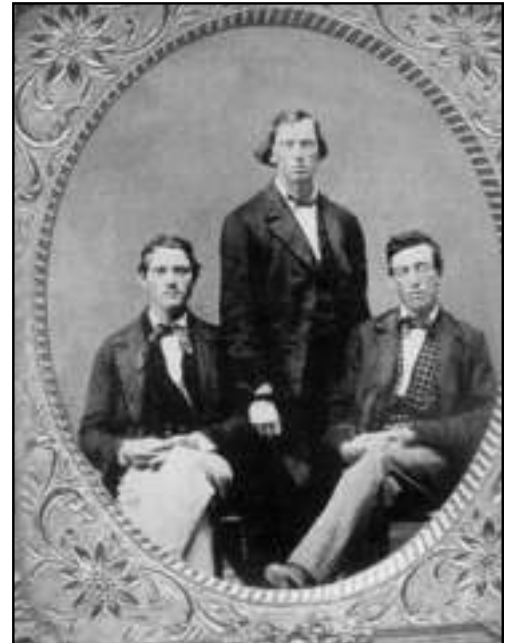
Hon. C.H. Carroll—Sir—I hardly know how to excuse myself to you for not writing before this, but as there was not much activity in the army since I returned to duty last winter, I thought I would not write until the campaign commenced. I think it has commenced in earnest now, and hope it will continue so until the rebels are whipped [sic] out and an honorable peace conquered, and then we can return to our peaceful homes.

I suppose you have heard that the 11th and 12th corps were consolidated some time ago and are under command of General Hooker. Fighting Joe, as the boys call him, is well liked by his whole command, and is a first rate General, as the rebel prisoners say they dread him. Our division is commanded by Gen. Butterfield, who is also an able commander and well liked by his entire command. I cannot give you all the names of the regiments in the division, as I am not acquainted with them all, but will of the brigade. Our brigade is composed of five regiments: the 136th NY, 73rd Ohio, 55th Ohio, 33rd Mass., 26th Wisconsin, and commanded by Col. Wood. Colonel Faulkner commands the regiment and both are well liked by their commands.

I cannot give all the details of our march since we left Lookout Valley on the 2d May, but will do the best I can. Our brigade broke up camp on the 2d of May and passed the spur of Lookout Mountain, getting to Grangers Mills that night, distance about 16 miles. The 3d we rested. The 4th marched to Ringold, distance about 10 miles. Rested the 5th. The morning of the 6th started and marched to Lucbeo Mills, about 8 miles. The 7th we had reveille at three in the morning and made coffee and started our march again. That day we crossed Tailor's Ridge and Nickajack Gap. The day was very hot, so we halted at two PM and got our dinner, camped that night at Dogwood Valley,

making that day about 16 miles. The 8th we were ordered out to Buzzard Roost and skirmished with the enemy all the afternoon. — Our brigade lost about six, no casualties in our regiment that day; layed [sic] on our arms all night. May 9th we were

relieved by a brigade of the 14th army corps, and returned to our old camp that night. The 10th laid still. The 11th the bugles sounded at three AM, and at four we were on the road again; marched that day to Smoke Valley, distance 15 miles. The 12th moved up to Snake Gap and halted at noon, the march that day was only about four miles. 13th marched out to the battle field about 8 miles, and formed in line of battle about noon. We did not get heavily engaged that day but there was some hard fighting by other portions of the army. The 14th there was heavy fighting. I don't know whether our whole corps was engaged that day or not, but our brigade had some hard skirmishing all day and was relieved that night about 12 o'clock; we were very tired, as we had laid on our arms all the night before, so we rested for the remainder of the night. —Our whole corps was engaged Sunday. —Our division formed in line of battle about noon on the edge of the woods and advanced on them under a shower of bullets; of course I can't tell how the whole division acted as the line was too long. Our brigade got engaged pretty heavy. We advanced and drove them from their first line of rifle pits; the men were falling pretty fast, but this was no time to hesitate. Col. Wood gave orders, "forward brigade," and we



Cullinan brothers - Jeremiah in center; courtesy John DuBois, APHS Member

advanced and drove them to the second line of their rifle pits. –They made different charges on us all that afternoon, but we stood firm and held the ground for five hours until we were relieved by Hooker’s orders about 6 PM. I can’t say too much for Colonel Wood; he was in the thickest of the fight; also Col. Faulker. Both done well and came out unhurt. The line officers in general all done well. Captain Collins, of Co. E., was slightly wounded. Our regiment lost 86, killed and wounded; it has lost in all since we left the Valley 104. Our company suffered the least, we had only one killed and three wounded up to this, and I think that is very light considering the loss in the regiment, but as our company was on the right flank of the regiment, we had the best position, and I think that saved us a good deal. There was heavy fighting until about 8 that night, and fighting about 12 when the rebels withdrew, leaving their dead and wounded on the field. Our corps lost 1,900, and I think done as well as any of them. –The battle was near the town of

Resaca and is called the battle of Resaca. May 16th, at day-light we followed the retreating rebels; as we passed through the battle-field it was horrible to see the poor wounded and dead. –Some of our boys gave the wounded water, but we had not much time to spare. We have been pursuing them ever since with light skirmishing as they don’t seem to show much fight; we took but few prisoners, and they were stout, hearty fellows, and well fed and clothed. I suppose we are now about 100 miles from Chattanooga, and perhaps 40 from the battle field, but I don’t exactly know, as we are half the time marching in the woods. We had some fighting yesterday, but not enough to bring on a general engagement. I had some narrow escapes but came out unhurt; all the Mt. Morris boys are well. –The name of the boy that was killed in our company was Palmer from Tuscarora.

Your obedient servant,

Jerry Cullinane

The Interpreter, Trader and Widow

Gilbert Roseboom Berry (abt. 1755—1797) was the first permanent settler in Avon. More is known of the ancestry of Gilbert’s wife, Maria Wemple.

Jan Barentse Wemple was born in Poest, Dort Lower, Netherlands, and settled in Beverwyck (Albany). In 1646 he married Maritie Myndetse.

Barent Wemple, son of Jan Barentse, was captain of the Schenectady militia. He served under John Schuyler in a 1690 raid to punish Canadian Indians.

Myndert, son of Barent Wemple, was sent by Sir William Johnson to the Senecas to “stay until their corn was a foot high, and to keep their arms and working utensils in repair.” So welcomed was he that the Indians requested he reside with them, as he was a smith and spoke their language.

Myndert’s son, Hendrick, was fluent in all the dialects of the Iroquois; in addition he spoke English, Dutch and German. He was in demand on the frontier, though his principal occupation was an inn at Fultonville, equipped to barter with the Iroquois. He was also a real estate speculator, and purchased some of the best land in Otsego County.

During the Revolution Hendrick joined the patriots, where he served in Jellis Fonda’s Company. In 1777 he accompanied Herkimer to an interview with Joseph Brant, acting as interpreter. Subsequently, Herkimer and his forces were ambushed at Oriskany, where the General and others were killed.

Wemple was an interpreter for General Sullivan in the New York Indian Campaign of 1779. He saw the rich valley of the Genesee, where his daughter and son-in-law eventually settled.

In 1784 a state law was passed making the governor and a board of commissioners the Superintendents of Indian Affairs. Hendrick was selected as one of the interpreters. The group was instrumental in securing treaties with the Iroquois.

Hendrick Wemple married Aefje Van Epps in 1755. They had five daughters and two sons. Only Maria and her sister, Volkje, moved to western New York.

In 1790 Hendrick witnessed the murder of a white man by the Indian “Saucy Nick.” As the Indian was about to be arrested, he killed Wemple, and escaped to Canada.

Gilbert Roseboom Berry was from Albany, where the Roseboom family had pioneered. The first American, Hendrick Roseboom, was born in Dingsterveen, Overijssel, Netherlands in 1630.

Gilbert married Maria Wemple (b. 1759) in Fultonville; she was a linguist like her father. They settled in Geneva, on the western edge of the fast-moving frontier. He was trained as a silversmith, and made brooches for the Indians. In spring of 1789 the Berrys moved to the east bank Genesee River, across from the Indian settlement of Canawaugus. They erected a log house in what was later Avon.

It was not Gilbert's intention to open a tavern, but he and Maria entertained the few travelers that passed. To gain a little money, he installed a rope ferry across the river. In their small log dwelling the couple raised four daughters.

In addition to the home/tavern and ferry, Berry built Indian trading posts in Avon, at the river mouth on Lake Ontario, and in Big Tree (Geneseo). He did a brisk business with trappers and hunters, and his packhorses laden with furs were often seen on the main trail to Albany. He was also General Chapin's local Indian agent.

In 1797 Gilbert died an early death at 32. Maria assumed charge of the tavern and rope ferry, and

asked her unmarried sister, Volkje, to join her. The women were widely known as "Widow Berry and Miss Wemple." Their tavern became the favorite place of land agents, surveyors, explorers, and pioneers. The more notable Indians were partial to Widow Berry, for she was reluctant to sell Indians alcohol.

The women eventually left the small log cabin for a large-scale building at the east end of the village. It became a famous stopping place for travelers.

The accomplished Berry daughters became noted wives and mothers of the Genesee Valley. Elizabeth married Hon. George Hosmer (noted lawyer and historian), Catherine married John Mastick (Rochester lawyer), Effie married George A. Tiffany (moved to Wisconsin), and Elsie married Elisha Clark Hickcox (an early merchant of Batavia and Buffalo).

John Mastick was trained in the law by George Hosmer. He was the Avon Justice of the Peace when he met Catherine Berry. They married and lived on South Street, and John thus became the brother-in-law of his law preceptor. They later moved to Rochester, where John was one of the first lawyers.

In 1812 Maria and Volkje ceased to operate the inn. The death date of neither is known.

- Philip Parr, Big Springs Historical Society

Spotlight on Historical Structures in Avon

The Barber Memorial Building

The Barber Memorial Building houses the Avon Free Library, an organization that had early beginnings in 1805, and by 1919 was established as the first free library in Livingston County.



Aaron Barber III (1836 – 1925), a prominent Avon resident, took great interest in the library. As the need for space grew, he offered rental space in the Boorman House at 143 Genesee

Aaron Barber III

Street in the village of Avon (present site of the Barber Memorial Building), which he owned at the time. When Barber died in 1925, he left \$45,000 in his will to build a new library on the site of the Boorman House, and also an endowment of \$15,000 to maintain the building.

Designing the Georgian Revival style building began in 1926 with the Rochester architecture firm Arnold & Stern, who had also designed the Pittsford Library, LeRoy Library, and the Hiram Sibley Building in Rochester. Local builder Fred Davis was contracted to construct the one-story rectangular brick building. On September 15, 1927 Miss Pierpont, one of the original members of the Library Board, laid the cornerstone of the new building which held an airtight box containing a photograph of Aaron Barber, coins, stamps, and other historical papers.



Construction of the Barber Memorial Building at 143 Genesee Street, 1927. Source: Town of Avon Historian, Maureen Kingston



Barber Memorial Building, postcard, circa 1942. Source: AP&HS

The official opening of the Barber Memorial Building was April 12, 1928.

Architectural features include a pargeted foundation and a gable roof. Located at the eaves beneath the Vermont slate roof are classic dentils. The primary windows are tall, double-hung sash with multi-light glazing, rectangular wooden panels at their bases, and round-arched transoms above. The corners of the building are accentuated by brick quoins. The main entrance features Roman Ionic columns and a triangular pediment above.

Improvements to the building, including a handicap entrance and interior improvements, were completed between 1999 and 2004. The scale, design, materials,

setting and association makes the Avon Free Library building an important visual and architectural landmark in the community. Honoring its historic significance, the Barber Memorial Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

- Clara Mulligan, APHS member

Sources:

See "Aaron Barber" at www.avonpreservation.org, "Significant People"

Cushing, Henrietta S. *The History of the Avon Free Library*

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. *Building-Structure Inventory Form*, 1997.

Behind the Scenes

We have been quite busy so far this year. We have sponsored two programs with very nice attendance. Terry Abrams spoke about "True Native Americans: History of the Senecas in the Genesee Valley." Prof. Dean June shared his research in the program, "And Then What Happened: Slave Settlement in Canada." Thirty-four people have paid their 2016 membership dues. This is what allows us to have these programs. Thank you. We have received a variety of 19 new artifacts thus far: books, postcards, photographs, a map, a wall hanging, a WW II ration book with many stamps, a framed drawing of a Civil War colonel, three East Avon Fire Department badges, a framed muster roll for Parker Brooks, and Ronald Reagan

memorabilia. The donors include John Bailey, Russell Barber, Richard Burke, Daniel Cochrane, Dr. Richard Collins, Richard Farrell, Linda Hally, Dr. Robert Hayes, John Kemp, Kevin Lillis, William MacIntyre, Linda Moran, Frank Phillips, Anthony Torregiano, and Bud Thurston. These will greatly enhance our collections. The fourth- and fifth-graders from St. Agnes School visited to learn more about how, when, and by whom this area was settled. What a great group of children. They were interested and shared some of their stories with us. We thank their teacher, Mrs. Renee Kashorek, for bringing them to our museum.

- Joan Reid, Curator



Avon Preservation and Historical Society

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

**If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2016-17 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

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Please fill in below, tear off, and return to:
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May we contact you to volunteer?

() Yes () No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

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Facebook Page

Our Facebook page is a hub of interesting articles and themes. This year we will expand our reach by inviting readers to post old photos. Come join the banter about Avon's distant and not so distant past! You can find us at facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety. See you there!

- Clara Mulligan, Web Designer



11/8/39: Admiral Richard Byrd's snow cruiser, on way to Boston for Antarctica exhibition, breaks down near Texaco Town truck stop on Rte. 20. Repaired 3 days later and on its way. Photo by Bud Carlin



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 28, No. 3 | August 2016

30th Anniversary Avon Rotary Corn Festival: Saturday, August 13, 2016



Vendors, corn on the cob, music, games, raffles, and fun for the whole family can be found at the 2016 Rotary Corn Festival! Celebrating Avon's agricultural heritage, this annual fundraiser is always a wonderful community event. Come support Avon Rotary Club, local businesses and artists, and enjoy tasty food. Don't forget to drop by to see the AP&HS stall for historical books, gifts, and to enter our raffle for themed gift baskets stuffed with coupons from local businesses! We will also have our limited edition 2016 ornament available, handsomely emblazoned with the White Horse. Festival events run from 10am - 10:30 pm. See avonrotary.org for complete details.

Avon
Rotary



Photo courtesy: avonrotary.org

Message from the President's Desk: Memories of July Fourth

Our national holidays all have special meaning which sometimes gets lost in the festivities and the anticipation of a day off from work. One is for honoring, one for thanking, remembering, and so forth. Independence Day, July 4th, is the one set aside for celebrating and boy, do we ever.

Growing up in Avon, I have special memories of the Fourth of July. Although we'd been out of school for a week or so, this was the day summer really kicked in. It started with the Ring of Fire and fireworks at Conesus Lake on July 3rd. Did you know the lake of fire dates back to the Seneca Indians who would have campfires around the lake to celebrate its splendor and abundance? Before there was the beautiful Vitale Park we would watch from one of the hillsides on the west side of the lake. If we were really lucky, we'd get invited to someone's cottage. My dad knew everyone so this was often possible. As the years went by, it was great to share these traditions with our children and later our grandchildren.

In July of 1956, the Lakeville Drive-In opened right around the time many of my friends were learning to drive. Back then they charged by the person so often someone would hide on the floor or even in the trunk, hoping someone would remember they were there.

In that time, fireworks were not legal for individuals, but there was always someone who picked up a bounty of them on a trip down south. The cookouts, picnics, celebrating with friends and family – all are great memories. The staff and board of the AP&HS will continue to do our best to preserve some of these traditions and keep a record for future generations. Remember our forefathers for giving us the greatest country ever. Hope everyone has a great Fourth.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

Avon Preservation and
Historical Society
Commemorative
Ornaments
Limited Edition

\$5.00 Each



The Year Without Summer, 1816

For a few minutes, put yourself back exactly two hundred years ago. It was 1816. It's not long in the grand scheme of things, but as you fruitlessly ignore your beeping cell phone and eat an apple from New Zealand, it seems an eternity ago. Here in Avon, a family was fortunate if they had a solid frame house; some still lived in smoky log cabins with earthen floors, peering out windows into a wooded world. The second bridge across the Genesee River, where Mrs. Berry had once kept her tavern, was about to be washed out, only to be rebuilt. The few American Indians that remained in the area interacted with the few intrepid white settlers, and some of their children attended schools along with the settlers' children. Fields were tilled with heavy wooden plows, drawn by horses and oxen. Food and goods were traded and bartered for if they could not be made by hand. Candles and lamps lit the darkness. Life meant hard work, though in general the land of the Genesee Valley was generous.

But the early summer of 1816 was different. Spring dawned on a May that was unusually cold, with frosts nearly every night. By the second week of June, there was snow and killing frosts for a week. Tender crops, such as beans and squash, were destroyed. It was reported that once thawed by the fog-covered sun, fields looked as barren as if they had been torched.

July was hardly different – frosts left ice on pools and lakes of the northeast and delayed wheat crops, though wheat and rye were cited as the hardier grains that, while severely impacted in most cases, were still salvageable by September. According to an account by one Elihu Church from Riga, Monroe County, published in Turner's History of the Pioneer Settlement of Western NY, the Riga wheat crop was "excellent." Mr. Church received a premium on his crops at Rochester, about \$2.00 per bushel, when the price in 1815 had been about 31 cents per bushel of wheat. This was also the case closer to Avon, where the Seneca apparently had small stores of corn from the previous season, which they sold to their neighbors for up to \$2.50 or \$3.00 per bushel during the summer, again up from less than a dollar before the need was so great.

To the east, further into Ontario County, farms had been established for longer and the people of the

Genesee Valley region may have depended on imported foodstuffs from these caches. People in the more distant wilderness were said to have subsisted on wild roots, herbs, and milk, while nearer to Avon, pathetic crops were harvested early and cooked into a makeshift bread.

The people of Avon may have looked to the unusually dusty, colorful sky for answers, but could not know at the time what had caused this backward season. Eventually it was discovered that Tambora, in what is now Indonesia, had erupted in April of 1815 with a blast 100 times more powerful than Mount St. Helens. The damage nearest the disaster was indescribable, with pumice and ash several meters deep for a 100-mile radius. But what most affected North America and Europe a year later was the sulfur dioxide that was released into the atmosphere. Once it reacted with water vapor, it created aerosols, which reflected the sun away from the Earth, creating a cooling effect over a year later all over the globe. Europe suffered particularly, with wet, cold weather that caused famines, riots, and disease.

Few local accounts from this year survive, and little mention is made in the area histories as to how severely this volcanic event affected life two centuries ago. According to some rent accounts the Wadsworth Papers from Genesee, one lessee of James Wadsworth's, a Mr. Forsyth of Avon, paid his rent in bushels of wheat. In 1816, his yearly rent appeared to be the same quantity he would continue to pay for years after the difficult harvest. Perhaps not everyone had as hard a time as we thought.

It's hard to fathom the confusion and fear of our Avon ancestors as they beheld their blackened bean plants and snow on the ground in June. At the present day, exactly 200 years have passed, the dust from Tambora has long settled, and it's hot outside. So for now, as we don our bathing suits and slop on sunscreen this August, we can put 1816 behind us, but we can also nod humbly to the power of nature.

- Holly Watson, editor

Dr. Timothy Hosmer (1745–1815)

Dr. Timothy Hosmer was born in West Hartford, CT, and was one of the first pioneers of Avon. He arrived in 1790, just as the land east of the Genesee River was opening for sale, but he had already accomplished a great deal.

In his youth, with just a public school education, he became a student of medicine with Dr. Dickinson of Middleton. In 1771, Timothy married Elizabeth Smith and began practice in Farmington. When difficulty with Britain began, Timothy and John Treadwell, later Governor of Connecticut, openly proclaimed resistance to oppression. It was then a loyalist town, but they persevered in their patriotic position until the town became notable for its revolutionary zeal. When the Revolutionary War began, Hosmer immediately entered into service as a surgeon in the 6th Continental Regiment. When an outbreak of smallpox erupted, he was assigned to the Danbury army hospital. The smallpox discovery of Jenner had just been announced in Europe, and with professional boldness, Hosmer espoused inoculation and used it with great success. This established his high reputation, and he then became a surgeon on General Washington's staff, beginning with the Battle for Long Island. In October 1780, Major André was hanged as a spy, and it was Dr. Hosmer who pronounced him dead.

Hosmer served throughout the war, but retired penniless. Anxious to provide for his growing family, he made bold moves characteristic of his personality. He was acquainted with Oliver Phelps, the land agent, and learning of the purchase with Gorham, and learning of the region's promise, he investigated. With four other Hartford, CT speculators he visited the region in 1790. The group was pleased, and purchased what is now Avon township for one shilling and six pence per acre, calling it Hartford after their homeland. In 1791 Hosmer returned with his sons, Frederick and Algernon, and they built a log house at the top of the hill. In 1792 the entire family left Connecticut for the log house.

By necessity and in the absence of other physicians, Dr. Hosmer opened a practice in the wilderness. The Seneca early learned to appreciate his professional skill and good offices, and they named him At-ta-gus, the healer of disease. In a period of doubt regarding the Seneca people's relations with the new settlers, Hosmer helped to reconcile them and avert danger. Avon had abundant

sulfur springs, and the Seneca called the neighborhood Canawaugus, meaning "stinking waters." Water from the springs flowed into a large pond. The shores were covered with white sand, and the water was clear. The Seneca valued the water for its healing properties, so the pragmatist Hosmer considered their opinion, and concluded the claims were justified. After the War of 1812 visitors began to avail themselves of the springs.

In 1797, Dr. Hosmer is said to have hosted royalty. Louis Philippe I (1773–1850), of the French royal family, was forced to flee his country by the French Revolution, and was in exile from 1793 to 1815. He spent nearly four years in America beginning in 1796. The story goes that in 1797 the Prince and his companions reached Niagara Falls, and were suitably impressed. After a short stay they ventured eastward and spent fourteen nights in the woods. They were devoured by insects, soaked to the bone, and had little to eat but pork, some salt beef, and cornbread. Finally they crossed the Genesee River by Widow Berry's rope ferry, and reached an outpost of civilization in Dr. Timothy Hosmer's tavern near the healing springs. Here they found excellent fare, and incredibly, Hosmer's well-chosen library. Their courtly host was remembered as "a gentleman of the old school, scrupulously clean and neat, with a portly frame and erect military carriage." It seemed to the princes that they were re-entering a lost world. The impression was reinforced in Canandaigua. Here the bedraggled travelers were greeted in perfect French by Thomas Morris, son of the financier Robert Morris and agent for the newly opened lands of the Genesee Country.

When Ontario County was organized in 1793, Hosmer had been appointed presiding judge of the Court of Common Pleas at Canandaigua, and officiated at the first jury trial in the county. Though Hosmer was not educated as a lawyer, he was one of the ablest judicial officials of his day. He had a keen sense of justice, and the straightforward manner in which he administered rendered him very popular with the bar and the public. In taking leave of the bench on his retirement in 1805, he received the most gratifying testimonials by the lawyers.

- Philip Parr, guest writer,
Big Springs Historical Society

Behind the Scenes

The past couple of months have been very busy. We have been reviewing the contents of many of the boxes of paper artifacts, sorting by category, photocopying any that are newsprint, then filing by subject in archival sleeves in labeled binders. We have learned a great deal of local history in the process. The sixth grade from ACS came to visit on June 17th. They were very attentive and asked good questions. They were all treated to ice cream cones following the presentations. The ice cream was donated by Tom Wahl's and the cones by Tops Friendly Markets. A huge thank you to Tom Wahl's and Tops for these donations. We also want to thank the ladies who assisted

in serving the ice cream. Thank you! We have received the following: artifacts, postcards, stock certificates from the LA&L RR, and a Union Trust bank bag from Jeff Babey; a WW II ammo box from Helen Cole; an envelope from the W.C. Minard Co. in Avon from a member of that family; and a WW II book – "1942 into the Battle" from Bud Thurston. Thank you to those people. We have had many visitors including a 5th great-granddaughter of Timothy Hosmer, an early settler of Avon. Thank you to all who make this such a fun place.

- Joan Reid, Curator

AP&HS Fall Program: The History of the Avon Inn

The Avon Inn has been a private home, a sanitarium with sulfur baths, a hotel, and an event center over its nearly 200-year history. At this transitional time for the beautiful landmark building, as a For Sale sign hangs out front, it awaits the next adventure. Maureen Kingston, Avon Town Historian, will give a presentation full of images and stories about the Avon Inn to celebrate its rich past and excite interest in its future potential. Come join us at the Avon Village Hall!

As always, the program will be handicap accessible, refreshments are provided, and donations are gladly accepted to continue supporting our terrific speakers.

Sunday, September 25th at 2pm

New Location: Avon Village Hall



Spotlight on Historical Structures in Avon

The Five Arch Bridge

The Five Arch Bridge at Ashantee in Avon, New York is a stone masonry viaduct, built to carry rail traffic over the Conesus Outlet. The railroad, an important transportation link in the Genesee Valley in the mid 1800s, connected Avon, Geneseo, and Mt. Morris with Rochester.

This stone railroad bridge with five arches is built of hand-dressed Stafford limestone, which was taken from a quarry along Conesus Creek just north of the Littleville Road intersection off of Route 39. It was constructed sometime between 1856, when the Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad reached Avon from the north, and 1859 when the first train reached Geneseo from Avon.

The Genesee Valley Railroad was incorporated on June 2, 1856 for the purpose of purchasing the land and completing the rail line between Avon and Mt. Morris. The Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad had built a line from Rochester to Avon, but ran into financial difficulty and could not complete its proposed southern line to Mt. Morris after spending \$100,000 on partially grading the roadbed south of Avon.

On October 1856, The Genesee Valley Railroad made a contract with George W. and George B. Phelps for completion of the railroad by the first of September 1857. Immediately work was begun, but due to the financial crisis of 1857, the railroad company was unable to provide the contractor with the means to continue the work. Operations were suspended and then resumed in 1858.

The first train entered Geneseo on January 1, 1859 and the last phase of the line south to Mt. Morris was completed in April 1859. The Genesee Valley Railroad experienced a short period of success, but due to exhausted capital, the line faced reorganization by the end of its first year of operation. Judgment of foreclosure and sale of the Genesee Valley Railroad was ordered at a special court term at Rochester on December 26, 1859.

On February 10, 1860, William Kidd, who owned a railroad equipment manufacturing company in Rochester, New York became trustee for all the property when he purchased the railroad for \$87,500. The railroad was renamed the Avon, Geneseo, and Mt. Morris Railroad.

1869 was a good year for the railroad. It had two engines, eight passenger cars, three baggage and mail cars and carried 43,574 passengers and 3,400 tons of freight over the Five Arch Bridge. In 1873 the railroad was leased to the Erie Railway Company.



In the 1880s, the hamlet of Ashantee had a population of 200 people. The prosperous home of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Wadsworth plus numerous businesses were located near the Conesus Creek. The Ashantee Creamery was built near the railroad tracks and Peter Zifka's blacksmith shop was located north of the creamery. W.P. Haskins owned the saw and cider mill just above the Five Arch Bridge. In 1899, Herbert Wadsworth had 50 men working to extend Center Street (present State Rt. 39) from the Little Conesus Outlet to the stone bridge. The road was built to go under the northernmost arch of the bridge.

Early images of the bridge indicate that the heavy wood beams bolted over each of the five arches were part of the early construction. A state inspection of the bridge in 1887 reported that it was fractured and clamps were holding it in position. A new structure was recommended to be built soon. In 1890, an inspection by the State Railroad Commissioners found the viaduct in bad condition. Up to June 30, 1901 the total cost of the bridges on the line from Avon to Mt. Morris was \$6,304.

In 1907 the Erie Railroad replaced steam trains with a single-phase electric railroad between Rochester and Mt. Morris, travelling over the Five Arch Bridge. The electric trolley ran thirteen trips daily between Rochester and Mt. Morris. In the 1930s passenger service dropped in demand and electrification was no longer necessary and on November 29, 1934 gas-electric cars were substituted. The



track was abandoned and torn up in 1940 after competitive modes of transportation took over in the Genesee Valley. Due to the increase of private automobiles, many serious accidents occurred at the Five Arch Bridge as drivers failed to properly navigate the road curves and narrow pass under the arch. By November, 1932 the route of Avon-Genesee Road was changed so it no longer went under the arch and avoided the bridge entirely.

George Stewart, an Avon attorney, purchased the bridge from the railroad on March 30, 1965. On October 28, 1971 Mr. Stewart gave the property to the Village of Avon, asking for only \$900 to cover the cost of two appraisal fees.



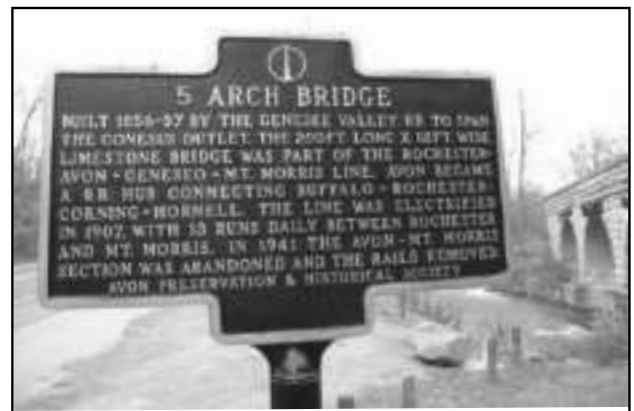
From 1966 until 1979, Edward Dooley, a retired Erie railroad employee, along with his friend Jim Couchman, maintained the bridge and surrounding land. A ceremony was held on July 25, 1975 to unveil a small historical monument honoring the years of dedicated service provided by Mr. Dooley and Mr. Couchman.

In 1985, an engineering study by Bero Associates of Rochester viewed the structure as in fair shape, but it was suffering from water penetrating through the railroad bed. The report noted that rainwater was dissolving the mortar holding the stones together, thus weakening the structure. The recommendation to restore the structure suggested removing the trees, brush and debris and installing a roof to create a water disposal system as well as repairing the mortar joints.

By 1990, the high waters of Conesus Creek had cut into the bank on the south side of the creek, causing large chunks of concrete from the bridge to slide down the bank. The bases of several arches had been severely eroded. In 1990, the village sought funds to make repairs on the bridge, but was informed in a letter by Assemblyman John Hasper that its application for a 1990-1991 legislative initiative grant had been turned down. The village promised that the bridge would be fixed with or without the grant. In 1991, the Livingston Construction Company repaired a deteriorating abutment of the bridge.

In June 1994, the Village of Avon followed the Bero Associates' recommendations to prevent water from seeping into the limestone structure. Under the direction of Avon Preservation & Historical Society's president, Dwight Brown, volunteers cleared the top of the bridge of trees and brush. A heavy-duty sheet of plastic was fastened to the top of the bridge and covered with gravel and sand, ensuring it was invisible, thereby preserving the historical character of the structure.

In October 1995, the concrete abutment on the south end of the bridge was removed to prevent people from climbing to the top. The present problems noted by the AP&HS include the problem of loose masonry on the outside surface of the bridge, and replacing the washed-out mortar. This group will be landscaping the area around the bridge to improve the appearance of the Five Arch Bridge Park.



Over the years many people have visited this local landmark. A Rochesterian's recollection of "Sunday Drives in the Thirties" notes the Five Arch Bridge as a frequent destination. The AP&HS hopes to preserve the Five Arch Bridge for the enjoyment of future generations.

Addendum: The historical marker, above, was dedicated on October 6, 1996, honoring the rich railroad history of Avon. The Five Arch Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historical Places in 2012, officially recognizing the significance of this handsome structure.

Source: Pitts, Joel. The Five Arch Bridge. Accessed Jun. 2016 from AP&HS. 1995.

Edited and updated by Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Member



Avon Preservation and Historical Society

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Avon, New York 14414

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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

Dr. George Collins was always there for us... especially when one of us (Dick Harness) broke his arm 2 years in a row playing football in the park..... also it was fun playing softball in his driveway on Sunday afternoons with his family. My Dad was the Rev. Donald Ellwood of Zion Episcopal Church and we lived around the corner (1942-1950).

-Donald Ellwood



Farnum's Drug Store, Genesee Street. That's my Great Aunt Lois (Carlin) Light. Guessing somewhere around the 1920s. -Kathy Carlin Salvati



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 28, No. 4 | November 2016

AP&HS Announcements

The True Story of Thanksgiving: Pilgrims, Politics, and Pumpkin Pie

Sunday, November 6, at 2 pm

Christopher Hensch, *Curator for the Toy Hall of Fame*
Spokesperson of the National Toy Hall of Fame

Join us for our last program of the year, held at the Avon Village Hall! Before you dig into that turkey and stuffing, let's take a moment together to learn about the roots of Thanksgiving and reflect on the constructions of the holiday.

As always, donations are encouraged to keep our program schedule going, the location is handicap accessible, and tasty treats are provided!

Opera Block Third Floor: Update

During the Avon Rotary Corn Fest, about 50 people enjoyed tours of the Third Floor in the Avon Opera Block, led by Bob Westfall. The large open space with intact stage has been getting a lot of attention recently as a possible renovation project for use as a community and event space. Recently, Kelly Cole and Bob Westfall proposed renovation and restoration to the Avon Town Board. The Board agreed to enlist Bero Architecture, the firm which oversaw the renovation of the lower two floors of the Opera Block building, to produce an estimate. We will continue to report on this project!

Message to the President

Bob Westfall, President of the AP&HS, is recovering from an injury, and therefore his regular article will appear in the next issue. We wish you a very speedy recovery, Bob!

Seeking Volunteers!

The AP&HS is always looking for volunteer docents to greet visitors at the museum and folks to contribute stories, photographs, and articles to the newsletter. Contact us at avonpreservation@gmail.com to get involved!

Behind the Scenes

The museum has received a number of gifts since the last newsletter. We are most grateful for all of these donations. One is an interesting old game from James Brewer called Perquackery. Geri Brewer donated a collection of baby textiles as well as two youth dresses and an adult dress.

Barbara Mellers of Santa Fe, New Mexico sent a diary that had belonged to Frances Wilson of South Lima, NY. It included the entire year of 1872. She was about 14 years old at that time, and recorded that she attended school and helped her parents. She apparently really liked school as she rarely missed a day. Mick LaFever sold us the rest of the collection of printers' blocks that were used for the Sesquicentennial Newspaper, 1958. James Brewer had acquired ten of them, and Mick brought 22 more.

Thank you to all who remember us with your kind donations.

- Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator

In Memoriam



Dr. Richard J. "Rip" Collins
(1924-2016)

Dr. Richard Collins has left a warm and lasting impression on the community of Avon during his long and rich life. He was a lifelong Avon resident and his friends, family, and neighbors remember him as an erudite, funny, and charming man and a dedicated physician. He was born at home, delivered by his father, Dr. George Collins, as were his 11 siblings. With the implacable impish look he often wore, he once told of a day at Mrs. Mulligan's preschool at the Mulligan Farm; he noticed the orphaned lambs had "0"s marked on their sides, and reckoned if he painted a number on them, they would no longer be orphans. He recalled hiding his telltale colored hands in his pockets when Mr. Mulligan angrily demanded who had upset his marking system in the flock.

Dr. Collins graduated with a BA from Colgate University in 1945, part of an accelerated program focused on training physicians during wartime; he received his medical degree from the University of Rochester Medical School two years later. Once his training in internal medicine was completed, he joined his father's private practice in 1949. His partner, Dr. Robert Hayes, would join him after 1958. Dr. Collins served the Avon community in this capacity until his retirement in 1994, suffering practical jokes from his patients with a laugh as well as dishing out his own brand of humor.

Dr. Collins served in Korea as Captain in the Army Medical Corps, returning home in 1953. Back in Avon, he continued to illustrate his commitment to and passion for medical education and care. He was a

life member of the University of Rochester's board of trustees and served on boards and committees at the Strong Memorial Hospital and UR Medical Center Board. He was a member of the Livingston County Medical Society and served on the National Advisory Council on the National Health Service Corps from 1985-1987, which oversees federal programs targeting health care needs in underserved areas.

Dr. Collins received numerous recognitions for his contributions to the medical care field, including a citation of merit from the Rochester Academy of Medicine in 1989 and the George Washington Goler Award from the NY Public Health Association of the Genesee Region. He was also elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society in 1979 as an alumnus, and was keynote speaker for the UR Medical School's White Coat Ceremony in 1995. After his retirement, he served as an advisor for first-year medical students, showing his lifelong dedication to medical education.

In his community, Dr. Collins was a mainstay at historic presentations, he served on the Republican Committee at the town and county level for many years, and was a trustee at St. Agnes Church. In 2005, his grandson prompted him to tell two stories for StoryCorps, an NPR project; Dr. Collins admitted roguishly that as a late-rising 4th-grader at St. Agnes School, he stole the bell that was tolled each day to distinguish the timely children from the tardy ones. He added that he still kept the bell by his bedside, and "joyfully [rang] it now and then."

He and his wife, Mary Finnegan Collins, who also passed away this year, have both been remembered for their sparkling eyes and laughter. They raised a strong and loving family together that is already carrying on their legacy.

- Holly Watson

Information courtesy of Dr. Michael Collins.

Other sources:

"Serious Pranks, Serious Work: A Family Heirloom."
NPR.org, 2005.

Richard James Collins M.D. *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 29 Jul. 2016.

"Good Bye, White Oak"

"That white tree was a landmark in Avon!"

That's the remark we have heard frequently, recently. So many Avon residents grew up knowing that the white tree was always in the front yard at 277 Genesee Street.

When we began planning to adapt the house at 277 Genesee Street to operate as a bed and breakfast, we considered several names which would identify the house:

"White Maple"? -- unlikely.

"White Catalpa"? -- too much of a mouthful.

"White Locust"? -- no, sounds like a swarm of insects.

So, we settled on "White Oak" for our logo and advertising.

Over the nearly twenty years we owned and operated the bed and breakfast, we told our guests, "Just look for the tall white tree stump at the front garden." And over that time, we had hundreds of guests, from all over the world: France, Italy, Germany; South Africa; Hong Kong, India, even as far as Tasmania. And Rotary guests from Australia, New Zealand, India and Sweden. Always: "look for the white tree" to locate us.

As with all good things, our bed and breakfast had to cease operating (although we continue to have calls for reservations, even now!). So, it was a very sad day when Mark and I drove away for the last time, and looked at the house, and said, "Good bye, White Oak".

- Barbara Herman

Brief History of the White Oak Stump

During the recent flutter of memories surrounding the late White Oak Stump, many have asked about it – what kind of tree was it? How long had it been there?

Before the Hermans lived there and ran a bed and breakfast, it was a Strassenburgh home. Alex Strassenburgh, son of Paul Strassenburgh, said it best in his post to the Facebook group "You Know You Grew Up in Avon when You Remember..":

It was a locust tree. My dad had the tree cut in 1940. He sold insurance out of the basement of our house. His insurance sign hung on the tree.

When the tree died he asked them to cut it above the sign so he didn't have to buy a sign post. Then he painted the tree white. And thus, a local



Photo: Google Street View, October 2012. Google, 2016.

landmark was formed... all because my dad was too cheap to buy a \$10 sign post."

Others have had memories of the landmark white tree, too. Westfall children were instructed to venture no farther than the tree, and apparently some Genesee kids played "punch bug" when they came to Avon, socking their friend if they spotted the tree first.

Locust is an extremely durable wood, commonly used for fence posts. Although the White Tree eventually succumbed, it sure did prove its tenacity.

Facebook Page



Photo shared by Robert D'Angelo of his uncle Sam D'Angelo's shoe store on West Main St. in the 1960s.

Every pair of shoes in my childhood came from Sam's store. It's legendary, the mountains of boxes everywhere and somehow Sam could always find the right shoes for you. A cherished memory!!!! - Guy Murphree

No matter how packed the store got, he always knew exactly where your size was. - Pam Bueche

Not just shoe-shopping...it was an "experience!" Great memories! - Cathy Corcoran Raynor

Spotlight on Historic Structures in Avon

The Avon Inn



Earliest known photograph of the Avon Inn, taken before 1882. Source: Avon Town Historian

The Avon Inn has held a significant presence in the village of Avon for nearly 200 years. The Greek Revival structure was used as a residence by many families, each making changes and additions to fit their taste. Later, the building was used as an inn, accommodating visitors traveling on one of the only major east-west roads in western New York.

The story begins with Jonathan H. Gerry, a Massachusetts native who came to Avon around 1830. He bought a parcel of land in the young village, on the corner of East Main and Temple Streets, and built his home for his wife and six children. He planted corn on his farm for the making of brooms; however, it is believed that he was unable to completely finish the home before he died in 1848. He is buried in the Avon Cemetery. One of Mr. Gerry's sons, Houghton, enlisted in the call to arms in 1862 under Captain Orange Sackett. His name is listed on the Soldier's Monument in the Avon Village Park.

Curtiss Hawley, a merchant and Town of Avon Supervisor, and his wife Sarah were the next owners. Mrs. Hawley's death prompted the sale of the house to George W. Sherman and his wife, Adeline Campbell Blake Sherman and family. The photograph above shows the house being well maintained, likely by the Sherman family. After the death of Mr. Sherman in 1879, the house was eventually sold to become a business for the first time.

During the Spa Era, many inns were built throughout the town to accommodate visitors who sought the health benefits of Avon's sulfur water. Dr. Cyrus Allen and James D. Carson, Sr., who had been innkeepers

for several years at the Avon Cure, on what is now Wadsworth Avenue, bought the home in 1882. Adding a third floor, a cupola, and the west wing enlarged the building for their spa business, the "New Sanitarium." Other improvements were made to ensure the comfort of guests: sulfur baths, central heating, gas lighting, elevator, livery service, a bank, and a taproom.

On April 14, 1910 the *Avon Herald* announced the reopening of the business as the "Avon Inn," offering a garage for twenty automobiles, complete with attendants and mechanics. Remodeling included upgraded sulfur baths for the guests.

In 1979, a fire extensively damaged the Inn as reported in the *Avon Herald*:

...The upper floors were rented apartments. At 5:43 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 24, 1979 the Avon Fire Department responded to a fire call at the Inn. Fire had broken out on the third floor. People were taken from the building, some suffered from smoke inhalation, but none were seriously injured. Priceless antiques and paintings were removed from the building as the fire spread. The fire was able to seek out hidden spots difficult to detect because the old building had been remodeled so many times that there were crawl spaces, layers of flooring and partitions aiding in its camouflage. The third floor and cupola of the building collapsed. One of the chimneys came tumbling to the ground, a floor collapsed trapping a Henrietta fireman in the debris for over an hour while firemen struggled to rescue him. He was taken to a nearby hospital with minor injuries. The fire spread to the second floor and the roof above the front porch. The fire was halted there. Firemen

In 1882 the building was expanded to host its first business, adding a west wing, third floor and a cupola. Source: Avon Town Historian





Source: Avon Preservation & Historical Society

were on the scene 13 hours. This was the third fire at the Inn in recent years...

Frank Csapo bought the building in 1980, restoring it to its present size and style. The current owner, Linda Moran, purchased the inn in 1982. She has maintained the building with a deep respect for its long historical significance in Avon. In 1991 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Clara Mulligan, adapted from a piece by Maureen Kingston, Avon Town Historian, September, 2016

Avon Corn Fest A Success

August 13th was a memorably hot and muggy day, but the annual Avon Rotary Corn Fest was fun, as always. We enjoyed chatting with old and new friends, signing up new and returning members, and, of course, eating some buttery corn on the cob. Our gift basket raffle was wonderful – we would like to acknowledge the following winners:

1. Jackie S. - New York City Trip
2. Mary M. - Genesee Country Village & Museum
3. Cindy D. - Spa Basket
4. U. B. - Men's Basket
5. Dorothy S. - Men's Basket
6. Kimberly M. - Spa Basket
7. Amy G. - Girl's Basket
8. S. V. - Boy's Basket
9. Kristina R. - Picnic Basket
10. Donna B. - Garden Basket
11. Ron R. - Barilla Bag
12. Ruth M. - Barilla Bag

Also congratulations and welcome to Rhonda L., who won a new membership! Jim R., it's good to have you as a member another year.

Congratulations to all and thank you for participating!

Holiday Gift Shop

Festive Poinsettias

The time is fast approaching for the AP&HS poinsettia sales! This is one of the big fundraisers for the AP&HS - last year we raised over \$400. We are planning to exceed that for 2016.



Each plant is just \$9.00, and there are several varieties available. Sales will be held during the month of November through Dec. 10th. Plants will be hand-delivered around Dec. 14th. To order, either stop by the Historical Society or contact Geri Brewer at 226-2729.

Collectible Ornaments

Deck the halls and trim your tree with these special mementos emblazoned with historical Avon images. This year, let the White Horse make your season merry as it poses on a candy-red ornament. Come grab yours today!



Only \$5!

Special Avon Calendar – “Yesterday”

AP&HS 2017 calendars are now on sale for \$10 each! They make a lovely gift for those hard-to-shop-for nostalgic people on your list. Showcasing iconic images of past days and lost buildings in Avon, these calendars also serve to keep you in the present day so you don't forget that important appointment.

Stop into the Historical Society Museum on Sundays or Thursdays between 1pm & 4pm to pick up these seasonal gifts as well as postcards, Avon Collectibles, and history books.



A House in 90 Days: the Sears Modern Home



"The Winona." Source: Sears Homes 1927-1932, searsarchives.com

Mr. Richard Sears was possibly a bit of a genius. Just over 100 years ago, the Sears, Roebuck & Company catalog was sometimes one of only two books that a middle-class family would have in their house, the other being the Bible. Children learned to read with the four-pound catalog; women and men coveted home wares and conveniences, tools and farm implements, clothes, and questionable medicines the company purveyed. And then, beginning in 1908, men and women saw that the pages of the catalog could make another dream come true: they could buy an entire house and build it themselves.

What exactly constitutes a Sears catalog home? Sears began selling building materials, hardware, and lumber in 1895, but this a Sears home does not make. For the catalog homes, or kit homes, most building materials, exterior and interior finishing materials, doors, windows, and hardware were included, even gallons of paint and varnish. They were collections of the needed parts for assembly, but they were not pre-fabricated buildings. You would have to provide cement block foundations, plumbing, wiring, a furnace, and of course the labor to install it.

Each year, new designs were introduced and some retired, and between 1908-1940, it is estimated that 370 different house designs were available. Motifs tracked popular styles and are not dissimilar from other Cape Cods, bungalows, American Foursquares, and Colonials of the times. The term Modern Homes, though, referred to new tastes in construction and décor. Less extravagant floor plans, décor with reduced flounce and stuffiness, indoor plumbing, and cleaner looks all translated into what was promoted as a more

hygienic living arrangement. The popularization of germ theory around this time took hold.

The consumer, pockets burning with hard-earned cash, would first select a design from the catalog. No. 103, say, or after about 1916, when the designs were given names, "The Winona" or "The Maplewood." For \$1, which would be credited to your purchase should you make an order, blueprints and a list of materials would be sent to you. A few weeks after your order for "The Castleton" was placed, boxcars loaded with thousands of pieces of your future residence would arrive at the train station. In the early days, you would have to buy the framing lumber separately or have it cut on-site. Beginning in 1914, the kit homes included pre-cut lumber, so no sawing was necessary. Considering the expense and toil sawing involved, pre-cut lumber was a dream. It was said that, using the 75-page leather-bound instruction manual, a man with "average abilities" could erect the home in 90 days. As long as the weather was fair.

The Sears "Modern Homes" came at a perfect time in America's history. "Model T" Ford automobiles were just being produced, and the masses found suburban residences to be possible. Young families who were living in multi-generational homes could now more easily afford to save up and move out on their own. Homes from the Sears catalog were inexpensive yet constructed with quality materials. Sears even offered mortgages on your new home, making the prospect more achievable for young families. And by making more families into homeowners, Mr. Sears shrewdly increased sales of all the items with which to fill the homes, which he was conveniently selling. The Modern Homes floor plans even included little outlines for beds, davenport, and appliances. With all the glee a dollhouse can inspire, the American Dream and all its trappings could now be purchased in one place, and that place was Sears, Roebuck & Co.

The peak of the Sears kit home empire is said to have come in 1929, when over \$12 million in sales were collected. After this, sales rapidly declined, until Modern Homes closed in 1934. Sears was forced to liquidate \$11 million in mortgages for its customers, a shocking sum in today's dollars. The department did reopen, but then closed permanently in 1940. It is estimated that 75,000 kit homes were sold through mail order between 1908 and 1940.

While kit homes were extremely popular in the Midwest, they may even be scattered in our own community. Having undergone alterations, additions, and cosmetic changes, they can be tough to spot, but experts say the eye can be trained. What are some of the clues to look for?



The CASTLETON Honor Price \$1,989⁰⁰
No. 227 Not Cut or Fitted.

At the price quoted we will furnish all the material to build this eight-room house. Price does not include cement, brick or plaster.

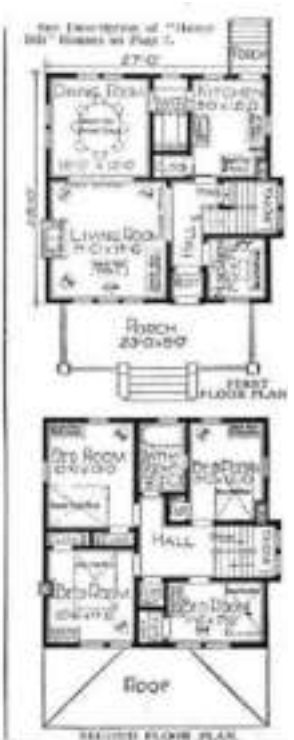
First Floor One study, screened porch on this floor, well lighted, with built seats of room for terrace.

Second Floor One bathroom, bathroom and linen closet on this floor.

Height of Ceilings The basement has concrete base and is 7 feet from floor to ceiling. The first floor is 7 feet from floor to ceiling. Second floor, 8 feet 6 inches from floor to ceiling.

See complete description of all materials, prices on pages 124 and 125. Instructions will state what to do on a concrete block foundation, accepted under the code laws.

See Complete Plans and Order Your House From The Book, Five Dollars Plus Post and Shipping. For names of Planning, Heating, Wiring, Electric Fixtures and Builders see page 116.



it was an E. F. Hodgson prefabricated cottage. As this was fascinating in its own right, she felt vindicated, but also disappointed that her home was not otherwise known as "The Sunbeam" or the like. But that is a story for another day.

Sears buildings are decidedly historic at this point, and offer a little glimpse into the expansion of the American independent life in the pre-WWII United States. If you can prove you live in one, let your local historical society know!

- Holly Watson

"The Castleton." Source: Sears Homes 1921-1926, searsarchives.com

Sources:

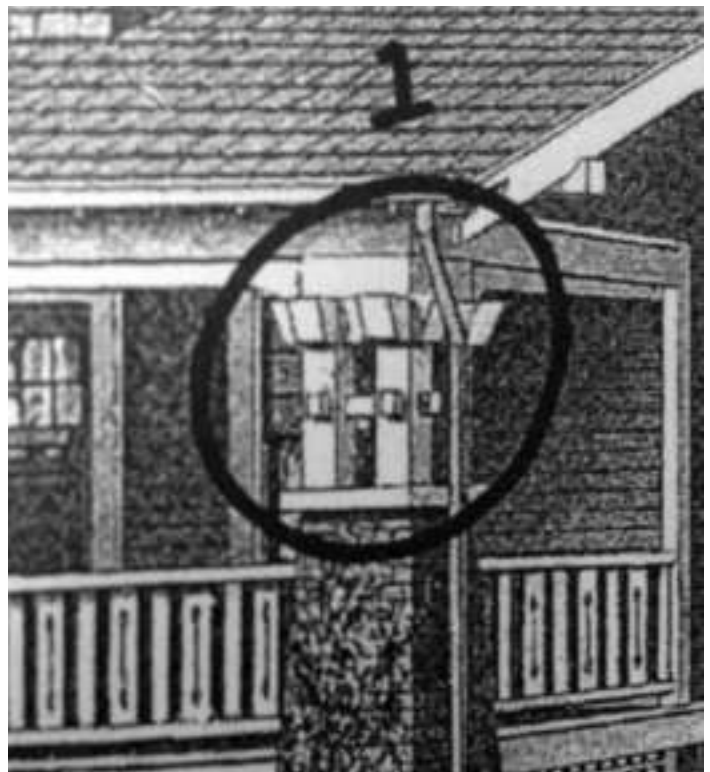
- Stamped numbers on the butt ends or on the tall side near the end of framing members in attic or basement; older models may not be stamped if lumber was sourced locally or not pre-cut;
- Stamped numbers on the back of molding or trim pieces; again, early examples may not be stamped;
- The presence of Goodwall Sheet Plaster;
- Stashed blueprints, documents, receipts, or instructions for assembly;
- Records relating to your property at the County Clerk's Office with Sears as the mortgage holder;
- Shipping labels (may have the railroad's initials), sometimes found in places such as the backside the basement stairs;
- Unusual five-piece eave brackets (diagonal supportive braces between exterior wall and roof line);
- Interesting decorative blocks in the porch trim and unique stickwork on chunky porch pillars.

Thornton, Rosemary. The Houses That Sears Built. Gentle Beam Pub.: Alton, 2002.

Stevenson, Katherine Cole and H. Ward Jandl. Houses by Mail. Preservation Press: Washington, D.C., 1986.

Sears Archives. Accessed 28 Sept. 2016 at www.searsarchives.com. 2012.

Source: Thornton, R. The Houses that Sears Built. p.75.



These are some features and clues to consider, but none alone are proof of the home being a Sears house, or even a kit home, since these designs can be very similar to architects' plans. Other companies such as Aladdin, Bennett, and Gordon-Van Tine also sold kit homes, though Sears sold the most and is the best known. It takes careful review of floor plans and features to correctly identify a Sears home, and experts say most people who think they have one do not. Yours truly was recently obsessed with her current home, convinced it was bought from Sears in 1931, only to discover



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A Cow

A cow is an angular feminine bovine, with four legs, an alto voice, a well-established milk route, and a face that inspires confidence.

A cow's husband is a bull. A cow's brat is known as a calf. Calves are generally used in the manufacture of chicken salad. Calves' brains cannot be distinguished from scrambled eggs.

A cow provides vitamins for double chocolate malted drinks until she is old enough to enter a can of corn-beef hash. Her tail is fastened to the rear of her back. It has a universal joint at one end and a fly swatter at the other.

A cow has two stomachs. The one on the ground floor is used as a store-house for grass, loco weed, corn stalks, rock salt and the neighbor's cabbage. When her storehouse reaches a state of either over production or under consumption, she sits down in the shade of a tree, then belches like Henry VIII at a coronation banquet. This social error on the part of the cow makes some of the hay and stuff do a return trip from the storehouse back up to the front part of the cow's kind face where it is "fletcherized."

A slice of the cow's rear is very valuable to a cow, but it is worth only a nickel to a farmer, 16 cents to a meat packer, 46 cents to a retail butcher, and \$1.25 to a restaurant, not counting the tip.

- *The Dairy Farmer's Digest*, unknown date

Provided by Joan Reid

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

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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



Avon Preservation & Historical Society *Newsletter*

Volume 29, No. 1 | February 2017

Avon Toboggan Ramp

*From the Albert R. Stone
Negative Collection,
Rochester Museum & Science Center,
Rochester, NY*



This giant slide was located at "Chilmark," originally the home of the Macys and later Col. Nathan Shiverick; it is now FarView Golf Course. At the time this photo was taken, c. 1920, it was the clubhouse for the Avon Beagles, a winter sports club whose activities including rabbit hunting with beagles, skiing, skating, and skijoring. The toboggan slide may have been set up on Mt. Ararat, a high hill. This photo shows a man rocketing down the ramp on a toboggan while three others watch or prepare their own runs.

*- Provided by Clara Mulligan, with information from
Maureen Kingston, Avon Historian. Image courtesy of Rochester Images.*

AP & HS Programs: 2017

This year we will host five informative programs, each exploring a topic of women's history. Our wonderful speakers will discuss local, regional, and national female accomplishments, honoring the centennial of the women's right to vote, passed in New York State in 1917.

Jane Oakes' engaging program on Early Women Physicians of the Genesee Valley was held on January 29th.

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.

Women and the Civil War

Sunday, March 12, 2017

2:00 – 3:00 pm

What were roles for women during the Civil War in the early 1860s? Some directly aided soldiers and the war effort, but on the homefront women stepped into many roles to support their families. Come learn about this fascinating piece of women's history from our own Avon Free Library Director, Rebecca Mulhearn.



Suffragists in Western New York

Sunday, May 7, 2017

2:00 – 3:00 pm

One hundred years ago this year, women finally won the vote in NY State. Learn more about their battle from Christine Ridarsky, Rochester City Historian, in her timely presentation.

Women in 19th-Century Literature

Sunday, September 17th, 2017

2:00 – 3:00 pm

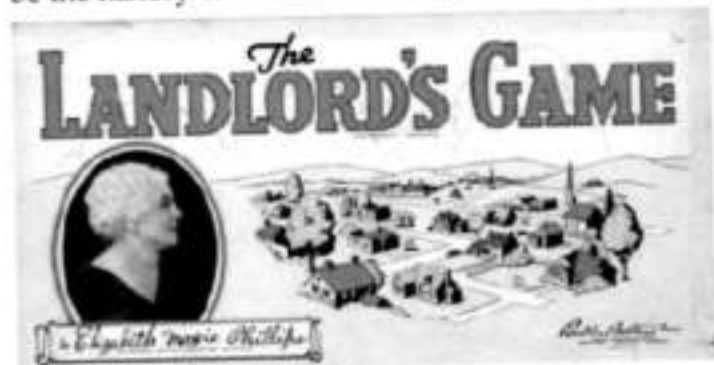
Description TBA. Presented by Dr. Caroline Woidat.

Wonder Women of Toys

Sunday, November 19, 2017

2:00 – 3:00 pm

Christopher Bensch, curator of the Strong Museum of Play, returns to APHS to share his research on women who invented toys. Did you know that Elizabeth Magie patented the first Monopoly game, known as the Landlord's Game, in 1904? What might be the history of Barbie? Come find out!



State of the AP & HS and Tribute to Our Founders

I am so pleased to report another successful year for our organization. We have an excellent board of very hard-working members. Our programs have been so well attended that we've had to find a new location. Thank you to the Village Hall for providing this space. Our fundraising did well, especially at the Corn Festival (even though we lost a few things in the late afternoon monsoon!). Our gratitude goes out to the Avon Rotary who does so much hard work to make this such a wonderful event year after year.

A huge thanks to all of the local businesses that purchased memberships. We are so very pleased about your response to our team of Dan and Geri and for your support. Please support these businesses whenever you can.

And, as always, thank you to David LeFeber and the Town Board for always being there for us and providing us with our beautiful space. And of course thanks to all of you who have purchased family and individual memberships.

2017 marks the start of our 34th year as an organization. I was reflecting at year's end on all the wonderful people who have served over the years to keep it going, even when we had no place to call home and very little space to store what we had. Many are still with us, many have passed on. I thought it might be a good time to reflect on the committee who started the AP&HS 34 years ago.

Robert Hoffman - a relative newcomer to Avon at the time, but a real can-do kind of person with great organizational skills. Bob was our first president and although he moved several years ago, still keeps in touch and stops in every now and then.

Kay Clark - a very accomplished lady. She published children's books and was a humanitarian. She started Operation Morale, a group that wrote letters to soldiers serving in war zones and sending out care packages. This started a movement that continues to this day.

Courtesy of AP&HS Collection

William Morrissey - a lifetime resident of Avon, and was involved in our fire department, loved Avon, and provided much in the way of historical background.

Maureen Kingston - What would we do without Maureen? She is our longtime town historian and still very much involved in the AP&HS as an advisor and fact-checker. She has done several of our programs over the years, most recently last September on the Avon Inn. It got five-star reviews and was very well attended.

Jean Harrington - Although she had only lived in Avon for a few years, Jean got very involved in her community. Jean and Dick moved to Avon when Dick came here to manage Kraft. They were wonderful people who were well liked and they loved Avon. They now live in North Carolina, but until recently came back every summer. I understand Dick has been in poor health, which doesn't allow travel. Jean was the primary author of our charter.

Duane Westfall - My Dad, and another lifetime resident of Avon. I can tell you firsthand how much he loved Avon, his beloved Central Presbyterian Church, his family, dessert, and above all, my Mom. He gave me my deep love of history. He was the AP&HS's first treasurer.

We are grateful to all these folks and to all others, past and present, who have worked hard to make us what we are today.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President



SUMNER BOYDSON STREET AND MAIN STREET, AVON, OH. 1924

A History of Oysters



Oyster shuckers at Chesapeake Bay, 1909.
Courtesy Florida Archive.

Pickled oysters; baked, stewed, raw, scalloped, and fried oysters; oysters in mayonnaise, jelly, and on the half-shell; oyster sauce and oyster pie – these are just a few ways the bivalves were prepared in the 1800s. Though mostly devoured by the upper classes of western New York until after the Civil War, the 1860s saw an explosion of popularity for the oyster – and everyone got a bite.

American Indians living on both coasts naturally ate oysters for centuries, and settlers in New England found them tasty and plentiful, but only small amounts reached the newly settled west by express wagon. In 1830, natural pond ice was made more readily available commercially and fresh oysters could be shipped more easily.

Some of the most bountiful beds were in New York City, Chesapeake Bay, Long Island, and Baltimore. The *New York Tribune* reported in 1857 that assembly lines were formed to open, wash, and measure the oysters. Until the 1870s, much of this work was done in private homes, allowing women and boys to be the primary labor; some could extract an average of 65 quarts of meat in one day. The shucked and cleaned oysters were packed in tins or kegs and shipped in wooden boxes surrounded by chipped ice.

In the 1850s, the ample oyster crop finally could reach farther and get there faster, thanks to the rapid expansion of the railroad system. Lines connected Avon to the eastern seaboard and provided excitingly fast transit across the state. The NY and Erie Railroad was said to transport oysters from Raritan Bay, bringing the cheap and plentiful delicacy to all residents, upper and even lower classes. No special event would be complete without some preparation of oysters.

The end of the 19th century saw the oyster's greatest popularity; oyster bars were everywhere, and the seafood was sold out of the back of trucks on the street. Oysters were considered a cheap and tasty food to pair with alcoholic beverages, so saloons and bars offered them liberally.

But rapid industrial and population increase caught up to the commercial success of the oyster. By about 1900, "pure-food hysteria" erupted, adding concerns about sanitation to the issue of over-harvesting, and for good reason. Continual dredging diminished the oyster population and careless pollution of the oyster beds contaminated the harvest with dangerous diseases such as typhoid. By 1909, negative associations with oysters and typhoid turned many consumers toward beef, though beef was twice as expensive. Greater care was taken with processing, canning, and shipping oysters, but in 1924 and again in the 1950s typhoid and other disease outbreaks continued to affect their reputation. Additionally, Prohibition, enacted from 1920 to 1933, upset the oyster's role as the favorite saloon snack. Oysters were still eaten, but never regained their former celebrity.

Today, high costs to process oysters combined with stricter regulations about harvest quantities and pollution has driven down production, making oysters an expensive and therefore elite choice once again. The perfect combination during the mid- to late 1800s of more relaxed harvest standards, cheap labor, and excitement about speedy transportation helped make oysters wildly popular, even in places like Avon. Happy birthday, George Washington!

-Holly Watson, Editor

Washington's Birth-day.

*You are invited to attend an Oyster Supper, at
the United States Hotel, - Avon, on Friday
Evening, the 22d day of - December, 1861.*

Tickets, \$1

VAN ZANDE & LOOMIS

Image courtesy of Avon Town Historian's Office

Sources:

Wikipedia.com. "Oyster Wars."
MacKenzie, Clyde L. Jr. "History of Oystering
in the United States and Canada." 1996.

AP & HS November Program



"The True Story of Thanksgiving: Pilgrims, Politics, & Pumpkins" was the last in the AP&HS programs series for 2016. The presentation given by Christopher Bensch, the Vice President for Collections and Chief Curator from the Strong Museum of Play, told how Thanksgiving as we celebrate it came to be.

Many think the Pilgrims celebrated the first Thanksgiving but there have been many proclamations

declaring a day of Thanksgiving throughout history. Some were for religious reasons, political reasons, or to give thanks for a plentiful harvest.

Since the time of George Washington, an American day of thanks was on a Thursday. This was solidified by a proclamation by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 designating the last Thursday in November as the National Day of Thanksgiving.

In the 1930s many businesses wanted Thanksgiving moved to the 3rd Thursday of November to give people more time to shop for Christmas. President Roosevelt agreed, but the public thought that the President was catering to the large retailers so they could make more money. A few governors decided to keep Thanksgiving on the 4th Thursday, so Thanksgiving was celebrated on different days in different states.

In 1941, Congress passed a law stating that Thanksgiving would be celebrated by all on the 4th Thursday of November.

- Ellen Zapf, Editor

Behind The Scenes

Since we last shared activities, this has been a busy season. Our new volunteer has been busy organizing the family file folders. Another volunteer inputs accession information into the computer program. The docents have been filing stacks of information into the appropriate binders.

A friend, Steve Stephenson, has donated a large sled that has belonged to his family for three generations. A friend, John Kemp, has been sharing more of his

postcard collection with us. William Shaw brought a framed Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) document about A. F. Smith that belonged to his mother. Does anyone have information about him or his family?

The last AP&HS program about Thanksgiving was well attended. Planning Christmas displays for the museum has been fun. We look forward to the coming year and its challenges.

- Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator



Frontier Schools

The first generation of New England settlers were astonishing in their zeal for education. During the 1640s, Massachusetts established the base for American public education, making attendance at primary schools compulsory and requiring each town to hire a schoolmaster to teach reading and writing.

The schools were open to all classes of children, though before 1800 New England girls were not generally educated, and there was no controversy on the subject. Regardless, many females learned to read as they were often taught at home. There were, however, private schools for girls and boys for families that could pay the tuition.

At the end of the colonial period, citizens believed that a self-governing republic needed intelligent leadership, and viewed literacy as essential to the success of the nation. Patriotism and civic responsibilities were added to religious and moral principles in children's instruction.

The white pioneers of the Genesee Valley in the 1790s had an inherited belief in the value of general education. By the standards of the time, rural Americans in 1800 were especially literate, surpassing most of the residents of Europe. It is estimated that three-quarters of white men could read and write, though women lagged in literacy.

In the settlement period, local individuals determined education policy, and girls received a primary education equal to that of boys. The "district system," devised by colonial Massachusetts, was the model. Townships were divided into districts, and each was responsible for building, maintaining, and staffing a small neighborhood school. Because the children had to walk to school, districts were small, and schools were only four or five miles apart.

Parents of students were required to pay a fee toward the salary of the teacher, or else furnish firewood or labor, or board the teacher for a time. The custom, termed "the rate bill" system, was common until 1850. When a teacher boarded with students' families, time spent in each household was proportioned to the number of scholars attending school.

The school was often the first public building erected in a pioneer region. Consequently it was also used for religious functions and community gatherings. Most district schools in the early 1800s were one room, and furnished with crude, backless benches hammered



Little Red Schoolhouse, Rush, 1822. Photo courtesy of gcv.org.

together by local farmers. The school was located where the land was as valueless as possible, and was built as small as possible. The earliest buildings were of logs, and heated by an immense fireplace. Occasionally a community would take pride in their school, and a building better than average would be constructed. In the best buildings, the entrance opened into a small anteroom. This sheltered the schoolroom from wintry blasts, and was also a place for the pupils to store their cloaks and lunches, and for the communal water bucket and dipper.

Blackboards were not common until 1820, and were considered an innovation. More efficient and less drafty stoves were not introduced until the 1830s. Frame schools were usually painted red, because like barn paint, it was the cheapest and longest-lasting paint.

Neighborhood schools provided a "primary" education up to eighth grade, and all the grades were taught together. In rural areas like Avon, this system prevailed until the 1940s.

District schools had two terms—summer school and winter school. Summer students were usually young, and if older, were female. Parents used school as "daycare," and sent children as young as two or three with older siblings to get the youngsters out from underfoot. Elementary studies predominated, as the requirements were minimal. Women, who taught the easier summer session, were paid \$4 to \$10 a month.

As boys were busy with farm chores during the agricultural season, they usually attended the four-month winter school, which began in early December. More advanced studies were the rule, and for this

reason, and because boys were considered more "difficult" students, the winter teacher was usually a man. He had to be possessed with considerable pluck, for it was universal that he and the older students would eventually come to a muscular clash.

The tutorial system of teaching was an absolute necessity in a one-room school with a single teacher. The typical school had a dozen or two students in grades one to eight. Each grade was taught a half-dozen subjects.

There was a recitation bench in front. The teacher called a class to the bench, and instructed all the students in the grade on a particular subject. When the teacher finished, the students returned to their seats, probably with some problem to be solved. The teacher then summoned another grade to the front for instruction. In that manner, students were taught in a one-room school with a single teacher.

However, the teacher assigned students who were particularly good in a subject to assist students who were having difficulty. For example if a sixth-grade girl was especially good in mathematics, the teacher might ask her to help a fourth-grade student who couldn't master the multiplication tables. The two would go to a quiet corner where the older student would help her younger colleague.

The scheme benefited everyone. The student having difficulty seemed to have an easier time learning from

another student about the same age. The tutor was pleased to receive compliments from the teacher and from the parents. The teacher was helped because there was not enough time in the day to adequately instruct all the pupils in all the subjects; furthermore, by having tutors helping other students, the classroom was actually quieter since there was less boredom. The parents were pleased that their children were learning from a teacher who lived in the community. The taxpayers were pleased because the education system was inexpensive.

One of the earliest frontier schools in the region was at Hartford (Avon) in 1789, a log building near the village square. A frame schoolhouse was erected east of the village about 1800, and a brick school was erected on Prospect St. in the village about the same time. East Avon built a brick school in 1810, and a North Avon school was erected of logs in 1812.

These early schools are now gone. Besides the later East Avon District School, which has become a pottery studio, one early school remains. The 1822 frame school, formerly located on East River Road near Elm Place, has been moved to the Genesee Country Village, Mumfords, NY. Here it has been preserved as a building helping to interpret the history of early schools in western New York.

- Philip Part, Caledonia Correspondent



Facebook Page

Check our Facebook page for upcoming events, photographs of Avon history, and to keep up-to-date with local projects, such as the renovations of the Avon Inn!

At left:
**The Avon Inn reception area,
November, 2016**

*Courtesy of the Avon Inn,
Facebook.com*



**Avon Preservation
and Historical Society**

Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414

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AP&HS Board of Trustees 2017

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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: _____

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



**2017 AP & HS
Program Info
Inside!**



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 30, No. 2 | May 2017

Message From The President

On April 3rd I had the pleasure of speaking to the ladies of the Esther Circle of the Central Presbyterian Church. The gracious ladies had invited me to talk about my father's side of the family and their history with the church. I learned a lot during my research and was surprised to learn that they go back to the beginning of the current church building, starting with my great-grandfather, Lyman Westfall.

The discussions were lively and the desserts wonderful. Thank you to Rev. Farmer for her input and gracious hosting, and to Betty Valentine for the invitation and tour of their beautiful church. I hope they will invite me back sometime.

Memorial Day will soon be here, and this holiday signals a multitude of things for many of us. It is the unofficial start of summer when we open our pools, start to cook and eat outside, watch a Memorial Day parade, and attend the ceremonies in the park. It's a day off from work and we can get together with friends and family, many of whom we haven't seen over the long, cold winter.

But in many ways it is the most sacred of our federal holidays because it's the one where we honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice defending our freedom and way of life. I always get a lump in my throat or mist in my eyes with the laying of the wreaths, the firing of the guns, and the playing of "Taps" after the speeches. Is there a more patriotic moment? It certainly is right up there.

Did you know it has a local connection? In May of 1966 President Johnson declared Waterloo, NY as the birthplace of Memorial Day. Many of our southern neighbors would take umbrage at that. Some would claim it started after the Civil War in Charleston, VA or perhaps Columbus, GA, as both had started setting aside a day to honor the fallen Confederate soldiers and put flowers on graves.

It was called Decoration Day for many years before it was changed to Memorial Day. The official day was May 30th until Congress changed it to the last Monday in May in the 1960s.

But it matters little who started it or where. It matters that we have a day set aside to honor these brave men and women. And when you see a veteran selling poppies, please buy one.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

Behind the Scenes

I thought that last year was busy; however, the first quarter of this year would put it to shame. Donations were received from the following: Robert McNinch (3 postcards); Arlene McShea (5 postcards and a newspaper clipping); Dorothy Jennings via Barbara Scott (1 Girl Scout pin and 13 Girl Scout patches); Daniel Cochrane (many Cub Scout items, a book, and some Boy Scout items); Wadsworth Library (33 books); St. Agnes (a numbering machine); Richard Burke (a book, some local documents, 1940 AHS football photo, Louise Moran's AHS graduation certificate, Father Brennan's obit, etc.); Lori DiSalvo (a book, "Songs for the Little Ones"); Connie Leone (WW II savings stamp book with stamps); Joseph Montesano (several documents and 2 fireproof bricks found by the Genesee River, made by Queen's Run Co. in Lock Haven, PA, c. 1835-1840); and a Genesee Valley Breeders' Association representative (collection of programs, 1922-1994 and 2000, minus 1993). Additionally, the Champaign County Historical Museum in Champaign, Illinois sent two LARGE boxes of newspaper articles, clippings, programs from local opera house events, and genealogy of the Dr. A. F. Smith and William Henderson families, as well as information illustrating relationships to some other local families. The donation from the Champaign Museum has given us information that we did not have, and will enrich our current collections. We are most grateful to the Wadsworth Library for their generous donation of local history reference books. If anyone has copies of the Genesee Valley Breeders' Association (GVBA) programs that we are missing, we would like to have them to complete the collection, if you are willing to part with them. Our volunteers continue to straighten files and input information into the database.

Thank you for your generosity.

- Joan Reid, AP&HS Curator



In Memoriam



Donald David LeFeber
(September 24, 1928 - March 6, 2017)

As a result of the recent passing of my father, I was asked to write an article about him. My father was a life-long resident of Avon; he was born in Avon and he died in Avon. His family goes back many generations in this town. The Williams, Wheelers, and Hogmires were all part of his family. He had a deep connection to Avon and its people. In this article, I will share a brief overview of his life and some of his favorite stories to tell.

My father was born September 24, 1928 in the "old house" on Reservoir Road. That's what we called the house that was on the farm my grandparents rented from the Wadsworth family. My grandparents, Lawrence and Olive Williams LeFeber, took over the farm on Reservoir Road in the 1920s. When they moved to Avon, they already had one child, Jean LeFeber Iler, my father's only sibling.

At a young age, Dad was put to work on the farm. My father would talk about the 27 workhorses they had on the farm and how they used to plow the fields. He'd reminisce about taking a team of horses and a sleigh to the pond at Ashantee in the wintertime. My father and grandfather would cut blocks of ice from the pond to be placed on the sleigh and hauled back home and stored for summer use. In high school, he would be scolded for falling asleep in class, but my dad would say he couldn't help it. He was expected to milk the cows before school and he'd get tired during the day. Despite the demands of farming, my father had a love of "working the ground" that lasted throughout his life.

Another passion of his was sports. In high school he played football, basketball, and ran track. One of his favorite sports memories happened during basketball season. In those days, the school relied on a parent to drive the basketball team to away games. One particularly cold evening, my grandfather was the parent assigned the task. He gathered up the team and started off to Nunda. My grandfather, who'd lived through some financially hard times, did not believe in heating a car. Thus, the team rode with no heat to their game. My father said they all got laughing so hard about being cold that by the time they got on the court they were very relaxed (and probably anxious to warm up) and easily beat the Nunda boys.

My father's love of Avon sports continued his whole life. As my brother, Craig, would often say, "Not only does Dad go to the games, but he goes to the practices, too!" My father was proud to have been at every opening football game for 77 consecutive years. In recent years, the announcer would declare his name and the number of years he had attended.

Another memory he enjoyed telling his grandchildren was about the time the school bus got stuck on Nations Road and the bus driver told him to run to the nearest house with a phone to call for help.

In 1958, my father and mother, Lucille Harvey, were married. They had 3 children: David, Craig, and me. When my Aunt Jean died, after a battle with cancer, my cousin, Marc, came to live with us. We moved into the "new house" that my parents built in 1974. Farming had its expected ups and downs. The workhorses were gone and tractors were in. The most difficult setbacks involved the seven fires, including one that destroyed all but one barn on Reservoir Road. At that time, my father moved his farming operation to Agar Road. He would continue to farm at that location until the 1990s.

The farm grew and my parents were able to buy land and build their own buildings. The farm continues to this day with my brother, David, running it. Along with farming and raising a family, my father was active in local government, attended school board meetings, and was a member of several farming organizations.

Throughout his life, my father expressed gratitude. He would often end a conversation with you by saying "thank you" or "I appreciate that." Growing up during the Great Depression and World War II had left him with a deep appreciation for family, community, and America. My father loved Avon; he loved telling stories from his youth and stories his parents and grandparents told him. A beautiful note was sent to me after my father's death, saying, "He was definitely a pillar of the community and his legacy will live on through his farm and his family." My father would be so happy to know he was appreciated.

Donald died March 6, 2017, at his home on Littleville Road, less than a quarter mile from the house in which he was born. My mother and his oldest grandson, Andrew, were by his side. He was 88 years old. We had had a conversation the day before he passed, and his final words to me were "thank you."

- Carole LeFeber Hayes, AP&HS Trustee



In Memoriam



Mahlon M. Hamilton

(November 12, 1919 - January 3, 2017)

Mahlon M. Hamilton, 97, of Stephens City, VA, formerly of Batavia, NY, passed away peacefully January 3, 2017 at Greenfield Reflections in Strasburg, VA, with his wife of 64 years, Lila, 88, at his bedside.

Mahlon "Ham" Hamilton was born on November 12, 1919 in Avon, NY, the son of Myron and Hettie Lucas Hamilton. Ham attended and graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University, where he was a member of the Chi Phi Fraternity. His senior year was interrupted by his service as a C46 and C47 pilot in the Army Air Corps in WWII in the CBI theatre, flying materials and supplies to allied forces in Burma, and evacuating wounded and prisoners of war. Later, he flew missions over the Burma Hump to China. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster and the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and honorably discharged as Captain, USAF. After the war, he was a health and physical education teacher and administrator at Oakfield-Alabama Central School, the State University of New York at Brockport, and Genesee Community College for 37+ years, during which time he coached and officiated various interscholastic sports, including football, basketball, baseball, tennis, swimming and diving. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Batavia, NY.

He was a member of the Avon School Hall of Fame, the Section V Hall of Fame where he was a coach and an official.

He was predeceased by his parents, his sisters and their husbands, George and Eleanor Hamilton MacIntyre, George and Jeanne Hamilton Oglivie, and long-time friends Bill Bruckel, Jean Batzing, and Dr. Richard Collins.

Mahlon married Lila R. Dean of Batavia on August 30, 1952. Surviving with his wife are his three daughters: Wendy Wygant and her husband Mike, of Stephens City, VA; Sally Dohse and her husband Jeff, of Centreville, VA; Amy Hamilton and Jeff Sanfrantello, of Batavia, NY; seven grandchildren: Tim and Brad Wygant of VA; Josh Wygant of Tacoma, WA; Jeffrey, Cameron and Emily Dohse of VA; Andrew Cowan of Batavia, NY; three great-grandchildren in VA; and several nieces and nephews, including nephew Bill MacIntyre of Avon.

A celebration of Ham's life will be held in Batavia, details to be announced at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the First Presbyterian Church, 300 East Main St., Batavia, NY 14020, or to the Veterans organization of your choice. Condolences may be sent to Lila Hamilton at 766 Germany Road, Stephens City, VA 22655.

- Submitted by Bill MacIntyre

AP & HS Programs



Suffragists in Western New York

Sunday, May 7, 2017

2:00-3:00 pm

Learn about the local fight for the women's right to vote – one hundred years ago this year! Presented by Christine Ridarsky, Rochester City Historian.

Women in 19th-Century Literature

Sunday, September 17th, 2017

2:00-3:00 pm

Presented by Dr. Caroline Woidat.

Wonder Women of Toys

Sunday, November 19, 2017

2:00-3:00 pm

Presented by Christopher Bensch,
curator of the Strong Museum of Play.

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 First Presbyterian Church of Avon



Figure 1. Courtesy of Livingston County Historian, Mt. Morris

The First Presbyterian Church of Avon is one of eight Avon properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Very simply, this 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. Being listed does not restrict the owner regarding changes to the property; however, it does increase the eligibility for grant funding.

The First Presbyterian Church of Avon was listed in 2005. As the oldest brick church in the surrounding counties, it is the last of the historical buildings standing at the four corners of East Avon. The National Register nomination was based on the Federal-style architecture and the building's contributions to our early settlement history.

In 1812, John Pearson initiated the building of the structure. Stones were gathered from local farms for the foundation, timbers were sawn at Josiah Watrous' sawmill on Little Conesus Creek, and the bricks were produced at a kiln south of Henty Road. Pearson was simultaneously building the White Horse Tavern across Rts. 5 & 20, but unfortunately he died on December 23, 1812, leaving both building projects in the hands of others to complete. Severe epidemics and the War of 1812 also slowed the process. By 1815 the brick

structure held a roof and supported a wooden steeple, providing the congregation with only an unfinished shell and seating of rough wood benches. The steeple collapsed a few years later, requiring a replacement. The congregation often met instead in a nearby schoolhouse until the new steeple and interior were finished in 1827, at which time it was dedicated as a Congregational Meetinghouse.

Two more steeples followed the original wooden structure and its replacement: one in 1841, and the present steeple installed during the extensive 1866 renovations. Also changed were the original doors, which can be seen, bricked over, in Figure 1. The first bell was installed in 1845, but was cracked by an exuberant striker in 1864, requiring replacement, which eventually happened in 1903.

Many shifts in membership occurred in the early years. In 1822, the congregation voted to join the Presbytery of Ontario, becoming fully Presbyterian in 1844. With the addition of the local railroad in 1854 came increased commerce in the village of Avon, which lured a group to establish a congregation there. The pressure to upgrade the East Avon church was made clear. The renovations in 1866 were made to the aging building to help retain members and entice new ones.

Stories about the church have been passed down through several accounts. One claimed the pews were shifted from facing south to north in response to the Civil War, symbolizing a turning of their backs on the south. Accounts of protecting escaping slaves persist to this day, most notably because of a small enclosure upstairs with a door latch that can only be secured from the inside. There is a window nearby looking to the west towards the site of the Pearson home (now Pioneer Truck Sales), which was also thought to be a partner in the Underground Railroad, leading to the possibility of the exchange of signals at the busy crossroads.



Figure 2. Courtesy of Livingston County Historian, Mt. Morris

Community Calendar

Avon Rotary Blue Jean Ball

May 13th, 2017 • 5-11pm

This fun, country event at the Avon Century Barn supports the Avon Rotary-Lions Ambulance - tickets are on sale now for \$35!

The historic Avon Century Barn was constructed by J. T. Wells and Sons of Scottsville in the year 1913. Wells barns were built primarily in the Genesee Valley with Wells' patented truss system of construction. Featuring elegant arched frames, the barn interiors were ready for any agricultural purpose the farmer desired, with no vertical and horizontal support beams to obstruct the open space. The barns are cathedral-like, which was especially useful for horse-drawn wagons full of hay to be driven in and unloaded.

Of the nearly 200 documented barns built between 1886 and 1942, only a small percentage survive, which makes the Avon Century Barn something special indeed. With their inviting and versatile spaces, some owners have gotten creative to extend the lives of their Wells barns – come see the Howlett family's gorgeous renovated event space that celebrates the integrity of the original structure.



Photograph courtesy of partymancatering.com

Avon Attic Days

Friday to Sunday, June 2-4, 2017

It's nearly time for our favorite community yard sale! The APHS will have wares for sale on Friday and Saturday only. If you have items to donate, please bring them to the Museum at least three days in advance so they may be priced. Thank you for your contributions, which help support the APHS!

Avon Rotary Corn Festival

Saturday, August 12

Save the date for Avon's annual summer festival celebrating our agricultural heritage and small-town spirit. More details coming in the summer issue of the newsletter.

Trees were planted in the 1850s to bring the feeling of a park. (See Fig. 2.) And more changes to the interior continued: The first pipe organ was installed in 1875, the first fellowship hall was built to the north in 1879, and replaced in 1923. To conserve energy, a barrel ceiling was installed in 1955, blocking the gallery. In efforts to become listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the ceiling was removed and the stencils in the gallery repainted, restoring the church to the style of 1866.

The four corners of East Avon are honored by the presence of this historic church. Its neighbors – the White Horse Tavern, which burned in 1955, the Pearson/Taintor home, which was destroyed in 1956 for a gas station, and the Wilbur home to the south – are all gone. (Photos can be seen at Avonpreservation.org/hamlets.) We are fortunate to have clerks and historians maintaining the records of this landmark, a legacy started in 1810, and a congregation that keeps the building in excellent condition, so that it may stand as a testament to our local history for years to come.

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee

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Quip

A small four year old was watching some cattle being driven by the Soldiers' Monument. Several auto horns were blown to hasten the animals along when the child asked, "Why don't the cows blow their horns?"

- Author unknown; submitted by Joan Reid from new acquisitions from Champaign Co. Historical Museum



Women's Agricultural Role in WWI



"Planting gardens, growing more food, and saving food are all war-time efforts of this government in which the women of America have co-operated loyally. We are all in the home army; the home army here must help the fighting forces and home armies over there; 120 million Allies must eat." (From the Livingston Republican, 15 Aug. 1918)

In early 1917, several great powers of the world had been at war for nearly three years. After provocation and constant rebuffing of his attempts at peacekeeping, President Woodrow Wilson requested Congress to declare war on Germany, and America entered the melee. By this time, America's perspective on the war was painted as a moral fight, a battle for democracy, and the "war to end war." The Selective Service was also instituted in May 1917 after it was clear that volunteer enlistments would not provide a large enough force. This was one hundred years ago in 1917, and this year we take a special moment to honor all the men and women from Avon who served in every capacity from nurses to soldiers.

Just before America's entry into the war, Charles Lathron Pack of Cleveland, OH organized the U.S. National War Garden Commission in March of 1917. Due to much of the European agricultural workforce engaging in the conflict and the conflicts themselves negatively impacting farmland, food shortages had erupted overseas. The campaign begun by Pack was based on the idea that home gardens could

bolster domestic productivity, reducing pressure on the food supply and assisting those allies in Europe. Food produced locally also lessened the drain on transportation resources needed for the war effort. The Commission promoted the use of public as well as private land for community gardens and backyard vegetable patches, calling them "war gardens," "victory gardens," or sometimes "food gardens for defense."

Once the U.S. entered the war, gardening became an even more patriotic activity, and also was seen as having a positive effect on morale. Women were encouraged to participate, which put their energy to use on the home front. Through the Education Department and the War Department, the United States School Garden Army was created and children and teens were engaged in the movement as well. In March of 1918, the Avon High School received 150 packets of seeds to aid in the growing of vegetables. Several girls from Avon High School had applied for farm-garden permits at this time, and about a dozen male students were joining the New York State Boys' Working Reserve to increase the agricultural workforce in the summer of 1918. According to the Avon News, they included Lindale Stephenson, Augustus Jenkins, Warren Pierson, Howard Greene, Bernard Bowman, Vernon Gardner, Wayne Caswell, Carl Sackett, William Whyland, and Clarence Morse.

It is clear that Avon High School students did engage in the movement, but it is not known exactly how involved the rest of the community of Avon became. However, snippets in local papers, such as the Livingston Republican out of Geneseo, promoted gardening activities during 1917 and 1918. The County Races and Fair, held at Avon in September 1918, had special prizes for new exhibits relating to the war effort, including best war garden. Businesses jumped in with advertisements for seeds and equipment, even capitalizing after the fact. For example, this hopeful ad from Batavia in March of 1919 claims victory gardens will be planted by many of one's neighbors again this year - even though the war was over.

According to Charles Pack, when he reported on the success of his campaign, victory gardens were reported to number 5 million across the nation by the end of the war in November 1918. The value of all the produce grown by the citizens of America, including many women and young people on the home front, was over \$1.2 billion.



Plant a Victory Garden

Thousands of people in this vicinity who had successful "War Gardens" are going to plant Victory Gardens this spring. It is none too early to begin planning, to go over the records of your work last year and decide what to plant. A good garden is a great money-maker and most men and women enjoy the pleasant exercise of taking care of growing things.

SEEDS of Extra Value

There will be shortages of seeds again this year. But don't be stampeded into ordering from out-of-town. "Buy at Home." As usual we will have seeds especially tested for growing in this climate and locality.

The Steele & Torrance Co.
 The House With Seed Experience
 No. 84 Main Street Batavia, New York



Batavia Daily News, 15 Mar. 1919.

Some women went beyond the small backyard garden and took on new roles to support the "boys" overseas. The Women's Land Army of America (WLAA) was fashioned after the original British Women's Land Army and put women into agricultural roles vacated by men who were on the fighting front. Closely associated with schools and colleges, many women laborers were students or teachers, or held occupations where they were able to take on seasonal agricultural work. The movement began in 1917 at Bedford, N.Y., "with no support from the farmers, and little encouragement from anyone else," according to one Livingston Republican article. Most women had never worked on farms before, and the term "farmerette" was used, at first pejoratively; many opponents believed that women were not strong enough to do the agricultural work. Later, the term came to be embraced even by those women it described, similar to the word "suffragette." The battle for women's rights had moved, in a way, to the fields.

Farmerettes were filling the places of men who had been drafted, so they worked 8-hour days. Female workers usually lived in camps during their employment in practical and rather militaristic simplicity, with tin mess kits, bedding, and limited extras. The Rochester branch of the WLAA established several camps near Lake Ontario, which enlisted farmerettes to assist with the cherry harvest in June of 1918, according to the Democrat and Chronicle. "Must take it seriously," commanded the paper, as it described the regulation blue jeans or overalls farmerettes would wear while on the job. No "fussy" clothes were allowed, and the young ladies would adhere to a strict schedule. It was indeed a serious and patriotic business, as fruit on the trees would go to waste if it could not be harvested.

August of 1918 saw a convention in Albany to assess the success of the New York Women's Land Army, and New York State, it seemed, was surprised by the results. "The farmerette is no longer an object of derision," stated the Livingston Democrat of Geneseo. "Her work has been of genuine assistance to the agricultural program." Women workers had risen to the challenge of plowing, harvesting, haying, and other tasks traditionally undertaken by male farm laborers. Some farmers who were at first skeptical of the movement eventually seemed grateful for the labor force which had been awaiting a call to action. Forty camps had been established in New York State at that time, and leaders of the WLAA were pushing for 200 for the coming season.

For Livingston County's part, one item in a paper of July 1918 suggested that an organized land army effort had not been instituted in the area. Only when Normal School students at Geneseo made a rescue effort the summer before did some over-ripening crops finally get harvested. Late in 1918, there was a camp in Genesee County, still touted as an experiment. By 1920, due to lack of support after the end of the war in 1918, the WLAA had dissolved. It seems probable that Avon, and the rest of Livingston County, was somewhat late to embrace a large-scale practice of employing women as farm laborers, and by the time that interest was building, the war ended and the movement subsided. Still, the movement of the victory garden and the farmerette began, slowly, to prove that women were eager to undertake new roles on the home front to support the war effort.

- Holly Watson, Editor



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



Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414

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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: _____

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



Photo of the Avon rail yard, posted by AP&HS, 18 Mar. 2017.

"My Dad worked for Erie Lackawanna when I was young. We could hear the train whistle from my house on Genesee Street when the train delivered cars to the Birds Eye plant on Spring Street. We knew it would be time to pick up my Dad at the depot soon after. Such sweet memories."

- Mary Ann E.

"Sometimes I drop what I'm doing and jump into the car to watch the Alcos shift Barilla or the Avon yard. Timed correctly, you can make the Triphammer crossing and the bridge on Pole Bridge road as they head back to Livonia. Love to listen to that big Alco chant and those turbos whining. Smell the diesel and creosote on a hot day."

- John L.



Miss Emma Rettig and the White Horse



Photo courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office (NY)

In 1920, when Miss Emma Rettig purchased this hotel property at the four corners of East Avon, she found a small horse sculpture made of tin perched upon the roof. Milton Smedley, a prior owner, had bestowed the name of White Horse Tavern upon the building, which had been known as Newman House well before Smedley's time. The sign out front also featured a white horse prancing, but Miss Rettig wasted no time in removing the tin horse.



Photo courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office (NY)

This throwback to the White Horse's younger years shows the original sculpture that stood in front of the White Horse Tavern. It was made of wood, with a fresh black mane and tail, and stood watch along the road from about 1920 to 1930. Miss Rettig, having taken down the first tin horse from the roof, replaced it with this life-size statue.



Possibly the Misses Emma and Mabel Rettig, proprietresses of the White Horse Tavern.

Photo courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office (NY)

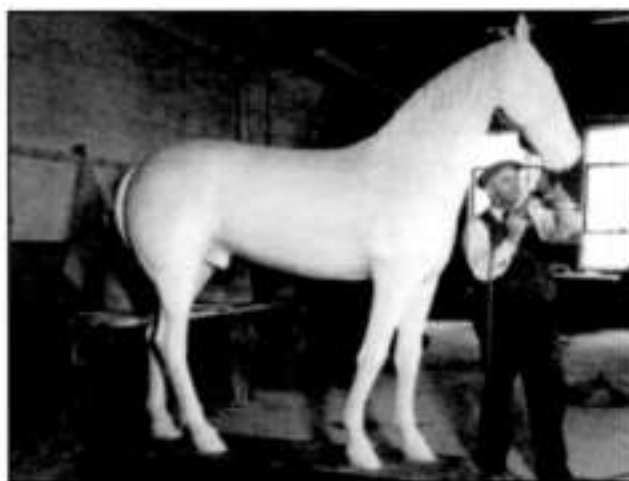


Photo courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office (NY)

In 1930, the old wooden horse was "weather-beaten" according to newspaper accounts, and Miss Rettig commissioned a new sculpture to be made in a similar style to the original. By now it was so iconic that people far and wide knew of the horse and the tavern it promoted. Instead of wood, this was carved from Norristone, modeled by John Alexander and carved by F. W. Howell, as seen in the above image. This grander specimen, said to resemble a tall Percheron, is iconic and still stands loyally at the corner in East Avon, though his tavern and stables burned down many years ago.

In Memoriam



George E. Cullinan
(April 9, 1927 - April 25, 2017)

On April 25th, 2017, we lost lifelong Avon resident, George Cullinan, just days after celebrating his 90th birthday. If you've lived in Avon for any length of time, chances are you probably knew or knew of George. He was one of 6 children of Frank and Mary Agnes Cullinan.

George spent most of his life here except for the time he served in the U.S. Navy (1945 - 1947) where he received two service medals. After his discharge, he completed his education at his beloved University of Notre Dame. In 1951 he married Martha Collins and they raised their three children, Mary Joan, Rick (deceased), and Peter.

After working a few years for Household Finance Corp. and living in Arlington, VA, he and Martha returned to Avon, and in partnership with his brother, Tim, purchased the Avon Hardware Corp. In 1972 he sold his share to Tim when he accepted a sales job with Hardware Wholesalers Corp.

He was a community leader who served 20 years on the Town Board, was a founding member of the Avon Ambulance Corps and served on the boards of both St. Agnes Church and St. Agnes School.

I was always amazed by George's sense of history and his ability to tell a story with detail and wit. And humor. He had total recall until the day he died.

I last saw George shortly after this past Christmas at the assisted-living facility where he resided. Although he suffered from health issues the last few years, he never lost his sense of humor or the twinkle in his eye, especially when telling a story.

We at the AP&HS were fortunate to do a couple of interviews with George over the years about Avon. These will be available soon on our website or at the Avon Library, along with many other taped interviews. Last year we did a fascinating one with George, Mr. Steele and Mr. Beason together.

It's sad when we lose these fixtures of our community, but fortunate to have had them for so long.

- Bob Westfall, AP&HS President

AP & HS Programs



Women in 19th-Century Literature

Sunday, September 17th, 2017
2:00-3:00 pm

Presented by Dr. Caroline Woidat.

Wonder Women of Toys

Sunday, November 19, 2017
2:00-3:00 pm

Presented by Christopher Bensch,
curator of the Strong Museum of Play.

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 Building of Interstate 390 Through Avon

Completed in 1981, the original purpose of Route 390 was to connect Rochester to the Southern Tier and to address "transportation deficiencies." Indeed, if Rt. 390 had not been built, our local roads, especially Rt. 15, would be very congested. Hearings were held in Avon on July 9, 1970 to educate the public about the plans, which inspired 323 people to speak or write comments on the optional routes through Avon, most favoring Route B.



A Draft Environmental Statement was prepared by the NYS Dept. of Transportation, dated January 1972. Some excerpts show the anticipated detrimental effects of Route A, which would have crossed Routes 5 and 20 between Avon and East Avon, including an interchange:

"Alternative A would have many adverse effects on this area."

"Although steps could be taken to improve the aesthetics of the expressway through landscaping and landform design, Alternative A forms an artificial barrier dividing a projected community."

"Providing utilities and other facilities would be more difficult and services such as school bussing and mail would be more costly due to the lack of a continuous street system. Finally, a loss of unity between the two divided communities could hinder the efforts which are necessary to achieve goals common to the good of both."

Because of the responses received from civic groups, local and state officials and the transcript from the public hearing, the Department of Transportation revised the location of the highway to what we have today.

A legal notice posted August 1972 stated:

"This location has been developed in response to expressed desires to avoid recreation and conservation areas and to best serve the anticipated development in the affected communities."

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee

Avon Corn Festival

The Corn Festival, celebrating Avon's history of agriculture, is almost here! Come join us on Genesee Street for vendors, food, music, and fun for the family on Saturday, August 12th from 10am-6pm.

The AP&HS will set up in front of the Avon Library and will be selling memorabilia, historical books and items, and the new 2018 calendar featuring farms of Avon. We will also be offering two raffles this year: a beautiful handmade quilt by Loose Ends featuring the iconic East Avon Native American statue, and a cordless string trimmer generously donated by Cub Cadet.

Our Museum, located at 23 Genesee Street, will be open during the Corn Festival. We will also be offering tours of the third floor of the Opera Block at 10 am, 1 pm and 3pm!

After visiting the AP & HS booth, peruse the wares available from Golden Oak Farm (Alpacas), LuLaRoe, Tauro Woodworks, Lemongrass Spa, and so many more. Enjoy a variety of food, including cotton candy, piña colodas, grilled cheese sandwiches, and of course, fresh corn on the cob. Return at 7:00pm for a concert by the Skycoasters! See you there!



Photo courtesy of avonrotary.org

Barber - Mulligan Farm

Aaron Barber, Jr. was born in Connecticut in 1806. By 1810 he was living in western New York with his mother and siblings, as his father had died. He was depended upon to support the family as a young boy and did so by "industry and enterprise." This ambition helped him develop into a successful landowner.

In 1840, Barber and his wife Lois Stevens and family of three children moved to what would become Barber Road in Avon. In 1852, Barber built a main farmhouse along with three outbuildings – a horse barn, carriage house and corncrib, all in the Greek Revival style. This was the beginning of a dairy farm that has continued to this day.



Lithograph of the Barber home. Source: Livingston County 1858 wall map



Barber's home in 2015

Barber grew many crops at this time, including hay, barley, wheat, oats, Indian corn, potatoes, and apples. He specialized successfully in shorthorn cattle and Merino sheep and also raised pigs and poultry. Tax records show major improvements to the land in 1874, and this likely reflects the building of a major barn complex.



Barn complex, 1920. Source: Mulligan family collection.

Barber - Mulligan Farm

Following this expansion, it was necessary to build a tenant house. Therefore a Victorian house was built next door in 1882.

His cows were nationally ranked, claiming blue ribbons in many state fairs all over the U.S. In 1918, a sketch of his well-bred cow was published in "Shorthorn Cattle" by Alvin Howard Sanders and Bryant Cowan stating:



Victorian tenant house, Barber Road, 2017



Mary Abbottsburn 7th, circa 1898 on the Barber Farm.
Source: Livingston County Historian's Office

"She fed kindly from the start, and, as a buxom heifer of rare promise, was bought by Aaron Barber, York State's enthusiastic admirer of good Short-horns, at the round price, for those times, of \$1,000—after winning the yearling heifer championship over all breeds at the Illinois State Fair of 1894. She matured into one of the noblest cows of any breed known to the American cattle trade. She had a back like a billiard table and her wide, deep ribs and long, level quarters were wrapped in a wealth of flesh that constantly recalled the carcass of her illustrious sire. From 1894 to 1898, inclusive, Mary Abbottsburn 7th, in the hands of Mr. Barber, was the unrivaled queen of American Short-horn cows."



Aaron Barber III

Barber III and his wife Caroline Hall had no children, so when he became elderly he put the property up for sale. In 1920, Edward Mulligan and his wife Frances (Nancy) Taylor purchased the amassed properties and started a family. They bought their first Guernsey cows in 1922, farmed the land and raised sheep and chickens. After Ed's death in 1964, sons Livingston (Mike) and John operated the dairy farm.

The Mulligan Farm was the first property in Avon to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1980, Nancy and her son Mike Mulligan were inspired to pursue the designation after the potential routes for Interstate 390 came close to going through the center of the farm. The National Register nomination was unusual as it included 640 acres and a total of 35 barns, houses and outbuildings. The acceptance was based on the "large collection of nineteenth-century rural buildings which continue to play an active part in the agricultural industry of the region." Unfortunately, the

original barn complex burned due to a lightning strike in 2009, gutting the historic core of the farm. However, maintaining the historical integrity of the farm continues. Also in 2009, the original farm was placed under easement through the Genesee Valley Conservancy, protecting it from further non-agricultural development.

Mike's son Jeffrey now operates the expanded business, having added new barns and milking parlor, and farming enough acreage to support a milking a herd of 1,200 cows.



Edward Mulligan

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee

Ventures In Maple Sugar

It is well known that Dutch investors purchased large tracts of land in upstate New York during the early white settlement period. But a lesser-known aspect of their ventures is the Dutch sugar stumbles of the 1790s.

Banking firms in Holland were trying to follow the lead of the Pulteney family of Britain, and invest in lands as yet unsettled by white pioneers in Pennsylvania and New York. The Dutch, however, were not only interested in making money by selling farm lots to homesteaders – they had an idea of cornering the market on sugar, and driving the cane sugar suppliers out of business. Investors thought they could satisfy the world's sweet tooth with the dried sap of the sugar maple tree. The financiers had learned about maple sugar from their agent, Theophilus Cazenove. He had tried the delightful sweet from the Indians, and often wrote about it. In early 1791 the matter was determined; funds were raised for the enterprise among five companies, among whom the expenses and profits would be equally divided.

Gerrit Boon of Rotterdam was selected to go to America, purchase the necessary lands, and manage the sugar business. He and Jan Lincklaen set sail in April 1791, and arrived in Philadelphia in June. The men set out in August to select the "proper" land, and in doing so travelled 2,600 miles. They considered, and rejected, western Pennsylvania, Vermont, the Connecticut River valley, and the Genesee Valley. After maple trees, the main requirement was easy transportation to an eastern seaport, which ruled out, in part, our fine valley. In 1792 they investigated eastern New York. They were looking for 100,000 contiguous acres with an uncontested title, and eventually focused on land south of Fort Stanwix where Boon bought an initial holding of 30,000 acres. Another speculator, learning of the riches to be made from maple trees, bought 110,000 acres in the Black River area.

While these purchases seem large today, the Dutch were then considering something grander: the purchase of all New York State west of the Genesee River. However, while the Dutch land titles were clear in central New York, in the Genesee Country, the Indian title had yet to be secured.



Image: duckminifarm.com

In February 1793 Boon was in place making plans for his sugar experiment. From his holding of 30,000 acres he had selected a sample site of 17 acres. The trees were on a hill, and Boon planned for the sap to flow to the bottom of the hill to be boiled. He hired 24 axe-men to chop down all but the maple trees. The crew got off to a bad start. The Yankees thought they knew how to chop trees, but Boon wanted them to work his way, and soon half of the crew was discharged. The maples were young trees, which Boon seemed to believe was an advantage. In his calculations, he expected that 10,000 acres would be eventually "farmed" for sugar, yielding 1.5 million pounds of sugar per year. (Evidently, Boon believed that the sap would run all year round, but indeed it has only short season in the late winter.)

By summer of 1793 all 17 acres had been prepared. On the banks of Cincinnatus Creek a saw mill had been erected to furnish lumber for the houses of the expected workers, but more importantly, to make wooden tubes to carry the sap by gravity to the boiling house at the foot of the hill. His carpenters did not know how to make the necessary tubes, so Boon spent the winter in Albany. He found a woodworker willing to construct troughs for the trial. They were thin and very expensive to manufacture.

In February 1794 Boon was back in his woods with a collection of troughs. The trees were tapped and troughs installed at every tree. These were hooked to larger collection troughs, which ran to a reservoir at the bottom of the hill. The system worked, temporarily, but cycles of freezing and thawing, although ideal for sap-gathering, damaged the thin wooden troughs. They leaked, and the sap was lost. Other trough designs were tried, but without success. Apparently Boon never considered a bucket at every tap, a horse-drawn sled containing a large vat, and a crew to empty each bucket into the vat.

The Holland investors terminated the venture in November 1794, and had to pay expenses of more than 38,000 guilders, and this was after 800 guilders of maple sugar profit.

In 1795 Boon explored land to the north and started the settlement known as Boonville. In 1798, another Hollander, Adam G. Mappa succeeded Boon as agent, and Boon returned to Holland, somewhat in disgrace for, in part, a financial disaster in the maple syrup business. Perhaps if he had taken time to learn about maple sugaring from the Iroquois and other American Indians he met, things would have turned out differently.

- Philip Parr, Caledonia Correspondent

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Long and Watkins



Uncovering the history of an old house can come from unlikely places. Recently I found a "gold nugget" in the cellar of our home on Genesee Street. On the back of an old piece of doorframe molding was the name B. Long, Avon, N.Y., written in bold cursive.

It wasn't the name I expected.

William Carter was the original owner of our house. So who was B. Long?

I contacted our family friend, Holly Watson, Deputy Livingston County Historian. "Do you know a B. Long that would have been alive around 1890?" I asked. Her response helped me uncover a little-known story about Avon's past.

B. Long was Benjamin Long, and he had a partner, Myron C. Watkins. In the Avon section of the 1880 Directory of Livingston County, "Long & Watkins" were listed as "contractors and builders" on Cure St. (today's Wadsworth Ave.) Holly noticed they were not listed in the directory of 1868 or 1891. I did some digging and discovered the two men had once been successful business partners in Avon. Here's their story.

Both men were born in Lima, N.Y., only five years apart – Long in 1834 and Watkins in 1839. Watkins served in the Civil War as a sergeant in the 27th Regiment, N.Y. Volunteers and fought at Antietam, Bull Run, and Fredericksburg. The regiment lost 74 men by war's end, two of them close comrades of Watkins. It seems likely that Long also served during the war, and came home to Lima.

By 1873, Long had proven his construction abilities by building the "Lima Church" designed by famed local architect, Andrew Jackson Warner. In a eulogy after his death, Long was cited as having built many of the prominent buildings in the village of Lima.

In 1876 the two men left Lima and moved their families to Avon, where they formed the business Long & Watkins. Long was 42 at the time and Watkins 37. That same year they built the iconic Clark Opera House Block in downtown Avon. Also that year, Long was elected elder of the new Central Presbyterian Church of Avon, N.Y., which included a total of 44 other members at its inception. He and Watkins had built both the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches on Genesee St.

The Methodist Church would prove to be a turning point in Watkins's life. The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle of Oct. 17, 1879, reported that he fell twenty feet while inspecting a wall of the Methodist Church. He dislocated and broke his arm and ankle. During the fall, he dislodged a number of bricks that hit him in the face near his right temple.

The fall nearly killed him. But after he recovered, he got back to work. By 1881 Watkins and Long had built nine churches and were building the Methodist Church in Naples, N.Y. In 1882 they went on to build the "New Catholic Church" in Rochester on East Avenue, then known as Sanford Street. Not only did they have contracts on churches, but in 1884, they were general contractors on another building by architect Andrew Jackson Warner, the P. Cox Shoe factory on Parce Avenue in Fairport.

By 1886, Long & Watkins had a long list of successes when they won the bid to build the addition to the Genesee Courthouse. (It is quite possible that our house was built at this time because the marble fireplace mantle that was in William Carter's office in the Genesee building was installed in what is now our dining room.)

The Courthouse addition would also prove nearly disastrous – this time for Long. Records show he survived a thirty-foot fall while working on the building.

By 1887 the record of Long & Watkins in Avon starts to dwindle. The last recorded building built by the men in Avon was the new Wadsworth Creamery. In 1889, after thirteen years of being in business together, the men appear to part ways. Long moves his family to Rochester, and within a year he heads to Marion, Indiana, to build the York Inn, a grand hotel that was the height of luxury in its day. Within a year of moving, Long dies from an illness in Marion in 1891 and is brought home for burial at Mount Hope Cemetery.

Watkins lived the rest of his life in Avon, passing at the age of 91 in 1930. He and his wife were mentioned many times in the Avon Herald, and they were both highly regarded members of the community. The company he founded, M.C. Watkins & Co., would continue to supply Avon with lumber, coal, and building materials until the late 1960s.

- Kyle Leonard, AP&HS Member



The York Inn, Marion, IN



**Avon Preservation
and Historical Society**
Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414

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Indicate desired membership level
() Individual \$10 () Business \$30
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Please make check payable to AP&HS
May we contact you to volunteer?
() Yes () No

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Facebook Page

Check out the 1852 Livingston County Map on the Library of Congress website - Was your house on the map in 1852? Where was the Genesee Valley Canal? What old family names are still in Avon today, 165 years later? Go online and zoom right in on Avon!



There is a square on my corner, indicating a house, and I see a name that says either Dann or Davin, can't make out the writing. But according to my Deed, the house was built in 1900.
- Dennis D.

I believe I see our home built circa 1834.
-Deirdre P.



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 29, No. 4 | November 2017

The Red Jacket Coach

In 1894, Emmett and Ella Jennings built their beautiful Georgian colonial home on the east side of the Avon village. The 7,700 square foot mansion was designed by J. Foster Warner and still stands today, always having been known as Charlton Farm.

Emmett was born in Rochester, NY in 1865, graduated from Harvard, and returned home to work in his family's Rochester-based business, Keeler & Jennings, building fashionable carriages and sleighs. In 1894, he and his new wife, Ella Durand, moved to Charlton, raised hunter-style horses and maintained one of the best-known stables in the Genesee Valley.

For the summer of 1899, Emmett became coachman of the Red Jacket Coach, which offered a round trip between Rochester and Avon in just 4 hours.

According to The Henry Ford, a museum of innovation, coaching was the "extreme sport" of choice in late 19th- and early 20th century America. Of course, the ability to maintain a vehicle, attendants, and a stable of horses precluded any but the wealthier classes from fully participating. The English mail coach, which had carried the mail as well as passengers and their luggage before railroads took over the task, was the inspiration for the sport coaches, which were sturdy yet elegant. The rising industrial tycoon class took eagerly to the image and challenge of handling four spirited horses while navigating the streets in a coach, and doing this gracefully could earn high esteem among peers of the same social strata. *Continued on next page*

Below: The Red Coach providing service between Avon and Rochester, 1899. Image courtesy of the Avon Town Historian.



Continued from previous page



Emmett Jennings, c. 1899, image courtesy of the Avon Town Historian

Although most of the wealthy people who owned road coaches used them for sport driving, some operated them as public coaches. Pelham Town Historian Blake A. Bell wrote on his blog that it became a fad amongst the equine elite to run a four-in-hand and take passengers, which was rather popular around the turn of the last century. Seward Cary of Buffalo was one of the so-called “millionaire coachmen” who engaged in the sport of “public coaching” or “road coaching.” Blake writes,

“The purpose of the sport was to rush the carriage between designated points on a specified schedule, with quick changes of horses at strategic points along the way, and to maintain that schedule rigorously.”

Although in theory anyone who paid the fare could ride, in practice the exclusive customers were “in society.” Invariably, they sat up on top of the coach, where they could see – as well as be seen. It was likely a mark of their class to be perched atop the rumbling coach and passing everyone else at a fast clip.

The driver, called “the whip,” sat on a seat that was backless, so he could lean against the reins. The most prestigious guest sat on the box with the whip and the other passengers rode behind on seats with cushioned metal backs. Some faced forward, others backward. Two center benches could hold up to 10 passengers. The elegantly upholstered, though stuffy, interiors were reserved strictly for picnic hampers, spare wraps, servants, and the occasional extra groom.

From a pamphlet advertising the Red Coach:

“Every morning at 10 o’clock the coach will start from the Powers Hotel, Rochester. Its route will be up East Main Street, the principal business part of the city, out East Avenue, passing all of the finest residences of Rochester and thence through Highland Avenue and the beautiful new South Park, a most charming drive and affording lovely scenery all the way.

Charlton Farm, postcard, APHS collection

“The first change of horses will be at Ballantine Bridge, and with the second relay the coach will pass on through the famed valley of the Genesee, concerning the scenery of which surely nothing need be said. At Scottsville, a pretty little village, the second change of horses will be made and the Red Jacket will start again on its journey through still more lovely country, catching glimpses now and then of the picturesque Genesee River.

“When Avon is reached the coach will pull up at the St. George Hotel at noon, where Smedley will serve his delicious luncheon at 1 o’clock in a private dining room.

“For the return trip the coach will leave the St. George Hotel at 2:15 p. m. arriving at the Powers Hotel at 4:30 p. m. The entire distance of 44 miles will be covered with six relays of four horses each and the passengers will have two hours in Avon.”

The round trip fare was \$5; one way, \$3; entire coach, 12 seats, round trip, \$50; one way, \$30; box seat, extra, \$1. Many old timers here well recall how they rushed uptown to be there when the Red Jacket drew up before the hostelry where genial Milt Smedley was invariably waiting to welcome the guests to Avon. “

- Published in *Democrat and Chronicle*.
Rochester, NY. August 14, 1932.

Seward Cary, the owner and principal coachman, donated the Red Jacket Coach to the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society in 1939, where it is today.

- Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee,
with information from Richard Heye,
Pavilion Historian

Sources:

Bell, Blake A. “Historic Pelham.” historicpelham.blogspot.com. 2017.
The Henry Ford. “Private Road Coach, 1906.” thehenryford.org. 2017.



In Memoriam: Barb Anderson

Although not a native to the area, Barb's very open, welcoming, and loving personality, along with her willingness to jump in and make things happen, allowed her to quickly acclimate and eventually become integral to Avon in many ways. The community showed appreciation in 2013 by naming her the Citizen of the Year. It was an honor she cherished.

Barb grew up in Elmira Heights and then chose to attend SUNY Geneseo to major in Education. While there, she fell in love with both Dick Anderson and the Genesee Valley. Upon graduation, she taught in the Rush-Henrietta district before she and Dick married. They formed both a marriage and a partnership lasting 40-plus years, each using their talents to run Anderson Farms dairy business and raising the joy of their lives, their children, Cynthia, Jim, and Liz.

Barb and Dick shared their passion and joy with anyone and everyone through field trips to the barn with cookies and milk in the kitchen after. The Anderson home was always a place where all were welcome. The house was always open to new friends and old.

Barb's relationship with others was much like her relationship with God - always present, filled with generosity and compassion for others. Barb was a woman who willingly offered herself, her gifts and talents and even her home to others.

At Central Presbyterian Church, among other things, Barb was a deacon, she served on session, and led the bazaar for many years - her list of activities is endless. When there was a position that needed to be filled and no one in sight, Barb would willingly volunteer and give it her all. Her care for others did not end with the



church; she was one of the founding members of the Lioness Club.

Barb knew how to live fully aware of her blessings: just look at her flower gardens. She always took time to bring beauty to the earth - not only at her home, but also as a member of the Avon Garden Club.

Ultimately, it was children she loved to grow!

Barb started the Avon Ladies 4-H Club and then made room for the boys when they wanted a club. She taught Sunday School at church for many years. Then there was the influence she had on the children of Avon whom she taught and cared for as her own, believing in them and their potential as she taught in both the county and the Avon district for many years.

Barb was really born to be a teacher. She taught by example as well as through textbooks and curriculum. She loved children and they, too, loved her.

In her final years, Barb remained active in many things, but the greatest joy was spending time with her grandsons: Alex, Josh, and Nathanael. The teacher in her would read to them, help them with writing, and teach them RESPONSIBILITY, while the grandmother took great joy in granting them wishes, watching their sports or musical performances, and just spending time with her boys.

The morning Barb died, Liz took a picture of a rainbow from the front of the house that was later posted on Facebook. Once again, the beauty of the earth spoke to the Anderson family. It was almost like Barb was whispering into their ears - 'Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'

- Cynthia Anderson

Washday



Irons at the Big Springs Historical Society, Caledonia; image courtesy of author.

The days of the week were set aside for certain activities. Folks only washed once a week, and unless it was very stormy, Monday was washday. It took all day, and was usually done in the kitchen. The method described here was used by everyone from the 1920s until after WW II. The only improvements that came in this period were hot water heaters, which eliminated the chore of heating water on the stove, and electric clothes irons, which were a wonderful advancement over the heavy sad irons. Sad irons were so-called from the Middle English for "solid" and were made from solid metal.

On washday, the large washing machine was first brought in from its storage place on the back porch, together with two large, galvanized washtubs and their wooden stands. The washing machine had



no internal water heater, so water was heated to boiling on the stove and placed in the machine with soap. The clothes that were less soiled were washed first. The washer had a back-and-forth agitator similar to

those found on modern machines. Of course there was no automatic timer, and so when it was judged that the clothes were clean, the agitator was stopped, and the washer pump was used to transfer the hot soapy water to one of the galvanized tubs. The washer was then filled with hot, clear, rinse water from the kettles on the stove. The agitator was engaged again to loosen the soap from the clothes.

Next, the pair of wringer rollers was swung over the washer and the gears engaged to power them. After untangling the wet clothes from the washer, they were fed one at a time through the rollers. The wrung-out clothes would be caught in the second galvanized tub, the water from the wringer falling back into the washer. One had to be especially careful with clothes that contained buttons. The wringers had a way of crushing them, and if that happened, you just made more work for yourself, for the buttons would have to be replaced. The rollers were made of a yellowish rubber, and after a period of use they became hard, cracked, and non-compliant, and would more easily crack buttons.

After the first load had been wrung out, the tub of still-wet clothes was lugged to the back porch where one end of the double pulley line was located. Usually there was a little stool to stand on to reach the line, and with a mouthful of wooden clothespins, the wet clothes were attached to the line and wheeled out into the sunshine. The clothesline was made of braided cotton, which stretched. Every woman had a U-shaped "gadget" inserted in the line that made it easy (in theory) to take up the slack in the line. It was important to have a tight line, for if it were too loose, the rope might untrack from the far pulley. If that happened, it was necessary to get out the ladder, for the pulley was at least ten feet from

Maytag washer, c. 1950, similar to one used by author's mother. Image courtesy of author and Big Springs Historical Society, Caledonia.

the ground, attached to a stout pole or tree. After the load of clothes was hung, a prop was stuck under the line to keep it from sagging too much.

In the winter, the housewife went from the warm kitchen to the cold outside with bare, wet hands to hang the line. Soon the wet clothes would be frozen as stiff as boards - the housewife, also. In the summer it was insufferably hot in the kitchen, and with the exertion, she nearly fainted. It is no wonder women developed arthritis.

After the first batch was washed it was time for the second batch, this time with clothes that were more soiled. The wash and rinse waters were reused, since it was so much trouble to heat more water on the stove. Usually the third wash was reserved for the most soiled clothes, including the cloth diapers, which had been soaking in a pail.

Since Monday was washday, Tuesday was ironing day. The clothes were retrieved from the line Monday evening, and carefully put in sorted piles for ironing. Everything was ironed, including sheets, handkerchiefs, and even socks. Ironing was also done in the kitchen, because the heavy sad irons had to be heated on the stove. The housewife had several irons of different sizes for different purposes, and because while one iron was

in use, others had to be heated on the stove. Ironing well was an art. If the iron was too cold, the cloth would not be properly pressed. If it was too hot, the material could be scorched. Then too, cotton, wool, linen, and silk had to be treated differently.

Because the sad irons did not provide steam (as modern irons do), it was necessary to sprinkle dry clothes with a small amount of water so they would self-steam when pressed. Many items, but especially men's shirts, were starched with a thin mixture of cornstarch and water. Starched clothes were especially easy to scorch. It took 20 minutes to starch and iron a shirt.

The fashions of the day furthermore challenged the washer and made for hard, involved work. If my mother was forced to choose, however, between an electric refrigerator and an electric washer, I think she would pick the "ice box."

- Philip Parr, Caledonia Correspondent

Visit the Big Springs Historical Society
Sundays and Thursdays from 1-4pm
to see their excellent collection of
vintage irons and washing machines!

AP & HS Program

Wonder Women of Toys

Sunday, November 19, 2017 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm

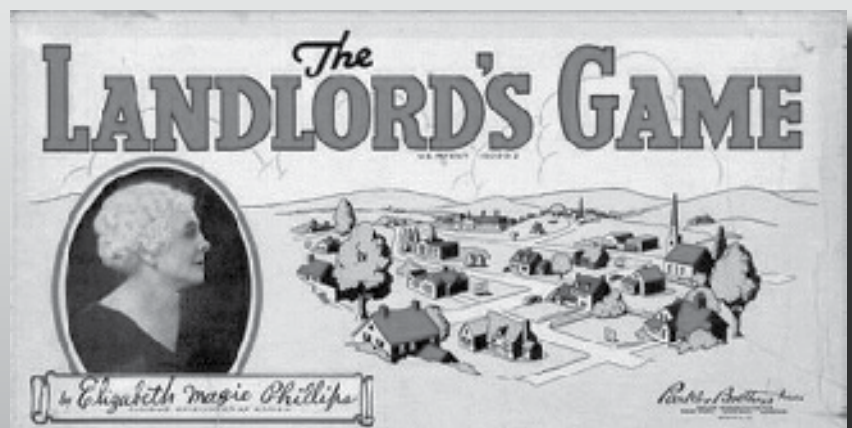
Christopher Bensch, curator of the Strong Museum of Play, returns to APHS to share his research on women who invented toys.

Did you know that Elizabeth Magie patented the first Monopoly game, known as the Landlord's Game, in 1904? What might be the history of Barbie? Come find out at our last program of 2017!

All programs 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.



Big Iron Horses



Harold Credit.

Image courtesy of John Dittrich.

"Big iron horses rolled across Five Arch Bridge and me and my Grandpa would watch from the ridge."

These are the opening lines of "Big Iron Horses," a song written by John Dittrich of the Grammy-nominated country group Restless Heart. It was the title song of their 1992 album, and when released as a single, made the Billboard country chart in 1993. The song is "lovingly dedicated" to the memory of Harold J. Credit.

I always wondered who these people were and what their connection to Avon was – it turns out: lots!

I decided to try and contact John Dittrich through Restless Heart's website. To my surprise, John got back to me the same day. He said that his mother, Mary Louise (Credit) Dittrich, came across a photo of John and his brother holding their grandfather Harold's hands when they were children. Mary Lou graduated from Avon Central School around 1940. She married Fred Dittrich, a doctor for the VA, and was sent to Syracuse and later Batavia. John lived in Avon for a few months before moving to Batavia.

John's grandparents were Harold and Lottie Credit, who originally lived on Lacy Street and later moved to 4679 Littleville Road where they lived for many years.

"When the last train left Avon, no one was there. I guess they didn't know, I guess they didn't care."

Harold Credit worked for the Erie Railroad for many years. Avon was a very busy depot from the nineteenth century

Credit and Dittrich families at 50th wedding anniversary celebration. Kneeling, far right: John Dittrich; Frederick Dittrich, standing 2nd from the right, with wife Mary Lou (Credit) Dittrich standing in front of him. Image courtesy of John Dittrich.

until after World War Two. Passenger trains made several trips a day to Rochester, Attica, Buffalo, etc. Although it is still used today to bring supplies to and from local plants like Kraft and Barilla, it's up to the stories handed down by people like Harold and Lottie Credit to people like their grandchildren to remind us of the glory days of Avon and the Erie Railroad. John Dittrich memorializes these remembrances in his song "Big Iron Horses."

"Now the station is empty, the train yard lies still, and Grandpa is gone now to St. Agnes hill."

Well, happily the station is no longer empty as it houses Duffy's, a great hometown bar and restaurant owned and operated by Avon residents who have done a great job of maintaining its character. Harold Credit is indeed buried in St. Agnes Cemetery. Lottie Credit was the very first person with whom the AP&HS ever conducted an oral history back in 1984. She was interviewed by Kay Clark and Maureen Kingston. She was 91 years old at the time and had amazing recall and great stories. She died in 1995 at the age of 102. Eventually, the oral history will be on our website, but if you're interested in reading it, stop into the Museum; there is also an audio copy at the Avon Library, unfortunately only on cassette at this time.

I would like to thank John Dittrich for sharing his memories of Avon and for his kind permission to quote from his wonderful song "Big Iron Horses."

- Bob Westfall, President of the AP&HS



Poinsettia Sale

The annual AP&HS Poinsettia Sale is fast approaching!

Gerri Brewer will be taking orders by phone or in person at the AP&HS Museum beginning December 1, and plants will be delivered later in December.

More details coming soon.

The AP & HS Needs You!

There are a couple specific ways you can help our organization this winter:

1. **Donate a Projector.** Our popular programs throughout the year are a wonderful way to promote history of Avon and our area. Borrowing a projector for each event can be challenging, however, so we are seeking a gently used one for our 501(c)3 organization.
2. **Volunteer to be a Trustee.** Our group is made up of long-term, dedicated members who volunteer in many different ways. Becoming a trustee simply means attending a monthly meeting, offering your personal skills to aid in management, and giving support where it is needed. Please contact us if you would like to become involved!

Facebook Page

Follow us on Facebook! You will get to see and engage with great images and videos, like this special video of a Little League parade about 1960, shared by Tom M.



How fortunate to have this!
- Dale B.

Thank you for sharing these old films. Very interesting to look back at times gone by.
- Carole L.

So many convertibles in town!
- Cindy Z.



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Our Banner

The red on our flag is the herald of dawn
While curtains that darken the East are withdrawn;
Like thunderbolts launched from the heart of a cloud,
Each stripe lends a gleam to War's sulphury shroud.
Then, while the breath of the tempest shall fan her,
Let **red** have a place on the folds of our banner.

The white is an emblem of peace to the world
When the black flag of Treason forever is furled
That stainless in name should the champion be
Who fights with a strong arm for the Lands of the Free.
Then, while the breath of the tempest shall fan her,
Let **white** have a place on our glorious banner.

For clustering stars a rich ground work of blue
Its folds from the dome of the firmament drew,
And the planets of Heaven shall darken with rust,
Ere Columbia's ensign is trailed in the dust.
Then, while the breath of the tempest shall fan her,
Let **blue** have a place on the folds of our banner.



- William H. C. Hosmer
(1814-1877), Avon poet

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E-mail: _____

Indicate desired membership level

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

() Family \$20 () Donation

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() Yes () No

Phone: 585-226-2425 x22

Email: clefeberhayes@gmail.com