



Avon Preservation & Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 35, No. 1 | February 2021

Message from the President

At age 78, I often remark on how much history my generation has lived through. Every decade from the 1940s through the first two decades of the 2000s has proven to be historic in ways both good and bad.

And the first year of the third decade has certainly proven to be a doozie that no doubt will keep historians occupied for years to come. We've seen a worldwide pandemic. We've had to learn social distancing, small gatherings, limited travel, limited restaurant visits, no movies, no concerts, and on and on.

We had a presidential election unlike any other in our history. As I write this on January 9th, we've lived through a very historic week. History is indeed a living thing.

Meanwhile, back at the Avon Preservation and Historical Society, it's been a quiet year. We have been closed to the public since March 2020. We had planned to try opening one day a month starting in December 2020 but then COVID-19 spiked in our area and we

were forced to re-evaluate. However, we've stayed busy behind the scenes. Geri Brewer continues to do her wonderful window displays every month, and we've taken in quite a few new artifacts this year, which will add to our ever-expanding collections. Recently, we participated in this year's filmed version of "Scrooge" by the Avon Central School. If you got to see it, the APHS Museum doubled as the toy store.

In closing, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to all who became new members and all who renewed their membership this year. Also, thank you to all who gave us donations and all who purchased poinsettias from us this past Christmas. In a year with very few fundraising opportunities, you kept us going.

2021 will be better, bring it on.

- Bob Westfall, President of the AP&HS

Updates from the AP&HS

Museum: Due to the coronavirus situation this winter, we were unable to reopen the museum in December 2020 as we had hoped. The Museum remains closed at this time. We will announce any changes on our Facebook page and our website.

AP&HS Programs and Meetings: Unfortunately, 2021 programs and public meetings are not currently possible due to the pandemic. We are monitoring the situation and will provide updates when available. If you are interested in becoming a board member, please contact us!

Thank You, Geri!

The AP&HS would like to trumpet a huge thank you to Geri Brewer, our dedicated trustee. She organized and ran the annual poinsettia sale at the end of 2020, handling orders and deliveries. The sale is quite a feat and we appreciate all the time she devoted to it.

Geri has continued to maintain the window displays of the AP&HS Museum, changing them each and every month throughout 2020 during the museum's closure (not to mention for years before the pandemic). This winter, Geri set up a festive display of toys and decorations for the holidays, including old favorites like Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls, Howdy Doody, nutcrackers, and a bauble-covered tree.



Photo: Stephanie Melenbacker Dempsey, 2020

Livingston County Bicentennial: 1821-2021

On February 23, 2021, Livingston County marks its 200th anniversary! From muddy lanes with ox carts and stagecoaches to the paved Routes 5 & 20 with trucks and Teslas; from log cabins to homes with solar panels; from trading agricultural goods to buying items on the Internet, an incredible parade of events has led us from 1821 to 2021.

The Livingston County Historian's Office has released a schedule of monthly events

to help commemorate this milestone. Events include releases of new OnCell Heritage Trails (January, May), a Bicentennial Geocaching trail (June), dedications of new county historical markers (June, August), the *Women's Biographical Review* book launch (October), and many more events. All are planned with health and safety in mind. Check out the County Historian's website (www.LivingstonCounty.us/historian.php) for the full schedule and updates!



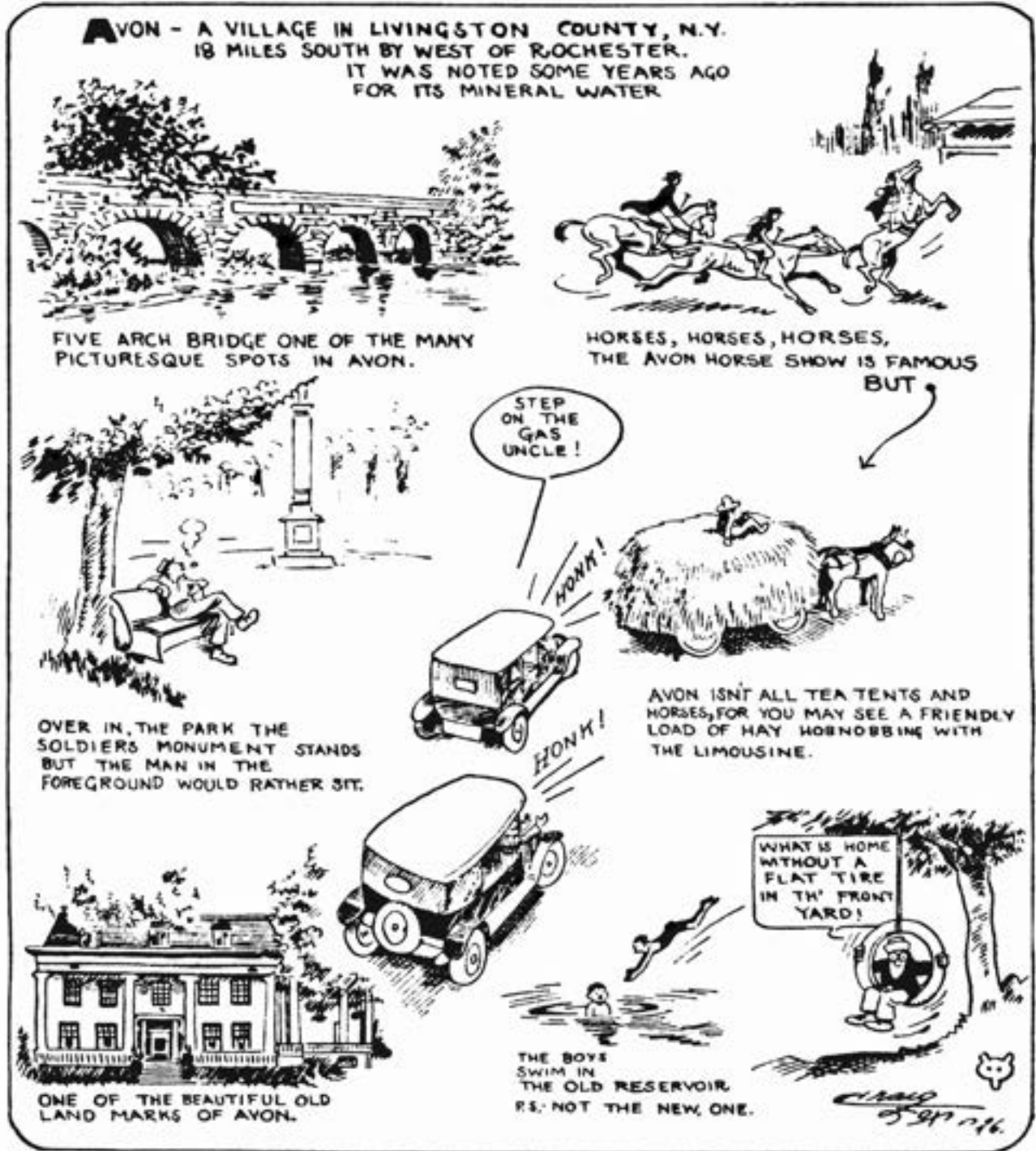
Motoring Through Avon in 1926

This humorous illustration was geared toward the new wave of automobile tourists in the 1920s. As the accessibility of motor vehicles continued to grow, roads were improved, motels popped up, and people looked for recreational day trips – for instance, from Rochester out to Avon.

Image from Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* and *Rochester Herald*, July 6, 1926 and submitted by Lore DiSalvo, correspondent

ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE AND ROCHESTER HERALD, TUESDAY, JULY 6, 1926.

MOTORING IN WESTERN NEW YORK



enhanced by Lore & COPY TOWN Lima, NY

Our Small Town Attracts Bright Minds

Famous orators have brought national issues to Avon over the centuries. Going back to the native Senecas, Seneca war chief Cornplanter and his half brother, Handsome Lake, born near what is now Avon, were both important leaders for their people. The fight for women's right to vote brought Sojourner Truth, who was formerly enslaved, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to speak at the Opera Block. And then there was Julia A. Wilbur, a local woman who became a voice for the women's suffrage and abolitionist movements and who was instrumental in bringing one of the most famous orators of our nation to East Avon.

Julia A. Wilbur spent her young adult years helping raise her nine siblings on a farm located on the Avon-Rush border. Her mother had died shortly after childbirth in 1835, and her father had become nearly blind. Not until Wilbur was 29 years old in 1844 did she leave home, choosing to become a teacher in Rochester. While there, she attended meetings after a day of teaching, becoming an active supporter of women's rights and the abolition movement. She began to work side by side with Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony.



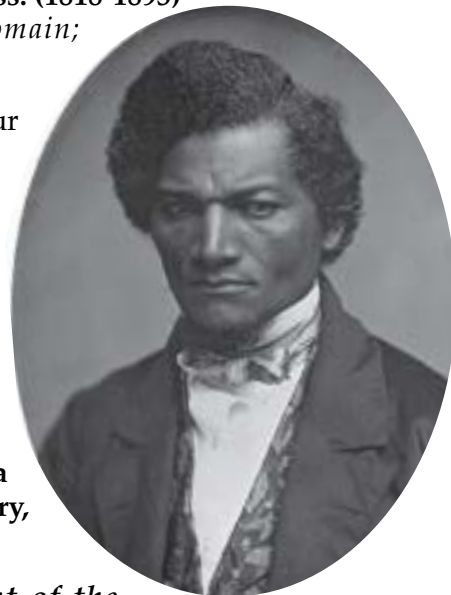
Julia A. Wilbur (1815-1895)
Source: Haverford College; 1865

In 1849, Frederick Douglass was planning a local 16-day lecture tour, to be joined by abolitionist John S. Jacobs. Jacobs, who had also escaped slavery, was managing a reading room for the anti-slavery movement in Rochester at the time, sharing space with the office for *The North Star*, Douglass' anti-slavery newspaper. Julia Wilbur, now immersed in the abolitionist movement, searched for a space in the Avon area for Douglass and Jacobs to speak. This task was not an easy one, as there was fear of protesters showing up to rally against the famous speakers. In the end, the Baptist Church in East Avon agreed to host the event, allowing local residents to witness two of the most famous nationally known leaders of the abolition movement.

Frederick Douglass: (1818-1895)

Source: public domain;
circa 1850

Because Julia Wilbur was dedicated to maintaining journals throughout her life, we are fortunate to have an entry regarding this event:



Excerpt from Julia Wilbur's diary entry, February 18, 1849:

"But the event of the week was the Anti-Slavery M[ovement], at East Avon attended by F. Douglass & John S. Jacobs. It was not until some unwillingness was manifested & some fears expressed that people would be abused that we were able to obtain the Baptist House for them. Notice was pretty extensively circulated, but after all, the Sexton was the only representative of the village of East Avon. Two gentlemen, not villagers, were present, & the rest 11 in number went from Rush. It was cold and tedious weather, but I have supposed that there was more curiosity if nothing else among the people than there seemed to be.

Some few had heard of Douglass but others knew not that there was such a person.

We supposed that there would few attend in the PM but still we expected more, for all that we knew that A[von] was so behind the times in every good work. Both Ministers gave out notice as far as they could & and did all that we could expect of them. But in the evening there was a greater turnout than we expected. Jacobs & Douglass both spoke well..."

Source: "Julia Wilbur Papers," digitized collection, Haverford College: Quaker and Special Collections.



East Avon Baptist Church: Constructed in 1827, razed circa 1950. Located at the present intersection of Routes 5 & 20 and Tajmahal Park, now an overgrown lot. Source: Avon Town Historian

For more reading: Whitacre, Paula Tarnapol. *A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time: Julia Wilbur's Struggle for Purpose*. 2017.

- Clara Mulligan, APHS trustee and Town of Avon Historian

Avon: 200 Years Ago

On February 23, 1821, Livingston County was formed from parts of Ontario and Genesee Counties. The new county was named in honor of Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, who helped draft the Declaration of Independence and who negotiated the Louisiana Purchase. Avon, formerly part of Ontario County, was one of twelve towns in brand-new Livingston. Later, the town of Sparta was split into Sparta, West Sparta, and North Dansville, and Nunda, Portage, and Ossian were annexed to Livingston from Allegany County.

During the planning of the new county, Avon was in the running for county seat, as were Lakeville and Williamsburgh in Groveland. Ultimately, Genesee was chosen. George Hosmer of Avon, a prominent lawyer, was appointed the first Livingston County district attorney. Thomas Wiard was Avon's supervisor in 1821, and Asa Nowlen was elected town clerk. Other official town positions included fence viewers, overseers of the poor, and constables. These citizens inspected fences and settled livestock trespass disputes, assisted those experiencing hardship, and preserved the peace, respectively. There were five constables for Avon in 1821, one also acting as tax collector, and town meetings were usually held at the First Presbyterian Church of East Avon.

Part of the slate of town officers elected in Avon in 1821. Avon Town Clerk's book, courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office (NY).

Avon in 1821 would look very different to an Avonite today. Few buildings of that era still stand today, and families had outhouses, as there was no plumbing, public water, or sewer system. There were many fewer inhabitants, with just under 2,000 white residents and two free Black residents, according to the 1820 U.S. Census. Occupations included merchants, millers, wagon-makers, and blacksmiths, but the majority of workers were farmers. Land was constantly being cleared of trees and prepared for growing crops and grazing livestock, and a bounty was offered on wolves, as they were considered a nuisance. Among the

Continued on page 6.

residents, several Revolutionary War and War of 1812 veterans were still alive, including Joel Fuller, Graves Hosmer, and Jesse Pearson. Families with surnames like Eggleston, Appleby, and Prosser christened their children with names like Chauncy, Dolly, Josiah, Electa, and Ebenezer.

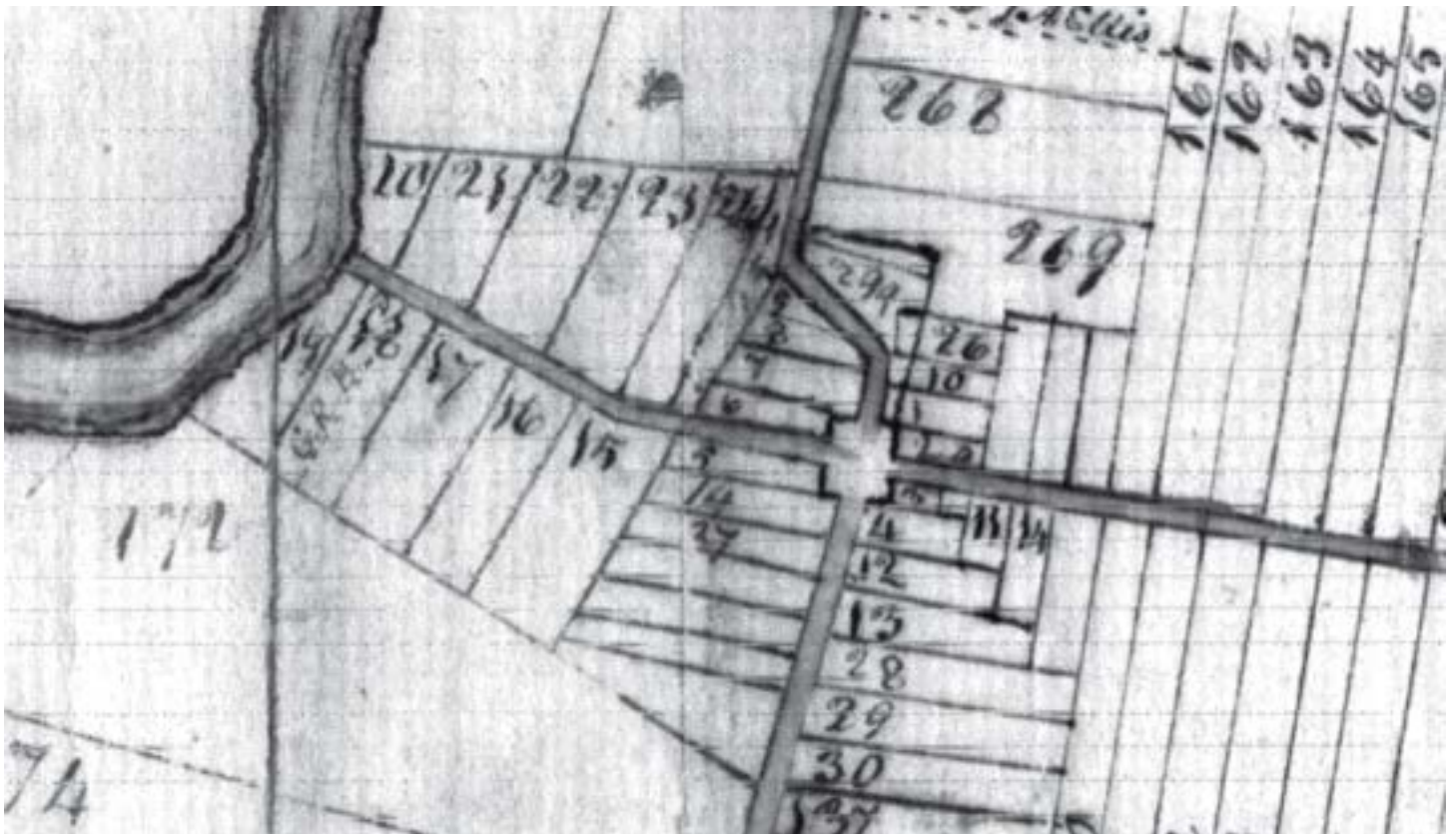
There were Baptist meetings held on Dutch Hollow Road and in North Avon at Oak Openings Road, and a Methodist-Episcopal church was organized and constructed at Bronson Hill and Marshall Roads in 1821. The First Presbyterian Church of East Avon was thriving in the same brick building that stands today. In the Village of Avon, which would not be incorporated for 32 more years, there was a Baptist church about where St. Agnes School is now. Episcopal meetings, the beginnings of the Zion Episcopal Church, were held in a log schoolhouse near the Village Park.

The Seneca people, who had resided in and around Avon for hundreds of years prior to European-Americans' arrival, had long utilized the area's abundant sulfurous mineral water to help treat an array of ailments. In 1821, Richard Wadsworth was said to have constructed a "showering box" near today's Driving Park, introducing sulfur water to white residents and tourists and launching Avon's nearly 100-year notoriety as a spa town.

Routes 5 & 20, once an ancient Native American path, was one of the main roads through town in 1821 and connected Avon to Canandaigua and Buffalo. The road cut through the center of the Village Park at that time, and the public green, then a square shape rather than today's circle, served as a place to meet and even graze livestock. By 1821, a bridge spanned the Genesee River into Caledonia, where the Canawaugus Reservation was home to the remaining members of the Seneca population. Many Seneca people had already migrated to the Buffalo area after the Treaty of Big Tree, signed 24 years earlier in Geneseo.

Although Avon looks and feels very different two hundred years later, the roots of the future Avon were growing in 1821. The Town of Avon's 2016 Comprehensive Plan indicates that our agricultural heritage continues to help define the town's character. Once the main source of income and subsistence, the agricultural landscape of rural Avon resonates with many residents today. The seeds that were planted in 1821 have grown and developed into a strongly rooted community, still growing and blooming in the 21st century.

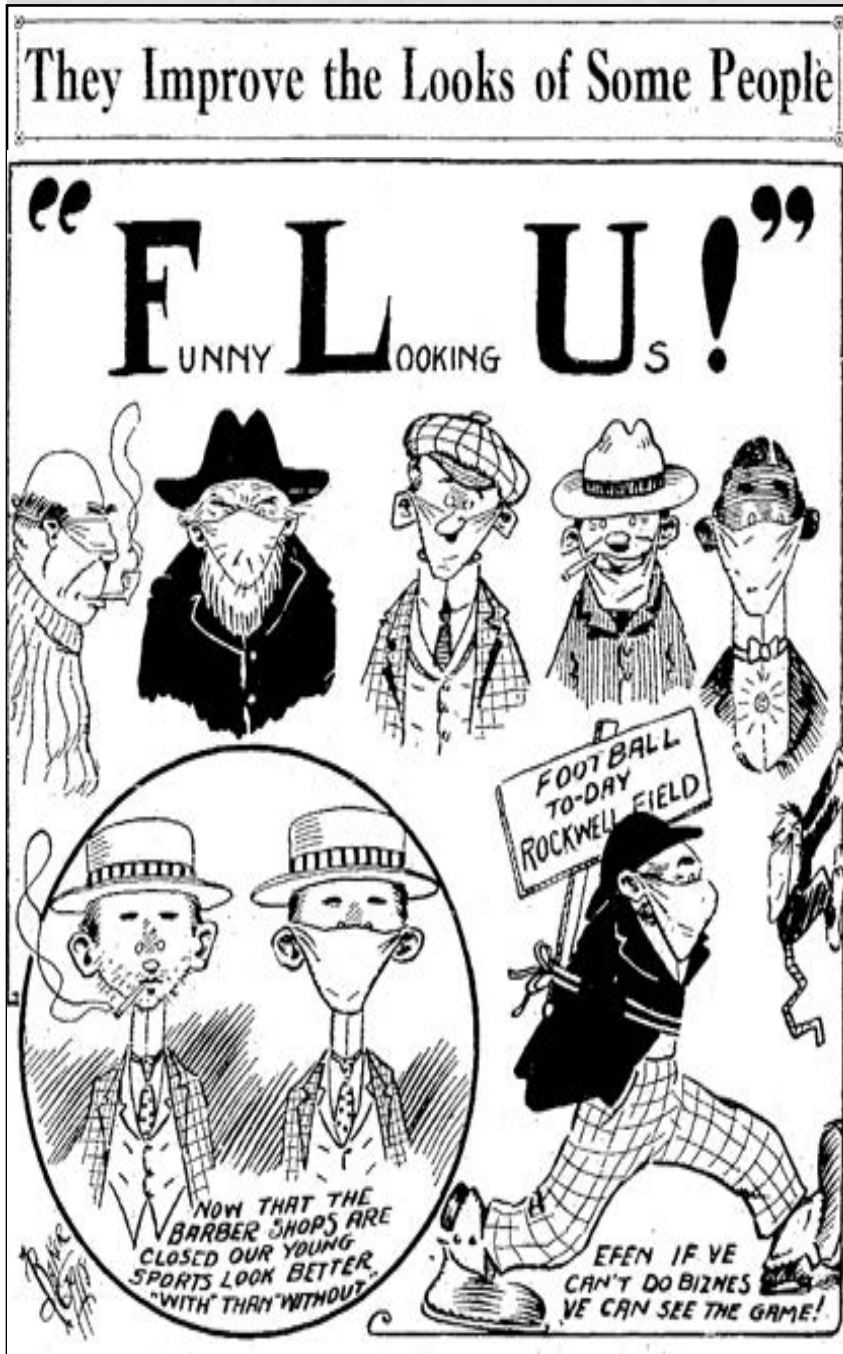
- Holly Watson, Editor



Segment of Avon map, c. 1809, courtesy of Wadsworth Family Papers, Milne Library, State University of New York at Geneseo.

Humor During the 1918 Pandemic

Plenty of comparisons are being made between today's coronavirus pandemic and the influenza pandemic of 1918, also known as the Spanish Flu. One parallel is that there were mask-wearing campaigns and mandates across the country a century ago, too. These cartoons comment on the inconsistencies of mask wearing, explore masks as fashion accessories and inconveniences, and poke fun at the variety of faces beneath them.



Source: *San Diego Union*, 7 Dec. 1918



Source: *The San Francisco Examiner*, 27 Oct. 1918



Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414
AvonPreservation.org

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #298
Rochester, NY

<u>AP&HS Officers</u>	<u>AP&HS Trustees</u>
Robert Westfall <i>President</i>	Geri Brewer
Dan Cochrane <i>Vice President</i>	Michael Cochrane
Joan Reid <i>Secretary</i>	Stephanie Dempsey
James Gerace <i>Treasurer</i>	Robert Dubois
Honorary Board Members	Carole Hayes
Maureen Kingston	Barbara Herman
Dr. Robert Hayes	John Liccini
John DuBois	Mary Lou Miller
	Clara Mulligan
	Mary Primm
	Ellen Zapf
	Museum Hours: Thurs. & Sun., 1-4, or by appt.

Address Service Requested

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

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

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

Avon Preservation & Historical Society MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name: _____

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

On December 20, 2020, Avon's Holiday Spectacular looked a little different from previous years, but residents lit up the village with bright lights, decorations, and luminaries. Pamela Bickford took a drive around to capture the cheer, and the AP&HS shared her video with the Facebook community. Follow the Avon Preservation and Historical Society Facebook page for more photos, videos, and to join the discussion!



Comments: Avon is Charming, even in Winter.
Merry Christmas! - *Christopher H.*

Thank you for the memories. - *Carol B.*

Cheers of thanks for the 'home-town' tour!
Joyful - *Victoria S.*



Message from the President

Well, it's been a while since the APHS museum has been open, but that doesn't mean we haven't been busy. By the time this newsletter reaches you we will have resumed our monthly board meetings and are planning a reopening for a couple of hours on Memorial Day.

Board members Clara Mulligan and Stephanie Dempsey have been devoting many Saturday mornings to scanning and documenting the mountain of photographs we've acquired over the last 38 years, and Curator Joan Reid and Vice President Dan Cochran have been spending many hours accessioning and cataloging the many new artifacts donated to us over the last year. This includes some very exciting items from the St. George Hotel that we can't wait to display.

I'm excited to report that plans are underway to resume the Corn Festival this August and the APHS will absolutely have a presence. We look forward to seeing so many of you there.

On April 1st, Ann Younger invited our board to see the now completed renovation of the Park Theater and we were blown away. It's so much more than a restoration—it's a reimagining. The new design opens it up for not just movies but so much more. We're looking forward to the grand opening.

The Opera Block third floor project is picking up steam at last. After considering several bids and determining the best fit, an architectural firm was chosen in March and design news and progress will be available soon.

A huge thank you to Maureen Kingston who, after many years of service as town historian, now adds "emerita" to her title. Maureen is one of the original

founders of the APHS and has helped us so much over the years. Our gratitude is boundless.

And congratulations to our own Clara Mulligan, new Town of Avon historian.

And finally, my grandfather John L. Westfall left an 11-page journal of his adventures and remembrances of growing up in Avon in the late 1800s and I'm happy to share some of those with you in this issue. And I thank Holly Watson for her great job editing them.

- Bob Westfall, APHS President

Easter display in APHS window by Geri Brewer and Gail Westfall.



Photo by Stephanie Dempsey

Earliest Recollections By John L. Westfall

“...Visiting my paternal grandparents – the darkened parlor with its corner ‘what-not’ on which was a large seashell and other things of interest to a small boy. The shell when put to the ear gave off a sound which my grandmother said was the noise of the surf on the sea shore. This room was never used except for funerals or when the minister came to call, or for other very special occasions. What an eerie gloom seemed to rest there and a peculiar odor which came from long exclusion of sunlight and fresh air.

“...I can see now [Grandfather’s] well-padded old fashioned chair which was in a nook back of the wood-burning kitchen range....Beside his chair was a calendar – one of those which had a leaf for each day of the year, each leaf having printed on it beside the day and date a quotation from the classics or from the Bible. One of his little chores was to tear off a leaf each morning. The thought came to my childish mind that it would save time to tear off a few weeks ahead. This I proceeded to do when he was absent from his place. I was the recipient of a tongue lashing which should have subdued me for all time.

“Another occasion I well remember was more cussed than the calendar episode. The kitchen off the old house was a lean-to and lower than the main part of the house. I managed to get up on the roof and proceeded to remove the shingles above Grandpa’s chair with the idea of dropping kernels of corn down upon him when he took his occasional naps. He discovered me before my job was complete and I think he would have been overjoyed if I had fallen from that roof and broken my disrespectful neck.

“...In order to be near his work, my father and mother and family lived on the wrong side of the tracks. We had a nice home and were always well fed and respectfully dressed. Until I was 12 or 14 years old I had an aversion to wearing shoes in the summer. How many nights after a strenuous day I would have slipped into bed without



Genesee River Bridge, Avon, NY

bathing my feet but Mother always seemed to catch me at it and insisted on my cleaning up before getting between her sheets. She said so many times ‘soap and water are cheap,’ and had no use for my companions who were unclean. Many nights Mother would remove slivers, poultice stone bruises, and doctor cuts in our feet which by July would be tough as a tire tread.

“Living below the tracks had its remunerations in many ways. We were much nearer the swimming hole in the Genesee River. It was here that our joys were unrestrained and modesty was only a word in the dictionary. Often we started soon after breakfast and used the two first fingers held up in the shape of a V, the signal or invitation to head for the river. By hook or by crook we would get a good plank for a diving board which had to be renewed each year because the flood waters would carry it away. From this we tried to out-do each other in various sorts of dives into the almost always muddy waters of the Genesee. Our hides would be stained to a muddy brown by the river water.

“A close second in popularity to the springboard was a slide we built down the sloping bank of the river. At the end of the slide there was a drop of two or three feet into a regular hog wallow of water and mud. The slide was covered with blue clay which we dug out of the river bottom. This when wet was as slippery as grease.

Continued on page 4.

Avon Village Historic District

As a result of the historic resources survey of the Village of Avon, The Landmark Society of Western New York is excited to be contracted by the Village to complete a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Avon Village Historic District. The historic district will include commercial, industrial, civic, and residential properties along the thoroughfares radiating from Circle Park. Avon has a more than 150-year dynamic history as a rural crossroads. It was one of the first western most white settlements on the Seneca Turnpike, the site of the first Genesee River bridge crossing, the location where many of the region's earliest professionals settled during the early nineteenth century, a travel destination to the local springs, and has a vast industry history related to local processed agricultural goods – all of which attest to the long history of activity stimulated by Avon's advantageous location and transportation connections.

The Landmark Society staff are currently gearing up to begin in-depth research and fieldwork that will expound on the discoveries and historic significance outlined in the historic resources survey. The National Register nomination will include a historic context based on the Village of Avon's development from ca. 1790 - 1940, as well as a list of "contributing" properties with building descriptions. A draft of the nomination will be submitted to the Village of Avon and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation in July 2021.

The National Register nomination is an honorary designation that does not restrict private property owners. Property owners with "contributing" resources



Preliminary boundaries for the proposed Avon Historic District. Exact boundaries may be subject to change.

to the district will become eligible for the state and federal historic tax credit program for rehabilitation and maintenance work. Additional information on the National Register nomination and tax credit programs can be found online at www.landmarksociety.org/Avon.

- Megan Klem, Preservation Planner, The Landmark Society of Western New York

It required no skill to enjoy this slide to the utmost. All one had to do was to sit upon it in his birthday clothes, give a slight hunch and be off like a streak. When nearly to the lower end raise feet and legs and allow the law of gravity to take its course. The main thing was to make as large a splash as possible in the wallow...No European spa could give one the joy and contentment of the mud baths which the old river silt afforded us. The feel of mud oozing thru toes of our bare feet was a delight long to be remembered.



“...In the spring before swimming season opened and after the flood waters had receded we fished the Genesee, obtaining mostly mullet which contained more bones to the ounce than anything which flies, runs, or swims...On one of our fishing trips to Conesus Creek we found a footbridge which the flood had washed from its moorings and carried downstream toward the outlet of the creek near its confluence with the Genesee River. The water was still very cold as it was in the month of April. We toiled all day hauling this bridge, which consisted of boards two or three feet long nailed to two 18-foot two-by-fours, over logs and other snags. As it was nearly dark when we got our raft to the mouth of the creek we made it fast and left it until the next Saturday. In the meantime, the river had risen again. Two of us, Frank Isham as skipper and I as first mate, with more rashness than sense, cast off and rode this contraption on the crest of the floodwaters for nearly two miles. With the aid of two long poles we managed to keep the raft upright and made a safe landing at the highway bridge on what is now Rt. 5 & 20.”

-Submitted by Bob Westfall, APHS President and grandson of John L. Westfall

Case Park



In the early morning hours of April 15, 1912, the mighty *Titanic* sank, leading to the death of over 1,500 passengers and crew members. One of those passengers was Howard Brown Case. Howard was born in Rochester, NY in 1863. He was a Freemason and a managing director of an oil company in London. He boarded the *Titanic* as a first class passenger and may have been making a business trip to Rochester at the time. Some survivors recalled how Case helped the women and children into the boats and then stepped back to meet his fate. When it was suggested to Case to jump, Case replied - “My dear fellow, I wouldn’t think of quitting the ship. Why, she’ll swim for a week.” Case then lit a cigarette and walked away and that was the last anyone saw of Case.

Howard’s son Charles Zopher Case was born in 1893. He lived at Charlton Farm in Avon for many years. His wife, Mary, rode with the Genesee Valley Hunt and was President of the Genesee Valley Breeders’ Association. Charles was the inventor of “v-mail,” a system which speeded letters to servicemen during World War II. He was also director of sales research at Eastman Kodak.

Case Memorial Park on Reed Street in Avon was donated to the Village of Avon in memory of Charles by his family in 1975. (source: encyclopedia-titanic.org)

- Stephanie Dempsey, APHS Trustee (originally published on APHS Facebook page, April 15, 2021)

Letchworth Gateway Villages and Genesee Valley Trail Towns

The Genesee River Valley is a great place to recreate – that’s why the municipalities of Geneseo, Mount Morris, and Perry joined to create the Letchworth Gateway Villages (LGV) initiative in 2017. Letchworth State Park is an incredible draw for tourists, and LGV aims to create a network of surrounding towns that serve as “gateways” to the park. These communities can all benefit from visitors seeking unique experiences in the region.



Avon, along with a number of other communities, has recently joined Letchworth Gateway Villages’ scope. Currently, thanks to funding from USDA Rural Development and the Northern Border Regional Commission, Avon is participating in a Trail Towns initiative, administered by LGV.

Focusing on expanding outdoor tourism opportunities and small businesses, the Trail Towns program aims to revitalize rural communities. Tactics include consistent branding and marketing, small business support, and improving infrastructure. As an example of the benefits of a Trail Towns project, the 2007 initiative along the Great Allegheny Passage in Maryland and Pennsylvania helped launch 65 new businesses, boosted income from outdoor recreation, and generated \$50 million per year in the area.

Currently, there is a small group of Avon stakeholders and residents partnering with Letchworth Gateway Villages to create a vibrant online Trail Towns presence

Avon Driving Park racetrack, photo by Holly Watson, 2018

and discuss opportunities and needs in the community. Working with LGV’s Genesee Valley Map Guide, anyone can help add points of interest, business listings, or recreation opportunities to the interactive map. This is one of the first steps in creating a resource for anyone looking for things to do in Avon while visiting the area.

If you own a business and want to be sure it’s listed on the map or have time to add some of your favorite spots around town, check out exploregeneseevalley.com/share-the-love to learn more about how to become a contributor.

Keep an eye out for more Trail Towns information in the near future and keep exploring!

- Holly Watson, editor



Mothers and Daughters

As of January 1, 2021, I was given the title of Avon town historian. I don't take this lightly because I am following a mother-daughter legacy of 70 years. Marie Preston was appointed historian for the town of Avon in 1949, holding the position for thirty years until 1980. She then handed the torch on to her daughter, Maureen Kingston, who has been happily in the position for the past forty years. She continues to hold office hours and now has the esteemed title historian emerita.



Photo courtesy of the Livingston County Historian's Office

How did I get here? I followed in *my daughter's* footsteps. The beauty of having children can be the blossoming of their interests sparking your own. As a young teenager, my daughter, Holly Watson, asked when our barn was built. I had no idea, but we decided to find out. The journey was an epic one. My father, Mike Mulligan, and his wife, Barbara Scott, started by taking Holly to the county courthouse to research old records. We then deciphered the handwritten farm deeds from the past 200 years, filled with odd terms like rods and chains and confusing compass directions, which ultimately lead to the creation of a map outlining the property. After two years of research, we had made a huge binder listing the many different owners of what is now Mulligan Farm on Barber Road. As for the age



Maureen Kingston at the John Hubbard Forsyth historical marker dedication with James Harrington, Paul Drozdziel, Tom Mairs, and Dave LeFeber. Photo courtesy of the Livingston County Historian's Office

of the barn, it remains elusive, so we must settle on the mid-1800s.

Initially volunteering, Holly went on to work with Maureen and Amie Alden, the Livingston County historian. Holly's love of history landed her a full-time job as deputy county historian and put me in the recently appointed position as town historian.

I listen to Maureen casually list off generations of family names that have been in Avon for many decades, if not centuries. She knows the farms, the storefronts and many businesses that have come and gone and which have created the fabric of the town's history. She can put on a presentation that charms everyone in the room.

I grew up in Avon, so one would think it would be easy to step up. However, I was the shy kid who just wanted to be at home with my pets. I didn't learn how

Recording Our History

to engage in the community until my own children had grown. The biggest challenge was getting over the fear of public speaking. I would shake nervously each time I spoke to the Town Board members, having to read word for word from a slip of paper, no matter how brief. Though I still love being at home with my animals, the guidance of others has recently helped me lead a committee to update the town comprehensive plan, serve on the board of the Genesee Valley Conservancy, and bring \$50,000 of grant money to install solar panels at the town barns.

But town historian? Luckily, I can pretend to be Maureen's daughter as I learn the ropes, because for now we hold the position of town historian together as a team.



Clara and Holly mapping out the historic lot lines of Mulligan Farm, 2008

Maureen holds office hours on Tuesdays, from 2-5 pm. Clara on Thursdays, from 1-4 pm. We can be reached by email at historian@avon-ny.org, and by phone at 585-226-2425 ext. 6.

- Clara Mulligan, APHS Trustee and Avon Town Historian

One perspective on researching and recording the history of a particular person, family, or community is the realization that every day of the present will be tomorrow's history. It is safe to assume that just as we investigate the past, future generations of Avon residents will be curious about life here in the twenty-first century – who lived in a particular house? What businesses were on Genesee Street? How did the village and town resolve the issue of water distribution? What farms were operating and producing what products? As each of us goes about the day-to-day business of living in Avon, perhaps we could put into practice some ideas to preserve a record of life here in the 2000s.



What can you do? How about, for starters, labeling and dating photos of local events? Perhaps keeping a diary of family activities on a weekly or monthly basis would provide a colorful account for future generations of how we spent our time. When you purchase a local craft item or a local artist's work, write a small record of the details of the purchase. Just ask yourself "What will others need or want to know about this and these times?"

How often in your research into your family's genealogy, or your attempts to discover the history of an item or piece of property, have you remarked, "Gee, if only someone had identified these faces in the photo!" or "Why didn't they write down the locale painted in this picture?" or "Who was the lady who gave us homemade candy every Christmas?" Just a few simple steps could help eliminate these frustrations for future local historians.

Perhaps the most important step adults today can take is to create in young people a respect for the past and a curiosity to know it better. As uncomfortable as it may be to some, we are the subjects of future historical societies' curiosity. Look at today's present as if it were tomorrow's past.

- Unknown author, originally published in the APHS Newsletter of October 2000





Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414
AvonPreservation.org

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #298
Rochester, NY

<u>AP&HS Officers</u>	<u>AP&HS Trustees</u>
Robert Westfall <i>President</i>	Geri Brewer
Dan Cochrane <i>Vice President</i>	Michael Cochrane
Joan Reid <i>Secretary</i>	Stephanie Dempsey
James Gerace <i>Treasurer</i>	Robert Dubois
Honorary Board Members	Carole Hayes
Maureen Kingston	Barbara Herman
Dr. Robert Hayes	John Liccini
John DuBois	Mary Lou Miller
	Clara Mulligan
	Mary Primm
	Ellen Zapf
	Museum Hours: Thurs. & Sun., 1-4, or by appt.

Address Service Requested

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

**If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2021-2022 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

The Livingston County Historian's Office recently released a short video highlighting Gail McGuire of Avon and her 50-year career as a rally car driver and co-driver. Find the video at facebook.com/avonhistoricalsociety or search YouTube.com!





Our Big Carnival



AP & HS 2019.44

There is a big time in store for Avon the week of September 2nd, 1912. Plans are under way by the Board of Trade for a BIG carnival that week. The park is to be walled in and filled with high-class attractions. A nominal admission charge, 10¢ for adults and 5¢ for children, to the park will be made and there will be free attractions that will be well worth the charge. Some attractions of the highest class have been booked. It is expected that the village will be brilliantly decorated and lighted by electricity for the evening events. The Board of Trade never does things by halves, so Avon may prepare for one grand time the first week of September.

The committee in charge is enthusiastic and working hard to secure the best that can be procured. Whenever they hear of anything that would tend to better the show it is quickly secured. There is to be an electrical display that has never been equaled in any small town in western New York. The park and main streets will be illuminated in a manner equal to any city display. A contract was let for the electrical display

and decorations to the G.A. Traham Company of Cohoes, NY.

The committee also has a contract with C. S. Karland, carnival manager of the Rochester Theatrical Exchange to furnish the free attractions. He also has the contract for letting all concessions. If any people of Avon wish to take part in these make application to Mr. Follett. Mr. M. E. Ross has been appointed to head the agriculture exhibit. If any resident of Avon has anything in this line they wish to exhibit, they should contact him.

Among the free attractions will be Animal Shows, Diving Girls, Vaudeville Acts, Riding Devices, the Massand Duo, acrobats, as well as "Enigmarelle" the Electric Man.

Enigmarelle is a large automaton operated by a human concealed within its body. The operator is believed to be Alba W. Root, the booking agent is Frederick J. Ireland. Enigmarelle can walk, ride a bicycle, and write his name on a chalkboard among other things.

Mr. Frank Stephenson of Avon will be demonstrating his skill as a "slack-wire walker."



Courtesy of Frank Stephenson

Continued on page 2.

Continued from Page 2

It is expected that about eight thousand fliers will be distributed. There will be ten thousand printed. The price for an advertisement is \$2.50 a space.

Monday, September 2, Labor Day, will be the annual Inspection and Field Day of the Avon fire departments. There will be eleven companies and five bands in the line of march. The parade will be followed by a fine program of sports which will be open to local and visiting fireman.

After dinner has been served to the visiting fireman and bands at the parochial school banquet hall [St. Agnes School], the parade will start.

The parade will form in Genesee Street opposite the post office in this order: Board of Trustees, Board of Fire Commissioners, chief and visiting chiefs and assistants, Honeoye Falls Band, Chief Hines of Avon, Chief Johnson of Caledonia and their assistants, Tennant Hose Company, Big Springs Hook & Ladder Company & Chemical Hose Company of Caledonia, Spring Creek Hook and Ladder Co., Dansville Protectives, Avon Cornet Band, Avon Hose Co., Wm. VanZandt Hose Co., Avon Hook and Ladder Co., Chemicals, and Erie Hose companies of Avon.

The fire whistle will be sounded and bells will be rung at 1:30pm sharp, then the column will move around the the park, winding through the village and returning to the park, where the procession will be reviewed by the chief, trustees, and commissioners. The ranks will be broken in the vicinity of the fire hall.

A program of sports will follow. Each evening throughout the week there will be music and dancing at Clark's Hall [Opera Block].

Tuesday is scheduled as Old Home Day. It is hoped that there will be a great gathering on that day. Prizes will be awarded to the exhibitors during the afternoon. At 10pm there will be a fine exhibit of fireworks.

Wednesday afternoon there is to be a big Calithumpian parade in decorated automobiles. Enigmarelle, driving the first car, will lead the parade.

Thursday a program of sports will take place. Among the events will be a modified marathon run. There will be fireworks at 10pm and dancing at Clark's Hall.

Friday is to be Grange Day. A public auction of livestock and other articles will be held in the

afternoon. A display of fireworks will again be held in the evening.

Saturday is Children's Day, a big parade of children will take place and it is hoped that every child between the ages of five and sixteen will participate. These children will be admitted free of charge to the park enclosure. The Queen of the Carnival will be crowned in the evening and a good time will prevail until the carnival comes to a close at midnight. There is a contest for the Queen of the Carnival. Any young lady of this village may enter. The winner will be given a beautiful diamond ring. Remember the most popular and hardworking young lady will win.

Avon's Street Carnival held last week was the biggest success of anything ever attempted in this village. The attendance was well over 10,000 people who paid admission to the park. The free attractions were of the highest order and well worth the price of admission. Emigmarelle, the mechanical man, was an attraction that has starred in Europe and this country as a headliner at all the leading vaudeville houses and proved to be a marvel. The Massand Duo were clever acrobats and received warm applause with each appearance. Frank Stephenson, son of Mr. & Mrs. Thomas V. Stephenson of this village also appeared on the slack wire. His performance has greatly improved since his last appearance and was well received.

The Japanese booth had some handsome wares. Several striking machines, the shooting gallery and the popcorn man were very popular. Several merchants reported that they were surprised at the amount of business the carnival brought to the town. The circle wave, merry-go-round and show were quite well patronized. A man from Dansville said that he drove people to the carnival every day. Never was a village of this size decorated in such a handsome manner as was Avon for the carnival. It was simply magnificent and caused a lot of comment from our out-of-town visitors. The park looks very fair now and after a shower or two nobody would ever know that it was used for a carnival. What's the use of having a site of this kind if it cannot be enjoyed? The decorations were very beautiful. The monument was certainly an exquisite site and much admired. The lights attracted many at night and the flags gave an appearance of gaiety in the daytime.

Miss Ethel Russell was crowned the Queen of the Carnival and received the diamond ring.

The following are the winners of the field day sports:

- Hose race: First prize of a trumpet went to the VanZandt Hose, second to Erie Hose. The winning team was made up of R. D. Browne, J. D. Carson, Harry Boorman, Chester Westfall, Ray Downing, W. H. Clark, F. H. Cooper, W. O. Soper, Herbert Longfellow, and H. R. Gibson.
- Fat man's race: first prize of a smoking set went to C.E. Hawley and second prize a cigar case to A. C. VanAllen.
- First prize of an umbrella in the 100-yard dash for firemen went to C.F. Richie and second prize of a scarf pin went to Ed Dooley.
- In the shoe race for boys, Francis Kellogg in first, winning a pair of shoes, and William Master in second winning a pair of sneakers.
- Knapsack race with Raymond Kennedy and Ray Downing in first, winning 100 cigars, and Chester Westfall and Stanley Weed in second, winning 50 cigars.
- Three-legged race with Ed Smith and Robert Downing in first, winning 100 cigars and Chester Westfall and Stanley Weed in second, winning 50 cigars.
- In the boys' race, Louie Battalia in first, winning a sweater coat, and William Masters in second, winning \$1 box of candy.
- 100-yard dash for all with Matt Cleary in first, winning 50lbs of flour, and Glen Webb in second, winning 25lbs of candy.
- Half-mile run with Carl Richie in first, winning a set with a watch and chain, scarf pin and cuff links, and Harry Credit in second, winning a watch fob, and Ray Downing in third, winning cuff links.

Many poodle dogs were disposed of during the week, judging from the ladies and children who were carrying them away. Yes, the men, too, carried away a lot of them.

H. C. Follett is certainly entitled to a world of credit for the success of the big event as he was the chairman of the committee and consequently had most of the work to do.

In retrospect, the success of this carnival was due in part to the demise of the spa era, the improvement in the economy following the minor depression, the number of trains coming and going from Avon, the increase in those driving automobiles, and the sense of well-being that prevailed at this time.

Note: Enigmarelle was a fake automaton constructed of 365 different parts and actuated by electricity. According to accounts, he was six feet tall, weighed 198 lbs, and was made of iron, steel, wood, copper, and rawhide, with a wax head. The figure contained seven motors of spring and electric, driven by wet-cell batteries, and a mess of wires, gears, and cranks. Enigmarelle was exhibited in the London Hippodrome in June 1905 and toured other capital cities in Europe, playing to the nobility.

- Joan Reid

Adapted from:

Avon News, September 4, 1912

Livingston Democrat, 1912

Avon Board of Trade booklet, 1912



Enigmarelle c. 1904. Public domain.

Continued on page 4..

Dr. Timothy Hosmer Honored

In May 2021, the Avon Preservation and Historical Society (AP&HS) and the Ska-Hase-Ga-O Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapter co-sponsored an event to honor Dr. Timothy Hosmer, a doctor, judge, Revolutionary War veteran, and one of the original purchasers of land in Avon.

Dignitaries attended the ceremony, such as Avon Village Mayor Tom Freeman, Avon Town Supervisor David LeFeber, and Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes, who presented the Ska-Hase-Ga-O DAR chapter with a proclamation from the 133rd Assembly District to honor the event. Also assisting in the program was Rev. Carin Farmer from the Avon Central Presbyterian Church, the Avon Scouts, the Rochester Scottish Pipes and Drum Band, and members of the Rochester chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR).

During the ceremony, a surprise gift was presented by Robert DuBois to the Village of Avon, the AP&HS, and the Avon Town Historian Ermerita Maureen Kingston. Mr. DuBois, on behalf of the DuBois family, gifted an original deed noting the sale of 4,200 acres by Timothy and Elizabeth Hosmer to members of the Wadsworth family. This deed features authentically sealed signatures of Timothy and Elizabeth Hosmer as well as signatures from the Wadsworth family. This piece of historical documentation will be preserved and put on permanent display at the Avon Museum.

Dr. Timothy Hosmer was selected as the honoree because of his service during the American Revolutionary War as well as his role in the founding of the town of Avon. Hosmer served as a surgeon with the 6th Continental Regiment and on Gen. George Washington's staff. It was Hosmer who laid his finger on the pulse of Maj. John Andre to confirm his death after he was hung for being a spy and assisting Benedict Arnold in the attempted surrender of West Point.

In 1789, Dr. Timothy Hosmer and Maj. Isaiah Thompson visited the Avon area on behalf of themselves and three other investors from Connecticut. After purchasing the land, they named the area Hartford. A few years later,

Hosmer and his family permanently settled in the area, living in a log home in the vicinity of the present-day Village Park in Avon.

Dr. Hosmer is noted as being the first physician in the area and was given the name At-tta-gus by the Seneca people, which meant "healer of disease." Dr. Hosmer is also credited with reading the first lay service at the Episcopal Church in Avon in 1792, making the Zion Church the oldest Episcopal Church in western New York. Due to his standing in the community, and despite not possessing a law degree, in 1793 Dr. Hosmer was appointed as one of the first presiding judges in the area. He officiated at the first jury trial on record in Ontario County. In 1815, Dr. Timothy Hosmer passed away in Avon at the age of 70.

- Stephanie M. Dempsey, AP&HS Assistant Curator



Rob DuBois presents a gift to Mayor Tom Freeman while AP&HS President Bob Westfall looks on. Photo by Carole Volpe, Hudson Street Studios.



Rob DuBois presents a gift to Mayor Tom Freeman while AP&HS President Bob Westfall looks on. Photo by Carole Volpe, Hudson Street Studios.

Town Historian Update: A Valuable Donation

The Avon Town Historian's Office is very lucky to be the recipient of a collection from the Carlin family. The historical items span several generations, providing us with a look into the life of farming in the Avon area. One item, a 1929 farm auction poster, is of particular interest.



Cousins Kathy Carlin Salvati and Mary Carlin Lathron with their great-grandfather's farm auction poster. Courtesy of Kathy Salvati.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Thomas Carlin was working a farm on Route 15, south of East Avon (now owned by Jack Steele). Carlin managed the farm on shares, it being owned by J. H. Crouse of Lima, a prominent local landowner. Agreements such as theirs would often take into account an assessment of the crops produced each year, as opposed to a flat rental fee. However, on March 12, 1929 Carlin's farm animals and equipment were auctioned off. Though we don't know why he decided to discontinue farming, it took place at the time of the Great Depression, which was forcing many farmers out of business. Crops were not bringing the prices that could sustain their operation, so they sold out, often moving to cities to find work.

The poster was printed on an Avon printing press, announcing the items for sale: six horses that weighed between 1,200 – 1,500 pounds, all at their prime working age of about 10 years old; seven Holstein and Jersey cows, all due to calve in April; pigs, chickens, and stock feed. The equipment list was long. First was a McCormick-Deering tractor and implements, including a new 9-foot cultipacker

and disc. Also included were a Champion grain drill, horse cultivators, and good horse harness, right down to small items including hay pulleys for loading loose hay into the hay mow. The list included most everything needed for running a 250-acre farm, while reflecting the significant transition from using horses for power to the use of modern tractors.

Not meant to last longer than the necessary time to announce the sale, it is astonishing that the poster held up without deteriorating for all these years. Being carefully stored away until we sent it to a conservator in Rochester for proper framing, it is now protected and able to be displayed for years to come.

The poster was not the only gem in this family collection. The Historian's Office was also given logbooks from the Davin Implement Company in East Avon, now the location of Fisher's Storage Sheds. Originally started by Mark Davin in 1946, he sold the business to family members Bob, William (Bud) and Ray Carlin in 1966. The Carlins went on to run the business for another 25 years, selling new and used farm equipment. Keeping impeccable handwritten records of each sale, they noted the piece of equipment, wholesale price, retail price and the farmer who purchased the equipment. Such a log gives our office a detailed list of those who were farming in the area from the 1950s up to 1991. Also, it provides a record of the enormous changes in farm equipment used over the years. The Avon Town Historian's Office is very grateful to Mary Carlin Lathron for donating this collection.



Davin Implement Company, East Avon. The business was sold in 1991 and the building was demolished soon afterwards. Courtesy of Mary Lathron

- Clara Mulligan, Avon Town Historian

Message from the President

Happy summer, everyone. As I sit here writing it's mid-July; it's been in the 90s and very humid. Time to jump in the pool.

Lots to report: after being closed for almost 16 months, the museum has officially opened on a regular schedule, every Sunday from 1 PM to 4 PM. We offer our beautiful museum, tours of the historic Opera Block, and tons of research material on local history, which includes families, businesses, the spa era, and much more. Not to mention pleasant conversation with our staff.

We have also resumed our monthly board meetings and have had some lively exchange of ideas for programs, exhibits, and window displays. In June, we elected officers. Everything stayed pretty much the same except that Carole Hayes takes over as secretary, which dovetails very well with her job as head of membership. Joan Reid continues as curator extraordinaire and chair of the program committee.

Last but not least, the AP&HS is holding a raffle with an excellent bundle of prizes. So, come and see us. We look forward to seeing you..

Clotheslines

A clothesline was a news forecast
To neighbors passing by.
There were no secrets you could keep
When clothes were hung to dry.

It also was a friendly link
For neighbors always knew
If company had stopped on by
To spend a night or two.

For then you'd see the fancy sheets
And towels upon the line;
You'd see the company table cloths
With intricate design.

The line announced a baby's birth
To folks who lived inside
As brand new infant clothes were hung
So carefully with pride.

The ages of the children could
So readily be known
By watching how the sizes changed
You'd know how much they'd grown.

It also told when illness struck,
As extra sheets were hung;

Then nightclothes, and a bathrobe, too.
Haphazardly were strung.

It said, "Gone on vacation now"
When lines hung limp and bare.
It told, "We're back!" when full lines sagged
With not an inch to spare.

Now folks in town were scorned upon
If wash was dingy gray,
As neighbors raised their brows,
And looked disgustedly away.

But clotheslines now are of the past
For dryers make work less.
Now what goes on inside the home
Is anybody's guess.

I really miss that way of life.
It was a friendly sign
When neighbors knew each other best
By what hung on the line!

(Author unknown)

- Submitted by Dan Cochrane, APHS Vice President



Updates from the AP&HS



Museum: We have reopened! As of July 11, 2021, visitors are welcomed to the Avon Historical Museum each Sunday from 1:00pm-4:00pm. Social distancing is still encouraged and all state and CDC guidelines will be followed. We can't wait to see you!

AP&HS Programs and Meetings: While no 2021 programs are currently scheduled, public meetings have resumed. The AP&HS Board meets in the town hall boardroom on the first Monday of the month at 6pm (though August's meeting is postponed until Aug. 9). If you are interested in becoming a board member, please contact us..

Summer Raffle!

Grab your tickets for the AP&HS raffle! It is one drawing for the whole package of 4 prizes. One winner takes all.

- Price: \$1 per ticket or 6 for \$5. All proceeds to benefit the AP&HS.
- Ticket sales are open until Labor Day. Call Geri at 226-2729 or stop by the museum on Sundays 1 pm – 4pm to purchase.

- Drawing will be Sunday, September 12, 2021.

PRIZES

- One night at the Avon Inn - call them for a reservation
- \$25 gift certificate for Fratelli's - call for a reservation - use any time
- \$50 gift certificate for Avon Floral World- use any time
- \$20 of scratch-off tickets



The Avon Preservation and Historical Society Museum on Genesee Street is now open!





Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414
AvonPreservation.org

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #298
Rochester, NY

<u>AP&HS Officers</u>	<u>AP&HS Trustees</u>
Robert Westfall <i>President</i>	Geri Brewer
Dan Cochrane <i>Vice President</i>	Michael Cochrane
Carole Hayes <i>Secretary</i>	Stephanie Dempsey
James Gerace <i>Treasurer</i>	Robert Dubois
	Barbara Herman
	John Liccini
	Mary Lou Miller
	Clara Mulligan
	Mary Primm
	Ellen Zapf
<u>Honorary Board Members</u>	
Maureen Kingston	Museum Hours: Sun. 1-4, or by appt.
Dr. Robert Hayes	
John DuBois	

Address Service Requested

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

**If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2021-2022 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. 8
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

APHS Trustee Stephanie Dempsey published several photos of the Five-Arch Bridge on Facebook on June 24, 2021. She wrote that the bridge was built in 1856/57 by the Genesee Valley Railroad. Avon became a railroad hub connecting Buffalo-Rochester-Corning-Hornell. In 1941, the Avon-Mt. Morris section was abandoned and the rails were removed.



Comments:

We spent so many summers swimming in the creek. I have a pic painted of it on the wall of my office here in Colorado. Just love it.

- Paula P.

Beautiful pics. I'd love to see a pic of it when the road ran under one of the arches!- Dale B.



Erie Railroad Waiting-room Bench

On October 15, 2021, members of the AP&HS attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum's (RGVRM) purchase of the Industry depot from the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad. Having been abandoned for 20 years prior to RGVRM's purchase in 1971, this building has come a long way.

The RGVRM is home to one of the largest collections of historic trains, and is also home to the newly restored waiting-room bench gifted to the museum by the AP&HS in 2012. The bench came from the Erie Railroad station in Avon (now Duffy's) and dates back to the late 1890s or early 1900s. This bench is made using the "bentwood" process, which involved steaming, gluing, and laminating several layers of thin wood in a mold to make curved shapes.

To learn more about the RGVRM or to help offset the restoration cost of Avon's historical train bench via GoFundMe, please visit [gofundme.com/f/waiting-room-bench-restoration](https://www.gofundme.com/f/waiting-room-bench-restoration).

- Stephanie Dempsey, AP&HS Trustee



AP&HS members with the waiting-room bench at the RGVRM event.

Avon in 1921

One hundred years ago, these bits and pieces were published in the *Avon Herald*. Compare and contrast!

"The Schliesmann Brothers Saxophone Sextette and Novelty Vaudeville Entertainers to appear at the Park Theatre, Wednesday evening, will be in addition to the regular pictures booked for that night."

"There are a lot of new women motor car drivers in Avon and they are all performing splendidly." (August 1921)

Continued on page 4

Updates from the AP&HS

Museum: We have reopened! As of July 2021, visitors are welcomed to the Avon Historical Museum each Sunday from 1:00–4:00pm. Social distancing is still encouraged and all state and CDC guidelines will be followed. Please note the museum will be open the Sunday after Thanksgiving, November 28, but will be closed December 26 and January 2, 2022. We look forward to seeing you!

AP&HS Programs and Meetings: While no programs are scheduled for the remainder of 2021, public meetings have resumed. The AP&HS Board meets in the Avon Town Hall boardroom on the first Monday of the month at 6pm. If you are interested in becoming a board member, please contact us.

Holiday Season in Avon

Poinsettias for Sale: The AP&HS poinsettia sale is here again! Grab some colorful plants for your home, work, or a friend. Orders are accepted November 1st through November 30th at the AP&HS Museum during open hours or by calling Geri at 226-2729.



Poinsettias are \$10 each and color choices are red, white, and variegated pink. Make checks payable to AP&HS.

You can pick up your order at the AP&HS Museum on December 4th during the Avon Holiday Spectacular (2:00–6:00pm). If you are unable to pick up that day, delivery will be on December 6th.

Puzzles for Sale: We're excited to announce the addition of jigsaw puzzles to the museum store for the holiday season! These 504-piece puzzles feature a choice of four different picturesque scenes of Avon and come in beautifully designed commemorative boxes. Please watch our website and Facebook page for updates about when the puzzles will become available. The AP&HS would like to specially thank Tetamore Photographic for the stunning photographs used for these puzzles.

Avon Holiday Spectacular: Save the date of December 4, 2021, from 2:00–6:00pm for the joyous return of the Avon Holiday Spectacular on Genesee Street! This old-

fashioned outdoor event features vendors and crafts, food, family activities, and all that winter cheer. The AP&HS will have a table with hot apple cider and donut holes, as well as jigsaw puzzles for sale. Come join the fun during this classic community event!



It's Never Too Late to Learn Something New

Over 200 years of Avon's history had been documented before I took the town historian position in January 2021. With the appointment of the job came doubting if anything new would ever be discovered. Would I just have to write up the same stories over and over, with nothing new to add?

To my great surprise, that doubt has already been vanquished. All it took was a fresh look at a photograph from the 1870s, a bit of research using scanned vintage newspapers, and suddenly three local historians were ecstatic.

It all started with Holly Watson, the editor of this newsletter, but also the deputy historian for Livingston County. She was looking at a photograph of the Avon railroad depot area and saw a building she hadn't noticed before.

Then John Liccini, an AP&HS board member, but also an expert on local railroad history, used the website fultonhistory.com to find articles in old newspapers referencing the building in question.

We knew Avon had at least 14 large hotels in the 1800s, serving the visitors who were coming from all over the country for the sulfur water spas: the United States Hotel, Livingston House, Avon Cure, and Congress Hall, just to name a few. But it seems no one had heard of the Avon Springs Hotel, which was sitting in plain sight right next to the train depot. In the provided image, taken before 1875, there is a pump house in the foreground along with the original depot. Beyond the depot stands a very large building with a sign on the gable end: the Avon Springs Hotel.

Research using old newspapers uncovered that it was owned by Mr. Brockway in 1870, who then passed it on to J. Henry Bronson by 1874. Mr. Bronson was familiar with running a hotel, as he owned the United States Hotel until it burned earlier in 1874. (The site is now occupied by the Opera Block/Town Hall.) Very little

can be found about the Avon Springs Hotel other than excellent food reviews and then the hotel's dramatic end, which is covered in the accompanying article by John Liccini.



Courtesy of the Livingston County Historian's Office.

The history books about Avon should now be updated to include the Avon Springs Hotel. And I can rest assured there is always something new to discover, especially with the help of other sharp-eyed historians and the extraordinary website fultonhistory.com.

- Clara Mulligan, Avon Town Historian

Tips and Tricks for Using FultonHistory.com:

- Click on "Go and Search My Archives"
- Important! Put name or short phrase in quotation marks
- Set search to "all the words"
- Try alternate name spellings and add/remove initials
- Add town or year outside quotation marks to help narrow results
- To broaden search, set "Fuzzy searching" dropdown to 1 or 2 to account for minor character misreadings

Message from the President

Everyone has a favorite Christmas movie. Mine is "A Christmas Story." Even though it's set in the 1930s and I wasn't Ralphie's age until the early 1950s, I can relate to so many things that happened to him in that film.

Now, let me first say I don't think my dad ever heard me say the big one ("Oh, fudge!" But it wasn't "fudge"), but I can remember the threat of having my mouth washed out with soap. (Actually, I think my brother tasted more Lifebuoy than I did – sorry, John.)

But I did love sending away for stuff and rushing home from school to see if it had arrived. My favorite was a reproduction of the first atomic submarine, the *Nautilus*. It was about 4 inches long, and if you lifted up the top and put in baking soda and placed it in water, it would submerge and resurface. Neat! I also had a decoder badge, but it wasn't Little Orphan Annie. Lassie, maybe.

Remember the scene when Ralphie and his family went downtown to watch the Christmas parade and see Santa? I vividly remember our wonderful trips to Sibley's in downtown Rochester with the magnificently decorated windows, the magical Santa's village, and old Saint Nick himself waiting to hear what we wanted for Christmas. Afterward, we would go to the top-floor restaurant for hot cocoa. A magical time.

I did ask for a Daisy air rifle one year, and I got one, but it didn't shoot BBs. You'd put little capsules in it and when you cocked it, it made a loud noise and smoke came out of the barrel. Not the same, but it looked cool hanging over my bed. I'm sure one of my aunts had advised my mother, "He'll shoot his eye out."

A favorite holiday memory took place on New Year's Eve day. Our house used to be the place for my parents' family and friends to usher in the New Year. While my mom prepared for the festivities, my dad was charged with getting the kids out of her hair. For several years, he would take us into Rochester to one of the magnificent old movie houses to see a film. What an adventure. I remember three theaters downtown: the Loews, the Paramount, and the RKO Palace. And palaces they were. Huge lobbies with red carpets and ornate stairways leading to a balcony where we'd sit the front row. All gone now, replaced by parking garages and a downtown mall, now gone as well.

Oh, one last parallel to the movie: I actually had a relative who stuck their tongue to a metal bridge and the fire department had to be called. It made the paper.

I hope you all have wonderful Christmas memories, too, and happy holidays to all.

- Bob Westfall, President of the AP&HS



Avon in 1921 Continued

"Birth Certificates Must be Filed: Parents should remember that every child who goes to school next September, according to news items appearing in several of our exchanges, must present a certified copy of the birth certificate. Foreign born pupils may furnish certified copies of the passports of their parents."

"A truly-attested oath of allegiance must be filed with the state department by the teachers before entering upon their duties. These were some of the requirements of a bill which became a law early this year." (August 1921)

Remembering Julia Wilbur

The AP&HS would like to acknowledge and thank Ken Rowe, caretaker of the Avon Cemetery, for recently restoring the burial plot of abolitionist and suffragist Julia Wilbur.

Julia Wilbur was born on August 8, 1815, in Milan, New York, one of 10 children of Quaker couple Stephen and Mary Wilbur. In the mid-1820s, Julia's father became ill with an eye disease that almost blinded him. He decided to leave his mercantile business and purchase farmland near his son's home in the town of Rush.

In 1835, Julia's mother passed away 6 weeks after giving birth. Even though Julia's father remarried, Julia stayed home into her late twenties and continued to help raise her siblings. In 1844, Julia moved to Rochester to become a teacher. She soon became involved with Rochester's active reform movements, spending evenings attending

meetings and lectures. Julia joined two anti-slavery groups and helped raise funds for Frederick Douglass's newspaper, *the North Star*, and other anti-slavery causes. She became a lifelong associate of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, and was also a vocal activist regarding the unequal pay of female teachers.

The start of the Civil War brought Julia to Washington, DC, where she was a relief worker for formerly enslaved people, as well as for sick and wounded soldiers. After the war, Julia was appointed a clerk in the United States Patent Office in DC, and it is believed that she was the first woman to be appointed to that position. Julia lived in DC until her death in 1895, just two months shy of her 80th birthday. Julia Wilbur was interred in the family plot in the Avon Cemetery.

- Stephanie Dempsey, AP&HS Trustee

BEFORE



AFTER



Sources: Paula Whitacre, author of *A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time* (paulawhitacre.com; farmingtonmeetinghouse.org); (www.findagrave.com)

The Avon Railroad Yard Fire of 1875

An 1875 fire at the Avon Erie Railroad yard, 100 West Main Street, made news across the state. The following details are credited to the *Mount Morris Enterprise* of December 15, 1875 and the *Nunda News* of December 14, 1875.

A fire was discovered in the livery a few feet north of the Pattee House at 11:00pm on the night of December 11, 1875. The fire was aided by a strong wind from the west and quickly grew and engulfed the Pattee House, a shed, two cottages, and a barbershop on the west side of the Erie rail yard. It was suspected that a transient person was the cause of the fire. Shortly before to the fire, the hotel proprietor, Mr. Pattee, had an altercation with a transient person and threw him out of the barroom. Several witnesses stated that the man shouted that "sooner or later" he would "get even with the proprietor." Within 30 minutes, smoke was observed coming from the livery and stable. Four horses and a cow were lost to the flames there.

The wind-driven flames jumped the Erie tracks to the station, which contained the waiting and baggage rooms, communication and ticket offices, and the office of the Erie superintendent, Mr. Brown. The water tank also started burning, and the fire quickly spread to the Avon Springs Hotel, the dining saloon, and the freight house. The fire jumped the rails again to the warehouses located on the west side of Rochester Street. Residents said that the area was "bright as day." Fear spread that the fire would cross Rochester Street and work its way up the hill to the business district. It would be an enormous loss.

At some point before the station was lost, telegraph operator Mr. Griffin sent a telegram to Mr. Butterfield, the Genesee Valley Railroad stationmaster in Rochester, stating, "Hurry to our office and have fire engine ready to come. Will send train for it. We are all on fire." Mr. Butterfield immediately notified Rochester City Mayor Mr. Clarkson, who ordered the city fire department to prepare and staff steam pumper #1 and wait at the Rochester Erie depot for transport to Avon. Mayor Clarkson also ordered the Active Hose Company to bring their duty carriage and extra lengths of hose to the depot.

The late-night train from Corning, New York, arrived in Avon on time about 11:30pm, but could not cross Routes 5 & 20 due to the flames. The cars were cut off the train and a boxcar and an empty gondola (an open car with low sides used to haul gravel, coal, stone, etc.) were attached. Flames were leaping across the track, and heat had warped the rails.

The engineer driving Engine 196, Mr. V. M. Rogers, realized the immediate need to proceed past the burning water tower, station, and hotel. After consideration, he made a successful run past the conflagration. The move was later described in newspapers as a run "through the gates of hell."

Rogers continued on to Rochester, where he met the fire crew, loaded the pumper and carriage into the gondola, and sped back to Avon. The steam pumper, still in the gondola, was connected to a water source and was successful in controlling the fire. By this time, the wind had changed to a more favorable direction and aided somewhat in containing the fire. Nonetheless, Mr. Rogers's actions were credited with saving a large part of the village from destruction.

Three men were injured in the fire. While helping to save furniture, Edward Drake was burned on the upper body and hands and Mr. Witcher suffered several broken ribs. Michael McLean was struck from a ladder, where he was pouring water on the flames, and suffered a broken leg. There was concern that McLean would die from injuries, leaving a wife and large family in Dansville. His fate remains unknown.

The apprehension, arrest, and trial of an arsonist also remain unknown.

Estimated property losses included \$30,000 for the Erie Railroad, \$15,000 to \$20,000 for William E. Pattee, and \$4,000 for J. Henry Bronson.

The Pattee House and livery was rebuilt and reopened the following year. It was later sold, and the name was changed to the Genesee Hotel. It no longer exists, having gone out of business when the popularity of water cures faded by the 1910s. There is no record that the

Avon Springs Hotel was ever reconstructed. The freight station and warehouses and were all rebuilt. The freight house was razed during the 1906-1907 reconfiguration of the rail yard and the warehouses were razed in the late 1900s. The wooden water towers were replaced with metal plugs protruding from the ground to service the locomotive tenders. They were removed when the Erie Railroad changed from steam power to diesel in the late 1950s. The fate of the barbershop and two dwellings remains unknown. A new station, designed by famous architect Bradford Lee Gilbert, was opened in 1879 and survives today as a restaurant. The “gingerbread” details between the gables of the depot are unique.

During the 1870s, fire prevention was crude at best. Most structures were made of wood and subject to fires caused by cooking, heating, and lighting. Zoning laws were few or unheard of, allowing stables and barns containing highly flammable hay to be built adjacent to, or adjoining, homes. Candles and oil lamps frequently

caused home fires. Heating relied mostly on wood or coal-burning stoves, and the potential for chimney fires was always present. Fire companies either did not exist or were ineffective due to lack of funding, equipment, and capability to fight structure fires. As a result, in the event of a conflagration such as the 1875 fire, residents could do little more than form bucket brigades, watch a fire burn itself out, or wait for the wind to change.

Courage, bravery, and determination often find a way to mitigate tragedy. As an example, V. M. Rogers’ act of driving his train through flames and across twisted rail to bring the pumper from Rochester made a significant difference. Also deserving of recognition are Mr. Griffin for his telegram, Rochester’s quick actions, and the many people who braved the flames to carry out furniture and possessions.

- John L. Liccini Jr., AP&HS Trustee



Pattee House and granary on left, freight station in front of passenger station in middle of photo, and Rochester Street on right. Photo was most likely taken from the top of the coaling tower for locomotives. Trolleys to the left of the station date this photo to c. 1907.



Avon Preservation and Historical Society

Avon Town Hall
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414
AvonPreservation.org

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #298
Rochester, NY

AP&HS Officers

Robert Westfall
President
Dan Cochrane
Vice President
Carole Hayes
Secretary
James Gerace
Treasurer
Joan Reid
Curator

AP&HS Trustees

Geri Brewer
Michael Cochrane
Stephanie Dempsey
Robert Dubois
Carole Hayes
Barbara Herman
John Liccini
Mary Lou Miller
Clara Mulligan
Mary Primm
Ellen Zapf

Honorary Board Members

Maureen Kingston
Dr. Robert Hayes
John DuBois

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

Address Service Requested

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

**If you know of a friend or relative who wants a 2021-2022 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. 8
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 x8
Email: clefeberhayes@gmail.com

Facebook Page

Pictured is the first Littleville schoolhouse with teacher Miss Belle Sutton, her students, and the trustees of the school. This picture was taken in 1904; note the Littleville Cemetery in the background. Modifications have since been made to the building, which now serves as the Scout House for Avon Troop #26. (Originally published on Facebook on September 9, 2021 by APHS Trustee Stephanie Dempsey.)



My dad attended school there til he went to ACS in 9th grade!!! He talked about it all the time!! - Dale B.
Lots of memories there, we played baseball in the driveway, hide and seek at dark in the cemetery, sledded down the big hill in the corner of the cemetery and played hopscotch on the cement at the steps. We rode mini bikes all over that place and up and down cemetery road. The best memories. Now I want to go home! - Doreen S.