



PRESS RELEASE

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**The Avon History Museum Grand Opening
Monday, September 1, 2025
12:00 – 3:00 p.m. Labor Day**



Avon History Museum, 8 East Main Street (Route 44)

August 13, 2025

Avon, Connecticut. The public is invited to the Grand Opening of the new Avon History Museum on Monday, September 1, 2025, Labor Day, from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. The new museum is located at 8 East Main Street, Avon, CT. Parking is available at the Avon Post Office, 15 Enford Street, behind the museum off Simsbury Road (Route 10.) The day will feature a public reading of the Declaration of Independence, ringing of church bells 13 times for the 13 colonies, games for kids, and an official launch of Avon America's 250 commemoration.

The Town of Avon and Avon Historical Society collaborated on an eight-year renovation to turn this 202-year old structure, originally named Schoolhouse No. 3, into a modern museum about Avon's history. Schoolhouse No. 3 was originally built in the geographic center of Avon on Country Club Road where the Avon Free Public Library stands today. For 115 years, from 1823-1938, students of West Avon were educated in this schoolhouse. To commemorate the two centuries of the Town of Avon's oldest-owned building, the Avon

Historical Society approached the Town in 2017 with a long-range vision of establishing a state-of-the art museum in the building.

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND: In 1980, The Avon Historical Society signed a 99-year lease with the Town of Avon to maintain the schoolhouse as its headquarters and to use it for public exhibits. After an archaeological dig was done in 1981 by the University of Connecticut yielding many interesting artifacts, it was relocated in 1982 from Country Club Road (on land needed to build the new Avon Free Public Library) to 8 East Main Street opening it as “The Living Museum” in 1983. A cellar was created for storage with a display area for artifacts built on the main floor. For twenty years, Avon’s elementary school students visited the Living Museum to learn about the town’s early history and spend the day being a student in a one-room schoolhouse. The Living Museum was open for 29 years during the summer months to thousands of visitors. Due to regular wear and tear and several maintenance issues, such as lack of proper climate control for the rapidly growing archival collection of textiles and other objects stored there, the museum was closed in 2012. The Society returned to calling it by one of its 19th century names, “Schoolhouse No. 3.”

A few years later, the Town of Avon was awarded a Small-Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant from the State of Connecticut to make streetscape improvements to the nearby intersection of West and East Main Streets (Route 44) and Simsbury Road (Route 10) which included the installation of wider sidewalks, granite curbing, and decorative lighting that reflected Avon’s historic character. The Society took advantage of that expansion in 2018 by commissioning banners on light poles along Simsbury Road highlighting historic sites in Avon. Hung annually from April through November, they welcome drivers and pedestrians who enter Avon on Simsbury Road.

But the Society wanted to do more to enhance the historically significant and original center of Avon. “Renovating Schoolhouse No. 3 into a new museum again seemed to be the answer,” stated Terri Wilson, president, Avon Historical Society. She added, “since 2014, professionals in the historic preservation and architectural community have stated that ‘the greenest building is one that already exists,’ which is exactly what this is.” Adopting this idea together, the Town of Avon and The Avon Historical Society agreed on a “vision and stewardship” of a new museum for visitors who could walk through the center from east and west to shop, eat and learn about the area's history. The museum is appropriately located in the original and historic center of Avon over the site of the 19th century Farmington Canal which crossed Route 44 traveling north and south.

An agreement on cost sharing was developed. The Town used funds from its Capital Improvement Project budget and from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA.) The Society raised its portion through private

donations, individuals, grants, proceeds from four TABLESCAPES fundraisers and its William Yadow Endowment Fund.

Some renovations began, during the pandemic, in the schoolhouse's cellar by the Town's Department of Public Works. They installed new flooring and walls, bathroom, and a small galley kitchen. The cellar is used for artifact and textile storage and a studio for the *AVON TALKS* podcast recordings.

During 2023 and 2024 a new HVAC system was installed, exterior siding was repaired in spots and new UV protection windows were added. The electrical system was upgraded with appropriate interior lighting for the exhibit areas inside. A free-standing exterior flagpole and solar light was donated by Society president, Terri Wilson and her husband. Lee, a US Army veteran. ***END OF OPTIONAL BACKGROUND***

The Society has an ongoing brick paver fundraiser for future temporary exhibits. To date almost 300 engraved brick pavers have been laid in a patio under a large white pergola donated by a Society member. Two new teak benches, donated by Society member Pat Moran, have been added in time for the grand opening. A Little Free Library, built by Lee Wilson, is located by the pergola for the enjoyment and sharing of books for all ages. Beautiful new landscaping all around the building was designed by Richter & Cegan Landscape Architects of Avon. DW Burr Landscaping in Simsbury donated the labor to install the many plants and trees. The area around the museum is the best it has looked in many years.

The main room's focus inside will be the history of Avon since Europeans arrived in the Farmington Valley in the early 17th century. At that time the land was named "Nod," later it became "Northington" (a daughter town of Farmington) and in 1830 it was named "Avon." A popular feature from the previous museum will still be on exhibit: the diorama of the Farmington Canal. The Canal operated through Avon from 1828-1848 and the museum is sitting on top of what was the towpath for the canal. The oldest textile in the collection, a women's silk dress worn in a 1794 wedding in Avon, was professionally conserved thanks to a Historic Preservation Grant from the National Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) through the Abigail Phelps Chapter in Simsbury. It will be showcased and described in a separate case along with other artifacts from the Society's collection. In addition, professionally curated and designed graphic panels, wall banners, and illustrated window shades will tell the story of Avon over four centuries.

The museum will also feature an exhibit of Native American artifacts found over the past 100 years by Farmington Valley residents. Surrounding the room will be panels describing the time period of 12,500 years ago to present when this part of the continent was inhabited.

"The Town is very excited that the Avon History Museum is opening soon. The renovations will help to preserve over four centuries of Avon's story, while adaptively reusing the Town's oldest public building to

serve future generations of Avon residents. We are so pleased to partner with The Avon Historical Society on this effort and look forward to showing the community the end result!” said Brandon Robertson, Town Manager.

The Society thanks the many donors and corporations who shared in the vision for the Avon History Museum: The Felicia Fund, Elizabeth Speer Foundation, Sharon R. O’Meara Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Eversource, The M&T Charitable Foundation, Avangrid, the Family of Anthony O’Neill, Patricia Moran, Northwest Community Bank Foundation, CT Water Company, Avon Greater Together Community Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and others. A perpetual plaque with all donors names will be in the new museum highlighting their commitment to local history.

“Avon residents can be so proud of the careful stewardship of one of its finest historical resources. I commend the strong partnership that the Town of Avon and the Avon Historical Society that brought this museum to life. The items and the knowledge it preserves will honor all those who came before us,” stated Nora Howard, Avon’s Town Historian.

After the celebration the museum will be open on Sundays from 1:00 – 4:00pm. For more information on The Avon Historical Society, visit: www.avonhistoricalsociety.org

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Photo courtesy of Deb Key Imagery.