



AVON LAND TRUST

Autumn 2022 Newsletter



Welcome to our Autumn newsletter! Folks seem to get giddy this time of year. It must be because the kids are back in school, football returns, the brisk weather and the beauty of the colorful leaves and yard decorations. Please take note of our organization's News below and our upcoming Events. Then relax with some apple cider and enjoy reading our articles.

We welcome comments on our Facebook page, or contact us via email at: trustavonland@gmail.com for information or to volunteer.

NEWS

- We are pleased to report that grant money provided by Lower Farmington River Wild and Scenic enabled the responsible removal of an unsightly and unsafe collapsed old cabin on our Sepous Road property, as well as other improvements made to this rustic site along the Farmington River. (See the fascinating article below on the history of Tunxis Reservation in Avon.)
- A generous grant was awarded to us from Northwest Community Bank. This money helped us restore the field at our Enders Reserve on Bishop Lane. (see the interesting article below on ALT co-founder Ostrom Enders, who was a corporate magnate who pioneered branch banking and racial integration of bank staff) In addition, part of the funds will be used to print a 50th Anniversary commemorative booklet for our 2023 celebration.
- The Avon Land Trust would like to thank the good people at ACE HARDWARE in Canton for the donation of a gallon of stain for the historic barn we recently inherited on Huckleberry Hill Road. The barn dates back to around 1820, according to a survey of historic barns of CT. Back in the day, the barn housed cows and agricultural equipment. Donations like this help stretch our limited funds, yet still accomplish great things! We always liked ACE before this, and love them even more now, as they help us preserve the barn for the next 200 years!
- How do you eat an elephant, or clean out a barn? One bite at a time! "Tidy" Heidi Zacchera was instrumental in clearing out some things from a barn that the Land Trust recently inherited. Heidi freely offered to help with this project, and also offered the use of her pickup truck as well! Heidi is just one example of the great folks who serve on the Avon Land Trust Board of Directors. Every member of our board contributes in their own unique way. To quote EBB, let me count the ways: from leading hikes, maintaining trails, setting up wildlife cameras, acting as our liaison with the town, helping remake our website, fundraising, grant writing, generous financial support, financial reporting, publicity, property research, land acquisition, nest box installation, etc etc etc.
- Gabriel DaCunha was recently awarded the rank of Eagle Scout. For his Eagle scout project, Gabriel built a puncheon (a raised wooden walkway on a trail) for the Avon Land Trust. It was a very ambitious project. An anonymous donor paid for the majority of the materials,

which was supplemented by the Land Trust. Land Trust director and Avon native David Whitney served on the Eagle Scout committee. We look forward to a long and productive partnership with Troop 274!

- We'd like to shine a spotlight on some of our very hard-working volunteers who maintain our trails and properties. A shout out goes to Scott Lewis, Gerry LaChance, Chris Graesser and others, who remove fallen trees and keep the trails clear. We plan to improve our trails even more by ordering and installing a number of new trail markers. Co-presidents Bob Breckenridge and Rick Dubiel installed two new bridges for hikers, over the seasonal brook at Oakes Preserve. ALT Historian Janet Conner donated some pavers, which were placed between the two bridge sections, now known as Conner Island Causeway!

EVENTS

September 7th at 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Zoom presentation '**Edible Wild Plants of Autumn**' given by Karen Monger. Register on the Avon Free Public Library website.

September 15th- **FUNDRAISER!** Dine at Puerto Vallarta restaurant and mention you are supporting Avon Land Trust. A portion of the proceeds will go to developing milkweed and pollinator planting beds for endangered monarch butterflies migrating to Mexico on our Enders Reserve parcel. Thank you!

September 15th at 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Webinar Series: '**Unearthing History: The discovery of a 12,500 year old Paleo-Indian site along the Farmington River in Avon**', **Lecture #4 aDNA-Ancient DNA** given by Christina Balentine and Samantha Archer, PhD, UConn Dept. of Anthropology. Register on Avon Free Public Library website. Avon Land Trust is a partner in this presentation.

September 19th at 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Zoom presentation '**Edible Wild Mushrooms of Connecticut**' presented by Karen Monger. Register on the Avon Free Public Library website.

October 21st at 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Inaugural '**History Talk & Walk**' at **Oakes Preserve** located at 65 Chidsey Road. Our Historian, Janet M. Conner, will give a talk about the history of ownership of this land parcel, followed by an ALT team member led walk around Lake Erie. Due to the small parking lot on-site, please park along the street being mindful of driveways and grass. We hope you will join us!

HISTORY BENEATH OUR FEET



Walking a Mile in Their Moccasins

By Janet M. Conner, Historian Laureate

The Tunxis Sepus native people were known to have lived both in Farmington proper, and on lands that would become Northington, early Avon. I find it interesting that many of our Town's street names have native people's names, however, but most of these were not from tribes that actually lived or passed through here. I recently came across some historical newspaper articles that provide some answers.

Here in Avon, streets named after native peoples include: Chepachet Road, Mohawk Road, Pequot Road, Nipmuck Pass, Sassucus Road, Sepous Road, Shepachet Road, Sequassen Road, and Uncas Trail. All of these streets are located in the Huckleberry Hill section of town, between New Road and the Farmington River. The

Avon Land Trust owns four properties on Sepous and Pequot Roads. Further research unveiled some further information about who decided on the 'Indian' [colloquial] names for these streets. In 1930 a developer by the name of G.A. Lawson owned a large tract of land on Huckleberry Hill along the river. Native artifacts had been found in this area and are in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society. Mr. Lawson decided to capitalize on this history: "...the owner and developer of this tract, because of the Indian history with which this reservation is associated...". [1] His plan was to build 244 cottages on small lots as a summer colony development. The development included "a public promenade running along the river for a mile or more"[2] and also hiking trails for residents. To announce the start of selling the lots, Mr. Lawson adorned the entrance with teepees and wigwams to denote its Indian theme. Now we learn about the street names! "In order to preserve the Indian background, Mr. Lawson has named his roads from such famous Indians as Uncas, Sequassem, and Chepachet and the new cottages being built will also have Indian names." [3] The 'Tunxis Reservation' was in the area of today's Verville Road, west and north to New Road. This article closes with: "In order that Tunxis Reservation may be known as a high class development, no lot owner will be permitted to build his summer cottage at a cost of less than \$1,000." [4] Mr. Lawson appropriated the name of Tunxis Reservation, however, according to Dr. Kenneth L. Feder, Professor of Anthropology at CCSU, in a 1992 *Hartford Courant* article said the following: "...there is no Tunxis reservation in Connecticut, no gambling casino and, in fact, no Tunxis people here." [5] In the photo above, is one of those 'expensive' cottages that was recently removed from one of the Land Trust parcels on Sepous Road, thanks to grant money from the Lower Farmington River Wild and Scenic.

In 1954, then Governor Lodge proclaimed September 24th as 'Indian Day' to commemorate Native Americans. Part of his speech: "...our ancient Connecticut hills, reminding us of those first inhabitants who pitched their tents of skin and houses of bark where now white clapboard homes stand along the roadsides. Many of these roads follow the immemorial paths of the red man through the forest..." [6] He closed by urging citizens to observe this date to commemorate native people. "Let us, in our schools and colleges, and in our individual opportunities pay special tribute to a race, which though nearly vanished, has left its sign and imprint strong upon our State". [7]

IF THE WOODS COULD TALK



The Waterville Beagles and Enders Reserve

By Janet M. Conner, Historian Laureate

Secluded deep into the woods in the Cider Brook section of town in 1939, now privately owned property, there were dog kennels. These were competitive show dogs who were owned by an Avon Land Trust Board of Trustee member, Mr. Ostrom Enders. Mr. Enders was elected as a Trustee at the founding of Avon Land Trust in 1973. Enders was a man with many interests, including ornithology, yachting, sportsmanship, and 'beagling'!

According to Wikipedia: "Beagling is the hunting mainly of hares and also rabbits, by beagles by scent."

A *Hartford Courant* newspaper article dated 1937, mentions two of the Beagles competing in The Bay State Beagle and Sportmen's Club as 'Waterville Gamester' and 'Rioter of Starleaf', owned by Mr. Enders. [8] Also in 1937, Enders 'Waterville Frantic' placed first and was the Derby winner in the New England Club field trials.[9] 'Waterville Dinah' took second place in the New England Derby Beagle Championship in 1938.[10] Another article from 1940, covering the Hartford Dog Show, notes "Third place was taken by the Waterville Beagles of Avon, with the Master and Huntsman being Ostrom Enders." [11] In 1941, the thirteen-inch Beagle, 'Gaiety of Starleaf' won and 'Gracious of Starleaf' placed third in the Western Massachusetts Beagle Club competition, both owned by Mr. Enders. [12]

There is a map in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society known as 'The Waterville Beagles'. It is dated March 20, 1939 and shows the location back off Cider Brook Road of where, approximately, the dog kennels were located. It looks as though there are three former buildings noted on the map. Many of the notations in the key are descriptive of the terrain and geographical features in Mr. Ender's neighborhood. For instance, it is noted that there was a 'deer field' and a 'black duck' field. Mr. Enders bred rare species of waterfowl and also left a \$1.2 million dollar, 6,000 volume library on natural history and ornithology, to Trinity College in 1984. [13] There was also a 'skeet field' where I can imagine him practicing his marksmanship.

This map however, did not identify where Mr. Ender's home was formerly located and since demolished. It stood at 55 Bishop Lane. In the Connecticut Digital Archive, this home was built in 1935 in the "International" style with ceramic hollow tile walls. The home was the architectural creation of Seth and Charles Hooker Talcott. Mr. Enders was married to Alice Talcott. The architectural survey notes this style was "expensive to design and build and acceptable to only the most advanced tastes". I wonder if he got the family discount.



The Avon Land Trust parcel known as 'Ender's Reserve' is a 2.65 acre of woodland and grassland at 125 Cider Brook Road. Mr. Enders died in 1994 and the parcel was donated in his name in 1995. The Trust is propagating milkweed on this parcel to help the endangered monarch butterfly population, and has installed several bluebird houses.

AVON FLORA AND FAUNA

The Birdbath

By Janet M. Conner, Historian Laureate



My backyard has long had a birdbath located in the sightline of my kitchen sink window to afford wildlife viewing. Over the past many years, I have delighted in the plethora of birds that visit this one spot. The bird bath attracts many of the common bird species including blue jays, cardinals, gold finches, house sparrows, robins, etc. Recently, I was surprised to see a scarlet tanager twice. What an eye-catching bird with bright red plumage and black wings! I was out back the other day and heard a noise that literally sounded like a cat...it was a catbird enjoying a bath.

Most of these birds just stop by for a drink or a bath and go on their way. But over time, I have noticed pairs of birds that I know are the same ones returning each year. There has been a pair of robins for several years now, that nest over my front door. This year, and in some others, they had two clutches of eggs that successfully fledged. Luckily, we don't use our front door much, and I enjoy watching for the pretty blue egg shells that fall to the porch when the eggs hatch. Some weeks later, it's fun to see the little heads of the baby birds pop up when Mrs. Robin flies in to feed them. How smart she was to build her nest under the portico of the front porch, out of the intense sun and rain. These adult robins are so comfortable with us, we can walk within about six feet of them when they are feeding on the ground. For many years, we have had a pair of house sparrows that nest in the hanging basket I put by the front door. There is also a pair of mourning doves that visit the birdbath in the early evening that also seem to return each year. They show up about the same time, just before the sun sets. Hummingbirds flit in and out of the yard stopping at the petunias on the deck for nectar.

The birdbath is kind of like the neighborhood bar! If you pay attention, you can see the interaction between the different wildlife. I have had a certain chipmunk that lives in my drainpipe for many years. I notice he will often venture out further into the yard when the robins are at the bird bath. I have noted that smaller birds will sound an auditory alarm when there is danger from a hawk or other predator. The birds co-exist in feeding with squirrels and chipmunks; some birds are very territorial however. The robins will chase off smaller birds and one, in particular, thinks this is their own personal bath and will guard it until a bigger bird drops by for a beer...errr, drink of water!

The wildlife in my backyard, including birds, mammals, and amphibians return annually to breed as they know they can find natural food sources, nesting opportunities, cover from predators, and a water source. We have had fawns born in our wild brush for three years running; bear cubs who have actually knocked over the birdbath and cracked the concrete, and recently bobcats! My one acre is like a wildlife microcosm reflecting more vast acreage which drives home to me the importance of the efforts of the Avon Land Trust. The Trust currently stewards over three hundred acres of land. Every autumn, as the cooler weather arrives, I marvel at hearing geese honking overhead as they practice their formations in readiness for their migration. The robins seem to leave a bit later, and it never ceases to amaze me how they return to exactly the same backyard, mine, year after year. Nature is truly magnificent. This is why the Avon Land Trust works hard to preserve habitats that wildlife can come home to year after year! And don't we all love to come home?

AVON NATURAL RESOURCES

Historic Waterways Near Land Trust Properties

By Janet M. Conner, Historian Laureate

As we drive around our town today, with all its modern roads, homes, stores and other buildings, it is hard to imagine our landscape when Native people lived here. If one looks deep into the historical record, there are traces of these early inhabitants. For instance, on Huckleberry Hill which was originally known as Whortleberry Hill, archaeologists have determined probable use of land near the Land Trust's parcels on Sepous Road and Pequot Road. According to the June 2011 Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Management Plan (FRWA), indicative findings point to Native people having had campsites here on the adjoining Farmington River. Today's Hawley Brook, formerly Long Swamp Brook, bisects 'the Hill'. Later in history this brook would supply water power for a distillery.

Across the ridgeline heading east, is the former Lovelytown section of Avon. Here as well, along Roaring Brook, archaeologists have also identified probable campsites of Native people along this waterway that is both a running stream and has ponds. The Tunxis Sepus were a Native people in the Farmington Valley. The water power of Roaring Brook was used to power two distilleries along Lovely Street and a sawmill later in time. The Land Trust owns two properties, one on Lovely Street and one on Old Wheeler Lane, near this brook.

Heading further east Chidsey Brook runs that portable saw mill on Sunrise Old Farm and Pine Woods in this area was originally first mill grant in 1711, and waterway supported machine and a fulling mill Farmington River. The Land Avon Road and its environs.



over the next ridgeline, into West Avon, is through this section. This brook powered a Farm. South of West Avon was the former sections of town. The historical waterway known as Long Swamp Brook, site of the later known as Beaver Dam Brook. This gristmills & sawmills [rebuilt], a carding over time. And just to the east, was the Trust owns five properties on or near West (1710 First Subdivisions of Avon, Town of Avon Engineering Dept.)

An ancient Paleoindian site was uncovered in 2019 at the juncture of Old Farms Road and Waterville Road, now known as the Brian D. Jones site [See Zoom event above]. The Avon Land Trust owns the parcel of land at 485 Waterville Road right where this find was made! The parcel is 1.95 acres with frontage on Waterville Road. The Land Trust is formulating some improvement plans for this property. This is the Cider Brook section of town, named for the brook of the same name as folklore says a wagon carrying cider was spilled into the brook. Ware Swamp Brook is just to the north of Cider Brook. Ware Swamp was the power source for a possible early gristmill, but also a large cider mill. The Land Trust has five properties along Waterville Road and nearby.

Turning north on Waterville Road, we enter the former Nod and Nod Hill sections of town. Nod Brook runs through this part of town and has its terminus in East Avon. Historically, this waterway supported the early fuse company, a cotton concern, distilleries, a fulling mill, a carding machine, gristmill and sawmill. A resident of the Nod section whose ancestors have lived there since 1666, recounted to me of seeing Native people's trenches (for defense) in the land behind her home near Talcott Mountain. "Near my back yard going up the mountain, there were two "Indian" trenches, where I am sure my ancestors scuffled with those here first. As Hazen drive built up, one of the trenches was "re-purposed" as a back yard, but the other one is still in Hazen Park. It is now simply a long depression in the land, as leaves and erosion have tried to fill it in over time." [14] The Land Trust owns two parcels on Talcott Mountain with hiking trails.

The Native people that fished, hunted, and lived along these historical waterways, followed by early settlers who utilized their hydropower, fortunately left traces in the earth. The earth itself is a part of the historical record from which archaeologists are able to interpret their stories. I can only imagine the serenity of the landscape of long ago.

THE AVON LAND TRUST HISTORY AND MISSION STATEMENT

The Avon Land Trust was founded on May 23, 1973 in order to conserve and hold in trust the natural resources of the Town of Avon – woodlands, fields, lakes, rivers, open spaces and the plant and animal life living therein.

By doing so we hope to retain the natural charm of our town. Future generations may not remember our names, but they will certainly be glad we were here.

Mission:

- To preserve and protect undeveloped land in Avon- By doing so, to enhance our town's scenic beauty and it's environmental and historic resources.
- To promote the conservation and management of woodlands and open space.
- To acquire through donations and purchases additional land which can be preserved in it's natural state.
- To maintain wildlife habitats on said properties.
- To provide public access to appropriate properties and in so doing provide public enjoyment of nature.
- To actively seek wetlands, woodlands meadowlands and ridgeland which have unique scenic, historic, scientific and ecological significance for Avon.



Source citations

- [1] The Hartford Courant, May 25, 1930, 'Innovations Mark Tunxis Development: Indian Tepees Placed At Entrance to New Summer Colony Near Unionville'
- [2] Ibid
- [3] Ibid
- [4] Ibid
- [5] The Hartford Courant, September 4, 1992 'Pequots' victory is rare one for the Indians of New England', Feder, Kenneth L.
- [6] The Hartford Courant, September 15, 1954 'Gov. Lodge Proclaims Indian Day: September 24 Names for Commemoration of Native Americans'
- [7] Ibid
- [8] The Hartford Courant, August 28, 1937, 'Local Beagles Ready for Bay State Show'
- [9] The Hartford Ccourant, October 15, 1937 'State Beagles First Twice at Lime Rock'
- [10] The Hartford Courant, May 29, 1938, 'May Qualify For National Legion Rifle Team Here' [photograph]
- [11] The Hartford Courant, April 21, 1940 'Four Beagle Packs Thrill Audience with Colorful Performance at Show'
- [12] The Hartford Courant, April 26, 1941, 'Speaking of Dogs'
- [13] The Hartford Courant, March 13, 1884, 'Lecture Set on Vanishing Species'
- [14] Private resident