

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 21 1979
DATE ENTERED FEB 11 1980

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Pine Grove (7th School District)

AND/OR COMMON

Pine Grove National Register District

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Harris and West Avon Roads

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Avon

0015

VICINITY 1st- William Cotter

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

Hartford

CODE

003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: Hist Sc Headquarters

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

See Property Owners List

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Town Hall

Route 44

CITY, TOWN

Avon

Connecticut

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1979

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

59 South Prospect Street

Hartford

CT

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Pine Grove School National Register District consists of four well-preserved 19th-century farmsteads, a late 18th-century house and a recently restored Gothic Revival 1-room schoolhouse. Located at the T-intersection of West Avon and Harris Roads in Avon, Connecticut, the grouping retains its rural, agrarian character despite limited residential development on Sunrise Drive, to the north, and along West Avon Road; a 1963 church stands just south of the district on Harris Road. Two of the farmsteads (at 712 and 841 West Avon Road) remain active and survive with a full complement of 19th-century outbuildings, while 687 and 727 West Avon Road and 20 Harris Road are now solely residential. The farms are set close to the road amid open fields rising to the west with an unobstructed view to the east over the Farmington River to the Talcott Mountain Range. West Avon Road (Route 167) and Harris Road are important arteries connecting Farmington and Avon and their intersection at the school is quite busy. In addition, some light industry in the area creates truck traffic.

The boundaries of the district were drawn on the basis of three criteria: 1) that the structures reflected the historic character of the district as an agrarian grouping, 2) that the structures were present when the school was built in 1865, and 3) that their owners either participated in the enactment of the school district or were historically associated with the area's settlement. The full acreage of the two active farms in the district was included as they continue to reflect the historic use of the land for farming. Consequently the district consists of three discontinuous parcels, separated by five incompatible houses, but linked visually, historically, and architecturally. The major grouping (A) occurs at the intersection of West Avon and Harris Roads and includes the schoolhouse and three farmsteads, the Oliver Thompson Farm, the Ephraim Woodford Farm, and the David Rood Farm. Visible to the south across an open field is the 1963 contemporary, brick, Christ Episcopal Church; just beyond the church, behind a stand of ever-green trees, is the Shubail Thompson House, a transitional Greek Revival/Italianate house gutted by fire in 1977. Because of its questionable structural integrity and visual discontinuity, the Shubail Thompson House is not included.

The second parcel (B) consists of the Marcus Thompson Farm at the crest of the hill west of Pine Grove School on West Avon Road. The house and several outbuildings stand on the north side of West Avon Road with the barn opposite on the south side of the road. There are three small houses, of modern construction, between the Marcus Thompson and Ephraim Woodford Farms on the north side of West Avon Road; these are excluded, as is a modern house, on the south side of the road whose lot and landscaping obscure it, preserving the district's sightline west from the school. An eighth of a mile north along West Avon Road is the third parcel (C), the Isaac Woodford House. An 18th-century house, it is included because it is the earliest farmhouse in the area and the only reflection of the

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Property Owners List:

687	<u>West Avon Road</u> Joseph C. and Penelope R. Woodford	C
712	Oliver W. Thompson	C
727	Albert R. Thompson	C
841	L. Max Smith/ Simsbury Bank and Trust 740 Hopmeadow Road, Simsbury, CT	C
---	Town of Avon, CT (Pine Grove School)	C
20	<u>Harris Road</u> Edward A. and Ann S. Kalber	C

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NR District ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

initial period of the district's development. South of the Isaac Woodford House at 711 West Avon Road is a 1950s single-family house, which is not included.

The Gothic Revival schoolhouse at West Avon and Harris Roads forms the focus for the district. It is an unpretentious building, sided with boards and battens, with a pitched roof faced with cusped bargeboards. A small, projecting, enclosed porch, also with a pitched roof and cusped bargeboards, leads inside to the boys' and girls' cloakrooms, from which the classroom is entered. The teacher's blackboard, which slides on tracks to reveal cupboards behind, is centered on the east wall. More wooden blackboards are set between the 4-over-4 sash windows along the north and south walls. There is an unfinished wood-room to the southwest and a teachers preparation and supply room to the northwest. The walls are finished with tongue-and-groove panelling to the windowsills and the ceiling, of tin, forms a shallow vault. The schoolroom holds many books and papers, most of which came from former 7th District schoolchildren. The teacher's desk is a reproduction, the replica of one shown in a photograph taken of the school's interior late in the 19th century; the pupils' desks are of the period, though not original to the school. Outside, one of the original two outhouses (one for boys, one for girls) survives.

A source for the school's design is documented in the Annual Report of the Connecticut Board of Education for 1866, reporting on the progress of the schoolhouse for the 7th District, enacted by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1865. The school, the report states, was built "on the exact plan of that in Westerly, Rhode Island, designed by Mr. Teft (sic), of Providence, as represented in Barnard's School Architecture." Thomas A. Tefft's design appeared in Henry Barnard's School Architecture; or Contributions to the Improvement of School-houses in the United States, published in 1854. Tefft, 1826-1859, was a Providence architect primarily known for his ecclesiastical designs, was the architect for the South Baptist Church* in Hartford, though most of his major works were in Rhode Island. Henry Barnard, 2nd, the Rhode Island Commissioner of Public Schools, was a Connecticut native and the first Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Commissioners of Common Schools, appointed in 1838. Barnard's close connections with the Connecticut educational system, his national prominence as an educational theorist, as well as the fact that he lived for many years in Hartford² (ten miles from Avon), all help to explain the choice of Tefft's design for the 7th District School.

*- Demolished

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Opposite the Pine Grove School is the Oliver Thompson Farm, with an 1856 Italianate farmhouse and 1874 barn, topped with a lantern with round-head windows. "Sunrise Farm" and a scene of Talcott Mountain with the sun rising over it are painted on the gable end of the barn. The painting was done c. 1905 by a local artist, Clinton Hart, and re-touched in 1974. Two tobacco barns, several sheds, and a slate-roofed ice house surmounted by a lantern, also stand on the property which includes 50 acres of land, now cultivated primarily with potatoes, though until the mid-1950s, tobacco was grown. The flat-roofed farmhouse, conventional in its fenestration and siding, has wide, overhanging eaves, and a veranda, the roof of which is supported by flaring posts of intersecting boards, all topped with lyre-like capitals, whimsical and undeniably hand-crafted.

Adjacent to the school across West Avon Road is the Ephraim Woodford Farm. The main complex of buildings consists of a 1½-story Greek Revival house, connecting with an ell, carriage shed, and barn. Another, larger, barn, set on a high, brownstone foundation, stands south and west of the house. There are several smaller outbuildings north of the house, which is a rather diluted Greek Revival design with small, square windows set in its wide, flat frieze; a deeply-recessed, flush-boarded pediment formed by the gable end is its sole allusion to classicism. Until recently, chickens and dairy cows were kept, but now, though intact, the farm is inactive.

South and east of the school, but still visually related to it, is the David Rood Farm at 20 Harris Road. A typical, 2-story, 5-bay structure with end chimneys and a 1½-story ell to the rear, the early 19th-century Rood house is roofed with wide bands of red and green slates. Its 19th-century barn survives, but the farm is not active.

The Marcus Thompson Farm, set at the crest of the hill which rises behind the school, is a modest, but well-preserved farm grouping. The house, c. 1840, is a 2-story, clapboarded structure with a pitched roof. Barely visible beneath a porch, bay window and 1-story extension added late in the 19th-century, is the core of the house, a transitional Federal/Greek Revival vernacular structure. The barn, across West Avon Road from the house, is almost identical to the barn at Marcus's brother Oliver's "Sunrise Farm". It also has a lantern with round-head windows; the weathervane is a carved flying eagle. Also included are another large barn (probably the original, c. 1840) and several

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smaller outbuildings. The farm consists of approximately 90 acres; hay and apples are grown there presently, though, during the 19th century, tobacco was grown.

The oldest building in the district, the 1789 Isaac Woodford House at 687 West Avon Road, is an unpretentious, central-chimney structure, 2 stories tall and 5 bays wide, with a simple transomed front entrance. It stands virtually undecorated save for triangular windows in the end gables.* Once part of an early farm, the Isaac Woodford House now retains only its connecting carriage shed to the rear. The remaining outbuildings, which always stood across West Avon Road from the house, have been torn down; two 1950s houses, not in the district, take their place.

*- triangular windows are a 19th-century alteration

1. Connecticut, "Annual Report of the Board of Education of the State of Connecticut, presented to the General Assembly", (Hartford, Case, Lockwood, & Company, 1866), p. 183.

2. Barnard's life-long home at 118 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut is a National Historic Landmark.

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Inventory:

(All buildings are contributory,)

1. Pine Grove School (7th District School): 1865, Gothic Revival, 1-story, board and batten schoolhouse on a brownstone foundation, with paired 4-over-4 sash, cusped bargeboards at the roof and entry porch. Late 19th-century outhouse to the rear, one of two originally standing.
2. David Rood Farm (20 Harris Road): C. 1820, 2-story, 5-bay, end-chimney, clapboarded farmhouse with a pitched, slate roof, entry porch with square piers and a 1½-story ell to rear (east). 1½-story, 19th-century, vertically boarded barn.
3. Epraim Woodford Farm: (727 West Avon Road): C. 1843, Greek Revival, 1½-story, clapboarded farmhouse with a late 19th-century veranda on the south (entrance) wall, a wide frieze with 3-over-3 windows and a flush-boarded, gable end pediment. 1-story contemporaneous ell to rear, connecting with a garage/carriage shed and a 2-story barn. 19th-century barn, 2 stories on a brownstone foundation, southwest of the house, 1-story chicken coop north of the house.
4. Oliver Thompson Farm (712 West Avon Road): 1856, Italianate, 2-story, clapboarded farmhouse with a flat roof with overhanging, bracketed eaves and a veranda with sawn-wood trim. 1874, Italianate, 2½-story, vertical boarded barn with a lantern with round-head windows and a finial with a copper arrow weathervane. Painted scene of "Sunrise Farm" and the sun rising over Talcott Mountain on the west wall of the barn. Numerous additional outbuildings, including a slate-roofed ice house with a lantern, 2 tobacco barns, 2 sheds.
5. Isaac Woodford House (687 West Avon Road): 1789, center-chimney, 2-story, clapboarded, 5-bay farmhouse with an end gable overhang with triangular windows and an entrance with a 5-light transom. Also, 1-story ell and carriage shed connecting to the rear.
*- triangular windows a 19th-century alteration
6. Marcus Thompson Farm (841 West Avon Road): C. 1840, transitional Federal/Greek Revival vernacular farmhouse with pitched roof with partial gable return, Doric corner capitals, a wide frieze with narrow windows visible on south wall, late 19th-century porch, bay window, 1-story extensions. House is 2 stories with clapboarding. C. 1870, vertically boarded barn with a lantern with round-head windows and a carved, flying eagle weathervane. Also, 2 1½-story barns, and a garage/shed.

(numerals 1-6 correspond to numerals 1-6 on base map titled "Pine Grove School NR District")

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

Criteria: A,C

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pine Grove School National Register District, in the West Avon section of Avon, Connecticut, is a well-preserved grouping of 19th-century farmsteads situated around an 1865 1-room district schoolhouse at the intersection of two country roads. Set amidst open fields, the farmhouses and their outbuildings are linked by common workmanship and materials and by a common sense of provincialism in their designs, vernacular adaptations of important 19th-century styles, such as the Greek Revival and Italianate. The Gothic Revival schoolhouse is taken from the design by a prominent Providence architect, Thomas A. Tefft. Despite encroaching suburban development from the north and increased through-traffic, the district retains its small-scale, tight-knit, 19th-century, New England, agrarian character. Two of the five farms in the district are still worked and three of the five retain extensive, 19th-century outbuildings.

In the 19th century, agriculture in Connecticut shifted from extensive subsistence farming to the more intensive production of cash crops. In areas where the soil was good, particularly in the Connecticut River Valley region, farming could be profitable: tobacco was an especially lucrative crop. The area around the Pine Grove School, though part of the Farmington River Valley, reflects this shift. Prior to its incorporation in 1830, Avon was a section of Farmington known as Northington. Farmland was divided by the Farmington proprietors and most of the district lies in what was once the 75th lot of the North-West Division, owned by a Mr. Haynes. A section of that lot, shown on an 18th-century map of Farmington, is identified as "Jonathan Thomson's Dry Brook Land": that land is still owned by Thompson descendants. In those early days, farmers worked their land by day, returning at night to the settlement at Farmington. Later, those farmers built on their lands and moved there permanently. The Isaac Woodford House is the earliest of these permanent residences still standing within the district.

Actually, the earliest house in the district may have been an 18th-century Thomson family house which once stood on the site of the Italianate house at 712 West Avon Road. When the present house was built, in 1856, the older house was moved to the back of the lot and, around 1960, razed (though some of the framing members were saved by the present owner). In the absence of the Thomson House, the Isaac

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Connecticut, "Annual Report of the Board of Education of Connecticut, presented to the General Assembly", (Hartford, Case, Lockwood, and Co., 1866).

Sanstrom, Cecelia B., "History of Education in Avon, Connecticut", unpublished thesis, Education 500, Saint Joseph College, May 19, 1970. On file, Avon Public Library. (Bibliography Continued, Continuation Sheet 9, page 1)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 121

QUADRANGLE NAME Avon CT QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 24000

UTM REFERENCES (Continuation Sheet, Item 10, page 1)

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

As indicated on accompanying map titled "Pine Grove School NR District" and outlined in black: sections "A", "B", & "C". Scale 1"=200'.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Sarah Zimmerman, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

February 1979

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

203 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

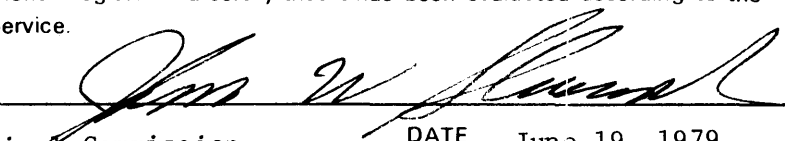
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE

Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

June 19, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Cecelia D. Skell
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2-11-80

ATTEST:

James W. Stewart
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

2/11/80

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Woodford House, built on land deeded to him in 1788 by his brother, Joseph, assumes significance as the first house in the district. At that time, cultivation would have been still for subsistence rather than profit.

The Woodfords and Thompsons were the two most influential families in the district late in the 18th century and into and during the 19th century. Asaph Woodford, Isaac's son, and Thaddeus Thompson, accumulated large tracts of land in the district early in the 19th century. But it was the next generation that created the district as it appears today. The pattern of building clearly indicates the period from 1840-1870 as the district's heyday. Oliver Thompson built his Italianate farmhouse around in 1856. His brothers Shubail and Marcus also built farmhouses around the same period. Ephraim Woodford probably built his Greek Revival farmhouse in 1843, when he married. During that period, tobacco was an important crop: when he died, in 1895, Oliver Thompson's inventory included 10,000 pounds of tobacco and the 52 acre farm was valued at \$3,000.00.

The school stands where it does for several reasons. The Annual Report of the Connecticut Board of Education (1865) states that the portions of the three districts (Unionville, Farmington, and Avon) from which the 7th District was formed had been "very inconveniently situated as to school privileges." A later statement that it was "a small district numbering only twenty-five scholars" suggests that local political influence, and not just simple need, dictated the formation of the district. In fact, Asaph and Zerah Woodford (local residents) were, for many years, selectmen and justices of the peace, and hence, politically powerful Avon citizens. But the formation of the school district seems due, in large part, to the efforts of Oliver Thompson. He oversaw the collection of signatures for a petition to the General Assembly to enact the district and he was authorized to warn a meeting of the electors. Later, the school was built opposite his house, on land purchased from Asahel Woodford (conservator for Ephraim Woodford).

The schoolhouse, completed by the winter of 1865/66, at a cost of \$1538.34 (descendants of Oliver Thompson have his account books itemizing the schoolhouse expenses), remained in use until 1949. Later, it served other uses, including use as a branch library and nursery school.

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In 1975, the Avon Historical Society began restoration of the school, funded by a matching grant from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut. The effort, completed in 1976, included documenting the original appearance of the schoolroom, determining paint schemes, replacing furnishings and restoring the cloakrooms. Barnard's School Architecture was helpful as many of his principles for school construction were realized in the design for the Pine Grove School. Today, the schoolhouse is a meeting place for the Society (which leases it from the town) and repository for materials relating to both the town and the school. The Historical Society encourages the use of the school by other non-profit organizations and frequently opens it for tours by today's schoolchildren; there are regular public visiting hours.

Architecturally, the district conveys a pragmatic simplicity. Architectural style in the district is a provincial response rather than an artistic statement; the detailing of the Oliver Thompson House, naive and handmade yet clearly intended to be up-to-date and stylish, is a good example of this response. In fact, the Pine Grove School is the purest example of any style or type within the district; even so, it follows the rural, cottage precedent set out by A.J. Downing. Thus, it is the integrity of the farmsteads in their groupings, the simplicity of their workmanship and materials, the naivete of their design and detailing and the extent to which their agrarian setting is preserved which creates the quality of significance in the Pine Grove School National Register District.

1. Connecticut, "Annual Report of the Board of Education of the State of Connecticut, presented to the General Assembly", (Hartford, Case, Lockwood, and Company, 1866), p. 183.
2. Ibid., p. 183.

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Thompson, Alice H., AVON: A BRIEF INFORMAL HISTORY, (Avon, Avon Women's Club, 1954).

Thompson, Alice Holmes, "Pine Grove School, Seventh District, Avon, Connecticut", article in the Lure of the Litchfield Hills, (Volume XIII, Number 5, December, 1956).

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathbun, BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTS, DECEASED, (Los Angeles, Hennessey and Ingalls, 1970).

Woodford, Frank B., THE WOODFORD FAMILY RECORD, (Detroit, privately published, 1938).

Also,
Avon Land and Probate Records, Town Clerk's Office, Avon, CT.
Farmington Land and Probate Records, Town Clerk's Office, Farmington, CT.
Interviews:
George J. Leger, Past President, Avon Historical Society
Oliver W. Thompson, Resident
Penelope R. Woodford, President, Avon Historical Society.