

**The Story of the H.L. Hunley Submarine:
It's Connection to Connecticut history**
Exhibit at the Avon Free Public Library: Jan. 8 – Feb. 28, 2018
Movie and presentation in January

The Special Projects Committee of the Avon Historical Society is pleased to present a unique exhibit on the history and reclamation of the Confederate submarine, Hunley, which sank in 1862 and later rediscovered and raised in 2000. The exhibit entitled “**The Story of the H.L. Hunley Submarine: It's Connection to Connecticut History**” will be on display from January 8 through February 28, 2018 at the Local History Corner on the first floor of the Avon Free Public Library, 281 West Avon Road, Avon, CT. A movie about the Hunley and its preservation to date will be presented on Thursday, January 18 at 1:30pm. A full presentation on its history will be held on Saturday, January 20 at 1:30pm in the Community Room of the Library by Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni, state archeologist emeritus, from Connecticut. Dr. Bellantoni was invited to examine the Hunley crew for his expert opinion and help solve the mystery of identification tags belonging to a Union soldier, yet found on a Confederate crew member.

There have been many unsolved mysteries surrounding the Civil War-era submarine, the brainchild of Horace Lawson Hunley, since it's sinking in February of 1862. Was Mr. Hunley motivated by patriotism and/or profit to create this machine of war? Mr. Hunley partnered with engineer James McClintock in designing this “fish boat” that was literally made of boiler plates welded together.

The mission of the Hunley was to break the naval blockade in Charleston, South Carolina harbor by sinking a Union ‘ironclad’ ship. After initial testing and deaths of crew members, the third mission was successful in sinking the USS Housatonic. However, the Hunley was unable to retreat from its death blow to the ironclad, and sank in the harbor, killing all crew members.

The Hunley submarine was discovered in 1995 by Clive Cussler, was carefully raised from the bottom of the harbor in 2000 and brought to the Warren Lasch Conservation Center in South Carolina. At the Center the submarine is kept in a huge, saltwater tank for preservation and teams have worked painstakingly to remove over 130 years of barnacle encrustation and the cleaning of artifacts. Dr. Bellantoni was called in to help solve one of the many mysteries surrounding the crew's skeletal remains. There are three connections to Connecticut's history that he will explain. The story of the Hunley and its crew is sure to captivate the audience.

In order to prepare for this exhibit, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Marcotte, members of the Society and the Special Projects Committee, traveled to South Carolina last month to visit the museum

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and see the submarine for themselves. “After our research for this exhibit, we were truly eager to see The Hunley in its 90,000 gallon conservation tank. It was most surprising to realize how small this sub was and it’s good condition after spending more than a century under water in Charleston Harbor. We also learned that for The Hunley’s “mission impossible,” the crew was made up of eight volunteers who came from both the Confederate Army and the Navy; four Confederates and four Europeans (who came to fight for the Confederate cause). It was also very exciting to see the artifacts first-hand. ” stated Dr. Marcotte on seeing the Hunley for the first time. He added, “to us, the most impressive artifact was the deformed \$20 gold coin that belonged to Capt. Dixon. We hope that the exhibit will have many visitors so that they can see for themselves the photos of *The Hunley*, the many artifacts and the facial reconstructions of *The Hunley* crew.”

Mr. Frank Johnson, Program and Outreach Manager, Friends of the Hunley, gave permission to the Avon Historical Society to use images of the submarine for the exhibit and subsequent articles in the Society’s newsletter. The exhibit will contain over 40 before and after photos of the submarine including details about its many missions, maps of where it went, stories of its brave Confederate soldiers who died when it sank, and what a visitor may learn if they are in Charleston to see the actual artifact.

As an added feature, the Library and Society will host a History Channel movie on Thursday, January 18 at 1:30pm in the Community Room entitled “*Digging for the Truth: The Hunley: New Revelations*.” It will be followed by a slide show from the Marcotte’s recent trip to the Hunley. Snow date will be Thursday, January 25 at 1:30pm.

After both the January 18th movie and the January 20th presentation, docents will be at the exhibit to answer any questions and share what they have learned about this early submarine of war. The Special Projects Committee “Team Hunley” has been hard at work all Fall preparing and studying to make this exhibit truly professional and educational. It is hoped many families will come by to view it and learn more about this time in our nation’s history.

For more information about the Society, visit: www.avonhistoricalsociety.org