



# THE FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS INC. NEWSLETTER

Volume I Number 2

Fall

October 7, 2002

## VALLEY FALLS PARK ON-GOING PROJECTS AND UPDATES



### THE BARN

Under the guidance of Bruce Dinnie and the Parks and Recreation Department, the barn renovations continue. The roof has been reshingled with Lifepine Shingles, made of southern yellow pine. The product comes with a 50-year warrantee and requires little maintenance. The cupola was reconstructed, painted and shingled also. The lower barn door appears to be new, but look again! Staff member of the Parks and



Recreation Department, Mark Lucas, painted faux door hinges (a trompe l'oeil, if you will!). New windows will be installed this fall. Thank you Bruce - it looks wonderful!

The Vernon Historical Society held its annual meeting at the barn this spring. Ronald Burke of the Friends and

the Society presented a most interesting and very detailed history of Valley Falls Park, which he had thoroughly researched. The talk was followed by a tour of Valley Falls Farm.

### DREDGING OF VALLEY FALLS POND

The project has been redesigned to reconfigure the sediment forebay, which will result in reduced sediment excavation. The gabion structure has been lowered, but will still be visible. The forebay will require annual inspection and periodic removal of accumulated sediments. The dredging is planned for next spring. The dam is also in need of repair, and it's possible that there may be state funding to complete that project also. Hopefully, both projects can be done at the same time, therefore requiring only one "draw down" of the pond, thus minimizing the impacts. While we realize that the area will take approximately three years to recover, the alternative to not dredge would be to see the continued growth of vegetation in the pond (eutrophication).

### BRAILLE TRAIL

The trail continues to be enjoyed by many people of all ages. Unfortunately, a minor vandalism incident occurred, and about 100 feet of roping was cut and stolen. The Parks and Recreation staff has since installed new rope.

### VOLUNTEERS

Many of you have volunteered to assist managing Valley Falls Park and Farm. Three Saturdays, (October 19, 26 and November 2) are planned as work days: mornings (9-11 a.m.) and afternoons (1-3 p.m.). We welcome workers on weekdays as well.

Please call Ginny at 875-9865 or Carroll at 870-9804 if you can help - specify time, date and task.

*Volunteers, continued on page 2*

**INSIDE: FARM NEWS AND MORE**

## FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Ginny Gingras* 875-9865

### VICE PRESIDENT

*Carroll Burke* 870-9804

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### FACILITIES MANAGER

*Anthony Caruolo* 647-1607

### PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

*Irene Gay* 875-9091

### INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

*Marilyn Steele* 872-1666

### COUNSEL

*Amy Paterson, Esq.* 645-8555



## *Volunteers, continued*

**\*Grounds:** planting cool season grasses in bare spots of the meadow, planting lupine seeds in both the park and farm, planting ferns on the hillside near Valley Falls Road, removing invasives (small russian olives, bittersweet and honeysuckle), clearing grass from stepping stones from the ice house to the stable, repairing the cold frames, weeding the two lower cold frames.

**Buildings:** Scraping and painting.

**Museum:** Labeling, cataloging and photographing museum pieces.

**October 19:** Cleaning lower floor of barn for annual meeting.

**October 26:** Leaf raking and leaf blowing.

## VALLEY FALLS FARM NEWS AND VIEWS

We've had a busy spring and summer as we continue with the stewardship and care of this wonderful place. We are ever grateful to you, our members and contributors, for your financial support and your words of encouragement - they keep us going!



### GROUNDS

We have a *wonderful* herb garden on site! The Vernon Garden Club worked very hard this spring clearing out the upper cold frame, even in the face of stubborn old tansy roots. The beds were raised, the soil tested and amended. Herbs were chosen that would be representative of those used by the residents of the estate. In a matter of weeks the cold frame was transformed into a lovely array of flowers and smells. An old grapevine found in the

frame was encouraged to grow - and a small arbor was constructed to support it. The club held a program on the site in August, featuring Katherine Mashiak from Kassandra's Herbs Unlimited in Somers. Many, many thanks to President Bobbie Orne and club members for this delightful addition to the Farm.

We have continued to obtain input and support from Leslie Duthie of the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary with regard to management of the field. For example, on one of the steeper hillsides showing erosion, blue-stem field grass was planted and intentionally left free from mowing. Christmas fern have been planted in another shaded embankment by the roadside. Wild lupine seeds will be planted in some other areas, and hopefully we will see some color in the spring. Invasive plant species on the property continue to be monitored and removed. Thanks to Chuck DiMauro for trimming the hedges and to Bill

Wardrop for cleaning the debris and other discards from the wooded area of the farm. Also, thanks to Ginny Gingras, Margaret Verdon, Jane Saich, Gil & Edie Suave, and Carroll & Ron Burke for these efforts.



### FACILITIES

Many, many hours went into sorting through the contents of the stable this spring - a huge job. Literally carloads of 'stuff' went to the transfer station and to Salvation Army. Three tag sales were held with some of the more interesting collectibles and other salvageable items, netting us \$750.00. Thanks to Carroll Burke, Ann & Bob Letendre, Irene Gay, Betty Tedford, Paul & Ginny Gingras and Margaret Verdon for this yeoman work.

We are also grateful to Paul Gingras and Tony Caruolo for getting the leaky pipes and faulty valves repaired in the stable and giving us running water and toilet facilities, enabling use of the

upstairs room for our Board Meetings this summer. We have also appreciated the caretaking efforts that our tenants, the King family and Kim Ulm and Jim Tracy have given to the property. This summer they took on caretaking responsibility for the grounds around the house, but most importantly they are vigilant watchdogs of the entire site for us.

We have not yet begun the much-needed painting of the stable and outbuildings, and it remains high on our list of things to do. Volunteer help would be much appreciated for this work!

### FINANCIALS

Overall we still remain in good financial condition, but we were dismayed to recently receive a tax bill from the Town of Vernon. The 8-acre site is divided into two parcels, one with the residence and 1-acre of land, and one with the remaining land and outbuildings. The tax bill was for the residence parcel and is about 23% of our annual income - a definite burden on the organization. We

had not expected this bill, and had not included the cost in our business plan. We had believed that our non-profit status - as well as our stated purpose as defined in our articles of incorporation as an organization existing for the benefit of town property (Valley Falls Park) - gave us tax-exempt status. The Town Assessor, David Wheeler, denied our application for tax exemption on the residence parcel based solely upon the fact that the corporation receives rental income from the dwelling. Attorney Amy Paterson is reviewing our options for appeal, which we fully intend to pursue. In the meantime, in order to keep in good credit standing with Tolland Bank who holds the balance of the mortgage, we have paid the tax bills for both this year and last year 'under protest'.

Our Annual Report will be available at the Annual Meeting, October 20th, and will provide details of financial status.

### MUSEUM

We will begin to catalog, label, describe and photograph tools for the farm museum that we plan for the stable. Sandy Yamarik and Phyllis Baltaks have volunteered to co-chair a committee to begin this work. **HELP IS NEEDED.** Please let us know if you would like to volunteer some time in this area.

## VOLUNTEER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Project Interest \_\_\_\_\_ Return this form to: **The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 2008, Vernon, CT 06066.

## NATURE NOTES

**W**itch Hazel is now blooming in the woods - look for the delicate, yellow ribbon flowers. An insect lays its



young on the leaf of the shrub and a gall in the shape of a witch's hat forms and nourishes the larva, hence the name Witch Hazel.

Twigs and leaves of the shrub have been commercially distilled for use on insect bites and as an astringent. The

Dickenson Company in Essex, CT has sold the product for years.

## YOU'RE INVITED!

### Friends of Valley Falls Annual Meeting

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2002**

2:00 P.M.

VALLEY FALLS BARN

*Valley Falls Barn: Its History, Structure and Use*



by Ed Hood, Research Historian: Architecture & Archaeology, Sturbridge Village

The talk will be followed by a barn tour and discussion of the renovation plans. Dress warmly.

**FALL NEWSLETTER 2002**

The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2008  
Vernon, CT 06066

