



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Volume V Number 2

Fall

September 2006

“An Afternoon at the Farm” - Please Join Us!

Sunday, September 24th, 2006
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Join us for an afternoon of leisure and learning at the farm!

Stroll through the fields, **tour** the farm buildings, **learn** more about the history of the Valley Falls area, **visit** the red barn and **watch** a timber hewing demonstration - or bring a picnic lunch if you want to just sit outside and enjoy the view. You may do any - or all - of these activities – whatever works best for you! Here’s the agenda for the afternoon:

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Free Time to Tour the Farm; Timber Hewing Demonstration

All of the farm buildings, including the red barn, will be opened for viewing. There will be someone at each building to tell you a little about it. We’ll have picnic tables placed at several locations throughout the property just for sitting. Beverages are on us!

★ Of particular interest in the red barn is the interior timber frame construction of this 1890s structure. A timber hewing demonstration will be given outside the barn, showing how logs for these structures were hand-hewn before we became a mechanized society.

★ The timber hewing demonstration will be given by **Michael Burrey, preservation carpenter**. Michael lives in Plymouth, Massachusetts and served as an interpretive artisan on early colonial building techniques at Plimouth Plantation. He is a member of the Timber Framers Guild of North America, and a founding member of the Traditional Timber Framers Research and Advisory Group.

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Annual Business Meeting – Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Valley Falls Area History – a short presentation with Q&A period

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Free Time to Tour the Farm; Timber Hewing Demonstration

“Artists at the Farm” scheduled for September 9th ***- POSTPONED until August, 2007 -***

We have decided to cancel the artist’s day we had planned for September. But stay tuned!! We do intend to do this fun and exciting fund raising event August, 2007. We apologize – but we think August is a better time to do it, and we’ll need more planning time. Watch for details in the spring.

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VALLEY FALLS FARM

Building Renovations



Tony Caruolo replaces stable windows.

We have turned attention from the house to the stable, the largest of the farm outbuildings. Eleven new wood windows have been purchased, but they all need to be primed and painted – a slow, painstaking job! Thanks to **Marilyn Steele, Ginny Gingras and Bob Letendre** who have been tackling the effort, and to **Tony Caruolo** who has begun installation of the

windows. Much more work needs doing on this wonderful building, including exterior and interior painting, some clapboard replacement, and plumbing upgrade.

Land Management

Maintaining the fields and lawn areas around the buildings is a huge job. We continued again this year with leaving some areas of the field in a natural state, and mowing others. Bluebird boxes were installed around the perimeter of the field, and we are very pleased to report that they do indeed have nests in them!

Many, many thanks to **Joe King** who keeps the lawns around the outbuildings mowed and trimmed. The privet hedges were severely overgrown, and we thank **Bill Wardrop** for a major trimming. The herb garden planted by the **Vernon Garden Club** in one of the old cold frames continues to flourish, and

work has started on plantings in the second cold frame. Thanks to our tenants, **Diane and Jane**, the lawns and gardens around the farmhouse are kept in very neat shape.

Focus on the Farmhouse Buildings – The Cold Cellar

In our spring '05 issue we initiated a regular feature in the newsletter about the six farm outbuildings. This issue's focus is an intriguing structure, the cold cellar. The only visible sign of its presence is a door built into the side of the hill, just behind the stable. The interior is comprised of three small rooms running front-to-back, built entirely into the hillside. The rooms are ventilated with two pipes that protrude through the hillside. There is an old



grinder still inside the cold cellar that was used by the Darico family to crush grapes for wine making. Cold cellars were very common buildings on 18th and 19th century farms and were used to store a supply of fruits and root vegetables for the winter. Emma Darico, now 85, remembers the cold cellar as a wonderful building that supplied the family during the winter with apples, cabbages, potatoes and turnips.



Emma Darico stands in the cold cellar doorway.

Valley Falls Farm – Now a Local Historic Property

It's official! As of January 23, 2006 Valley Falls Farm was designated as a local historic property. Under the guidance of chairman Bob Hurd, the local Historic Properties Commission shepherded the application through the lengthy process that required approvals from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Committee, the Vernon Planning & Zoning Commission, and finally the Town Council. This status will now place the property in good standing for historic grant applications.

DEMISE OF VERNON'S ECOLOGY PROGRAM IN GRADES 3 – 5

It is with sadness and dismay that we note the budget cut this June that ended the 30-year ecology program in the Vernon Public Schools, serving five elementary schools.

The Friends of Valley Falls were instrumental in establishing this program in the early 1970s. It has been an unqualified success, exciting students about science and the environment. The program cost of \$20,000 was totally eliminated. Why did the Vernon school administrators choose to eliminate this valuable program?

We recognize the budgetary problems facing the town, but believe that this part of the school curriculum should never have been considered to be cut. As responsible and concerned citizens, we must carefully scrutinize the school budget to see where the funds are being spent and urge the restitution of the Ecology Program in the elementary schools.

NATURE NOTES

GOLDENRODS (*Solidago*)

produce masses of gold color in late summer. The flowers are insect pollinated-the pollen is sticky and adheres to insects. Goldenrod is responsible for 1-2 % of the pollen dispersed in summer. **The principal cause of hayfever is ragweed (see next note).**



RAGWEED (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), common plants along roadsides. The small green flowers are wind pollinated.

POISON IVY (*Rhus radicans*) . This feared plant produces whitish or gray berries that are nutritious for birds. It is predicted that the warming of the atmosphere will produce a more toxic plant and more of them!!!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you would like to spend some time outdoors at this peaceful place, PLEASE let us know! We will be organizing Standing Committees to help with the care of the Farm.

We have an immediate need for volunteers for:

Carpentry - installing windows in the stable;

Painting - new windows in the stable;

Gardening - assisting with small tasks on the farm

Clearing invasives, using a weed wrench;

Constructing a set of compost bins;

Cataloging museum pieces, taking pictures using digital camera, researching the item;

Replacing areas of the stable siding;

Painting the stable; and

Monitoring bluebird houses, cleaning yearly, reporting to DEP.

WHITE WOOD ASTER (*Aster divaricatus*) is a common species in dry woods and clearings, producing masses of small white flowers.



WOOLY BEAR CATERPILLAR is a sign of

approaching autumn. The amount of black on each back end of its body does not foretell the severity of approaching winter. The caterpillars winter under stones and debris, feed in

the Spring on dandelions, plantains and low growing weeds, and pupate in cocoons for about two weeks to produce the Isabella Tiger Moth (*Isia Isabella*).



TWO SEPTEMBER EVENTS - PLEASE JOIN US!!



Preservation Carpenter Michael Burrey hewing a timber.

September 23rd 1 p.m.

Mushroom Foray in Valley Falls Park

- Led by Irene Gay, meet at the park

September 24th 12-3 p.m.

Annual Business Meeting & “An Afternoon at the Farm”

- Tour the farm buildings
- Watch a hewing demonstration by Michael Burrey
- Hear a presentation on the history of Valley Falls Area
- Stroll the grounds; bring your own picnic lunch

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