



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. NEWSLETTER

Volume VI Number 2

Summer

September 2007

"AN AFTERNOON AT THE FARM"

Please join us for an
afternoon of leisure and
learning at the Farm!

Sunday, September 30th
1:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Stroll through the fields, tour the Farm and learn more about its history. Visit the red barn and watch a pottery demonstration, or just bring a picnic lunch and relax in the shade. You may do any - or all - of these activities – whatever works best for you!

All of the farm buildings will be open for viewing at your leisure. We'll have picnic tables placed at several locations throughout the property for just sitting. Beverages are on us!



The most imposing structure in the area, the red barn, will also be open. A pottery demonstration will be given inside the barn, showing how 17th and 18th century potters applied decorating techniques to earthenware pottery.

The activities will include our Annual Business Meeting and report of activities this past year. A short talk on some of the old tools and machinery on the Farm will also be given.

Afternoon Agenda:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1:00 pm – 1:30 pm | Annual Business Meeting - Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. |
| 1:30 pm – 2:15 pm | 19th Century Farming Implements - in the stable |
| 2:15 pm – 3:30 pm | Pottery Demonstration - in the red barn |

We are very pleased to welcome back Early American Craftsman **Michael Burrey**! Last year Michael gave an interesting and well-received timber hewing demonstration. This year he will demonstrate 17th and 18th century pottery decorating techniques.

Michael studied under the Master Potter at Plymouth Plantation and has been named by Early American Life magazine as one of the top 200 traditional craftsmen in America. His work has been chosen for several important juried shows, most notably the annual American Craftsman show in Wilton, CT. More recently, he has been invited to show his work in a major upcoming exhibition organized by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Museum of National Heritage in Lexington, MA, titled "Keepers of the Tradition: Folk Arts in Massachusetts." The exhibit will feature works of traditional artists who are recognized as outstanding practitioners of folk craft. The exhibit will run from May, 2008 through February, 2009.

Early American reproduction pottery by Michael Burrey



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VALLEY FALLS FARM

Building Renovations

Our focus on the stable, the largest of the farm outbuildings, is continuing. Volunteers **Russ Kunz, Tony Caruolo, Dick James and Bill Wardrop** spent a busy June Saturday installing seven of the new windows. Much more work needs doing on this wonderful building, including exterior and interior painting, some clapboard replacement, and plumbing upgrade. If you would like to help, please let us know!

Land Management

Maintaining the fields and lawn areas around the buildings in the summer is a huge job. We continued to leave some areas of the field in a natural state, and mowing others. The bluebird boxes installed last year continued to be inhabited this year. Most importantly, we give a huge THANK YOU to **Joe King** who keeps the lawns around the outbuildings mowed and trimmed. The herb garden planted by the **Vernon Garden Club** in one of the old cold frames continues to flourish. Thanks to our tenants, **Diane and Jane**, the lawns and gardens around the farmhouse are kept in very neat shape. There is always more that could be done. If you would like to spend some outdoor time on this peaceful place, let us know!

Focus on the Farmhouse Buildings – The Piggery

In our spring '05 issue we initiated a regular feature in the newsletter on the six farm outbuildings. This



issue's focus is a low, rather dilapidated structure called "the piggery." This building is located to the left of the stable and was principally used for raising pigs. There are five small doorways located along the front of the building that enabled the pigs – and their young piglets – to move in and out of the building. Unique to the building is an underground conduit that leads directly to the manure shed below. It is presumed that this conduit enabled downhill, underground flow of manure, saving shoveling and transportation time.



VALLEY FALLS PARK

The Braille Trail

The **Vernon Lion's Club** is the Greenways sponsor for the Braille Trail in the park. The trail is tended by **Vernon Greenways Volunteers**. Last fall, a work session was held to control trail erosion. A ditch was dug on one side of the trail to direct run-off alongside the trail. Volunteer work was done by **George Arthur, Joe King, Don Bellingham, Dick James, Sara Smith, Bruce Dinnie, Jerry Kinsman, Gerri Phelps, Irene Carnemolla and Ryan Gorecki**.

This spring, volunteers cleaned the braille trail signs and put them in place, and repaired the roping. Work was done by **Gerri Phelps, Irene Carnemolla, Dick James, Don Bellingham, and Wayne and Pauline Cheveriea**. The

(Park, continued on bottom next page)

SIGHTINGS... by Jane Seymour

Two young red-tailed hawks moved to the farm this summer. One of the fledglings made its presence known by screeching... and screeching, and screeching. Some days it would screech all day with the other fledgling chiming in from time to time. When the young hawks leave the nest, they are as big as the adults. Like other baby birds, red-tailed hawk fledglings will beg for food - noisily. The hawks must learn to hunt if they are to survive. Like any child learning a new task, they are prone to making mistakes (like trying to kill the garden hose). Immature red-tails can be distinguished from the adult by the appearance of the tail. Adults have the well-known red tail, while the immature birds have a brown striped tail. The two young birds are now spending more time hunting and less time screeching, although they still make their presence known from time to time.

Barn swallows spend the summer at the farm, most likely nesting in the red barn. By the beginning of August, a large flock swarms over the field catching insects to fuel up for their migration back to South America. They perch on the telephone wire – as many as 50 birds all lined up in a row – and chatter away. The chattering is now gone as the flock began their journey home before the end of August.

One more sighting worth noting: a red-breasted nuthatch was seen at the farm in the big Norway spruce. Red-breasted nuthatches can be found in coniferous stands – pines, spruces – such as those at the Belding Wildlife Management Area. This is the first sighting of one at the farm. This bird will probably not stay around for long as it may be en route to a more southern latitude.

NATURE NOTES



Little Bluestem

LITTLE BLUESTEM (*Andropogon scoparius*) is a lovely native ornamental grass growing on the grounds of Valley Falls Farm. It is a dominant grass of mixed-grass prairie, but in the east, it tends to grow in abandoned fields and rocky ridges. It thrives in poor or rocky soil and is commonly called one of the poverty grasses. In the fall, the grass turns reddish-gold, with fluffy white seed clusters. Its gold color and form persist all winter.



Interrupted Fern

CINNAMON FERN (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) is found in damp, shady locations and along streambanks. It is named for its bright cinnamon-colored fronds

(occurring after the green spores are shed) which die down early in the summer. Sterile fronds are easily identified by tufts of brown wool at the base of each pinna (leaflet). Height: 2 1/2 - 5 feet. Deciduous.

INTERRUPTED FERN (*Osmunda claytoniana*) prefers stony, dry soil but is found in any type of soil and location. It resembles the cinnamon fern in the shape of the frond but is distinct in having the spores borne on several pairs of pinnae in the middle of the frond with vegetative pinnae above and below- giving an "interrupted" effect to the frond. Height: 2-4 feet. Deciduous.

Both ferns are majestic, common and prominent in our area .



Cinnamon Fern

(Park, continued from previous page)

Friends have submitted a grant to DEP under the Recreational Trails Program for metal signs (which are more durable) to replace the wooden signs.

Restroom Facility

Construction of the new restroom facility has been completed. Many thanks to all who helped with the effort, including architect Dan Wright. Mayor Marmer will be present at a grand opening and dedication ceremony tentatively scheduled for September 20th. Watch for the date and time - and join us!



UPCOMING EVENTS

September 29th, 2007 at 1:00 pm
Mushroom Foray in Valley Falls Park

- Irene Gay will lead the walk. Meet in the parking lot.

September 30th, 2007 1:00 – 3:30 pm
***Annual Business Meeting and
“An Afternoon at the Farm”***

- Tour the farm buildings
- See a pottery demonstration by Michael Burrey
- Hear a presentation on old tools and farm implements at Valley Falls Farm
- Stroll the grounds

*Limited parking is available by the red barn;
otherwise use the Valley Falls parking lot*



*Early American
reproduction pottery by
Michael Burrey of
Chiltonville Pottery,
Plymouth, Massachusetts*

