



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

Volume XXV Number 1

FALL - WINTER 2015 & 2016

ARTISTS' DAY 2015 A GREAT DAY!

Our fifth "Artists Day at the Farm" was again a successful event, attracting about 160 visitors. Ten Connecticut *plein air* artists spent the day painting scenes of the Farm, while at the same time welcoming those who strolled by to watch them work. The pleasant afternoon was enhanced by the live harp and flute background music of "The Celtic Birds", **Kasha and Bob Breau**. The event also featured tours of the Farm, and an art display and sale of other works by the artists in the red barn. The day ended with a reception for the artists and viewing of the paintings they had done.

Thanks go to the volunteers that made it happen: **Joe King, Ann & Bob Letendre, Ginny Gingras, Karen & Rich James, Paula Passaretti, Mary Cross, Bill & Betty Wardrop, Jon Roe, Rosemarie Gallichio, and Tom & Barbara Duva**; the **Vernon Parks and Recreation staff** for assistance with facility preparation; and the **Vernon Arts Commission** for providing the music.



A painting in progress at Artists' Day.

ANNUAL MEETING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL VIEW OF VALLEY FALLS HISTORIC SITES

The Annual Meeting was held September 27th in the red barn. Our invited speaker was **Dr. Bruce Clouette**, Senior Historian at the Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc. at Storrs. Dr. Clouette discussed the Survey Team's work involved in listing the Sharps Trout Hatchery and the Valley Falls Cotton Mill on the National Register of Historic Places. The interesting talk sparked a lively question and answer period. Following the talk, our beekeeper, **Allen Valli**, gave an update on the beehives at the Farm, noting that there was excellent production of honey again this year.

Board of Directors Elections

Members elected a new Board of Directors during the business meeting: President, **Ginny Gingras**; Vice-President, **Karin James**; Secretary, **Jean Merz**; Treasurer, **Bob Letendre**; Directors **Joe King, Ann Letendre, Paula Passaretti, and Don Sierakowski**.

Resignations from the Board were regrettably received from **Dave Herrmann** and **Marilyn Steele**. We thank them both for their many years of dedicated service to the Friends organization - we will miss them both!

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SUMMER TOURS - AND HERITAGE CENTER UPDATE

We opened the farm to the public Wednesday afternoons during the summer and were pleasantly surprised by the number of people that came to visit and wanted to know more about the farm and its structures.

The success of the tours has spurred us on with the work of developing the **Valley Falls Heritage Center** in the stable, funded by a grant from the State of Connecticut. The stall area of the stable has been cleaned and painted by **Tom Duva**. We have started to sort through the plethora of old tools and artifacts left in the farm buildings, and started

researching history of the Valley Falls area. Our consultants, Donna Baron and Jennifer Eifrig of **Musevue 360**, helped us identify the tools and their use, and decide those that would be relevant for display in the Heritage Center.

We thank Heritage Center Committee members **Barbara Duva, Joe King, Ann & Bob Letendre, Paula Passaretti, Jon Roe and Don Sierakowski** for their work to date. We especially thank Jon for his patient research in the depths of the library, the Town Hall and the Historical Society. ☺

SERENDIPITY OPENS A DOOR TO THE PAST



Jon Roe and Penny Beach Chittenden discuss Beach family genealogy.

Digging into the history of the Valley Falls area for the Heritage Center has been both intriguing - and fun. Prior well-known owners of Valley Falls were **Dr. Charles Beach** and his wife, **Mary Batterson Beach**. Mary was the daughter of the founder of Traveler's Insurance Company.

Quite by chance, we met **Penny Beach Chittenden**. Penny, who lives in Clinton, had responded to our call for artists for Artists Day. During the conversation we learned she was a granddaughter of Dr. and Mrs. Beach! She had spent many childhood summers at Valley Falls Farm during the 1930s and 40s.

The timing was perfect - we were just beginning our dive into Valley Falls history. We invited Penny for a visit to the Farm. She brought her sister, **Pat Beach Thompson**, and Pat's daughter, **Melissa Fischer**.

We spent a delightful afternoon with them, walking about the Farm, gathering bits and pieces of their past memories, days spent freely running about the Farm.

Later, **Carol and Ron Burke** graciously hosted us for a delightful lunch at their Bolton Road home, which was the main house where Dr. and Mrs. Beach resided. Penny and Pat had a treasure trove of information to share. We will surely be talking to them again as we develop content for the Heritage Center. ☺

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We also welcome new member **Jean Merz** to the Board. Jean is a retired teacher, active in the Garden Club, and a life-long Vernon resident. Her energy and enthusiasm are most welcome and appreciated. We still have one opening on the Board - if you are interested please contact us! Our thanks to the Nominating Committee, **Karin James, Jean Merz and Nancy Strong** for their efforts. ☺

VALLEY FALLS FARM BUILDINGS

A BUSY SUMMER AND FALL

Our New – Old Front Door

We had a long list of projects to accomplish this summer, and we did all but three! Because we are a designated Local Historic Property, we feel it is important to maintain the historic integrity of our buildings and choose to restore rather than replace whenever we can. **Tom Linskey** of West River Restorations did the much needed work on the front door of the farmhouse. Tom was able to save the 1850 door as well as the small windows (lights) above the door. Keeping to 1850 materials and hardware, he took apart and completely rebuilt the door, found cast butt hinges and a late 1830 Norfolk latch for the door, and old wavy glass for the lights. The work was a tedious project, but true to the historic values of the house! Thank you, Tom!

We also had the farmhouse driveway resurfaced, installed a liner in one chimney and made repairs to the other two. The leaky back porch roof was replaced with membrane roofing.



Norfolk Latch, c. 1840 on farm house front door

Our tenant, **Tom Duva**, continued the never-ending job of keeping the exterior of the buildings painted. Thanks to Board members **Bob Letendre** and **Joe King** for managing these projects. We think Valley Falls Farm is looking pretty spiffy these days. We hope you do also! ☺



Restoration carpenter Tom Linskey restores the Valley Falls farmhouse door.

WELCOME FEEDBACK FROM OUR MEMBERS...

It's NOT Goshen Stone – it's Bolton Schist!

In our last issue we talked about the large stone slabs in the farmhouse walks, identified by a local stone supply company as “Goshen Stone”. **Garry and Deb McConville** shared further insights, and tell us that “Goshen Stone” is the commercial name given to the mica schist found generally throughout New England, simply for reasons of convenience and simplicity for customers. However, the McConvilles tell us that from a geologic perspective the mica schist in our region is rightfully called “Bolton Schist” because this rock is of the Littleton Formation in the Bolton Range. Duly noted, Garry and Deb, it's Bolton Schist from now on! Thank you!

“Current Occupant” Address Label – An Explanation!

One of our valued members sent us a note about the labels on our mailings. You may have noticed that the labels read “Current Occupant – OR (your address)”. Our member thought that was offensive – and we would agree! HOWEVER, “current occupant” is a **US Post Office requirement** for **bulk mail** rates, which we use. So – while it may not be the most tasteful label, it does save us about \$200 each mailing! We do try to spend your contributions wisely. We thought you'd agree! ☺

— CALENDAR 2016 – SAVE THESE DATES! —

May 14th & May 15th - THREE-WALK WEEKEND AT VALLEY FALLS

8:00 am Saturday May 14 - Bird Walk, by Denise Animani

1:00 pm Saturday - History and Geology Walk, by Don Sierakowski

10:00 am Sunday - Wildflower Walk, by Ginny Gingras

September 25th - FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS ANNUAL MEETING

1:00 pm in the Red Barn

July & August - SUMMER TOURS OF VALLEY FALLS FARM

Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00 pm - The Farm buildings and grounds will be open for tours and leisurely walks.

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