



# THE FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS, INC. NEWSLETTER

Volume III Number 2

Fall

October 2004

## VALLEY FALLS FARM



### FARMHOUSE RENOVATION

The interior of the farmhouse has a whole new look and feel! It's clean, and it's safe. The house has been insulated, and electrical outlets, new light fixtures and new switches installed in every

room. Four wood floors were sanded and refinished, a rotted section of a sill was replaced, the rear apartment has been painted, and our tenant is painting the front apartment. New sink, counters, cabinets and appliances were installed in the rear apartment, and ten new windows were purchased and installed. The insulation, electrical work, floor sanding and rear apartment painting were contracted out, but the remainder of the work was accomplished by our hard working Board members. Thanks go especially to **Tony Caruolo** and **Bob Letendre** for hours of carpentry, to **Carroll Burke** for 'finding the bargains' and keeping the project moving, and to **Ginny Gingras, Margaret Verdon, Betty Tedford, Marilyn Steele, Irene Gay, Ann Letendre** and **Carroll** for doing the gritty job of clearing out the basement and tackling post-construction clean up.

Our tenants moved in during the summer – and they are terrific! They love the place, understand the uniqueness of an old house, and have added some artistic touches that work well with the character of the house. They have also been very

helpful with the renovation work. We look forward to a pleasant relationship with them.

While these efforts have been both successful and rewarding, we have had a serious problem with the water system. Water tests indicate high levels of iron, iron bacteria and manganese, and a hydrogen sulfide odor. Not pleasant! We have had numerous consultations with well companies, water treatment companies, even the State Department of Public Health. We dug up the well and 'shocked' it twice, but some conditions still persist. As we speak, we are awaiting results from the most recent tests.

We are also very encouraged by the support we receive from YOU, our supporters! We have received nearly \$5,000 to date towards our Special Building Fund Appeal! Our goal is \$30,000 – and we're off to a great start, thanks to you!

### PROPERTY TAX ISSUE

We are pleased to report the resolution of the tax issue with the Town of Vernon. The Town has agreed to exempt the house and associated 1-acre lot from future property taxes and we have agreed to these conditions:

- 1) to grant a preservation easement to the Town of Vernon on the house and 1-acre; 2) to submit an annual income and expense report confirming that rental income from the residence will be used to maintain Valley Falls Farm; and 3) the tenants living on the property will undertake stewardship activities of the property. The Town reimbursed the Friends

half the money it paid in real estate taxes in 2001 and 2002, which amounted to \$4,480. We are grateful to Mayor Ellen Marmer and Town Attorney Joe Courtney for initiating a resolution and to Attorney Amy Blaymore Paterson who worked on behalf of the Friends to resolve the tax issue.



**FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS  
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**NEWSLETTER**

*Lisa Letendre* 547-1990

## VALLEY FALLS PARK

### VALLEY FALLS POND DREDGING PROJECT

The park was closed June 1 and dredging of the pond began in August. Work ceased October 1, and will resume June 1, 2005. The park will close again at that time. Bruce Dinnie, Parks and Recreation Director, expects work to proceed quickly in June. The heavy rains of summer and DEP permit process delayed the project. The DEP permit limited the time span for keeping the pond drained to avoid interfering with the life cycle of trout, which breed in the fall. Material dredged from the pond has been trucked to the Valley Falls Cemetery where it is to be spread. During the park closing, the trails have been "given a rest" as they have become very compacted in some areas. Valley Falls is indeed a very special place and we all look forward to enjoying its beauty, but we must continually be mindful of its fragility.

### VALLEY FALLS BARN

Progress on the barn restoration has slowed. The Town Engineer, Tim Timberman, is looking for a suitable site on the hillside to install a septic system and water source. Percolation tests taken last spring did not find a favorable site, so further testing needs to be done. Once that site is established, a water source will be explored. Also slowing progress is the diversion of Recreation Department staffing to the dredging project. We hope that with the delay of that project to spring, that attention can now be focused back to the barn.



## OUR ANNUAL MEETING - BY THE GARDEN!

**O**ur Annual Meeting was held Sunday September 26. The weather was a perfect September afternoon, the setting sublime: we sat outdoors near the herb gardens, with our hillside view as a backdrop! It couldn't have been more perfect. Following the business meeting, **Katherine Mashiak**, owner of "Kassandra, It's About Thyme, Herbs Unlimited" gave a wonderful presentation to the group on herbs, herb gardens and medicinal uses of herbs. She also discussed the herbs in the old vegetable garden troughs on the hill, which were planted by the Vernon Garden Club.

Election of officers and directors for a two-year term was held during the business meeting: President, **Ginny Gingras**; Vice-President, **Betty Tedford**; Secretary, **Marilyn Steele**; and Treasurer, **Bob Letendre**. Elected directors are **Dan Wright**, **Ann Letendre** and **Tony Caruolo**. There are two open positions for Director, which the Board can appoint during the year, per our by-laws.

We welcome Bob Letendre to the Board. And we sadly say good-bye to three Board members who have served us well: **Irene Gay**, **Margaret Verdon** and **Carroll Burke**. Thank you, Irene, for your 20-some years of showing us the natural wonders in the Park. Thank you, Margaret, for your patience and wisdom, and for a job competently and professionally done as Treasurer. Thank you, Carroll, for your years of staunch support, hard work, and driving will to just get the job done. We will miss you all!

# NATURE NOTES



## POLYPORUS SULPHUREUS

The delicious tasting polyporus sulphureus mushroom was found at Valley Falls Farm last year – above the stable. It did not appear this year. It is found on woody plants, dead or alive, and often appears yearly in some areas. The mushroom can be as large as one to two feet in diameter. According to Irene Gay, leader of our mushroom forays, the mushroom tastes like lobster! Our scheduled walk was cancelled this year due to the four inch rainfall on September 18.

## WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

Wild turkeys, abundant in Connecticut when the first settlers arrived were eliminated in the early 1800s due to forest clearing, unregulated hunting, and severe winters. Attempts in 1950s to restore turkeys via artificial propagation were unsuccessful. With the technique of using the rocket net, 356 wild turkeys were released at 18 sites in the state between 1975 and 1992. It is estimated the population today is about 30,000. A flock of turkeys is often seen on Valley Falls Road environs. A wild turkey may range over many square miles in a day, foraging in the fields bordering forested areas for acorns, fleshy



## TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Turkey vultures are not glamorous; their looks, behavior and sounds are unattractive to humans. The

adult is identified by its naked red head. As masters of air currents, they ride the thermals, soaring for hours. Turkey vultures have increased in Connecticut paralleling the explosion of the deer population.

According to Peter Picone, Department of Environmental Protection wildlife biologist, there are 18,000 road kills yearly in the state and the staple of the vultures's diet is the deer road kill. These highly valuable carrion birds dispose of the carcasses, performing a necessary function - keeping our environment clean. They are protected by law in many parts of the U.S.



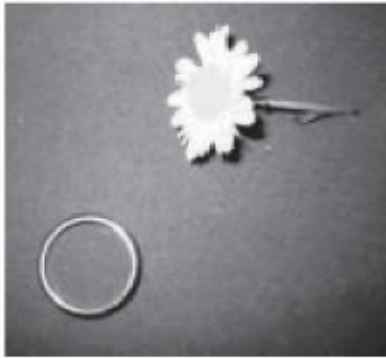
fruits, corn, seeds and invertebrates. Young turkeys feed on insects. Few predators are able to catch an adult turkey; their survival instincts (good eyesight and hearing) keep them out of harm's way. If you recall

your history lessons, the turkey was so common that Benjamin Franklin wanted it named the national bird instead of the bald eagle.

Hunting season is:  
Archery  
(September 15-30)  
and FireArms

(October 16-30). A written consent form for both is needed from the landowner. For more information, contact the Department of Environmental Protection at 860-424-3105.

# THE 'MYSTERY' RING...



While rummaging through one of the old cabinets near the sink in the Valley Falls Farm stable, we came across a man's

wedding ring! The initials engraved on the inside are CDB and PRH. The wedding date is September 3, 1960. We'd like to find the owner. We inquired of the former owners, and they could not shed light on the mystery. Can you? If you have any information, please call one of the board members.



*AERIAL PHOTO OF THE FIELDS AT VALLEY FALLS FARM.*

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