



THE FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS, INC. NEWSLETTER

Volume IV Number 2

Fall

September 2005

VALLEY FALLS FARM

FARMHOUSE RENOVATION

The farmhouse is sporting a new roof, as well as a facelift: three sides of the main house are now newly re-sided, repairs have been made to the chimney, and new gutters installed in some areas. While most of this work was contracted out, we owe thanks to **Tony Caruolo and Bob Letendre** who re-sided the back wall – during that very hot week in August, no less! The painting on the exterior has been started, thanks to help from a community service volunteer.

GROUNDSKEEPING

We have employed **Art Carone** of Carone & Sons Landscaping and Turf Management to maintain the upper fields near Bolton Road. Art is a Certified Master Gardener with 27 years experience in the agricultural field. The approach has been to mow some field areas, and leave the grasses around rock outcroppings and steep areas to grow, cutting them once a year. These grasses (Little Bluestem, Goldenrod) provide food for migrating song birds, bumblebees, and hummingbirds. We also purchased a 48-inch “walk-behind” lawnmower to maintain the remaining property. Our hardworking Board member, **Joe King**, spent many, many hours mowing and weedwhacking the areas around the outbuildings. Thank you, Joe! The tenants maintain the area around the house.

We have been very pleased with the work of **Paul Bittner** for his Eagle Scout Project to clear the fallen trees, mainly red pines, from the wooded area on the farm. Paul’s team of 6 adults and 8 scouts worked two very hot Saturdays in June cutting and removing the trees. Thank you, Paul! Your project was very well executed and was a major contribution to Valley Falls Farm.

FOCUS ON THE FARMHOUSE BUILDINGS

The.....ah.....Manure Shed

In our last issue we initiated a regular feature in this newsletter on six farm outbuildings. This issue’s focus, the “Manure Shed”, is the building located directly on Valley Falls Road, at the base of the steep slope below the driveway to the stable. This building stored pig manure from the “Piggery”, the shed located to the left of the stable at the top of the steep slope. The



location of the manure shed, directly on Valley falls Road, enabled easy loading of manure onto wagons for spreading in the fields. The unique aspect of this structure is that there is a direct underground conduit, about 6 inches in diameter, leading directly from the piggery down the slope and into the rear of the manure shed. It is presumed that this conduit enabled downhill, underground flow of manure, saving shoveling and transportation time.

HISTORIC PROPERTY ACTIONS

Landmark legislation for open space, farmland preservation and historic preservation was recently passed by the State legislature. Public Act 228, *An Act Concerning Farmland Preservation, Land Protection, Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation*, will provide \$6.5 million each year for historic preservation initiatives.

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The Friends has recently taken two steps that will place the Farm in a good position for eligibility for historic grant funds. An application for Local Historic Properties designation is in process, thanks to the Vernon Historic Properties Commission. Secondly, a historic structures study will be done on the farmhouse and farm buildings. This work will commence in September by Architechural Historian Julie Burrey, and her husband, Restoration Carpenter Michael Burrey. The study involves a 2-3 day "sleuthing and examination of the structural elements of the buildings such as beams, chimneys, foundations and walls. Each room including the attic and cellar will be carefully examined. Julie and Michael will present their findings at the Annual Meeting on September 25. (See page 4)

VALLEY FALLS PARK

DREDGING COMPLETED OF VALLEY FALLS POND

Valley Falls Park was officially opened Thursday, August 4. The dredging, begun last summer, was completed this year. A new gate valve was installed, the beach was reconfigured, and a stone weir was installed at the far end of the pond to block further sedimentation from Railroad Brook. 7200 yards of silt and other materials were removed from the pond. However, we are concerned about the impacts of some downstream siltation in Railroad Brook that occurred during construction. On two occasions a large "blowout" of sediments occurred at the dam during a major storm. Siltation in streams destroys food sources and reproductive capacity for the native fish.

BRILLE TRAIL

The signs need to be restored. An Eagle Scout Project is currently being planned to restore (re-finish) the signs, including the large one at the trail head. We would prefer to have new metal signs, but the cost (about \$50,000) is prohibitive. Perhaps at some time in the future, grant funds or a major donation would enable us to install metal signs. The upper trail needs to be re-graded to allow for run-off during heavy rains and resurfaced with stone dust. The roping on the trail has been cut and needs repair.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

We are contacting volunteers who have offered their time to assist with work to be done this fall. The work to be done: carpentry (install windows in the stable), painting (stable and farmhouse), leaf raking (or blowing), and cataloguing museum pieces. Tuesdays have been set aside for the museum work (9:00 a.m. – noon), beginning September 6, but volunteers for other jobs will be scheduled as their time allows.

DEDICATION OF THE BELDING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The dedication of the Belding Wildlife Management Area was held Wednesday, August 24 at 11:00 a.m. Guests were given a guided walking tour of the interpretive trail recently established and viewed the Butterfly Garden which was planted with the assistance and funding by the Vernon Garden Club. In 1982, Maxwell Belding donated 282 acres in Vernon to the State of Connecticut. In 2002, the Belding Family established a trust to manage the property and support its associated conservation education programs. Jane Seymour has been hired as the full-time steward of the property and has written a management plan to guide its care. Vernon is fortunate to have the area preserved and the education programs to be provided.

NATURE NOTES



JOE PYE WEED

Eupatorium purpureum

A handsome, vigorous plant growing to 8 feet tall in large colonies in swampy places. It has magenta-pink flowers, blooming August to September. Its seeds yield pink textile dyes used by native Americans. The plant was named after a native American who cured New Englanders of Typhus. The rhizome is still used to induce fever-breaking sweats.



IRONWEED

Vernonia altissima

The plant can grow to 10 feet in moist, rich soils. The flowers are a vivid purple, blooming from July to September. It is a valuable nectar producer.



RAVEN

Corvus corax

A pair has nested in the park again this year. Wildlife Biologist Jane Seymour reports seeing a family of five. The bird is larger than a crow with a heavier bill and wedge-shaped (not fan-shaped) tail. Its voice sounds deep, varied, guttural croaking- a hollow wonk-wonk. It nests on cliffs or on the top of a conifer and is a carrion bird (scavenger).

BONESET

Eupatorium perfoliatum

A plant (2-5 feet tall) with white flower heads, blooming July – September. Its opposite leaves join so closely as to appear as one leaf bisected by the stem. It was used in pioneer days as an infusion to alleviate pain caused by broken bones and sore muscles.



ALL THE PLANTS PICTURED ON THIS PAGE
GROW IN THE FIELDS IN VALLEY FALLS PARK.

TWO EVENTS IN ONE AFTERNOON - SAVE THE DATE!

Please Join Us

MUSHROOM WALK AND ANNUAL MEETING!

Sunday, September 25th

**Mushroom Walk – 12:30 p.m., meet at the pavilion in Valley Falls Park
Annual Meeting – 2:00 p.m. by the herb garden at the Farm**

Guest Speakers

**Julie Burrey, architectural historian
and
Michael Burrey, restoration carpenter**

***“These Old Buildings: A Discussion of the Architectural History and
Features of the Valley Falls Farm Structures”***

FALL NEWSLETTER 2005



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