



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

Volume XXIX Number 1

FALL 2020

COVID 19 AND VALLEY FALLS FARM



First, and most importantly, we hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy. Though our activities have been temporarily curtailed due to the pandemic, we are pleased to have the ongoing support of our membership, and we look forward to the time when we can safely welcome you, the public, back to Valley Falls Farm.

While the pandemic had canceled our summer Open House Tours, we do plan to hold a very short version of the Annual Meeting, see below article. In the meantime, the maintenance and upgrade projects continue. Chimney repairs were completed in the farmhouse by **Spotless**

Chimney, and we are happy to report no more leaks! The installation of underground utility lines directly from the street to the stable has been completed by **Rock-Vern Electric**, a major project. New track lighting for displays in the Heritage Center has also been completed, and we were also able to continue working on development of content for the Center.

And lastly, the bees keep humming, in spite of it all! Beekeepers Marcie Lavoie, Tom Kaminski and Allen Valli report a good summer, and honey is available for purchase. *See page 2.* 🐝



ANNUAL MEETING – A SHORT VERSION SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27TH, 1PM

We have canceled the invited speaker planned for the annual meeting. Instead, we will have a VERY BRIEF BUSINESS MEETING ONLY, to comply with our bylaws. We do not expect it to be more than twenty minutes. Per the bylaws, members must be given notice of the annual meeting, as well as location and agenda. We will hold the business meeting outdoors, behind the red barn, on the lawn by the silo garden, 300 Valley Falls Road. Chairs will be spaced twelve feet apart, masks will be required, and we will not be serving refreshments.

The business meeting agenda will be as usual, including the President's Report, Treasurer's Report, and Committee Reports. As usual, we will mail a copy of the Annual Report to the membership after the meeting. 🐝



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NEWSLETTER & PHOTOS

Ann Letendre

VACANT APARTMENT IN THE FARMHOUSE!

Our tenants of six and a half years, **Tom and Barbara Duva**, have embarked on a new venture on the Cape. We will miss them greatly, and wish them well! And so, the front apartment in our 1850 farmhouse is now vacant. If you know of a person or a couple that would enjoy living in a cozy historic farmhouse (small rooms, wide floorboards) on the most scenic corner in Vernon, and directly across from Valley Falls Park - please send them our way! The rent is reasonable, tenant pays heat and utilities.

We are looking for a single person or couple that has had experience with living in, or caring for a house, and is willing to provide some minor caretaking activities. It is important to note that the apartment is on two floors, and the stairway is steep, as you find in old houses. The first floor has a newly renovated kitchen, a living room, 3-season sunporch, and open porch overlooking the red barn and Park. The second floor has a bath and two bedrooms. Garden space on the grounds is available for green thumbs! Email annletendr@aol.com if interested. 📧

REPORT FROM THE BEEKEEPERS

Most of the beehives at Valley Falls Farm survived the winter, but the rainy spring weather meant that the bees did not start producing honey until a bit later in 2020. The bees can tolerate the heat, but lack of rain ultimately means no nectar flow which also means less honey production. **Allen Valli, Marcie Lavoie, and Tom Kaminski** report that for the period of September 2019 through August of 2020 the six hives produced about 300 pounds of honey. If you would like to purchase their honey, contact Allen at (860)871-4410 or Marcie at (860)803-8678. 📧

WHAT GOES AROUND...

Digging into the history of Valley Falls Farm has taken us down some surprising and rewarding pathways! In culling through the farm building contents, we came across a panel from a desk or cupboard with a beautifully intricate wood inlay carving of the BPOE Elks Club logo, including the moose. Our research had also uncovered the fact that a former owner of the Farm, Peter Darico, had once worked at the Manchester Elks! The Daricos were also collectors, so we believe he may have recognized the collectible value of the piece and rescued it from the junk pile. We contacted the Manchester Elks, relayed the story, and asked if they'd like the piece. A phone call from **Jerry Gallo** resulted in his visit to Valley Falls Farm. He realized the significance of the piece and was pleased to receive it for the Manchester Elks! 📧



Jerry Gallo, Manchester Elks

HERITAGE CENTER UPDATE

Even under Covid circumstances, we've been able to make progress through the summer. Electrical work has been completed, including the new underground line to the stable and the track lighting to highlight displays. We've cleaned the outbuildings, sorted through their one hundred



Jacey Letendre cleaning up

years of stored “stuff”, and culled out the items that tell the story of Valley Falls Farm. We are delighted with our finds, and are pleased to say that we are able to tell the story with ONLY the artifacts found on at the Farm, making it a truly local and authentic experience for visitors!

The final phase, organizing, cleaning, and labeling the artifacts, and setting up the displays, has begun. In keeping with our goal to use only on-site artifacts, we will “re-purpose” old tables, barrels, and crates found on the Farm to show the vintage pieces. We have hired **Austin Bach** to manage this last project phase. Austin is a graduate of Maine

College of Art, with a major in graphic design, and a focus in woodcraft. We are pleased to have assistance from high school students **Jacey Letendre** (Glastonbury High School) and **Stefanie Schmelter** (Ellington High School), who are putting in time to meet their schools' community service requirements. See their photos below, at work in the stable. 🌱



Stefanie Schmelter painting trim



Austin Bach refinishing a table

THE BELL AT VALLEY FALLS



Our bell is not, as you might think, original to Valley Falls Farm. The bell was actually moved from the Springville Mill in Rockville sometime in the early 1960s by the Darico family. Bernice and Peter Darico, former owners of Valley Falls Farm, were avid bell collectors. They had a collection of about 250 bells that they occasionally put on display for public viewing, both at the Farm and at places like Rockville Library. The Darico family was also well connected to Rockville gentry, some members having been in their employ over the years. These connections enabled them to obtain the bell at a time when the purpose of mill bells had become outdated, and when mill manufacturing was in decline in Rockville.

The bell, cast by the Maneely Bell Foundry of Troy, New York, was probably installed in the Springville Mill tower in 1886 when mill owners George Maxwell and George Sykes replaced the old wooden mill structure with a modern brick manufacturing facility, the imposing building we see today on West Main Street, now converted to apartments.

Mill bells played an integral role in the life of the mill workers of the late 1800s. They called workers to their shifts, and rang for wake up time, lunch time, and sleeping time. The Springville mill ceased operations in 1951, but its bell continues to ring and be heard by the visitors here at Valley Falls Farm. 🌱



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VALLEY FALLS PARK – AND COVID19

The last day of swimming was August 23rd. In early August, a new admission policy was necessary due to disregard of social distancing and littering problems. Also, the pond had to be closed to swimming for a short time due to high bacteria levels. We are very concerned about the high level of activity at Valley Falls Park since Covid19 came into our lives. During the summer months, Vernon's "jewel" became a popular place to be outdoors with family members and close friends.

Overuse of the park destroys the very reasons we love and enjoy the park – as a quiet place to walk in a peaceful setting, surrounded by an abundance of wildlife and greenery. BUT - the Park needs a rest! We haven't forgotten that our mission includes keeping a watchful eye on the Park's condition. We need to develop measures to offset the overuse of the Park during Covid. We continue to have a good working relationship with Parks & Recreation, and are hopeful we can work together to address the issue.

ANNUAL MEETING – SHORT VERSION

Sunday, September 27th, 1 pm, on the lawn behind the Red Barn, 300 Valley Falls Road.
20-minute Business Meeting Only! *See Page 1.*

DID YOU MISS US?

We apologize. We did not publish a Spring 2020 issue of the newsletter, due to the uncertainties of event scheduling at the time. We're back on track, and also publishing our e-newsletter. If you have not received the e-news and wish to do so, please email our administrator, Janice Fournier, at fournijs@gmail.com. 