



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

Volume XXX Number 1

SUMMER 2021

COVID 19... AND VALLEY FALLS FARM

First, and most importantly, we hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy. Secondly, we apologize for this late issue. Due to uncertain Covid conditions we had cancelled our summer tours, but decided to go ahead with two later events – Artists Day at Valley Falls Farm and our Annual Meeting. (See below). We expect to follow whatever Covid protocols may be in place during these events. We look forward to welcoming you, the public, back to Valley Falls Farm. ☹️

ARTISTS DAY AT VALLEY FALLS FARM A “PLEIN AIR” EVENT - AUGUST 22, 2021

Art, music and history – what could be better on a summer afternoon! Come stroll the farm fields and watch artists at work. Listen to the guitar-mandolin duo, **Judy Handler** and **Mark Levesque**. Attend a tour of historic Valley Falls Farm by local historian **Jon Roe**. Enjoy free lemonade and goodies, courtesy of the Vernon Arts Commission. Other paintings by participating artists will be on display and available for sale in the Red Barn.

Artists will spend the day painting. **The public is invited between 1:00 and 3:00 pm.** Park in the Valley Falls Park parking area, 300 Valley Falls Road. Shuttle service will be provided to the Red Barn - or you can take the short 250-ft trail up the hill from the parking area. Come join us!



Judy Handler & Mark Levesque



WE STILL HAVE SPACE FOR ARTISTS!

Do you know any plein air artists that would like to participate in Artists Day? Artists paint between 9:30 am and 3 pm. The Friends will provide a box lunch. Space will be available in the Red Barn to display other paintings of the artists. Call Ann Letendre at 860-875-4623 if interested. ☹️

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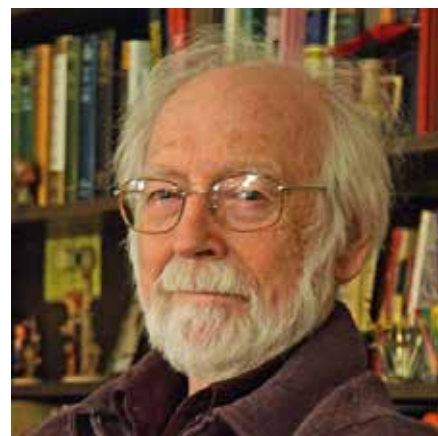
Lisa Letendre 633-7666

NEWSLETTER & PHOTOS

Ann Letendre

ANNUAL MEETING JOIN US - SEPTEMBER 26TH

Our Annual Meeting will be held at the Red Barn, September 26th at 1:00 pm. Per our bylaws, members of the Friends must be given notice of the annual meeting, as well as the location and agenda. The public is invited as well. Park at the parking lot in Valley Falls Park, 300 Valley Falls Road. A shuttle will be available to bring you to the Red Barn – or you can walk up the short trail to the barn.



Jon Roe

The agenda will begin with a short business meeting, including reports from the president, treasurer and committee chairmen, followed by the election of officers.

Our Guest Speaker - and the Story of Count Hans Munchow

Local historian, **Jon Roe**, will be the guest speaker at the Annual Meeting. He will talk about the nefarious “Count” Hans Munchow, one of the early 20th century “gentleman farmers” who once owned Valley Falls Farm. Posing as a Hungarian nobleman, the Count was often seen riding through town on his impressive horse and carriage, with his Great Dane seated beside him. Though he owned Valley Falls Farm for only three years, he built the Farm’s most imposing structures, the white stable and the red barn. He then mysteriously left town in 1913 without a trace, leaving his wife behind to settle his numerous debts.

What happened to the Count? Where did he go? There were rumors that he had headed to Hollywood – but no one had been able to trace him. That is, until now! It’s taken the curiosity and talents of our own Jon Roe, and today’s tools, to find the answers. Jon ventured on a relentless search to pick up the Count’s trail, and that he did with great success. Come enjoy listening to the full story of “Count” Munchow – millionaire? Or not? 📍

WELCOME NEW TENANTS!



Nicholas and Emily

We are pleased to welcome new tenants, **Emily Trocchi** and **Nicholas Cranmer**. Emily is a pre-med student at UConn, and Nicholas is a graduate student, working on his Master’s in Natural Resource and Forest Management. He has also been recently appointed to the Vernon Conservation Commission. They love being here on the farm, and are a perfect fit as Valley Falls Farm tenants. We have hired them both for extra help this summer. Emily will care for the gardens, and Nicholas has been removing the invasive plants on the property. His next jobs are to build new compost bins near the cold frame gardens, and help with carpentry needed for setting up Heritage Center displays. 📍

ONLINE...

We expect to be putting out an e-newsletter shortly. If you do not receive it and wish to do so, please notify our administrator, Janice, fournijs@gmail.com. We are also on Facebook, check it out. And lastly, great news, we’re working on making it feasible to pay your annual dues payments via Paypal. Stay tuned! 📍

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NEW BOARD MEMBER

We are very pleased to announce that **Nancy Steffens** has joined our Board of Directors. Nancy has lived in Vernon for 33 years. She enjoys flea markets and tag sales, local history, and exploring Connecticut's hiking trails. Nancy and her husband, **Bob Felber**, live in a historic 1860 house on South Street. Living in an old home has given her a true appreciation for Valley Falls Farm and its old structures. She retired from the State Department of Labor where she was Director of Communications. We think her interests and her talents are a perfect fit for our organization. We look forward to working with her. Welcome aboard, Nancy. 🍷

FROM THE BEEKEEPERS...

Unfortunately the bees did not survive well over the past winter. Only two of the six hives are active at this point. Beekeepers **Marcie Lavoie & Tom Kaminski** lost two of their hives, and beekeeper **Allen Valli** lost two hives as well. They report that the two active hives are doing fine. Marcie and Tom harvested 40 lbs from their one hive last week. At this point it is uncertain if there will be honey available for sale at the Annual Meeting. 🍷

IN MEMORIAM – MICHAEL DARICO

We were surprised and saddened to learn of the passing of Michael Darico last May. Members of his family once owned Valley Falls Farm. Michael was a friendly and compassionate man, always ready to talk or tell a story about the Farm. A lifelong resident of Vernon, he was employed by Vernon Manor and passed shortly after his retirement. He will be missed.

The Darico Family, the Bell and the Jukebox

The Darico family has a long history at Valley Falls Farm. Michael's grandfather, Andy Darico Sr., managed the farming and dairy operations during the Beach family era of ownership. Andy Sr. and his family of five children lived in the farmhouse. After the Beach family sold Valley Falls Farm, two of Andy Sr.'s children purchased the farmhouse and the surrounding 10 acres in 1958. The Friends purchased the property from the Darico family in 2001.

Michael had stopped at the Farm during our Artist Day event two years ago. He had with him a scrapbook of photos showing the removal of the big green bell from the belltower in the Springville Mill in Rockville - and its move to Valley Falls Farm. Michael said he was about 11 years old at the time, and quite remarkably, he had taken the photographs himself with his Brownie camera. Michael wanted us to have the photographs. We were thrilled! We plan to enlarge them as a display in the Heritage Center, along with some other bells that had once been in the Darico family's bell collection at the Farm.



The juke box

Shortly after Michael's passing in May, we received a call from Michael's sister, Jane Darico Lonsdale. She was taking care of Michael's estate and wanted us to have the jukebox that had once been in the second floor "party room" of the stable! She said it was time for it to go home. A photograph is pasted to the jukebox showing it sitting in a corner of the second floor of the stable (See photo). Again, we were thrilled! That item, too, will become a part of the Heritage Center's story of Valley Falls Farm. Thank you, Jane! Your family memories will live on. 🍷



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.
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Summer 2021

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UPCOMING EVENTS

ARTIST DAY AT VALLEY FALLS FARM - AUGUST 22, 2021

The public is invited **1:00 to 3:00 pm**. Park at the Valley Falls Park parking area, 300 Valley Falls Road. Shuttle service will be available to the Red Barn, or you can walk up the short trail to the barn.



ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

Our Annual Meeting will take place from **1:00 to 3:00 pm**. A presentation about former owner of Valley Falls Farm, the nefarious Count Hans Munchow, will be given by guest speaker, Jon Roe. Park at the Valley Falls Park parking area, 300 Valley Falls Road. Shuttle service will be available to the Red Barn, or you can walk up the short trail to the barn.

