



Preserving Nature and History at Valley Falls

Website: friendsofvalleyfalls.org

Facebook: The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc
Vernon CT

Dear Members and Friends,

Come Visit the New Valley Falls Heritage Center!

The Friends of Valley Falls invite you to visit the new Heritage Center at Valley Falls during the Grand Opening to be held 1-4 pm on Saturday, June 10.

Located at 345 Valley Falls Road, Vernon, the Heritage Center is part of a eight-acre farm that is often called the most scenic spot in town. Tour the historic stable, dairy barn, root cellar and three additional unique buildings. Most items on display are original to the property. Interpretive information panels, tools and household items tell the story of the farm, its former owners and the Valley Falls area. Follow the adventures of "Count" Munchow, the renowned Beach family, and the local Daricos - all who worked and played at Valley Falls.

If you can't join us June 10, summer hours for the Heritage Center at Valley Falls Farm are 1-4 pm on these days:

- June 18 and 25
- July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
- August 6, 13, 20, 27
- In September, Sunday hours are 12-4 pm Sept. 10 during Artists Day and 12-4 pm Sept. 24 during the Annual Meeting.

Admission is free; donations welcome. Limited parking available in the lot where the Red Barn is located, or at Valley Falls Park and walk the hillside path to the Farm.

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The new Heritage Center, the rooming house barn and five unique outbuildings also showcase a variety of interesting artifacts found on the farm.



One of the stalls in the stable displays many of the items often used by the women who lived and worked at Valley Falls Farm.



Bringing Back the Bluebirds

With the arrival of spring and the June opening of the Heritage Center, the hope is to bring more Bluebirds to the farm.

Thanks to Friends volunteers Sheryl and Tim McMullen, the Bluebird houses at Valley Falls Farm have received a much-needed refresh.

Following an assessment of the boxes and support poles on the property, it was determined that some houses just needed cleaning while others needed to be replaced or repaired.

In order to attract more Bluebirds, houses were consolidated to nine, to ensure the boxes were not too close to each other. According to Board of Director member Bruce Dinnie, Garden Barn in Vernon donated 10 butterfly weed plants for the nearby pollinator garden to further help attract the birds, while Hebron Ace Hardware donated two of the new houses. Bruce, who worked on the project with Sheryl and Tim, also secured replacement poles and hardware.

With five new houses, the refurbished ones, new poles and mounting hardware, there are already eggs in several boxes and a Bluebird baby! Sheryl and Tim are now monitoring the birds, identifying eggs in the boxes, and documenting all findings.

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Helping Valley Falls Move into the Next Century

Two historical groups in Connecticut are helping the Friends move Valley Falls Farm and the Heritage Center into the next century.

As part of a State Collections Assessment grant, History and Museum Consultant Richard Malley toured the farm on April 6 and made recommendations to the FVF Board of Directors on ways to preserve vintage artifacts on display in the new history museum. The grant, funded by the Department of Economic and Community Development, is managed in partnership with CT Humanities and the Heritage Foundation at the CT State Library.

A second organization, Preservation Connecticut is helping provide structural engineering expertise to evaluate ways to improve and preserve building structures on the property. That same day, Mike Forino and Stefon Danczuk, both with Preservation CT, and Beth Acly, from Cirrus Structural Engineering in Columbia, were on-site to evaluate cracks in a beam in the dairy barn, as well as examine ways to help preserve the manure shed that features a waste collection system that was unique in the early 1900s.

As part of ongoing efforts to pursue funding needed to support the new Heritage Center, the Friends were very pleased to receive a \$1,000 award from the Connecticut Water Company. The recently-awarded funds will partially fund construction of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) drop-off parking pad in front of the stable at the Heritage Center. "We are pleased to support this effort," said Denise Poole, from CWC.

The Friends also received a \$638 award from Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. These funds are received annually from the Designated Fund the Friends have with the Foundation.

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Rich Malley with (from left) Maryann Levesque, Jean Merz and Ann Letendre in front of the historic red barn built in 1911.



The group explores the historical stable and its contents, with Malley noting, "I have never seen such an elaborate farm building!"

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Managing Principal at Cirrus Structural Engineering in Columbia, examine ways to help preserve a manure shed built with an unusual waste collection system that was unique in the early 1900s.

The Gardens are in Bloom!

Thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers, the gardens at Valley Falls Farm are looking especially beautiful this year.

Vernon Garden Club members keep the Herb and Flower Gardens located near the white stable in picture-worthy condition, and even invite visitors to snip a few herbs for cooking. Often you can see club members weeding, watering and maintaining the gardens that overlook the eight-acre farm.

Across the street from the Farmhouse, Jean Merz heads up the team of Friends volunteers - Lynn Lusardi, Maryann Levesque and Nancy Steffens - in weeding, mulching and maintaining the Silo Garden located in back of the Red Barn.

A pollinator garden located on the hillside near the beehives also offers a bit of color and serves as a natural backdrop for the trees and birdhouses that dot the scenic landscape.



The round garden outlined with local rock mimics the footprint of where the silo once stood. It is filled with perennials and a nearby bench makes it easy to enjoy its quiet beauty.

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(left) and Mary Rooney, cleaning and watering the pretty Herb and Flower Gardens the club maintains at the farm.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Spring Wildflower Walk, Sunday, May 28 at 10 a.m. Meet at the Pavilion at Valley Falls Park, 300 Valley Falls Road, Vernon. Wildflower enthusiast Carol Hatch help identify a variety of spring wildflowers found in the Park. Attendees welcome to bring identification apps.

Tree Walk with Nicholas Cranmer, Saturday, June 3 at 10 am. Meet at the Pavilion at Valley Falls Park, 300 Valley Falls Road, Vernon. Nicholas, a Master of Science student at UCONN, Natural Resources and the Environment, will identify a variety of trees in the Park.

New Heritage Center Opens at Valley Falls Farm: Grand Opening of the new Heritage Center. Saturday, June 10, from 1-4 pm, at Valley Falls Farm, 345 Valley Falls Road, Vernon. Tour the historic stable, dairy barn, root cellar and three additional unique buildings. Most items on display are original to the property. Interpretive information panels, tools and household items tell the story of the farm, its former owners and the Valley Falls area.

Valley Falls Heritage Center Summer Hours: Heritage Center will be open 1-4 pm June 18 and 25, and 1-4 pm every Sunday in July and August. In September, Sunday hours are 12-4 pm Sept. 10 during Artists Day and 12-4 pm Sept. 24 during the Annual Meeting.

Artists Day: Sunday, September 10 from 12-4 pm at Valley Falls Farm, 345 Valley Falls Road, Vernon. Local artists will select various vistas on the scenic eight-acre farm and paint outdoors in the "Plein Air" method. Enjoy a day at the Farm, watching the artists at work, asking them questions, and touring the Heritage Center.

For events held at the Farm, there is limited parking in the lot where the Red Barn is located. Parking is always available at Valley Falls Park and walking the hillside path to the Barn.

Founded in 1972, the Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving history and nature.

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Those taking part in the May 13 Bird Walk at Valley Falls Park identified over 40 bird species.

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