



**Dear Members and Friends,**

### **Valley Falls Heritage Farm Holds Successful Grand Opening!**

After years in the making, the Heritage Center at Valley Falls finally opened its doors to the public on June 10. More than 100 people visited the Center that day and comments included "incredible," "amazing," and "I'll definitely be back again!"

Since that day, the Center has been open Sundays, hosting a number of visitors. Several have been former residents who moved out of town and were home to visit friends and family. One couple from Oregon was thrilled to tour the farm and learn about its history, noting that they had driven by it for years and had always wanted to see the buildings. Almost everyone has noted

how much they enjoyed learning about the families that lived at Valley Falls Farm, including the infamous "Count" Hans Munchow who eventually ended up in prison for his scamming activities.

The Grand Opening was held one week after Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne cut the ceremonial ribbon, accompanied by Town Council members, along with volunteers and Board of Director members of the Friends of Valley Falls. Mayor Champagne, who toured the Center before cutting the ribbon, thanked the Friends for their great work, and presented a Proclamation from the Town of Vernon recognizing the merits and historical value of the new Heritage Center to the community.

Maryann Levesque, Vice President for the Friends, thanked everyone for attending the Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening events, noting that town, state and community support was instrumental in the success of the Valley Falls Heritage Center.



Over 100 people attended the Grand Opening. Many said they had always wanted to see the inside of the vintage farm buildings.



Visitors toured the stable stall that is focused on the Beach Family. Mary Batterson Beach bought the farm in 1915 as a summer home.

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### **Special Sale Supports Heritage Farm, Valley Falls Farm**

The Friends of Valley Falls will hold two special sale days on August 13 and September 24. On those Sundays the Heritage Center will be open for tours and visitors can purchase T-shirts with the Friends of Valley Falls logo, notecards depicting the stable in winter, and sepia-tone prints of a circa 1950 photograph of the farm. It has been documented that Polly, the horse identified in the print, hauled the large ice blocks from Valley Falls Pond to the icehouse for storage. Membership forms will also be at the Center for those wanting to join as a Friend of Valley Falls. Payment is cash or check, with all proceeds from sales going toward maintaining and improving the Heritage Center and farm.



Friends of Valley Falls T-shirts are just one of the items that can be purchased, with all proceeds going toward maintaining and improving the Farm and Heritage Center.

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### **Artists Day Features Local Musicians and Artist**

Our September 10 Artists Day is shaping up to be a great event for the entire family! In addition to hosting amazing local artists who will capture the beauty of Valley Falls on their canvases, the day includes the music of local musician Jeannie Murphy, and a talk by Bolton artist Dorothy Hall.

Jeannie, who performs as "Just Jeannie" in addition to bands "Murphy's Law" and "Off the Cuff," will be joined by her brother, Fred, and friends Eugene and Kim. As a group, they will play music ranging from country and folk to soft rock and golden oldies. They will play from 1-3 pm at the historic Red Barn, as artists paint and visitors stroll the grounds or gather on the hillside or in

their chairs to enjoy the music.

At 2 pm, Dorothy Hall will talk about Artificial Intelligence and what it means to the art community. Will AI diminish the need to nurture artistic talent, or will it bring new opportunities? She will also discuss the importance of keeping an active sketch book and will show examples of her own sketches and how they evolved. Back by popular demand from our 2021 Artists Day, Dorothy is Bolton Land Trust's Artist-in-Residence and creates her art using a variety of media.

The Heritage Center will also be open, with local historian and Vernon resident Jon Roe on hand to provide tours and answer questions about the Valley Falls area. Prior to retirement, Jon was an engineer at Pratt and Whitney. Since 2013 he has served as publisher of "The Tankerhoosen" a website and newsletter that serves as a resource about Vernon's Tankerhoosen Valley.





An artist taking part in a previous Artists Day, surrounded by a blooming garden of flowers.



The red barn, captured beautifully on canvas.

### **Annual Meeting on Sept. 24 Features "Rachel Carson"**

All are welcome to attend the Friends of Valley Falls Annual Meeting to be held 1-4 pm on September 24. The meeting will be held in the Red Barn, lower level. Following a brief business meeting, Bev York will provide a lively presentation on Rachel Carson. Born in 1907, Ms. Carson was a marine biologist, environmentalist and conservationist, and author of several books, including 'Silent Spring' which explored the danger of pesticides. The book helped spark grassroots efforts to ban harmful chemicals.

The meeting will also feature our annual sale of delicious honey harvested by Allen Valli, resident beekeeper at Valley Falls Farm. His honey is always a popular part of our annual meeting. New this year, we will also sell Valley Falls T-shirts, notecards, and prints of a circa 1950 photograph of Valley Falls Farm. We will also take orders for custom framing of the print. Graphic artist Barry Ford of Ford Folios, who designed many of the interpretive panels for the Valley Falls Heritage Center, is also a skilled woodworker who will use vintage wood to craft customized frames. Items for sale that day can be purchased with cash or checks (sorry, no credit cards) while orders for prints with frames can be placed that day. All proceeds from sales of T-shirts, notecards and unframed prints will go toward maintaining and improving the Valley Falls Heritage Center and Farm.

Please join us for the meeting; light refreshments will be served, and the

Heritage Center will be open for tours following Bev's presentation. There will be limited parking in the lot where the Red Barn is located. Parking is also available at Valley Falls Park and then walking the short footpath to the Barn.



The annual meeting will be held Sept. 24 in the lower level of the circa 1911 red barn.

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### Looking for Plein Air Artists!

Are you an artist who enjoys painting in the "Plein Air" style? Do you know anyone who enjoys setting up their



easel outside and painting the beauty of nature? Artists of all ages and skill levels are invited to take part in *Artists Day at Valley Falls Farm* to be held September 10. Held on the eight-acre farm, the event provides an afternoon of art, music, history, and nature at what is often called the most scenic spot in Vernon.

Artists select a favorite vista at the farm, set up an easel or table in the morning, and paint outdoors. Paintings completed that day, or other artwork, can be displayed and sold in the farm's historic red barn. In the afternoon, the public is invited to watch the artists at work, bring a picnic, enjoy music being performed from the historic red barn, or tour the new Heritage Center. Interested artists can contact Ann Letendre at [annletendr@aol.com](mailto:annletendr@aol.com) or 860-875-4623.



Artist Sugar Sweet paints during the 2021 Artists Day.

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### **Help us Grow Our Membership**

Our annual membership drive for new and renewing members is currently underway. If you know someone who would be interested in joining the Friends (or if you want to give them the gift of membership) please download a membership form from our website at [www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org](http://www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org). The form can be found under the membership tab. Membership levels include Senior, Student, Individual, Family, Preservation Partner, and History Hero. Lifetime memberships are also an option. With the opening of the new Heritage Center, community support is more important than ever. Thank you for your support, and please help us grow our membership!

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### **Volunteer Spotlight – Jon Roe**

If we could use one word to describe Jon Roe and his volunteer work with the Friends of Valley Falls, it would have to be five: "We can't thank you enough!" Jon and his wife Jan live just down the street from Valley Falls Farm and Park. Jon has been tireless in his support, especially in helping to open the new Heritage Center. His extensive research regarding the families and individuals who lived at Valley Falls Farm is evident when reading many of the interpretive panels displayed at the Heritage Center. In addition, he provides tours of the Center and is well-known as a local storyteller, having given several talks on the subjects of his research, such as the infamous "Count" Munchow, at our Artists Day, Annual Meetings and Spring Walks. Other topics of his research have resulted in collaboration with the Vernon Historical Society on intriguing projects such as the finding, and subsequent restoration, of the missing headstone of David Allis, one of the most prominent men in Vernon in the .1700s

After retiring as an engineer at Pratt and Whitney, Jon pursued his interest in holistic health and organized the annual Health Fest, which has now grown to be a major spring event in town. His love of history and in 2013 he published "The Tankerhoosen," a website and newsletter dedicated to providing a resource about Vernon's Tankerhoosen Valley. He is also chair of The Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative (VVC), a group he formed to support community organizations that work collectively to make Vernon a special place to live and work. The Friends of Valley Falls is a member of the VVC and recognizes its value in cross-promoting events with other non-profits, and in serving as an important resource to the Friends of Valley Falls and the residents of Vernon.



At the new Heritage Center, Jon Roe talks with Vernon resident Phyllis Winkler about the history of Valley Falls and the people who lived at the farm.

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### **These Girl Scouts are researching cookies, not selling them!**

The old oak that once stood tall in the Valley Falls Farm pasture was an iconic sight. We saved a slice of the tree, known as a "cookie" to be displayed at the Heritage Center. The number of rings on the slice tells the age of a tree, and whether a particular year was a wet or dry season. We also wanted to determine the age of the tree, and to pinpoint important dates in history on the "cookie."

We connected with Girl Scouts Leah Cha and Leah Paugus of Vernon Troop 10709 who were interested in the tree "cookie" as a Silver Award project (yes, a different kind of Girl Scout cookie!) The two Leahs did their research and determined that the tree was 147 years old. They also tagged important dates in world history and local history on the tree, including the 1887 mill fire in the Valley Falls area and the start of World War II (1939).

The Leahs note that it took a number of attempts to count the rings, especially after their research revealed that a tree marks a year with one dark and one light ring. When you visit the Heritage Center, be sure to look for the slice and try counting the rings! We enjoyed working with these two very capable eighth-grade students and thank them for their fine work.





Scouts Leah Cha (left) and Leah Paugus with the giant tree slice, also known as a "cookie". The two are holding the cards that they pinned to the tree rings to show different national and local events in history.

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**We couldn't do it without YOU!**

In June, the Friends were pleased to receive two generous donations that will help maintain and improve the Heritage Center and Farm.

Betsy Glenn, a former Vernon resident who now lives in Oregon, sent a donation in honor of her mother, Mary Glenn. Betsy and her sister, Jessica, made a \$2,000 donation in recognition of Mary Glenn's ties to Valley Falls. She was one of the seven original women who met weekly in the '70s to study and document nature at Valley Falls Park. They went on to establish the Friends of Valley Falls in order to protect the land. Betsy, who was



featured in the Spring 2012 FVF newsletter, is a research biologist who says her early days at Valley Falls were a big influence on her career. After their mother passed away in 2018, Betsy and Jessica came east to help dedicate a park bench in their mother's name. Located near the little waterfall at the back of the pond at Valley Falls Park, the bench is embellished with a quote from naturalist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of individuals can change the world."

Luanne's Bakery and Café in Ellington also wanted to help the Friends of Valley Falls and included us in its donation program for non-profits. During the month of June, the FVF received a percentage of every drink sold at Luanne's. The result was a \$235 check! And it was nice to know that many in the community contributed to this donation by supporting a local business.

A huge thank you to Luanne's and to Betsy and Jessica. We are so appreciative of the generosity of people and individuals who value the beauty and history of Valley Falls Farm.

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