



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

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FALL 2023

Valley Falls Heritage Farm Holds Successful First Season

After years in the making, the Heritage Center at Valley Falls opened its doors to the public on June 10. Since that time, the Sunday openings in July and August have attracted nearly 400 people to the Center. Visitors from age 3 to 90 have toured the six outbuildings and comments have included: “incredible,” “amazing,” and “I’ll definitely be back again!” One youngster went back to the stable and barn several times with her mom to ring the multiple bells on display. Collected by the Darico family, the bells include one that once rang from the tower of the Springville Mill. The Mill Bell, located outside in front of the stable, was brought to the farm in the 1960s. Its moving day is documented with black and white snapshots taken by a young Michael Darico.

“That’s what is so amazing about this Heritage Center,” said Ann Letendre, who is one of the people who has worked tirelessly to make the museum a



reality. “Every exhibit item you see was found here at the farm, or donated back to the Friends because it was originally

recalled sledding down the Valley Falls hills on the sled with his childhood friends, the Darico boys, who lived in Valley Falls farm house.

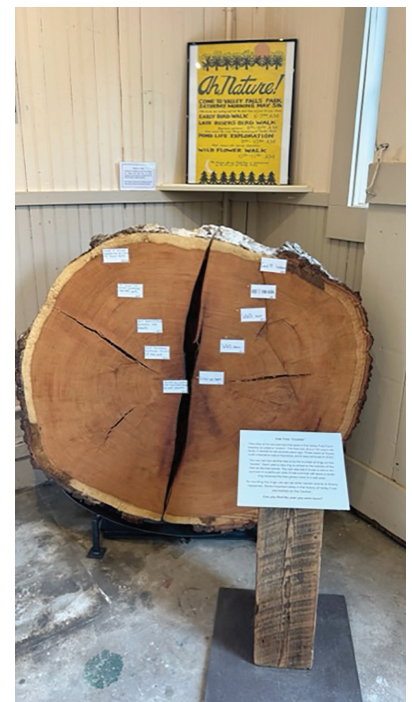


Some visitors are former residents who were in Connecticut to visit friends and family. One woman from Las Vegas recounted that she and her parents and sister lived in the farmhouse in the early ‘60s. Although she was only about five at the time, she and her sister had many happy memories of posing by the stone wall in their Easter dresses. She also

described the colorful fabric her mother used to make a skirt for the kitchen sink.

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 summer season will end September 24 when the Annual Meeting is held. If you were not able to visit the Heritage Center this year, or intend to return again, plans call for the Center to open its 2024 season in June of next year. ☺



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Nancy Steffens, Ann Letendre

**Don't forget
to renew your
membership for this
fiscal year! If you
need a form, you
can find one on the
website, click on
"Membership."**

Artists Day Features Arts, Music, History and Nature

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

Local artists will select a favorite vista at the farm, set up an easel or table in the morning, and paint outdoors. From 12 to 3 pm, the public is invited to watch the artists at work, bring a picnic, enjoy the music performed from the historic red barn, and join Dorothy in the stable at 2 pm for a talk on creativity and the growing concern about AI and the artist community.

This year's musical group is Jeannie Murphy, who performs as "Just Jeannie" and in local bands including "Murphy's Law" and "Off the Cuff." On Artists Day, she will be joined by her brother, Fred, and friends Eugene and Kim. As a group, they will play from 1-3 pm, providing music

ranging from country and folk to soft rock and golden oldies.

In addition to discussing the impacts artificial intelligence (AI) may present to the art community, Dorothy will demonstrate the importance of maintaining a sketch

book and keeping every sketch – even if you initially want to discard it. In her own career, she has found that some of her near throwaways turned out to become some of her best art.

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. Since 2013 he has served as publisher of "The Tankerhoosen" a website and newsletter (www.tankerhoosen.info) that serves as a resource about Vernon's Tankerhoosen Valley. It was his research that led the Friends to learn about the colorful lifestyle of "Count" Munchow and his many misdeeds. 🌿



Annual Meeting on Sept. 24 Features “Rachel Carson”

All are welcome to attend the Friends of Valley Falls Annual Meeting to be held 1-3 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 honey harvested by beekeeper, Allen Valli. New this year, we will sell Valley Falls t-shirts, notecards and sepia prints of a 1950 photograph of Valley Falls Farm by Hartford Times photographer, Ellery Kington. Framed prints can also be ordered. The frames are hand-

crafted from vintage woods by locally well-known graphic artist and woodworker, Barry Ford of Ford Folios, Salem CT.

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 take the short footpath up the hillside to the Barn. ☕

Volunteer Spotlight – Lynn Lusardi

Since becoming a volunteer with the Friends, Lynn Lusardi has made a big impact. Describing herself as someone who enjoys organizing things, Lynn has single-handedly taken on the project of developing an inventory system for keeping track of items displayed at the Heritage Center.

After a grant from CT Humanities provided funds for museum consultant Richard Malley to provide an on-site evaluation of the Center’s collections, it was recommended that the Friends develop a cataloging system for every artifact. The seemingly daunting project was put on the “to-do” list until Lynn arrived on the scene! Using her professional background in inventory control, she has already photographed and logged every item into a computerized spreadsheet system.

Since retiring about a year ago, this long-time Vernon resident has made it a priority to give back to her community. In addition to volunteering with the Friends, Lynn is involved with Meals on Wheels through Trinity Lutheran Church in Vernon, and she has joined the Vernon Greenways group which helps to maintain the town’s trail system. In addition to spending her time setting up an inventory system for the Friends, Lynn often volunteers Sundays at the Valley

Falls Farm, when the Heritage Center is open.

When asked why she decided to volunteer with the Friends, Lynn notes that she went to Valley Falls pond as a child, and then with her own children. Always fascinated by what she describes as the “white farm on the hill,” she often wondered who lived there but had no idea that it was being developed into a Heritage Center. “And then I discovered the great team of volunteers and I was eager to join and help out.”



After growing up in Vernon, Lynn later moved back to town with her husband. The couple have now lived in Vernon for 37 years. While raising two sons here, the family enjoyed using the well-kept parks and bike trails. When she’s not volunteering, Lynn enjoys reading, growing vegetables in her garden, hiking with her two dogs, and playing pickle ball at the Senior Center.

The new inventory system, Lynn notes, “will ensure there is a permanent record of the collection. It will also identify important data about each artifact, such as location, description, usage and historical significance.” Asked why it is important to her to protect both history and nature, her answer is simple: “for the enjoyment of those who come after us.” ☕



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.
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Vernon, CT 06066

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Last Call for Plein-Air Artists

Last call for artists who enjoy painting “en plein-air!” If you know anyone who enjoys setting up an easel outside and painting the natural landscape, the Friends are still registering artists wanting to take part in Artists Day at Valley Falls Farm. The September 10 event will be held right at Valley Falls Farm, providing an afternoon of art, music, history and nature at what is often called the most scenic spot in Vernon.



Artists will select a favorite vista at the farm, set up an easel or table in the morning, and paint throughout the day. Paintings completed that day, or other artwork, can be displayed and sold in the farm’s historic red barn. Interested artists can contact Ann Letendre at annletendr@aol.com or 860-875-4623. ☎

Calendar of Events - Join Us!

September 10th – Artist Day at Valley Falls, 12-3 pm

Enjoy an afternoon at Valley Falls Farm listening to music and strolling through the hillside pasture to watch artists paint at the farm. Artists’ paintings will be available for purchase in the basement of the Red Barn, which is handicapped accessible. Music will be performed by Jeannie Murphy and company from 1-3 pm. Discussion from Bolton artist Dorothy Hall on creativity and growing concerns among the art community about artificial intelligence (AI).

September 24th – Annual Meeting, 1 to 3 pm;
Annual Business Meeting, including election of officers for next two years, followed by our featured speaker, Bev York, who will discuss Rachel Carson, environmentalist, conservationist and author who helped to spearhead efforts to ban harmful chemicals.

For both events park in the parking lot of Valley Falls Park located at 300 Valley Falls Road. Limited parking may be available at 345 Valley Falls Road next to the Red Barn. ☎