



Preserving History and  
Nature at Valley Falls

Website: [friendsofvalleyfalls.org](http://friendsofvalleyfalls.org)

Facebook: The Friends of Valley  
Falls, Inc Vernon CT

### **Friends Offer Walks and Hikes at Valley Falls Park**

The Friends of Valley Falls are pleased to offer a series of free nature and history walks in Valley Falls Park. Based on interest shown in past years, we added an additional flower walk, and we are also partnering with the Vernon Historical Society to offer a history walk. New this year is a collaborative hike with the Northern CT Land Trust, ending with refreshments at the Red Barn and a tour of the Heritage Center buildings.

The following walks start from the pavilion in Valley Falls Park, 300 Valley Falls Road. Any event cancellations due to weather will be posted before start time on the Friends Facebook page: *The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc., Vernon CT.*

### **April 26, 10 am –April Wildflower Walk led by Carol Hatch**

Carol will help us find the many early spring wildflowers that can be found peeking out of the ground after a long winter.



**May 3, 7 am - *The Birds in Valley Falls Park* led by Denise Animani.**

Denise will share her wealth of knowledge about our feathered friends. In the past, we have typically identified over 30 bird species found in the park during spring migration.

Bring binoculars if you have them; bird apps such as Merlin, and bird lists are welcome.

**May 17, 10 am – *May Wildflower Walk* led by Carol Hatch**

Carol will lead us through the woods to find spring wildflowers typically overlooked in the park; often we discover Lady Slippers!

**May 30, 10 am – *Rocks, Railroads and Industry Walk* led by Don Sierakowski**

On this partnership walk with the Friends of Valley Falls and Vernon Historical Society, Don explores an old flax and cotton mill site, highlighting how these industries, the lives of several rich or notorious people, and the railroad all helped bring industrial development to the Valley Falls area.

**June 6, 10 am – *The Trees of Valley Falls Park* led by Rose Hiskes**

As the trees begin to leaf out, join Rose as we identify the many species found in the park, hear about notable trees, and learn about the ways trees help our local habitat.

**Oct. 17, 1 pm – *Fall Hike in the Park; Tour of the Heritage Center***

In partnership with the Northern CT Land Trust, join Karl Hasel for a 90-minute hike to Echo Ridge and enjoy scenic views during this autumn

season. We will then walk the short distance from the park to the Red Barn at Valley Falls Farm for cider and refreshments, followed by a guided tour of the Heritage Center's historic buildings and artifacts. Tour includes the stable, ice house, root cellar, manure shed and piggery. Restroom facilities available in the barn.

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### **Join Us for Opening Day at the Heritage Center – June 13!**

We are looking forward to opening day when the Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center opens for the 2026 season. From 1-4 pm on **Saturday, June 13**, the museum will be open for self-guided tours of the buildings, with a docent-led tour offered at 2 pm.



The six historic farm buildings, including an elegant stable, 1911 dairy barn and three-room root cellar, are filled with items original to the property. Interpretive information panels tell the story of this unique gentleman's farm, its former owners and the Valley Falls area.

The tour is geared for all ages – many of our younger visitors love to ring the various bells on the property (including the 1888 bell that once rang at the Springville Mill) and enjoy sliding through the little doors that allowed the pigs to exit from the stalls to the outside. Free admission; donations gratefully accepted.

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### **Open Dates at the Heritage Center**

This year the Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center will be open two

weekend days a month, from June through October. Following opening day on Saturday, June 13, the museum will be open 1-4 pm on the following Sundays: **June 28, July 12, July 26, Aug. 9, Aug. 23, Sept. 6, Sept. 20, Oct. 4, Oct. 18.** Take a self-guided tour from 1-4 pm, or a one-hour docent-led tour offered at 2 pm. In addition to the museum buildings, the eight-acre former gentleman's farm features a picnic area, herb gardens maintained by the Vernon Garden Club, walking trails and scenic views of the Valley Falls area. Bring a lunch or your sketchpad and enjoy an afternoon at this historic property. Park at the Red Barn Welcome Center, 345 Valley Falls Road, Vernon.

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### **Join Us for Clean-up Day!**

This year's annual Spring Clean-Up Day at Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center is set for Saturday, 9:30 am to noon on April 18, with a rain date of 1:30 pm on Sunday, April 19. In addition to sweeping out a few smaller buildings and cleaning windows in the stable, plans are to rake, prune, weed, and clean out gardens to spruce up the property. Bring rakes, gloves and maybe a friend or two! Here are two photos from last year's event.



*Getting ready to weed and mulch the silo garden*

Park at the Red Barn, 345 Valley Falls Rd. We'll have cleaning supplies and extra landscaping tools. To assist with assignments, please call or text Bruce Dinnie at 860-539-9648.

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*Jeremy Geller, Bob Felber, and Ann Noel were three of the volunteers greeting visitors at Healthfest 2025*

### **Say 'Hi' at the Healthfest**

The Friends of Valley Falls will have a table at the April 25 Greater Vernon Holistic Healthfest to provide information about the Heritage Center, Valley Falls Park, and opportunities for helping out

with the museum and its eight acres. This year's event at Vernon Center Middle School will run from 10 am to 4 pm and features up to 96 vendors and community organizations focused on health, exercise and holistic options. We had a great time at last year's event, handing out event schedules, answering questions about the Heritage Center, and meeting some fantastic people. We even recruited a few amazing volunteers! Hope to see you there!

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### **Schedule Your Group Tour**

A highlight last year was when members of the UConn League arrived at the Heritage Center on a Wednesday for a special group tour. Nineteen members of this

community organization, formed to provide a way to explore and learn about the area, arrived for a tour given by Karen Prewo. We all had a great time with this friendly group and would enjoy doing even more special tours for local organizations, clubs, and schools. Groups of five or more are preferred. Those interested in a group tour can go to our

website (<https://www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org/>), scroll down to the contact box on the first page, and provide your information.

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### **Volunteer Training Sessions Offered in May**

If you're a storyteller with an interest in history or nature, or enjoy connecting with audiences by telling stories of the past, you are invited to attend our May training sessions and become a building greeter or tour guide. As one of our volunteers, your assistance would be welcome during any of our open Sundays this summer that meet your schedule.

Training sessions are 1-3 pm on May 12, 14, 19 and 21, and are held in the Red Barn Welcome Center, 345 Valley Falls Rd., Vernon.

This training is designed to introduce you to the history of Valley Falls Farm and Park, and the surrounding area. Each session will focus on different families and individuals who lived on this historic gentleman's farm. It is not necessary to attend all sessions; printed materials are provided.

If interested in attending, please contact Ann Letendre at 860-875-4623.

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### **Want to Help Preserve History and Nature at Valley Falls? Become a Sponsor!**

It takes a village to maintain and operate the non-profit Heritage Center and to preserve this wonderful 8-acre historic site. Our new sponsorship program offers the opportunity for businesses and individuals to play an important role in building upkeep, landscaping and insurance on this scenic property. Depending on level of sponsorship, benefits include recognition in our newsletters and social media, a link to your business from our website, and recognition in the Heritage Center tour guides and exhibits. And, since we are a 501(3)(c)

organization, there is always the advantage of tax deductibility. For more information click on the link, below, to go to the "Sponsorship" page on our website.

<https://www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org/membership-how-to-join/sponsorships/>

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### **A Habitat-Based Management Plan for Valley Falls Park**

In spite of all the work involved with maintaining Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center, we still manage to take on the other half of our mission, to preserve nature at Valley Falls Park.



In concert with the Vernon Conservation Commission and the Parks & Rec Department, the Friends organized a committee of local conservationists to carry out this exciting project. The committee has had four productive meetings to date; the plan will be completed by April, 2028. Stay tuned for the details!

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**Photo Finish**



Photographer Kirk Giglio, who has taken several beautiful photos of the Valley Falls area, took this terrific arial photo of the Heritage Center property.

Let's hope this is the last snow photo we see this year!

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***Stay in Touch!***

Visit our website: [www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org](http://www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org)

or "Like Us" on Facebook:

*The friends of Valley Falls, Inc Vernon CT*

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