



V A L L E Y G R O V E N E W S L E T T E R

DECEMBER 2001

BY THE VALLEY GROVE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

GOOD DEED GOES REWARDED

In recognition of the preservation and restoration of the prairie, Valley Grove won a 2001 Preservation Honor Award from the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota in the category Community Effort. The award ceremony took place at the 16th annual Preservation Awards in Duluth on November 3. Jonathan Larson accepted it on behalf of all Valley Grove, one of three groups honored for “extraordinary efforts of saving their churches from demolition and undertaking long-term commitments of maintenance and dedicated support. These efforts share many similarities and illustrate a resurgent national concern for our rural religious heritage... The Valley Grove Preservation Society ... preserved in perpetuity the breathtakingly beautiful setting of these two ancient church buildings that face each other in the rural countryside.”

GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND PUT TO GOOD USE

A \$25,000 gift was made in loving memory of Evelyn Rinde Anseth, a former Nerstrand resident who attended Valley Grove church, given by her husband Russell Anseth, originally of Northfield, a retired general contractor. The Rinde farmstead dates back a century or more and the barn was put up in 1867. Other gifts have been sent in celebration of the memory of Thelma Mueller, Lillian Wasner (former Valley Grove board member), Richard Hall, Orville Vesledahl and Sadie A. Hansen.

WE'VE STRUCK WATER!

A \$10,000 donation from The Frederick & Margaret L. Weyerhaeuser Foundation was made to Valley Grove. The money is to be used for the purchase of a well that will be installed next spring. Now those planning to hold wedding parties and other events here will not have to tote in their own water, and our faithful prairie tree waterers can use fresh water instead of hauling water or hoping there's rainwater in the old cistern.

WELCOME TO CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AT VALLEY GROVE

The Valley Grove Preservation Society welcomes all to come and join us for one or both of the following events: Sunday December 23rd 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. – Come and help hang decorations to get the church ready for the Christmas Eve Celebration.

This year our candlelight service will be held Christmas Eve at 10:00 p.m. and lead by Reverend Gary Kaston. Music will begin at 9:45 p.m. and following the service we will have our special hot cider. Please feel free to bring some of your Christmas treats to share.

VALLEY GROVE HITS A TRIPLE IN THE NEWS

In a rare coincidence, Valley Grove was covered three times in the same newspaper. On Sunday, September 9, 2001 staff reporter Darlene Pfister's article "Eternal View" appeared on the metro /state section cover of the Star Tribune while art critic Mary Abbe's feature on Valley Grove neighbor Tom Maakestad—"Artist Edits Sprawl to Show Farmscapes"—shone on the cover of the arts and entertainment section and Karin Winegar's editorial on "The Land We are Losing" ran on the Commentary page. To order backcopies of this issue call (612)673-4618 or read them on the web at www.startribune.com.

NEW WEB ADDRESS

You can read about Valley Grove, see photos of it and learn about its people, prairies and plans on our new web site: valleygrovemn.com. Thanks to Jonathan Larson for setting it up!

SHOW US THE WAY

A handsome new wooden sign directing visitors to Valley Grove will be installed at the southwest corner of County Road 29 and County Road 246 soon.

V A L L E Y G R O V E N E W S L E T T E R

D E C E M B E R 2 0 0 1

CHRISTMAS NOTES FROM VALLEY GROVE

Mildred R. Hamblin recently made a contribution in memory of Benford and Alma Roisum, her siblings. Mildred, who will be 95 in March, lives in Coon Rapids but grew up near Valley Grove. We hope to interview her soon for the VG archives. If you have memories of attending the churches, please write or tape them and send them to us. Her letter includes the following remembrance of a simpler time in the valley:

“On Christmas Eve, Mama would put bricks in the oven and Papa would put the extension on the sleigh and fresh straw (in it). When it came time to go, we were bundled up and ready for our church programs..The men and women sat on opposite sides (of the church) with the men having the older children and ladies (caring for) the infants and young. My father had Alma, and she’d stand in back of him and examine his ears and hair. He never made a move. There were smiles all around. . After church we’d go to the Lockrims and stay the night. We would have our Christmas the next night and received our one gift. Mine was a doll which I loved. ...”

SPLENDOR IN THE PRAIRIE GRASS

The first Savanna Days gathering is tentatively scheduled for August 11, 2002 under the direction of Valley Grove board member Gary Wagenbach of the Carleton College biology department . Planned events will include tours of the Valley Grove prairie and neighboring prairie restoration projects.

HORSES ON THE HILLTOP

Whips ‘n’ Wheels and St. Croix Horse and Carriage Society held their joint monthly fall color drive at Valley Grove on a recent Sunday. Among the herd was a Norwegian Fjord horse owned by Kathy Johnson of Delano. Johnson is expecting a Fjord foal next year and chose the name of her new Fjord from among the Valley Grove gravestones: Berit. After a trot over the gravel roads down to Cty. 246, the group adjourned to the warmth of the church where a spread of Swedish meatballs, scalloped potatoes, fruit and desserts was laid out on a pew along with hot cider and coffee. Sonja Johnson of Lester Prairie played the organ: she turns out to be related to the local Sivertsons two doors to the west of Valley Grove. Valley Grove board member Jonathan Larson of Faribault, who rode in a wagonette belonging to Steve Crownover of Prior Lake , photo documented the drive.

VALLEY GROVE PRAIRIE SETS AN EXAMPLE

Professor and writer in residence at St. Olaf College Jim Heynen brought his writing class of 20 students to tour the church, cemetery and prairie along with St. Olaf chaplain Bruce Benson and St. Olaf philosophy professor Ed Langerak. The topic was “writing to change the world” — how to write about things you treasure and what impact editorial writing can have. The example used was a Star Tribune editorial about Valley Grove written by former Star Tribune reporter Karin Winegar of St.Paul. Professor Heynen, a popular fiction and poetry writer, was the Variety section cover story in the Star Tribune of October 22,2001 in a piece by John Habich called “Haystack Haiku.”

VALLEY GROVE PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART EXHIBIT

Valley Grove has been celebrated in paintings, note cards and a calendar; the shifting and striking light, the wide horizon and spare, pure architecture and setting offer endless possibilities for capturing good images. Both professional and artists are encouraged to exhibit pieces representing the church, the grounds and its newly planted prairie for an exhibition to be held at Valley Grove next summer. The date and time will be announced in an upcoming newsletter.

SERIOUS STEEPLE REPAIR

In preparation to paint the next year, the residing of the steeple & the church’s south side has begun. A special 65 foot mechanical lift was used to inspect & evaluate the condition of the steeple. It was found that the wood moldings & finals are rotted & decayed, the cedar shingles thin & fragile and the metal flashing between the siding & shingles has rusted away. A complete structural analysis will be completed this winter to determine what work & money will be needed to complete this project.

We are committed to do as much as possible with our budgeted funds and will keep you informed of our progress. Visit our new web site at www.valleygrovemn.com and go to projects to see close up pictures of the steeple. Please keep us in mind this holiday season. Gifts to Valley Grove Preservation are fully tax-deductible and may be sent to:

Valley Grove Preservation Society
P.O. Box 75
Nerstrand , Minnesota 55053