

VALLEY GROVE NEWSLETTER

Spring 2006

By the Valley Grove

Preservation Society



It Was a Good Jul at Valley Grove!

Our Christmas Eve service drew a full house for the third year in a row. The heartfelt simplicity of Valley Grove, the historic connections to our immigrant and farming past and the high quality of the music add up to a powerful attraction for those who have roots here and those who just love and appreciate Valley Grove. Pastor Reverend Dr. Cynthia Vold Forde was in town visiting

relatives and so she officiated. Carols and instrumentals were provided by organist/violinist Andrea Een, clarinetist JoAnne Polley, and flautist Kay Sahlin. The magnificent Christmas tree was donated by Rick and Cindy Opatrny. The 16 foot fir was started from a seedling they found in a ditch in Northern Minnesota.

Events and Opportunities at Valley Grove

Weed Whackers Whip Thistles at Valley Grove

Our prairie is alive and changing, which means it requires some help every year to keep the balance in favor of the desirable plants. On Saturday, June 24, we will take prickly things into our own hands and hold a Thistle Day potluck and weed killing session. We will provide the heavy duty garbage bags. If you have not been on your prairie, searching for and cutting thistles will definitely educate you on the plethora of plants and birds at this site. If you have questions on plants, we will have people there with the answers. For those of you

who do not want to get into competitive thistle bag filling, come enjoy the site and just socialize or engage in storytelling about the days of Valley Grove. Join us from 1 to 5 pm, bring your weeding gear and gloves and something to share. The rain date will be Sunday, June 25.

Good News and Big Plans

Hear all about what's happened in the past year and what we plan for the years ahead at the Valley Grove annual meeting, April 20th, 2006 at 7:00 pm. Bring your good ideas, too. Interested in becoming a Board member? Call Ken evenings at 507-645-8720.

Trees Dedicated on the Prairie

Since our last newsletter, the following gifts have been turned into tree dedications: a tree in Prairie Rose Grove in memory of Betty Gudmedstad, a tree in Prairie Rose Grove as a memorial to Carl and Emma Iverson, and a tree in Ken's Grove dedicated in honor of the men and women of the United States armed forces serving in Iraq.

Coveted Wedding Site

It's photogenic, it's spacious, it's rustic, and it's historic: and now it's in demand. Valley Grove is already re-

served for a record setting 10 weddings in summer of 2006. All events are posted on our official calendar at : www.valleygrovemn.com.

Memorials

The Valley Grove Preservation Society and its friends are grateful for the following memorial gifts:

Gift in memory of grandparents Melvin and Lulla Groff; In memory of Andrew A. and Marie Rollag Rowberg; Gertrude F. Stenbakken Memorial; Memorial to Helen Ingram; In Memory of Clayton Sorenson.

Restoring the Old Stone Church

We did it together: We purchased and replanted the prairie, we banded together to restore the old white church from the finial on the steeple to the furnace and antique pipe organ. Now let's get together for the last effort: restoring the old stone church. The first phase of the restoration – bat removal, steeple reconstruction and roof replacement – requires a minimum of \$90,000 before construction can begin. We are almost halfway there at \$34,000. Can you help Valley Grove achieve this wonderful goal? If so, please send a check to Valley Grove Preservation Society marked for the 1862 fund right away. Then see what we do with it! Thank you.

Valley Grove in the Long Run

Valley Grove's natural beauty and age remind us of many things – time especially. In the long run, when we are not here to take care of the prairie and the churches, we want others to experience this place. To that end, the Elton-Nelson Endowment Fund was created. An anonymous donor has pledged to match donations and memorials to this Endowment Fund up to \$25,000 through 2006. People have already had their gifts doubled: Corinne Mase, Barbara Hope, and Kenneth Nelson. This January we received a donation of \$5,000 from a person who wished to remain anonymous. This donor told us that it was up to the board to determine the use of the money. The board put half toward the 1862 Fund and the balance toward the Endowment Fund. The \$5,000 turned into a \$7,500 gift. This opportunity makes it the best time ever to contribute to Valley Grove.

From our Favorite Fiddler...

What a friend we have in Professor Andrea Een! She performs Norwegian hardanger fiddle at the church social and she named a CD in honor of Valley Grove. To listen to samples of her music and to order her CDs, see www.andreaeen.com Parts of the CD "From the Valley" – yes, that's the 1894 church on the cover – were recorded at Valley Grove, and Een donates 20 percent of the sales of that CD to the Valley Grove Preservation Society. Bridal dances, folk hymns, and running and walking dances are featured.

"My fiddle conjures
ancestral spirits who crossed
to dance *nuld* in a prairie
farmhouse, set among waves
of wheat and corn."

From "May Dance at Eengard"
By Andrea Een.

Shop Valley Grove

Lovely color photographs of Valley Grove's unique two churches are available as magnets. These make great, inexpensive, practical gifts. They can be ordered for \$5.00 each plus \$1.50 shipping and handling (up to two). Please see our webpage for a choice of two designs: www.valleygrovemn.com.

Please Stay in Touch!

Write us with your Valley Grove Church reminiscences, your fundraising suggestions, your recollections of people and events past at Valley Grove and your ideas for its future. Letters, photographs, original furnishings and other memorabilia of Valley Grove are always welcome for inclusion in our archives.