



November 2008

By the Valley Grove Preservation Society

God Jul Og Godt Nyttar

This December 24th marks the fifteenth consecutive year that the Preservation Society has celebrated Christmas Eve at Valley Grove, and the first one in which the old stone church is largely completed. We have a lot to be grateful for!

In 1994, our first guest minister for the Christmas event was Duane Dahlberg, a retired physics professor

from Concordia College who was also an ordained Lutheran minister. The organist was one of our board members who played keyboard for a polka band. About 85 people attended. We have continued the tradition of ringing the bell at the opening and closing of the service, reading the Christmas gospel and singing "Silent Night" (Stille Natt, Heilige Natt) by candlelight, some verses in Norwegian.

This year Steve Swanson, a retired English professor from St Olaf -- also an ordained Lutheran minister-- will conduct the service. The Christmas story this year will be read both in Norwegian and English. Slip into your comfortable and warm *genser* (Norwegian sweaters) and be prepared to sing your favorite hymns. Music starts at 9:45 pm and the service begins at 10:00 pm. Join us and stay after the service for our special hot cider and cookies. Tusend Tak!

Valley Grove Country Social



The creak of wagons, the smell of autumn leaves, the breeze rippling the prairie grasses, the jingle of harness— Valley Grove's biggest autumn event is evocative of another, sweeter time. All that and there was music in the air and the aroma of coffee wafting over the hilltop at the annual Valley Grove Country Social on Sunday, Sept. 21.

Bob Mathies of Faribault and his gorgeous teams of Percherons drew two wagons over the prairie and through the still-flowering prairie on a perfect day.

And Valley Grove board member Karin Winegar and her friend Maren Schroeder, both of St. Paul, gave horseback rides to children on Prinz, a percheron-morgan cross, and

Bailey, a Welsh pony.

Children chased each other across the cemetery lawn and up the steps into the newly restored balcony of the charmingly restored stone church, built in 1862 by Norwegian immigrants. The occasional dog capered around the churchyard, and Zeman's Simple Harvest Farm, a Valley Grove neighbor, provided the hands on fun of a chicken and a milk goat for everyone to pet.

Hutenanny, a Northfield folk music group, supplied some of the music, alternating with WindWorks, a woodwind quintet based in the Twin Cities and Northfield. Members include: Kay Sahlin, flute; Dana Maeda, oboe; JoAnn Polley, clarinet,

Cindy Bailey, bassoon and Becky Jyrkas, French horn.

Tim Johnson of T.J. Custom Finishing in Nerstrand demonstrated antique wood graining, one of the techniques used in the original Valley Grove churches.

In honor of the completion of the stone church, River City Builders of Nerstrand re-cycled some of the 1862 stone church's historic floorboards into traditional benches. Three of these were auctioned off.

The weather was as exquisite as it could be, attendance was high and donations exceeded expenses!



“Valley Grove is a place of peace and grace”

Prairie Creek Community School student after visiting on a class field trip in September

Tree Dedications

The children of Truman and Edna Carlson have dedicated a tree to celebrate their parents' 60th wedding anniversary. We still have trees on our prairie that need dedications: consider contributing to one for your family. This is a living, breathing way to honor your loved ones, to mark happy memories or joyous occasions.

Memorials

Since April of this year we have received memorial gifts to honor the lives of the following: Steven C. Ostby, Beth & Miff Mattison, Melvin & Lulla Guroff, Al Dammer, Wilhelm (Bill) Vesledahl, Gladys Hope Wallin, Rolf Rosenqvist, Marvin T. Elstad, Richard Hougen, the Groff family memorial, Doris Floran Pleschourt, Alvin Hamre and Al Severson.

Grants – a Special Thanks

The Valspar Corporation through the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation donated 100 gallons of premium primers and paint that were used in bringing back to life the 1862 church. Valspar also donated the white paint used for the exterior of the 1894 church when it was refurbished in 2001.

This month we received a gift of \$5,000 from the Frederick & Margaret L. Weyerhaeuser Foundation to be used toward the 1862 church. Weyerhaeuser has come to our aid four times to date.

And the donors of a very large gift prefer to remain anonymous.

These and all gifts make a huge difference for Valley Grove and we are very grateful for them.

Endowment Fund

Our endowment fund is growing in its number of stocks through the gifts in stocks from Sylvia Nelson and Robert Hougen. The total value is currently decreased due to the depressed stock market. On the other hand, the dividends keep coming and that money has more than offset the interest on our loan. Thank you Sylvia, Robert and all of you who have directed your donations to this fund.

Coveted Wedding Site

Its' photogenic, its' spacious, its' rustic, and its' historic:

To the Valley Grove Preservation Society,

Thank you ~~so~~ much for all of your hard work in restoring the beautiful churches. I was able to take my students to see them last week. They were really captivated by the photos and appreciated the hard work behind each of the renovations.

Before we looked at the costs, we estimated what we thought different things cost... and we were really surprised at how far off we were.

As one student wrote in her journal, "Valley Grove is a place of peace and grace." Thank you for all you do.

Jarah Currier
Teacher (Prairie Creek Comm. Sch.)

and now its' in demand Valley Grove served as a location for 8 weddings the summer of 2008. All events are posted on our official calendar on our web site. Past newsletters are available there also (www.valleygrovemn.com).

Wanted

Valley Grove is looking for a spruce or pine to display in the front of the church for the Christmas Eve service. Call Ken at (507) 645-0551 (daytime) if you wish to donate. We will cut and pick up.

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.

Valley Grove Preservation Society

P.O. Box 75

Nerstrand, MN 55053

www.valleygrovemn.com

November 2008

Dear Friends and supporters,

The last ten years has seen your non profit, the Valley Grove Preservation Society, leading the restoration of the Valley Grove 1894 church. This effort was complemented by the purchase of farm land surrounding the site and on which native grasses and trees were planted. The result is a young oak savanna that is looking great and with developing populations of birds, mammals, and insects that do well in this new habitat. The view surrounding the two historic churches is absolutely stunning. These successes lead to VGPS leasing the 1862 stone church from the Valley Grove Cemetery Association, which has been responsible for its care. During the first two years of the lease VGPS undertook essential steps to begin restoration - replacing the roof, removing a false ceiling, installing a replacement steeple and finial to match the 19th Century original, replacing the floor joists and sub floor, and lastly building a basic catering kitchen. Priming and painting the interior walls was done using donated paint obtained from the Valspar Corporation.

These successes were made possible through your generosity. Thanks to all of you that have given support. In June 2000 when the 111 acres surrounding the churches came up for sale, at a cost of \$414,750, our society managed to have funds available to purchase the land on January 2, 2001. The end result was that all 111 acres of land were protected under the Forest Legacy Program and we retain the 52 acres that surround the church site. A key to the land purchase was \$109,000 in donations. They ranged from \$5 to one as high as \$5000.

In addition to funds used for the purchase of the land, we spent \$395,947 on restoration between January 1999 and July 2008 (summary on reverse). Today we are in debt for \$79,000.

In summary then we have received an additional \$316,947 in donations during the past ten years - a total of over \$425,000 (i.e. 395,947 – 79,000 + 109,000).

We are also excited to report that the late Ken Nelson expressed confidence in the VGPS and our restoration project by establishing an endowment for Valley Grove. It is intended to provide support for the long term. Interest/dividends from this fund will help pay for maintenance going forward.

Now that we have stabilized the 1862 building we are seeking to pay down existing debt in the form of a loan from (Lake Country Community Bank, Nerstrand) in the amount of \$79,000. As we take a breather to do so we are at the same time looking forward to choosing flooring, having a restoration chandelier built, and a decorative arch carved to match one present in the 19th Century. Painting in the form of “graining” also still needs to be done. Lastly we are looking for a used bell that would be appropriate to install in the steeple.

How exciting and satisfying it is to see people enjoying and supporting Valley Grove. Those with family connections must feel especially proud. Students and community members of all ages enjoy and learn from the site. Even the birds love it. There are many grassland loving species present in the savanna. I wonder if the Minnesota listed endangered Henslow’s Sparrow has taken up residence?

We look forward to your continuing support. Join with the VGPS Board in financially supporting this amazing historic site. Help us to maintain momentum and plan for the next steps in restoring the 1862 church. Your support is vital to our mutual endeavor. Donations to our general fund, the 1862 fund, or stock to our endowment are encouraged. If you would like to learn more just write or call.

Gary Wagenbach
President, VGPS
507-645-8549

Valley Grove Preservation Society

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EXPENSES

Cash balance on books January 1999 **\$7,485**

1894 Church

Organ \$5,923
 Concrete Steps \$1,089

 Carpet \$1,809

LAND \$414,750

Prairie costs \$32,370
 Siding \$12,500
 1894 steeple renovations \$54,682
 Prairie costs \$10,019
 Well \$11,319
 Organ \$5,685
 Prairie costs \$11,086
 Roof \$36,474

 Prairie costs \$2,806
 Finial \$9,852

 Renovations \$5,100
 Rubber roof for steeple \$4,500

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

1862 Church

Money spent for Restorations of Prairie
 and of Buildings
 January 1999 through July 2008
\$395,947

50 year LEASE OF 1862 CHURCH \$1

Roof \$23,340

Steeple \$95,303

Renovations \$72,090

Cash balance on books November 2008 **\$950**

LOAN \$79,000

Your tax deductible donations toward reducing our debt would be greatly appreciated.

Valley Grove Preservation Society

PO Box 75

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