

*Renewing our Roots* The year was 1862 and the United States had just entered into Civil War. Volunteers from the newly declared state of Minnesota committed themselves early in this war in record numbers. Tensions between the Dakota Indian tribes and government agencies located at the Upper Sioux Agency near Redwood Falls were growing. The conflict that erupted in the autumn 1862 resulted in the death of many immigrant settlers and indigenous people alike.

Through all this, many immigrant families still hoped for the future and wanted to establish farms and build a community. The area now known as Valley Grove was one of several farm communities that wished to build a place for worship as well as to gather with family, friends and neighbors. With the support from the greater Holden-Goodhue Lutheran settlement, Valley Grove area immigrants began to build the stone church and the community that we celebrate today.

This year the country social will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the building of the stone church. Many activities are being planned including a presentation and discussion by Joseph Shaw of Northfield. Shaw is professor emeritus of religion at St. Olaf College and the author of several books, including a biography of Reverend Bernt J. Muus. This book provides insight into this man and the leadership role he played in supporting the growing number of Norwegian immigrants establishing a religious, social and academic foundation for these new communities.

With the support of area churches such as Valley Grove, Muus went on to found St. Olaf's School (1874), which became St. Olaf College. We are excited to celebrate this milestone and wish to do it with all of you, because your generous gifts and contributions make it possible for the Preservation Society to stabilize and repair the churches. And your financial support has made it possible to further enhance the site with the establishment of the surrounding oak/prairie savanna. Thank you! We look forward to continuing this legacy with all of you.

*For the Valley Grove Preservation Society,*  
Todd Lein, President

## *Save the Date for our Country Social*

Sunday, Sept. 16 1 to 4 p.m. former Governor **Al Quie** will speak on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Valley Grove. **Joseph Shaw** of St. Olaf College will share the history of Valley Grove's first Pastor Bernt Julius Muus and Valley Grove's relation to St. Olaf College. **Bob Mathies** and his percheron teams will provide wagon rides on the restored prairie, **Marilyn Lewis Johnson** will perform harp music and organ music, **Allysa Leonard** is bringing her band "Sister," and **Hutenanny**, a Northfield-based Scandinavian music group that has been a country social mainstay for years, will play outdoors under the historic oak tree. There will be a silent auction of a wooden bench made from the original flooring of the stone church and an oil painting by Northfield artist **Fred Somers**. The Sons of Norway will participate as will the Norwegian-American Historical Association. Refreshments will be served.

### *Governor Al Quie Headlines the Country Social*

Albert Quie has roots that interlace around Valley Grove. He was born on a farm near Dennison, attended grade school in Nerstrand, high school in Northfield and graduated from St. Olaf College. He and his wife Gretchen ran a local dairy farm, and he served as clerk on the school board. He was a member of the Minnesota state senate (1955-1958), Congress (1958-1979) and served as Governor of Minnesota from 1979 until 1983. A lifelong

horseman, he rode the length of the Rockies and wrote about it in his book, *Riding the Divide*.

His list of service to state and country goes on, but we know him also because of his roots. Quie writes "great great-grandfather Halvor Olson (1746-1795) lived at Flaa in the Hallingdal Valley of Norway. His son, my great-grandfather Halvor, used the surname Gaptjern, Halvorson, Quie and Kvi at different times, and it was he who immigrated with his family that included a son, my grandfather, also named Halvor, to Wisconsin in 1845. In 1855 Halvor ... and his parents came to Dennison and purchased adjoining quarter sections (160 acres). This was at the very beginning of settlement in the Dennison area, and Native Americans lived nearby. The Halvors, father and son, lived and farmed together and in this period had to haul the wheat harvest with horse and wagon to distant Hastings on the Mississippi River. Later Grandfather Halvor acquired land from his father and at the end of the 19th century, Longfurrow Farm had 240 acres."

### *Farewell to John Maakestad*

Valley Grove neighbor John Maakestad passed away April 15, 2012. He and his wife Bobbie were some of the earliest supporters and protectors of Valley Grove and worked to save it and ensure the two churches were entered into the National Historic Registry. John was chairman of the Society for the Preservation of Valley Grove for 20 years. He taught art – drawing, design, printmaking, painting and sculpture – and art history for 38 years at St. Olaf College, and served as chair of the art department for eight years. He retired in 1994. Valley Grove permeates many of his landscape





paintings and those of their son, Tom. He and Bobbie were the first landowners to become part of the Forest Legacy Program in Minnesota; they and their four sons planted trees on their 83 acres.

On August 8, the family spread his ashes on the Valley Grove prairie where their son Eric will create a bench. John specified that gifts in his memory can be made to Valley Grove Preservation Society.

"When we first moved here after graduate school in 1956, the church was still operating, although later it was decommissioned," Bobbie recalls. "We saw it as a spectacularly beautiful place. One day when John was out west hiking in the North Cascades, someone drove by the church, and people were taking pews out of the white church, and they were going to take the bell and sell it, then tear the building down. I ran over to a neighbor, a lawyer, and told him what was happening. He got a court order and had the doors chained shut. Two years it was in court, and finally we hired an expensive lawyer in Minneapolis, and the other side could tell we weren't gonna give up. By the skin of our teeth we saved it."

"Sidney Rand was president of St. Olaf much of the time when John was there, and once they were driving by Valley Grove together, and Sidney said 'remind me never to try to take down a building on campus that John wants to keep.'"

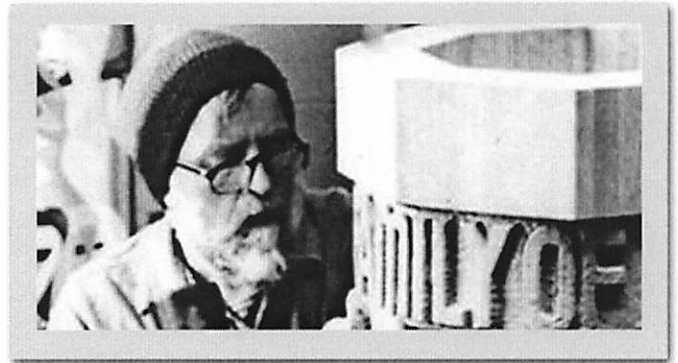
"The church needed a lot of work. We cleaned every spring: Cookie Haworth, Elaine Hope, Gladys Koester and I used to get the altarpieces out and sit on the front steps and polish them. For years Norman Hope and Ralph Koester farmed 11 acres that we own, and the money they made on that crop they put in a savings account for Valley Grove."

"We started by having a Christmas service there every year. The kids put it together: some would read a verse, another would play the violin. The neighbors were the only ones who came. One year it was terribly windy, and the furnace went on and off, so we had Christmas service here at our house. Pastor Herb Brokering, a good friend of John's who wrote hymns, held one of the first Thanksgiving services there. There were only four people."

"Then the preservation society began an annual country social, and Gretchen Quie organized an art show. Tom painted pictures of the building for that. And Fred Somers did a special note card image to raise money. And with all the reconstruction by Peter McKinnon, we couldn't have asked for a better new group to take care of it. Now it is so neat to hear people come out to see Valley Grove and rave

about it, it has turned out well. It was so worth it."

John's obituaries may be read at the following links: [startribune.com/printarticle/?id=147454505](http://startribune.com/printarticle/?id=147454505) and [stolaf.edu/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsDetails&id=5284](http://stolaf.edu/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsDetails&id=5284).



## *Valley Grove Stone Church Has a Story to Tell*

2012 marks 150 years since the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, a tragic time in Minnesota's history. The war, its causes and its aftermath had a profound impact in shaping Minnesota.

One hundred fifty years ago during the late summer and fall of 1862 the U.S.-Dakota War broke out in communities just west of here in the valley of the Minnesota River. A few years earlier The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux (1851) led to European settlers moving into the Valley of the Cannon River, displacing a Dakota tribe (Whapekute) in what is now Rice County. First worship services at Valley Grove occurred during 1857. As if there weren't enough challenges facing settlers and Indians, the Civil War commenced (January 1861 – April/May 1865).

### *Recommendations:*

Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul opened an exhibit featuring the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 on June 30, 2012. Documents, images and artifacts relating to the war on display.

[www.usdakotawar.org](http://www.usdakotawar.org). This is a definite "go to" site including brief historical background, events, programs and recommended books. Check events upcoming during July 2012.

2012 150th Commemoration of the U. S. - Dakota War Events: August 20 - 26, 2012 (an event series sponsored by Brown County Historical Society, [www.browncountyhistorymn.org](http://www.browncountyhistorymn.org))

Visit the Nicollet County Historical Society museum, 1851 North Minnesota Avenue, St. Peter, MN 56082. Go to [www.nchsmn.org/index.html](http://www.nchsmn.org/index.html) for a calendar of events.

*Recommended book:*

*The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux*, by William E. Lass, Nicolette County Historical Society Press, St. Peter, MN, 2011. A readable and well-researched synopsis of this treaty that opened this area of Minnesota to European settlement.

## ***Brief Historical Background***

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The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 followed years of broken treaties and promises to the Dakota people combined with a burgeoning white population in the state. In August 1862, when annuity payments were late and agents and traders refused to release provisions, some Dakota faced starvation. Factions attacked white settlements – the Lower Sioux Agency and Fort Ridgely – in south central and southwestern Minnesota. A significant number of Dakota were against the war and did not participate.

The fighting lasted six weeks, and 400 to 600 white civilians and soldiers were killed. The number of Dakota killed in battle is unknown. Troops under the command of former Gov. Henry Sibley were sent to support Fort Ridgely and the settlers, ultimately defeating the Dakota forces and bringing the war to a close by the end of September 1862.

After a trial by military tribunal, 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato on Dec. 26, 1862. It remains the largest mass execution in U.S. history. More than 300 Dakota men had initially been condemned to death, but President Abraham Lincoln commuted all but 39 of the sentences. Another was reprieved at the last minute because of questions about the testimony used to convict him.

Approximately 1,600 Dakota and mixed-race people at Camp Release near Montevideo were taken into U.S. Army custody. In November the prisoners (mostly women, children, the elderly, non-combatants and others who had filtered into the camp) marched six days to Ft. Snelling. There they were held over the winter of 1862-63 in an internment camp (sometimes called a concentration camp) below the fort. As many as 300 Dakota prisoners died over the winter, victims

of illness and attacks by civilians and soldiers. Eventually they were forcibly removed from the state to reservations in the Dakota Territory and what is now Nebraska. Those whose death sentences were commuted were transported to a military prison at Camp McClellan near Davenport, Iowa.

Thousands of Dakota had fled the state to Dakota Territory following the Battle of Wood Lake. Punitive expeditions into the territory in 1863 and 1864 led by Sibley and Gen. Alfred Sully, a Civil War veteran, resulted in three battles in which hundreds of Dakota were killed or forced farther westward. Although these expeditions effectively ended the war between the Dakota and the U.S. government that started in Minnesota, conflict continued in bloody battles at Fort Phil Kearney, the Little Big Horn, and finally, in 1890, at Wounded Knee.

While the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 lasted just six weeks, the issues surrounding its causes went on for decades. Its aftermath continues to affect Minnesota and the nation to this day.

<http://www.usdakotawar.org>

## ***New Board Members***

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Valley Grove welcomes two new board members: Myles Bakke is retired manager of the Carleton College Cowling Arboretum, about 160 acres of restored prairie in the lower Arb. Julie Klassen is a retired Carleton College professor of German. She taught there since 1978.

## ***In Honor Of /In Memory Of***

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Gifts have been made to VGPS in the honor of Russell Anseth, Valdine Engeseth, Gladys Hope Wallin, Rev. and Mrs. Rolf Rosenqvist, Mark Rosenqvist and Norman Rosenqvist, Pastor Olaf and Helga Hanson, Bruce Anderson, Melvin and Lulla Groff, Laura June Nelson, Helen Story, Mark Johnson, Denora Engeseth, Carla and Dean Glattly, Lawrence T. Nelson, Laura June Nelson, Tom Hill and Ruth Halvorson Okkelberg. A tree has been planted in Settlers' Grove in honor of Kari Amundsdatter.

Many thanks to those who have donated in their honor. You make it possible for Valley Grove to continue to be a Minnesota treasure.

**[www.valleygrovemn.com](http://www.valleygrovemn.com)**