

# VALLEY GROVE NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2004

By the Valley Grove

Preservation Society



## The Annual Valley Grove Country Social and Jell-O Contest, Sunday, September 19, 2004, 1-5 p.m. MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

### Country Social Features a CD Launch by Norwegian Hardanger Musician Andrea Een

Andrea Een, hardanger fiddler, will give a CD release concert at Valley Grove Church at 2 pm on Sunday, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>. Her CD, "From the Valley" was recorded in part at Valley Grove and features the happy chirping of songbirds along with the rich chords of this nine-stringed Norwegian folk instrument. Included are 15 dances, bridal marches and listening tunes from the valleys of West Norway and four original compositions. A portion of the sale of each CD will benefit the Valley Grove Preservation Society.

Andrea Een received the St. Olav Medal in 2002 from King Harald of Norway in recognition of her promotion of greater knowledge of Norwegian culture abroad. In 1998, Een was named a Master Folk Artist by the Minnesota State Arts Board and in 1987 she received the second Ole Bull Award from the Ole Bull Academy, the leading folk music school in Voss, Norway. Een, who lives in Northfield, is a professor of violin, viola and hardanger fiddle at St. Olaf College.

### See it Like It Was

The Country Social is known for relaxing, simple 19<sup>th</sup> century fun, so Bob and Cheryl Mattheis of Faribault will bring their beautiful team of percheron horses with a wagon to give free rides around our restored oak savannah. A saddle horse will be available for children to ride.

### It Wiggles, It Jiggles, It's Edible Giggles

Ladies, gentlemen, and children are encouraged to bring a Jell-O entry to the Social and compete in the silliest event of the summer, the Annual Valley Grove Jell-O Contest, which includes a classic church basement supper, pure art, and kid's divisions.

The Official Valley Grove Jell-O judges are Joan Erickson and John Louis Anderson, both seasoned veterans assessing the merits of this sophisticated cuisine, and who reserve the right to create new categories on the spot. Judging takes place at 4 p.m., after which all entries that have not melted or got too many flies on them will be eaten.

## Fundraiser Raises New Roof

Our fall 2003 fundraising letter asked for your help and you responded: the letter went to about 570 supporters, and Valley Grove was able to finish the roof because of your generous gifts. Blesener's Quality Exteriors of Northfield completed the roof in mid-April in natural cedar that matches the newly re-furnished steeple, and it is replete with updated lightning rods. Photographs of the roof will soon be seen on our web site [www.valleygrovemn.com](http://www.valleygrovemn.com).

## Valley Grove Makes the Cover

Both Valley Grove churches grace the cover of a gorgeous new book rife with color photos of Minnesota historic churches: *Churches of Minnesota* by Alan K. Lathrop, professor and curator of the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota.

Lathrop sold out of the books he brought and autographed for the Solstice Art Show. He will bring more books to sell at the Country Social. Look for his display table in the stone church near the Jell-O display. The book is \$29.95 and is published by University of Minnesota Press, with photographs

by Bob Firth. The Valley Grove photo was selected as the cover because only Valley Grove has two churches on a hilltop, said Lathrop.

## More Images of Valley Grove

*America 24/7* by Rick Smolan and David Elliott Cohen contains two night photos of Valley Grove Church, one in moonlight, taken by Minneapolis Star Tribune Photographer Brian Peterson. *America 24/7* contains photographs depicting American life selected from submissions by over 25,000 amateur and professional photographers. One of the Valley Grove photos can be seen on the MSNBC website on *America 24/7* "Reason to Believe" set to Judy Collins singing *Amazing Grace*.

## Finial Update

In order to restore the white church steeple completely to its original appearance, a replica of the original finial will be crafted and installed. Valley Grove board member emeritus John Maakestad has the original finial, which he saved in his barn after it fell over atop the steeple in the late 1970s. It will be on display at the Country Social.

## Bucktooth Prairie Predators and Other News of the Savanna

\* The yellow of the gray-headed coneflowers has been the dominant color of the savanna throughout much of the summer. In the last weeks of August, the big bluestem, wild rye, and Indian grass have gone wild (excuse the pun) in their reach for the sun, easily surpassing a 6 ft. height. Their maturing seed heads are giving the prairie a soft, hazy russet-hued appearance.

\* Hummingbirds & bees are feasting on blooming hyssop, verbain, jewelweed, and blazing star. Colonies of compass plant, bergamot, rattlesnake master, butterflyweed, and golden alexander are developing as the prairie matures.

\* A more diverse bird population has been discovering VG, beginning this spring with meadow larks, a brown thrasher, wood thrushes, white-throated sparrows, yellow-rumped warbler among others, and continuing through late summer with sightings of blue buntings, eastern kingbirds, several species of hawks, phoebes, savanna & grasshopper sparrows, and swifts. Looking at dusk from the top of the hill into the woods of the state park, you're likely to see the white flash and swoop of a hoot owl. Visitors to the VG churchyard will be kept company by robins, chipping & song sparrows and at least one

scolding wren warning you away from her nest in the evergreens. Barn swallows from the neighboring farms are teaching their second brood of fledglings to fly over the grass tops catching insects in preparation for migration.

\* The trees have thrived with summer's abundant rainfall. Several oaks were lost because of gopher damage (the roots are severed when the gophers make their burrows). Trapping was discussed as a method of control, although a more effective, long term solution may be introducing natural predators, i.e. fox, badger, weasel. A board member is discussing possibilities with a natural resource/animal rescue organization. Tree tubes have remained in place to protect against deer foraging. A spray repellent will be applied again this fall as a further safeguard.

\* Thistles have thrived and multiplied in the wet weather also. Because thistles quickly become invasive, and are on Rice County's noxious weed list, time has been spent hand cutting, spot spraying, and mowing in an effort to control them. Thanks to thistle "terminators" Ken Sahlin, Todd Lein, Eric Hope, and Peter McKinnon for their work on this project. Other invasive species that are being monitored include mares tail, reed canary grass, ragweed, and common goldenrod.

\* Trails are kept mowed for walking and reach all areas of the savanna (paths can do double duty as cross-country ski trails). Everyone is invited and encouraged to visit.

## Events and Notices

### What a 'God Jul' It Was!

Valley Grove had a packed to the rafters Christmas Eve service. Families and friends who wanted to observe the holiday the old-time way filled every seat in both the main floor and the balcony. Rev. Hugh Kaaste read Matthew in Norwegian and candles were lit for the traditional Norwegian version of Silent Night.

### Solstice Art Show

On Saturday, June 19, the St. Croix Horse and Carriage Society held a spring drive at Valley Grove, so visitors at the Solstice Art Show were able to see the site a bit of the way it was: replete with a couple in historic costume driving in a restored vintage carriage with horses.

Preservation Alliance members from the Twin Cities stopped by toward the end of the day and were given a tour of the site and a talk on its history by board member Jon Larson.

### Deaths

Valley Grove will miss Howard Segerstrom, neighbor, musician, friend and board member from the start of this organization in the 1970s. We also note with sadness the passing of

Harding Hope, Gladys (Hope) Wallin, and Ina (Quie) Bengston, friends and supporters of Valley Grove.

### Weddings

Valley Grove is a popular site for weddings, since it is charming and photogenic as well as historic. So far this year there have been four weddings and one is scheduled for this fall.

### New Board Members

Valley Grove Preservation Society is only as good as its people, and we welcome new board members who bring many talents to the board: Todd Lein, Michelle Roethler, and Marlene Halverson have agreed to serve.

### Opportunities

As always, we can use volunteers! Come out for prairie planting, weeding, and watering, church cleanups, holiday decorating, country social setups — we get a lot done in a little time amid great beauty.

Trees in the 7 scenic groves surrounding Valley Grove are available for adoption. This is a beautiful way to memorialize a loved one. Please see the Valley Grove website for details.

## Please Stay in Touch!

Contributions are always very welcome and put to good use. Write us with your Valley Grove Church reminiscences, your fund-raising 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 welcome for inclusion in our archives.