

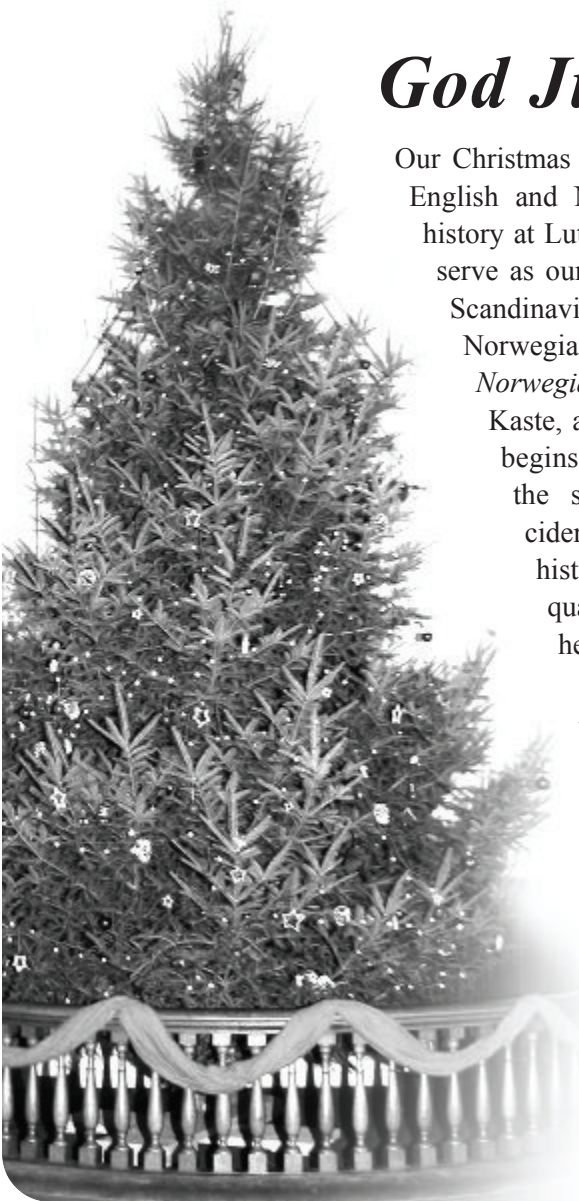


## *God Jul at Valley Grove*

Our Christmas Eve service features carol singing and the Gospel of Matthew read in English and Norwegian. The Rev. Dr. Todd Nichol, former professor of church history at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, and currently professor at St. Olaf College, will serve as our guest preacher this year. Dr. Nichol is the King Olav V Professor of Scandinavian American Studies at St. Olaf College and serves as editor of the Norwegian-American Historical Society. His most recent book is *Crossings: Norwegian-American Lutheranism as a Transatlantic Tradition*. Reverend Hugh Kaste, a VGPS board member, will serve as the liturgist for the service. Music begins at 9:45 p.m. and the service at 10 p.m. We invite everyone to stay after the service to share news, glad tidings and history and, of course, cider, coffee and holiday treats. 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 to those who have roots here and those who love and appreciate Valley Grove.

## *Badgers Sighted Near Valley Grove*

After several years of trying to find ways to reduce the pocket gopher (*Geomys bursarius*) population on the Valley Grove oak savanna restoration surrounding the churches, we are excited to hear reports of badgers in the neighborhood. Here is how things work – pocket gophers are vegetarians eating the roots of plants including some of our newly planted trees, leaving characteristic mounds of soil as they burrow from one location to the next. Badgers love to eat pocket gophers and can quickly dig them out of their burrows when they find a population. We are hoping that the Valley Grove site is their next stop. Watch for sign of badgers (slanted burrows 6-10 inches in diameter, with a characteristic mound of soil thrown out in a fan during burrowing).



## *Weddings*

There's no place like Valley Grove for a wedding: it's historic, photogenic, lovely and distinctive. The small stone church and the larger white church each have their charms. Either church is available for rent at bargain prices! Nine couples held their ceremonies at Valley Grove in 2009. If you are planning a wedding next year, contact Ken Sahlin at 507-645-8720 to reserve a date.

## *Newsletter via Internet*

Reduce mailing costs. Send your name and e-mail address to [ken@rcbmi.com](mailto:ken@rcbmi.com) and we will send the spring 2010 newsletter to you as a pdf file. (Open the pdf file with Adobe Reader, a free download).

## *Valley Grove Goes Digital*

You can now enjoy the convenience of donating online at [www.GiveMN.org](http://www.GiveMN.org). Bring up the web site and search for Valley Grove Preservation Society, then follow the menu to donate. GiveMN.org is a partner with Charities Review Council and MAP for Nonprofits. It is part of the Razoo.com network and also a 501(c)(3) supporting organization of the Minnesota Community Foundation. The entire donation will go to VGPS as credit card fees are paid by GiveMN funding partners.

## *Country Social*

The annual Country Social on September 20 featured the usual spectacular autumn weather, handsome blooming prairie and an appreciative crowd.

A photo display created by Twin Cities artist Holly Welch, wife of VGPS board member Shawn Olson, illustrated our history and restoration progress. The Rice County extension bluebird experts provided bluebird houses and information about bringing back the gems of blue. Zeman's Simple Harvest Farm brought chickens and milk goats and demonstrated milking techniques.

The Northfield music group Huttenanny played traditional Scandinavian music in the shade of the enormous oak tree. WindWorks, a woodwind quintet based in the Twin Cities and Northfield, performed in the 1894

church. WindWorks members include Kay Sahlin, flute; Dana Maeda, oboe; JoAnn Polley, clarinet; Cindy Bailey, bassoon; and Becky Jyrkas, French horn.

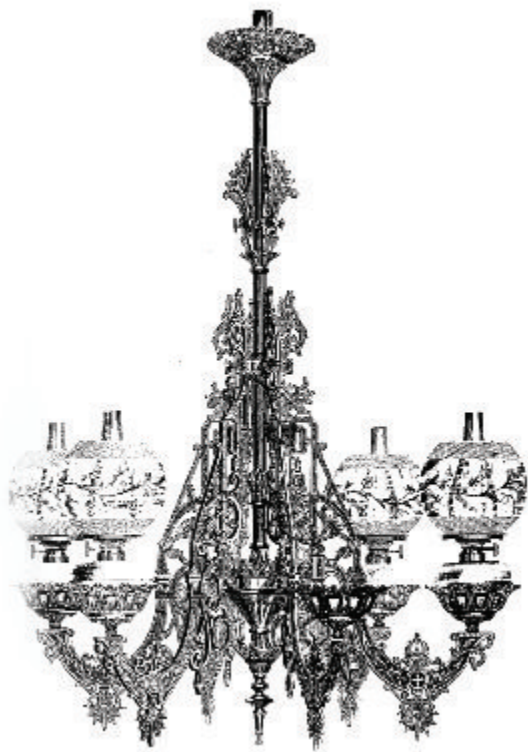
Two magnificent black percheron teams and wagons, owned by Bob Mathies of Faribault, gave rides across our thriving prairie. Prinz and Smokey, board member Karin Winegar's draft cross horses, gave rides and posed for photos with children and adventuresome adults. Maren

Schroeder, daughter of Huttenanny's Ann Schroeder, assisted with the horses.

Some lucky folks took home pieces of immigrant history when they won items in the silent auction: benches constructed by River City Builders of Nerstrand using pieces of the original pine floorboards from the 1862 stone church.

Please send us your ideas for the country social next autumn. We are excited to continue the tradition, but also happy to branch out. Send suggestions to Gary Wagenbach at Valley Grove Preservation Society, P.O. Box 75, Nerstrand MN 55053.





## ***Where are Our Chandeliers?***

When we enlarged old black and white photos of the stone church for displays at the country social, it was revealed that not one but two ornate metal chandeliers hung there. Six curving arms held six globes of kerosene or lamp oil to illuminate the services. Where are they now? We have only one or two fragments, which may have been part of the chandeliers or part of matching wall sconces. The 1862 church is almost completely restored. Bringing back the lights would be the crowning touch to this painstaking restoration. Please help us solve the mystery and bring the chandeliers home. Are they in your attic? A relative's basement or barn or rec room? If you have any leads at all, please contact us.

## ***Memorials***

A white oak has been planted in our Goldfinch Grove; it is dedicated to the memory of Lisa Hess of Des Moines, Iowa. While Lisa and her husband Joel lived in Northfield, they attended a couple of weddings at Valley Grove. After moving back to Iowa, Lisa and her mother Marilyn Hrubes happened to stop at the church one evening while a wedding was going on. The sun was setting, and the church was aglow from candles in the yard, children were playing outside, and the serenity and peaceful feeling they experience stayed with them for many years. On June 24th, 2009 Lisa passed away after battling ALS for almost 2-1/2 years.

Memorial funds were also given to celebrate the life of Janet Flicek.

## ***From the President***

Dear Friends,

We are thankful for the generosity of so many who help us continue restoring Valley Grove. Patience and persistence are paying off! We are making progress on restoration of the 1862 stone church, our main focus for the last few years and going forward. And we have been able to reduce our debt from \$86,000 to \$59,000 over 2009. We

look forward to continued debt reduction as well as funding some special projects in 2010. Next spring we will need to replace the front steps and railings of the 1894 church. Longer term goals include flooring, a decorative arch to match the original, and a replacement chandelier for the 1862 church. Its decorative graining is yet to be completed, and we are on the lookout for a bell that would be installed in the restored steeple.

With your support all these projects are possible. Please remember this special place in your financial planning knowing that your help is always welcome and appreciated.

Our Elton-Nelson Endowment Fund has a value of \$130,734 as of November 2009. This restricted fund (we can only use interest to pay expenses) is intended for support of VGPS over the long term.

Your gifts may be directed to immediate needs by giving to the 1862 Fund, which will be used to pay down our loan and help next steps in restoration. As always we would also appreciate gifts of stocks or cash to add to the Elton-Nelson Endowment Fund.

*For Valley Grove Preservation Society,  
Gary Wagenbach*

## ***Valley Grove Forever***

Valley Grove's beauty and age remind us of many things — simplicity, peace and 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 unique place. Your contributions will insure that this happens. Your tax deductible gift in any amount may be designated as a memorial or honorary tree or a donation to the 1862 Fund. If you want to consider a gift to the Elton-Nelson Endowment Fund please contact our treasurer Ken Sahlin 507-645-8720. Fifty gifts of \$1,000 will go a long way toward paying down our loan and reduce interest expenses. Tax-deductible gifts may be directed to the Valley Grove

Preservation Society, P.O. Box 75, Nerstrand  
MN 55053. Find us online at

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

# *Thank you* to Valley Grove's 2008 and 2009 donors

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**Mail to: Valley Grove Preservation Society, P.O. Box 75, Nerstrand, MN 55053**