



Valley Grove Preservation Society Newsletter

Summer 2015

A Note from our President

Your Valley Grove Preservation Society board accomplished a lot in the last year. Their dedication and contributions of time and talent were remarkable. For example, during a joint work afternoon called by the Valley Grove Cemetery Association during May, Cemetery Association and Valley Grove Preservation Society board members combined their labor to prep the grounds and cemetery for Memorial Day and the summer season. Fencing along the East, South, and West sides of the grounds was removed, softening the border between the cemetery and the surrounding prairie lands. The beautiful 19th century fencing on the North (facing the parking area) is still in place. The Cemetery Association maintains the cemetery itself, including the headstones, and does the mowing. Valley Grove Preservation Society maintains the two historic churches and the surrounding oak savanna restoration. The volunteers were rewarded with a potluck supper at the end of the afternoon.

As we look to the future, we are working with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office making preparations to refurbish the unique plastering on the exterior of the 1862 stone church. Additional projects on the horizon include replacement of the exterior steps on the east end of the stone church and replacement of the entry doors and hardware on the wood church.

Restoring the chandelier that hung in the stone church (we have some pieces of the original) would make a striking contribution at a later time. You might be interested to know that in 1895 the stone building was given to the Valley Grove Ladies Aid, the ceiling was dropped and kitchen space was added. Electricity was added in 1949.

Do visit this summer and enjoy the new look of the grounds and the magnificent summer prairie setting. And remember to attend our annual Country Social, Sunday, September 20, 2015.

See you then,

Gary Wagenbach
President
Valley Grove Preservation Society

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Country Social 2015

We hope to see you at the 2015 Country Social, Sunday, September 20, from 1-4 p.m. Music already scheduled includes Hutennanny and the Windworks Woodwind Quintet. Monarch educator Nancy Schumacher will be tagging butterflies. See the Valley Grove website: valleygrovemn.org/

Events at Valley Grove, 2014

2014 saw six wedding services at Valley Grove, two church services, our Country Social, the regional Soil and Water Conservation District meeting, and the Christmas Eve Service.



Traditional music, prairie beauty, refreshments, and old time pleasures were the heart of the annual Valley Grove Country Social 2014. Celebrated organist Theo Wee of Northfield provided a concert on the historic Valley Grove church organ that also featured a ragtime duo with DeWayne Wee on the piano. Hutennanny, the Northfield-based traditional Nordic music group, played under the historic oak. Bob Mathies and his teams of percherons gave wagon rides throughout the day. There were displays and information by bluebird and monarch butterfly educators, as well as guided walks on the restored prairie. Children had the chance to handle chickens or milk a goat from Ziemann's Simple Harvest Farm or try traditional rope making. The annual raffle of charming and/or historic objects was successful in adding to the VGPS project funds.

See more photos and article in the *Northfield News* under Valley Grove Social:

http://www.southernminn.com/northfield_news/news/article_9b9f24d1-6837-5ba3-afb0-781724c4b9d2.html

Valley Grove Social 2015: September 20, 1-4 pm

Christmas Eve at Valley Grove

Rev. John Gorder conducted the 2014 Christmas Eve Service, with music by Theo Wee (organ), Kay Sahlin (flute) and the Braaten family (voice). The service was attended by about 175 people.



Weddings

In 2015 we have four weddings scheduled. Our top year for weddings was 2006 with nine weddings.

Valley Grove Art Pieces

We have some high quality prints made from paintings of the Valley Grove site: Two landscape views by Tom Maakestad and one watercolor of the big oak tree by Bettye Olson. We will have these prints available at this year's Country Social. Proceeds will go toward our work at Valley Grove.



Gifts, memorials, donations:

John Maakestad
Neil Canon
Clifford Peter Mattso
John & Hannah Floren
Shirley Hellerud Johnson
Gladys Hope Wallin
LeRoy Sahlin
Lorraine Hanson

Joyce Schrader
Ross Shoger
Ginny Shaw
William Jarvey
Hans and Randi Rinde
Ingebrit I. and Durdei Engeseth
Henry B. & Rose Engeseth
Corrine Mase

Donation information at: <http://valleygrovemn.org/donate-get-involved/>
You can also like Valley Grove on Facebook.

What have we been up to with your donations?

2014-15 accomplishments at the site:

Window repair



Shown are composite side-by-side recent images of windows at Valley Grove. One from the stone church is on the left and one from the wood church is on the right.

The windows of the 1862 church have been in disrepair for decades. This spring we replaced 18 panes of glass with recycled glass. Windows were all primed, glazed and painted.

On the 1894 white church, six of ten windows needed to be rebuilt. For three of the windows, two stiles and the rail needed to be replaced. In rebuilding the windows, we found no windows were the same in size and very little remained square. All the original glass was saved. Three sills were rebuilt. After repairs, the windows were primed, glazed and painted. Stop by to see what you think.

Alarm System

Our alarm system installed in 1996 became unreliable, and it was more cost effective to replace it than to fix it. The staff at Custom Alarm assure us the new motion detector will not activate the system when a stray bird or bat flies past.

Architectural Study

Last January a stock from our endowment fund (donated by Sylvia Nelson) was acquired by another business. The result was that we received additional unexpected money. With this funding, we were able to hire the firm of MacDonald & Mack Architects, Ltd. to do a study of the exterior plaster of the 1862 stone church. This study is required as part of a grant request to the MN Historical Society Legacy program.

The architects are coordinating the testing of the plaster, researching appropriate treatments, doing construction drawings and developing detailed construction specifications. If we are fortunate to receive a Legacy Grant, the above information will be used in the bidding selection process. We hope the architectural study will help us come closer to restoring the unique stucco on the 1862 stone church.

Valley Grove Preservation Society Board, April 2015

Myles Bakke

Jennifer Cox Johnson

Andy Franklin

John Gorder

Marlene Halverson

Julie Klassen, Secretary

Michelle Roethler

Ken Sahlin, Treasurer

Lee Skaar

Gary Stromley

Gary Wagenbach,
President

Karin Winegar

Valley Grove and Grace Cemetery Board, May 2015

Blair Baalson, Sexton

Gary Bonde, Secretary/
Treasurer

John Hellerud

John Radtke

Travis Roethler

Mark Severson

Ken Vesledahl, President

Prairie Burn, Spring 2015

A managed burn of 17 of the 50 acres owned by Valley Grove Preservation Society was done by Prairie Restorations, Inc., on April 3, 2015, with financial assistance from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.



Prairie Notes by Myles Bakke:

Managing with Fire

Seventeen acres of Valley Grove prairie were put to the torch in April, leaving a blackened landscape as counterpoint to the waving beauty of the adjoining dry thatch of the previous year's growth. The burn area, a month later, became a lush field of green with golden alexander already blooming in great profusion. In the unburned portion of the prairie, the new growth amongst the dead grass looked drab and messy by comparison. A prairie after a burn is beautiful, faster growing, flowers more abundantly, and has a fresh rejuvenated aspect that makes one wonder why we don't burn the whole thing every year. Most people are aware that fire was naturally occurring on prairie and good for its overall health. They may not be aware that the Plains Indians often set fires to improve the grazing for their horses and to attract the bison herds. So why don't we burn more of it and with greater frequency?....

An Arboreal Mystery

First, let me say that often what biologists find interesting, or even engrossing, are things that much of society simply finds gross. It was probably a biologist's spouse that came up with the dictum: "You can clean them up, and dress them up, you just can't take them to dinner." That said, and heaven forefend that I repel my readers, but when my friend and fellow board member Julie Klassen sent me an email with an accompanying photograph, I was more than a little intrigued. She and a friend had been out for a prairie walk at Valley Grove on a cold November day, when they came upon a weird and mysterious situation. Wedged between the branches of a small bur oak tree, about six feet off the ground, was the body of a small strange-looking mammal. Its face was coated in ice from a recent freezing rain, and the nearly three-quarter inch claws of its front feet gave it an unearthly spectral appearance. The body was six or seven inches long, and its skinny sparsely furred tail added another three inches to the overall length.....

Read more about fire ecology and the arboreal mystery by visiting the Valley Grove website for the complete stories: <http://valleygrovemn.org/>

New Board Member Elected: Welcome John Gorder

Annual elections at the May board meeting brought us a new member in addition to the current eleven members. We are delighted to welcome John Gorder of Northfield for the open three-year position beginning April 2015. John is already known to our community as the pastor for the Valley Grove Christmas Eve service on several occasions (including 2013 and 2014). An ordained minister who studied at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, John held varied positions in interesting places: Interim Pastor and Interim Associate Pastor at St. Olaf College (2012-2014), pastor at Augustana Lutheran Church, Hyde Park-Chicago, Illinois (1999-2011), and Director of Church Relations/Associate Pastor at St. Olaf College (1993-1999). A Wisconsin native, John began his career as a missionary from 1969-1993 in Papua, New Guinea, then in the Central African Republic and in Nigeria. Now that he is retired, we look forward to his work with us. Among his other interests, John also enjoys spending time on carpentry projects in his wood-working shop.