

Valley Grove *News*

WINTER 2011



Photo by Diane Halverson

Dear Friends of Valley Grove Preservation Society,

The harvest in the Valley Grove neighborhood was aided this fall by drier than normal conditions. Rain has been absent these past months except for the light mist we received on the Sunday of our country social. A mixed blessing? Maybe. But the gathering of friends and family that day continues to provide us with a sense of gratitude for that which we are given.

This fall two sisters from the Hellerud clan generously donated two lamps from the original chandelier that once hung in the 1862 church. We are very grateful to Shirley Hellerud Johnson and Paul Johnson and to Eileen Hellerud Sarber. I had the pleasure of meeting the three of them, along with more of their family, as they delivered the lamps.

Another benchmark for Valley Grove takes place next year. In 2012, the stone church, built in 1862, will be 150 years old! We are looking forward to celebrating its sesquicentennial. One goal we've set for ourselves is to pay off the remaining \$11,000 debt while continuing to move ahead on improvements and repairs still needing attention.

A big part of continued improvements and maintenance depend upon the gifts we receive from each of you. Your financial contributions are tax deductible and can be made in the form of memorials, donations to our 1862 Fund or by requesting the purchase of an honorary tree for the prairie/savannah restoration project. We also encourage you to consider a gift to the Elton-Nelson Endowment Fund that plays an important role in our ongoing efforts toward preserving and enhancing the Valley Grove site. Please send your contribution to: Valley Grove Preservation Society, P.O. Box 75, Nerstrand, MN 55053 or contact Ken Sahlin (507) 649-1227 with questions regarding your gift.

**We look forward to seeing you at the Christmas Eve service.
Blessings to you and yours this holiday season!**

For the Valley Grove Preservation Society,
Todd Lein, President





God Jul at Valley Grove

Our Christmas Eve service features carol singing and the Gospel of Matthew read in English and often Norwegian. The Rev. John Gorder will serve as our guest preacher this year. A lovely decorated tree donated by Don Nelson will grace the sanctuary. Live music begins at 9:45 p.m. and the service at 10 p.m. concluding with the candlelight singing of "Silent Night" in Norwegian. We invite everyone to stay afterwards 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 is always a highlight of the holiday season for those who have roots here and those who love and appreciate Valley Grove.

Weddings

There is no place like Valley Grove for a wedding: it is historic, photogenic, deeply lovely and distinctive. The small stone church and the larger white church each have their charms. And either or both are available to rent for a fee that is a bargain for the setting and atmosphere! If you are planning nuptials next year, please contact Ken Sahlin (507) 649-1227 or ken@rcbmi.com to reserve a date.

Country Social

The annual Sunday Country Social on September 18 attracted a smaller crowd than usual thanks to a blustery day. A display of large images and text created by Twin Cities artist Holly Welch, wife of VGPS board member Shawn Olson, illustrated our history and the restoration progress. The Rice County chapter of the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota provided bluebird houses and information on bringing back the gems of blue. Zeman's Simple Harvest Farm brought milk goats and demonstrated milking techniques. The Northfield music group Hutennanny played traditional Scandinavian music in the balcony of the stone church. Rope making delighted kids and adults alike. All afternoon 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. The Lars Skjervheim Spelemannslag, a St. Olaf College student hardanger group directed by Andrea Een, provided lively and sweet Norwegian fiddle music.



Valley Grove via Internet

Reduce mailing costs for us and save paper. Simply send your name and e-mail address to ken@rcbmi.com and we will send newsletters to you as a pdf file readable using Adobe Reader, which you can obtain as a free download.

Valley Grove Gets Digital

You can now enjoy the convenience of donating online at 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 donation will go to VGPS.

In Honor Of /In Memory Of

Seventy-five people attended a concert and memorial to longtime Northfield resident Helen Story, 93, at Valley Grove on October 16, 2001. A St. Olaf College graduate and English teacher, Helen traveled the world and loved the arts. An oak tree will be planted on the savannah around the churches in her honor. For a more details about Helen, visit the Northfield News obituaries page.

A tree will be planted in our Bluestem Grove in honor of Miles Graydon Giroux by his grandparents VGPS board member Jennifer Cox Johnson and Bill Johnson. Miles was born June 1, 2011.

David Otterness gave a gift to honor his mother, Margery Otterness. Doris (Hope) Meyer gave a gift in honor of her parents Harold and Gertrude Hope. Joan and Dale Nelson made a gift in honor of Matthew Nelson and Rueben Nelson.

Trees from Leif

Knecht's Nurseries and Landscaping of Northfield is generously collaborating with Valley Grove to provide and plant large young oaks at a reduced price to replace those lost to gophers on our prairie. Thanks to owner Leif Knecht for his assistance in re-foresting this land. And thanks to Gary Wagenbach and Ken Sahlin for hauling water to nourish the trees.

www.valleygrovemn.com

Our Wish List

Help celebrate and complete this touching and historic place by joining us in continuing to bring it back to its original splendor. We'd like to complete the restoration of the stone church for 2012 sesquicentennial. To do that our wish includes: burning our mortgage, restoring the carved arch, installing new floors, re-assembling the chandelier and replacing the long lost lime dashing on the exterior.

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) 649-1227. Ten gifts of \$500 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, or online at www.GiveMN.org.

