



VALLEY GROVE PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 2021

<https://valleygrovemn.org/>

Valley Grove Historic Place

is registered with the *National Park Service*

COUNTRY SOCIAL CANCELLED AGAIN

The Valley Grove Preservation Society Board regrets having to cancel the Sunday Country Social for a second year due to the risks that COVID presents to large gatherings of people. The board hopes that in September 2022 Valley Grove supporters, friends and enthusiasts will gather again to enjoy one another's company over coffee and cake, ride on the horse-drawn wagon over the oak savanna, and listen to the lively tunes of Hütenänny. Until then, stay healthy!

AUTUMN ALTERNATIVES

Hikes in the oak savanna, picnics in the cemetery, and dog walks on the prairie (*and* picking up after your pets, please) are all favorite activities that everyone can enjoy even without a Country Social. Watch for updates on the website and email announcements about small group activities that may include prairie walk-n-talks. If you document your alternative adventure, share your photos on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ValleyGrovePreservationSociety/>.



FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD *by Gary Wagenbach*



The twelve-member Preservation board continues to care for the Valley Grove churches and the surrounding beautiful prairie and oak savanna. Facing the challenges in 2020, including meeting remotely and several canceled events, the board completed landscaping around the churches in the fall 2020. Managed burns were planned during the fall and completed this spring on an eastern 15-acre plot. Hard-working volunteers planted 300 wildflower seedlings in the flower garden surrounding the cemetery. The cemetery itself is well cared for by the Valley Grove Cemetery Association.

Frequent visitors come from near and far, and many walkers have made use of the oak savanna trails during the pandemic. This summer and fall four weddings, a memorial service, and a summer worship service were scheduled.

In memory of board member **Gary Stromley** (1949-2021) the Valley Grove Preservation Society has dedicated a bur oak. Gary was a good friend, and the board celebrates his friendship and his years of service to the Society. As a contributing board member, Gary was an energetic field worker on the prairie and oak savanna surrounding our site, and dedicated to caring for the historic church buildings. We miss his friendly and joyful presence among us.

Newly elected board members (see bios below) are contributing their much-appreciated time and effort. Volunteer labor to care for the surrounding land occurs during the summer and shoulder seasons, with occasional help from professionals, such as the prairie burns. Land care involves removing invasive weeds from the prairies, trail mowing, and monitoring new wildflower plantings. The rewards? Enjoying the breathtaking vistas plus wildflowers, birds, and butterflies, and an occasional sunset. Come and see for yourself!



YOUR SUPPORT

Your **continued financial support of the Valley Grove Preservation Society** makes all of our preservation and restoration efforts possible. Every dollar goes to the care and improvement of this special and sacred place. For more information: <https://valleygrovemn.org/donate/> or send to PO Box 75, Nerstrand, Minnesota 55053. Thank you!

Memorial donations received between 1 August 2020 and 31 July 2021 in honor of Andrew & Lena Engeseth (grandparents), Robert Engeseth Davis (brother), Hazel Seversin Castilo (childhood friend), Marlene Hustad Engstrom, Catie Webb (honor her short life), Gertrude Halverson (longtime supporter of VGPS), and Carol Rosenqvist Knutson (last of the Rosenqvist children, Rev Rolf Rosenqvist 1921-1946 was the second longest serving pastor of Valley Grove).

You can always find news, photos, and updates on events at <https://valleygrovemn.org>.

BOARD MEMBERS

Three of the new board members, elected at the April 2021 annual meeting, describe themselves and their connection to Valley Grove:

- **Ed Muniak** who is an 8th grade science teacher at Northfield Middle School. Ed moved with his wife and daughter from Northfield to rural Nerstrand 7 years ago. They were drawn to this area by the prairie and big woods. As a new member of the VGPS board, Ed is excited to learn more about and help preserve the natural and human history of this area. In his spare time, Ed enjoys running, reading, gardening and walking his dog.
- **Shawn Nuebel** was born and raised in the country near Valley Grove, where his family still has a hobby farm. He spends his weekdays working on databases, and his free time reading, being a dad to his two rapidly-growing-up sons, and enjoying nature, often with his girlfriend on the Valley Grove prairie. He is interested in exploring the rich history of Valley Grove and ensuring that it remains available for the future. Maintenance of the prairie is a long-term goal.
- **Carl Stortz** and his wife Heather live with their 2 young children just north of Valley Grove. Valley Grove is the first thing they see every sunrise and the last thing each sunset. They moved to the area about 4 years ago from Northfield. Carl and his family enjoy spending time hiking on the prairie and picnicking at Valley Grove. He joined the board to help in any way he can, but specifically to provide manual labor to make the place beautiful for everyone. His other hobbies include archery, hiking, backpacking, camping, bowhunting, and golf.

Board members 2021-2022 include Gary Wagenbach, president; Ken Sahlin, treasurer; Michelle Roethler, secretary; Maren Brogger, Jennifer Cox Johnson, Marlene Halverson, Margit Johnson, Rene Koester, Ed Muniak, Shawn Nuebel, Christine Sartor and Carl Stortz. Ken Vesledahl, President of the Valley Grove Cemetery Board serves ex officio as the liaison between the Cemetery Board and the Valley Grove Preservation Board.

NEW AND ONGOING PROJECTS



- **Nordic Arts project** – Valley Grove is one of 17 church sites in the Upper Midwest chosen by Partners for Sacred Places (PSP) for its Nordic Churches Project. We received a \$9,500 grant from PSP to commission Minneapolis weaver Robbie LaFleur to design and weave four tapestries in the traditional Norwegian *billedvev* style. The tapestries will illustrate the history of the church, its congregation, and the flora and fauna surrounding Valley Grove. LaFleur will offer demonstration lectures at Valley Grove occasionally during the grant cycle, which ends in May 2022. Watch her creative process on her blog <https://robbielafleur.com> under the heading “Valley Grove Tapestries” (Photos from Robbie LaFleur’s blog post).



- **Written Publication - 50 Year History of the Valley Grove Preservation Society**
Historian Jeff Sauvé researched and documented the past 50 years of preservation and refurbishment efforts by the nonprofit group now known as the Valley Grove Preservation Society. Stayed tuned for a book with some of the stories, to be published fall 2021.
- **Film Documentary - Valley Grove and Regional Historical Documentary Project**
Filmmakers Paul Krause Associates are creating a one-hour documentary film about Valley Grove, including the remarkable and successful efforts of community members to save the churches from demolition in the 1970s, the growing importance of Valley Grove to the community, and the continuing preservation efforts.

UPCOMING EVENTS *(check website for updates)*



September 11, 2021: Wedding
 October 2, 2021: Wedding
 October 16, 2021: Family retreat
 December 24, 2021: Christmas Eve
 Service, 10 pm, music starts 9:45 pm
 July 16, 2022: Memorial Service
 July 23, 2022: Wedding

Please keep in touch via our website, email or Facebook, or US mail.
 More up-to-date information on events and changes are on our website
 and our Facebook page at
<https://www.facebook.com/ValleyGrovePreservationSociety/>

We love hearing from you and sharing your photos and memories too,
 so please contact us. If you are willing to receive your newsletter through email,
 please send us your email address.

Send to:
info@valleygrovemn.org
 or by US mail at
 PO Box 75, Nerstrand, MN 55053

Many thanks!

