



## VALLEY GROVE PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER, Spring 2022

<https://valleygrovemn.org>;

Valley Grove Historic Place

is registered with the *National Park Service*

### SPRING AND SUMMER AT VALLEY GROVE

The upcoming seasons promise opportunities to explore the outdoors and gather with others to enjoy music, Norwegian tapestry weavings, and stories. On quiet days you can hike the oak savanna and the adjacent Prairie Creek Scientific and Natural Area. Add the following public gatherings to your spring and summer calendar:

- **Thursday, April 21, 7:30 PM, Annual meeting** of the Valley Grove Preservation Society in the Wooden Church; masks required.
- **Thursday, April 28, 7 PM**, author and historian **Jeff Sauvé** reads from his book *VGPS: History & Highlights*, at the Rice County Historical Society building, 1814 2nd Ave NW in Faribault.
- **Sunday, May 15, 2-4 PM, Syttende Mai Celebration** (two days before May 17, Norwegian Constitution Day) with live hardangar fiddle music and the **opening exhibit** of Robbie LaFleur's Norwegian tapestries in the Stone Church.
- **July 20, 12:15-12:45 PM**, Valley Grove joins the **Northfield Noon Organ Recital** series with organist Richard Collman at the keyboard in the Wooden Church.
- **Sunday, September 18, 1-4 PM, Country Social**; we are hoping to restart this well-loved event in 2022; more details in the fall newsletter.



### FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD *by Gary Wagenbach*

Our VGPS board is busy thinking through ongoing challenges and opportunities to care for, enjoy, celebrate, learn from, and cherish memories associated with the Valley Grove Historic Place. Our attention during the long winter was focused on care of our historic buildings, long range planning, and organizing.

We are anticipating the warmer shoulder season events mentioned above. Be sure to join us as you are able. There are many opportunities to gather, celebrate, and walk the prairie as it begins to unfold and prepare for summer glory. As is always the case, we would love to hear from you. Email a message to [info@valleygrovemn.org](mailto:info@valleygrovemn.org) or send a note to VGPS, PO Box 75, Nerstrand, MN 55053.

## NORWEGIAN *BILLEDVEV* TAPESTRIES



With a grant from the Partners for Sacred Places, Valley Grove Preservation Society has commissioned Minneapolis weaver Robbie LaFleur to create four unique tapestries. She documents her work on her blog <https://robbielafleur.com>. She completed the first of four tapestries with the bur oak as the centerpiece surrounded by animals, both domestic and wild, that were known to the Norwegian settlers who built the Valley Grove churches. In her

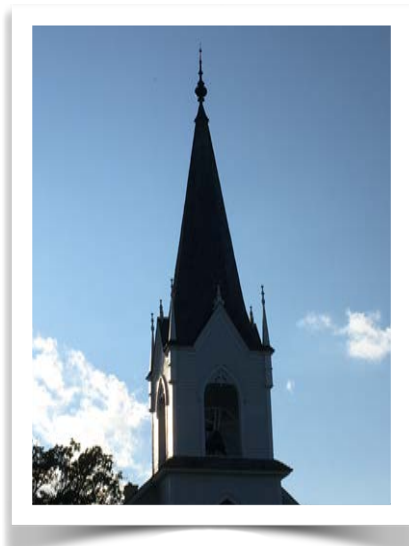
blog she debated whether to include the words “Valley Grove,” since the weavings will be hanging in the Stone Church at Valley Grove. She gave herself the nod, however, when she realized that the tapestries will become a traveling exhibit during the winter months when the Stone Church is closed.

The first off-site exhibit will be at the Nordic Center in Duluth in late fall 2022. If you know of a public exhibit space (library, museum, school, senior center, etc.) where the tapestries could be exhibited, contact board member Margit Johnson at [johnson.margit@gmail.com](mailto:johnson.margit@gmail.com).



**Be sure to see the tapestries in the Stone Church on Sunday, May 15, 2-4 PM when Robbie will be demonstrating the tapestry weaving technique and answering questions about her designs.**

*(Photos from Robbie LaFleur's blog)*

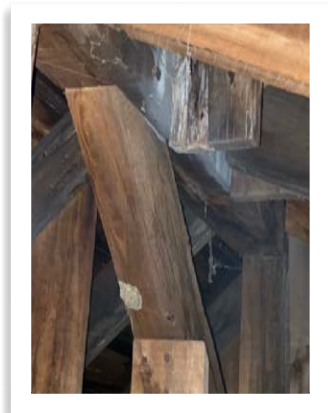


### THE STEEPLE, AGAIN

The **Wooden Church's steeple** was built in 1894. With the help of strong horses, an elaborate pulley system and a lot of elbow grease, the bell, which had been housed in the Stone Church's belfry since 1875, was hoisted over to the new steeple. The bell called Valley Grove's congregation to Sunday services and funerals for generations. On July 5, 1911 the steeple was struck by lightning, requiring \$90 in repairs. It held up well for 81 years until more repairs were needed in 1992 to the tune of \$4,500. Ten years later major renovations were made including new wood finials. In 2005 a new rubber roof was installed beneath the bell to slow the rain and snow that seep into the steeple. The bell's wheel was replaced in 2016, and more repairs added up to \$6,800. You can see the trend. This iconic landmark, open to the elements all year round, needs still more repair work soon.

Structural beams are showing signs of rot. The delicate 20-year old finials need restoration. The bell requires more support.

Your **continued financial support** will be essential for these repairs. 100% of your donations go to the care and improvement of this special and sacred place, including the steeple. For more information: <https://valleygrovemn.org/donate/> or send to PO Box 75, Nerstrand, Minnesota 55053. Thank you!



## ROASTING DOUGHNUTS!

Doughnut lovers gathered around warm fire pits on a wintery Saturday, January 8 to roast doughnut holes and enjoy one another's company. Because the Christmas Eve service was canceled for a second year due to Covid, roasting doughnut holes outdoors seemed like the next best way to gather. Doughnut hole enthusiasts of all ages, including one of Valley Grove Preservation Society's founders Bobbie Maakestad and young Ivar Johnson with his grandfather Rene Koester, turned their doughnut holes slowly to warm the insides and crisp (but *not* burn) the outsides.



## NEWS FOR BUTTERFLIES AND POLLINATORS

About two hundred prairie wildflower seedlings such as asters, gentian, milkweed, and sneezeweed will be added to the Valley Grove prairie edge close to the cemetery grounds. We have ordered seedlings from the Rice Soil and Water Conservation District: <https://www.riceswcdonlinestore.com/native-plants-1>. Planting will happen mid-June 2022. *If you wish to order your own seedlings from this same source, do so prior to April 22, 2022.* Volunteers will be needed to help plant mid-June. Contact Gary [gwagenba@gmail.com](mailto:gwagenba@gmail.com) or text to 507-301-4331 to join the planting team.

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

**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, 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.

## VALLEY GROVE IN PRINT

*Valley Grove Preservation Society: History and Highlights*

Historian Jeff Sauvé researched and documented the history of preservation and refurbishment efforts by the nonprofit group now known as the Valley Grove Preservation Society. His book, filled with delightful stories, was published in the fall 2021. Copies may be requested from VGPS (available for \$15) or purchased at the Northfield or Rice County Historical Museum shops.



### UPCOMING EVENTS in 2022 *(check website for updates)*

- April 21, 7:30 PM, Annual Meeting
- April 28, 7 PM, Historian Jeff Sauvé tells stories about Valley Grove at the Rice County Historical Society, Faribault
- May 15, 2-4 PM, Syttende Mai Celebration and opening exhibit of Norwegian *billedvev* tapestries
- July 3, 10:30 AM, 1st UCC Sunday service, open to all
- July 20, 12:15-12:45 PM, Noon Organ Recital
- July 16: Memorial Service
- July 23: Wedding
- September 18, 1-4 PM: Country Social

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 <https://valleygrovemn.org>.

We love hearing from you and sharing your photos and memories too.

Share your photos on our Facebook page,

<https://www.facebook.com/ValleyGrovePreservationSociety/>

If you are willing to receive your newsletter through email, please send us your email address.

Send to:

[info@valleygrovemn.org](mailto:info@valleygrovemn.org)

or by US mail at PO Box 75,  
Nerstrand, MN 55053

**Many thanks!**

