



# VALLEY GROVE PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024

<https://valleygrovemn.org>;

Valley Grove Historic Place is registered with the National Park Service

Before we get to the **Big Restoration News** below, be sure to add these public events to your spring and summer calendars:

- **Thursday, April 18, 7:30 PM, Annual meeting** of the Valley Grove Preservation Society at Dennison's Fireside Lounge.
- **Sunday, June 23, 2-4 PM, Valley Grove Weddings Celebration** for anyone who has been married at Valley Grove; coffee, goodies, music, and stories!
- **Wednesday, August 7, 12:15-12:45 PM, Valley Grove joins the Northfield Noon Organ Recital** series in the wooden church; organist Noah Klein.
- **Sunday, September 15, 1-4 PM, Country Social**; more details in the fall newsletter.

## THE BIG RESTORATION NEWS OF 2024

In January River City Builders and Millworks Inc. began much-needed work on the wooden church steeple. Twenty-five years ago RCBMI restored the steeple in the building's first round of major renovations. Wind, rain, and freezing temperatures have all taken their bite out of the steeple and the beams that hold the bell in place. With deep gratitude for several significant estate gifts and other generous donations, the VGPS board is able to make the necessary repairs to preserve the iconic church steeple with RCBMI's skills and longer-lasting modern building materials. With repairs beyond the steeple that have been uncovered during construction - the east steeple window, the sill plate to the right of the front door, the interior balcony posts, etc. - additional funds will be needed to cover the total cost of restoration. See "Your Donations" on page two for more information.



*Photo: Dan Rogness*

Because the area is an active construction site through the end of May, the board postponed the annual February Doughnut Hole Roast and the Syttende Mai celebration until 2025, and they moved the April annual meeting to the Dennison Fireside Lounge.

## SUMMER SPECIAL EVENTS

**Valley Grove Weddings:** Were you married at Valley Grove? Come celebrate with other Valley Grove couples on **Sunday afternoon, June 23, 2-4 PM** with coffee, goodies, some of your photos and your stories to share. Bring your family and friends to show them where it all began!



**Northfield Noon Organ Recital:** The organ has been repaired once again and will sound beautiful on **Wednesday, August 7, 12:15-12:45 PM** in the wooden church; organist Noah Klein will be performing; the windows will be open with the summer breezes wafting through the church .



**FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD, *Michelle Roethler***

In the fall my husband and I had the amazing opportunity to celebrate our daughter's wedding at Valley Grove. It was an unforgettable day to be able to walk our daughter down the aisle to start her next chapter! As many of you know, Valley Grove holds a special place in my family as well as in the hearts of so many others.

Over the years our preservation board has taken great care in managing the prairie and the upkeep of both churches. If you have been out to visit our special spot you may have seen that the 1894 church steeple is under some construction. Our decision to begin construction was timely as we ended up uncovering other deteriorating structural components in addition to the original project that we were concerned about. As this project progresses we will be sure to keep everyone updated on the repairs and construction. Thank you for your continued support of our mission to refurbish, restore, and maintain Valley Grove!

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**Board members 2023-2024** include Michelle Roethler, president; Gary Wagenbach, vice president; Ken Sahlin, treasurer; Margit Johnson, secretary; Rene Koester, Ed Muniak, Shawn Nuebel, Tedd Pederson, Dirk Peterson, Dan Rogness, Shannon Scheill, and Maren Wasner. Ken Vesledahl, President of the Valley Grove Cemetery Board serves ex officio as the liaison between the Cemetery Board and the Valley Grove Preservation Society Board.

**YOUR DONATIONS**

Your donations have made everything at Valley Grove possible, starting in 1975 when the Valley Grove Preservation Society was founded to save the wooden church from becoming a practice burn for the Nerstrand Fire Department. Your monetary gifts totaling over \$572,000 have funded building renovations, repairs and prairie restoration for 25 years. The 50-acre restored oak savanna surrounding Valley Grove was spared from becoming a residential development in 2001, thanks to your generosity.

The board continues to look for opportunities to restore and preserve the buildings and surrounding prairie. Your donations make that possible. If you are over 73, consider directing part or all of your annual Required Minimum Deposit (RMD) to Valley Grove as a tax-free donation. If you are making estate plans, consider designating Valley Grove as a beneficiary. If you are under 12 years old, consider donating one week's allowance to help support the repair of the steeple and more. Thanks to our friends of *all* ages for making Valley Grove possible!



## FINALLY, CHRISTMAS EVE 2023!



We postponed our traditional Christmas Eve service for two years due to Covid and again in 2022 due to -10° temperatures (even though the tree was decorated and ready to go!). The Christmas Eve service returned in 2023 to a church full of friends and families. Thanks to Leif Knecht for another beautiful tree, and to John Gordor, master decorator, krumkaka provider for

board members who helped decorate the tree, and leader of the service. We look forward to sharing many more years of this seasonal tradition.



## ON THE ROAD AGAIN



The Valley Grove tapestries, woven by Robbie LaFleur, are back on the road during the “off” season. They traveled to North Waseca Lutheran Church in November where numerous parishioners there have Valley Grove family connections. Now the tapestries are on display at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Northfield from March 17-April 28 before they pack up again and return to the Stone Church at Valley Grove for their summer season. Visitors to St. John’s can see the tapestries weekdays during regular office hours and on Sundays before and after church services. Weaver Robbie LaFleur will speak on Sunday, April 28 at 9:45 AM about the tapestries. Everyone is welcome!

These traveling exhibits continue the intent to share the Valley Grove story with the wider community, as outlined in the grant we received from the Partners for Sacred Places to commission the tapestries.



More up-to-date information on events and changes are on our updated website <https://valleygrovemn.org>. We love hearing from you and sharing 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!**