

# Valley Grove Newsletter

Spring 2007



*By the Valley Grove Preservation Society*



## Restoring the Old Stone Church

Even though we had not raised enough to repair the roof of the old 1862 stone church AND the steeple, the VGPS board voted to at least fix the roof because it was in such sorry shape. This work was completed in March by River City Builders of Nerstrand. However, the inspections conducted while doing the re-roof showed that the steeple has deteriorated further than expected. So at the annual meeting in April, it was decided to start repairs on the steeple in winter 2008 using money from the general fund.

The northeast corner of the steeple is rotten as is the column supporting it right down to the ground. To have it structurally re-worked and brought back to the original appearance will cost approximately \$70,000. We are over half way to that goal, and need to raise just over \$30,000. You can view images of the proposed restorations on the

web site at [www.valleygrovemn.com](http://www.valleygrovemn.com) under What's New. Once this is done, our 145 year old stone church should be good for another century or so.

We have been very fortunate that so many have given money to our trust fund. This will ensure an ongoing capability for care and maintenance of the buildings on site. However, trust funds are for long-term needs and legally cannot be tapped for a short-term project like a steeple repair. There will be an ongoing need to raise more money to complete the restoration of the stone church, but most of the rest of these projects can be completed as money arrives. The rebuilding of the steeple, however, is as close to an emergency as these things get. So if you can contribute to this effort, please indicate that the money is intended for steeple repair.

## **Vive la Tour de Nerstrand!**

Valley Grove served as starting and finish line for a regional bike race held Saturday, April 14. The first annual Starleton Spring Classic with cyclists from St. Olaf and Carleton College attracted 83 riders.

The event included a road race with collegiate categories and a team time trial and an out and back course where members of the same team worked to set the fastest time against the clock. Milltown Cycles bike shop in Faribault were sponsors of the race.

It's a beautiful site and it worked out well being able to be indoors in the white church for registration," said Sean Noonan, junior at Carleton, one of the organizers with Jake Boyce, a junior at St. Olaf. "It's a beautiful area in general, and you can see the churches from the other side of the course."

## **Horses at Valley Grove**

The St. Croix Horse and Carriage Society (founded 1973) will hold a meet at Valley Grove on Sunday, May 6. The club, whose members drive their new or restored antique carriages, gigs, wagons, phaetons, surreys and other vehicles throughout the year, hitch up at noon and drive off at 1 p.m. then return to the parking lot for a tailgate. If the weather is not cooperative, they end up lunching inside the white church where they sometimes play the organ as well, which the horses also appreciate.

Valley Grove board member Karin Winegar, who drives a Percheron-Morgan team, will host the event. Outriders on horseback and non-members of the clubs are welcome to bring horses and rigs and join the group. Contact Ken and Kathy LeTourneau at (651) 430-1739 for details.

## **...Where Root Munching Varmints Get Trapped**

We still have a major gopher problem. Over the winter we lost some of our oak trees because they are very tasty to these critters. Some trapping has been done but other solutions are welcome. Badgers, anyone?

## **And Always in the Fall**

The annual Valley Grove fall country social—live music and song (sometimes in Norwegian), horse-drawn wagon rides, cordial milk goats, prairie walks, organ singalong, etc., will take place September 23. Save the date, bring the kids and grandparents and cameras and enjoy life as it was and ought to be.

## **Hougens and Then Some**

The Hougen family has deep roots at Valley Grove and in the land around it, including some Veblen connections. And Janice Hougen, wife of late board member Dick Hougen, invites everyone who loves Valley Grove to celebrate life and its golden years with her family on Sunday, May 25 at 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Valley Grove.

There will be refreshments, hymn singing with the organ, an acoustic sing and play along (bring your own instruments or voices), prairie and cemetery walks. The church bell will ring and the restoration plans for the 1862 stone church will be on display. If you'd like to stay for a light supper beginning at 5:30 p.m. please reply by May 18th to Jan (612) 724-5080, Laurie (507) 334-3335 or Janet (612) 721-3576.

## **Trees Dedicated on our Prairie...**

Since our last newsletter, the following gifts have been turned into living trees: The family of T. K. Gudmestad dedicated a tree to his memory in Prairie Rose Grove.

Last Christmas the Rolf Rosenqvist family of New Hampshire gave their father a tree. Together the Rosenqvists are composing a dedication to be posted on our web site. This tree will be known as the Rosenqvist family tree.

## **In Memoriam**

The following friends and members have passed since last December: Lois Soren Kaul, Nancy Bonde, Lenora (Lee) Christie Hauer, and Gerry D. Nystuen.

## **Call for Wedding Photos**

We would like to have a collection of photographs of weddings held at Valley Grove over the years. We do have a few already spanning from May 13, 1885 to September 23, 2006. Please send or e-mail us your photo, especially if it shows the setting. The photos and your Valley Grove wedding thoughts will be posted in the wedding section of our web site. [www.valleygrovemn.com](http://www.valleygrovemn.com)

## **Valley Grove in the Long Run**

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 place. Your contributions will insure that this happens. Tax-deductible gifts may be directed to the Valley Grove Preservation Society P.O. Box 75, Nerstrand MN 55053