

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT
For the

VALLEY GROVE CHURCHES
Nerstrand, Minnesota

prepared for the

VALLEY GROVE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

prepared by

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Robert Mack, Rita Goodrich, and Katie Kangas of MacDonald & Mack conducted the on-site investigation and evaluation of the buildings, with Mr. Mack serving as Principal-in-Charge. Ms. Goodrich prepared the technical sections of this report, and Douglas Mack of MacDonald & Mack wrote the historical overview.

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- Jens Eldal
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- Gary Wagenbach
- Linda Wagenbach

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PROJECT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

<i>Location:</i>	The Valley Grove Churches are located outside of Nerstrand, Minnesota.
<i>National Register of Historic Places Status:</i>	Listed on April 6, 1982.
<i>Methodology:</i>	<p>Field survey investigations were conducted during Fall 2012 and May of 2013 and in order to inventory, record and analyze the provenance and physical condition of architectural and structural features of the Churches.</p> <p>Documentary investigations were also conducted by volunteers of the Valley Grove Preservation Society, whose work included extensive research (and translation) of documents held at the Norwegian American Heritage Association archives at Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.</p>
<i>Project Participants:</i>	<p>MacDonald and Mack Architects, Ltd. located in Minneapolis, Minnesota led the project. Robert Mack served as Principal Architect-in-Charge. Staff members Rita Goodrich, Douglas Mack and Katie Kangas had major roles in on-site investigations, documentary research, building analysis, and report writing and drawing production.</p> <p>Project volunteers from the Valley Grove Preservation Society included Kenneth Sahlin, Dagfinn Moe, John Quam, Julie Klassen, Mary Jones, Jens Eldal, Ken Vesledahl, Gary Wagenbach, and Linda Wagenbach</p>

PART 1: DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

(Partially adapted from the 1981 National Register of Historic Places nomination)

Valley Grove consists of two church buildings and a small cemetery situated on a hilltop in southeastern Minnesota, on the northern edge of Big Woods State Park. The structures are located approximately seventy-five feet apart and face each other, with access through a metal gate bearing the name “Valley Grove.” The cemetery lies directly to the south of the two churches. The site and its surroundings make for a particularly picturesque and pastoral setting: two historic churches standing sentry over a rolling landscape of prairie and oak savannah.

The churches served as the nexus of the community of Norwegian immigrants who came to eastern Rice County beginning around 1850-1860. These homesteaders initially worshipped in homes, and later held open-air services on the site that would become home to the church buildings.

The first church to house the Valley Grove congregation (then called Tyske Grove) was the so-called “stone church,” constructed in 1862 for a cost of \$1,200. By 1894, the Valley Grove congregation had outgrown the small church, and members who lived in nearby Nerstrand also desired a church in town. So, in 1894, identical frame Gothic churches were constructed at Valley Grove and in Nerstrand (the latter is extant, as Grace Lutheran Church, but has been altered substantially) The churches copied the Gothic design of a previously-built church in the nearby Norwegian immigrant settlement of Christiana, several miles to the north, which had shared a parish and a pastor, the Reverend Nils Quammen, with Valley Grove.¹ The new church cost \$3,100 to build. The 1862 stone building was retained as a guild hall, with substantial interior remodeling, including dropping the ceiling and adding a kitchen space.

The two churches (Valley Grove and Nerstrand) remained one congregation until they reorganized in 1949. In April 1972, the Valley Grove congregation voted to disband due to declining membership, ending regular worship services at the site. The congregation transferred the 1894 church to the Society for the Preservation of the Valley Grove Church Building and the 1862 church and the surrounding grounds to the Valley Grove—Grace Cemetery Association.

Also in 1973, the Minnesota Historical Society sent Survey and Planning staff to document the Valley Grove Churches and placed them on the Inventory of Historic Sites, with a recommendation for “further research and investigation as this site exhibit[s] strong National Register potential.”² These findings became critical information the following year, 1974, when site’s two stewardship organizations

¹ Noted in email from Jens Eldal to Ken Sahlin, 27 November 2012. Subject line: “SV: Valley Grove churches.”

² Letter from Russell W. Fridley (Director of MHS) to Kay Hope (Secretary for the Society of the Preservation of the Valley Grove Church), 29 August 1974.

engaged in a contentious legal and public battle over ownership, upkeep, and the very fate of the churches, with the Cemetery Association discussing the possibility of moving or demolishing the 1894 church. The Society for the Preservation of the Valley Grove Church filed a lawsuit, asserting its ownership of the building, but in February 1975, Rice County Judge Urban J. Steimann ruled that the land legally belonged to the Valley Grove-Grace Cemetery Association.³ Judge Steimann added,

The court is somewhat distressed by the fact that this matter must be settled by judicial proceedings. In making its decision, the court can only view the law and not the sentimental value respective of each party's decision. ... If all parties can abandon their passions and prejudices, some type of agreement can be worked out whereby the newer church could be preserved for its historic value ...⁴

And, indeed, the two sides did come together. Today, both buildings are maintained by the Valley Grove Preservation Society (the new name for the Society for the Preservation of the Valley Grove Church) The churches are used for weddings, concerts, and two annual events, an autumn country social, and a Christmas Eve concert and celebration.

In 2000, the owner of the a 110-acres property surrounding Valley Grove sought to sell the land, with the possibility of a sale to developers, presenting a threat to the bucolic, open setting. News coverage and public outreach helped The Valley Grove Preservation Society raise enough funds to purchase the land. The fundraising effort was so successful that it was included in The Minnesota Project's 2001 *Case Studies of Sustainability in Rural Minnesota Communities*:

More than 400 people from around the country donated money to help purchase the land, and many became repeat donors. People who had been married in the church, who had ancestors buried in the cemetery, even one who had been arrested there nearly 30 years earlier, wrote moving letters along with their donations.⁵

The Valley Grove Preservation Society has also made great strides in repairing and restoring the two structures. Recently-completed work has included installing new cedar shake roofs on both building; putting a new steeple on the 1862 church, to match the one in the earliest extant photo, c. 1890; and renovating or repairing floor joists and footings in the 1862 building. Further repairs and alterations are detailed in the chronology in the following pages.

³ Hest, David. "Nerstrand church ownership is determined in court ruling." *Faribault Daily News*, 6 February 1975. Page unknown. Found in the archives of the Valley Grove Preservation Society.

⁴ Quoted in "Cemetery group wins court case," *Northfield News*, 6 February 1975 (no byline) Found in VGPS archives.

⁵ Page 67.

CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT AND USE

The following is an overview of key dates and events in the buildings' development and use. A more extensive chronology, compiled by volunteers from the Valley Grove Preservation Society, is included as an appendix to this report.

1862	Stone church constructed using locally-quarried limestone.
1868	Stone church dedicated on October 18.
1870	Congregation changes its name from Tyske Grove to Valley Grove.
1874	Church members purchase and install first church bell.
1894	Wood-frame church constructed.
1894	Bell moved from stone church to frame church
1895	Stone building given to the Ladies Aid. They have ceiling dropped and add a kitchen space on the east side of the building.
1895	Small organ in stone church moved to frame church
1897	Repair to tower of 1862 building ⁶
1901	Repair to tower of 1862 building ⁷
1905	Spire of 1862 building taken down ⁸ (<i>presumably this is when it was replaced with the cupola</i>)
1911	Pipe organ installed in 1894 building.
1931	Motion passes to keep cupola of 1862 building. ⁹
1935	Stove purchased for 1862 building. ¹⁰
1939	Church meeting minutes include "motions to shingle 1862 building, repair steps." ¹¹
1939	Electricity added to 1894 church. ¹²
1948	Coal furnace added to 1862 building ¹³
1949	Electricity added to 1862 building. ¹⁴
1949	Furnace added to 1894 church. ¹⁵
1950	New oil heater added to 1862 building. ¹⁶
1951	Pulpit lowered in 1894 church. ¹⁷
1954	Motor installed in pipe organ in 1894 church (previously hand-pumped with bellows) ¹⁸

⁶ Church minutes at NAHA.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ladies Aid Ledger.

¹¹ Church minutes at NAHA.

¹² Ladies Aid Ledger

¹³ Church minutes at NAHA.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ladies Aid Ledger.

¹⁷ Per Donald Hanson. See note in timeline in Appendix C. Unverified in official documents.

- 1964 Acoustic tile installed in ceiling of 1894 church.¹⁹
- 1973 Church decommissioned (in April) after membership declines.
- 1973 Society of the Preservation of the Valley Grove Church Building incorporated on June 21.
- 1973 Minnesota Historical Society places both buildings on the Inventory of Historic Sites.
- 1982 Valley Grove listed on National Register of Historic Places.
- 1991 Roof of 1894 church replaced.²⁰
- 1991 Steeple repairs to 1894, including installation of copper cone to replace finial (new finial installed in 2005)²¹
- 1993 Unspecified foundation repair work to 1894 church.²²
- 1995 Electrical service to 1894 church moved underground. Also, ceilings and walls in nave repaired or replaced.²³
- 1997 New furnace and duct work, along with a new security system, in the 1894 church.²⁴
- 1997 Entry doors of 1894 church replaced and refinished.²⁵
- 1999 Two new precast concrete steps installed at back (west) doors of 1894 church.²⁶
- 1999 Valley Grove Preservation Society gets 501(c)3 nonprofit status.
- 2003 Cedar shake roof installed at 1894 church.²⁷
- 2005 New rubber roof installed below bell in steeple of 1894 church.²⁸
- 2007 Cedar shake roof installed at 1862 building.²⁹
- 2007 Replaced steeple of 1862 building to match 1890s photo.³⁰
- 2008 Range of renovations in 1862 building, including renovating footings, replacing floor joists, replacing old kitchen, adding stairway, adding new wiring, and removing dropped ceiling.³¹
- 2010 Replaced front steps and railings at 1894 church.
- 2013 Add maple hardwood floor in 1862 building.
- 2013 New LP furnace.

¹⁸ Church minutes at NAHA.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Valley Grove Books, as noted in timeline in Appendix C.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The 1862 building faces west and is located east of the frame church. Limestone for the building was quarried locally. The church is a simple rectangular building capped by a gable roof with a square tower with pyramidal roof at the top (west) and a brick chimney near the rear. The simplicity and massing of the design are reminiscent of the Greek Revival style, and are also characteristic of an early generation of church structures constructed by rural immigrant populations.

Four regularly spaced windows are located on the north and south facades. The windows are rectilinear and double-hung, nine over nine lights with stone sills; markings over the windows suggest that they were originally arched. Fenestration on the front (west) façade consists of a central doorway surmounted by a window with six over nine lights; a small, octagonal window is centered in the gable end. A single entry is located off-center on the rear (east) façade. A church bell was installed in 1874, and was later moved to the new church. In 1895, after the new church opened, the stone church was given to the Ladies Aid for use as a guild hall, with alterations including a dropped ceiling and a new kitchen space. The original spire was removed in 1905, according to church records; presumably this is when it was replaced with the cupola that remained in place until restoration of the spire in 2007.

The 1894 church, with its white frame Gothic design, offers a striking contrast to the stark simplicity of the original church and is more typical of what has become considered as traditional ecclesiastical architecture in rural Minnesota. The frame church, which faces east, is basilican in plan with entry through the projecting bell tower. The pointed arches, pinnacles, and high steeple are characteristic features of the Gothic style. The four evenly-spaced pointed arched windows on the north and south sides are double hung with four over four lights. The muntins in the upper sash form twin arches within the arch of the window, giving the impression of tracery. The tower features double doors with a transom light set in a triangular pediment surmounted by a pointed arched window, and an open belfry sheltering a bell rises above the roofline and terminates in a steeply pitched octagonal roof capped by a metal spire and cross. Shingled pent roofs separate the entry, tower window, and belfry. The roof of the building is sheathed with wooden shingles. The interior retains excellent integrity.

DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Valley Grove is primarily significant for its dramatic historic and pastoral tableau, which also represents two phases of rural ecclesiastical architecture. In addition, the buildings are significant for their role as the focus of the dispersed community of Norwegian farmers who settled and farmed parts of eastern Rice County beginning around 1850-1860. As with many rural churches, Valley Grove served as a de facto community and cultural center, integral to social cohesiveness, a place where Norwegian immigrants could feel at ease surrounded by familiar faces, traditions, and practices. (Many church meeting minutes and other records were kept in Norwegian through 1920.)

Valley Grove is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a locally-significant site, under the following criteria:

- Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master; or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant concentration of resources whose individual components are united historically by function or plan.

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The narrative below details our recommendations for building modifications, repairs and restoration work. Some repairs are more critical than others—namely, those affecting areas of particular concern, which are contributing to or causing, accelerated deterioration. These specific repairs are noted as high or medium priority.

1862 CHURCH (See Figure 1 & 2)

Please see Appendix A for figures referenced in the conditions assessment.

Exterior

FOUNDATIONS AND FOOTINGS

Assessment: Although no footings and foundations are visible at this time, photographs from the 2007 interior rehabilitation show that the foundation is constructed from rubble limestone, as are the walls, with the foundation being a continuation of the masonry wall system. Church records indicate that work was completed on the footings in 2007. These footings and foundations appear to be in good condition. (See Figure 20)

Recommendations: There are no indications that there are any problems, so no recommendations are made at this time.

Priority: N/A.

MASONRY

Assessment: The walls are constructed of rubble limestone which has been coated with a cementitious covering or plastering, inscribed with “mortar joints,” creating the appearance of dressed stone units. There are have “repairs” made that are not sensitive to the existing wall and a poor match. There are areas that are deteriorating and should be repaired. Much of this deterioration has been caused by water infiltration, poor site drainage and age. (See Figure 21, 22, 23, & 24)

The front stone stair, below the double doors is cracked and deteriorated, it has been patched with concrete. There is enough missing material to allow water to sit and the freeze-thaw cycle will continue to deteriorate the stone. There is a concrete sidewalk below the stone stair that is in fair condition.

Many of the limestone window sills are deteriorating; cracking and missing material is common. There are some areas that have been repaired with concrete, a patch that does not match in color, texture or material.

Recommendations: Repoint underlining mortar joints, and repair coating, returning mortar joints to the face of the wall. Care should be taken to provide a good match in terms of composition, aggregate, color, texture and tooling. If possible, turn the stone stair upside down to see if the underside is in better condition. If not replace stone stair, considering ADA accessibility and any changes that might be made in the future.

Repair limestone window sills with masonry epoxies at the cracks and masonry patch materials that match the existing stone. It is desirable to maintain the existing material rather than replace the stone sills.

Priority: Medium. It is recommended that this work be completed to avoid additional loss of historic fabric.

CONCRETE

Assessment: The stoop and stair at the rear of the building is concrete. The stoop at the rear of the building is in poor condition. The concrete is deteriorated and cracked. The unit is pulling away from the structure, causing further damage, as the railing is connected to the wall. (See Figure 21)

Recommendations: Provide a new concrete stoop and stair, with adequate footings and detailing to address issue so frost heave and movement. Provide a landing at the bottom of the stair to terminate the handrail or provide a different detail.

Priority: Medium.

SIDING

Assessment: There is painted lap siding at the walls of the steeple. It appears that the wood is in good condition and Church records indicate that the steeple was built off-site in 2007, based on historic photographs.

Recommendations: There are no recommendations at this time. Periodically inspect to ensure good paint coverage to preserve wood siding.

Priority: N/A.

EXTERIOR TRIM

Assessment: The existing wood trim consists of painted soffit/eave ensemble at the roof edge and painted wood trim at the windows and doors. There are several areas that the wood is deteriorating and pulling apart at the joints, which allows for water infiltration. The paint is also deteriorating at these locations. (See Figure 25)

Recommendations: Repair wood trim, seal joints and repaint.

Priority: Medium.

ROOFING

Assessment: There was a new cedar shingle roof installed in 2007. The roof clads the main gable portion of the structure and the conical steeple roof. It appears that the roof is in good condition. No flashing is visible. There is a membrane rubber roof at the steeple, presumably installed in 2007, at the time the new steeple was set in-place. (See Figure 28) There are few areas that the shingles have come loose or are pulling apart, such as at the roof ridge. (See Figure 26) Also some of the shingles are starting to cup.

Recommendations: Periodically inspect the roof to monitor condition. Replace damaged shingles.

Priority: Medium

GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS

Assessment: There are gutters or downspouts installed on the north façade of the building. The gutter appears to be in good condition, but the downspouts are two short. In one location, it does not even reach the ground level. (See Figure 27) Historic photographs do not indicate that gutters had previously installed.

Recommendations: Care needs to be taken to maintain downspouts, either with a rain barrel or in conjunction with lawn mowing. Downspouts need to be in place to drain water away from the grade. Care should be taken to reattach after mowing and not to run over them with equipment. Remove any plant materials that are close to the foundation and that hold water against the building. Slope grade away from the building.

Priority: High

STEEPLE

Assessment: Photographs from the Valley Grove Preservation Society show that the steeple had been modified over time and was altered from the historic photographs. In 2007, a new steeple was installed, based on historic photographs. It is this steeple that is in-place at this time. The condition of the steeple is good. (See Figure 36)

Recommendations: There are no recommendations at this time.

Priority: N/A.

EXTERIOR DOORS

Assessment: There is a set of double screen doors and a pair of three panel doors at the front of the Church. In front of the screen doors is an iron gate. The wood doors are painted and in fair condition, although there is some deterioration at the bottom of the screen doors. There is also deterioration at the bottom of the door jamb. The finish on the metal gate is in poor condition and there is some rusting. The existing hardware may be original. The rear of the building has a painted wood door.

Recommendations: Replace the screen at the front screen doors. Repair the bottoms of the screen doors and door jamb with wood epoxy. Repaint metal gates.

Priority: Medium.

WINDOWS

Assessment: There are painted 9/9 double hung sash windows at the north and south façade of the Church. There is a single painted 9/9 double hung sash window above the front door, above this window is a small hexagonal divided light window at the attic level. (See Figure 24) Careful examination of the windows indicates that some windows are of an earlier age than others, based on muntin width which varies among windows. The windows are in poor to good condition. (See Figure 29 & 30) The joint between the window and the masonry wall is undefined at many locations, the “plastering” covers the wood trim.

Recommendations: Care should be taken to repair the window, including frames, trim and sash. Maintain as much of the historic material as possible, the use of wood epoxies is recommended. Windows should be re-glazed with new putty and the existing glass lights. Any replacement should match the species of wood, the profiles and sizes of the existing windows. When work is preformed, care should be taken in re-establishing a clean joint between the wood and masonry.

Priority: High.

FINISHES

Assessment: The majority of the exterior finish is the “plaster” that is addressed in the masonry section. There is paint on the wood at the windows, doors, roof edge and cupola. The paint is in poor to good condition, depending on location.

Recommendations: Paint areas of deteriorated finish.

Priority: Medium.

Interior

STAIRS

Assessment: There is a wood ship ladder to access the second level of the building. The ladder is sound construction and in good condition but may not meet building code requirements for public access to the second floor balcony. The ladder was installed in 2008, according to Church records. (See Figure 31)

Recommendations: It is not known if the ladder is based on historic precedence, but if it is maintaining the existing ladder and limiting public access is recommended. If requirements of the space change, careful consideration should be given to changes.

Priority: N/A.

INTERIOR DOORS

Assessment: There are no interior door in the space other than access doors to the roof and steeple. The access door is in good condition.

Recommendations: There are no recommendations for work.

Priority: N/A.

FLOORING

Assessment: There is a new maple floor what was installed and subsequently repaired in 2013. The new floor is in good condition. (See Figure 31)

Recommendations: No work is recommended.

Priority: N/A.

WALLS

Assessment: The interior walls are the plaster clad exterior stone wall and are in good condition. Church records indicate that interior wall tuck pointing, plastering and painting was completed in 2008. (See Figure 32) The interior wall is wood framed, clad with painted bead-board and provides a separation between the main space and kitchen area. (See Figure 35)

Recommendations: Periodically inspect wall surfaces. Clean rather than paint to maintain appearance.

Priority: Low.

CEILING

Assessment: The ceiling is painted wood. The underside of the balcony is also wood, but with a transparent finish. It is in good condition.

Recommendations: There are no recommendations at this time.

Priority: Low.

WOODWORK AND TRIM

Assessment: The existing wood work and trim in the interior is the balcony system, which has painted wood columns supporting the floor level, with a wood balustrade surrounding the edge of the loft. The windows have painted wood trim which is in good condition. (See Figures 33 & 34)

Recommendations: Maintain wood finishes protecting the wood. Base any changes on historic evidence.

Priority: Low

STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS

Assessment: The structural systems consist of wood framed roof structure on masonry stone walls. The floor system is also wood framing over an open crawl space. There are no indications that there are structural problems, even though the whole system is not visible. Church records indicate that the floor joists were replaced in 2008, the new floor joists are located with 12" centers. Construction photographs indicate that the condition was verified and deterioration addressed.

Recommendations: None.

Priority: N/A

MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, AND PLUMBING SYSTEMS

Assessment: There is electrical service but no heating/cooling or plumbing within the building. The existing electrical service was updated in 2008. Church records indicate that there was once a heating system but there is no record of when it was removed. There is a portable toilet located on the site. If it is determined that the needs of the facility have changed and a restroom is to be added, location needs to be considered so it is sensitive to the building and the site.

Recommendations: Considerations to changes to the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should be informed by the requirements of the current and future use. Any new installations should be sensitive to the existing materials and be guided by preservation standards.

Priority: N/A.

SITE WORK

Assessment: Grade should slope away from the building to move water from the roof away from the foundation. There is a gutter/downspout system installed at the north façade, but grading should still slope away. Plantings can also cause water to pool, not allowing the ground to dry out, as evidenced by the growth of moss.

Recommendations: Over time grade can build up and so periodically review grading and adjust as required. Consideration of plant materials is important in the drainage. Remove any volunteer plants that can cause damage to the foundation.

Priority: Medium.

SECURITY

Assessment: It does not appear that there is a security system at the building.

Recommendations: Monitor buildings on a regular basis and re-assess if problems arise.

Priority: N/A.

ACCESSIBILITY

Assessment: Currently the building is not accessible. Both the front door and the rear doors are located above grade, although the front door is quite close. Historic photographs indicate that the grade has not changed much.

Recommendations: If it is determined that the Church is to ADA compliant, a temporary ramp could be placed at the front entry, which would be used by all. A more permanent solution would be to raise the grade to offset the 7" to 8" step, so entry would be direct.

Priority: N/A

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Assessment: The investigations did not include a survey of hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint.

Recommendations: If such an assessment has not been completed, it is recommended that this information be determined as it will inform future work.

Priority: Project specific.

1894 CHURCH (See Figure 1 & 2)

Please see Appendix A for figures referenced in the conditions assessment.

Exterior

FOUNDATIONS AND FOOTINGS

Assessment: The Church has a rubble limestone foundation that is almost totally covered at the exterior with a cementitious parging. It is assumed that the parging is part of the repairs referenced below. The existing parging is mostly in good condition although there are several areas where it is failing and the underlying limestone is exposed, (See Figure 3) At the west façade, there is deterioration of the stone.

Church records identify repairs to the foundation made in 1994 at a cost of \$1,366.00

The footings are not visible at this time but it is assumed that they are also similar limestone. There are no indications that there are concerns with the footings

Recommendations: Repair the areas of damaged parging by applying new parging that matches the existing and address water control issues that may be contributing to the deterioration. If there are areas of exposed deteriorated mortar, it would be good to repoint the mortar before parging over it. There are no recommendations for the footings.

Priority: High.

MASONRY

Assessment: Other than the limestone foundation, the basement has had some reinforcement work over the years with the addition of a concrete masonry unit wall, running the length of the structure and also the addition of a structural tile and brick wall. .These walls provide additional support for the existing wood floor structure above. (See Figure 4)

There is also a brick chimney that vents the furnace. The chimney is located at the rear of the building and has a broader base which corbels to a straight simple form, topped with a metal cap. The interior of the chimney was lined in 2013 to accommodate the new LP furnace. There is damage at the plaster on the chimney, located in the corner of the Sanctuary. When this damage occurred is not known, but it could have been from condensation which moved through the wall before the chimney was lined. (See Figure 17)

Recommendations: The assorted walls in the basement appear to be in fair to good condition and no additional work is recommended. The chimney should be inspected when a lift is on-site and when masonry repairs are made at the 1862 building, repointing should be considered. Monitor the plaster at the chimney location in the Sanctuary for additional deterioration. If no additional problems arise, repair plaster.

Priority: Medium.

CONCRETE

Assessment: There is a cast in place concrete stoop and stairs at the front entry and a pre-cast concrete stair at the rear entry. The front stair was replaced in 2010 and is in good condition. The precast stairs at the rear have both moved away from the building several inches since being installed in 1999. Each stair itself is in fair condition. (See Figure 5)

Recommendations: No recommendations for the front stair, the rear stair should be set back in-place.

Priority: Low

SIDING

Assessment: The exterior walls are clad with four inch horizontal lap wood siding. The cupola is also clad with the same siding. The siding is in fair to good condition. Church records indicate new siding work was completed in 2001.

Recommendations: At this time no work is recommended, although it is important to monitor the condition of the paint, as the paint on the trim is failing.

Priority: Low.

EXTERIOR TRIM

Assessment: Flat wood trim is used as corner board as well at the window sills and casing. The tops of the pointed arch windows have additional pieces of trim, which become quite elaborate at the apex of the openings at the top of the steeple. Each of the four corners of the roof is anchored with a single pointed finial. The soffits and cornice are also wood. The wood is generally in good condition (from what could be observed), although the paint is in poor to good condition. The bottoms of some of the corner boards are deteriorated. It appears that the majority of deteriorated paint is located in select areas; at the cupola and the steeple windows, window sill, and the bottom ends of corner boards. (See Figure 6 and 7)

Recommendations: Before painting, inspect wood to be sure it is in sound condition, use of wood epoxies is recommended to repair the wood rather than replacement. It is important to keep sound paint on these surfaces to protect and ensure the preservation of the wood. Horizontal surfaces, where snow or water can sit are especially vulnerable to deterioration of paint and wood. When painting, it is important to seal any joints that may allow water infiltration as well. When there is access to the steeple, inspect the wood to be sure it is sound before painting.

Priority: High.

ROOFING

Assessment: The gable roof that covers the main body of the Church, the steeple and rear addition are clad in wood shingles. The existing roof was installed in 2003 and although it was not inspected, a new rubber membrane was placed below the bell in 2005. The existing roof appears to be in good condition. It was noted that there are a few loose shingles at the ridge, near the chimney and along a rake edge and within the roof field.(See Figure 8) The roof flashing was not visible.

Recommendations: Replace the missing shingles. Periodically inspect the roof to monitor condition. It is assumed that the water damage that is observed at the ceilings was from past water infiltration since the roof was put on (2003) and there are no interior painting indicated on the Church records.

Priority: Low.

GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS

Assessment: The Church has as gutter downspout system located only at the south facade. The gutters appear to be in good condition, there is a downspout that is disconnected and deposits water down the siding, the other downspouts are not long enough and deposit the water too close to the foundation. (See Figure 5 & 9) It was noted that historic photographs do not show gutters and downspouts, Church records indicate that seamless gutters were installed in 1994. It is not known if there was a gutter at the north façade that has been removed.

Recommendations: Verify connections of all downspouts and extend the length of the downspouts to drain water away from the building. Care should be taken during lawn maintenance as to not damage downspouts. Gutters and downspouts need to be cleaned to maintain clear water drainage from the building.

Priority: High. Cleaning of gutters should be cleaned twice a year to remove debris.

STEEPLE

Assessment: The steeple was rehabilitated in 2002, new siding and trim, new roofing and wood finials were put into place. Records show that a new finial was built and installed in 2005. The finial was completed by Lockerby, from Fairbault, Minnesota. The overall condition looks pretty good, as seen from the other building's cupola, but the paint is deteriorating at the belfry openings and at the corner boards. Closer investigations may uncover additional areas.

Recommendations: New paint should be applied to the open belfry openings.

Priority: High

EXTERIOR DOORS

Assessment: The front of the Church has a pair of vertical board out-swinging doors without any glazing. The doors are painted and when the building is in use, held in an open position. The wood threshold has no paint and the bottom of the door leaves and trim has some deterioration. It appears from the HABS photograph that the doors have since been repaired and the hinges replaced.

The door at the northwest corner of the rear of the Church is a single leaf, painted vertical board door. It is in fair condition, some paint deterioration at the base. There is also a single leaf, painted recessed vertical board door at the northwest corner of the back façade. This door is in good condition except for some deterioration at the bottom of the door. It was noted that these doors are recessed five panel doors at the interior and vertical board doors at the exterior. (See Figure 10)

There is a set of double cellar doors to the basement, located at the north façade. These painted doors are also vulnerable to deterioration due to snow accumulation.

Recommendations: The age of the existing doors is not known, and Church records do not indicated any door replacement. Historic photographs show doors that have a similar appearance. Because the deterioration is just at the bottom of the door leaf, repair the bottom edge of the doors as required. Epoxy wood repair materials rather than replacement maintain the existing material, which is important, especially if it is historic. Paint doors.

Priority: Medium.

WINDOWS

Assessment: There are matching pointed arch windows at the north and south façade of the Church, four large wood double hung at the Sanctuary and one small window within each of the back rooms. The steep has a large pointed arch transom window with wood tracery above the front entry doors and at the balcony level another double hung pointed arch window, similar to the windows at the side facades. The windows are 5 over four, divided lites, and the top center lite has red colored glass. The glazing is held in-place with glazing putty and the interior and exterior of the sash are painted. The windows are in poor to fair condition. There is much deteriorated paint, some broken members and deterioration at the rails. The glazing putty is very deteriorated, cracked and missing. No weather-stripped was visible.

There are small cellar window which has been in-filled with a wood panel and a metal vent. The paint finish is deteriorating. There are other masonry openings along the foundation that have been in-filled with metal mesh, the frame is no longer visible and parging wraps the opening. (See Figure 11 &12)

Recommendations: Windows should be repaired, treated with linseed oil and repainted. Re-glaze all sashes. Again, epoxy repairs are recommended over replace of wood member is possible. Paint the metal mesh at the basement windows will maintain the mesh and is simpler than replacing it.

Priority: High.

FINISHES

Assessment: The exterior of the building is primarily painted wood. The paint finish varies in condition, from poor to good. The areas of deterioration are primarily areas that are exposed to snow and extended moisture.

Recommendations: Since the building is not used in the winter on a regular basis, it is recommended that the paint finishes be kept in good condition to prevent deterioration of the wood surfaces.

Priority: High.

Interior

STAIRS

Assessment: The existing stair provides access to the choir loft and bell tower rope. The stairs are unpainted, with a similar finish as the rest of the interior wood. At the top of the stairs there is a turned balustrade, similar to the one at the altar. The wood stair is in good condition. (See Figure 13)

Recommendations: There are no recommendations at this time.

Priority: None

INTERIOR DOORS

Assessment: There is a pair of five recessed panel doors inside the entry vestibule. They have an applied wood graining finish and are in good condition. Above the doors is a divide lite transom that has a transparent finish. There is a matching set of doors, (minus transom) across from these doors that access the sanctuary. They are also in good condition. There are single leaf raised 5 panel doors to the choir loft and to each of the back rooms. Church records do not indicate any specific work done to the doors over the years.

Recommendations: There is no work indicated for the doors at this time.

Priority: N/A.

Interior Finishes

FLOORING

Assessment: The floors are wood with a transparent finish. They are generally in good condition, with a couple of areas with deteriorated finish. There is a central aisle carpet runner down the main aisle. There are some areas of the floor that have had "cut-out" that have been in-filled.

Recommendations: Refinish flooring in areas with deteriorated finish to provide protection of the existing wood. It appears that the damage corresponds to water damage to the ceiling, which was roof related.

Priority: Low

WALLS

Assessment: The existing sanctuary walls are painted plaster with a varnished bead-board wainscot. The entry vestibule has painted bead-board walls. Church records indicate that the chancel was "re-rocked" in 1992. The two small back rooms have wallpaper over plaster. Generally the walls are in fairly good condition with some areas of wear. (See Figure 14)

The back rooms have wallpaper that is in poor condition due to water damage.

Recommendations: Periodic inspections, clean rather frequent painting is recommended.

Priority: Low.

CEILING

Assessment: The ceilings are primarily painted square acoustical tile. The tile is a later addition, although not specifically identified in the Church records. The ceiling is damaged near the bell tower. The condition of the tile varies; there are areas of water damage that correspond to past water infiltration at the roof. There are also some missing tiles. (See Figure 16)

Recommendations: There damaged areas at the ceiling are not a concern for further deterioration, rather as an appearance issue. A quick fix would be to apply a stain blocking paint and repaint the ceilings as is.

Priority: Low

WOODWORK AND TRIM

Assessment: The existing wood trim is located primarily at the chancel, organ and balcony. The wood has a transparent finish and is in good condition. There is also painted wood trim at the windows and the pulpit. Some of the window trim has deteriorated paint finish. (See Figure 15)

Recommendations: Maintain the wood trim, periodically cleaning with a gentle cleaner. Paint the window trim when restoring the windows.

Priority: Low.

Structural Systems

Assessment: The structural system consists of wood framing on a stone foundation.

Although much of the wood frame system is not visible, there are no indications that there are problems, so it is assumed that the structural system is in good condition. It was noted in the basement that there due to cantilevered joist ends at the brick wall, there is a slight sag with a magnified uplift at the floor surface.

Recommendations: None.

Priority: N/A.

Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing Systems

Assessment: The Church currently contains a mechanical system which heats the building, there is no cooling component. The heat is provided by a liquid propane fueled forced air furnace, installed fall of 2013. Records indicate that the previous oil fueled furnace and ductwork were installed in 1996. It is our understanding the Church is primarily unheated and several days before Christmas the furnace is fired up and the Church is heated for services or if there are other special events.

There is no plumbing system at the building. There is a portable toilet located on the site. If it is determined that the needs of the facility have changed and a restroom is to be added, location needs to be considered so it is a sensitive addition, either to the site or the building.

The Church was first electrified in 1939, wiring noted in 1958 and the existing electrical service was located underground in 1995. It appears to be adequate for the current use of the building. If programming of the building changes, re-evaluation of the existing system may be necessary.

Recommendations: Consideration to changes to the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems should be informed by the requirements of the current and future use. Any new installations need to be sensitive to the existing materials and be guided by preservation standards. Periodic maintenance to the furnace is recommended.

Priority: N/A.

Site Work

Assessment: The Church is located atop a hill, across from the 1864 Church building and in front of the cemetery. Although the Church is located at the high elevation, it is important that the grade near the building is sloped away from the building walls so any water that runs from the roof, flows away from the foundation. Foundation damage can also be caused from tree roots that are too close to the foundation. Roots are opportunist and will expand any cracks or gaps in the foundation walls and cause damage to the foundation.

Recommendations: Inspect the grade at the perimeter of the building and adjust grade to slope away from the foundation. Remove any trees and other volunteer plants from the foundation.

Priority: Medium. This should be addressed before any repairs are made to the parking of the foundation.

Security

Assessment: The records indicate that a security system was installed in 1996.

Recommendations: Monitor buildings on a regular basis and re-assess if problems arise.

Priority: N/A.

Accessibility

Assessment: Currently the Church is not ADA accessible. Both the front and the rear entries are located several feet above grade. Historic photographs indicate that the grade has not changed much.

Recommendations: If it is determined that the Church is to be ADA compliant, a temporary lift or permanent ramp could be installed to the side of an expanded front stoop. Landscaping can be adjusted to screen the added element.

Priority: N/A.

Hazardous Materials

Assessment: The investigations did not include a survey of hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint.

Recommendations: If such an assessment has not been completed, it is recommended that this information be determined as it will inform future work.

Priority: Project specific.

Site

The site consists of the two Churches, a cemetery and an additional 52 acres of easement protected land. This easement will protect the historic view-shed and maintain the visual experience of the two facing countryside Churches without encroaching development. This was made possible by an effort in 2000, when funds were raised that allowed for the purchase of surrounding land.

A letter from the Minnesota Historical Society in 1974 states, "For your information the Survey and Planning Staff of the Minnesota Historical Society visited and recorded the two Valley Grove Churches in August 1973. Because the entire site was found to show merit with regard to architecture, landscape architecture, and the history of local immigration, the staff placed both Churches and the surrounding area on the Inventory of Historic Sites this past year."

Valley Grove Preservation Society has enhanced the site with newly planted replacement trees, prairie seeding and required prairie burns as part of the Forest Legacy Program. A well was installed in 2002.

Continued maintenance of the site is important and special consideration should be given to any changes to the site including such elements as roads, parking, lighting and additional structures.

The metal fence and gate with "Valley Grove" overhead at the front of the entry to the site is in fair condition. Paint should be part of regular maintenance to protect the metal from corrosion.

PART 2: TREATMENT AND WORK RECOMMENDATIONS



HISTORIC PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES

RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION RATIONALE

Restoration of the exterior and interior configuration and character-defining features of the 1862 Church and the 1894 Church is recommended in keeping with the guidelines set forth in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. A significant portion of each original building structure has survived while some missing or modified features have been replaced. It appears that this work was based on sound research and accurate documentary and physical evidence. Any additional work that is undertaken should be guided by these same principals. Elements for which no evidence remains will be replaced to a period appropriate appearance based on the analysis of existing local buildings of a similar date, construction, and style.

Inclusions of building features facilitating the continued use of the building are recommended. These include the integration of modern building conveniences, such as heating and cooling, and rehabilitation of interior spaces for continued uses. While preservation is encouraged, wherever practicable, modifications sympathetic to the style and time period are permissible. Preservation goals need to be in concert with reuse requirements and, of necessity, will be tempered by building code, life safety, accessibility, and other legally mandated constraints. Again, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* should provide guidance.

Work defined as restoration is recommended for the 1894 Church as there have been few changes and modifications to the structure. The roof has been replaced, portions of the bell tower, stairs and siding. As the current and proposed use of the building will not change, it is recommended that as much historic fabric remain. This means that when there are areas of deterioration, repair is recommended over replacement.

As for the 1862 Church, many more changes have been made to this structure over time. The current and proposed uses have evolved. Thus there are fewer original materials remaining, especially at the interior of the building. Much of the floor structure, flooring, roofing and steeple have been replaced. It is still important to maintain existing building fabric, especially the exterior "plastering" and windows. New work should be guided by historic photographs or existing physical evidence if there is interest in returning many of the missing historic elements such as lighting, the elaborate wood arch or wood graining.

WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the specific work necessary to accomplish historic preservation and reuse objectives meet the guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* and are presented throughout the Condition Assessment section of this study and illustrated in the photographs included in Appendix A.

All recommendations in this report are intended to prescribe material conservation, keeping as much historic, existing material in place through repairs, rather than replacement. Professional fees for design work related in these recommendations are not included in the estimated costs. Costs may be reduced with the use of volunteer labor.

1862 CHURCH , HIGH PRIORITY

Our assessment concludes that these items are of high priority and should be immediately be considered by the Valley Grove Preservation Society.

At the windows, scrape loose paint, use a wood consolidant and epoxy filler to repair the areas of deterioration, such as bottom of trim and sash. Install new glazing putty and repaint. Replace any broken glazing.

Cost: \$4,000.

Clean all downspouts and gutters. Extend the length of the downspouts in all locations to drain water away from the foundations. Remove plant materials near foundation. Provide additional soil to slope grade from building foundation.

Cost: \$2,000.

1862 CHURCH, MEDIUM PRIORITY

Repair exposed mortar joints, remove new "plastering" patches. Install new "plastering" to match existing "plastering" in material, texture, color and application.

Cost: \$50,000.

Provide new concrete stoop, stair and handrail at the rear entry.

Cost: \$3,000.

Where paint is peeling, carefully scrape the deteriorated paint from trim and repaint with a durable exterior paint to match existing colors.

Cost: \$3,000.

At the doors, scrape loose paint, use a wood consolidant and epoxy filler to repair the areas of deterioration, such as the bottom of the door leaf and frame. Provide new metal screen.

Cost: \$2,000.

1862 CHURCH, LOW PRIORITY

Paint metal gates located at the front door. Use a rust-inhibiting paint product.
Cost: \$500.

If a lift is on-site for other work, replace wood damaged or missing wood shingles.
Cost: \$1,000.

1894 CHURCH, HIGH PRIORITY

Our assessment concludes that these items are of high priority and should be immediately be considered by the Valley Grove Preservation Society.

Where paint is peeling, carefully scrape the deteriorated paint from trim, use a wood consolidant and epoxy filler to repair the areas of deterioration, such as at the ends of the corner boards. Repaint with a durable exterior paint to match existing colors.
Cost: \$4,000. (Due to location at bell tower)

At the windows, scrape loose paint, use a wood consolidant and epoxy filler to repair the areas of deterioration, such as bottom of trim and sash. Install new glazing putty and repaint. Replace any broken glazing. Replace any broken or missing window components.
Cost: \$5,000.

Re-attach downspout at the south façade. Clean all downspouts and gutters. Extend the length of the downspouts in all locations to drain water away from the foundations. Provide additional soil to slope grade from building foundation.
Cost: \$3,000.

1894 CHURCH, MEDIUM PRIORITY

Repair parging at foundation. This work should be completed after the downspouts and grading has been addressed. Remove loose parging and apply new parging to match existing color, texture and surface application.
Cost: \$5,000.

At the doors, scrape loose paint, use a wood consolidant and epoxy filler to repair the areas of deterioration, such as the bottom of the door leaf and frame.
Cost: \$2,000.

Clean wood trim. Repaint wood trim at interior windows.
Cost: \$1,000.

1894 CHURCH, LOW PRIORITY

Repair plaster on chimney at the corner of the sanctuary and paint.
Cost: \$1,000.

Remove failing wall paper at the ceilings of the back rooms, repair plaster as required and repaper or if evidence exists, paint.
Cost: \$5,000.

If a lift is on-site for other work, replace wood damaged or missing wood shingles.
Cost: \$1,000.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MacDonald & Mack Architects, along with Valley Grove Preservation Society volunteers, consulted a variety of sources in the preparation of this report.

REPOSITORIES REFERENCED

During the course of this study, researchers utilized files and archives found at the following repositories:

The Minnesota Historical Society

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office

The Norwegian-American Heritage Association (NAHA) at Saint Olaf College

Valley Grove Preservation Society archives.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The following documentary sources were most helpful in determining the history and physical provenance of the Valley Grove Churches near Nerstrand, Minnesota:

Valley Grove Ladies Aid ledger, held at NAHA.

Valley Grove Church minutes, held at NAHA.

Correspondence between Lucius Smith and Osmund Ause, attorneys at law in the court proceedings regarding the ownership and fate of the two churches immediately after the congregation disbanded in 1974. Found in the Valley Grove Preservation Society archives.

OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED

Historic articles from the *Nerstrand Herald*, the *Northfield News*, and the *Northfield Times*, as noted in the text. Many are undated clippings held in the archives of the Valley Grove Preservation Society.

Bloomberg, Britta. "Minnesota Historic Properties Inventory Form." Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, February 1981.

Boevers, Carol-Jean Swanson. *A Psalmbook and a Good Pair of Shoes: Thirteen Generations of the Floren and Haugen Family*. Saint Paul: LifeStories, 2002. (Not in widespread print. Provided by Kenneth Sahlin of the Valley Grove Preservation Society.)

Bruce, G. M. *A Brief History of Valley Grove Lutheran Church*. Nerstrand, Minnesota: Valley Grove Church, 1953. Available online at <http://valleygrovemn.com/historyBrief.cfm> (link current as of 17 October 2013)

Weintraub, Elizabeth, Lola Schoenrich, and Katie Davidson. "Wheeling Township and Nerstarand: Landmark of the Past, Symbol of the Future." Pages 65-70 in *Case Studies of Sustainability in Rural Minnesota Communities*. Saint Paul: The Minnesota Project, 2001.

Valley Grove Churches Cost Estimate

1862 Church

High Priority

1	Remove vegetation	1,000
2	Repair windows	4,500
3	Extend downspouts, slope grade	3,000
	Total	\$8,500

Medium Priority

1	Repair "plastering" at exterior	50,000
2	Provide new concrete stair at rear	3,000
3	Paint exterior	8,000
4	Repair doors	3,000
	Total	\$64,000

Low Priority

1	Paint metal gates at front door	500
2	Replace damaged shingles	1,000
	Total	1,500

Total \$74,000

1894 Church

High Priority

1	Remove vegetation	1,000
2	Repair windows	7,700
3	Extend downspouts	3,000
4	Paint partial exterior	4,000
	Total	\$15,700

Medium Priority

1	Repair parging at foundation	5,000
2	Repair doors	2,000
3	Repaint interior windows	1,000
	Total	\$8,000

Low Priority

1	Repair plaster at chimney	1,000
2	Remove wallpaper, paper or paint	5,000
3	Replace damaged shingles	1,000
	Total	7,000

Total \$30,700

Buildings Together

High Priority Items for 1862 and 1894 Churches	24,200
20% Contingencies	4,840
Total Construction Cost	29,040
Architectural Fees	5,808
Total Project Cost	\$34,848

Medium Priority Items for 1862 and 1894 Churches	58,000
20% Contingencies	11,600
Total Construction Cost	69,600
	13,920
Total Project Cost	\$83,520

Low Priority Items for 1862 and 1894 Churches	8,500
	1,700
Total Construction Cost	10,200
	2,040
Total Project Cost	\$12,240

Grand Total Project Cost \$130,608