



HISTORY KEEPERS

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Members and Friends,

The 11th annual Sweet Rides and Sweet Pies car show was a wonderful success and a true celebration of community spirit. What has become a beloved Westby tradition once again brought together classic car collectors, generous volunteers, residents, and visitors for a day of shared pride and connection. The event helps raise awareness of the Westby Area Historical Society and the Thoreson House Museum & Genealogy Center while shining a spotlight on the local businesses that make Westby such a special place.

The event began in 2016 with the vision of the late Madeline Anderson, a former Westby Area Historical Society board member, and the steady leadership of members Garland McGarvey and Kathy Anderson. Through their dedication and the continued support of many others, the car show has grown into the organization's best-attended and most financially successful fundraiser.



This year's event again featured Dennis Gage, host of the popular television program *My Classic Car*, along with a new event, Buzzy's Pinewood Derby, sponsored by the Martin "Buzz" Bekkedal family and Westby Cub Scouts Pack #76 (A new organization chartered by WAHS you will hear more about in the November newsletter). Together with 300 classic cars, these attractions created a lively and memorable day for the whole community. Behind the scenes, more than 70 volunteers gave their time, energy, and talent to make the event possible. Their welcoming spirit, hard work, and careful organization helped everything run smoothly. The event was strengthened by the generosity of local businesses and individuals who sponsored more than 80 trophies that Driftless Studios in Westby designed, crafted and donated. A special *thank-you* goes to Mega Parts of Coon Valley, whose tremendous support and friendship continue to be so important to the event's success.

With three hundred classic vehicles on display, the event continues to grow as a cherished gathering for Westby and the surrounding area. The organizers are deeply grateful to every participant, volunteer, sponsor, business, family, and guest who helped make the day so special. We look forward to welcoming everyone back next year for another celebration of history, community, and hometown pride. — Blaine Hedberg, WAHS President

"A TASTE OF NORWAY" COMES TO WESTBY



A new event will come to our community on Saturday, October 3 at the Country Church from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. when the Coon Valley Historical Society, Country Coon Prairie Church Preservation, Inc., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Vernon County Historical Society, Westby Area Historical Society, and Westby Sons of Norway Solvang Lodge #457 offer an afternoon of history, traditions, and culture of Norwegian immigration in our area.

Guests will enjoy twelve sweet and savory sample tastings inspired by the fresh, flavorful cuisine of modern Norway. Adult attendees with proof of age may sample Norwegian beer, while orange "brus" (like the popular Norwegian soft drink), coffee, and water will also be available for those preferring non-alcoholic beverages.

Throughout the afternoon, visitors will have the opportunity to explore exhibits, visit with representatives from each organization, and participate in educational displays and hands-on activities. Designed for all ages, the event offers something for everyone — from history enthusiasts to families with children looking for a fun and engaging afternoon.

Adding to the authentic Norwegian experience, accomplished musician Eden Ehm of Decorah, Iowa, will perform traditional music on the Hardanger fiddle in the church sanctuary. Between selections, she will share the history of this uniquely Norwegian instrument, tell stories about its traditions, and answer questions from attendees. Her presentation promises to be a memorable highlight of the day.

Please note that visitors must be able to navigate seven to eight steps at a time to access either the upper or lower level of the building. Admission is free. Proof of age will be required to receive a beer sampling card. A suggested donation of \$10 per person is appreciated to help support the participating organizations and future educational programming.



Shining a Light on the Past

There are so many talented people in Westby! 30 years ago, these two were recognized with awards from Vesterheim. This article from *The Times*, published on August 22, 1996, highlights woodcarvers Gerald Ekern and Tip Bagstad.

Ekern, Bagstad win Nordic carving contest honors

Westby's Gerald Ekern and Tilford Bagstad collected top honors at the 1996 National Exhibition of Woodcarving in the Norwegian Tradition, sponsored by Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum, during Decorah's Nordic Fest, July 26 – 28.

Ekern, a 1995 Gold Medalist, won Best of Show for his figure carving titled "Blind Date."

Bagstad of Westby took home a White Ribbon and an Honorable Mention from the 1996 National Exhibition of Woodcarving. Bagstad earned a white ribbon for an Acanthus Cartouche while an Acanthus Clock received the honorable Mention award.

Each year, judges award Blue, Red and White Ribbons representing points that accumulate over successive exhibitions toward a Gold Medal.

Carvers who already are Gold Medalists may submit pieces in subsequent exhibitions to be judged along with other entrants for the Best of Show award, but they are excluded from the overall ribbon competition. *Editor's note: Tip won a Vesterheim Gold Medal for one of his acanthus carvings in 2000. Left photo: Gerald Ekern's "Blind Date." Below: Tip Bagstad's acanthus cartouche. Both carvings received awards at Decorah's 1996 Nordic Fest.



Cemetery Stone Cleaning Workshop

Learn how to make your family's gravestones go from unreadable to beautiful at our next workshop! Join us on Saturday, September 26, at the Vang Cemetery from 10 until 11 a.m. Wear comfortable, loose clothes you can move around in, in case you want to try it yourself, instead of just watching to learn.



Volunteer of the Year Nominations Now Open!

Every year, since 2007, WAHS has given a Volunteer of the Year Award to a special someone who has gone above and beyond for our organization. Sometimes it's a member, and sometimes it's not. If you know that special someone who has substantially contributed to the health, success, and well-being of WAHS, please submit your nomination by email to westbywihistory@gmail.com or leave a message at 608-634-4788. Please note that previous winners are not eligible for a second award. Nominations will be presented at our September meeting. Votes will be taken at the October meeting. The award will be presented in November. Past **Volunteer of the Year** recipients are:

2007 – Gary Daines	2016 – Madeline Anderson
2008 – Ed Klos	2017 – Roy Jefson
2009 – Karen Hankee	2018 – Carol Navrestad
2010 – George Navrestad	2019 – Garland McGarvey
2011 – Bertha Johnson	2020 – Blaine Hedberg
2012 – Marlowe Nelson	2021 – Fred Jefson
2013 – Elaine Lund	2022 – Grant Johnson
2014 – Elaine Olson	2023 – Marlo Volden
2015 – Kathy Anderson	2024 – Ellie Brye
2025 – Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies Pie Crew	

WAHS EVENTS THROUGH 2026

Our last event of the summer will be an Open House at the Thoreson Museum on Sunday, August 23, from 11 am until 2 pm.

The following is a list of our 2026 Fall events and activities:

- Tues., Sept. 8: **Kaffegruppe** at the Thoreson Museum; 2 – 4 pm
- Tues., Sept. 8: **Party on the Porch** at the Thoreson Museum, 5 – 7 pm
- Sun., Sept. 13: **SPECIAL MEMBER MEETING**, 2:00 p.m.
- Tues., Sept. 15: **WAHS Monthly Meeting** at Thoreson Museum; 1 – 3 pm
- Fri., Sept. 25: **Homecoming Tailgate** at the Thoreson Museum; 2 - 6 pm
- Sat., Sept. 26: **Cemetery Stone Cleaning** at Vang Cemetery; 10 – 11 am
- Sat., Oct. 3: **"Taste of Norway"** at Country Coon Prairie Church; 1 – 4 pm
- Tues., Oct. 6: **WAHS Monthly Meeting** at the Thoreson Museum; 1 – 3 pm
- Tues., Oct. 13: **Kaffegruppe** at the Thoreson Museum; 2 – 4 pm
- Wed., Nov. 4: **WAHS Monthly Meeting** at the Thoreson Museum; 1 – 3 pm
- Tues., Nov. 10: **Kaffegruppe** at the Thoreson Museum; 2 – 4 pm

In Memory of Teri Mathison

As WCCU manager during the first decade of Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies, we couldn't have asked for a better cheerleader than Teri. Sadly, she unexpectedly passed away on July 19. In her memory, we dedicated this year's WCCU Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies award in her memory. It was presented to her good friend, Rodney Johnson – with a little bag of candy for him to remember how she kept a bowl on her desk, just for him!



2026 Sweet Rides and Sweet Pies

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THESE 2026 EVENT PHOTOS!

2026 Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies was the 11th annual event and the biggest one yet! More cars, more spectators, more pies, more trophies, and more activities! Here is just a little of what you saw if you were at the show, and more great photos can be found on our Facebook page!

1. The line-up of more than 264 registered vehicles and many that did not register was amazing.
2. Thank you, Westby Fire Department, EMS, and the Vernon County Sheriff's Department for showing the kids a good time in your vehicles.
3. Buzzy's Pinewood Derby was a huge success for a first-time event. 18 people participated!
4. Garland and Kathy were very happy about the show's success.
5. A beautiful aerial of the show.
6. Rick Steinhoff's People's Choice winner, a 1956 Dodge COE.
7. Garland giving Marty Stenslien the Madeline Anderson Award for the Pontiac GTO he bought in 1969.
8. Dennis Gage enjoyed being back. He thinks our show is really great.
9. We got a fantastic number of motorcycles registered for this year's show.

(Photo credit 1, 4, 5, & 8: Preising Productions LLC)

Put July 31, 2027 — always the last Saturday in July — on your calendar now!



Preising Productions LLC

WAHS RECEIVES GRANT FOR SWEET RIDES & SWEET PIES VIDEO

Jim Schwingle, Senior Energy Services Manager of WPPI Energy, along with Westby Utility Clerk Wendy Sutton and Westby Director of Public Works Ron Janzen, presented a \$2,000 grant award to WAHS treasurer Kathy Anderson and Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies chairman Garland McGarvey. Sweet Rides brings more than 1,500 visitors to Westby for a classic car show, homemade pie, shopping, dining, fuel stops, and local attractions, providing a significant boost to area businesses. William Preising, of Preising Productions LLC, will produce the economic development video, donating a majority of his time and expertise to ensure the project serves as a high-quality marketing tool for the City of Westby. WAHS thanks WPPI, the City of Westby, and William for making this project possible!



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You will get a separate notice when it is time to renew your membership. Please do not pay before that time.

Dues are just \$20/person and help us continue our mission. We appreciate your renewal!

If reading the newsletter online works for you and you no longer need a paper copy, contact us by email or leave a phone message at 608-634-4478.

SUMMER SNAPSHOT STUMPER

Can you guess where this gas station was located?

We'll give you a hint –

Marilyn Sharping shared this photo with us!

Thank You!

to our sponsors for their support! It helps our general operations budget, our members, our newsletter, and our events!

Please leave a message at 608-634-4478, email us at westbywihistory@gmail.com, or find us on Facebook. Your ideas, opinions, and suggestions matter!



We want to hear from you!



"We want to live in the present and the only history worth a tinker's dam is the history we make today."

—Henry Ford (1863-1947), who founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903



2026 Officers and Board of Directors

President and Curator – Blaine Hedberg (2027)

Vice President – John Erlandson (2027)

Sec't/Treas & Newsletter – Kathy Anderson (2026)

Board Member – Dorothy Skaaland La Due (2028)

Board Member – Carol Erlandson Navrestad (2028)

Board Member – Marlo Volden (2026)

* Officers are elected at the Annual Meeting

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Helping you build a better life.

Please share our newsletter with your friends, and encourage them to join WAHS by filling out and mailing this membership form!

Westby Area Historical Society

P. O. Box 42; Westby, WI 54667

www.westbywihistory.com

608.634.4478

westbywihistory@gmail.com

Your Annual Dues of \$20.00 supports our education efforts, our quarterly newsletter, and the Thoreson House Museum & Genealogy Center building.

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