

HISTORY KEEPERS

2024
Issue 1
FEBRUARY

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends of WAHS,

Thirty-five years ago, the Westby Area Historical Society organized to preserve the heritage of our city and the surrounding area. We document the area's history and those who have lived here through artifacts, our genealogical collections, and many other materials in the archives. Each year, the Westby Area Historical Society continues to receive valuable items, manuscripts, and photographs donated by those who see value in the work we do to preserve the past for future generations. We thank those who have sought us

out and have trusted us to keep their treasures safe so that we can share them with those interested in our local history.

This month marked the 101st anniversary of the first Snowflake Ski Tournament in Westby held back in 1923. We were pleased that the Snowflake Ski Club reached out to us to exhibit historic ski jumping films from the WAHS Lincoln Knutson Collection. The films and a unique historic posterboard designed by WAHS highlighted the club's activities over the last century. Snowflake's leadership also asked WAHS to help with a special seven-question survey. The survey results, designed to discover the impact of the Snowflake Ski Tournament on the local and regional economy, will assist the club with grant applications and future fundraising.

We are holding our general membership meetings in the early afternoons, now at 1:00 p.m., the first Tuesday of every month. Our upcoming March meeting will be held at the Daily Brew Coffee Shop in Westby. In April, the monthly meetings will return to the Thoreson House Museum. I hope you can attend. Your presence tells us the work we are doing matters to you and to our community.

As members of the Westby Area Historical Society, please continue to help us in our mission to collect, preserve, promote, and communicate the history of Westby. We cannot do this without you! Donate, volunteer, and continue your membership – your participation will help us be successful!

If you have questions, please contact us through our website, www.westbywihistory.com, or call and leave a message at (608)634-4478. You can also "Like" and "Follow" us on our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/westbywihistory. As always, thank you for supporting us, your Westby Area Historical Society! — Blaine Hedberg

Welcome, John Erlandson, to the Board of Directors! WAHS' newest board member has jumped right in to accept the position of Vice President. John's father is a descendent of Swedes but we will forgive him because he has very deep Norwegian roots – all of his mother's ancestors came here between 1853 and 1885. John says he feels blessed to have been a "downtown kid" who grew up in a very "Mayberry" Westby. John's parents owned Skundberg's Grocery so he knew everyone in town. He would ride with Tip Lund in the cop car, visit Art Hegge at the fire station, frequently visit the projection room at the theater, and knew all the old-timer farmers who had retired at the Hotel Evans. John retired and moved back to Westby about 2 years ago but as a WAHS officer, a firearms instructor, a volunteer with the local EMD, and an involved grandpa, John and his partner, Nina, have a very full schedule. WAHS feels lucky to have this great guy and his love of Westby!



Above: Snowflake Ski Queen Chelsea and Attendant Adey with the WAHS display at the tournament's Hospitality Night. Below: our Survey Team collecting information for the Snowflake grant application.



Welcome to the board, John!!!
Shown above with his grandchildren.



Shining a Light on the Past

We just finished "101 Years of Fun" with the Snowflake Ski Club so we thought this article, published on March 30, 1989 in *The Westby Times*, will trigger memories for some of you!

Ski hill near end of era

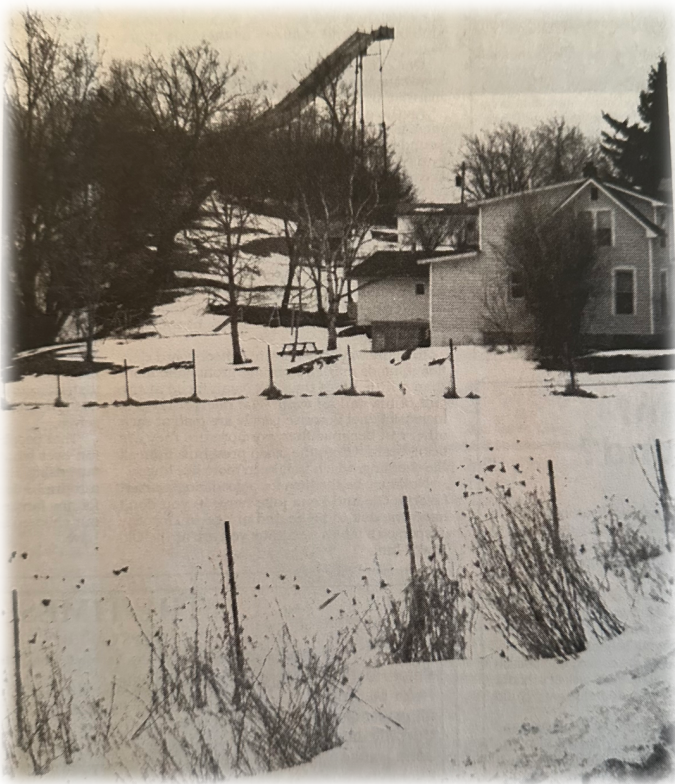
"Walkers along Bekkedal Avenue will soon be having their last look at a monument whose age is roughly set at 30 years – the junior ski jump.

Other winters the site has teemed with activity; shouts of joy for a good landing or moans of chagrin for a spill. Tournaments were held there. The road would be lined with cars as moms and dads watched potential champs on the 'Big' hill in Timber Coulee, or an Olympic contestant perhaps.

"The 30-meter hill was built in the early 60s by Elgin Herbeck of Hillsboro, a steel worker," according to Alden Fremstad, a life-long ski enthusiast. The late Leif Mikkelsen and Noble Stendahl were two Alden remembers who also were involved in construction.

It replaced a ski hill, now long gone, which stood at the back of Davidson Park in what was then Ulland Valley.

At one point active members decided the take-off on the junior hill was too high so Alden and Glen Stakston rebuilt and lowered it. A warming house or lunch stand was built in later years where ski moms took turns providing hamburgers and hot chocolate." Editor's note: This [Shining a Light ...](#) article, featuring the below photo, shared that the Snowflake Ski Club helped finance the construction of the Syverson Park slide with a gift of \$7,000!



to new members:
Roy & Joyce Stephan
Cheryl Day

2024 Calendar of Events

Be sure to make a note of these dates! We will be sharing details on Facebook as we get closer to each event. The May newsletter will give more information on summer and fall events.

March: Tuesday, 3/5; 1:00; Daily Brew; member meeting

April: Tuesday, 4/9; 1:00; Thoreson; member meeting
Thursday, 4/11; 10:00; VCHS presentation

May: Saturday, 5/4; 10:00; Cemetery Stone Workshop at
Coon Prairie Cemetery
Tuesday, 5/7; 1:00; Thoreson; member meeting

For Syttende Mai:

Wednesday, 5/15; 7:00; announce Grandmother of the Year

Saturday, 5/18; 9:00 – 4:00; lefse/pølse sale

Saturday, 5/18; 9 – 1:00; Thoreson Museum Open House

Saturday, 5/18; 2:00; special program with Season 6

Alt for Norge winner, David Engen

Sunday, 5/19; 9:00 – 4:00; lefse/pølse sale

June: Tuesday, 6/4; 1:00; Thoreson; member meeting

July: Tuesday, 7/2; 1:00; Thoreson; member meeting
Saturday, 7/27; 10 – 3:00; Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies

[We will be open during the road construction!](#)



Project 2024 Facebook logo



We are going to be so happy driving through Westby in the Fall of 2025 but until then we'll need a lot of patience. (Remember how things were during the construction of the Uff Da Bahn?) The Main Street project will start this spring after the weather breaks. When construction is well underway during June, July and August, you will only be able to get to the Thoreson House Museum from the south on Bekkedal Avenue, coming from the view you see in the photo above. It will take a bit of maneuvering depending on what stage of construction is going on but it will certainly be possible. A Facebook page, [Westby Main St./Hwy 14 Improvement Project 2024](#), will have updates to keep you informed about how to get around town and there will be signs posted everywhere to let you know what intersections are open. We will be here and hope you are, too!

35 YEARS of the WESTBY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

We have a lot to celebrate in 2024! On March 19, 1989, Dorothy Krause, director of the Vernon County Historical Society, met with Ray Bakkum, Robert Becker (Editor of the Westby Times), Julda Call, Elaine Lund, Alma Mikkelsen, and Cloie Neprud to discuss the formation of a historical society in Westby. After that meeting, *The Times* published photos and a short blurb on the front page of the paper asking people to join their efforts. Now, 35 years later, we have over 100 members, a beautiful museum building, and an amazing collection of artifacts that you can see in very professional displays. We are serious about our association with the Wisconsin Historical Society, our practice of museum standards, and our appreciation of our members, donors, and volunteers. We have worked hard to provide countless programs and presentations for schools, nursing homes, local churches, and community groups about “everything history” in the Westby area. We hope to continue this tradition of excellence and professionalism for another 35 years!

30 Years of History Keepers

The WAHS newsletter, *History Keepers*, has had 5 editors since it was first printed in March 1994. Barb Nelson (1994-99), Rita Wells (1999-02), Marlow Nelson (2003-12); Dave Amundson (2012-14), and myself (since Nov. 2014) have done the job. The newsletter has improved as technology has made the process easier – at least we no longer have to “scrapbook” or hunt through magazines for artwork! As I celebrate 10 years of editing (longer than any other editor!) this year, please feel free to contact me with any recommendations you have for improvements. Do you want to read more content, or see more photos? Are there particular time periods or subjects you want to see reported more? And please let me know what you like most about the newsletter so that can be more highlighted! We will continue 4 pages to be cost effective but your input would be helpful and certainly appreciated. - Kathy

2023 TREASURER's REPORT

INCOME	Donations and memorials	\$8,594.91
	Fundraisers	\$13,739.22
	Membership dues	\$763.88
	Transfer from savings	\$4,000.00
	Income Subtotal	\$27,098.01
EXPENSES	Acquisitions for collection	\$655.00
	Advertising	\$329.99
	Computer, website	\$619.10
	Collections management	\$115.40
	Electric and water	\$1,336.44
	Fundraiser expenses	\$7,340.61
	Heat	\$863.64
	Insurance	\$2,711.03
	Lawn care	\$1,395.00
	Maintenance of museum building	\$2,803.66
	Memberships & conferences	\$552.00
	Phone and internet	\$790.60
	Post office	\$490.00
	Printing	\$570.78
	Expenses Subtotal	\$20,573.25



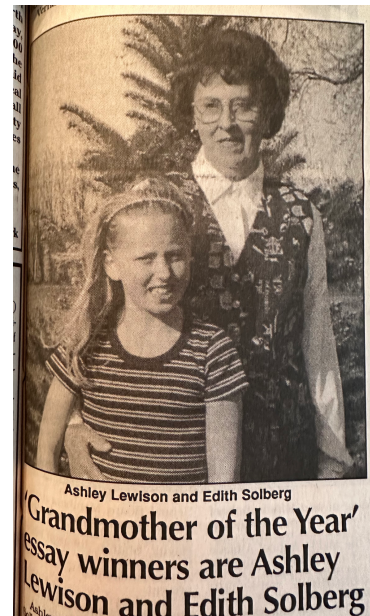
Preserving Westby's past . . .

An Historical Society in Westby? A group of interested citizens is working to make that happen. There will be an informational meeting on Monday, April 10, at 7:30 p.m., in the Westby Community Center (Library Basement), to determine the level of community interest in forming such a society, and how to go about organizing it. The meeting is open to the public, and anyone interested in recording and preserving the history of Westby is encouraged to attend.

"An historical society brings people into the community," says Dorothy Krause, one of the Directors of Vernon County Historical Society, who was asked to help with the formation of a society in Westby. On April 24, Tom McKay, the head of the State Historical Society, will be in Westby for an informal breakfast meeting to discuss the creation of a society in Westby. Time and place will be announced in a coming edition of *The Times*. Clockwise from upper left: View of State Street around 1910; the old Westby Public School; the Milwaukee train rolls through Westby in September of 1909; Birds-eye view of a Westby gone by.

25 Years of Grandparent of the Year

In April 1999, WAHS decided to sponsor a new Syttende Mai event, a Grandparent of the Year contest. Following the “ladies first” rule, Grandmother Edith Solberg was selected as the first winner of this event. Edith’s granddaughter, Ashley Lewison, wrote the winning essay. Since 1999, WAHS has presented 13 Grandmother and 12 Grandfather awards. In any given year, there have been 30 to more than 100 entries! The May issue of our newsletter will have a complete list of the nominating grandchildren, the winners, and the 2024 Grandmother!



2023 WAHS Financial Report

WAHS closed 2023 with \$6,821.15 in the checking account *because of you*, our fabulous members, volunteers and donors, and because of our very successful fundraisers that gave us a profit of \$6,399. The bottom-line cost of paying the building utilities, doing repairs and maintenance, managing the collection, and doing the “business” of WAHS is more than \$13,000/year. Because you send gifts, donations and memorials, you attend our events and purchase pie with ice cream and buy lefse/pølse, we can cover our budget and have a few dollars left over. Thank you for your generosity, your time and effort, your continued membership renewal, and for sharing the good we do with your neighbors and friends. *You* are what makes it possible for WAHS to collect, preserve, promote and communicate the history and heritage of the Westby area!



FEBRUARY FOTO

As our last nod to "101 Years of Fun," this picture features three people probably in the mid to late-1970s. Do you know who they are? Can you tell us at least one thing they were each known for besides supporting the ski tournaments?

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

2024 Officers and Board of Directors

President and Curator – Blaine Hedberg (2024)
Vice President – John Erlandson (2024)
Sec't/Treas & Newsletter – Kathy Anderson (2026)
Board Member – Dorothy Skaaland La Due (2025)
Board Member – Carol Erlandson Navrestad (2025)
Board Member – Marlo Volden (2026)

* Officers are elected at the Annual Meeting



DIFFICULTY IS THE
EXCUSE HISTORY
NEVER ACCEPTS.

Edward R. Murrow
1908 – 1965



Only if it's time for you to renew your membership, will you find a separate invoice and envelope with your "History Keepers" newsletter. Dues are just \$20/person and help us to defray most of the cost of the newsletters! We appreciate your renewal!

Thank You! to our sponsors' continued support to help our general operations budget, our members, our newsletter and our events!



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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

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608.634.4478

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\$20.00 for Annual Dues from each of our WAHS members supports our education efforts, our quarterly newsletter and the Thoreson House Museum building.

WAHS EIN #39-1645990

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