

Museum Notes

by Kristen Parrott, curator
for the week of September 27, 2017

Norwegian-Americans have a couple of good opportunities to learn about their ancestry next week. Genealogist and author Liv Marit Haakenstad of Hamar, Norway, is currently visiting Vernon County, and she will be presenting programs in the area during her stay.

On Tuesday, October 3, at 7PM, Liv Marit will give a program at the Vernon County Museum. Her subject will be “From Norway to the New World: the Immigrant Experience.” She will talk about how and why Norwegians left their hometowns in the 19th and early 20th centuries to move to North America. She will also explain how to use Norwegian emigration records and ships’ passenger arrival lists.

This program is free and open to the public. It will be held in the museum’s wheelchair-accessible conference room. The talk will last about one hour. Refreshments will be served afterwards, including Norwegian treats.

If you are specifically interested in Norwegian immigrants who arrived in the U.S. during the first half of the 19th century, then you can find more information in the five-volume series of books, *Norwegian Immigrants to the United States: A Biographical Directory, 1825-1850*. The museum owns these books, and you are welcome to look at them here.

The series was begun by Gerhard Naeseth, former director of the Vesterheim Genealogical Center, who described the work as his “attempt to record the basic data concerning each of the immigrants who arrived from Norway before 1851,” which totaled about 18,000 people. He “arranged the immigrants in order of arrival, ship by ship,” with volume one covering the years 1825 to 1843, and volume five devoted to just 1850. Fortunately each book has a first name index (Norwegian last names being notoriously changeable), so you don’t have to know which ship your ancestors arrived on.

Continuing with the Norwegian theme, the Westby Area Historical Society is also sponsoring a program with Liv Marit Haakenstad. She will talk about “How Norwegians Celebrate Holidays” on Saturday, October 7, at 2PM, at the Westby Community Center in the lower level of the Bekkum Public Library. You can learn more about Liv Marit Haakenstad, her books, and her genealogical services, at her website, norwegianancestry.com.