



From the Director

But whatever the way you choose to help, trust that everyone at Vesterheim notices and is truly grateful.

Keeping Up Appearances

In the museum world, “keeping up appearances” is not merely the superficial posturing that the phrase has come to suggest. It is, in fact, of crucial importance to a visitor’s overall experience and, in terms of preserving historic structures and housing valuable artifacts, it is at the very heart of any museum’s mission.

There are many ways to contribute to vital projects like general maintenance, building repairs, and temperature and climate control—and many people do—but because these projects are not always the most glamorous ones, such efforts often go unsung. I’d like to remedy that, at least a little, here.

One major way to help us keep up appearances is to volunteer, like the Sons of Norway Norsota Lodge of Eagan, Minnesota, has done, so exceptionally, for 18 years.

Among other projects, Norsota Lodge has scraped and painted buildings in both the Open Air Division and at the Jacobson Farmstead; laid drainage tile; redesigned the Museum Store and inventoried Museum Store items; built and dismantled fences; washed windows; readied thousands and thousands of member communications for mailing; planted, hoed, and raked; installed exhibitions; and moved the library—twice! And, to all reports, they have had a great time doing it. The value of their volunteer services to Vesterheim totals over \$85,000!

Dean and Ann Urness Gesme and their Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Sons of Norway Restoration Lodge have supplied similar service to Vesterheim, often working at the Jacobson Farmstead or preparing mailings.

Some donors, like trustee Dan Huebner of Decorah, Iowa, and Owen and Naomi Bekkum of Madison, Wisconsin, realize that maintenance costs are built into the fabric of museum life and work behind the scenes to help meet them.

Dan Huebner established a maintenance endowment for the Westby-Torgerson Education Center that enables us to perform costly emergency projects like replacing the cables in the building’s freight elevator without overburdening our annual budget. If there is a building at Vesterheim that you particularly love, consider making a contribution to its endowment, or, if

an endowment doesn’t exist yet for that building, think about starting one.

The Bekkums are notable in that they choose to give to projects that no one else might even consider, like replacing the boiler in the Main Building, installing security cameras, and sprucing up the museum exterior with a new coat of paint. These are major contributions to the museum’s mission, but there is no plaque on the museum’s boiler that says “Donated by Owen and Naomi Bekkum,” and no one would see it, really, if there were. Nevertheless, the Bekkums consistently support such essential projects without thought of acknowledgement, and because of them, artifacts are safe and visitors stay warm.

Another way to help in the important work of keeping up appearances is to take an aspect of the museum especially to heart, as Wayne and Dorothy Johnson of Farmington, Missouri, have. Beginning with a family connection to our Valdres House, the Johnsons’ embrace expanded to include the whole Open Air Division. Among other contributions, they established a Valdres House Endowment and underwrote the design and printing of our Valdres House brochure, financed the interpretive signage throughout the Open Air Division, sponsored a special issue of *Vesterheim* magazine focusing on the Open Air Division, and paid to repaint our Bethania Church.

This is only a sampling of many valued friends of Vesterheim who help us keep up appearances in countless ways. Not everyone is as free to contribute at the level of these donors perhaps, but, as an individual, or as a member of a Sons of Norway Lodge or other social group, you can make an important addition to what they’ve begun. Becoming a member of our Compass Club, or making regular donations to our regular Annual Fund appeals, may be the easiest ways of all. But whatever the way you choose to help, trust that everyone at Vesterheim notices and is truly grateful.

We keep up appearances *for* you and *because* of you. By joining with these generous donors, you will enable us to do so long into the future.

Vesterheim

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