



Vesterheim, the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School, welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in the conversation of the American immigrant journey through the lens of the Norwegian-American experience, and to participate in the continual evolution of traditional folk art as it meets new influences. Vesterheim is dedicated to building community and creating experiences by offering innovative and interactive exhibits, classes, publications, and programs at the dynamic campus and park in scenic Decorah, Iowa, and online at vesterheim.org.

This world-class museum and folk-art school shares the stories of over 33,000 artifacts and 12 historic buildings, showcases astounding historic and contemporary Norwegian and Norwegian-American folk and fine art, and cultivates living traditions.

You don't have to be Norwegian-American to enjoy all that Vesterheim has to offer. Vesterheim invites you to explore the ongoing story of all immigrants to the United States and encourages you to enjoy the objects, exhibitions, and programs through your own lens, your own story.

Museum History

Norwegian immigrants called America their *Vesterheim*, their Western Home. In 1877, Norwegian Americans began collecting and preserving objects at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, documenting their chapter of the immigrant story, making them pioneers in the preservation of cultural diversity in America. That early collection has grown into an independent not-for-profit museum accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

Vesterheim started the Folk Art School in 1967 with two classes – Hardanger embroidery, taught by Carola Schmidt of Decorah, and rosemaling, taught by Sigmund Aarseth from Norway. The program now includes over 100 annual classes, both onsite and online, in rosemaling, painting, woodworking, fiber arts, metalworking, language and culture, food traditions, jewelry, music, and more. The program also features *The National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition*, a judged show of work by contemporary folk artists; study tours to Norway; an instructor apprentice program; and family activities.

Ties to Norway

Ties between Norwegians and Norwegian Americans have always remained close, so it would be natural for Norway and its cultural institutions to maintain a connection to Vesterheim throughout the museum's history. Norway has been generous with its gifts of artifacts, and many folk artists have come to Vesterheim to teach traditional techniques at the Folk Art School. Norway's Royal Family and government officials have visited the museum many times, and His Majesty King Harald V is the museum's Honorary Board Chair.

A significant gift of historical objects from Norwegian museums for "the Norwegian people in America" came in 1925 to mark the 100th anniversary of Norwegian emigration. The gift, which took two years to assemble, ultimately filled 23 crates when it crossed over the ocean to the United States in 1927. The coordinator of the entire project was Anders Sandvig, founder of the Maihaugen collection in Lillehammer, Norway. Sandvig expressed his purpose in organizing such an effort by writing, "May these objects work so that the Norwegian-ness in you will not die too soon, and the connection with the homeland will because of this be tighter. Receive this gift as proof that we follow you all in our hearts, even though the big Atlantic Ocean parts us."

Membership

Support Vesterheim and receive great benefits through the museum's membership program. With levels for individuals of all financial capacities, Vesterheim membership offers free admission to the museum; discounts to Folk Art School classes and the Museum Store; invitations to member-exclusive events; a subscription to the popular, full-color Vesterheim magazine, and more!

Connect

Explore vesterheim.org to shop online in the Museum Store; register for Folk Art School classes; and sign up for memberships and email newsletters. Vesterheim's website also includes virtual galleries; 360° views of inside museum buildings; online exhibits; inspiring stories, videos, and photos on the blog; a calendar of events; ways to donate and volunteer; and more.

Also find Vesterheim on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube.

For more information, check the website, call (563) 382-9681, or write Vesterheim, 502 W. Water St., P.O. Box 379, Decorah, IA, 52101-0379.