

## Museum Notes

for the week of January 25 – 31, 2026

by Kristen Parrott, curator

Local African-American history will be the topic of our next program on Tuesday, February 3, at 7PM, at the Vernon County Museum and History Center. February is Black History Month, and the program will get the month off to a good start!

Vernon County is not usually thought of as having much racial diversity, but in the 1800's we were home to the largest rural African-American population in Wisconsin. This population lived for the most part in and around the community of Cheyenne Valley, which is located generally along Highway 33 in the Town of Forest. Black families in Cheyenne Valley sometimes had connections to Black families in La Crosse and Sparta.

The speaker for the evening will be Denise Christy, who is part of the Enduring Families Project. This project is a program of the La Crosse County Historical Society, and was founded to create public theater based on the lives of early African-American settlers to La Crosse County and to Cheyenne Valley in Vernon County.

Denise will talk about brothers Thomas and Ashley Shivers, and about Birletta Waldon Loving, all of whom spent part of their lives in Cheyenne Valley. Thomas and Ashley were born into slavery, and Birletta was born into a free family.

The evening will also include a short presentation of the Vernon County Historical Society's 2026 budget, as required by our bylaws. This will be brief and informative, followed by a chance for VCHS members to vote on the budget. We are facing a difficult year financially, because our income has dropped while our expenses are going up, and we want to be transparent about the situation. To sweeten the task, hot chocolate will be served!

Everyone is welcome to attend the program. A suggested donation of \$2.50 each will help us to defray costs. Programs are held in the wheelchair-accessible conference room on the first floor of the building. The upper floors of the building, which are now heated, will be open for those who wish to tour the exhibits before or after the program.