



# Langlade County Historical Society Newsletter

*Fall 2011*

**Curator:**  
Mary Kay Wolf  
**Directors:**  
Dean Blazek  
Steve Bradley  
Nancy Bugni  
Glenn Bugni  
Judy Grimm  
Lisa Haefs  
Joe Hermolin  
Jim Klapste  
Terri Torgerson

## Annual Meeting: A Speaker with a Unique Story

The Langlade County Historical Society will be holding its annual meeting and fall banquet on Thursday, November 17.

In addition to dinner and a short business meeting, we will have a guest speaker with an interesting biography and unique story to tell.

Bud McBain spent a career in print and broadcast journalism, beginning in World War II when he was one of the first journalists to enter Hitler's bunker.

He got into journalism while in the army, when it was discovered that

he had a most valuable skill-- typing. It was his army colonel who suggested he try journalism as a career after the war and got him a job with NBC, working at Radio City in New York. He worked with "Voice of America" and also knew and worked with some of the early pioneers of television. He worked in Neenah and Oshkosh before retiring to a cabin on Pickerel Lake on land that had been owned by his parents who ran a resort.

Those wishing to attend Bud McBain's presentation but not the dinner may come to the Knights of Columbus Hall at 7p.m.

## Antigo Visual Arts Puts on a Show

The Antigo Visual Arts (AVA) Association has been partnering with the museum to establish a venue in Antigo for local artists to display their work. Initial fundraising efforts have been successful and display panels have been set up for the designated space in the museum. While much remains to be done, an opening show has been scheduled.

On October 5 the gallery will display the work of Antigo native artist Frank Vavruska. Frank Vavruska was a renowned artist who worked mainly in the 1950s. Ed Vavruska has loaned some of his brother's works to the gallery for an exhibit to run from

October 5 to October 25.

On Saturday November the AVA will mount an exhibit of works by contemporary artists in the Antigo area and the works will be for sale. The show will include paintings, photography, ceramics, and jewelry.

A December show is planned for smaller items that are suitable for Christmas gifts.

In the new year, shows are being planned including an exhibit of art by school students and Boys and Girls Club participants. In the spring an exhibit of quilts and baskets is being planned.

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The evening will begin with cocktails at 5 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. There will be a brief business meeting at 6:45 with an update and reelection of officers. The presentation will begin shortly after 7 p.m. Details are on a separate page inside this newsletter.

Details will be forthcoming and may be viewed at the AVA's web site:

[www.antigovisualarts.org](http://www.antigovisualarts.org).



*In spring of 2009 the museum hosted a small exhibit of Frank Vavruska's work. His brother Ed viewed the exhibit, accompanied by museum curator Mary Kay Wolf and board president Joe Hermolin.*

## Antigo Island: A Summer Escape for People from Antigo

An annual tradition is just now reaching its seasonal end. Going to the cottage dates back over a hundred years in Antigo. In 1896 eleven prominent citizens of Antigo, which then had a population of about 6,000, formed the Antigo Island Club. Their mission was “to purchase grounds, erect buildings thereon, to own and have such boats and other paraphernalia as the club shall from time to time see fit to own.”

They did not have to travel far to find their ideal piece of land. Antigo Island is a wooded, 23-acre island at the south end of Pelican Lake with a single main path around its perimeter.

The Village of Pelican Lake consisted of fewer than a dozen buildings and was accessible only by

railroad. Not too much earlier the land was occupied by the Ojibwe. There were some relics of a former Ojibwe village on the island as well as some Indian mounds which predated the Ojibwe.

The club came into possession of the land by quit claim deed of \$550. Club members were issued stock certificates and allotted parcels of land 20’ wide which they could clear and erect a tent or cottage. In addition to 18 cottages and several boathouses, there was a club house and a janitor’s cottage. The first janitor, Ed Resing, was hired in 1897 for \$300 per year.

Some of Antigo’s prominent citizens were in the club including Thomas Lynch, Antigo’s first mayor and renowned Antigo photographer Arthur J. Kingsbury. It is



*Top: The caretaker of Antigo Island  
Bottom: A view of the trail along the perimeter of the island and some cottages. Photos are from the museum’s collection of Kingsbury’s works.*

thanks to Kingsbury we have many picture postcards of the cottages on Antigo Island.

## Dr. Steffens: A Family Tradition of Public Service

The tradition of combining medical practice with community service in Antigo goes back to the city’s early history. Dr. Lyman Steffen was one of the city’s first physicians and was instrumental in founding its first “house” hospital. He also was involved in political affairs in many capacities including two terms as mayor.

His daughter, Elizabeth Steffen, born in Antigo, was no less committed to community service. She graduated from medical school in 1944, a time when few women took up the profession and practiced obstetrics and gynecology in Racine for 41 years. She was a trailblazer for women in medi-

cal societies, helped found Family Planning Association of Racine (a forerunner to Planned Parenthood) and was a strong supporter of health care for the disadvantaged. On her retirement in 1990, she donated her entire office to an organization that provided health care to the needy. In the 1960s she volunteered to serve on the U.S. S. Hope, a ship which travelled the world over helping train doctors and treat patients in underdeveloped countries.

In 1966, Elizabeth Steffen and her sister donated their old family home in Antigo at 503 Fifth Avenue for use by various non-profit community organizations.



*Antigo native Dr. Elizabeth Steffen was a pioneer in establishing a place for women in medicine and committed to helping the disadvantaged.*

*In the 1960s she served for 9 weeks on the U.S.S. Hope, a ship funded by People-to-People Health Foundation, a private non-profit organization. At a time of cold war tensions she not only helped the sick but improved America’s reputation abroad. She is shown here during her tour in Brazil.*



# The Old Hospital: Prologue to New Developments

With a new hospital taking shape in Antigo we look back to how medical practice developed in Antigo:



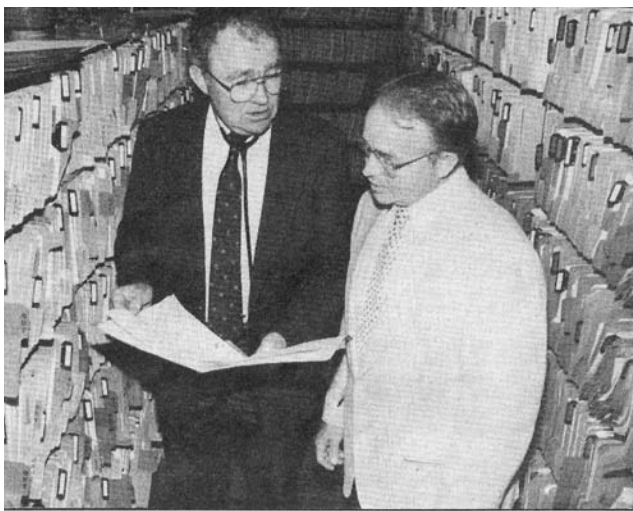
Left: One of Antigo's first hospitals on Fifth Avenue at Elm Street.



Right: An early hospital on Superior Street at First Avenue.



Langlade Memorial when it opened in 1933 (left) and after a major addition in 1954 (right).



Left: Doctors John McKenna and Ted Fox examine records in the 1960s. Right: Nurses tending to the Servi triplets, born in 1935.



**Note:** The museum has prepared a 30-minute DVD video describing the history of medical practice in Langlade County. It is available for viewing at the museum.

# Hunting and Fishing in the Northwoods



Fishing and hunting have long been major attractions, drawing visitors to the northwoods year round.

The lakes created by the retreating glaciers provided a habitat for game fish. Fishing possibilities increased greatly thanks to a pair of researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Professors Chancey Juday and E. A. Birge studied fresh water ecology in Madison's Lake Mendota and other nearby lakes almost 100 years ago. Together they helped redefine the study of freshwater biology and limnology. In the 1920's their studies expanded to include northern lakes. They established a research station at Trout Lake and fish hatchery in Vilas County.

## Helping the Museum

The Langlade County Historical Society is grateful to all individuals and organizations that have helped us with financial support over the years, since we moved into the former library. The Society maintains museum displays and houses archives used by researchers. We also maintain the Deleglise cabin, as well as the steam locomotive and the railroad park.

These local features are enjoyed by local residents and visitors.

In addition, the society works with

People will soon putting away their fishing gear and getting out their blaze orange in preparation for the annual ritual of the deer hunt.

In the early 20th century, market hunting and increased human settlement had decimated deer populations in the eastern states and many mid western states including southern Wisconsin.

But this was not true of northern Wisconsin. Decades of logging had altered the environment and improved the habitat. Also the expansion of the railroad into northern Wisconsin enabled people from southern Wisconsin and out of state to participate in hunting. In fact the railroad was necessary since the roads were so sparse and in poor

the schools on programs about local history and presents programs to the general public at a variety of venues, including the public library and seniors homes.

Most workers are volunteers, but we need the organization and continuity of a staff person to coordinate the operation. In addition, the building is expensive to maintain. At present we operate at a deficit.

If you believe that preserving our

condition. Deer sometimes had to be carried 20 or 30 miles from the hunting camp to a railway depot from where they would be shipped. The 1904 "Official Railroad Map of Wisconsin" promoted northern Wisconsin as a sportsman's paradise.

In the first decade of the 20th century, the season ran for 20 days. Initially hunters could take two deer of each sex, but in 1909 one deer of either sex became the law. Wisconsin residents paid a \$1 license fee while out-of-state hunters paid \$30.

Many hunting practices have changed but the ritual of hunting camp has a long history in northern Wisconsin.

history is an important part of community vitality, we ask you to consider donations of cash, stocks, bonds, or mutual funds. Memorial gifts offer a lasting legacy of loved ones. Annuities and trusts may be established to benefit you in your lifetime and the Historical Society in your name someday.

For further information, contact curator Mary Kay Wolf or any board member.



## Agriculture in Langlade County

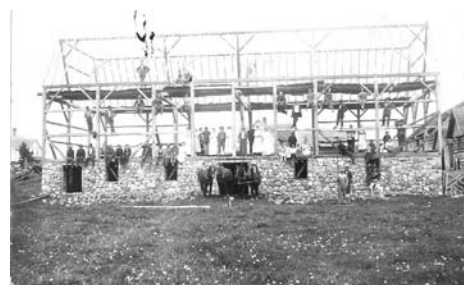
Langlade County boasts of being the source of the state soil: Antigo Silt Loam. The area supports a booming agricultural economy which began around the turn of the 20th century, once the lumbermen cleared the trees that brought them to the northwoods. Pioneer farmers often paid for their land by selling off the trees to lumber companies.

Mrs. Fredrick Kohn (born in 1901) recalled the days of horse drawn and hand plows when major crops were wheat, corn, and oats. Milking was done by hand, then strained, and put in milk cans. The cans were kept in cement tanks full of cold water to keep them cool.

Sometimes in winter the water froze making it hard to retrieve the milk cans.

Julius Jilek, born in 1903, recalled growing up on a potato farm north of Antigo. His parents started on 5 acres and later expanded with the purchase of 120 acres for \$270. Initially planting and harvesting were done by hand; but by the 1920s, the family had a horse drawn one-row planter and by the 1930s they achieved the luxury of a tractor with a bagger on it.

*Stories of early farm days were taken from an oral history project of Mary Hermann and Antigo High School students in 1977 and 1978.*



*Top: Farming near Bryant before mechanical assistance.*

*Bottom: A barn raising was always an event that brought neighbors together. A feast usually followed completion of the work.*

## Thank You:

**Dean Blazek:** Framed newspaper article listing local WWII servicemen who died in action

**Janice Cahak:** Fan, barber clippers, camera

**Lynn Fermanich:** Sheet music

**Andrew Fleischman:** Burlap Sugar bags for Gunkels Bakery

**Jacqueline Gunderson:** Butter churn

**Don Guse:** Antigo City Band cap from 1940s

**William Kelly:** Books

**Jim Klapste:** Movie lights and splicer, cameras

**Margaret Klessig:** A 48 star flag

**Mary Sue Koepfel:** 1901 wedding dress and photo, plat books a store ledger and material from 1882 Kaufman Store in Phlox, 1932 Mattoon school memorabilia

**Laura Lazewski:** Model of the Antigo Depot (In memory of Barney, Doris, and Tony Lazewski)

**Robert Marine, Jr.:** Ad for Bob-O-Link roller rink at Post Lake

**Jean Marling:** Photos

**Karla Martinsen:** Sheet music

**Joann Norem:** 46 & 48 star flags, tennis racket, photos, football pants

**Donna Murray Osness:** 1913 wedding dress

**Jeff Robinson:** Letters of a 107th TMB soldier from WWI

**Angela Schwartz:** Margaret Studio items

**Eleanor Parsons Thorpe:** History of the Antigo Garden Club

**Todd Toburen:** WI Civil Air Corps certificate of his father Clarence

**Laurie Toth:** 1923 AHS yearbook

**Marlene Zerbst:** School arithmetic book

### New Members:

Hope and Gary Fleming  
Natalie Fleming

### Special Thanks:

To Northern Advertising for printing several posters for the museum

### Monetary Donations

C.A.R. Thrift Store  
Langlade Cty Genealogical Society

### Monetary Donations

*In Memory of Helen Winski* from Elvira Frisch

*In Memory of Lee Dewan* from Ludene Dewan and family, from Dean and Polly Blazek, from Dave and Jenny Schlundt, from Frank Krom  
*In Memory of Barney Lazewski* from Dean and Polly Blazek

*In Memory of Jerry Pennington, Vernita Bahr, Carolyn Thomas, Lois Wesley, Hazel Johnson, Ruth Schalk, Marie Berner and in honor of Lucille Regni's 90th birthday* from Jim and Connie Hubatch

The Langlade County Historical Society recently lost four friends of the museum. We note the passing of Barney Lazewski a past board member; Marie Berner who, through the Antigo Daily Journal, did much to support the museum; and long-time members and supporters Lee Dewan and Helen Peters.

**Address:**

404 Superior St., Antigo, WI 54409  
Phone: (715) 627-4464  
E-mail: lchs@dwave.net  
web site: www.langladehistory.com

**Museum Hours:**

9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
October 1 to May 1  
Thursday to Saturday

May 1 to October 1  
Tuesday to Saturday

**Membership Dues**

Individual, 1 year: \$25  
Individual, 3 years: \$50  
Family, 1 year: \$30  
Family, 3 years: \$70  
Junior (18 or younger), 1 year: \$3  
Business, 1 year: \$100  
Life Member: \$250

**Upcoming Events:**

AVA Art Gallery opening: October 5: Frank Vavruska Remembered, in the museum  
During October: A percentage of sales made on oil changes at Parsons will go to the museum.  
November 17: Annual Meeting (Details Inside)  
November 19: Museum volunteers will be serving refreshments at intermission at the Civic Music Concert  
Santa Claus Comes to the Museum: Watch for details



**Items from the Museum:** Roller skating rinks were once a popular place for young people to spend an evening. In fact, the Antigo Opera House for a time ran a roller skating rink in its basement.

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404 Superior Street  
Antigo WI, 54409