

Fall 2021

LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



An Invitation to an Open House

The Langlade County Historical Society and Economic Development of Langlade County are hosting a party and all are invited. For the past 18 months we have worked to realize a plan to renovate the building. Although there are still a few finishing touches needed, we have been open since mid-June and would like to invite our generous supporters to see what we have accomplished. On Wednesday October 20th we will host an open house at the museum from 5:00pm to 7:00pm, serving light refreshments and guiding

visitors through our remodeled building. Changes include an elevator, new restrooms, improved décor, and new furnaces and air conditioning.

An important change is the addition of a Welcome Center with information about sites and activities in Antigo and the county.

We hope community agrees that it was all worth the effort. Come to our party- meet our staff,

volunteers, supporters, and take a ride in our elevator. We encourage attendees to wear face masks.



We'll Meet Again: Annual Membership Meeting

The Langlade County Historical Society will hold its annual meeting in November. Last year the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to cancel the meeting and hold our election for board directors by mail. This year we are cautiously optimistic that we can gather in person.

The meeting will take place at the museum on Thursday, November 18th. We will gather for light refreshments and socializing at 5:00 pm. There will be an opportunity to tour our remodeled building and view photos displaying how those changes evolved. This will be followed by a brief business meeting at 6:30 pm.

It has been a busy year, in spite of our shutdown. A plan, several years in the making, has finally been

implemented (with a few finishing touches still to come). We are now compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and have improved the decor on the first floor and in the Antigo Visual Arts Gallery on the second floor. Heating and cooling throughout the building has been improved. A major change is the space dedicated to a new Welcome Center, managed by the Economic Development Corporation of Langlade County. The Welcome Center contains information and displays of points of interest in Antigo and throughout the county.

The only official business will be the election of three of our nine-member board. Members whose terms are expiring are Nancy Bugni, Joe Hermolin, and Diane Zuelke. All have agreed to serve another 3-year

term. Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

Please respond, using the insert in this newsletter, so that we know how many people to expect. We encourage attendees to wear face masks.

All donations are tax deductible.

CURATOR:

Mary Kay Morrissey Wolf

DIRECTORS:

Dean Blazek
Fran Brown
Nancy Bugni
Glenn Bugni
Carol Feller Gottard
Chris Haedtke
Lisa Haefs
Joe Hermolin
Diane Zuelke

THANK YOU

Items Donated:

Rebecca Kassis: Postcards, chalkware, yearbooks, books, misc. items

Memorial Donations:

In memory of Robert Duerwachter
Sandra Dorff
Michael & Janice Farmer
Elizabeth & Richard Hohl
Robert & Jon Ingle
Lakeland Officials Association
Ehren Miller
Ronald & Kathleen Mueller
Adrienne Roffers
Patricia & Dewey Schiele
Susan Scott Stanford
Gloria Wegner

Monetary Donations:

Braun Woodlands Foundation

Member Renewal:

Susan Johnson

New Members:

Dan & Kimberly Donarski

To Let's Make History Fund from July 9, 2021 to Sept. 17, 2021

Julie Blazek
Ron and Nancy Blood
CoVantage Credit Union
Carol Feller-Gottard
Volm Companies
Wagner Oil

LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winter is No Time to Hibernate

Beginning in October the museum will change to reduced hours – open on Thursday, through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. The Welcome Center will be open for more extended hours than the museum but, at this time, those hours have not yet been determined.

But we will still be as busy as ever. A dedicated volunteer, Pat Kennedy, has restarted tours for elementary school students. She had developed a program geared to fourth graders where Wisconsin history is emphasized. Two years ago, the museum hosted school groups to learn about the history specific to this region. The program included content about the Native Americans who were here first, the pioneering Deleglise family, and the importance of logging and the railroad. The program was well received but had to be curtailed last year due to the pandemic. This year, schools have expressed a renewed interest and, barring setbacks related to Covid-19, organized school tours will occur again.

Museum curator Mary Kay Wolf and volunteers continue to work on rearranging and improving displays after the changes resulting from our remodeling. We are also reorganizing our archives to make them more accessible to researchers, answering questions that come by phone, mail, or email, continue to prepare stories for our social media outlets, and make ourselves available, when possible and by special appointment, for researchers.

We are still searching for volunteers who are willing to help organize, digitize, and catalog our archives or attend to the desk of the Welcome Center. No experience is necessary. With minimal training you can help our historical society preserve and promote our history. This vital resource in the community depends on its volunteers.



Mary Kay Wolf (left) and Pat Kennedy (right) at the museum's display of logging- an important part of the history of the Northwoods.

Needed Help at Harvest Time

In an agricultural area such as much of Langlade County, fall is a busy time when workers are needed for harvest. In the early 1940s, that help came from an unusual source- German Prisoners of War (POWs). During World War II there were several German POW camps and Antigo was home to one of them. When they were eventually repatriated to their homeland, they left behind many pleasant memories, harvested fields and canned crops that likely would have been wasted due to manpower shortages caused by the war effort.

Keeping captured German soldiers in Europe became a logistics problem and it was decided to ship many stateside on returning empty Liberty Ships. Eventually Wisconsin housed about 20,000 POWs in close to 40 camps. Some Wisconsinites were understandably cool or even harsh towards the German soldiers in their midst but most accepted these men as being trapped in a war they did not choose.

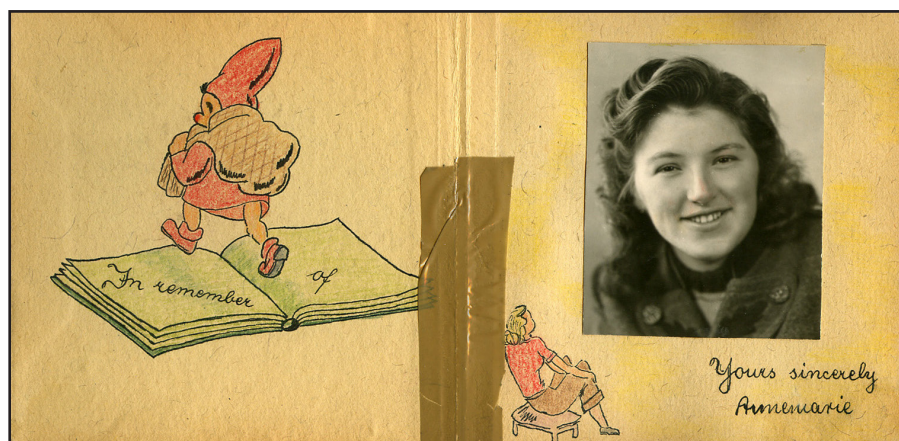
In 1945, towards the end of the war, Antigo had up to 150 POWs, 45 in a canning factory and the rest working in the potato fields. They worked when other, local, sources of labor were unavailable. Local farmer Eugene Lukas was confident that “the Army wasn’t going to send us anyone dangerous.” He was very pleased with the work performed by the three German prisoners he hired, with guards dropping the men off at 5:00am “...then going to sit in the tavern in Neva all day.” He went on: “They were burly young fellows, good looking kids and they knew how to work...Four or five high school kids

wouldn’t do half the work that two of those guys could do.” Elda Schrader remembered the POWs at her father’s farm on Highway 52. “If it hadn’t been for them, dad would have had a real hard time getting his potatoes in.”

On Aug. 6th 1945 the Antigo Daily Journal described the living conditions as comfortable but austere, both for prisoners and their guards. “A field is available near the enclosure where the prisoners play soccer, which consists of kicking but not carrying the ball... The prisoners also play chess, ping pong and other games.”

Captain Claghorne who was in charge of the Antigo camp spoke to a Rotary Club gathering at the time: “Prisoners of war are treated according to the rules laid down at the Geneva conference. We strive to keep good relations with them, but they are not babied.” He added that the men were not kept under constant guard because “They were not likely to run away.”

With the end of the war many farmers in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest continued to worry about future harvests. There was extensive lobbying to allow POWs to stay longer but President Truman ordered them home by the end of 1946. Elda Schrader said that the POWs working on her parents’ farm stayed in touch for years and that the Schrader family sent them clothing as Germany recovered from the devastation of the war.



After the war, Ann Marie Kuntz, in Munich, sent the Shrader family a small book of photos and notes as a Thank You for taking care of her brother while he was a POW in Antigo.

Langlade County Historical Society received \$10,000 grant to ‘reconnect with history’ following pandemic

For 15 months, the Langlade County Historical Society was forced to keep its museum doors closed to the public, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That severely battered the Society’s operating revenues, which are funded largely through visitor donations and grants from local businesses.

Now, a substantial grant from the Wisconsin Humanities is aiding its recovery.

“We are excited to announce we have received a Wisconsin Humanities Recovery Grant from Wisconsin Humanities,” Joe Hermolin, Society president, said. “Our project, WHRG-Reconnecting with our history, supports Wisconsin Humanities’ mission to strengthen the roots of community life through educational and cultural programs that inspire civic participation and individual imagination.”

The grant is earmarked toward regular museum operating expenses, including partial salary for the curator—the only paid staff member—along with utility and social media costs.

“This will also allow the museum to continue to evolve its social media outreach, allowing guests to access a variety of museum documents and displays remotely”, Hermolin said. As the pandemic made clear, the ability to reach members and guests through online platforms is key to

continuing the museum’s mission of sharing and promoting the unique history of Langlade County and the surrounding area.

The museum, a former Carnegie Library has, for the past three decades, served as the clearinghouse for information and artifacts relating to the history of Antigo, Langlade County, and the surrounding areas. It is also home to the Antigo Visual Artists art gallery, featuring a revolving series of exhibits featuring local artists, with many pieces available for purchase.

New this year, the museum has become home to the Welcome Center operated by the Langlade County Economic Development Corporation. The center offers information on activities and trails waiting to be explored in an attractive setting. Maps and brochures are available in the vestibule around-the-clock. Travelers are also invited inside during working hours to visit with staff, watch videos on county attractions and plan their visit with help from a huge interactive map.

In Wisconsin, 52 historical societies, museums, libraries, and other nonprofits were awarded \$442,000 in Wisconsin Humanities Recovery Grant funds to help the state prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the pandemic. The awards represent the first round of funds provided to Wisconsin Humanities

by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.”

“We received 114 applications expressing more than \$1.6 million in need.” Dena Wortzel, Executive Director of Wisconsin Humanities, said. “We weighed factors including need, location, the strength of their public humanities work, the audience that organizations serve, and how they would use these funds to help them address the impacts of the pandemic.

These funds will help organizations with everything from salary support and utility bills to improving access through digitization of collections and programming, she stressed.

“We saw so much need,” Wortzel said. “We hope these funds can help these Wisconsin nonprofits that provide cultural programming remain resilient as we try to emerge from the pandemic.”

Wisconsin Humanities supports projects that strengthen the roots of community life through educational and cultural programs that inspire civic participation and individual imagination.

The Spring Brook Trail is a great addition for bicyclists, joggers, and walkers in Antigo. It also features some important aspects of Antigo's history.

Top left: The Fourth Ave. dam, rebuilt in 1936 replaced the original, built in 1879, that created Antigo Lake

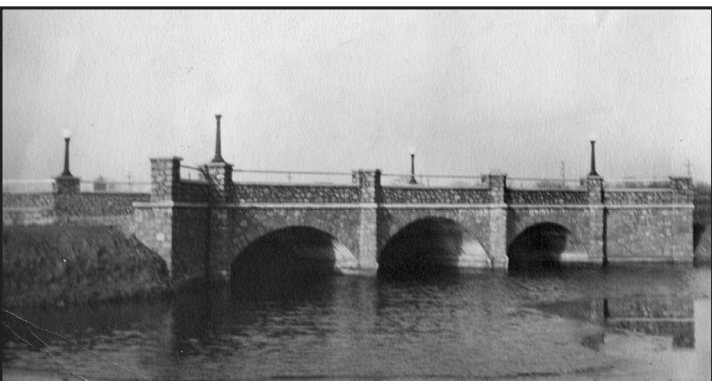
Top right: One of the many sawmills that lined the north shore of the lake.

Middle left: In the 1930s ice was harvested from the lake for use in iceboxes in summer

Middle right: The lake was a favorite spot for ice skating.

Lower left: The Hudson St. Bridge was one of 10, and grandest, bridges built in the 1930s as a New Deal project

Lower right: Today's walking trail skirts the lake and follows Spring Brook.



ADDRESS:

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Email: lchs@dwave.net
web site: www.langladehistory.com

MUSEUM HOURS:

October 1 to May 1,
Thursday to Saturday

May 1 to October 1,
Tuesday to Saturday

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

Wed. Oct. 20: 5pm to 7pm The museum and Welcome Center will host an open house, with light refreshments. Come tour our remodeled building and meet staff and volunteers.

Thurs. Nov. 18: 5pm Annual meeting: A summary of what's been accomplished in the past 15 months, light refreshments, a brief business meeting. See insert in this newsletter.

ITEM FROM THE MUSEUM:

Welcome Center Table

White Lake based and nationally recognized designer Tom Gallenberg created this table for the new Welcome Center. The graphic design was by Becca Kaegi.



404 Superior Street
Antigo WI, 54409