

The care and preservation of Antigo's history

By **JOE HERMOLIN**
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The city of Antigo has been a pioneer in the state of Wisconsin for its historic preservation efforts. In 1914 the downtown was rapidly growing. But the Deleglise cabin (the home of the city's first resident family), which was built in 1877 and occupied in 1878, stood in the way of progress. It was situated on the banks of Spring Brook and Kellogg's Pond (now Antigo Lake) somewhere near where Lakeside Market now stands. Rather than tear down the cabin the city decided to move it to the grounds of the Carnegie Library. The Wisconsin Historical Society believes this is the first instance of a Wisconsin local community's efforts to preserve its history.

Interest in historic preservation prompted a group to assemble as early as 1921 but it wasn't until 1929, with the momentum of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Antigo that the group established the Langlade County Historical Society. It was located in the second floor of the Carnegie Library with Judge Parsons as president, Edward Goebel (publisher of a local German newspaper) as vice president, Sophie Leslie as secretary and Earle Holman as treasurer.

Sophie Leslie was a daughter of Francis and Mary Deleglise and, along with her sister Anna Morrissey, were childhood residents of the original log cabin. They were both very active in the early days of the Society and contributed many artifacts and historic documents still on view and referenced today. Earle Holman



Provided by the
Langlade County Historical Society.
To donate, volunteer or become a
member, call 715-627-4464.
Visit the museum complex at
Superior Street and Seventh Avenue
or check out the Website
at www.langladehistory.com.

Our History



In 1914 Antigo's first home, the Deleglise cabin, stood in the way of downtown development. Rather than tear it down the city put it on log rollers and wheeled it down the road to the library.

was a news editor at the Antigo Daily Journal and would go on to serve as secretary for 47 years. His newspaper articles about Langlade County history are still referred to by researchers in the museum.

When the library opened its doors in 1905 the second floor was set aside for a Normal School to train elementary school teachers but they soon outgrew the space and had a separate building erected across the street in 1926 (now the Boys and Girls Club). The Society moved in and used the space for displays and public lectures on local history.

Over several decades the Society continued to operate but became a more formal organization in 1974 when it obtained federal 501(c)3 tax exempt status. In 1983 the museum had outgrown its space and moved to St. John's Convent. But in 1991 the church wanted to use that space and the museum had to find a new home so it moved into a building of the Antigo Co-op Credit Union, then at 619 Sixth Ave. near where the Heinzen Pavilion now sits.

Soon afterward the museum was very fortunate to receive a bequest of \$200,000 from the estate of Helen Tomany. She gave the same amount to the city

library. The library, which had occupied its Carnegie building since 1905, moved into new quarters in 1997.

It has been said that "You can't go home again." But the Society proved that wrong. The board of directors at the time was both visionary and energetic. They arranged to purchase the Carnegie Library building from the city and financed and staffed its operation as a museum, this time taking over the entire building. Many people worked hard to make this possible but it is worth noting one in particular, Ed Morrissey who was the grandson of Anna Morrissey, one of the founders of the organization, and great-grandson of Francis and Mary Deleglise, founders of Antigo.

One of the first major undertakings of the Society in its new home was a major fund-raiser to restore the Deleglise log cabin built over 100 earlier and situated on the library grounds since 1914. About 10 years later the Society mounted a second major campaign to acknowledge the important legacy of the railroad in Antigo's history. It was arranged to purchase and restore a locomotive. Both these additions to the museum grounds have proved to be popular sites for visitors as well as the local com-

munity—especially school groups.

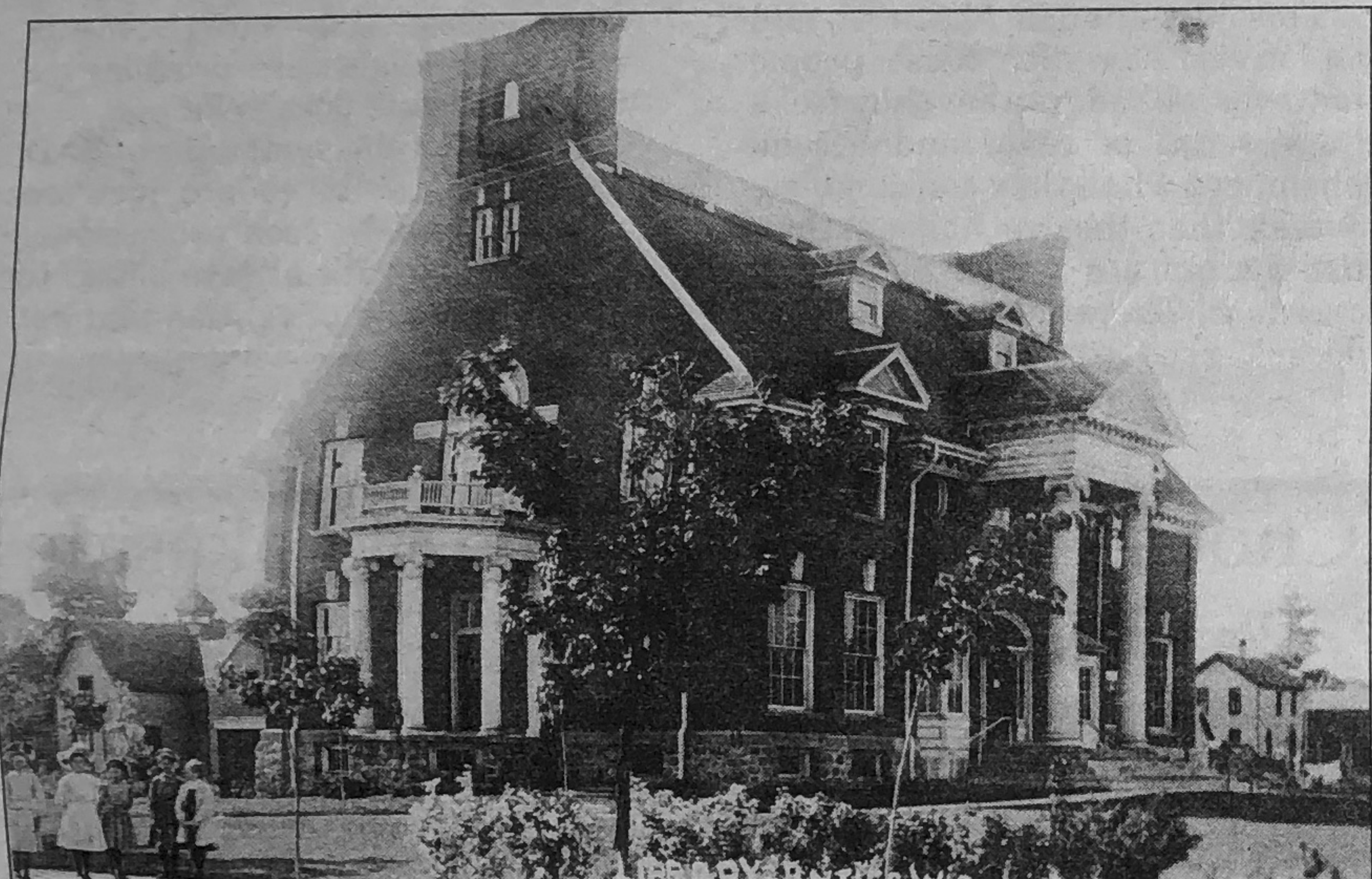
In the past 20 years building repairs have been necessary. These include storm window repairs, heating and air conditioning updates, and a new roof. In 2007 Society entered into a partnership with the Antigo Visual Arts to provide space for local artists to display and sell their works and to provide opportunities for the public to view art.

The Society is quite proud of the building itself. It is a Carnegie Library and was designed by a prominent Wisconsin architect, Alan Conover, who was based in Madison and the first professor of civil engineering at the UW-Madison. He designed Antigo's library late in his career. Andrew Carnegie funded the library along with over 1,700 others throughout the country, Canada and the United Kingdom, 63 in Wisconsin alone. Very few of the buildings still stand and Antigo's still looks much like it did in 1905 and is still open to the public, albeit repurposed as a museum. In 1974 it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register was only established in 1966 so an Antigo building was early in the game of getting landmark recognition at the national

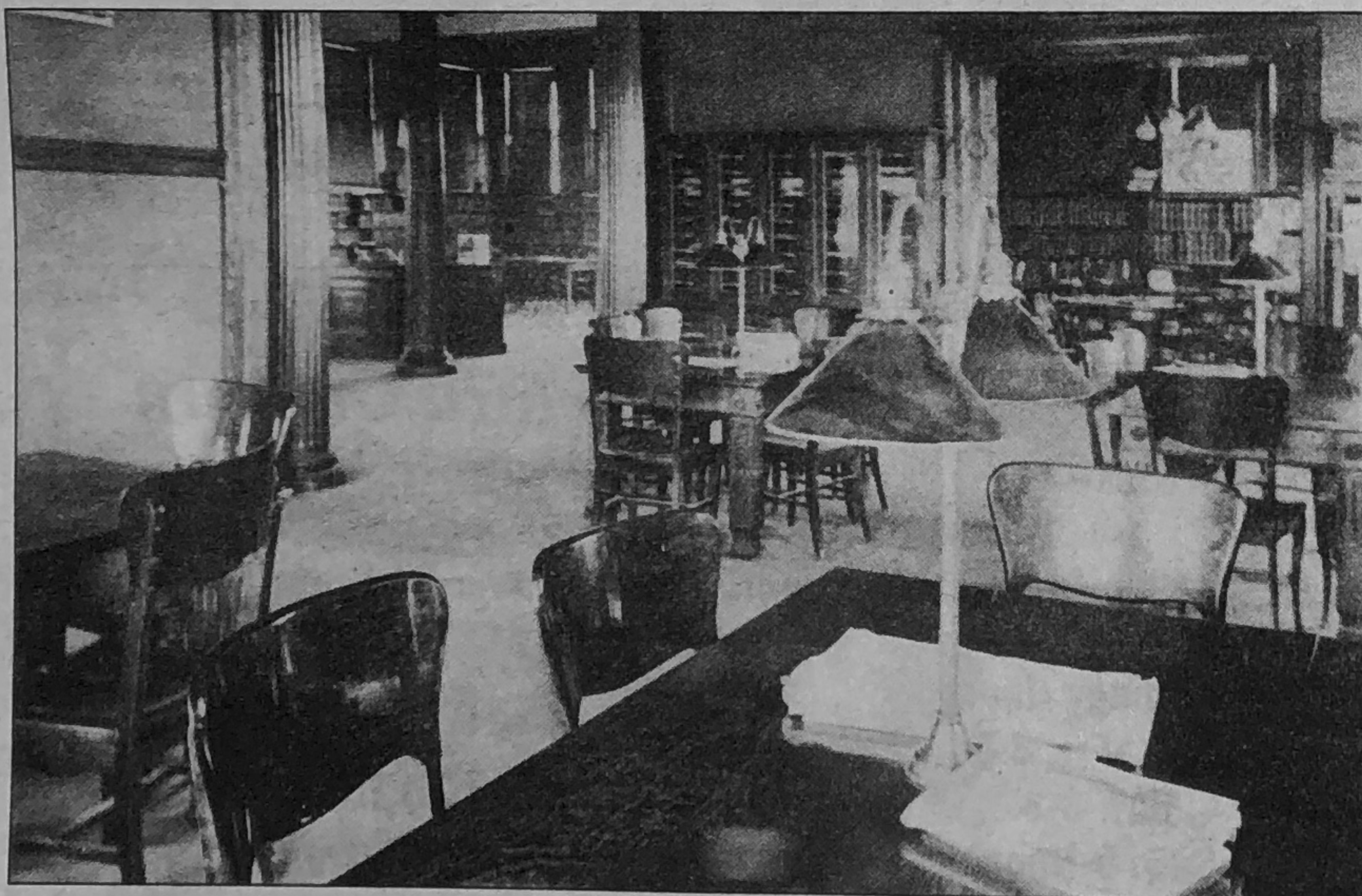
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Construction began in 1903 and the library opened to the public in 1905.



The library was designed by Alan Conover, a prominent Wisconsin architect and built by a local builder, Charles Dallman who also built the old city hall.



Antigo's Carnegie Library was one of 63 funded by Andrew Carnegie in Wisconsin.

Continued

Our History

level.

In 1991 the federal government enacted the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Society has long struggled with the problems involved in making the museum available to all who wish to visit all three floors. There is also the need to redesign some interior elements for viewing of displays in a building designed as a library. These issues were addressed in 2003 in a formal Historic Structures Report prepared by architectural historian Art Chadek and funded by a grant of the Jeffris Foundation. It provided some guidelines for the future care of the building.

While major changes are planned for one of Antigo's more visible landmarks it is also interesting to note that there is some continuity in the history of the Langlade County Historical Society. Francis and Mary Deleglise were Antigo's first settlers, arriving in 1879. Two of their daughters, Sophie Leslie and Anna Morrissey were instrumental in forming the Society which occupied the second floor of the Carnegie Library. Anna and Tom Morrissey's grandson Ed Morrissey was instrumental in having the group move back to its first home, taking over the entire Carnegie Library, in 1997. Today, Ed and Helen Morrissey's daughter Mary Kay Morrissey Wolf is the museum's curator.

Let's Make History. For more information on this major, \$500,000 fund-raiser and the projects it will encompass, please contact the museum at 715 627-4464. Brochures and handouts are available and presentations will be gladly made to interested organizations, businesses, groups and individuals.

Get caught up on all those cribbage results

Cribbage winners for Antigo for the months of August through December and Town of Uphamfor December and January include:

Antigo

Aug. 3 — Ed Sikora, first; Shirley Larson, second; Linda Metzfeld, third; Ruby Barnett, booby; Elton Neinas and John Barnett, door prize; Helen Adair, 24 hand.

Aug. 10 — Audrey Neinas, first; Grace Werwie, second; Shirley Larson, third; Linda Metzfeld, booby; Helen Adair and Debbie Ramer, door prize; Audrey Neinas, 24 hand.

Aug. 17 — Ruby Barnett, first; Linda Metzfeld, second; Al Werwie, third; Ed Sikora, booby; Helen Adair and Elton Neinas, door prize; John Barnett, 24 hand.

Aug. 24 — Debbie Ramer, first; Elton Neinas, second; Shirley Larson, third; Audrey Neinas, booby; John Barnett and Helen Adair, door prize.

Aug. 31 — Grace Werwie, first; Shirley Larson, second; Charlotte Hatfield, third; Elton Neinas, booby; Ed Sikora and Linda Metzfeld, door prize.

Sept. 7 — Charlotte Hatfield, first; Helen Adair, second; Debbie Ramer, third; Linda Metzfeld, booby; Shirley Larson and Jim Hubatch, door prize; Ed Sikora, 24 hand.

Sept. 14 — Shirley Larson, first; Elton Neinas, second; Ed Sikora, third; Audrey Neinas, booby; Grace Werwie and Ruby Barnett, door prize.

Sept. 21 — Charlotte Hatfield, first; Helen Adair, second; Ed

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