

# Langlade County has rich immigrant heritage

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With immigration much in the news a look at where Langlade County's settlers came from becomes an interesting and timely question.

Most early settlers arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to work and provide for their families. But they did not come to an empty land. American Indians, primarily Ojibwe and Menominee had already been here for centuries. Their knowledge of the land, resources, and how to adapt would be invaluable to the newcomers.

Langlade County's first white settler, Willard Ackley, who migrated westward from New York State, arrived in 1853. He married the daughter of an Ojibwe chief. Together they operated a trading post just west of Antigo at the east and west branches of the Eau Claire River (near the current Riverview golf course) and raised a family. Other settlers from Canada and the eastern United States came to the eastern parts of the county — around the Wolf River and the Military Road.

Antigo's founder, Francis Deleglise, brought his family to the area from his home in Appleton in 1878. But he himself had come to Wisconsin as a young boy of 12 with his family fleeing civil unrest in their native Switzerland in 1848. The family had settled into a farm and Francis married the girl on a neighboring farm, Mary Bor (or Bahr) whose family had emigrated from Bohemia. Surviving letters from the Deleglise family back to Switzerland describe how strange

they found some of the Indian habits but the family accepted the differences and adapted.

Immigrant families came to Wisconsin in general and to Langlade County in particular from diverse regions after hearing tales about the state's dense forests and demand for lumber, availability of fertile farm land, and boundless opportunities.

Mr. Deleglise himself was active in recruiting immigrants to the area through the publication of booklets, articles, and advertising in magazines. The museum has a collection of his promotional material and correspondence with potential clients eager to buy land in the area. He specifically sought to recruit businessmen with interests that would help the community grow, such as newspaper publishers, blacksmiths, etc.

Looking at the letters it is apparent that, for many, the opportunity to live among people with whom they shared a common background, language, cultural traditions, and culinary tastes, was a major attraction. Some letters publicize the rich German and Slavic traditions of the new arrivals.

Many other families were drawn to this area thanks to the efforts of a Bohemian immigrant named Joseph Duchac. As a surveyor and land speculator, Duchac would often travel to Chicago to promote Langlade County to newly arrived Bohemian immigrants who were eager to get out of the city and take up farming. Being able to speak their native language was a great advantage. He would describe the opportunities in their native tongue and often accompanied potential clients back to Antigo and put them up in his home until they decided to purchase their own land from him.

Thanks in part to boosters like Duchac, Langlade County had a significant population of European settlers in the early twentieth century. Waves of immigrants arrived, many from Eastern Europe and Germany. Between 1880 and 1890, for example, half the village of Kolocein in Posen, Poland, had immigrated to the Antigo area. By 1900, 40 percent of the county's population was German. Antigo alone boasted two German newspapers well into the 1920s as well as a number of German, Polish, and Czech social clubs.

From the 1890s to around 1905 the large Czech community in the Neva Corners area used the public school building there to teach Czech on Saturdays to children of immigrants. In 1916, classes in Czech were held on Sunday afternoons in the Third Ward school, the heart of Antigo's Czech community. In 1927 students per-

formed a play in Czech to a full house in Smetana Hall in Neva.

Other immigrant groups also had an impact on the community. The 1880 census, the first since Langlade County was officially formed, showed 685 county residents, including several Irish names. In the 1890s St. John's

**See Our History Page 14**



A photo from the 1930s shows the Swiss home the Deleglise family left in 1848 to immigrate to Wisconsin.

**Antigo Banner**  
(Früher Antigo Gerold.)  
Antigo, Wis., den 5. Dezember 1919.  
Jahrgang 1.  
Nummer 1.

**Wochenschrift.**  
Antigo, Wis., den 5. Dezember 1919.

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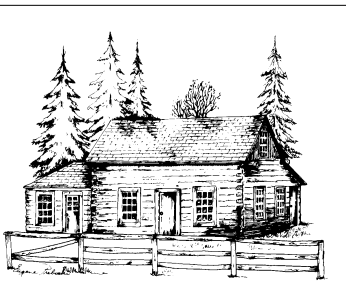
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**Our History**

The Banner was one of two German newspapers of Antigo, here showing an ad for Christmas gifts from Molle's Jeweler.



The Mecilkawski Store in Jennings is a prime example of a building style popularized by Polish immigrants in Wisconsin.

Although not used in their native Poland, immigrants developed this “stovepipe” style in which logs are cut and mortared in place sideways rather than lengthwise.

Continued

## Our History

parish consisted primarily of 80 Irish families, 70 German, 45 Polish and Bohemian. Most Polish and Bohemians had established their own parishes.

Antigo’s first residents were Francis Deleglise (Swiss) and his Czech born wife Mary Bor. Their son-in-law who had come to Langlade County earlier and helped construct their cabin was from Poland. It was definitely a diverse first family. Antigo’s second resident was Niels Andersen, a Dane.

The Ballas family from Greece formed the nucleus of a small Greek community in Antigo. Mr. Ballas Sr. with two sons arrived in St. Louis in 1902 and worked, saving money to bring over the rest of the family. By 1920 Mr. Ballas and his total of six sons and their Greek or Italian wives were settled in Ackley Township, where they farmed.

Another Greek immigrant, Chris Adraktas came to Antigo in 1915 where he operated Adraktas Sweet Shop with two brothers. It became a popular student ice cream parlor and hangout. Peter Bouman, came from Greece in 1911 and also operated a sweet shop owned by his uncle, John Papadakis, at 735 Fifth Avenue.

He then ran a popcorn stand in the Palace Theater and, in 1921, owned the Antigo Café and the Studio Grill. In 1938 he became owner of the Arcade Bar and Bowling Alley. His cook in the Antigo Café was also Greek.

Two brothers, John and Louis Sarris, operated the Sarris Sweet Shop on Fifth Avenue together with their Greek wives and an assistant, George Psiris, also Greek. Two pool halls in Antigo were operated by Greek immigrants: Peter Petrole and Tom Mataxis

Jewish immigrants came to the U.S.- from Germany in the mid-19th century and from Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century. A handful ended up in Antigo. As early as 1903 a congregation was formed by a small group of three families and in 1910 the growing Jewish community began to hold services at a building at Superior Street and Eighth Avenue. In 1914 it was reorganized as the Beth Israel Synagogue. The congregation remodeled the building in 1920s. Major retailers in early Antigo (L Krom and M Krom, Widgerson, Wolpert, and Goldberg) were Jewish immigrants. Goldberg’s was one of Antigo’s leading department stores, at one time employing 75-80 people. At its peak in the 1920s there were about 50 Jewish fami-

lies in Antigo.

Beginning in 1930 many of Antigo’s Jewish residents started moving away and the remainder traveled to Wausau for services. By 1932 the congregation dissolved.

It has been said that history may not repeat itself but it rhymes. Patterns repeat, not identically, but with similarities. People still come to the United States, and to northcentral Wisconsin fleeing strife back home and seeking a better life for themselves and their families, just as the Deleglise and Duchac families did over 140 years ago, and as countless others did. A generation ago the Hmong of Laos were forced to flee because they were put in



A traditional Czech dress, owned by an Antigo resident, was worn on special occasions and is now on display in the museum.

great danger for helping U.S. soldiers during the Viet Nam War. Today migrants from Latin America are trying to escape from oppressive situations back home. The history of their contribution to our society remains to be written.

Continued

## Schutz

will be \$600 per month (\$7,200 for the year). During 2019, you plan to work and earn \$22,600 (\$4,960 above the \$17,640 limit). The SSA would withhold \$2,480 of your Social Security benefits (\$1 for every \$2 you earn over the limit). To do this, the SSA would withhold all benefit payments from January 2019 through May 2019. As of May, only \$80 remains to be taken out of your SSRB check to pay the entire \$2,480. However, the rule is that any month that you still have an unpaid balance the SSA will take your entire SSRB check and then pay the extra amount the SSA took in the following year. Beginning in June 2019, you would receive your \$600 benefit and the SSA would pay this amount each month for the remainder of the year. In 2020, the SSA would pay you the additional \$520 the SSA withheld in May of 2019.

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Our next Medicare Basics Presentation is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10 from 9 – 11:30 a.m. in the Langlade County Health Services Center & Aging & Disability Resource Center, 1225 Langlade Road, Antigo. Please RSVP by calling 715-627-6346 as seating and materials are limited. Check in at the ADRC reception area.



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