

Spring 2015

## LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# Summer at the Historical Museum

“Sumer is icumin in” say the words in a medieval English song. Starting in May we will switch to summer mode and be open from Tuesday through Saturday, from 10am to 4pm. We will open the Deleglise cabin and 440 locomotive for tours. Just stop in at the desk.

Summer is also a time for fundraising at the museum which we try to mix with some fun. On Saturday June 6th the city wide rummage sale takes place and the museum will once again be taking part, selling at the museum grounds from 8am to 1pm. We are accepting donations of items to sell at the museum. (Sorry but we cannot accept large appliances or clothing.) If you have any hidden treasures in your attic or garage please consider donating them to the museum. Drop off items at regular museum hours

or call us at 715-627- 4464. This is one of our major fundraisers of the year and helps maintain our programs.

On Wednesday July 15 we will host our annual railroad picnic, starting at 5pm. This has become an Antigo tradition that started with our purchase of the locomotive in 2005 and its restoration and dedication in 2007. We will be serving brats, burgers, potato salad, beans, ice cream and soft drinks. Music will be provided by Brian Hayes and Charlie Kirsch who will be making a return appearance. The cost for the event will remain at \$6.



In between those events you will find us at the Music in the Park concerts. On Monday June 29 starting at 5:30 we will be serving pie and ice cream at the performance of the Dang-Its, who will be performing country music.



Top: Lining up for a meal in the shadow of the museum entrance  
Left: Brian Hayes and Charlie Kirsch will once again provide music.  
Right: The Northwoods Tractor Club antique tractors are always a big hit.

**CURATOR:**  
Mary Kay Wolf

**DIRECTORS:**  
Dean Blazek  
Fran Brown  
Nancy Bugni  
Glenn Bugni  
Judy Grimm  
Lisa Haefs  
Joe Hermolin  
Gary Whitman  
Diane Zuelke

# THANK YOU

## Items Donated:

Judy Bellin: Family photos  
Kathy Degenhardt: photographs and text related to the Vulcan Company  
Jill Lewandowski: classic books  
Meeks family: 1931 Quinlan Coal Company calendar  
Paul Netzel: various photographs

## Memorial Donations:

In memory of: Jack Fermanich from Jim & Connie Hubatch

In memory of: Phyllis Hubatch from Jim & Connie Hubatch

In memory of: Dr. Robert Cromer from Phyllis Hughes

In memory of: Dick Winter from Phyllis Hughes

## Monetary Donations:

Langlade County Genealogical Society  
Langlade County Voiture 1204 40 et 8

## Membership Renewals:

Ted & Sue Baginski  
Ludene Dewan  
Susan Johnson  
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Kelly & family  
Sue Kramer  
Jeff & Cheryl Marx  
Jacob Meister  
Helen Morrissey  
Jacquelyn Reynolds  
Walter Rugland  
Mary Schleis  
Teresa Sprecher  
Joe & Kathy Sveda

## Life Time Membership:

Tonya Trabant & Patrick McKenna

## New Members:

Gary Whitman

## From the Curator:

We would like to fill the gaps in our collection of Antigo High School yearbooks. Missing years include 1944, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1957, 1964. We would appreciate donations to fill these gaps.

## LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# From shoes to bowling pins

**M**anufacturing related to forest products has always been an important part of the economy of Langlade County. It may happen that an industry must change with the times in order to stay active and this was no more true than in the case of the Vulcan Corporation.



The Vulcan Corporation was established in 1909 as a manufacturer of shoe lasts, originally in Portsmouth Ohio. In 1919 the company started a plant in Crandon, which moved to Antigo

in 1925 and took over the buildings of the Antigo Tractor Company in Antigo's industrial park. The north end of Edison Street in Antigo was lined with the Vulcan sawmill and drying kilns.



*Start: The manufacture of bowling pins starts with a large diameter slab of maple. These are plentiful in the northwoods.  
Finish: The composition, weight, and coating of bowling pins are tightly regulated by the American Bowling Congress which is based in Milwaukee.*



*HeelPlant1954: Vulcan continued in the shoe business even after it had switched primarily to bowling pins. The photo shows the manufacture of wooden heels in about 1954.*

As plant manager Don Degenhart said in 1973: "Being in the shoe last business set the style. It was a darn good business." A good last was the first step in the production of a good shoe. Shoe lasts were originally made of a hardwood such as maple, which is abundant in Langlade County. Each last was designed for a particular heel height, toe shape, and shoe type although shoe styles could vary when using a given last.

Metal and plastic began to replace hardwood and Vulcan decided to change its production while still continuing to make some shoe lasts. During the 1930s and 1940s the plant started making bowling pins in small amounts for Brunswick and also some golf clubs. They also tried their hand at furniture, sewing machine tops, and shuffleboards. During World War II they made gun stocks as part of the war effort.

In 1952 the company decided to focus on the bowling pins and took over the National Youth Administration buildings on Elm Street. The buildings had been used by the NYA, a New Deal project designed to provide training and work for young men in the late 1930s.

Once again, the abundance of maple trees in the area proved an advantage since maple was required in bowling pin manufacturing. In fact wood for bowling pins came from a radius of 60 miles from Antigo. In the 1950s about 20% of all bowling lanes in the U.S. used pins that began life at the Vulcan sawmill on Elm Street in Antigo. The popularity of bowling increased greatly in the 1950s with the introduction of automatic pin setters, which decreased waiting times for bowlers. Another

explosion in demand took place in the 1960s when bowling became popular in Japan. The establishment of 500 lane high-rise facilities and about 125,000 lanes created a tremendous demand and Vulcan had to charter flights to supply the demand for pins to the bowling hungry Japanese public.

But Vulcan was not exclusively a bowling pin company. They continued to make wooden heels for shoes. Also, in 1953 they acquired the U.S. Bung Company and for a few years manufactured bungs for beer barrels. In 1968 they closed their bung making operations in order to expand pin manufacturing. During those 15 years they had produced between 25 and 33 million bungs a year.

Technology changed the methods of pin manufacturing, with laminates and new materials used in coating the pins. These changes were always carefully monitored and controlled by the American Bowling Congress based in Milwaukee. In the early 1990s, when Vulcan merged with Brunswick, the plant on Edison Street employed 145 people and produced 8,000 pins a day. By the time it closed its Antigo shop in 2008 Vulcan had been a major economy force in Antigo for over 80 years.

A recent donation of material related to Vulcan was made to the museum by the Degenhart family. Don Degenhart had been the plant manager for many years.

## Don't Travel without Your Passport

This summer, while travelling throughout northern and north-eastern Wisconsin, travelers should be sure to take along their passports. Museums in the region are adopting a plan to encourage people to learn the cultural and environmental history of the region and have fun in the process. Both the Langlade County Historical Society's museum in Antigo and the White Lake Museum in White Lake are participating, along with 10 other sites in six other counties in northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Visitors will be able to obtain a "passport" that contains instructions, a photo of the participating museums or venues, information about the sites, and a place where the site will stamp acknowledgement of a visit. Visitors with stamped passports will be eligible for a Grand Prize drawing of a two night weekend stay at the Potawatami Casino and Hotel in Carter. We have not yet decided how many sites a passport holder must visit in order to be eligible for the Grand Prize drawing. To be eligible visitors must complete the identification/contact page in the passport or have their information recorded using their cell phones or tablets. The drawing will take place on October 6.

This coordinated effort was initiated by Sara Conner of the Wisconsin Forestry Museum and Lumberjack Steam Train in Laona. Pioneer Printing donated printing services and the Potawatami Casino and Hotel in Carter donated the

grand prize. All the museums in the participating area should benefit through increased attendance and communication.

Watch for further details as this program is finalized. We will post details on the museum's

web site and Facebook page. The information will also be available at all participating sites. A complete list of participating museums in the six county region is posted here.

### Passport Participants

#### Florence County

Florence County Historical Society Museum in Florence

#### Forest County

Forest County Potawatomi Cultural Center, Library & Museum

Forest County Historical Society Museum in Crandon

Potawatomi Casino and Hotel, Carter – DONATED GRAND PRIZE

Pioneer Printing – DONATED Aspects of Printing Production

Wabeno Logging Museum

Wisconsin Forestry Museum/Camp 5 Museum/Lumberjack Steam Train

#### Iron River Historical Museum in Caspian, Michigan

In 2014, this museum was declared "Log Cabin Capital of Michigan"

#### Langlade County

Langlade County Historical Society Museum in Antigo, Langlade County  
White Lake Historical Center and Depot Museum in White Lake, Langlade County

#### Oconto County

Holt-Balcom Logging Museum in Lakewood, Oconto County

#### Oneida County

Rhineland Historical Society Museum, Oneida County

Rhineland Pioneer Park/Logging Museum, Oneida County

#### Vilas County

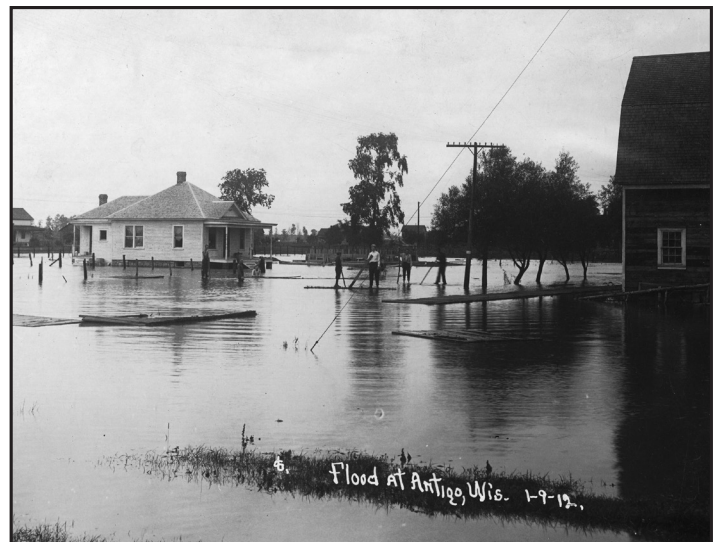
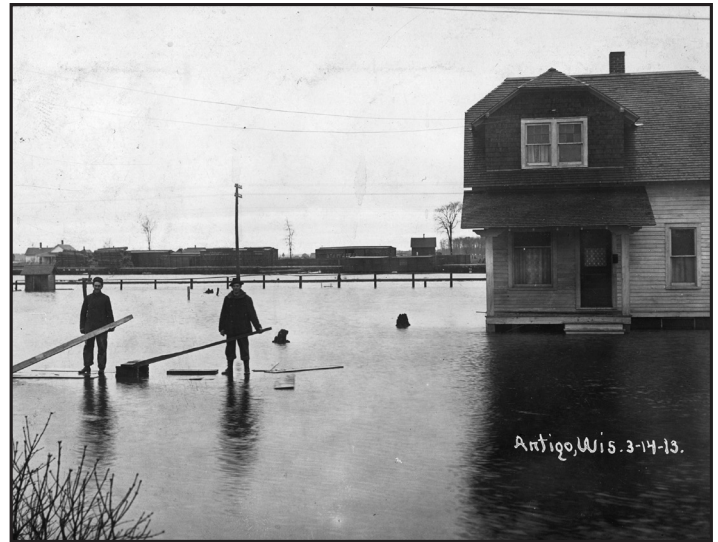
Eagle River Historical Society Museum in Eagle River

Northwoods Childrens' Museum in Eagle River, Vilas County

# Spring: A Time for Floods

Antigo has frequently experienced springtime floods when snow melts and early season heavy rains create water runoff from the flats. Here are some views of downtown in the Peaceful Valley

area during the consecutive years of 1912 and 1913.



**ADDRESS:**

404 Superior St., Antigo, WI 54409  
 Phone: (715) 627-4464  
 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**

- Sat., May 2:** The Deleglise cabin and the 440 locomotive open to the public
- Sat., June 6:** Museum Rummage Sale, 8 am - 1 pm. Donations now being accepted.
- Mon., June 29:** Museum serves pies and ice cream at Music in the Park, City Park, 5:30pm
- Wed., July 15:** Railroad Picnic at the museum, 5 pm. Cost is \$6.

**ITEMS FROM THE MUSEUM**

**Products from Vulcan**

For over 80 years a major fixture in Antigo's industrial park was the Vulcan Company. It went from manufacturing shoe lasts to bowling pins, with some detours along the way to produce golf clubs, furniture, shuffleboards, and gun stocks - all using maple wood from the region.



404 Superior Street  
 Antigo WI, 54409