

Spring 2016

## LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



### Summer Plans

Starting on May 3rd the museum switches gears into summer mode with expanded hours and special events. We will be open from Tuesday through Saturday, from 10am to 4pm and also open the Deleglise cabin and 440 locomotive for tours. These are both locked for the winter and some items are moved into storage but all will be put back into place. To tour the cabin or the cab of the locomotive stop at the museum desk during regular hours and request a tour at the front desk.

Summer is also a time for fun and fundraising at the museum. On Saturday June 4th the city wide rummage sale takes place and the museum will once again be taking



part, selling items 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 or call us at 715-627-4464 during regular museum hours. This is one of our major fundraisers of the year and helps cover operating costs.

On Wednesday, July 13 we will host our annual railroad picnic, starting at 5pm. This has rapidly become an Antigo tradition. It was initiated after our purchase of the 440 locomotive in 2005 and the completion of its restoration in 2007. The restoration and establishing of the “Railroad Park” were community efforts which were celebrated at a dedication picnic at the museum as a way of thanking the community. This year we will again 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 addition you will find us at the series of Music in the Park concerts. On Monday August 29 starting at 5:30 we will be serving pie and ice cream at the performance of the Trilliums.



Left: Lining up at last year's picnic.

Above: Museum volunteers finalizing a sale at last year's rummage sale.

### Museum Update

A major goal for the upcoming year is the redesign of the main floor ceiling and lighting, which are badly in need of repair. Some preliminary plans have been drawn up for lighting. We are looking into grants and making fundraising plans. Much research, cost analysis, and lighting fixture selection still needs to be done and these steps are well underway. Once remodeling begins it will be necessary to close the museum for a time. We are planning to begin remodeling sometime in early fall, after our busiest time which is summer.

**CURATOR:**  
Mary Kay Morrissey Wolf

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

# THANK YOU

## Items Donated:

Bill Bergman:	Butter churn
Dean Blazek:	Currency bills from First National Bank of Antigo
Jim Darling:	Photo of Antigo Merchants hockey team from 1948-49
Lee Jesse:	Teachers College diploma
Jerome King:	Name plates from the Vulcan Company
Judy & Cliff Knudsen:	UNICEF stamp collection
Warren Wabner:	WWI aviator jacket, wedding veil

## Monetary Donations:

Patricia & Louis Delliros  
Helen Morrissey

## Membership Renewals:

Jim & Jeanne Darling  
Jacob Meister  
Helen Morrissey  
Gary Whitman

## New Members:

Dennis & Margie Shuh

# AVA Prepares for Summer

Antigo Visual Arts (AVA) operates an art gallery in the museum showcasing the works of local artists. This spring they will host a Starved for Spring show running from May 8 to June 18. This will be AVA's first judged show and will contain works in various media.

The opening of the show is on May 8 (Mothers Day). There will be a reception from 1:00 to 4:00pm with light refreshments and an opportunity to meet the artists.

The gallery will continue to feature local artists with changing displays throughout the summer once this show has finished.

You can stay up-to-date on happenings at the AVA Gallery on their web site [www.antigovisualarts.org](http://www.antigovisualarts.org)

*Glass artist Mary Turnbull discusses art with painter Sandy McArthur at an earlier show.*



# WI101: Our History in Objects

The web site WI101: Our History in Objects ([www.WI101.org](http://www.WI101.org)) has an interesting approach to Wisconsin's history. It explores Wisconsin's diverse interconnected histories by telling stories related to specific objects. It is organized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison History Department but is entirely collaborative. To maintain a variety of items and ideas, it encourages submissions from individuals and groups from around the state. Submissions are reviewed by an editorial board and edited by staff members who maintain the site.

Recently a new cluster of stories submitted by our museum, based on a bowling pin manufactured by Vulcan in Antigo, was added to the site. Hewn from Northwoods maple, this Vulcan Corporation pin reminds us of the state's lumbering heyday and that Milwaukee was once the bowling capital of America. From the state's lumber industry to Japan's abandoned alleys, discover Wisconsin's and Langlade County's roles in bowling history at this site.

This is the second item from our museum to be highlighted at the site. Previously a pillow sham created for a CCC enrollee by his sister before he left for the camp at Summit Lake in 1933 was used to tell the story of memories of European immigration to Langlade County, the Great Depression, and the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).



# Gardner Dam Catastrophe

In the old days, one sign of spring was that log drives along the rivers would begin. Lumberjacks had cut and piled timber all winter long and once the ice was out they would float logs to mills downstream. It was difficult and often dangerous work. In the spring of 1874, the water in the Wolf River, a major logging route, was exceptionally high. There were four dams along the river as it ran through Langlade County. On the night of May 14th Gardner Dam went out, killing four men, while five escaped by a hair's breath. The nine men had been staying in a shanty 12 x 18 feet as a crew working the log drive. John Satterlee, a Menominee Indian, was a survivor and told his story to the Shawano County Journal in 1922.



“Along in the night we were awakened by the terrible roar of the water going over the top of the dam. Jerry Casey (who was tending the dam) sprang to his feet, lighted the lantern and rushed down to the dam to raise the gates, but the pressure of the high water had become so great that his efforts were like those

of the puny hand of a child. He came back to the shanty and insisted that every man should go down and help, in order that the dam might be saved. But the men in the shanty demurred, and at first refused to go... But we never faltered a moment; we walked straight out onto the dam.

We each took hold of the ironwood piers and lifted with all our might on the bars, but it did not faze the gate. Then we tried the waste gate.

Out in the deep water, the logs looked like great snakes with the light of the lantern shining on their backs. One tremendous heave, and the flood gate started. Then came a crash and a noise the like of which I have never heard since. The best I can match it with would be a barrel full of giant fire crackers shooting



*Big Jim Rollaway. Loggers prepare for the start of a river log drive.*

in rapid succession. The dam was going.

The lantern fell into the river and we were in total darkness. The night was still and cold, with not a breath stirring, and so dark that a man could not see his own hand. The last thing I saw before the crash came was a big rock right near the shore, like a wigwam. I hit the water with a thud that almost broke my body in two. I was absolutely helpless against the fearful power of the water. The logs came rushing down whirling and tumbling like mad. I was going over and over, feet overhead, like a circular saw. Then something hit me in the head, and I saw a million lighted matches.

“In the next minute, which seemed like five days, I came so close to death that I had all sensations of dying. There was a most intense bitterness in my throat, and I knew what the great bard meant when he spoke of the taste of bitter death. And with the bitter taste, came such a stench that I cannot describe it, for there is nothing on earth to which I can compare it.

*Continued on Page 4*

*Gardner Dam Catastrophe  
Continued*

“Then the sins of my life were paraded before me. It seemed like a long procession, and things that I had done, and had forgotten, came back to taunt me. And when they had gone, I prayed that I might be saved. A spirit said to me, “swim out” and I tried to do it, but I could not use my left arm. It was broken and I had not known when it had happened.

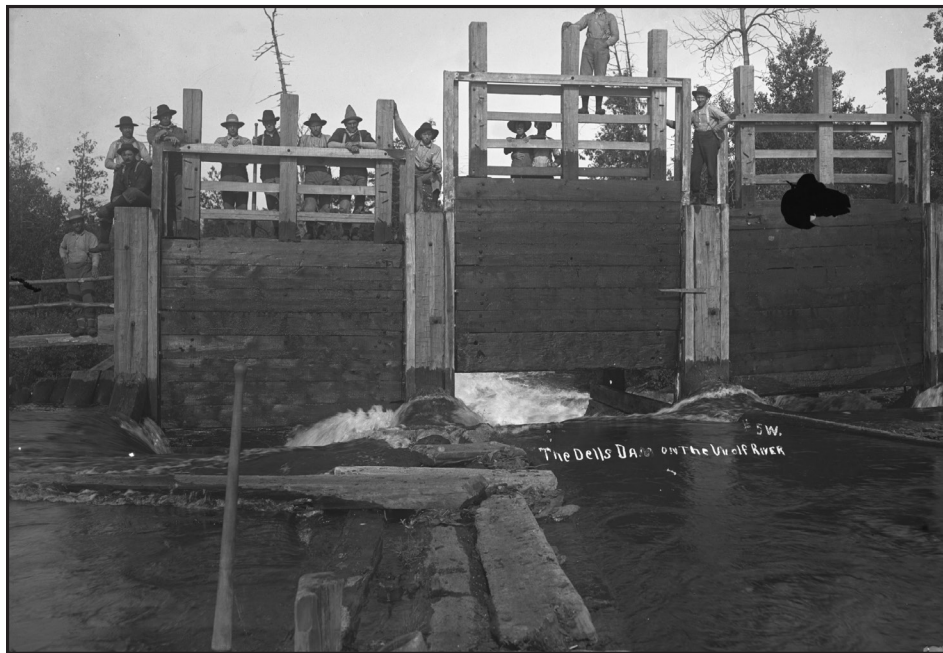
As if in answer to my prayer, my head came up between two logs, and a hand touched my scalp. Andrew Betts, a man from Washington, D.C. was on the log, and my head just happened to hit his hand. He tried to pull me up onto the log, but my hair was short and he could not get a hold. He reached to my collar and



*River Rats during a log drive on the Wolf River.*

last he gave up and said, “Goodbye, John, I’ll have to let you go” and with that the logs were heaved by the under current and I was free. I jumped out into the darkness and

calling the roll there in the black of night, and enduring that awful silence when no answer came from the four. My clothes were driven full of stones and pebbles and I was carrying a load of a hundred pounds or more. Peter LaFund lay on the shore raving crazy. The Washington man went down the river to another camp where a hundred men were working. They made torches out of birch bark and came to our rescue. With the aid of their light we found poor Jerry Casey. He lay out on a pile of logs, his body horribly mangled. The logs in the river were chipped up like tooth picks and were without any assemblage of bark. The stone which had looked like a wigwam, was entirely worn away.”



*The Dells Dam was one of four dams along the Wolf River. This dam is similar to the Gardner Dam in structure.*

pulled with all his might, but the logs were jammed so closely that he could not pull my body through. At

was pulled to the shore.

Then came the sad business of

# Spring is Planting Time

Springtime means different things to different people. Log drives down rivers for some, planting for others. This is true for amateur gardeners and farmers alike. The Antigo Silt Loam of Langlade County is Wisconsin's state soil and ideal for growing potatoes.

A local pioneer in growing potatoes in this area was John W. Smith who farmed in the area around Kent in the early 1900s. He gained prominence for his Red Triumph seed potatoes and was a breeder of a white strain of Triumphs.

Smith was born in England in 1861 and came to the U.S. in 1892 with his wife and five children. They had three more children, born in the U.S. At first he settled in Chicago where he worked in industry. In 1900 the family moved to Kent in the town of Price in Langlade County. There he developed a farm and began doing potato breeding for which he became known.

His farm consisted of 280 acres where he raised cattle, corn, and hay, as well as potatoes. He experimented with his seed potato stock and at the

in developing a new strain of Triumph seed stock is considered one of the great achievements in the industry." His improved stock



*Smith (far right) leads a tour of his farm for potato growers.*

1919 State Fair his potatoes were awarded first prize, yielding 300 bushels an acre. He went on to gain recognition from the Milwaukee Association of Commerce and the University of Wisconsin which acknowledged that "his pioneer work

attracted attention of many agricultural experts, some from as far away as the Bahamas. There was some talk of not allowing his seed stock to leave the state and saving it exclusively for Wisconsin potato growers.

John Smith's wife Mary died in 1939, shortly after he retired and turned the farm over to his son Earl. Afterwards he lived in Antigo part time and with a daughter in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and a son in Shawano. He died in 1949 in Shawano and is buried near Bryant. His Triumph potatoes continued to be a popular seed stock well into the 1950s before being replaced with newer varieties. But his Triumphs helped put Langlade County on the potato map.



*Smith (center) displays his prize winning potatoes at a show in Rice Lake.*

**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. June 4:**

Rummage sale museum fundraiser - 8am to 1pm at the museum

**Wed. July 13:**

Railroad picnic - 5pm to 8pm at the museum

**Mon. Aug. 29:**

Pies at Music in the Park 5:30 pm - ? at City Park

**ITEMS FROM THE MUSEUM**

Joseph Duchac Sr. arrived in the Antigo area in 1878, at the age of 26. and surveyed and promoted much of the area surrounding Antigo, particularly around Neva. He is largely responsible for the large Bohemian population of the area. This is his surveyor's compass.



404 Superior Street  
 Antigo WI, 54409