

# LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Annual Meeting

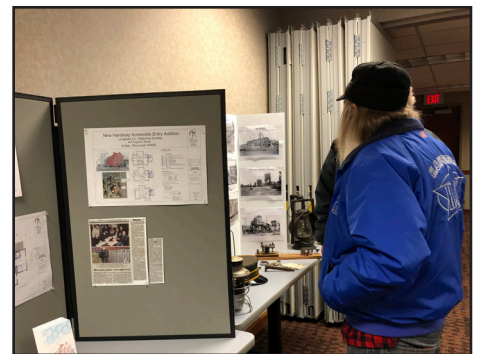
The Langlade County Historical Society held its annual meeting on November 14, 2019. The CoVantage Credit Union kindly provided us with an excellent facility by letting us use their meeting room. Dean and Polly Blazek generously subsidized the event and this enabled us to provide light refreshments at no charge to all attending members of the Langlade County Historical Society and also to the general public for a nominal fee of \$5. It was encouraging to see so many non-members show up to see what we are doing and planning to do at the museum.

Approximately 50 attendees were given an update of progress on the museum remodeling plans, a presen-

tation of a new program for grade four students in the area organized by volunteer Pat Kennedy who has been working with Antigo schools, and a history of the role of the railroad in Antigo's history by Joe Hermolin.

As part of the business meeting Fran Brown, Carol Gottard, and Chris Haedike were each reelected to serve another three year term. At the next monthly board meeting in December the following officers were elected: Joe Hermolin president, Lisa Haefs vice-president, Chris Haedike treasurer, and Mary Kay Wolf secretary.

*At the annual meeting displays of the museum remodeling plans and railroad memorabilia were on view.*



## Santa At The Museum

Continuing his annual tradition, Santa set up shop at the museum, this year for a total of nine eve-



*Santa had a very busy time at the museum before Christmas where he patiently listened to hundreds of requests*

nings or afternoons. He was visited by 374 children who also brought along 313 parents, grandparents and other adults. The museum provided cookies and punch for all and each child received a toy, stuffed animal, or book.

Santa's residency at the museum was made possible, as in years past, by the efforts of the late Fred Berner of the Antigo Daily Journal. Fred did so much to enrich the lives of the community in many ways and was especially generous to the museum. He will be missed. Santa promised he will continue updating his list on who's naughty or nice after a well-

earned vacation and will be back next year.

**CURATOR:**  
Mary Kay Morrissey Wolf

**DIRECTORS:**  
Dean Blazek  
Fran Brown  
Nancy Bugni  
Glenn Bugni  
Carol Feller Gottard  
Chris Haedike  
Lisa Haefs  
Joe Hermolin  
Diane Zuelke

## THANK YOU

### Items Donated:

Mary Hilger: Portrait of Dr. W. Curran Sr  
Jeff Marx: Engineer's outfit of  
E.V. Marx, original bricks  
from Antigo's roundhouse

### Monetary Donations:

Louis & Patricia Dellios in honor of  
Dean & Polly Blazek  
Otto & Jeanne Tieg  
James & Kathleen Wing  
Langlade County Genealogical Society

### Memorial Donations:

In memory of: Jackie Pecha  
In memory of: Beth Mollet & Karen Bentz  
Mollet from Mary &  
Don Mollet

### Membership Renewals:

Cliff Hoffmeister  
Jerome & Vicky Marx

### New Membership:

Susan Fuszard  
Richard & Laurie McConnell

### Donations to "Let's Make History" since September 23

Ron & Nancy Blood  
Gregg & Vicki Born  
Glenn & Nancy Bugni  
(in memory of Fred Berner)  
Lori & Kelly Fermanich  
William Gresch  
Paul Grinde  
Michael & Nancy Hagerty  
Cliff Hofmeister  
(in memory of his wife Marion)  
Sally Jansen  
Julie Kolb  
Jeff & Cheryl Marx  
Thomas & Sandra Nelson  
Tim & Kathie Rasman  
Don Schroeder  
Jaclyn Schroeder of  
Schroeders Farm Market  
Mike & Mary Winski  
AHS Class of 1955  
AHS Class of 1957  
Devine-Menting American Legion Post 525

## LANGLADE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Remodeling Plans

We are now well into winter and it may appear that not much is happening at the museum but that is illusionary. Fundraising continues and, while we are not yet at our goal needed to fund everything on our list, we are confident that the initial stages will begin in spring.

The plans drawn up by architect Rod Cox of Wausau have been approved by the state and we are currently negotiating to hire a general contractor to oversee the project and to start getting bids for aspects of the remodeling project.

### Sharing Expertise

Two state-wide organizations are in place to help smaller local historical societies in their missions of preserving their histories and making material available to the public. The Wisconsin Council for Local History (WCLH) is a division of the Wisconsin Historical Society which offers assistance to local historical societies affiliated with it. This includes over 400 regional or theme-based museums throughout the state. The WCLH provides assistance to its affiliates through workshops, conferences, webinars, access to experts, and grants.

Recollection Wisconsin (RW) works to bring together digital cultural heritage resources from Wisconsin libraries, archives, museums and historical societies and to share materials with the world in partnership with the Digital Public Library of America. Primary support for RW is provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Our museum has taken advantage of the expertise of both WCLH and RW in our operation.

Thanks to a grant from the National Archives, RW and WCLH have

recently partnered, together with WiLS (formerly Wisconsin Library Services) to conduct a survey of the WCLH affiliates in order to facilitate community conversations and strategic planning sessions. The goal is to develop a plan for a Digital Readiness Community of Practice that will increase affiliates' capacity to create, manage, and share digitized historical resources. Throughout this past fall three strategic planning sessions were held. This resulted in a plan to further hone the ideals and goals for a statewide digital readiness community of practice. This plan will be used as part of a grant application to be submitted this winter. Should the grant request be approved, work will begin in the summer of 2020 to develop a communication plan, identify priority areas for documentation and training, and help spread the word to the local history/museum community about this work. This may include future "Digital Fairs" to introduce local organizations to available digital resources, share digital resources, and highlight local digital projects. Our museum hopes to play a role in expanding the reach of local museums through evolving computer technology.



# Looking at and Sharing Pictures

The museum, in collaboration with Terri Johnson of Healthy Aging in Rural Communities (HeART), is launching a program for all local residents, particularly seniors. This new project invites, and indeed depends on, community participation. It is inspired by events that occur sporadically at the museum. From time to time people visit with family photographs that they allow us to copy for our archives. So, we know there is some community interest which we hope to build on in a more organized way. These photos are an important way for the museum to create and maintain a record of how the area appeared and how people lived their daily lives. Through the museum, we can share those views.

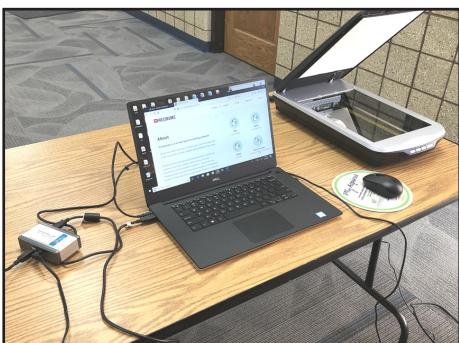
On the first Monday of each month from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm we will

be set up in the McGinley Meeting Room of the Antigo Public Library at 617 Clermont Street to scan photographs that people may bring in. We hope to build our archive of photos to use in displays and publications (printed and electronic). If people bring in a flash drive, they will be able to get digital copies of their photos to share with family and friends. (We're sorry but our budget does not allow us to provide flash drives.)

We would like to tape record comments, or at least take notes, about the photo contents such as subject, approximate dates, and any background stories. We would also like participants to sign a statement allowing the museum to use the photographs. If participants wish to place restrictions on how or where the photos are used, we will respect those requests. Street scenes, sporting and

social events, workplaces, buildings, schools, rural scenes etc. are all welcome. We can never predict what photos, paired with other photos and documents, can be assembled to form an interesting story.

We are capable of scanning prints, negatives, and 35 mm slides. In the future we hope, together with HeART, to prepare "memory packages" around themes. We would then provide them to seniors' groups as a way of engaging them in social activities.



Three photos which people allowed us to scan for our files are this 1905 or 1906 view of the construction of the old city hall, youth posing in front of Vosmek's Pharmacy in the 1940s, and the Bryant Spuds baseball team (date unknown). Also shown is the setup for scanning at the library.

# Logging and the Railroad

Logging and the railroad are two important aspects in the history of the Northwoods, including Langlade County. Both aspects come together in the history of the network of logging railroads of the region. Up to the 1880s white pine timber stands close to rivers were harvested and shipped along waterways to mills. But as logging operations moved further away from navigable waterways and hardwood trees (which don't float) were being harvested the railroad gained in importance. This connection between railroads and logging is best exemplified locally in the story of the Crocker Chair Company.

The Crocker Chair Company was founded by Watson D. Crocker in 1880. It was originally based in Sheboygan but shortly afterwards a saw mill in Elton and a manufacturing plant in Antigo were established. (The chair factory in Antigo was located on Seventh Ave. between Superior St. and Spring Brook) The company owned

over twenty square miles on land for logging about 10 miles east of Antigo and, according to reports of the Wisconsin Railroad Commission in 1909, brought into Elton, via the Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW), logs from as far away as Washburn County.

In 1912 Crocker began building its own railroad lines in Evergreen and Langlade Townships. Private railroads were exempt from Interstate Commerce Commission regulations as they were restricted to company owned land and were free to abandon any and or all rail lines without many regulations.

Crocker had two engines; a 2-6-0 Baldwin and a 2-6-0 Cooke. These engines were adequate to handle the steep grades in the region but required skills and teamwork of the engineer and fireman. They were fueled by coal and occasionally pieces of coal may be found even today along where the tracks ran. However, evidence of a coaling

station had not been found.

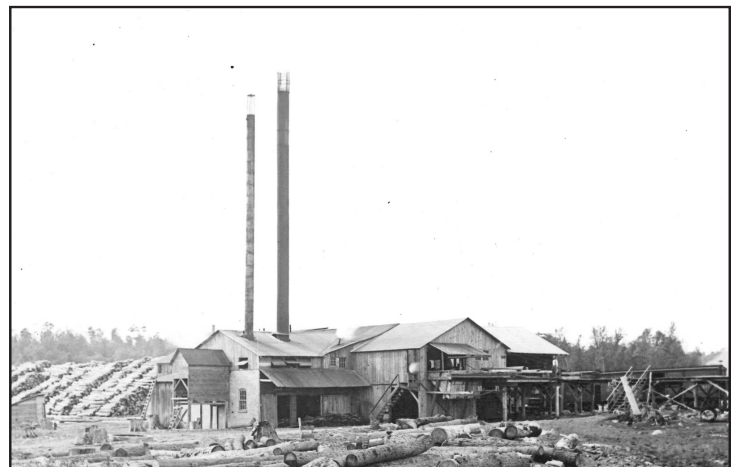
Crocker's logs were likely brought to Elton to be sawed on Crocker's own railroad and then shipped to the Antigo factory for chair manufacture on C&NW trains.

The Crocker Chair Company continued to operate until 1923 at which point its land holdings and railroad engines were bought up by Yawkey-Bissel Lumber Company of White Lake. Yawkey-Bissel continued to operate the rail line into the early 1930s. Today the Crocker Chair Company is best remembered for the region in the county where its forests, rail lines, and lumber mill were: the Crocker Hills.

**Note:** Much of the material for this article is from a report by Brad Pagels of Eagle River who refers to himself as a "Railroad Archeologist". It is available for reference at the museum.



*One of Crocker's locomotives*



*The saw mill in Elton where the Crocker logs were delivered*

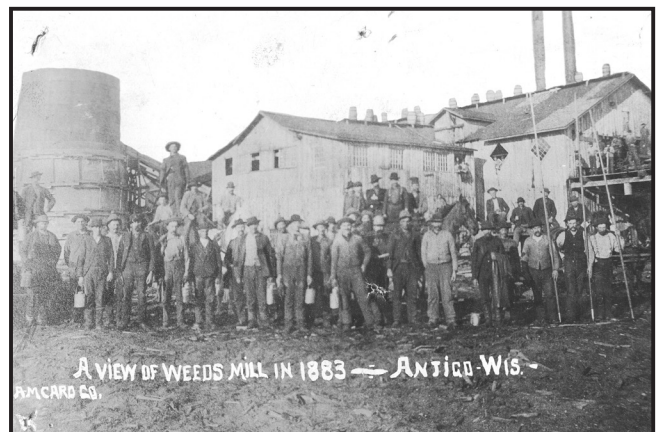
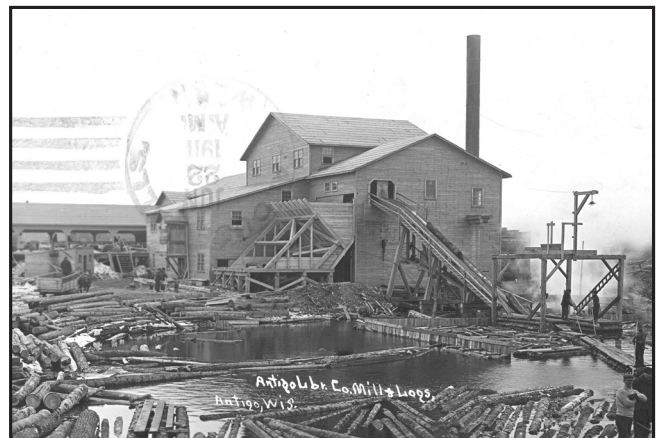
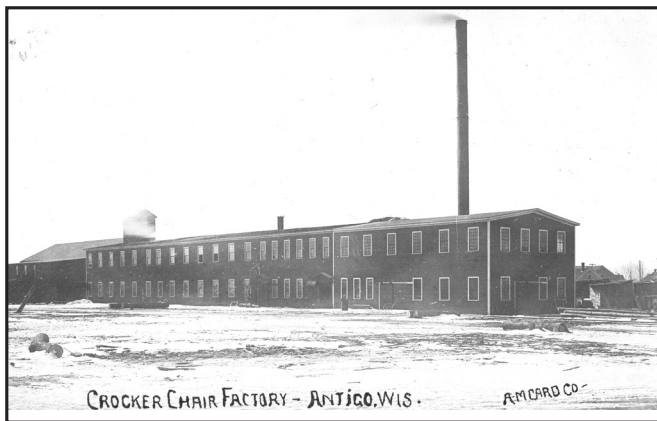
# Saw Mills In Antigo

*Downtown Antigo had many saw mills during the days when wood products was an important local industry*

**Top row:** *The Crocker Chair Company (left) and Heineman mill (right)*

**Middle Row:** *Antigo Building Supply (l) and Antigo Lumber (formerly Paine) (r)*

**Bottom Row:** *Kingsbury & Henshaw mill with St. John's in the background (l) and Weed's mill, one of Antigo's oldest (r)*



**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:**

**Sharing Photos:**

Mondays: Feb. 3, March 2, Apr. 6: from 1pm to 2:30 pm bring photos to share to the Antigo Public Library (see story on page 3)

**Think Spring & Summer**

The museum will serve refreshments at Civic Music at the Volm Theater April 27 and Music in the Park on July 23. Volunteer bakers will be needed. Watch for more details.

**ITEM FROM THE MUSEUM:**

A chair made at the Crocker Chair Company of Antigo



404 Superior Street  
Antigo WI, 54409