



AGER NEWS



Meetings

The Board meets at the Ager Museum monthly on the third Monday evening at 7 p.m.

Open House

Tours

April 4 Canceled
 April 11 Private Event at the Ager
 April 25 10 - 2
 May 9 10 - 2
 May 23 10 - 2
 June 13 10 - 2
 June 27 10 - 2

Trolley Tours

June, July, August, September
 Dates and booking at volumeone.org



The Waldemar Ager
 Association and Museum
 514 W. Madison Street
 PO Box 1742
 Eau Claire, Wisconsin
 54702-1742
 715.598.1776
www.agerhouse.org

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

If you haven't renewed your membership for 2026, please do so now. Use the form on page 7 of the newsletter.

Household (\$40) Life (\$1000).

Send your check to Treasurer, Ager Association, PO Box 1742, Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742.

Please write your check to the Ager Association. Or go to agerhouse.org, find "Become a Member" and pay online (PayPal). Additional donations always welcome.

THANK YOU!

Syttende Mai 2026

Attend this year's celebration on 17 mai at the Eau Claire Holiday Inn South. Tickets (\$30) at Festival Foods, Mall Drive, Eau Claire. Banquet at 6. Program speaker Paul Kaldjian, who will reveal the secrets of the Happiness Index.

Ager and His Son Trygve, June 22

Ella Fossum, the daughter of Trygve, will talk about her father's achievements as a journalist and translator. Trygve graduated from St. Olaf College in 1929, the same year that Waldemar was awarded an honorary doctorate by the college.

The Tusenbeiner 3 (The Centipede). July 18. 2K/5K Fun Run/Walk (that's 1.25 miles or 3.1 miles). Run or walk on city trail. Enjoy Scandinavian treats after you finish. T-shirt for all who register by July 13.

Thanks to contributors for this issue:
 William (Bill) Ager and Chris Engen

Reform's Boghandel (Bookstore)

by William (Bill) Ager



Recently, while browsing Reform Online, I discovered that Waldemar Ager operated a bookstore at a location on the southeast corner of Eau Claire and South Barstow Streets. This business was part of Fremad Publishing or “Forward” publishing, the company that produced and distributed the

weekly editions of *Reform*. Throughout many editions of *Reform*, there were printed listings of the books available at the bookstore, along with prices and other important information. A listing from April 18, 1916, provides a fascinating snapshot of the books and materials available through the Reform-Fremad bookstore. The collection reflects both the life and times of immigrant interests and the values of Norwegian Americans in the early part of the 20th century. In particular, the importance of education, heritage, literature, religion, and the temperance movement is reflected in the books that were available.

Book Store Listings

Boken om Norge “The Book about Norway.” Described as a collection for Norwegian-American schools and homes, this richly illustrated volume featured large images of Norwegian cities, landscapes, and industries, alongside legends, folk tales, poems, songs, and proverbs — including works by Petter Dass. For immigrant families raising children in Wisconsin, this was a tool for cultural transmission: a way to keep Norway present in homes where English was steadily taking over. It is exactly the kind of book Ager would have stocked with purpose.

Another significant title was “The Temperance Question in Brief” by N. Nyhus. At 330 pages, this work provided a comprehensive overview of alcohol laws and social responses across various countries. It included arguments, statistics, and formal resolutions, and was clearly intended for active temperance workers. Another significant title was “The Temperance Question in Brief” by N. Nyhus. At 330 pages, this work provided a comprehensive overview of alcohol laws and social responses across various countries. It included arguments, statistics, and formal resolutions, and was clearly intended for active temperance workers.

A third especially interesting item was “Christ Before Pilate,” a novel by Waldemar Ager. At 284 pages and priced at \$1.00 in cloth binding, this work represents Ager’s literary voice at its strongest. Its inclusion in the

bookstore catalog shows that Fremad was not only promoting general cultural and religious works, but also actively distributing Ager’s own writing alongside the authors.

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In addition to literature, the bookstore carried practical handbooks that supported the daily organizational life of Norwegian-American communities.

Rev. A. F. Skoe’s “Practical Handbook in Parliamentary Procedure” offered a clear and concise explanation of parliamentary rules for societies and assemblies, while smaller guides such as “Parliamentary Rules for Small Meetings and Societies” were tailored for chairmen and secretaries of lodges and organizations.

English-language or translated works included:

- When You Are Tired of Playing — \$0.50
- Pilgrims Wanderings through the World to the Land of the Future — \$2.50
- Ralph Waldo Emerson (presentation by Oskar Gunderson) — \$1.00

Songbooks and pamphlets were also widely available, particularly for temperance societies:

- Songbook for Temperance Societies (various editions) — \$0.10 to \$0.40, or \$1.00 per dozen
- The Drunkard’s Account — \$0.30

Ager’s own writings, including *Christ Before Pilate*, *Everyday Folk*, *Stories and Sketches*, and *When You Are Tired of Playing*, appear in the listing and are a reminder that Waldemar Ager was not simply an editor; he was a publisher in the fullest sense, actively distributing Norwegian-American literature from his corner shop in Eau Claire, WI. More generally, through *Reform*, Fremad, and the bookstore,

Waldemar Ager and his colleagues were not only publishing a newspaper but also distributing literature, educational materials, and persuasion tracts that influenced Norwegian Americans in the Chippewa Valley region and throughout the Midwest.

Reform Newspaper Online:

<https://rescarta.apps.uwec.edu/Ager-Web/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp>

## President's Update

Association Members and Friends,



**W**ith spring officially here and Easter fast approaching we wish everyone God *påske!* As the temperature warms and blooms appear, we hope you will consider joining us for upcoming

events and activities, including the annual Syttende Mai (17th of May) celebration, Tusenbeiner fun walk/run, and our recurring open houses.

Our deepest thanks go out to the dedicated volunteers who keep us going. However, I would again like to highlight existing opportunities within our association. We still have two vacancies among our Board of Directors and are in need of a Secretary on the Executive Committee. Also, we need volunteers for our program, facility, and library committees. Please consider inviting friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers to join you at a future event. We welcome all newcomers and the opportunity to spark interest and future involvement.

As always, we value your input and feedback, so please contact us if you have questions, recommendations, or would like to volunteer.

Please visit our website or Facebook for the latest information updates. We are looking forward to seeing you in the months ahead!

Warm Regards,  
Chris Engen

## VOLUNTEER, Please!

Since 1994, the Ager Association has depended on volunteers. They have restored the house (a nearly six-year project), cleaned, painted, and updated the house. They have also created a library and exhibits, offered rosemaling, carving, and fabric arts classes. There has been instruction in Spanish, German, Norwegian, Swedish. For a time, we introduced youngsters to the house in a summer day camp. And we have offered the community many opportunities to learn about Waldemar Ager and Nordic culture. In 2014, we started a regular schedule of open house events, and docents have been giving tours ever since.

NOW, as ever, we need volunteers. The **interior** of the house needs care.

Will you help inside the house?

- wash windows
- clean floors
- dust exhibits
- review and inventory kitchen facility, including discarding unneeded equipment
- deep cleaning both bathrooms
- review and inventory household equipment related to instruction and entertainment

Will you help with tasks **outside** the house?

- in late April—clean up and dispose of leaves
- renew lawn north of back porch (April/May)
- renew perimeter gardens (April/May)
- help install new treads and blocking on stairs on the east side of the back deck (summer)
- help with prep for painting—summer (decks and fence)
- help paint decks and fence—summer

**Please** sign up to do one or more of these tasks. When you volunteer, you assure that the museum will continue to flourish in Eau Claire. **If you won't be able to help, please consider a donation for supplies and possible paid professional cleaners, painters, etc.**

Doug Pearson will gladly receive your offer(s) to help at dougpearson77@gmail.com.

# Recent

## *American Birkebeiner: The nation's Greatest Ski Marathon* by Jerome P. Poling



On February 10, Jerry Poling educated and entertained more than 70 people in the L.E. Phillips Memorial Auditorium of the Chippewa Valley Museum. Jerry told us about the many interviews he did over several years in order to publish a book that celebrated the 50th anniversary of the American Birkebeiner. Like Jerry, who has participated in about 25 of the races, many in the audience were experienced cross country skiers. In addition to citing comments from veteran and novice skiers, Poling lets us know that as good as the Birkie course is with five tough hills, the Holmenkollen course in Oslo is an even more severe test “with thirty-six climbs of at least 75 feet in the 50 kilometers. The highest climb at Holmenkollen is nearly 250 feet at 6.1 percent slope and the skiers do it six times on the 8.3 kilometer course.”



This talk was co-sponsored by the Chippewa Valley Museum, the Chippewa Valley Writers Guild, and the Waldemar Ager Association.

# Events

Waldemar Ager's friend E.E. Lobeck was the grandfather of speaker Tulla Froyen on March 11 at the Riverview Room in the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library. In 1906, Lobeck was present at a meeting of the Framed Board when Ager was confirmed as the manager of the business.

With assistance from her three daughters who contributed interwoven aspects of the story, Froyen helped us understand the many interests that Ager and Lobeck shared. Both spoke strongly about the importance of retaining one's culture even as the pressure of assimilation mounted as their children grew up with mixed loyalties.

Like Ager's book about the Civil War, which includes many letters and diaries from soldiers at the front, Froyen's book uses the letters, diaries, lectures, and musings of Lobeck to show how his energy and passion led him to promote prohibition at schools, churches, union gatherings, picnics, temperance club meetings—and, eventually, the campaign trail for office in Minnesota's government.

In his travels, according to one diary entry collected by Froyen, Lobeck is in North Dakota, scheduled to speak on the 5th and 6th of April 1903. President Theodore Roosevelt was scheduled to speak on April 7th. On the 7th, Lobeck "strode up the street with giant strides. One way or another one must step out in this world. If one cannot do it with [agerhouse.org](http://agerhouse.org)



L to R: Kristin, Tulla, Sara, Sonja

his mind, one can do it with his legs, I thought." When the train arrived, some "of the city's tycoons pushed through the crowd and were ushered in to the President and came back with happiness on their faces." Eventually, when the President appeared, Lobeck could "easily see in the president's bearing that he is "envis" (stubborn), and I was glad that he was. He appears to be independent, and does not run after the tycoon's bagpipe music."

"When he opens his mouth to speak, he laughs quite dreadfully, almost like a bulldog when it is ready to bite. However, one must love him, and I say: God protect our country's President."

"So I came, saw, and did not hear him."



# CultureFest

at the

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

March 29, 2026



This annual event featured more than 20 exhibits and food demonstrations and sales from noon until 4 on Sunday, the 29th. The Ager Association and Museum shared a room with Løven Lodge, Sons of Norway and Nordic Collaborative (formerly Midwest Institute of Scandinavian Culture).

The Ager tables included Ager’s books (we sold a couple), information about the organization and the museum, and a Scandinavia trivia quiz, such as, Name the capital city of two Scandinavian countries. Or Who is the author of *The Little Mermaid*? Or What is the smallest Scandinavian country? Or What does it cost to go to public school, the doctor, or the dentist in Denmark? We also sold two Syttende Mai tickets even though public sale doesn’t begin until April 11.

As we have done in 2024 and 2025, Ager’s readers theater prepared a script based on an Ager book. This year we read excerpts from *Chickamauga: Colonel Heg and His Boys*. Irish dancers preceded us. Their audience of about 100 dwindled for us to about 40. But they got the picture: The Civil War was a tough experience for the Norwegians and other Scandinavians of the 15th Wisconsin Regiment.

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Here we are on stage at the end of our performance, which included our acapella rendition of “Just Before the Battle, Mother.”



L to R: I Lunde T Hirsch K Hirsch S Pearson D Pearson K Larson



Before the crowds arrive, our exhibit is set, including Tusenbeiner shirts from 2023, 2024, and 2025.



The readers are available for performances based on *Sons of the Old Country*, *On the Way to the Melting Pot*, and *Chickamauga: Colonel Heg and His Boys*. If you are a member of a group who would like a performance and conversation about Waldemar Ager, please send a query to agerassociation@gmail.com.



Membership Form

 <https://AgerHouse.org>
 The Ager Association

Waldemar Ager Association
and Museum

Member Information

Date:

Name (First and Last or Household):

Mailing Address:

Email:

Phone:

Choose one:

New Member

Renew Membership

Membership level:

Single/Household \$40

Life \$1,000

Payment Method:

Check Enclosed

PayPal

Other

Donation and Volunteer Information

Amount:

Who or What:

General Needs:

\$

House Maintenance:

\$

Capital Project (New Museum/Nordic Center):

\$

In Memory of (Give Name):

\$

In Honor of (Give Name):

\$

Other (Please Specify):

\$

Would you be willing to volunteer?

Yes, contact me!

Maybe in the future?

If yes, what's the best way to contact you?

Contact Info:

Membership and donations may be sent by [PayPal](#) (email or QR code). Please include a note indicating the purpose!

agerassociation@agerhouse.org

Or send check to:
Waldemar Ager Association and Museum
P.O. Box 1742
Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742



Tusen takk!

The Waldemar Ager Museum

Center for Nordic Culture

P.O. Box 1742

Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742

Physical Address

514 W. Madison Street

Eau Claire, WI 54703



Browse our Little Free Library in front of the house. Take a Book, Leave a Book.



For a few years, Ager members and the Board met at the Ager memorial in Lakeview Cemetery on or near Waldemar's birthday, March 23 [1869]. Someone, often Bob Gough, gave a short talk about Ager and the cemetery. But bad weather plagued these meetings. So we stopped doing this event in March. Instead, we have sometimes gathered on May 23, when the weather is better for the visit.