

# The Ager Newsletter

Waldemar Ager Museum

June, July, August 2020

## TENTATIVE Activities

### Board Meetings at 9:30 a.m.

Next scheduled meeting is September 21. Possibly virtual.

### Book Club Discussion:

Jonas Jonasson, *The 100-Year-Old Man . . .*

Monday, September 21, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. Location to be decided. Check Facebook.

### Open House:

#### Starting in September

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays, 10 – 2  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, 4 -7

### Membership Meeting

Sunday, October 4, at 3 p.m.  
On the lawn at the Ager Museum.

The Waldemar Ager  
Association  
514 W. Madison Street  
P.O. Box 1742  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin  
54702-1742  
715.834.3985  
[www.agerhouse.org](http://www.agerhouse.org)

## The Ager Museum Reopens for Open House on Saturday, September 12, from 10 – 2

The Ager House remains closed to the public until Saturday, September 12, when we will welcome the public with our open house scheduled for Saturday, September 12. Thereafter we will resume a normal open house schedule. The following safety protocols will be adhered to until further notice:

- All volunteers and visitors will be required to wear facemasks when two or more people are present in the house. Signage will be posted around the house announcing this rule.
- Social distancing will be practiced. Ideally, no more than one person or family present in a room at one time. Signage will be posted around the house announcing this rule.
- Volunteers will be required to sanitize all commonly used areas of the house following open hours. This includes, but is not limited to, door handles, light switches, faucets, sinks, and toilets. The Ager Association will provide a supply of disinfecting wipes.
- Classes and other events at the house are cancelled until further notice.

The Association's board of directors will continue to monitor this situation. Ideally, we will relax some of these temporary protocols and resume classes, programs, and other events as soon as possible and in accordance with best practices.

The program committee is exploring ways in which the new website and/or social media can engage with our audiences during this time.

**President's Column:  
An Unusual Year  
By Greg Kocken**

What an unusual year we have all witnessed! 2020 will not soon be forgotten, and while it brought great challenges to the Ager Association it also brought exciting change. We began the year with a fundraising campaign that exceeded our expectations and allowed us to expand the scope of our restoration and renovation project. Thanks to donations from our members, and grant support from Xcel Energy, the Eau Claire Historic Preservation Foundation, and the Immanuel Lutheran Trust we are restoring the front porch and other delicate wood trim on the house. Following this, the entire exterior of the house is being carefully cleaned and painted. These changes provide an impressive face-lift for the house.

Additionally, through donations made in honor of Karren J. Bloom, we are also able to enhance the functionality of the lower level with new tables, chairs, and other learning equipment. Combined, all these projects will help support our organization for years to come. Our membership meeting, planned to be held outdoors on the afternoon of Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 p.m. will provide an opportunity for our members to safely learn about and view all these exciting updates.

Moving forward, our Association is constantly looking into new approaches to serve our members and community. I am confident, as we begin looking toward 2021, that our Association will continue to provide programming, classes, and other opportunities that connect with a wide array of community members. At the same time, we remain grounded and true to the roots of our organization first planted over 25 years ago.

On a final note, my term as President will expire this fall. This may be the last time I write this column and connect with all of you in this capacity. Serving as President of our wonderful organization has been among the greatest privileges of my life. It is my hope, as I depart from this position, that our group is well positioned to continue serving our members and community in the years ahead. I hope to continue my involvement with the Association and discover new opportunities that allow me to connect with all of you. Thank you, everyone, for the support you provided to me over the last several years and for everything you have done to continue making our Association great.

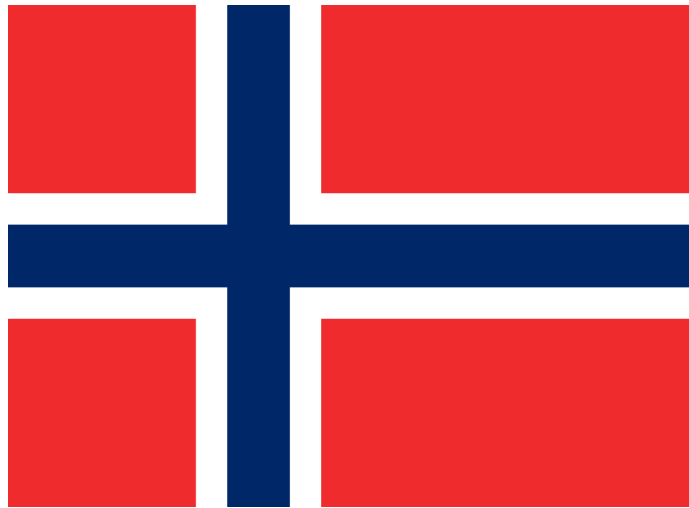
Greg Kocken  
President, Waldemar Ager Association  
kockeng@uwec.edu

# Det Norske Flagget og Den Norske Vimpelen

By Robert Fossum

Drawing on Wikipedia and his own experience, Robert Fossum calls our attention to laws and practices concerning the display of the Norwegian flag.

The Norwegian flag and the associated Norwegian Vimpel are important icons for the Norwegian people. There are certain rules and regulations that apply to the use of the flag (and some unwritten conventions).



In 1898, Norway adopted the current Norwegian flag. Fossum notes that there are special rules (since 1927) for the use of the flag on state property and on national holidays. They state that during the period from March to October, the flag should be hoisted from 08:00 (8 a.m.). From November to February it should be hoisted from 09:00 (9 a.m.). The flag is to be lowered at sunset, although no later than 21:00 (9 p.m.). In Nordland and Troms the flag is flown from 10:00 to 15:00 (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) from November through February. The flag is the only flag to be hoisted on a flagpole. These rules do not apply for private use but are generally observed by all citizens. The unwritten rule is that it should not be worn on the body below the waist. As in other countries, there are special procedures for rolling up and storing the flag.

There are 17 official Norwegian Flag days. On other days, it is common for citizens to raise vimpels on their flagpoles. According to Wikipedia, vimpels are "Pennants that correspond to national flags [they are] used more informally than the flag and can be hoisted around the clock. Such a pennant tends to have a motif similar to that found on the country's national flag, but there may also be differences between them."

It is my experience that vimpels (pennants) are much more common than the Norwegian flag

## Colonel Heg and His Boys

by Mari Carlson

Greg Kocken's email to the Ager board, wondering if the Ager Association should formally respond to the removal of Colonel Heg's statue from the capitol grounds in Madison in June, prompted me to learn about this man to whom I'd never given any thought. Greg informed me that Ager wrote a book about "Col. Heg and His Boys," so I checked it out of the Ager library.

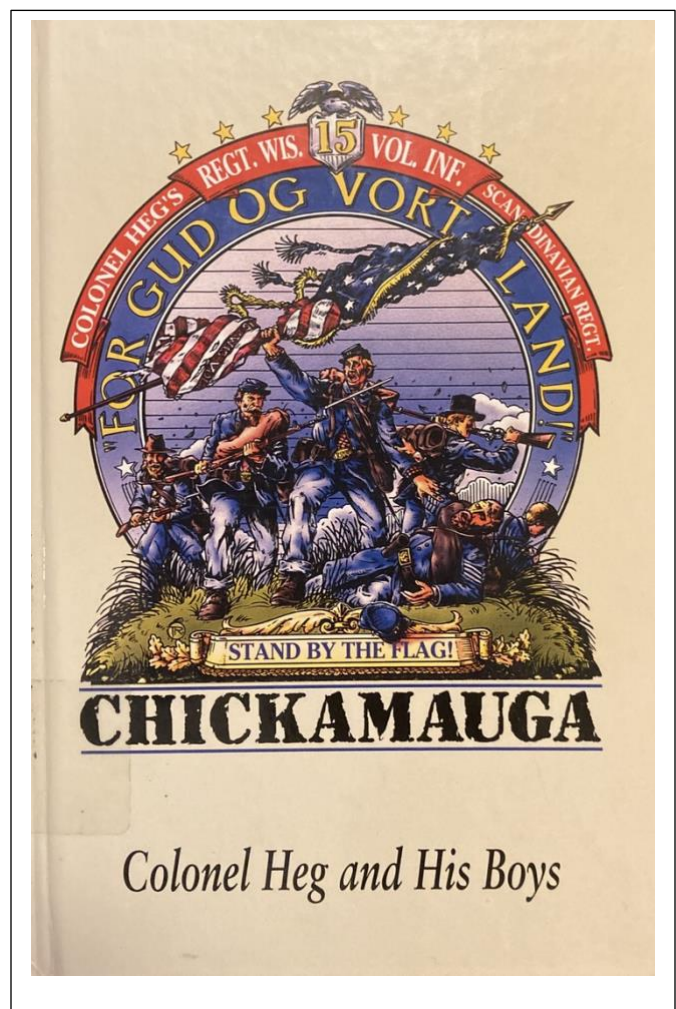
Ager's manuscript was expanded, translated and corrected for historical accuracy in a 2000 publication, part of the Norwegian American Association's Travel and Description series. Odd Lovoll wrote the preface. Ager's essays give historical and cultural context to the letters and personal memoirs he compiled. Photos, a poem, a list of the soldiers and their fates, as well as an index, round out the eclectic collection. The book does not so much tell a cogent history as to give voice to Col. Heg and his men, mostly in their own words.

Hans Heg was chosen by Wisconsin's governor to be colonel of an all-Scandinavian regiment in the Civil War. After emigrating from Norway, Heg's father ran a Norwegian newspaper in the Muskego settlement. Heg spent a few years in California during the gold rush then returned to Wisconsin and led a career as a politician. His anti-slavery stance and solid reputation in his community recommended him as a good candidate to lead the regiment, modeled after other ethnically-based regiments.

Many of the recruits signed on for the money. Regular pay and the chance to travel were worth the high stakes involved in war. Indeed, a fourth of the company perished and more came home injured. The men proved to be hearty fighters, used to harsh conditions and hard work, as many came from farms and labor industries. The first hand accounts of marching throughout the South, foraging and bartering for food,

fighting and taking prisoners show resourcefulness, courage and dedication. The men saw 26 battles. Heg died at the battle of Chickamauga.

The Civil War marked a turning point in the assimilation of Norwegian-Americans. To serve as Union soldiers furthered the pursuits of freedom and opportunity which had led many of the men across the ocean in the first place. The war solidified their indebtedness to "our new fatherland." It took Heg's statue coming down for me to find out about him. Statue or no statue, now that I know of his valiant contribution to the building up for this nation of immigrants, my memory of him, and that of his compatriots, will not fade easily.



## Statues: A Recent History, Including “Colonel Heg” and “Forward”

By Doug Pearson

“Forward” became the motto of the State of Wisconsin in 1851. In 1895, Jean Pond Miner’s statue of a female figure, its right arm stretched high as if pointing the way forward, took its place in the state capitol. Eventually, the statue was moved outside the building. On June 23, 2020, protestors pulled the statue from its pedestal at the State Street corner of Capitol Square. That same night, the statue of Norwegian-immigrant-Civil-War-officer Colonel Hans Christian Heg was also knocked down, dragged to, and dumped in Lake Monona.

In 1916, Waldemar Ager celebrated Heg’s Civil War efforts in a book called *Colonel Heg and His Boys*. Ager was aware that Heg had formed the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Madison, Wisconsin. Heg died in battle in 1863. Mari Carlson’s article introduces the no longer in print book. Amazon. lists it at prices from \$23.16 to \$890.

Heg’s statue on the capitol grounds was erected in 1926. The Norwegian Society of America funded the work, and, until the evening of June 23, 2020, the statue had “lived” a quiet life in the shadow of the capitol in Madison.

It’s pretty likely that Ager would have objected to the violence that occurred that night. But, as a thoughtful and somewhat argumentative man, he probably would have understood the reasons for the various protests. However, Ager would no doubt have been astonished at the ignorance of those who pulled down “Forward” and “Colonel Heg.”

He probably would have wondered what motivated the destruction of the statues. It’s likely that the protestors did not know that Heg was someone who was on their side. It’s possible to imagine that they did not see the statue as a representation of a young man whose conscience and patriotism led him to fight **against** slavery, not for it. But, according to an article in the Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram*, “Demonstrators said they ripped [the statues] down because they represent a false reality of racial equality.” The statement may be another way of describing blind, institutional racism.

Heg’s great, great grandson isn’t having it. He believes that Colonel Heg “in fact died for the cause of destroying slavery.”

On July 20, the Wisconsin State Capitol and Executive Residence Board authorized restorations of the Heg statue and “Forward.” Fund-raising and proceeds from a \$50,000 deductible insurance policy will underwrite the expenses.

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Interested in supporting the restorations?

[Statue Restoration Fund - Wisconsin Historical Society](#)

This website secures your private information using an SSL Certificate.. The Tax ID for the Wisconsin Historical Foundation is 39-0921093.. Want to mail in your donation instead? Please make your check out to the Wisconsin Historical Foundation and mail to: Wisconsin Historical Foundation, PO Box 260050, Madison, WI 53726-0050.

[support.wisconsinhistory.org](http://support.wisconsinhistory.org)

## Recent Activities and Promotions

In the not-too-distant future, the Association will make available an audio version of Waldemar Ager's *Sons of the Old Country*. Several chapters have already been recorded. More are in progress.

A small production team has first-takes of a short video explaining who Ager was and why there is a museum celebrating his accomplishments.

Some new publicity elements are in drafts and/or production. Soon we hope to have one of those "feather" flags on the lawn at open house and other public event occasions at the museum.

Classroom instruction poses a number of problems these days. We are considering a Zoom class for rosemaking. Perhaps other classes will also be offered, but we are moving ahead slowly because we are not yet confident that the confines of the museum can work safely with even small classes.

If you have an idea for an activity or promotion and are wondering why in the world someone hasn't suggested it, please send your proposal to the editor, Doug Pearson ([pearsoda@uwec.edu](mailto:pearsoda@uwec.edu)). He will pass the idea along to the Program Committee and the Board.

## Book Discussion

The next book, Jonas Jonasson's *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* (2009), promises a change in tone and theme. A few of the group have read the book and think it's quite funny. We decided to have some laughs.

Our next meeting will be on Monday evening, September 21, at 6:30. This may be an outdoor event again, weather permitting. Watch for an announcement about where we will meet. Also come to the event with ideas about what we should read next.

## Renewal of Basement Furnishings

The basement meeting area at the Ager Museum has been generously furnished by donations made in memory of **Karren Bloom**. Karren was a long-time member of the Ager Association and a grandchild of Waldemar Ager. Included in the renewal are 40 folding chairs, 8 6-foot tables, a hanging screen, and a display case. Only the chairs have been delivered as this issue of the newsletter goes to print.



## Marty Zens, Board Member and Painter of All Surfaces

What Marty did on his summer vacation:  
Painted the trellis.  
Painted the deck.  
Painted the ramp.  
Painted the exposed foundation.  
Painted the front porch.  
Painted the whole house to the top of the first-floor windows (two coats).  
Then he and Mari cleaned the house inside so that Open House could happen in September.

**THANKS MARTY!**



Kiran Millwood Hargrave. *The Mercies*. New York: Little Brown, 2020. 345pp. \$27. A Review by **Bob Gough**

Most Americans know something about the Salem Witchcraft trials of 1692-93. Witchcraft, though, was not part of America's supposed "exceptionalism." It was common throughout the early modern Atlantic world. Kiran Millwood Hargrave builds her first novel for adults, *The Mercies*, around the campaign against witches in Vardo, at the remote easternmost point of Norway, in the early 1620s.

There appear to have been many similarities between the situations in Salem and Vardo. There were pre-existing social rifts in both communities. Women who did not conform to gender roles (in the case of Vardo, the ones who led the community after all adult men were killed while fishing during a freak storm on Christmas Eve, 1617, for which demonic origins were suspected) were targeted as witches. Fears of indigenous peoples created suspicions of witchcraft. Unbending religious beliefs motivated the witch hunters. The tactic of protecting yourself by "naming names" of others who consorted more closely with the devil spread widely the specter of witchcraft. A temporary void in colonial-level political authority was the *opening* for accusations in Salem, while efforts by distant authorities to *end* a void in local authority in Valdo *empowered* witch hunters.

Hargrave's two main characters are Maren Magnusdatter and Ursa Cornet. Maren has lost her father, brother and betrothed in the storm and has to take on responsibilities for her aging mother, from whom she is becoming increasingly alienated. She befriends Ursa, the newly-arrived and newly-married spouse of the local commissioner, who as the daughter of a Bergen merchant is out of her element in Vardo, from not having the right clothing to not knowing how to cook for her zealous and patriarchal husband. The relationship between the two women deepens as, in a sense, they try to create a

family as a substitute for the dysfunctional situations in which they find themselves, while challenged by the terror of witchcraft accusations swelling around them.

*The Mercies* has been received positively. Emily Barton in the *Sunday New York Times* writes that it is the best novel she has read in years. It has themes of feminism and the spectral, and an intriguing setting in part of the Scandinavian world that remains isolated even in the twenty-first century.

### **Membership Meeting Sunday, October 4, at 3 p.m. At the Ager Museum**

Please plan to attend this meeting. Even though we will be wearing masks and practicing social distancing, there will be an opportunity to chat with friends.

At this meeting there will be nominations and elections for president, treasurer, and two director positions on the Board. Also a current financial report.

AND Mari Carlson, Ager board member and violinist, will provide music for the membership meeting, including Scandinavian tunes in keeping with the meeting's theme of building renovation and upkeep.

The Waldemar Ager Association  
P.O. Box 1742  
Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742

Membership Meeting  
News, Camaraderie, Entertainment  
Sunday  
October 4, 2020  
At 3:00 p.m.  
At the Ager Museum



Mari Carlson