

# *The Ager Newsletter*

## April May June 2024

### ACTIVITIES

**Board Meetings at 7 p.m.**  
Third Monday of the month.

#### **Open House--Tours**

July 7 1 – 3

July 13 2-4

July 27 10 – 2

August 4 1 -3

August 10 2 – 4

August 27 2 – 4

September 1 1 – 3

September 14 2 – 4

September 28 2 - 4

Or by appointment.

The Waldemar Ager  
Association  
514 W. Madison Street  
P.O. Box 1742  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin  
54702-1742  
715.598.1776  
[www.agerhouse.org](http://www.agerhouse.org)

### Coming Soon

“The Tusenbeiner “

a 2K and/or 5K Fun Run/Walk

Saturday, July 20. See page  
7 for an entry form. Picnic  
included. Join the fun.

#### **Book Discussion**

Helene Tursten

*The Torso*

**Wednesday, July 31**

starting at 6:30.

Location TBD.

NO September (date to be decided)  
Kent Syverson talks about  
Norwegian Fjords and Glaciers.

N October (date to be decided)  
**Annual Meeting** and Program  
Jan and Miriam Hansen talk  
about contemporary Norwegian  
Culture.

N November 30  
Norwegian Baking

NO December 1  
Advent at the Ager

## Some Cemeteries of Eau Claire—The Norwegian Story

By Robert (Bob) Gough, Professor Emeritus , History, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Many Norwegian-Americans are buried in Eau Claire's two large, public cemeteries. Waldemar Ager, of course, was interred in Lakeview Cemetery and has a large memorial monument. Also, in this newsletter in 2020, I wrote about the impressive and well-sited monument in Forest Hill Cemetery for *Formand* Gjermund Hoyme, who led what today is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

These public cemeteries, however, while officially non-denominational, in the nineteenth century were largely the final resting place of Eau Claire's "Yankee" settlers. Other ethno-religious groups understandably felt the need to develop their own cemeteries. Beginning with St. Patrick's Cemetery in 1862, Irish Catholics, German Lutherans, Norwegian Lutherans, Jews, and German Catholics successively built cemeteries on Eau Claire's Northside (Hmong were to follow a century later). These groups located their burial grounds north of Omaha Street, between the properties facing Starr Ave. and Churchill St., extending to the railroad line at the crest of the bluff above Dells Pond.

In 1885 the Scandinavian Lutheran Cemetery Association opened its cemetery at what currently is 1822 Omaha St. What became First Lutheran and Our Savior's churches (now merged as Spirit Lutheran) were primarily responsible for this development. Hoyme, pastor of First Lutheran (not yet a *formand*), led a reportedly "interesting and impressive" dedication ceremony on Sunday, June 7. This cemetery became known as the "Norwegian Cemetery" or the "first addition." Twenty-five years later the Norwegian cemetery proposed to expand by leapfrogging its neighbor to the west, the German Lutheran cemetery. When neighbors objected, it compromised by limiting the size of this "second addition," at 1712 Omaha St. Confusingly, this new burial ground became known as the "Scandinavian Cemetery." To further muddle things, both cemeteries also are referred to as the "Northside Lutheran Cemetery." In 2024 there are about 3,600 gravesites in the Norwegian and Scandinavian cemeteries on Omaha St., tended in past decades by the women of the Scandinavian Lutheran Cemetery Guild.

Among the prominent Eau Claire residents buried in the Norwegian Cemetery is Peter J. Smith, a civic leader and politician for over 40 years during the first half of the last century. A Republican and later Progressive in politics, he was a close ally of Robert M. LaFollette, Sr. Smith was a LaFollette delegate to the 1924 Republican National Convention and was a state senator from 1929 to 1933. He was also a founder and for several decades the grand secretary of the Eau Claire-based American-Scandinavian Fraternity (located in what is now the Grand Apartments, the old Wells Fargo building at the corner of East Grand and Graham streets). Two years after Smith's death in 1947, the Fraternity added an impressive memorial monument to his gravesite for "one who dedicated most of his active years to the upbuilding of our order." U.S. Senator Alexander Wiley, a fraternal brother of Smith's, spoke at the dedication of this monument on September 11, 1949. Smith was "a good American," the senator emphasized, who performed his duties faithfully and well.

Today the Norwegian and Scandinavian cemeteries are overseen by the Lutheran Church Cemetery Board, with volunteer members from Eau Claire's mainline Lutheran churches. The cemeteries are close to full, but still have room for additional burials—there were six interments in 2023.

If you are interested in Eau Claire's historic cemeteries, consider taking a walking tour of Lakeview Cemetery in August sponsored by the Chippewa Valley Museum and led by me and former Ager Association president Greg Kocken. Go to the CVM website for details and registration.

# Presidential Ramblings by Ivar Lunde

Mid-June 2024



## Presidential Ramblings

I've just returned from Norway (I missed my return flight but was able to hop on the same flight the next day . . . lucky to get one of the two seats left, I needed only one of course). I was in Norway for the annual meeting of the Norwegian Society of Composers.

The trip was a success but frustrating at times. Norway is changing. I had to ask my sister-in-law before I arrived if people still used cash in their transactions. They do, but I remember the confused feeling I had had just a few years ago when I presented kroner bills from yet another trip and was told they were old bills, too old, and not possible to use. The currency had to be mailed to the national treasury to be changed! I am glad I had my DNB debit card updated two years ago. The card is used even at the lavatory at the central rail station in Oslo, Oslo S! (NOK 20 = \$1.27).

The country is beautiful! Roads are great, and tunnels are built to facilitate transportation. I did not rent a car this time. I decided to use the rail system . . . and the conductor accepted cash! I was indeed surprised when the train entered the station in my hometown from the opposite direction of what I expected. This was due to a new tunnel.

The Waldemar Ager Association, Inc., has also made improvements, and miracles happened when the two houses on Whipple Street came down. Then Gordy Thorpe found a person to move the *Stabbur* to Eau Claire from a farm near Osseo. That was the second miracle. After resting in our garage during the winter, the little Viking ship from the Ray and Betty Larson estate finally made it to the museum. Grateful to our treasurer Kathryn and her grandson for moving that gem. It has been filled with dirt and flowers. That was the third miracle.

The big item for the Board is to begin in earnest to plan for a Nordic Center on the vacant properties next door. Community members are sought to be part of a larger planning committee. The May Board minutes show that "The committee will consist of two members from the Board, two from the general membership and two from the community." Please let us know if you can participate. This could be fun! And your presence would make a fourth miracle. The Nordic Center will house the **Waldemar Ager Library** now on the second floor of the house and not so easily accessed and also out of space for additions to the collection, many of which are yet to be catalogued. The building will also offer a meeting room, kitchen, exhibit space, storage area, and, possibly, a coffee and gift shop.

Our newsletter and Program Director Doug Pearson works with a committee that creates an annual plan for activities and events. Please "Tusenbeiner" yourself to the activities calendar! Doug should have an award for all his activities. So what can **you** do? Support the Association by contributing to all our activities. Helping to build the building fund will be greatly appreciated of course! Have a great summer!

Ivar

## CultureFest at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

April 14, 2024



At the Fest, Ager members read an adaptation from the going-up-the-river chapter early in Ager's *Sons of the Old Country*. Left to Right: Ivar Lunde, Jackie Young, Sue Pearson, Bob Gough, Jane Pederson, and Doug Pearson.

## Getting Ready for the Future: Phase One Mid-April



Two buildings had to be razed. Now there's planted grass turning the two properties into a job for the lawn mowing guy.



A view of the now-vacant land east of the Ager Museum. The space consists of two city lots and could, possibly, include the triangle of city-owned land at the south end of the property.

The plot is approximately 8,000 square feet. A student in the architecture program at the U of Minnesota has offered a rendering for a building to fit on this site. This is a good, tentative start for Phase II.



## The *Stabbur*

Arrived on May 7



We celebrated the summer solstice on June 20—in front of the *stabbur* and the newly planted ground across the alley.



And, since some of us were confused about the time of day, Tim Hirsch set up a henge so that we could estimate that it was about 13 and a half minutes past 7. Time for ice cream and strawberries.

## Syttende Mai 2024

More than 100 people gathered in Eau Claire on May 16 (the room rental for Friday, the 17<sup>th</sup>, exceeded our budget). As has been the case for several years, the event was planned by the Midwest Institute for Scandinavian Culture; the Løven Lodge 5-209, Sons of Norway; and the Waldemar Ager Association. Debbi and Tom King presented this year's program. They discussed their Norwegian roots, cultural experiences, and the ways they have embraced the *Friluftsliv*, a life outdoors. They hike, ski, and skate. And they tend a small herd of Icelandic sheep on land with a view of Lake Superior.



Tom



Debbi



Emcee Paul Kaldjian

Please support the Waldemar Ager Association.  
**It's still a good time to RENEW your membership.**

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) for our database: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

This is a: ☐ new membership ☐ renewal

☐ \$30 – General Membership

☐ \$60 – Sustaining Membership ☐ \$120 – Supporting Membership ☐ \$1000 – Life Membership

**The Association appreciates special donations:**

☐ A contribution to the Ager Association in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ A contribution to remember or honor someone in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_ In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contributions to the Ager Association are tax deductible to the extent provided by law**

I would like to volunteer my services to the association in the following areas:

☐ Programs

☐ House Maintenance ☐ Publicity

☐ Fundraising/Grants

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Clip this form and send it to    The Waldemar Ager Association and Museum  
P.O. Box 1742  
Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742

~~~~~

## Help Fund a Scandinavian Culture and Heritage Center

**Phase I** (2023-2024) is completed. We have access to the land across the alley from the Ager Museum. Grass is growing there now. Help the Association “grow” a modern structure for modern times.

**Phase II** (2024- 2026) Raise the funds needed to pay for the construction of the building.

**Phase III** (2026 – 2027) Build the center. Add a significant structure to the development on the west side of downtown Eau Claire.

**Please see page 8 for suggested levels of support.**



Tear out form and send to  
Treasurer  
Ager Association  
PO Box 1742  
Eau Claire, WI 54720-1742



### Run or Walk “The Tusenbeiner 2K and/or 5K”

Sponsored by the Waldemar Ager Association

Saturday, July 20, 2024

Start at 5:30 p.m. in the Mayo parking area across the street (W. Madison) from the Waldemar Ager Museum in Eau Claire, WI.

### Entry Form. Who are you registering?

Self First Name:

Last Name:

**\$25 ages 18 and older**

Other First Name:

Last Name:

**\$20 13 - 17**

**\$5 12 and under**

Address

Street:

City, State, Zip

Email Address:

Phone:

T-Shirt Size (Adult): ( ) XS ( ) S ( ) S ( ) M ( ) L ( ) XL

T-Shirt Size (Youth): ( ) S ( ) M ( ) L

Note: Guaranteed shirt for entries received by July 15. **Shirts not guaranteed for day-of-race registrants.**

Pay by check: Send to Treasurer, Ager Association, PO Box 1742, Eau Claire, WI 54720-1742.

Pay online: go to form at [agerhouse.org](http://agerhouse.org)

**Picnic after race included with entry fee.**

### Waiver

I, the undersigned, assume full and complete responsibility for any injury or accident that may occur during my participation in the event or while I am on the premises of the event. I hereby release and hold harmless the Waldemar Ager Association, Inc., the Mayo Clinic, the Eau Claire Parks and Recreation, the City of Eau Claire, the sponsors, promoters and all other persons and entities associated with the event or their agents or employees, or otherwise. I will not enter and participate unless medically and properly trained. I assume the risk associated with this event, including but not limited to falls, contact with participants, alcohol consumption, the effects of weather including high heat and/or humidity, and the conditions of the trail, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. I further grant my permission to use any photographs, videotape, motion pictures, recordings or any other record of this event.

**Fees are non-refundable.**

I have read the waiver statement and agree to the terms indicated above.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (parent/guardian if registrant is under 18) \_\_\_\_\_ Date

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

## Make a Capital Campaign Gift

We encourage you to celebrate the 2023 anniversary of our 30<sup>th</sup> year and the plan to expand our community impact. **Please consider a donation to the capital campaign.**

Consider these possibilities:

|                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>\$33</b>      | <b>Send donations to</b>         |
| <b>\$333</b>     | <b>Treasurer</b>                 |
| <b>\$3,333</b>   | <b>Waldemar Ager Association</b> |
| <b>\$33,333</b>  | <b>PO Box 1742</b>               |
| <b>\$333,333</b> | <b>Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742</b> |