

# The Ager Newsletter

The Waldemar Ager Association

June-August 2017



## Coming Events

*Board meetings at the Ager Museum, Third Mondays:  
June 19, July 17 and Aug. 21, 9:30 am*

*Kids Kubb at the Ager Museum Tuesday June 13.  
Call about times.*

*Midsommar Celebration at the Ager Museum, Saturday June 24, 1-3pm*

*Nordic Summer Camp for Kids—July 31-Aug. 2, mornings—Contact Doug Pearson*

*Yard Sale—To be announced*

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)

## Midsommar Celebration at the Ager Museum Saturday June 24, 1-3pm

In Scandinavia the summer solstice is the occasion for all sorts of celebrations. Events in each country differ slightly, but they all include food and drink, dancing, singing familiar songs and burning bonfires—usually on midsummer eve.

At the annual Midsommar event at the Ager Museum we welcome summer with strawberries and ice cream, hand made flower garlands, and lawn games like Kubb. You may learn the basics of Kubb or work on your skills. We hope to hear some fiddle playing and experiment with folk dancing along with other activities for kids and adults.

**JOIN THE FUN**  
Event is **FREE** and **OPEN** to the public  
**514 West Madison St. Eau Claire**

Regular Open House Schedule—  
Tour the Ager House and Library on  
2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays, 10-2pm and  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, 4-7pm

## Notes from President Robert

**Fossum**... My first 100 days have not been as eventful as has Trump's. But there have been some interesting events and challenges.

We are thankful for the many of you who have renewed memberships for the coming year. We appreciate the support and commitment you provide.

Since the last communication with you, the Association has celebrated several events.

A gathering of about 20 members assembled at Waldemar Ager's burial site in Lakeview Cemetery in Eau Claire on 23 March 2017 to celebrate the 148th anniversary of Ager's birth. After the short ceremony, there was an informal gathering at the Ager Museum for cake, coffee and conversation.

Two days later, on 25 March 2016, the Association sponsored a program by Lisa Lunge-Larson who spoke about and told stories about trolls. The program was held at the L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire after which attendees were invited to the Ager Museum for sandwiches, cake, and beverages.

On 30 April, the Association participated in the International Folk Fest at UW-Eau Claire. Mari Carlson played the violin at the music venue and volunteers were at the Museum table in the Nordic Room to tell about the Museum. Visitors were asked to take a quiz. A sample question: Where is the headquarters of IKEA?

These activities were arranged by the Association's Program Committee chaired by Doug Pearson, the immediate past-president. We appreciate all the work that Doug and our other active volunteers do for the Association.

Doug was also chair of the 17. Mai Committee that organized the very successful celebration. Over 160 people enjoyed an excellent meal and a delightful program by Viktoria Borgessen (aka Marely McGriff) who played the Nyckelharpa and told Ole and Lena jokes. Members of the committee, Orv Bierman, Mary Elworthy, Vicky Finstad, Dianne Lueder, Linda McClelland, Doug Pearson and Janice Wnukowski are

thanked profusely for putting on a great event. Many others provided dessert and served as hosts and decorators. They also deserve a huge "Tusen Takk".

At noon on 17 May a children's parade from the nearby Montessori School to the Museum took place. The children waved Norwegian flags and, after arriving at the Museum, sang "Ja vi elsker".

Board member Oscar Brandser, chair of the Building and Grounds committee has been attentive to the needs of the Museum and the surrounding grounds. A well needed deep cleaning of the first floor of the Museum was completed in early March. The city will be paving the ally next to the Museum parking lot, and Oscar has carefully watched over this process.

The Board has appointed a committee to review the bylaws of the Association. Another special committee is considering the structure of the standing committees.

After several years of service, Ingrid Coobs has asked to be relieved of her position as Docent Coordinator. She has arranged for Docents to be on duty at the Museum since the program of opening the Museum on weekends began. We owe Ingrid huge thanks for her service. We also need to fill her position as soon as possible in order to continue to maintain the open museum policy. If you are interested, then please send a message to me. My e-mail address and phone number are.

Florence Weise has taken the board position of Recording Secretary. She is former president of the Dover Sons of Norway and accountant for the Cameron School District. We are still looking for several more board members. Let me know if you are interested.

Finally, we continue to search for an Executive Director. The description of the position can be found on the website. An Executive Director would be a valuable addition to the operation of the Museum.

robertfossum@gmail.com  
715.924.4111

## Happy Birthday, Waldemar Ager!

On Thursday, **March 23**, 2017, 18 people gathered at Waldemar Ager's grave site in Lakeview Cemetery. The temperature was under 40 degrees, but President Robert Fossum welcomed us and introduced two of Ager's descendants: Borgny Ager and Ella Ager Fossum. Chris Pederson, currently finishing his master's in history at UW-Eau Claire, offered a short overview of the important aspects of Ager's life, noting some of the barriers he faced in trying to sustain the use of the Norwegian language and in advocating for prohibition.

Because of the chill in the air, President Fossum invited us to the Ager Museum, where Borgny and Ella blew out a candle on Ager's birthday cake and where the president read a clipping that provided some historical background for the funding that led to the installation of the monument that stands near the Ager graves. *(See photo on picture page.)—Doug Pearson*

## International Folk Fair

On Sunday, **April 30**, Mari Carlson belted out some Scandiband tunes and some traditional folk music. Carlson, a member of the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra and most recently instructor of Beginning Norwegian for the Ager Association, had volunteered to play her fiddle in The Cabin at the revived International Folk Fair at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Having taken a year off and reset the date for the event from November to April, the organizers of the Fair also declared a unifying theme for 2017: MUSIC. So the sounds of fiddles, the nyckelharpa, polka bands, and other musical presentations resounded in the Davies Center throughout the afternoon.

Upstairs in the Dakota Room Sons of Norway, Norden Folk, and the Ager Association shared a large space. Like many other exhibition spaces, food was a prominent element. Sons of Norway had their usual array of pastries spread across 24 linear feet of table top. Norden Folk celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence and offered a variety of maps, informational brochures and a performance of nyckelharpa artistry. The Ager Association displayed and sold copies of Ager's books and offered once again the Nordic Culture trivia quiz.

For trying the quiz, participants this year received a bar of candy and a bar of music (a printed bit of music Carlson had prepared for this purpose). Here are a couple of sample questions. See if you know the answers.

What was Ole Bull's claim to fame? In what city was Edvard Grieg born?

If you don't know, you'll just have to look it up. —Doug Pearson

## Docent Coordinator

For the past 17 months, **Ingrid Coobs** has served the Association as Coordinator of docent assignments for Ager Museum Open House days. She has made sure that we had two people at the house from 10 – 2 on second and fourth Saturdays and again on third Wednesdays for all of those months. Not only has she scheduled the docent assignments, she has also trained new docents. That job included making sure that docents know the routines of security for the house of course, but also preparing them to introduce visitors to Waldemar Ager, his work, and the importance of the elements of the house.

So, THANK YOU, Ingrid for your loyal and long service. Thanks too to the members who have served as docents. You have helped us provide the public face of the Waldemar Ager Museum. And that is an important contribution to community life and history. --Doug Pearson

# Syttende Mai at the Ager Museum

In Norway and many other places where Norwegians celebrate Syttende Mai, the "children's march/parade" is the essential and most prominent event. For some years now, the Eau Claire celebration has not included a children's parade.

Seeking to restore this tradition, the Programming Committee endorsed the idea of approaching the nearby Montessori School to see if teachers there would like to include the march and a learning experience about Norway among their spring activities.

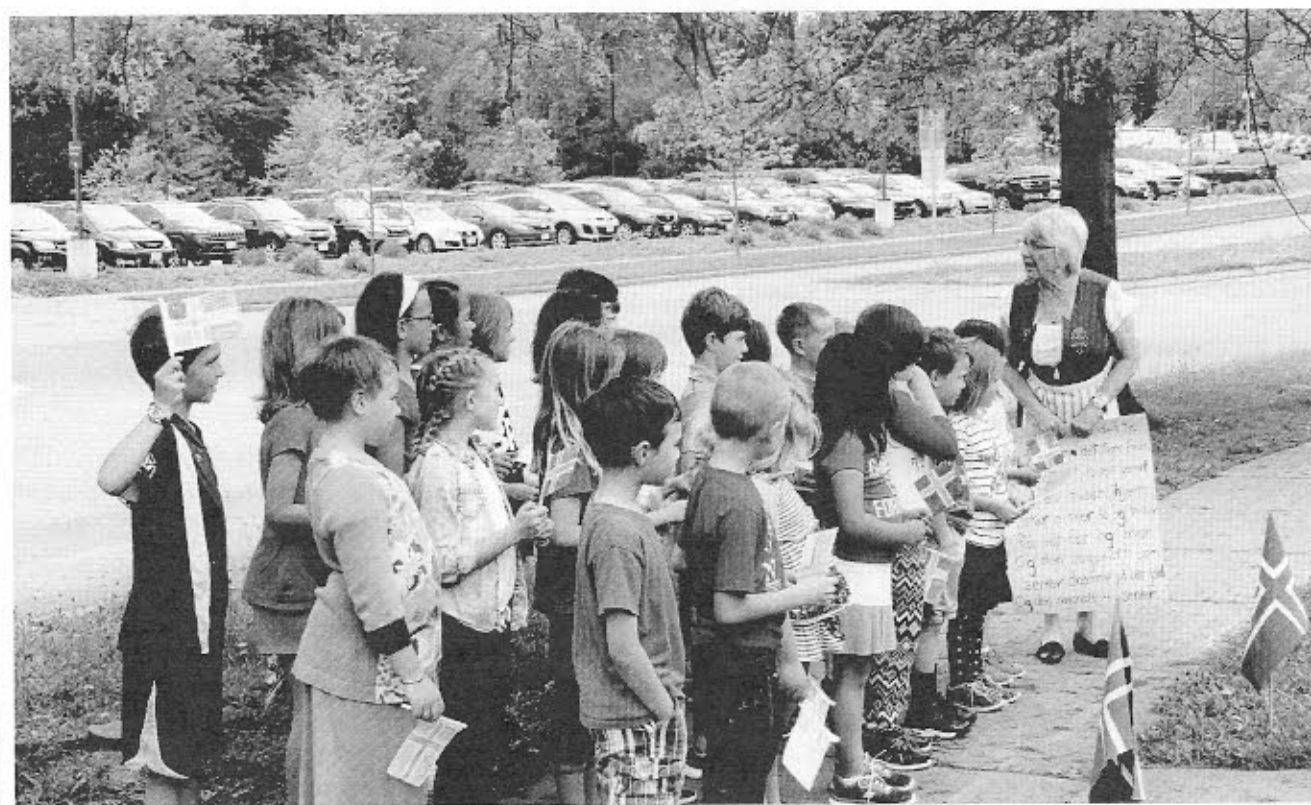
Mary Elworthy agreed to take charge of this event. She met with youngsters several times to teach them the national anthem. It turned out that they can "Ja, vi elsker" with the best of them. After a "dress rehearsal" on Tuesday, they were ready.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> at about 12:20, Mary, the 21 students, and a couple of their teachers left the school chanting and waving their handmade Norwegian flags (paper taped to straws). They paraded down Whipple, turned on to Madison, and arrived at the front of the Ager Museum.

After a brief welcome from President Robert Fossum, the "choir" of first, second, and third graders offered their performance of the national anthem. Inspired, we all (there were a dozen of us gathered for the ceremony) joined them for a second, rousing rendition of the famous song.

Then the children went down our unpaved alley of lakes and ponds (the result of fierce rain and storms overnight and throughout the morning) in time for a little bit of recess on the playground. It turned out that the brightening skies weren't the only sunny thing at noon that day. —Doug Pearson

*Mary Elworthy organizes the children's parade. Photo by Norb Wurtzel.*





# Annual Syttende Mai Event -- 2017

Many months ago representatives of the Ager Association, Norden Folk, and Sons of Norway formed a committee to plan 17.mai. 2017. It was the Ager Association's turn to take the leadership.

Because last year's event at the Best Western Plus was generally deemed a success, the committee and the Best Western signed a contract for 2017. From what we gathered informally from the 162 people who attended this year's event, we made a good decision.

Dawn Bergstrom and Linda McClelland greeted people as they came in the door. Then Yvonne and Stan Hillestad and Miriam and Jan Hansen helped guests find places to sit, guided them to exhibits set up along the south wall and, generally, just gave an elegant touch to the entryway.

Guests enjoyed the social hour (several people arrived VERY early and got more socializing done than the rest of us). Dorothy Anderson, an Ager Association member, was nearly the first in the door. At 102 years old, she had much to tell the many who had conversations with her. The first thing she told me was, "You know, I knew all of the Ager children. My sisters were close friends with Gudrun."

We enjoyed a meal that started with a cole slaw dish with a fresh, slightly sweet taste. There followed a dinner plate of meat balls, cod, boiled red potatoes, and, for more color, a medley of vegetables green and yellow. At every table there was a plate of fresh lefse from Blair and, at the end, an array of krumkake, sand bakkels, spritz, and other "cookie" delights baked by nine members from the three organizations. Oh yes, there was coffee too.

Then, Robert Fossum, President of the Ager Association, welcomed us to this special celebration of perhaps the most important date in Norwegian history: Constitution Day. Next, at the piano, Mary Elworthy got us singing the Norwegian national anthem and then the "Star Spangled Banner" and the prayer of thanks.

The buzz in the room was a welcome sound, eventually punctuated by Fossum's introduction of our presenter, Marilyn McGriff, aka Viktoria Borgessen. Echoing the deadpan style of the Danish comic pianist Victor Borge, Borgessen entertained us with comments about her temperamental instrument, the nickelharpa, and with a variety of jokes and word play: "I considered being a historian, but decided there was no future in it." As one of those who attended the event said, Ms. Borgessen gave us "an excellent balance of entertainment and information."

Many of us were reluctant to end the evening's fun, not just because it was pouring buckets outside. People were still socializing, getting their pictures taken next to the the Ager Association Norwegian flag, and trying to stay out of the way of the hotel staff who were busy cleaning up to be ready for a meeting the next day. It's doubtful that the next day's visitors would have as much fun as we did. —  
*Doug Pearson*





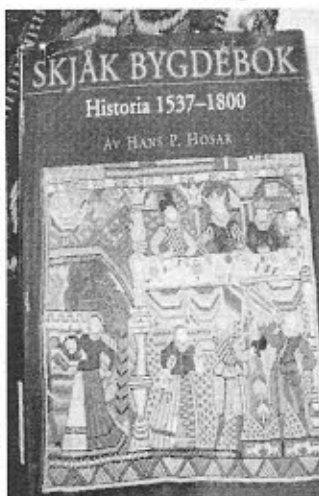
## Ager Library News: Report to the Genealogical Society, Chippewa Valley Museum, May 13, '17

By Miriam Hansen, Librarian

"Lilleaasen: Where It All Began" by Beatrice and Juneau Johnson is a genealogical collection of the three families who emigrated from Norway in 1868: Halvorson, Amundson, and Gunderson. Thanks to Erik Halverson, the Ager Library now has a very extensive family genealogy record of these three families. We are glad to add his donation to our growing collection of family histories.



Mr. Halverson, dressed in appropriate Norwegian attire, also brought his instrument and voice to the Eau Claire Genealogical Society's May meeting at the Chippewa Valley Museum, where he sang "Høyt Opp i Hakkedalen." His song introduced the topic of the day: "Finding Your Story: Resources at the Ager Library."



Though the Ager Library isn't a source for vital records or online records, it's been amazing to find the multitude of library materials that relate to immigration and settlement in western and southern Wisconsin. And as we dig into our resources, we keep discovering the names and stories of families whose descendants we know, including some from the Eau Claire area! Here's an example of an amusing story told by Gullik Knudsen Laugen, an immigrant from Numedal who came to Wisconsin in 1839: "When the first snow had fallen that autumn another Norwegian and I went on skis over the prairie to Beloit to buy flour. The Americans later saw our tracks in the snow, and no one could figure out what kind of animal might have left them. The matter aroused much talk and people racked their brains in an effort to solve the puzzle. The most learned naturalist in town finally delivered the verdict that in the forest out west there must be some hitherto unknown monstrosity whose means of locomotion produced furrows." (From *A Chronicler of Immigrant Life: Svein Nilsson's Articles in Billed-Magazin, 1868-1870.*)

Above top: Miriam Hansen at the Chippewa Valley Museum. Middle: *History of Norwegian Settlements* by Hjalmar Holand. Lower: *Skjåk Bygdebok* by Hans Hosar.

Through a power point program, we also introduced the audience of 35-40 to the library's research tools such as *Norwegians in America* by Martin Ulvestad and the five volume set of *Norwegian Immigrants to the United States* by Gerhard Naeseth and Blaine Hedberg. Other resources included books with stories from early Norwegian settlements, including *A Chronicler of Immigrant Life* by Svein Nilsson and translated by Clarence Clausen, *The History of the Norwegian Settlements* by Hjalmar Holand, and several bygdeboks. Audience members who were not familiar with our collection were especially interested in learning about our many resources, and expressed interest in visiting the Ager Museum and Library.

## The Ager Association 2017 Board of Directors

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**Items for next newsletter must  
be received by Aug. 22, 2017.**

**Visit our website Agerhouse.org  
for more color photos.**

## Recent Ager Association Gifts

### Contributions—

Carol & John Best  
Ray A. & Betty Larson  
Pete & Carol Anderson—In memory of Ev Krigsvold  
Orville & Elaine Bierman  
Oscar & Beth Brandser  
Jeff & Stacey Culver—In memory of Gudrun Bergh  
Miriam & Jan Hansen  
Marilyn Jones  
Ann M. Kuhlman  
Linda McClelland  
Lois Missman—In memory of Ev Krigsvold  
Richard & Sherene Nicolai—In memory of Hildur Ager Nicolai  
Leon Salander  
Judy Y. Tugren  
Jan Etnier

### Acquisitions—

Edward Mattner—movable hot type (similar to what was used  
in the Reform print shop)

**New members—**We welcome new members Ann M. Kuhlman  
and Florence Weise to the Association. Florence is also our  
new Recording Secretary.

## Help Wanted

*YOU can help the Association in numerous ways. You can  
be a docent. You can help on a program committee. You  
can assist the Building and Grounds Committee in their  
work to keep the house in order (Oscar Brandser chairs this  
committee.) You can chair or work on other committees  
being formed as the year goes along.*

*Here are five specific ways that you might contribute to the  
work of the Association.*

- **Help us find an Executive Director.** We are still in  
the search for someone to do this job.
- **Serve as Docent Coordinator for the remainder  
of 2017.**
- **Serve as a docent.**
- **Serve as the Program Coordinator for Advent at  
the Ager planned for Sunday, December 10.**
- **Serve as Program Planning chair for 2018.**

*Please let President Fossum (robertfossum@gmail.com)  
know if you are interested in volunteering.*



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

E5068-477965



**The Ager Association Membership/Renewal Application**  
**January 1-December 31**

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership Levels: New\_\_\_\_\_ or Renewal\_\_\_\_\_ (Please check one.)

Life Membership: \$1,000\_\_\_\_\_ Supporting Membership: \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Sustaining Membership: \$50\_\_\_\_\_ General Membership: \$25\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Gifts in Memory or in Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Other donations may be designated for the Endowment\_\_\_\_\_ or the General Fund\_\_\_\_\_

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

Call me for help with:

( ) Programs

( ) House Maintenance

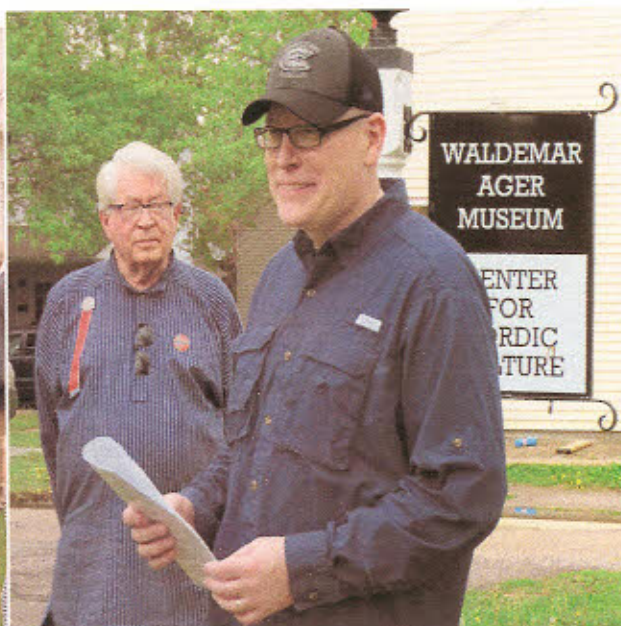
( ) Publicity

( ) Fund Raising/Grants

( ) Other

Please mail your check payable to: The Ager Association, P.O. Box 1742, Eau Claire, WI 54702





# **Ager Newsletter Picture Page June-Aug. 2017**

Photographers: Dennis and Florence Weise and Norb Wurtzel

Top L: Children's Syttende Mai parade at Museum; R: Robert Fossum and Chris Pederson

Row two L: Lisa Lunge, storyteller; R: Sue and Doug Pearson

Row three L: Viktoria Borgessen; R: Syttende Mai Banquet

Bottom: Waldemar Ager Birthday Celebration