

The Ager Newsletter

The Waldemar Ager Museum Sept.-Nov. 2017



Nordic Summer Camp 2017

Coming Events

Rosemaling class begins—
Sept. 18, 5-8 pm, Ager
Museum.

Fall program—Monday,
Sept. 18, 7 pm, L.E. Phillips
Public Library

Norwegian classes begin—
Sept. 18, 10-11 am, Ager
Museum

Annual Meeting—Tuesday,
Oct. 17, 7 pm, Ager Museum

Advent at the Ager—
Dec. 10 Details forthcoming

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Waldemar Ager Association Honors Journalist Ron Buckli

The fall program of the Waldemar Ager Association will be on **Monday, September 18, at 7 p.m., in the Eau Claire Room of the L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library.**

The program will salute local ski jumping and journalist **Ron Buckli**. For decades Buckli has been documenting ongoing ski jumping events and the achievements of local jumpers. For Buckli it's not just a job. It's a special aspect of local history that he describes every time he writes up the preparations for and the results of area competitions.

Jerry Poling will open the program. A former colleague at the sports desk of the *Leader-Telegram*, Poling is a cross country skier and perennial participant in the Birkebeiner. And he knows a thing or two about Buckli's work.

Also featured will be some of **Eau Claire's youngest ski jumpers**. They will talk how they train, and what their goals are. Then we'll hear from **Emily Anderson**, an Eau Claire skier who first qualified for an Olympic-sanctioned women's ski jumping event in 2012, at the age of 16. We will receive updates on **Nick and Nate Mattoon**, local ski jumpers who have competed across the world. And we anticipate some news about **Adam and Ben Loomis**, who compete in ski jumping but have added Nordic Combined to their training and Olympic aspirations. Helping provide some world-of-ski-jumping perspective will be US Ski Hall of Famer **Dan Mattoon**, who will give us a rundown on developments at Silver Mine Hill and opportunities for our community to make its mark on ski jumping worldwide.

Help us honor **Ron Buckli's** community spirit and celebrate local ski jumping.

This event is free and open to the public. Bring your friends.

President's Report By Robert Fossum

In Scandinavia, the summer solstice is widely celebrated as a festive day. Not only is it the longest day of the year, but for hundreds of years it has had a tie-in to the celebration of the birthday of John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus. In Norway, John the Baptist is Sankt Hans.

When the early church was dealing with the nativity, it was decided in 350 CE that it should be celebrated on the same day as all other sun gods, namely December 25. Since John the Baptist was born six months earlier, his birthday would be June 25. These two dates should have been the winter and summer solstices, but due to error or convenience, they are now just a few days off. In Norway "St. Hans er minnedagen for døperen Johannes sin fødsel."¹

In Norway and Denmark, the day that traditionally marks the summer solstice and midsummer is called Sankthans. Sankthansaften is celebrated today as a non-religious summer festival on the evening of June 23. Huge bonfires are lit throughout the two countries. Beer, aquavit and dancing around the bonfires are all part of the merrymaking.

This year Sankthans came to the Ager Museum in the guise of Midsommar on 24. June 2017. The day was celebrated with strawberries and ice cream, flower garlands, Kubb and fiddle playing. A good time was had by all.

The Museum was also host to Kids Kubb in early June and Nordic Summer Camp for Kids at the beginning of August. There were 12 campers at the camp. See page 5 and picture page.

Two classes will be held in the fall. Norwegian will be taught by Mari Carlson. Rosemaling will be taught by Patsy Volk. See page 8.

The Association Board has been very busy with several important items. It has agreed to become associated with the Wisconsin Historical Society. This involves a revision of the bylaws that are necessary to adhere to the principles of the Society. Other minor revisions to the bylaws have been adopted by the Board. These will be presented to the general membership at the Annual Meeting in October.

Oscar Brandser, chair of the Building and Grounds Committee and its members have kept the Museum and grounds in tip-top shape. The alley is now asphalt and easy to drive on. Thanks!!

Florence Weise suggested and the Board approved the purchase of several vests to be worn by Docents when on duty. These are hanging in the wardrobe area at the back entrance. The Board also agreed with her to have T-shirts with the Roger Ager ink drawing on the back for sale. These will be available to purchase at the Annual Meeting on Oct. 17 at 7 pm at the Museum.

The Board recognizes Tim Hirsch for his efforts to get the Reform digitized and online. Thanks to Vicky Finstad for her support for this project.

Three volunteers are leaving this year. Our Librarian, **Miriam Hansen**, is moving to Madison. **Ingrid Coobs** is unable to continue as Docent Coordinator, and **Carol Anderson** is unable to coordinate our Advent party. Thank you all for your generous years of service. We will miss you.

We continue to search for an Executive Director. The position description can be found on our webpage.

The Annual Meeting is scheduled to be held at the Ager Museum on Tuesday 17 October 2017 at 7:00 PM. The agenda is:

- **Short illustrated review of past year's activities**
- **Business meeting including vote on amendments to bylaws, approval of budget, and election of officers and board members.**
- **Refreshments and tour of Museum.**

The Association is sponsoring a **program on skiing in Eau Claire at the Eau Claire Library on 18 Sept at 7:00 PM.** See page 1.

We will hold the Sankte Lucia Program on December 10. Keep an eye out for details.

It has been a pleasure working with all the Board members and volunteers. I look forward to the future.

In May, members Ivar and Nanette Lunde traveled to Norway. Below Ivar shares with us his discoveries about the founding of the Norwegian Constitution, which is commemorated in the Syttende Mai Celebration and his search for the grave of Norwegian labor leader Marcus Thrane, who, when exiled from Norway spent the last years of his life in Eau Claire.

Syttende Mai, the real thing...By Ivar Lunde

Norwegians are very proud of their heritage, and the 17th of May is very special. This is the day they celebrate the signing of their Constitution of 1814 following 434 years of Danish rule. The 17th of May gained a new meaning following WWII. The observation of this date is a day of celebration that continue to the present

Nanette and I arrived in Norway a few days before the big day, I wanted her to see Eidsvollbygningen (Eidsvoll Building) where the constitution was signed on May 16, 1814, and ratified on the 17th. Of course, the weather cooperated; opening the curtains in the morning, we realized that about two inches of snow had accumulated outside.

Following the tour at Eidsvoll, while examining the paintings of the signers of the declaration in an adjacent building, I noticed a familiar name... Midelfart! Could it be? It turned out through further investigation that **Hans Christian Ulrich Midelfart** (July 22, 1772 - December 1, 1823), one of the signers, is the great grandfather of **Hans Christian Ulrik Midelfart, founder of the Midelfort Clinic, who was born in Kristiania (Oslo) August 5, 1865 and died in Eau Claire on December 15, 1937.** Same name indeed, but that was just the beginning! Even his son Peter, also a medical man, and daughters Margaret and Signe bore the names of their ancestors. These were people I had known. Onward to Tønsberg...

Eventually Ivar and Nanette's travels take them to Oslo where Ivar decides to search for the grave of labor leader Marcus Thrane. Norb Wurtzel had called his attention to the fact that Marcus Thrane's desk was part of the Ager Museum collection, so Ivar decided to look for Trane's grave. It is unknown how the desk became part of the Reform office.



I just returned from a rainy trip to Norway. I seem to recall you asked me to look into the final resting place of Marcus Thrane. We did find it after some walking around. It is located not far away from Munch's grave, and Henrik Ibsen is also close by. No mention of the fact that he died in Eau Claire. That was disappointing. I took a bunch of photos, and can, when I find time, identify the gravesite on the official map of Vår Frelser's Gravland.

Marcus Thrane was imprisoned in Norway for his socialist labor views in the mid 1800's. When he was released, and his wife had passed away, he emigrated to Chicago where he ran a Norwegian American newspaper and wrote plays. Eventually he made his way to Eau Claire where he spent his remaining years with his son Arthur.



Marcus Thrane's grave stone in Oslo.

In 1949 Marcus Thrane's body was exhumed and returned to Norway where he is now considered a hero. His wife Josephine is buried in the same grave.

Marcus Thrane had five children, but the only one we know with certainty is Dr. Arthur E.H. Thrane, who was born in 1844 and died in 1923. He is buried in Eau Claire. —E.F.



Newly Digitized *Reform* Now Available Online

Tim Hirsch reports that a searchable version of *Reform*, an important Norwegian-American newspaper, is now available online at (<https://rescarta.apps.uwec.edu/Ager-Web/jsp/RcWebBrowseCollections.jsp>). How did this happen? The Ager Association collaborated with John Friend from the Wisconsin Historical Society, John Sarnowski, Director of the ResCarta Foundation (a non-profit that helps other non-profits enlarge their online resources) and Greg Kocken, Head of Special Collections at the UWEC McIntyre Library.

John Friend, the Microfilm Specialist at WHS, transferred the microfilm *Reform* into digital images. John Sarnowski at ResCarta provided the tools to shape the collection into a user-friendly online format, and Greg Kocken helped a find suitable online host in the McIntyre Library online collection. Digital storage space will cost the association about \$250 a year. The search features installed by Res Carta make it possible to access issues of *Reform* even when the reader is familiar neither with Fraktur script nor fluent in Norwegian.

Already the Ager Library is beginning to hear from historians and genealogists from as far away as Norway. None of this could ever have happened without the far-sighted contribution from Vicky Finstad. Thank you, Vicky!

(Tim Hirsch provided the information for this report.)

Nordic Summer Camp Features Viking Theme in 2017

Twelve campers, ages 7 – 12, showed up on July 31 to start four mornings learning a new language (Norwegian), finding out about the work of Waldemar Ager, and creating some of the objects we associate with Viking life.

Mari Carlson introduced Norwegian in a series of games that involved musical chairs, tugs-of-war, Frisbee throwing, a clever rock/paper/scissors game involving very different signaling systems, and a sort of limbo/troll-under-the-bridge activity (I don't recall what linguistic achievement was required). In short, Carlson kept the campers active. Eventually, she taught them the Norwegian national anthem, leading them with her violin and a big smile. All you can say about this part of each day is "Ja, vi elsker" these happy youngsters.

Having attended last year's camp (when they tried to learn Finnish), a few of the campers were at an advantage when we adjourned to throw batons at wooden blocks out on the front lawn. Now famous throughout Eau Claire, the game of Kubb is sometimes described as a hybrid of "bowling, horseshoes, and chess." Happily, under the direction of Stan Hillestad, no one got hurt.

About half of each day was devoted to crafts (the floating kind and the kind involving cutting, coloring, and folding paper). Each camper received a Viking ship kit created by Sue Pearson. In no time at all, 12 pairs of scissors were snipping away the part of the paper that wasn't a Viking ship. (Clare Pearson, the camp counselor and granddaughter of Sue and Doug, made sure that it was only paper that was getting cut.) With strategic application of glue spots and the insertion of six sticks complete with paper ends simulating paddles, each camper had the basic structure of a Viking ship. The real-life Viking boats found their way, on rivers and portages, to the Middle East, across the North Sea to the northeastern sections of the Anglo-Saxon world, and also across the Atlantic to the mysterious coast lines of North America. Eventually, the campers gave their ships an elegant look with artful shields and fancy sails.

We also learned that the Vikings played Hnefatafl, a board game reminiscent of chess or checkers. The

campers colored in the squares on their boards, marking the positions of the defenders of the king and the starting places for the attackers who come from every side of the board. Only 12 guards keep the king safe from the attack of 24 enemies. But the versatile and resilient king can only be taken if the attackers surround him. Sadly, we had all we could do to get the board and "pawns" prepared for the game. The campers will have to go on line to learn about the strategies for playing the game of Hnefatafl.



Hnefatafl—A Viking board game.

We added a fourth day to the program for 2017. We went to the Chippewa Valley Museum for two activities. First, Tim Hirsch, founding member of the Ager Association, introduced the campers to the world of printing. Using some type in the Ager collection and once used at Fremad Publishing, the company that produced *Reform*, Hirsch helped the young people understand how printers produced readable texts. Before long, the campers had "set" the type that spelled their names, and they went off to the inking table to prepare the type for application to paper. Fortunately, water-based ink was used—as were aprons and lots of paper toweling.

Before going outside with Museum educator Karen Jacobson to tour the one-room school house and the log cabin of Lars and Grethe Anderson, the campers tried the flavors at the ice cream shop in the museum. This was a variation on the treat theme on the other three days: Danish Havarti, Swedish Fontina, and Norwegian Jarlsberg, each cheese paired with grapes, or apples, or blue berries and some special Danish cookies provided by sisters Eva and Violet. I'll bet you wish you had been there. —*Doug Pearson*

AGER LIBRARY NEWS—BY NORB WURTZEL

NEW TO THE SHELVES OF THE AGER LIBRARY

We recently received a two-volume set *Norske Lutherske Menigheter I Amerika, 1843-1916* by Pastor O. M. Norlie. This writer found the history of the churches of his baptism, confirmation and marriage. Genealogists may want to research these for the years of organization, pastors and lay leaders of Norwegian Lutheran congregations. Pictures are shown of some churches. You can also learn the value of a church building, parsonage and graveyard. I found the 80 acres the pastor of one congregation was expected to farm was valued at \$100.00. (Was farming class taught in the seminary?) These books were given to the Ager Library when the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire was discarding them this spring. Special thanks to Ager member Janice Bogstad.

GAME OF NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS: Ole Bull 1—Cleng Peerson 3

If you are interested in early Norwegian immigration, check out a new acquisition in the Ager Library—*The True Saga of Cleng Peerson*, by Alfred Hauge. We all know Ole Bull had a dream of developing a community named Oleana in the New World. He bought the land recruited people and the socialistic idea failed. Another Norwegian, Cleng Peerson (1782-1865) had an idea that was more successful. Alfred Hauge cites Cleng Peerson as “The Father of Organized Norwegian Migration”. Born near Stavanger on 17 May 1782, his first organized emigration took place in 1825. The boat “Restauration” carried 50 souls over the ocean to America. His first settlement was near Bath, New York. Later another group he recruited settled in the “free and fertile land” of Illinois near the Fox River. Cleng spent much time walking around the country looking for future sites. His largest, and probably most successful emigrant group settled in Texas. A Texas Historical Plaque states “He led a group to Bosque County, beginning a large Norwegian settlement in the area.” (Notes taken from the publication of the Norwegian Society of Texas and Translated by John Weinstock and Turid Sverre. 1982) This book is a gift from Helen and Norb Wurtzel.

A Contemporary Emigrant Story...

This year Gerd “Geggy” Ryen of Belmont, MA, had two events to celebrate. January marked 68 years since her arrival in America, and In August she celebrated her 96th birthday. Geggy, her husband Kob and two children Vera and Dag left Norway in January 1949, and settled on Lexington, KY. There Kob taught horseback riding and light horse husbandry at the University of Kentucky. Geggy raised her family and managed their farm. After Kob died she worked as a sorority house mother at the university. Seventeen years ago, she moved to Belmont to be near her daughter and son-in-law, Ager members Vera and John Gregg.

In Belmont, she walks daily, knits, reads, maintains her home, belongs to Sons of Norway, and corresponds by email with her many friends and relatives. “I always tell the Norwegians there are good people in America.” says Geggy. She is truly one of them—E.F.

Our website,
www.agerhouse.org
features extended
newsletter articles
and color photos of
the newsletter.
Please visit the
website.

**The Ager Association
2017 Board of Directors**

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**Items for next newsletter must
be received by Nov. 6, 2017.**

Recent Ager Association Gifts

Please note: Contributions and new members will be included in the next newsletter

Acquisitions

Hildur Gleason, Poulsbo, WA donated Gurolle Ager's fountain pen, a gift to her from her mother Valborg Oyen, Gurolle's second daughter.

Connie Johnson donated Norwegian silver coffee spoons and fork.

Special Notes

A recent UWEC email announces the fact that Board Member **Dr. Robert J. Gough** is being honored by the Wisconsin Historical Society for his co-authorship of *Building Excellence: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*. Congratulations, Bob!

Sadly we say thank you and farewell to **Miriam Hansen**, our librarian who is retiring with her husband Jan to Madison. Miriam has cataloged and managed the library for at least ten years. Thank you, Miriam.

Ingrid Coobs is retiring from her volunteer role as Docent Coordinator. Because of her work we have been able to keep a steady schedule of open houses. We include in our thanks her many years of help at our Advent at the Ager celebrations with cochair with **Carol Anderson**, who is also retiring. Thanks to both of you.

Help Wanted

We are in the process of recruiting more docents. They are essential to our open house program. If you have not volunteered because you think you are unprepared, please join us for a training session at the house on Saturday, September 9, at 9 a.m. You'll enjoy the opportunity to introduce people to Waldemar Ager. **Call Doug Pearson, 715 834 5204, if you will attend the training session.**

*YOU can help the Association in numerous other ways. 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. **This month we are especially Looking for a Docent Coordinator, a Librarian and an Advent Party Chairman.***

- **Help us find an Executive Director.** We are still in the search for someone to do this job.
- **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

Fall Classes at the Ager Museum

Rosemaling All levels: \$50. Beginners pay an additional \$30 for start-up kit.

All beginners and experienced painters are welcome.
Sept. 27, Oct. 4 & Oct. 18, 5 - 8 pm

Beginning Norwegian and Review of Norwegian \$25
Start fresh or renew your skills.

Sept. 18, Sept. 25 & Oct. 2, 10 - 11 am

Continuing Norwegian \$25 for course or \$45 for **both**
3-week courses.

Oct 9, Oct. 16 & Oct. 23, 10 – 11am

Waldemar Ager Association
514 W. Madison Street, Eau Claire
(715) 834 5204
www.agerhouse.org

Wisconsin Federation of Museums

*Wisconsin Museum Conference—
Monday November 6, 2017*

Museums: Constant & Changing

Wisconsin Federation of Museums
invites you to our 2017 conference
where we explore the theme
Museums: Constant & Changing. This
year's conference will take place on
November 6th at the Cedarburg
Cultural Center, a long-time hub for
visual and performance arts,
humanities and local heritage located
at

***W62 N546 Washington Ave.
Cedarburg, WI 53012***



Nordic Camp 2017 at The Ager Museum Had a Viking theme: Dancing, Shipbuilding and Games

