

The Ager Newsletter

Waldemar Ager Museum

April, May, June 2021

TENTATIVE Activities

Board Meetings at 7 p.m.

Third Monday of the month.
Virtual until further notice.

Book Club Discussion:

Wednesday, July 21, at 7 p.m.
Lars Myttig (Norwegian) *The Bell
in the Lake*

Wed., Sep 22, at 7 p. m.
Book not yet selected.

Locations To Be Decided

Open House:

Closed until further notice.



**The Waldemar Ager
Association**
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www.agerhouse.org

Midsommar Celebration

Celebrate “Midsommar” at the Ager Museum

Ever wish you could visit the Land of the Midnight Sun? Well, you can –in a way--without leaving Eau Claire! Come to the Ager Museum to celebrate the summer solstice.

On Saturday, June 26, from 2 to 4 in the afternoon, the Waldemar Ager Museum will host OUTDOOR activities for young and old alike.

From 2 – 3, participate in “Backyard Olympics”: Four activities for children and adults, including the “long run/walk” (about 200 meters); the “sprint” (40 meters); the hop, skip, and jump; and the toss the Wiffle ball. All events held on the grassy peninsula east of the museum at 514 W. Madison. On the front lawn, learn to play (or develop your skills) in games of Kubb.

All participants receive Norwegian 5 kronor “coins” to exchange for refreshments.

In the second hour, enjoy a medley of Scandinavian folk fiddle tunes and learn to sing some Norwegian songs and camp songs.

In Norway, June 23rd, Midsummernight Eve (also called St. Hans Aften or Jonsok-kveld) is a night to party, eat good food, dance, sing, and sit around a bonfire. We’ll do the best we can with the “Olympic” games and folk tunes.

Join us for the fun.

President's Ramblings, by Ivar Lunde



Friends,

Although it is not a requirement for the Waldemar Ager Association Board to have monthly meetings, we have done so, via Zoom. This June we will meet at the Ager house proper. Earlier this month, in an update to the Board, I identified the many activities we have embarked upon this summer in spite of the pandemic. The Waldemar Ager Association was a cosponsor of the 17th of May celebration, and I am happy to report its success. The meatballs and the lefse were particularly tasty, as were the cookies. The joint committee of Sons of Norway, Norden Folk and the Waldemar Ager Association did an excellent job. Our representative Doug Pearson was tireless in his work on our behalf.

A crew of members and non-members cleaned up the property and added mulch to bare patches. We now have a power washer that will keep the walkways safe. We will be deep cleaning the inside of the house as soon as we officially open.

We are now registered as a WiLS member. WiLS (formally Wisconsin Library Services) is a non-profit membership organization that facilitates collaborative projects and services to save their members time and money and to advance library service, primarily in the state of Wisconsin. Most of their members are libraries, but they also work with cultural institutions, government agencies, and other non-profits to develop partnerships and projects.

Our website will soon provide you the opportunity to buy books and perhaps other types of material as we are in the process of obtaining a **Seller's Permit**. How about an Ager Association T-shirt? We will of course have Ager books!

I have been corresponding with the Chippewa Valley Museum to explore co-operation on several fronts. Both Rachel Meyer (Development Manager) and Jodi Kiffmeyer (Archivist) seemed very interested. One item we discussed was having a joint opening of the Ager Museum and the Schlegelmilch House in September. Covid is still with us.

We have been active with the local Eau Claire Kubb League to sponsor activities and we are planning an exciting Midsommar event.

Plans for the fall are progressing and we welcome any thoughts and suggestions from our members. You **know, one of my greatest concerns is to make the Waldemar Ager Association a "contemporary"** organization. Any help you can offer is appreciated. As Dean Martin used to say, **"Keep them letters coming."**

Sincerely,

Ivar

THANKS to All for Your Donations

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The Waldemar Ager Museum: Scandinavian, Nordic?

You may recall that the Ager House was undergoing considerable renewal back in 2013-14.

At that same time, the Ager Board was considering an important change in public identity. With financial support from Marian and Bill Klish, we replaced the sign in front of the house and renamed the building The Waldemar Ager Museum, Center for Nordic Culture.

Why not Scandinavian Culture? There's a controversy here. Oddly, we are aware of it partly because of the popularity of "Nordic" crime fiction. Consider the two-faced title of a 2013 book by Barry Forshaw: *Nordic Noir: The Pocket Essential Guide to Scandinavian Crime Fiction, Film & TV*. The book can't make up its mind. It's not alone. A Slate article had this to say about the "controversy."

Technically, the term Scandinavia refers to a geographical region, the Scandinavian Peninsula, which encompasses Norway, Sweden, and part of Finland. It may also refer to a language group, Continental Scandinavian, that is descended from Old Norse and includes Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish. . . . Nordic is a cultural term and includes these three countries plus Finland, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. . . . They currently participate in the Nordic Council, founded in 1953, and except for Greenland, still have similar flags featuring the "Nordic cross." Kim Gittleson (2009)

In adding the term *Nordic* to the Ager Association's identity, the Board was stipulating an inclusive way of describing the mission of the organization. Even though Ager zealously celebrated his Norwegian roots, he also had faith that every immigrant culture contributes its special qualities to the ways of life in the United States.

Think of that the next time you raise a glass of *akevitt*. Your editor is thinking that Waldemar Ager is turning over in his grave at the mention of this "elixir."

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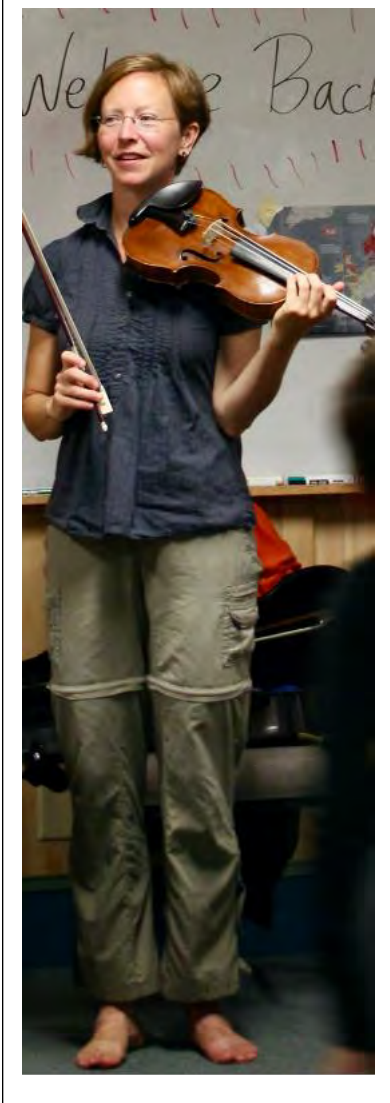
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For the Ager Association
Text or call 715.834.3985

Items for the Next Newsletter
Send to pearsoda@uwec.edu by
September 15.

Meet Mari Carlson: Artist/Musician/Teacher



Mari was raised in Washington, DC. After college and marriage, she lived in Minneapolis. Then, in 2014, she moved to Eau Claire along with her husband and son. She joined the Ager Association not long after coming to Eau Claire.

You could say that she started preparing for her participation in Ager Museum activities when she was 9 years old. That year she boarded a plane in DC, flew unaccompanied to Minneapolis, then took a shuttle bus to Bemidji, MN, where Norwegian was taught as one of the Concordia College language programs. What did it feel like, I wondered? “I was terrified . . . but excited too,” she said. For 10 summers she made the trip to Bemidji, eventually taking the four-week camp programs and earning high school language credit. In her first two college summers, she served as a Norwegian camp counselor in Bemidji.

The camp itself, she remembers, was a full immersion experience--not only in the Norwegian language, but also in music, food, architecture, rosemaling decoration, and buildings named after Norwegian cities and Norse mythology.

In college (at St. Olaf, where her mother and sister went; her father went to Concordia), Mari was among those students who created their own major program in what was called Paracollege. Her focus involved religion and art. She had planned to do art therapy. Eventually she did pastoral studies at St. Thomas University Seminary.

Many Association members know Mari as a musician (she plays in symphonies and also offers folk tunes on the violin, having started with that instrument at the age of 3). Others know her as their teacher of Norwegian, or as a storyteller.

So it is no surprise that she has become a member of the Board of the Ager Association and has helped organize programs during the past several years. She credits the contacts with the Association for helping her settle into life in Eau Claire. The connections have fostered friendships in community music groups and given her an outlet for her work as a book reviewer, artist, and musician.

She mentioned as we talked that she likes coming to the Ager house for its historical significance and the focus and intimacy that a dedicated, small museum provides. She enjoys being in the cozy, decorated rooms that link her to Ager himself.

Mari is about to set off on a 10-month adventure, a sabbatical of sorts. On August 1 she leaves for Washington, DC. She looks forward to going back to her roots in that city. She intends to study, play music, refresh. We look forward to welcoming her back in June 2022.

Doug Pearson

Two Events in June: A Soft Opening for the Waldemar Ager Museum

On June 10, Oscar Brandser, Xcel Energy employee and former member of the Ager Board, brought a small group of colleagues to the museum for a day-long planning activity. Oscar reports that all went well. And the air conditioning works! Good thing. We were having a run of 90+ days.

On June 15, the Association hosted a morning Kubb for Kids event, co-sponsored by the Kubb Association and Eau Claire Parks. Bob Gough and Doug Pearson handled the refreshments—lemonade, water, and sacks of chips or popcorn. Eric Anderson set up two pitches for the 10 kids in attendance. Eric is a former member of the Ager Board and the principal organizer of the annual United States Kubb Championships held in Eau Claire in July. He's also a good teacher of the game.



Five or six games seem to be happening at once here.

9.2 Points for Style



Game abandoned

Aaron, Eric, and Bob. the men who made it happen

Open House

In 2015 the Ager Museum opened its doors regularly on 2nd and 4th Saturdays from 10 – 2. For a while we had very good attendance. So we added third Wednesdays, from 5 -7. Sometimes people showed up. Most of the time, docents sat waiting for action.

About the time that the pandemic led to the closing of the museum, we also decided to drop the Wednesday opening. We have been closed to the public since our annual meeting, held out on the front lawn last year on a slightly chilly late October 4th afternoon.

When will we reopen? That is still an unanswered question. If it seems safe, we may be able to open later in the summer. We hope that not later than September there will be confidence that we can do tours of the house safely.

Willing to be a docent? Contact Doug Pearson (pearsoda@uwec.edu).

Book Discussion

Recently, the group discussed *The Historians*, by Cecilia Ekbäck. The story is set in WW II (1943) Sweden, where neutrality is a complicated process. The book starts with a murder, and includes a cohort of Uppsala graduate students (the historians) now in first jobs in government or the war effort, and a culture of lies and deceit. Again and again, the characters in the novel struggle with the question of who can be trusted and what activities can be believed. We recommend the book.

Interested in joining the group? Ask Doug Pearson (pearsoda@uwec.edu) to put you on the mailing list.

To renew or join the Ager Association for the 2021 calendar year, go to agerhouse.org.



The Library

The library is a fabulous element of the museum. It's a pleasure to go upstairs and just behold it and the special exhibit of *Reform*. For several years, Greg Kocken has been chair of the Library Committee—and also president of the organization for a term. With the addition of a second child in his household, arranging child-care has become a high priority. So Greg is seeking a replacement as chair—also additional members for the committee. If you are willing to serve on the Library Committee, contact Greg (kockeng@uwec.edu).

One of the tasks of committee members is to evaluate gifts of books and requests for purchases. It's also necessary to survey the stacks and see that books are where they are supposed to be.

Most important is helping to catalogue new materials. This is a skill you can learn. You'll like the feeling of accomplishment when you get to the moment of sticking the catalogue information on the spine of a book being added to the collection.

Syttende May 2021

As President Lunde mentioned in his “Ramblings,” the annual celebration of Syttende Mai in Eau Claire has been for many years a collaborative event. A planning committee made up of members from the Ager Association, the Midwest Institute for Scandinavian Culture (sometimes known as Norden Folk), and the Sons of Norway start planning about a year advance. For 2020, we asked Professor Emeritus Ivar Lunde to present a program on Norwegian music from 1814 to the present.

Professor Lunde explained that we were asking him to do a semester course in 45 minutes, but he agreed to try. His first “draft,” in October 2019, included many selections of musical styles, some videos, and photos and a connection with Eau Claire. We were very impressed.

After we canceled the 2020 event, Lunde said he would like to give his presentation in 2021. In the course of time, however, it was clear we couldn't have an in-person event. Our contact at Holiday Inn South suggested that a pick-up meal could be prepared to our specifications. So it happened that 93 people bought the meal, picked it up, and walked out of the hotel with their boxed dinner, a bag of traditional cookies, and a copy of Lunde's program on a DVD or flash drive.

Many have commented that they liked the meal and have enjoyed watching Lunde's presentation. Here is a response the committee especially treasures:

Terrific Syttende Mai event. The food was especially special, for Norwegian fare:-), struggled a bit with "Swedish" meatballs. We have watched Ivar Lunde's program several times, enjoying it more each time. The presentation will be shared with our Norwegian kids/grandkids.

Please thank the many involved in putting the celebration together.

Dorothy & Jim



Linda M, Deb, Linda C, Janice, Diane, Doug
!00 bags of cookies—at attention

Nanette

Ivar

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In the translation of excerpts from *Reform* (this interesting book is available at the Ager Museum and soon, we hope, online), we find two interesting items from June 27, 1905.

Carl Schurz gave a lecture at the University in Madison last week. Among other things, he said that the country's security is more dependent upon the schools than upon the navy. He appeared to be of the thought that schools are of more usefulness than warships.

THE SITUATION IN NORWAY

The Swedish Riksdag [Parliament] assembled the 20th in order to consider Norway's withdrawal from the Union. The government has submitted a proposal which presumes certain guarantees that acknowledge the dissolution of the Union.

How the Riksdag will respond, nobody can have any well-grounded idea about. The rumor about that is that it will dispose of the government's proposal, and the fact that Minister Ramstedt has submitted his resignation does not bode well for Norway's cause.

Note: on September 23, 1905, the Union between Norway and Sweden was formally dissolved.