

The Ager Newsletter

October November December 2025

ACTIVITIES

Board Meetings at 7 p.m.

Third Monday of the month.

Open House--Tours

November 8 2 - 4

November 22 2 - 4

December 13 2 - 4

December 27 2 - 4

Or by appointment.

715 598 1776



The Waldemar Ager
Association
514 W. Madison Street
P.O. Box 1742
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
54702-1742
715.598.1776
www.agerhouse.org

Coming Soon

Saturday, November 29

“Art and Craft Sale” | 10 -5

Local artists, including Mary Elworthy and Sue Pearson.

Sunday, November 30

“Advent at the Ager” | noon to 4.

An *almost* winter smörgåsbord. Also cellos, carols, chat. Games and other fun **for kids** in the basement. Also a poetry office. Pay a dollar. Get a poem. (The dollar's for the food bank).

Please bring nonperishable food items for Feed My People food bank.

As the 200th year of Norwegian immigration draws to a close, we can reflect on the past two centuries of the immigrant experience. By comparing the past and present, we see that, while the world has changed dramatically, the core of the human experience remains strikingly the same.

I had the privilege of attending the **Ager Association Annual Meeting** in October of this year. The main program featured an excellent interview conducted by fellow board member and seasoned interviewer, Jodi Kiffmeyer. The interview was with two Ager Association members and Norwegian immigrants: **Jan Hansen** and **Ivar Lunde**.

Jan immigrated in 1949/50 at the age of 14, coming to America with his mother, aunts, and brother—nine months after his father had immigrated ahead of them. Times were hard in post-war Norway, still recovering from the Nazi occupation during World War II. America promised more economic opportunities, and Jan's family wanted to have a better life. Jan spoke very little English at the time and had only learned about America through Hollywood movies and popular songs.

After getting off the Norwegian-American line and still wearing his Norwegian sweater and knickers, Jan got a tour of New York City, where he was astonished by the towering skyscrapers. Then he and his family took an overnight train to Chicago. In Chicago, they moved into an apartment that felt huge compared to what Jan was used to in Norway. Everything in America seemed "immense," and Jan was struck by how fast-paced life was. His high school experience, however, was very difficult due to the language barrier. He studied in a class with students who also struggled to communicate.

Ivar Lunde had a very different immigration story. He came to America by himself at the age of 22 in 1965 after meeting his American wife while she was a student in Salzburg, Austria. He traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet his in-laws for the first time and was amazed by their modern home—especially the kitchen, with conveniences like a dishwasher. Though Ivar had studied English since the 4th grade and continued through higher education in Norway, he arrived in the U.S. with less than \$10 in his pocket. Ivar's experience of Americans was also through movies and television, such as Roy Rogers and Hopalong Cassidy.

In the years following, Ivar's experience took him across the country—California, Maryland and Idaho—teaching and performing music. One of the biggest surprises for him was the disconnect between the overseas perception of America and its reality. He noted that Americans were much more conservative than their international image suggested.

If Waldemar Ager were alive today, listening to the stories of Jan and Ivar, he would likely nod in recognition. As a passionate advocate for the immigrant experience, Ager believed that preserving one's cultural identity could coexist with contributing to American society. He would sympathize deeply with the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by newcomers, and he would remind us that behind every immigrant story lies courage, resilience, and a yearning for a better life.

Ager championed a pluralistic vision of America, where immigrants retain their heritage while participating fully in civic life. His unwavering belief in democracy, education, and the power of the written word to inspire change would find new relevance in today's conversations on immigration. Above all, he would insist that we listen to these stories—not just as anecdotes from the past, but as reminders of the ongoing journey of what it means to become an immigrant and an American.

Jan Hansen is Professor Emeritus, Economics, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He has given numerous talks on topics relating to modern Norway. He and his wife Miriam have led several tours to Norway.

Ivar Lunde is Professor Emeritus, Music, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He has his own music studio, has been the artistic director for the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra, and has several of his compositions selected for concerts in the US and abroad.

President's Update – Nov 2025

Association Members and Friends,



Last month we held our annual membership meeting to provide a comprehensive update on the state of the Ager Association, elect new board members, hear from our members, and thank those who have contributed their time and efforts to our organization. The past year included many enriching events, including the 3rd Annual Tusenbeiner fun run/walk, the "This is Norway" tapestry exhibit, open houses and group visits, and of course the Syttendai Mai celebration.

We aim to sustain and build upon this year's many successes, but need help from you, our membership, to fill roles within the organization and/or recruit interested candidates. We have two vacancies among our Board of Directors and also need a Secretary on the Executive Committee. Additionally, we need volunteers for our program, house, and library committees. Please let us know if you are interested. We welcome any amount of time that folks may be willing to contribute to preserve our future.

We will close out the final weeks of 2025 with a baking demonstration, art sale, and Advent at the Ager. Please visit our website or Facebook for additional details about each event. We hope to see you there!

Warm Regards,
Chris Engen

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Donations in 2024

Tryg Ager
Mary & Ed Elworthy
Harold and Genevieve Hagen Family Fdn
Ann Kuhlman (for Nordic Summer Camp)
Leon Salander
Patrick Kurtenbach
Diane and Mark Lund
Nanette & Ivar Lunde
 (demolition of Whipple St houses)
Ella Fossum
Marilyn Jones
Ivar Lunde
Miriam and Jan Hansen
Robert Gough
Sherrie Miles
Oscar & Elizabeth Brandser
Bill Phillips
Janet Etnier
Cindy & David Rasmussen
Helen & Herb Wurtzel
Bob Rizzi

In Memory Of and In Honor Of

Jo Stolp | IMO Robert & Averil Osterhus
Amy & Carl Leer | IMO Brad Larson
Ted Wacchholz | Brad Larson
Linda Ager | IMO Borgny Ager
Carol & Peter Anderson | IMO Borgny Ager
Janice Bogstad | IMO Josephe Ole Bogstad
Hilder Gleason | IMO Borgny Ager
Sarah & Greg Kocken | IMO Brad Larson
Viickie O'Meara | IMO Victor Forseth
Sue & Doug Pearson | IMO Brad Larson
Mary & Ed Elworthy | IMO Brad Larson
Robin and Robert Fossum | IMO Brad Larson
Jackie Young | IMO Brad Larson
Martha Frey and John Mason | IHO Doug Pearson

Editor's Note: Apologies for not including these lists at the start of this year. Please let me know (pearsoda@uwec.edu) if any of your donation(s), memorial(s), or in honor(s) of have been overlooked. The first issue of the newsletter in 2026 will account for contributions in 2025. The 2024 lists (above) are in order received. Our next lists will be alphabetized by last name of donor(s).

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 31st anniversary of the Ager Association. **Please consider a donation to the capital campaign.**

Please **designate Phase Two** on your check.

Consider these possibilities:

\$31	Send donations to
\$311	Treasurer
\$3,111	Waldemar Ager Association
\$31.111	PO Box 1742
\$311,111	Eau Claire, WI 54702-1742