



AGER NEWS



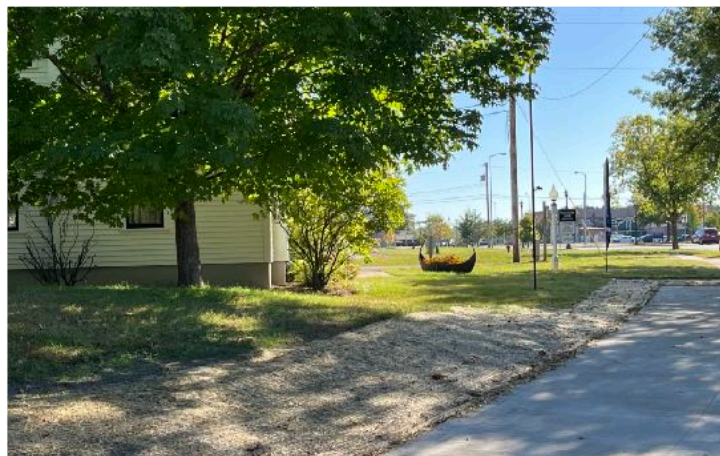
Meetings

The Board meets at the Ager Museum monthly on the third Monday evening at 7 p.m.

Open House/Tours

January 11 10 - 2
January 25 10 - 2
February 8 10 - 2
February 22 10 - 2
March 8 10 - 2
March 22 10 - 2

And by Appointment 715.598.1776



The new trail, where it curves parallel to W Madison and ends at the entry sidewalk of the Ager Museum.



The Waldemar Ager
Association
514 W. Madison Street
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Eau Claire, Wisconsin
54702-1742

715.598.1776
www.agerhouse.org

Coming Soon

Saturday, January 25, at 2:30: Hike the newest city trail. Finish at the Ager Museum for warming up with cocoa, cookies, and crayolas. Bring the children—and grandchildren. All are welcome.

Note: The photo above shows how the trail curves around the front yard of the Ager Museum. Start and return here. Or start about a mile north on Folsum, where the trail angles east toward the High Bridge.

Thursday, February 13, at 6:30

The first of three scheduled talks about immigration.

Dr. Elizabeth Hart, Executive Director, Literacy Chippewa Valley, will speak. She notes that the agency has tutored adults from more than 30 countries. Hart will address issues related to literacy and immigration.

Late February/early March

The Music and Theater Department of UW-Eau Claire presents Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), one of the world's most frequently produced plays.

Sunday, March 9

CultureFest, the annual festival sponsored by the UW-Eau Claire includes exhibits and programs from more than 20 nations. Be sure to hear the Ager Players present an excerpt from Ager's *On the Way to the Melting Pot*.

Meet the Members of the Board

President CHRIS ENGEN is originally from Eau Claire, Chris returned to the area following a 30-year career in the U.S. Army. His overseas military service included three years in Stavanger, Norway, with the North Atlantic



Treaty Organization (NATO). Living in Norway afforded him the opportunity to further explore his Norwegian roots and enjoy the culture, geography, history, and people. He became a board member in 2021 and served as Vice President last year.



Director WILLIAM (Bill) AGER is a great-great-grandson of Waldemar Ager. He lives in Madison, WI, with his wife, Marti, and family. He holds a degree in physics from UW-Madison but works in Information Technology. His interests include hiking, running, technology, and taking his dog, Juneau, to the dog park. As a longtime member of the Ager Association and a member of the board

of directors, he looks forward to serving the Ager Association in any way he can.



Vice President IVAR LUNDE is a former Professor of Music at the University of Maryland and University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Lunde was President of the Waldemar Ager Association from 2020-2024. Born and educated in Norway, he played oboe for the National Opera in Oslo. Additional

education was obtained in Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and the United States.

Secretary ROBERT FOSSUM (Bobby) was born in Northfield, MN, son of Tina Gaudland Fossum (from the Red River Valley of MN) and Inge



Martin Fossum (from Meridean, WI, on the Chippewa River). A graduate of St. Olaf College, he earned a PhD in mathematics at the University of Michigan and taught mathematics at the University of Illinois for more than 40 years. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Norway and a professor of mathematics at the University of Oslo and Aarhus and København

Univeristet in Denmark. He has held positions of leadership in professional and cultural societies and organizations and, recently, served as president of the Ager Association.

Treasurer ROBERT GOUGH is a retired history professor at UW—Eau Claire. Among his publications, he coauthored the university's centennial history, *Building Excellence*, which received an Award of Merit from the Wisconsin Historical Society. His connection with Ager House comes from his interest in Historic Preservation. He is a member of the Eau Claire

Landmarks Commission and, from 2004 to 2016, served on the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board.



Director Jodi KIFFMEYER has served as archivist at Chippewa Valley Museum since 2020. She has three adult sons and two perpetual toddlers (aka cats). In her spare time, she enjoys biking, reading, writing, paddleboarding, swinging in a hammock, walking in cemeteries, and researching family and local history.

Director JANE PEDERSON is UW-Eau Claire Professor Emerita of History. She completed her PhD at Columbia University and is the author of *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin* and other publications on Norwegian American and rural history. She grew up on the Pederson family farm in Trempealeau County.



Director JACKIE YOUNG is in her second year on the Ager board. She has lived in Eau Claire for almost fifty years. She taught second grade in the Eau Claire school district. Her heritage is Norwegian and she has traveled to Norway several times. She says, "It's funny but when I am there I feel like I am home."

President's Update

Association Members and Friends,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I wish you a very Happy New Year and all the best for 2025! We hope you had a joyous holiday season that may have included some Scandinavian treats and traditions.

Since this represents my first opportunity to reach out to everyone after our annual membership meeting, I want to extend sincere thanks to our previous board members and key volunteers for their efforts during 2024. Special thanks go out to Ivar Lunde for his leadership, impact, and enduring commitment! I am humbled to be entrusted with this responsibility and look forward to working with everyone to further our progress. Please take a moment to meet the rest of our leadership team by reading their bios (p. 2) within this issue.

Looking ahead into 2025, our Program Committee put together an event calendar that provides a range of activities for participation. Please mark your calendars, join us, and share these opportunities with family, friends, and neighbors. As a reminder, the success of these events relies heavily upon volunteers, so please consider lending a hand. We welcome any amount of assistance, and every contribution is valued!

The coming year also marks a 200-year anniversary in the history of Scandinavian emigration to America. The first organized group of Norwegian immigrants to America departed Stavanger, Norway, July 4, 1825, on the sloop *Restaurationen* and entered New York harbor 98 days later on October 9th. This significant milestone provides an opportunity for us to reflect and learn, and we hope to incorporate elements into our upcoming events.

Finally, please send us your thoughts, suggestions, and ideas for the year. We value your input and want to generate new interest and membership to sustain our future.

Warm Regards,
Chris Engen

Appeals for Help

Stories: If you have a story to tell about experiences in Norway, books you are reading (concerning Nordic topics), an event from the Association's past years, please let the editor see what you have written. You might be published in the next newsletter. Write pearsoda@uwec.edu

Tours: We need docents to give tours. We offer more than 24 opportunities to let the public in on the secrets of the Ager Museum—such as the library and the newspaper collection. If you are ready to take one of the shifts we offer each year, we'll arrange training. Write pearsoda@uwec.edu

House Maintenance: There's always something to look after. We need one or two people to be the house caretakers. Write pearsoda@uwec.edu

Yard Sale 2025

The Ager Museum plans for a Yard Sale and celebration of the Summer Solstice on June 20. In some years, the sale has earned as much as \$1,000. Recently, however, we have added only about \$300 to our income.

You can help by donating things of value that are in good repair: furniture, appliances, collectibles, jewelry, tools, toys, etc.

You may bring donations to the Ager Museum on any open house day between January 25 and June 14.

We'll store donations in the basement. If you can't deliver on an open house day, please leave a voicemail on the Museum phone: 715 598 1776.

A Norwegian Lesson

"Å ta det for god fisk"

Literal Translation: To take it as good fish.

Meaning: To believe something someone said without doubting them.

Coming Activities

Hike

The City of Eau Claire has recently added to the extensive system of trails for walking, running, biking. The newest, a wide concrete path, runs northwest from the front door of the Ager Museum. It's about a two-mile round trip from the museum to the end of this stretch of pavement. But walk any distance comfortable for you. Or just come for the treats. See you on **Sunday, January 25. Finish the exercise at 2:30**, and gather at the museum for "Cocoa, Cookies, and Crayolas." All are welcome.

Immigration Program #1

"Literacy and Immigration"

6:30 p.m., L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

Dr. Elizabeth Hart will talk about the work of Literacy Chippewa Valley. The agency provides tutoring for adult immigrants. That this resource is important for immigrants should be obvious. Practical use of English is essential for almost every immigrant. In the USA and many other countries, proof of competency in the new country is essential to approval for citizenship.

In 1995, in Estonia, for example, "The large number of Soviet citizens who had lived in Estonia for years, perhaps their whole lives, were not granted Estonian citizenship unless they passed a test showing knowledge of the language and the constitution and signed a loyalty oath" (Tom Loftus, *Mission to Oslo*).

In 2023, in Estonia, "minority language has been effectively eliminated as a medium of instruction." (United Nations, Human Rights).

A Doll's House

Late February/Early March, JAMF Theater, Pablo

This play (1879) focuses on marriage and the ways that social expectations and gender roles limit individuals, especially women, in marriage. In the course of the play, Ibsen reveals Nora's discovery that she has been playing a role she finds unfulfilling—an unveiling of her acceptance and then rejection of her role.

In the winter 2024 edition *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, John H. Nondorf reveals that Kurt Vonnegut wrote a playlet, *Nora*, as an afterword to Ibsen's play. Vonnegut wanted his daughters to be self-sufficient, something he thought might not be possible for Nora. The play is set 20 years after the end portrayed in Ibsen's play. Nora finds Helmer and they have a conversation—about the children.

CultureFest

Sunday, March 9, noon to 4, Davies Center, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

This annual event, recently held near the end of April, will happen before the next edition of "Ager News" arrives in your mailbox.

Here's what to expect. Almost every room in Davies will have exhibits and students, faculty, and community members welcoming visitors with song, games, food, and fun.

The Ager Association joins the local Sons of Norway and the Midwest Institute of Scandinavian Culture to celebrate Nordic customs and traditions. The Sons usually sell baked goods. The Ager Players offered a Readers' Theater excerpt from *Sons of the Old Country* last year. Look for them on the main floor stage reading an extract from *On the Way to the Melting Pot*.

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## What Happened in September, October, November, and December

Four events completed the Ager programming in 2024 September.

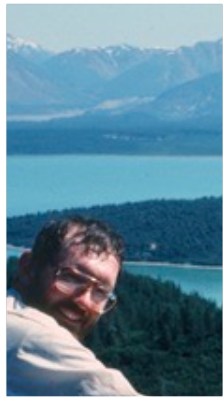
In September, *Kent Syverson* presented "The Formation of Norwegian Fjords and My Adventures in the Fjords of Glacier Bay, Alaska." In many images and with great humor, Syverson helped us understand how a geologist discovers and interprets life on the ground.

In October, *Jan and Miriam Hansen* reported their findings about contemporary Norway. Their talk, "The Culture, the Oil Economy, and the Current Interests" of Norwegians" helped us understand the impact of oil sales. We learned that Norway is a rich country but a savvy and democratic one. They make sure that every citizen is well cared for and that the proceeds of the oil economy are invested for the future.

In November, the Association sponsored an art sale: *Ivar Lunde* sold CDs of his music, and *Mary Elworthy* and *Sue Pearson* sold art (cards, paintings, prints).

Also in November, the Association sponsored for the second year, a very popular baking demonstration presented by recruits from Chris Engen's family. In December, we celebrated Advent at the Ager, an event that produces a *koldt bord* (Norwegian) or *smörgåsbord* (Swedish) of Scandinavian foods. Mary Elworthy played the pump organ (yes, it still works) for caroling. (See photos, opposite page.)





Kent Syverson in a calm moment in Alaska



Miriam and Jan Hansen, Oslo Harbor



The Ager Christmas Tree 2024



Smörgåsbord at Advent at the Ager



Art Sale: Sue Pearson, Ivar Lunde, and Mary Elworthy



How to make lefse without burning your fingers: Scandinavian Baking Demonstration (November 2024)

## Syttende Mai 2025

Reviews from prior years confirm that the Holiday Inn South serves a good Scandinavian meal and has a room that works for the programs (three screens help for those distant from center stage). But this year 17 mai falls on a Saturday. The room is too pricey for us on Saturday, so we have booked the 2025 event for **Friday, May 16**.

There will be the usual silent auction. Bring cash or checks for some good deals. Also, there will be a cash bar—open until the program starts.

We hope that Tom Loftus will be our speaker this year (confirmation not yet settled). Loftus was US ambassador to Norway from 1993 to 1997. He experienced some important changes in his tenure as ambassador, probably on a par with the big event we are celebrating—Syttende Mai 1814—the year when Norwegians drafted a constitution. The document provided structure for political independence, but the separation from Sweden did not happen until 1905.



You'll be smiling like these women (Borgny Ager, Astrid Nilsen, Ingrid Coobs) if you buy your tickets for the 2025 banquet.

**Tickets will be available at Festival Foods, Mall Drive, Eau Claire, or online at [agerhouse.org](http://agerhouse.org), starting on March 29.**

## Reflections: The Library

Our library has about 1,600 catalogued items. The library committee has stacks of uncatalogued books on its desktop, and boxes more are on the floor. Some haven't even been opened yet. We have been in a holding pattern since the pandemic.

More to the point, however, is the fact that we have very few feet of unused shelving in the library. We can't move many of the books from the desk or the floor to the bookcases.

This is our way of reminding you that we have moved from Phase I to Phase II of a plan to construct a building across the alley from the museum. Phase II has to do with fundraising. Help us raise the money that will make it possible to add to the library collection and will move the library to ground floor level for easy public access for research, reading, and borrowing.

## Waldemar Ager: Other Resources

In the newspaper room on second floor of the museum, you will find many binders with photos and other information about Ager and the Association.

One binder includes granddaughter Barbara's "Glimpses into My Grandfather's Scrapbooks" and "A Biographical Sketch of Waldemar T. Ager."

In the same binder there are other articles. "Man of Many Minds," published in *Norden* by Ager's good friend J. J. Skordalsvold, reveals Ager as "a man [who rose] above the common herd by sheer personal force." Skordalsvold goes so far as to say that the section on Eau Claire in his article will give the city "some free advertising on account of its most interesting citizen."

Skordalsvold treats many aspects of Ager's life, but none so avidly as Ager's prohibitionist rhetoric: "Suppose a preacher or some other outstanding person should find fault with the cause of prohibition, woe unto that person if Mr. Ager saw fit to give him a real treatment! It was enough to paralyze an ordinary mortal."

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

Enclosed is a membership/donation envelope. OR go to [agerhouse.org](http://agerhouse.org), and click on "Become a Member." Then scroll down to *Become a Member Now*. Click on that button and you will have the form for paying online. If you have difficulties making an online payment, please write us at [agerassociation@gmail.com](mailto:agerassociation@gmail.com) so that we can address the issue.

Please note that the address label on this edition of *News* includes the date we have on file for your most recent membership payment. Whatever the number is—2024, 2021 or 2017, or something else—we hope that you will RENEW now. Your support of the Ager Association makes it possible to keep the house in good condition. Your donation also supports the publication of *News* and the cost of the many programs we bring to the community every year.

THANK YOU!

| Date                     | Event                                                                                                   | Description                                                                                                         | Coordinator                                        |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Jan 25<br>2:30           | Hike/walk/run on new trail from/to Ager Museum                                                          | Arrive at Ager Museum at 2:30 for "Cocoa, Cookies and Crayolas." All are Welcome.                                   | Pearson                                            |
| Feb 13<br>6:30 - 7:30    | Immigration Talk: #1<br>Immigration and Literacy                                                        | Presenter: Dr. Elizabeth Hart, Executive Director, Literacy Chippewa Valley                                         | Pearson                                            |
| Feb 24 - March 9         | UW- Eau Claire production of A Doll's House                                                             | One or two events to introduce Ibsen to the public and to help promote attendance at the production                 | TBD                                                |
| March 9<br>Noon to 4     | CultureFest                                                                                             | Celebration of cultures. Ager has table and a performance of an excerpt from <i>On the Way to the Melting Pot</i> . | Script in progress. No coordinator designated yet. |
| Late April/Early May     | Collaborative event with Chippewa Valley Museum. Program and exhibit.                                   | Immigrants in Eau Claire: Hmong and Norwegians                                                                      | Jodi Kiffmeyer/Bob Gough                           |
| May 1                    | CVLR Tours of Ager Museum                                                                               | 10 11:30 and 1:30 to 3                                                                                              | Sally Felling and Doug Pearson and Tim Hirsch      |
| May 13                   | CVLR Tours of Ager Museum                                                                               | 10 11:30 and 1:30 to 3                                                                                              | Sally Felling and Doug Pearson and Tim Hirsch      |
| May 16                   | Syttende Mai Banquet and Program                                                                        | At Holiday Inn: Silent Auction, Program by Tom Loftus (not yet confirmed)                                           | 17 mai committee                                   |
| May 17                   | Celebration of Syttende Mai and belated acknowledgement of Ager's birthday. Reception for Tom Loftus??? | At the Ager Museum. Flag raising. Song. Cake.                                                                       | Program Committee                                  |
| June 20<br>all day       | Yard Sale. Early evening celebration of the solstice                                                    | At the Ager Museum. Short program on the solstice. Refreshments.                                                    | Program Committee                                  |
| July 19 at 8:30 a.m.     | Tusenbeiner 3                                                                                           | 2K/5K fun run, followed by breakfast at the Ager                                                                    | Program Committee                                  |
| August 24?<br>11 - 5     | Multicultural Festival                                                                                  | Ager display table. Kubb playing/demo?                                                                              | Program Committee                                  |
| Sep 16 or 18<br>6:30 p.m | Immigration Talk: #2                                                                                    | Plan still in progress                                                                                              | Program Committee                                  |
| October 9<br>5:30 - 7:30 | Annual Meeting and Immigration Talk: #3                                                                 | Interview with Ivar Lunde and Jan Hansen about immigration experience. Kiffmeyer moderator.                         | Program Committee                                  |
| November 9 or 16         | Scandinavian Foods                                                                                      | A Demonstration                                                                                                     | Program Committee                                  |
| November 22 or 29        | Art and Craft Sale                                                                                      | At Ager Museum<br>3 - 5 sellers                                                                                     | Pearson                                            |
| November 30              | Advent at the Ager                                                                                      | Food, music, tours, more?                                                                                           | Program Committee                                  |



## 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

#### Events Planned for 2025

Questions? Leave a message at 715 598 1776

##### Traditional

- CultureFest (March))
- Syttende Mai (May 16)
- Summer Solstice and Yard Sale (June 20)
- Tusenbeiner (July 19)
- **Multicultural Fair/Festival**
- Scandinavian Food Demonstration (November 9 or 16)
- Art and Crafts Sale (November 22 or 29)
- Advent at the Ager (November 30)

##### Special and Themed (three events)

- Immigration and Literacy
- Immigrants in Eau Claire—the Scandinavian experience (*On the Way to the Melting Pot*) and Hmong experiences (both included in exhibits and talks. A collaboration with CVM)
- Immigration 200 years ago and in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century

Connections to Norwegian literature: collaboration with the Department of Music and Theater Arts, UW-Eau Claire, including promotion of the production of *A Doll's House* scheduled in March 2025.

##### Goals

- To raise awareness of Waldemar Ager and his many achievements.
- To acknowledge and explore the experience of immigrants.
- To provide rich and various cultural programs for the community and region.