



Telling the story of the Belgian Settlement in Wisconsin and working to preserve unique elements of Belgian culture

[www.BelgianHeritageCenter.org](http://www.BelgianHeritageCenter.org)

NOVEMBER 2022

## 2022 Events

20  
NOV

**Helen Gillet Cello Concert**  
at 4pm

25-26  
NOV

**Thanksgiving Sale and Special  
Opening Hours - St Joseph /  
Champion Area Exhibits**

## Thank You, Supporters!

BHC is extremely grateful to the many people who help us advance our mission through donations, sponsorships, volunteering and by attending our events. We thank those who donated artifacts, photos, genealogies and family stories to help us bring the experiences of our Belgian ancestors to life. And, a very special thanks to the Walloon speakers and volunteers working to preserve the language for future generations. Thank you to everyone who helped us this year. There is still time to help us in 2022 – donations can be sent to Belgian Heritage Center, PO Box 173, Brussels, WI 54204 or you can donate online at [belgianheritagecenter.org](http://belgianheritagecenter.org). BHC is a 501(c)(3) organization. We know there are many great causes in need of support – we appreciate everyone who supports BHC or donates to charitable causes.


Thank you for making a difference!

## Winter Projects at BHC

Looking for a winter project? BHC needs volunteers to help with a variety of projects planned this winter. We are looking for:

- **Carpenters** to replace window trim in the school/convent. Thirteen custom built windows are ready for installation. BHC will then need carpenters to reinstall trim to match the historic trim used when the building was first constructed in 1894.
- **Video editors** to create YouTube content. BHC has hours of raw footage to create short videos on a wide variety of subjects.
- **Content developers** for newsletter, Facebook and website to deliver new and different information through the long winter.
- **Researchers** to compile documentation of donated photos and artifacts.

If you are interested in volunteering, please email [contact@belgianheritagecenter.org](mailto:contact@belgianheritagecenter.org). **Students** looking for community service opportunity are especially welcome!



# Thanksgiving Sale and St. Nick Special Opening

**November 25-26**

**9:00am-3:00pm**

The Belgian Heritage Center will be open Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving for visitors to tour our exhibits and take advantage of special holiday merchandise offerings. Bring your family to learn about their Belgian heritage and choose from a variety of Belgian and holiday themed items.

BHC is pleased to offer Belgian lace handkerchiefs and ornaments made of bobbin lace in Bruges, Belgium. These beautiful ornaments are available for \$7 each or a set of 6 for \$40. Handkerchiefs are \$19 and come in gift packaging. Quantities are limited. We also offer custom tatting by Sr. Agnes Fisher, including ornaments and other lace items. Each item is unique with prices ranging from \$4 to \$10 depending on size. We will again offer Belgian chocolate St. Nicholas figures in dark and milk chocolate from Be Chocolat, a Belgian chocolatier.

**This is the perfect chance to get a start on Christmas shopping and support BHC at the same time. Most merchandise can be ordered online and shipped. See the Merchandise tab at [belgianheritagecenter.org](http://belgianheritagecenter.org) for more information.**

Brugges Bobbin Lace Ornaments







## Thanksgiving Sale and St. Nick Special Opening

### St. Nicholas figure In dark or milk chocolate...\$9

Hollow figure is handmade with Callebaut Belgian chocolate by BE Chocolate. Benoit is a master chocolatier from Ceria Culinary Institute in Belgium.

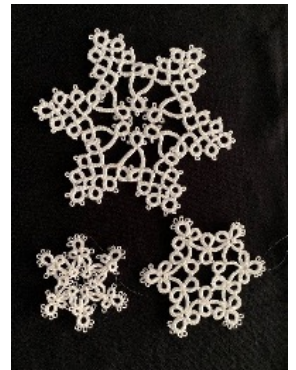
Available for purchase at BHC. Sorry, we are unable to ship this chocolate.



*Bruges Bobbin Lace  
Handkerchief*





*BHC offers a wide variety of custom art glass and jewelry creations  
by Gary Chaudoir.*



*Tatting Sample*

### \$5 off - Save on Books about Belgian History and Culture

 <p><b>Francois</b> Josie Wautlet.....\$45- <b>\$10</b></p>	 <p><b>Belgian American Heritage Customs and Cookbook</b> Margaret Draize    <b>\$20 \$15</b></p>	 <p><b>Les Walloons du Wisconsin</b> <b>The Walloons in Wisconsin</b> Lempereur/Istasse <b>\$30 \$25</b></p>
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# **John (Jean) Baptiste Nellis**

## **Antoine J LaCourt**

### **Friends and Civil War Survivors**

Jean Baptiste Nellis was born in Brabant, Wallonia, Belgium on June 12, 1837. He emigrated to the United States in 1854 and arrived January 17 in New York on the ship Hahnnemann along with his parents Eugene and Elizabeth Eleonore Bodart Nellis. He and his parents and five siblings settled in Green Bay.

Antoine J LaCourt was born in Brabant, Wallonia, Belgium the son of Etienne and Marie Thibou- LaCourt. Antoine came to the United States at the age of 15 with his five siblings and they settled in Green Bay, Wi.

The Civil War began on April 12, 1861 when the Confederate forces attacked the Union garrison at Fort Sumter, in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Jean and his friend Antoine LaCourt from Green Bay enlisted together on November 26, 1861. Jean was listed on the roll as "John B. Nellis" and was listed as living with his parents, Antoine was listed as a shoemaker. From that time on Jean was known as John B. Nellis. He was appointed corporal of Company G in the Seventeenth Infantry.

As members of the Seventeenth Infantry they participated in several major actions during 1862 and 1863, which included the battles at Shiloh, Tennessee, Corinth and Champion's Hill, Mississippi. On May 18, 1863, the Seventeenth took its place in the trenches before Vicksburg. This was a major assault on the Confederates as they were within seventy-five yards of the enemy. They were forced to retreat. This costed the regiment forty-five men who were killed or wounded. Both John and Antoine were listed as wounded. When they had recovered they returned to the regiment. Both men remained in the war until discharged. Antoine was released on January 18, 1865, and John on July 14, 1865. The Civil War ended on May 9, 1865.

Returning home after the war, John married Eugenie Legot on November 12, 1865. Eugenie had immigrated to Wisconsin from Marchin, Liege, Belgium. John and Eugenie settled on a farm in Red River Township, Kewaunee County and raised eleven children. Eugenie died in 1900. On June 14, 1904 John married Augustine Charles.

John lived in Dyckesville until 1921 and then went to live with his daughter Eleonore Geniesse in Green Bay. His death occurred on December 31, 1922 and was laid to rest in the St. Louis Catholic Cemetery, Dyckesville, Red River Township, Wisconsin.

After the war, Antoine lived in Green Bay and married Marie Josephine Wilmart in 1865. They had four children. In 1886 he started a shoe store business on Main Street in Green Bay which he continued to run for fifteen years. Antoine then started a saloon and boarding house. He was a member of the T.O. Howe Post of the Grand Army of the Republic in Green Bay in which he held a position as assistant treasurer. Antoine was ill for about four days and the cause of his death was heart failure on December 9, 1909. His remains were interred in the Allouez cemetery plot BB South, in Green Bay.

Both survived the Civil War and remained friends until the end. They saw Hell on Earth through all the Civil War battles.

- Biography: John B. Nellis (or Nellis) <https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~belgintheamcivwar/history/CivilWarUnit/Wisconsin/Jean%20B%20NELLIS.htm>

- Badgers For The Union-Reflections of History No. 2 By John Adams Graf- published By the Neville Museum of Brown County – Copyright 1995 page 15 --a photographic Collection of Wisconsin In the Civil War

- J.B. Nellis Sr. Passes Away Sunday P.M. Luxemburg News 1/05/1923

- Pen Bel Gen ( gw.geneanet.org—Jean Baptiste Nellis (viewed 4/07/2022)

- A.J. LaCourt, well known man dead—Green Bay Press Gazette, 12/09/1909 obituary

"Reprinted from the Kewaunee County Historical Society newsletter Reflections in Time written by Arletta Bertrand."



# Friends and Civil War Survivors

## John (Jean) Baptiste Nellis



*Photo from Badgers for the Union-Reflections of History by John Adams Graf*



*Antoine Lacourt grave marker*



*John Nellis grave marker*

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/87768752/jean\\_baptiste-nellis](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/87768752/jean_baptiste-nellis): accessed 04/22/22

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/121356008/antoine-joseph-lacourt> accessed 04/22/22

## In Remembrance

With great sadness, we remember one of our founders and a true friend of our Belgian communities.

Dr. Bill Laatsch, retired UWGB professor and long-time volunteer and advocate for the BHC, passed into his eternal journey on September 14, 2022. He was best remembered for the warm, humorous, and informative stories of early Belgian immigrants he shared over the course of many bus tours. Laatsch relayed the cultural uniqueness of our area like no other. He opened the eyes of visitors to the architecture and location of homes, barns, roadside chapels, summer kitchens, churches, taverns, and even the hamlets themselves.

During his years of professional research on the Belgian settlement in northeast Wisconsin, Laatsch wrote numerous papers on many aspects of the settlement. His research was instrumental in the establishment of the Namur Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and later designated a National Landmark. As one of our founding Board Members, Laatsch guided the formation of the Belgian Heritage Center, created to tell the Belgian immigrants' stories. We will dearly miss and always remember Dr. Laatsch.

Bill's full obituary can be found at the Feerick Funeral Home website.



*Bill Laatsch*



# Volunteer and Community Engagement



## Kermis Celebration

This year's Kermis was a great success! We enjoyed our largest attendance ever and took in record proceeds.

Thanks to our sponsors and the 75+ volunteers who made the event possible. Here are a few pictures in case you missed it.



BHC newsletter is sponsored in part by the Booyah Shed in Green Bay. For sponsorship opportunities, please email [contact@belgianheritagecenter.org](mailto:contact@belgianheritagecenter.org)

## THE BOOYAH SHED

1800 S Ashland, Green Bay

920-371-6249

Dine-in or Carry-Out

Homemade Booyah, Chili, Burgers, Brats, Pulled Pork, Chicken. Pork Tacos, Tots, Deep-Fried Cheese Curds, Desserts, Beer, Cocktails, and much more.

**Featuring our Friday Fish Fry**

Visit our Facebook page for Full Menu

### Hours:

Monday 11-5

Tues, Weds, Thu 11-7

Friday 11-8

Saturday 11-7

Sunday CLOSED



# Volunteer and Community Engagement

## St. Joseph 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



On October 2, 2022, St. Joseph Church in Champion celebrated their 160th anniversary as a parish. The Belgian Heritage Center provided displays of local Champion history dating back to the arrival in 1853 of the first group of Belgians from the Grez Doiceau area. [Displays featured the unique aspects of a "community built on faith" as the Robinsonville Presbyterian (French Presbyterian) church (established in 1861), St. Joseph's (established in 1862) and the Shrine (1859) are all within a few miles of each other. Contents of the displays also focused on such aspects as leaving Belgium, arriving in Wisconsin, establishing the Town of Green Bay government, the Civil War participants, and the impacts of the Great Fire. Many of the buildings that still exist in Champion today were highlighted and featured history of the early social lives of the pioneer settlers. Gary VandenHouten was also available to answer questions about his work in mapping out the nearby St. Martin's, Tonet Cemetery.

The event was well attended not only by local descendants but also parishioners new to the area. Many comments were made about learning something new, even those who have lived in the area all their lives. Attendees learned that the Belgian Heritage Center is not only a place to learn about the immigration of our Belgian forefathers and their experiences but also to aid in digging deeper into their own heritage. Comments were also made about artifacts and/or pictures that could be welcomed additions to the BHC collections. If you have items that you would like to share, please reach out to the Center to discuss donation and/or scanning of photos.

Thanks to Donna Bultman for the extensive research and Yvonne Alexander for designing the custom displays for this event. The displays will be available for viewing at BHC on Friday, November 25 and Saturday, November 26... one last opportunity before the Center closes for the 2022 season.



*Clifford Abts, Walloon speaker volunteer, with Donna Bultman*





Belgian Heritage Center  
PO Box 173  
Brussels, WI 54204

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## BELGIAN HERITAGE CENTER DONATION/PLEDGE FORM

*I/We are pleased to support your efforts with a gift of: \$* \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Paid in Full
- ☐ Annually: \$ \_\_\_\_\_/year, for \_\_\_\_\_ years, beginning \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_\_

Checks may be made payable to the Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation, P.O. Box 173, Brussels, WI 54204.  
Donations can be made at [www.belgianheritagecenter.org](http://www.belgianheritagecenter.org) (major credit cards accepted).

- ☐ Please check if you **DO NOT** wish to be recognized in publications under the names provided above.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_