



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

www.BelgianHeritageCenter.org

October 2020

The History of St Mary of the Snows School and Convent

St. Mary of the Snows church as shown below was built in 1893, after fire destroyed a log church and school in 1892. To raise funds to rebuild the school/convent, parishioners contributed sacks of grain according to their means. The grain was sold and the new school was erected in 1894. Construction started just after the arrival of Father Bernard Pennings (later Abbot Pennings) who established the Norbertine Order of Priests at St. Mary's. The campus is known as the birthplace of the Norbertine Order in the United States. The Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross were requested by the parish to teach the Belgian children in the area. The Sisters lived and taught classes at the school/convent from 1889 until it closed in 1925.



The main classroom doubled as a space for Fr. Pennings to say mass for the early settlers. The blackboards were made to part and roll to each side, revealing a small altar. For many years, the school/convent was vacant and fell into disrepair until the Bishop gave the building to the Peninsula Belgian-American Club. In 1969 it was moved a short distance to its present location. Members of the Belgian Club worked hard over the years to preserve and maintain the building. In 2019, the school/convent was transferred to the Belgian Heritage Center to continue preservation efforts and to open this unique, historic building to the public.

St. Mary of the Snows church and school/convent in Namur circa 1900

Would you like to help preserve the School/Convent?

The school/convent is now 126 years old and needs repairs, especially window replacement. To maintain the building in its historic appearance, windows have to be custom made. We are incredibly fortunate that Kevin DeKeyser donated his time and talent to build custom windows, but funds are needed for additional materials and installation. Donations of \$600 or more toward the window replacement will be acknowledged on a special plaque at the school/convent. If you are interested in donating funds, material or volunteering time to assist with this project, please contact Joe Alexander or email supportBHC@belgianheritagecenter.org.

Small Altar in main classroom
photo courtesy of Door County Historical Museum



photo courtesy of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross

School/Convent circa 1969
photo courtesy of Peninsula Belgian-American Club



School/Convent Today
photo courtesy of Peninsula Belgian-American Club

Thank you for your interest in Belgian Heritage!

Another Successful Booyah to Go!

Many thanks to all who picked up booyah at the BHC's most recent drive-thru sale. All seventy-five gallons made by our own booyah chefs were sold on a chilly, drizzly fall day. We are grateful for our wonderful volunteers and supporters!



Thanks go to Bill & Ted Chaudoir, Jerry Reince and Jack Alexander for installing the new sign.

Thanksgiving Weekend Merchandise Shopping

BHC will be selling Belgian themed merchandise Thanksgiving weekend. Hours will be **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27 from 9:00 until 4:00** and **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28 from 10:00 until Noon**. Merchandise will be available for curbside pickup. This is a great chance to get an early start on Christmas shopping and save shipping costs.

BHC has a selection of fiction and non-fiction books, DVD's, mugs and glassware, flags and our popular Belgian Roots T-shirts.

Choose from Belgian, Walloon and Flemish items including Christmas ornaments. Two Ways to Purchase:

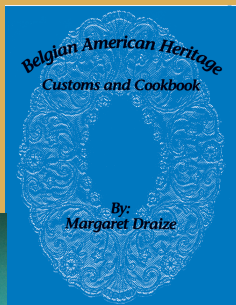
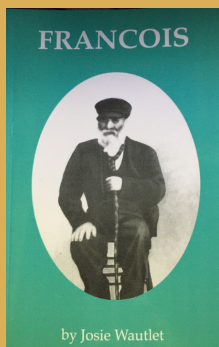
Online - Go to the Merchandise page at BelgianHeritageCenter.org – view the catalog and request your merchandise online.

By Mail - Request a copy of the catalogue and order form by mail by calling 920-825-7319. Return the order form by mail.

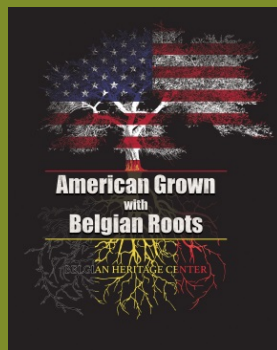
Merchandise orders will be accepted for pickup until Noon on **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27**.

Payment can be made in advance (online or by check) or at pick-up.

Books



Many more items can
be found on the
website!



T-Shirts

Merchandise featuring
Belgian flag images





Belgian Heritage Center
PO Box 173
Brussels, WI 54204

BELGIAN HERITAGE CENTER DONATION/PLEDGE FORM

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

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☐ 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 (major credit cards accepted).

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

Signature _____ **Date** _____

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