



# BELGIAN HERITAGE CENTER

www.BelgianHeritageCenter.org

May 2024

## BHC 2024 Event Calendar - Save the Dates!

24 MAY	BHC weekend visitor hours start 10am-3:00pm Friday-Sunday
4 JUN	"Shot Down" Presentation by Steve Snyder; his father's WWII experience in rural Belgium - 6:30pm
8 JUN	Wisconsin Historical Society Meetings on benefits of Namur Historic District at 10am
20 JUN	Door County History Days Focus Event at 1:00pm
30 JUN	Belgian Waffle Breakfast at 9:00am
13 JUL	Belgian Days Bus Tours and Booth
25 JUL	BHC Night at Northern Sky Theater
18 AUG	BHC Kermis
14 SEPT	Bookmobile, Books and Booyah
5 OCT	Great Fire Remembrance at BHC
8 OCT	Great Fire Remembrance at National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion
29 NOV	Thanksgiving Sale/Mosaic Workshop
7 DEC	Mosaic Glass Workshop/Wine and Cheese Sampling

More events are in the works – please watch our newsletters, Facebook and BelgianHeritageCenter.org for details

## Belgian Waffle Breakfast

Sunday, June 30

BHC will host a Belgian Waffle Breakfast on Sunday, June 30 from 9:00 until noon. Breakfast includes waffles, trippe, eggs and a beverage. Proceeds help support the Belgian Heritage Center's mission to preserve and promote Belgian heritage. Price is \$12 for adults, \$7 for children 4-12, free for children 3 and under.



## Belgian Days Bus Tours

Saturday, July 13

Join BHC's Historian Barb (Englebert) Chisholm for a one hour narrated bus tour in the Belgian settlements. See roadside chapels, traditional Belgian houses, summer kitchens, cemeteries and where the first Kermis was held. Hear stories about the lives and challenges faced by the early settlers. Tour participants will also receive a guided tour of the Belgian Heritage Center campus including exhibits, the votive chapel of St Roch and the restored Schoolhouse/Convent.

Tours are \$20 per person and leave from the Belgian Heritage Center at 9:00 on Saturday, July 13. Transportation will be via standard school bus\*. Reservations are strongly encouraged as seating is limited. To reserve your seat call Theresa at 920-265-5605, email [contact@belgianheritagecenter.org](mailto:contact@belgianheritagecenter.org) or stop in at BHC during our weekend hours. Payment by cash, check and credit card is accepted. The tour is offered in cooperation with the Brussels Lions Club as part of their annual Belgian Days celebration on July 13 and 14. Tour proceeds benefit the Brussels Lions Club and BHC.

*\*Please note: the school bus is not air conditioned and is accessible only by steps. There is a loud speaker system on the bus.*

**BHC will also have a booth at Belgian Days, where you can see traveling exhibits and purchase merchandise.**

## Door County Bookmobile

Saturday, September 14

Newly restored Door County Bookmobile will make a stop at BHC on Saturday, September 14. Event will also feature authors of Belgian themed books and booyah to go. Details coming soon!

## Northern Sky Theater to Feature Two Belgian Themed Musicals for 2024 Summer Season

*BHC Storytellers and Displays at July 25th Productions*

The world's only metaphysical cheese curd musical returns for its 30th Anniversary – one of Northern Sky's longest-running musical comedies! Belgians in Heaven follows the antics of bachelor farmers and brothers, Roger and Leo Dewarzegeer. Angelique, a clumsy guardian angel, and Mildred, the invisible chicken, help Roger and Leo discover the meaning of life and save the universe.

Hell's Belgians is the long-awaited prequel to Belgians in Heaven by the same writers. Featuring characters from Belgians in Heaven, the prequel focuses on Angelique (the guardian angel in the original show) as she contends with dark forces to earn her wings. Hell's Belgians has been designed to be completely understandable for those who haven't seen Belgians in Heaven, while also revealing delightful insights for those who love the original show.

On July 25, the two musicals will be offered as a double feature with Hell's Belgians at 6:00 PM and Belgians in Heaven at 8:30 PM. On that night, BHC will have displays and storytellers available before the first show and in between shows to visit with guests and answer questions about the true Belgian history in Northeastern Wisconsin. Plan on coming that evening for one or both musicals, bring your friends and relatives, and show your Belgian pride!

For those unfamiliar with Northern Sky Theater, this popular company provides heartwarming original musicals to delight folks of every age to tens of thousands each year.

These musicals, while not necessarily historical, are reflective of the Belgian tradition of enjoying good humor.

The performances are outdoors at the large Northern Sky Amphitheater at Peninsula State Park in Fish Creek, WI. The theatre is not covered – the shows are performed under a canopy of stars. The theater has handicap access and parking. A Wisconsin State Park sticker is not required to attend Northern Sky.

For more information and to purchase tickets in advance please visit <https://northernskytheater.com/2024-season/>

**Planning to attend these shows? Consider offering a ride to family and friends who may appreciate a chance to attend.**



*Photo by Northern Sky Theater*

**BELGIANS**  
IN *Heaven*

**HELL'S**  
**BELGIANS**



*Photo by Northern Sky Theater*

## Door County History Days Focus Event - Thursday, June 20

The third annual History Days will take place in Door County from Monday, June 17 through Sunday, June 23. Events are planned by many of the county's historical organizations to bring attention to the rich history of the Door Peninsula. The theme this year is "Surrounded by Water" which will give participating organizations a chance to highlight some less known history.

As our contribution, the Belgian Heritage Center will feature a talk on Thursday, June 20 at 1:00 pm, The Belgian Settler's Success Shaped by Land and Water. We will look back at the economic development of the Belgian settlements and the important role of local docks and the waters of Green Bay. Visitors will be able to view old-time hand implements used by settlers to improve their livelihood. Belgian desserts will be available to purchase and there will also be plenty of time to check out the exhibits and visit the restored school/convent.





## Peninsula Belgian-American Club 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In May 1964, the Peninsula Belgian-American Club officially began a 60 year legacy, promoting fellowship among those who trace their ancestry to the Belgian immigration that started in 1853. The “Belgian Club” as it is often called, acquired the St. Mary of the Snows school/convent as their clubhouse. They preserved the building and collected artifacts from the earliest days of the settlement. In 1972, PBAC began an exchange program where visitors from Belgium traveled to Wisconsin and stayed with local families one year and, the following year, US visitors were similarly hosted in Belgium. PBAC fostered communication and goodwill in the US and Belgium that continues to this day. This fall, PBAC members will travel to Belgium to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Wallonie Wisconsin Society, their partner organization.

BHC would not exist as it does today without the groundwork laid by PBAC. In 2017, PBAC transferred the school/convent and their collection of artifacts to BHC, greatly enhancing our ability to show visitors a living history of the Belgian settlers. They hosted events like Kermis and cooyah tournaments, keeping these important Belgian traditions alive. Most importantly, PBAC taught us what a unique treasure our Belgian heritage is and why preserving it is so important. Many BHC volunteers and Board members are proudly continuing the work started by their parents and grandparents.

BHC gratefully acknowledges the important contributions of the Peninsula Belgian-American Club and its past and present members. Congratulations on an amazing 60 years!

*Belgian Visitors at Lambeau Field circa 1973*



*PBAC presentation to Françoise Lempereur by Harry Chadoir (President), Irene Conrad (Secretary) and Leonard Lampereur (Treasurer) in 1973. Françoise later co-authored “Walloons in Wisconsin”*



*US Visitors to Belgium and their hosts in 1972*

## Belgian Settlers' Success Shaped by Land and Water

Belgian settlers, arriving in Wisconsin with little to their name, quickly realized the potential of the land. They turned to trapping, hunting, and fishing to stave off hunger, while also cultivating potatoes and utilizing trees for warmth and shelter. However, it was a different use of the forested land that transformed their fortunes. They discovered that the pine, oak, and cedar they cleared from their land could be made into shingles that could be sold. After the Civil War, a building boom increased demand for both shingles and lumber – both of which Belgian settlers had in large supply.

First, they cut down trees, chopped the tree into sections, and split sections into shingles – all by hand. Shingle-benches were easily made and were often used in the house at night with light provided by candles and whale oil or kerosene lamps. All family members helped make shingles. Working together, a family could make 21,000 shingles in a single week.

The settlers tied shingles into bundles of 250. They hauled these bundles to Green Bay on their backs or shipped them in wagons drawn by oxen. In the winter, settlers loaded shingles onto sleds and pulled them to market along the frozen shores of Green Bay. These shingles provided essential income, ensuring their survival in the harsh Wisconsin environment.

The following was written to the editors of the Wisconsin Press Association regarding a tour of the waters around Green Bay – From the Door County Advocate, June 29, 1871. It illustrates the importance and the volume of the Belgian immigrants' shingles.

*"The interior towns along the east shore of Green Bay we have now been traversing to this point is settled by a Belgian population numbering probably 10,000 persons, who have for years been engaged in making shaved shingles. These industrious people manufactured millions of shingles annually, sending them by land and water to Green Bay city for sale and shipment, and it is to them that Green Bay is indebted for making it what it is – the largest shingle emporium of the world. They were pioneers in this work, but their hand labor is being superseded by the steam shingle mills multiplying so rapidly all around this region of country."*



*Dock and Mill at Barrett's Point, Red River*



*Chadoir's Dock, Namur circa 1940*

Docks and piers were springing up along the bay shore in the Belgian settlement area. Instead of hauling their products on their backs or by wagon load to Green Bay, the settlers could haul shingles and other agricultural products to these closer shipping centers. New shingle mills were built near these operations which offered employment for many of the Belgians.

One of the earliest was developed by F.B. Gardner who, in 1854, purchased the Increase Clafin homestead on Little Sturgeon Bay and developed the waterfront with several businesses including a sawmill, shingle mill, boarding house, blacksmith shop, warehouse, a shipyard and piers.

Chadoir's Dock was another operation that served a vital role in the Belgian community's prosperity. Antoine, Alexander, and Justin Chadoir, who arrived from Belgium in 1856, were authorized by the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly to build and maintain a dock and pier in the Town of Union in 1874.

After the Great Fire of 1871, the economy shifted to farming but docks remained essential. Farms expanded and Belgians grew a wide variety of crops for market such as hay, sugar beets, tobacco, wheat and peas. The steamer Nettie Denesson was a frequent visitor, covering the east shore of Green Bay. Fishing and Ice fishing on the waters of Green Bay also provided recreation, sustenance and for some, additional income.

Today, Chaudoir's Dock County Park and Boat Launch, marks the historic site which stands as a reminder of the resilience and ingenuity of the Belgian settlers. Their ability to harness the resources of the land and leverage the nearby shipping routes of Green Bay paved the way for their success as well as the enduring vibrancy of their communities.



Joseph Jeanquart, commercial ice fishing



Gus DeBroux farm, Gardner

## BHC Campus Improvements

Construction is now underway to make several safety and accessibility improvements to the BHC site. Our current phase of campus development emphasizes visitor friendly connection of all campus features. These improvements include:

- relocating St. Roch votive chapel to be more visible and accessible to visitors
- installing an accessible path and entry to the school/convent and St. Roch chapel
- repairing paving to improve safety and drainage issues
- improving parking efficiency and safety for public events

We are also developing six outdoor exhibits to be placed along the new paths. The exhibits will provide information about the campus and surrounding historic district to make BHC a 24/7 source of local history. Thanks to grant funding, we are designing the exhibits at this time. Additional funding is needed to construct and install the exhibits by spring of 2025. Naming opportunities are available – if you are interested, please contact Bill Chaudoir at 920-559-3113.



## 2024 Photo History Contest /Photo Feature

Quarterly Topics: 1) Traditions 2) Characters 3) Homesteads 4) Historical Accounts / Open Entries. Here's a sample entry.

### Reverend Mattias Vanden Elsen, priest at St. Mary of the Snows

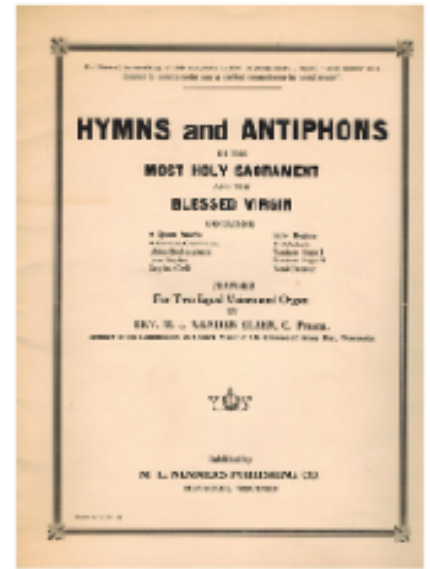
Fr. Vanden Elsen was born in Gemert, Holland on June 29, 1870 and ordained in the Norbertine Order on August 15, 1894. Father Van (as he was known) came to the US in 1900 and served as pastor at St. Mary of the Snows from 1919 to 1957. According to his obituary:

*Father Vanden Elsen was regarded as one of the little known "grand old men" of American Catholic church music. His most famous Mass, honoring St. Norbert, was published in 1905... In "Twenty Centuries of Catholic Music" by E. E. Nemmers, Father Vanden Elsen is one of 19 leading church music composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States. His work is also summarized in a complimentary article in the "Catholic Choirmaster" for 1947. "Father Vanden Elsen's music" the article points out, "in the hands of expert performers gifted with perfect pitch and timing, has a sonority and dignity that frequently makes one forget whether there are two, three or four or more voices signing. Not all his music is easy. As a mathematician he had an uncanny employment of the basic principles underlying pitch or vibration, all of which, of course, is fundamental to harmonic perfection."*

Father Van was also pastor at St Willebrord's in Chicago and St. Francis Valier in Montana. He served as professor at St. Norbert College, filling temporary staff vacancies. He enjoyed mathematics and science. He was also popular with local children who once had a chance to pile into his truck.



Father Mattias Vanden Elsen



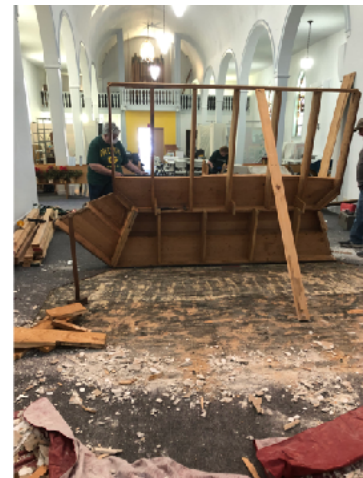
Father Vanden Elsen music compositions

For more stories like this one, visit the FEATURED tab at [belgianheritagecenter.org](http://belgianheritagecenter.org) and scroll to Featured Families.

- EJ Delwiche, agricultural science innovator
- Constant Thiry, namesake and first settler of Thiry Daems
- Our Belgian Forefathers and Foremothers – collection of contributed stories

## BHC Interior Improvements

Thanks to our volunteers and supporters, we were able to add a new media gallery and expanded storage and volunteer workspace. Official recognition will be at the Waffle Breakfast on June 30.



## Thank You!

**Belgian Heritage Center thanks everyone who made the renovations to the church possible**  
Funded by Francis & Rita Jauquet Family and BHC

**Contractors** Alberts Plastering, Inc.  
Buhr Construction, Inc.

Best Buy  
Gunnlaugsson Electric, LLC

**Volunteers:** Jack Alexander  
Joe Alexander  
Yvonne Alexander  
Bill Chaudoir  
Cheryl Chaudoir

Kelly Chaudoir  
Brian Delwiche  
Ann Jinkins  
Barb Maskell

John Maskell  
Kevin Moore  
Sandy Orsted  
Julie Rheingans

## Help Us Manage Newsletter Cost

If you would like to save the cost to BHC to print and mail your newsletter, we will send it to you via email or you can see the content on our Facebook page. If you are interested, please email [contact@belgianheritagecenter.org](mailto:contact@belgianheritagecenter.org) or contact us through Facebook. Donations to offset the cost of newsletter production and delivery (\$10 per year per person) are greatly appreciated.

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## Belgian Heritage Center Donation Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make checks payable to: Belgian Heritage Center, P.O. Box 173, Brussels, WI 54204. Donations may be made at [www.belgianheritagecenter.org](http://www.belgianheritagecenter.org) (PayPal and major credit cards accepted).

*Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation, owner of the Belgian Heritage Center, is a 501(c)(3) organization*



Belgian Heritage Center  
PO Box 173  
Brussels, WI 54204

## **Barb & John Maskell – Golden Hearts Award Nominees**

BHC congratulates Barb and John Maskell on their nomination for a 2024 Golden Hearts Volunteer award, recognizing 42 years of volunteer commitments to this area!

Last year they spent over 420 hours at BHC making speculoos and booyah, managing kitchen inventory, running the Kermis food tent, acting as docents, fundraising, serving as a Board Member (Barb), leading and organizing the Ethnic holiday event held at the Historic Hazelwood, researching Belgian cultural and immigration history...and more!

BHC is tremendously grateful to Barb and John for their many contributions, delivered with cheer and warmth.

