BELGIAN HERITAGE CENTER

Preserving and sharing the history and culture of Belgian settlers in Wisconsin

www.BelgianHeritageCenter.org contact@belgianheritagecenter.org 920-825-7319 NOVEMBER 2026

BHC 2026 Event Calendar - Save the Dates!

20-21 NOV	Kewaunee Christkindlmarkt
27 NOV	Thanksgiving Sale / Family Glass Workshop
5 DEC	Christmas Spirits Adult Glass Workshop
12 DEC	BHC open for visits and shopping
19 DEC	BHC open for visits and shopping

2027 Save the Dates

Dates for BHC's major 2027 events have been set. Mark your calendars for these annual events. More event dates will be released in the coming months.

25 APR	Booyah and Bread Lunch
28 MAY	BHC Opens for Weekend Hours (Friday-Sunday, 10:00-3:00)
27 JUN	Belgian Waffle Breakfast
10 JUL	Belgian Days Bus Tours and Special Events
15 AUG	Kermiss
2 OCT	Great Fire Remembrance at BHC

Honoring the Legacy of the Peninsula Belgian and American Club

In September, the Peninsula Belgian and American Club (PBAC) Board of Directors made the recommendation to formally unite with the Belgian Heritage Center. The decision was endorsed by a unanimous vote of the PBAC members and $12,907 of its remaining funds were donated to BHC.

In its 62 years, PBAC's contributions to preserving Belgian heritage were many, including:

- Initiating renewed interest in our Belgian Heritage in Northeast Wisconsin
- Moving and renovating the former St. Mary of the Snows schoolhouse
- Initiating and fostering a Belgian Cultural exchange program for over 50 years that saw yearly visits between Wisconsin and Belgian residents
- Hosting informational speakers on topics of interest to members and the public
- Sponsoring the official state historical marker titled "Belgian Settlement in Wisconsin"
- Fostering many lasting friendships in the United States and Belgium

BHC would not exist today if not for PBAC. The threat to demolish St. Mary of the Snows Church became an opportunity to take preservation of Belgian heritage to the next level. BHC quickly generated the enthusiasm and financial support necessary to preserve and repurpose the historic church with help from PBAC's members and the historical groundwork laid by the organization. The donation of the schoolhouse to BHC in 2018 put the campus back together as a single destination to preserve our history. The artifacts collected by PBAC over the years were used to quickly turn "the old school" into a living history open to the public. Record books, photos, antiques, audio recordings and reference books became valuable resources to BHC.

BHC will carry on the mission of PBAC by supporting the Belgian Cultural Exchange program that facilitates visits between Wisconsin and Belgian residents, enhancing current educational and informational programing, and continuing the PBAC Facebook page with its outstanding genealogy research.

BHC extends its sincere appreciation to the generations of PBAC members who taught us to love our history and heritage. We are committed to being equally good stewards of our ancestors' legacy.

Our Nation at 250

In recognition of the 250th anniversary of the United States, BHC is featuring a series of articles looking at the state of the Belgian settlements in 1776, 1876 and 1976. In this issue, we focus on ways to keep the legacy alive.

If you missed the previous articles, past issues of the BHC newsletter can be found at the News tab at belgianheritagecenter.org.

The Settlers' Legacy Lives On

The Belgian Settlements Beyond 2026

How Will the Settlers' Legacy Live On?
Belgian immigrants began settling the wilderness of Northeast Wisconsin 173 years ago. Most arrived with virtually nothing. Their courage and persistence saw them through fire, harsh weather, war, disease and back-breaking labor. For generations, their traditions and culture have endured. Preserving their legacy and sharing their stories with future generations is now up to us. In this article, we focus on just a few of the ways you can learn more about our history and heritage and share the stories with your children and grandchildren.



Massart Farmhouse at Heritage Hill

Visit Historical Sites and Exhibits
Heritage Hill State Historical Park is a 56-acre living history park in Green Bay, located on a beautiful site on the Fox River. Among the many local historical and cultural exhibits are a Belgian farmhouse and outbuildings. The house, built by the Massart family in Rosiere, is a traditional log structure with brick veneer and "bullseye" window, typical of Belgian homes. Outbuildings include a barn (Lampereur), pig barn (Draize), and chicken coop (Romuald). The park also includes a traditional roadside chapel from the LaLuzerne family in Duvall. Walloon language audio signage provides the history of these buildings in one of the native languages of the early settlers.



Neville Exhibit

For a look at Belgian and other food traditions of the area, check out "A Place at the Table" special exhibit at the Neville Museum in Green Bay. To learn more about the lives of the early settlers, including demonstrations, visit Heritage Village in Sturgeon Bay, sponsored by the Door County Historical Society. For more information, visit:

https://heritagehillgb.org/discover/agricultural-area/
https://www.nevillepublicmuseum.org/
https://doorcountyhistoricalsociety.org/heritage-village/

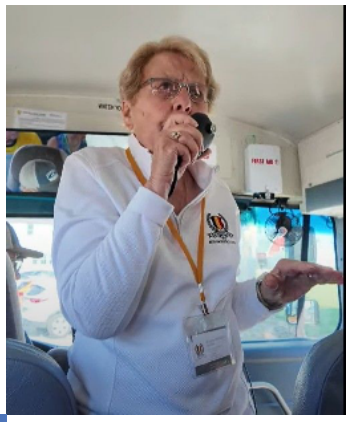
Attend History Presentations
BHC offers various presentations throughout the year including several through partner organizations. Learn about the challenges faced by the first settlers, the development of the Belgian communities and the impact of the devastating Great Fire of 1871. Private tours of the Belgian settlements and roadside chapels can be arranged for families and groups. We especially welcome youth organizations. These dates are already set for 2027 with more to come.

January 28	The Clearing Folk School, Ellison Bay
May 6	Door County Learning in Retirement at BHC
June TBD	Door County History Days Event at BHC
July 10	Belgian Days Bus Tours and Special Events
October 2	Great Fire Remembrance
October 8	Belgian Heritage Days at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion
Fall TBD	Lifelong Learning Institute UWGB at BHC

For registration information, email contact@belgianheritagecenter.org or call 920-825-7319.



Capt. David Siegel explains the nature of the Great Fire at the Clearing Folk School



Barb (Englebert) Chisholm guides visitors on a bus tour of the Belgian Settlements



BHC's Belgian Days bus tour at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel

Our Nation at 250

Research and Share Your Family Story

In addition to the Belgian Heritage Center there are excellent resources to help you research your family history. These local organizations provide onsite and/or online materials for research and education.

Bay Area Research Center at UW Green Bay **uwgb.edu/archives**
7th Floor at Cofrin Library, 2400 Main Entrance Dr, Green Bay, WI 54311
Original manuscripts and government records including: pre-1907 birth, marriage, and death records; citizenship/ naturalization records; court records; probate records; tax rolls; city directories; and much more including Belgian Pedigree Charts.

Bay Area Genealogical Society, Inc. **bagswi.org**
118 North Monroe Avenue #283, Green Bay, Wisconsin 54301
The organization was founded in 1975 to educate people in genealogical research techniques and to make historical and genealogical material available to the general public. Original materials and donations of genealogical books and materials are shared with local libraries and repositories. BAGS holds several public educational sessions throughout the year, including online via Zoom.

Brown County Library Local History and Genealogy Department **browncountylibrary.org**
515 Pine Street, Green Bay, WI 54301; second floor of Central Library
Created in 1974 the collection contains over 10,000 volumes including books, atlases, maps and periodicals. In addition, the microfilm collection contains census, newspapers, county histories, etc.

FamilySearch Center Green Bay
651 Pinehurst Avenue, Green Bay WI 54302
FamilySearch Centers are branches of the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These centers are free and open to the public, offering a space to research your family tree and receive assistance from knowledgeable volunteers. Centers offer complimentary access to computers, internet, and subscription family history websites. Visitors get special access to images of historical records that are only available in centers or at the FamilySearch Library in Utah and free access to many fee-based databases.

Kewaunee County Historical Society **kewauneecountyhistory.com**
217 Ellis Street, Kewaunee, WI 54216
In addition to museum displays, KCHS is home to over 20,000 photographs useful to genealogists, researchers, history buffs and families. The Center has thousands of documents such as tax records, indexes of deaths/ marriages/ births, early land ownership, school histories, veteran histories and maps.

Door County Library Laurie History Room **doorcountylibrary.org/genealogy**
107 S 4th Avenue, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
The Laurie History Room has a collection of books and information on Door County and Wisconsin history available for in-library use at the Sturgeon Bay Library. Decades of the local newspaper are available, digitized and on-line, for reading and printing. Plat books going back to 1899 are also available. The link above includes information on the Laurie History Room (in the library) as well as many links to genealogy and history resources including local and regional digital newspaper archives.

Learn Walloon

Language plays an essential role in truly appreciating a culture. Listen to songs and historical accounts in Walloon and learn key words and phrases at WisconsinWalloon.org sponsored by BHC.



Walloon language classes are held on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 at the Brussels Community Center and via Zoom; for information contact Tim Jeanquart at 920–495–7365 or BP_ mit@yahoo.com. Classes are also held in Champion; for information contact Mary Ann Thiry at 920-837-7510.



Celebrate!

2028 is the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the first Belgian settlers. Celebrations are being planned in Belgium and Wisconsin.

Details coming soon!

Our Belgian Ancestors

Over the years, historians have offered various quotes about the early Belgian settlers or located statements made by the settlers about their experiences. These are a few of our favorite quotes, accompanied by photos of the first settlers in Aux Premier Belge.

"The first colonists needed a great deal of courage, energy and initiative to settle in the midst of the original forest… God has blessed the efforts of the emigres… They never could have dreamed of this in Belgium." - John Masse, Belgian consul in Green Bay, 1862

"We live in a very fertile country and the harvest is tremendously good. Dear brother… I am happier than most farmers in your area. Most of all, what is the biggest thing of all, I am independent!" – Charles Lhost to brother in Belgium, 1857

"The Belgians of Door County are an excellent class of people. They are very thrifty and farm lands are sold for a higher price there than anywhere else in the county... They are a sociable, pleasant people, frank and generous to people of like mind. They are also very public spirited. They have several of the best schoolhouses in the county and are very progressive in building good roads." – Hjalmar R. Holand, Door County Historian, 1917

"I found the people apparently very poor, but a more industrious crowd of men, women, and children I have never seen. Many of them were felling trees and clearing land; others were busy shaving shingles by hand, while women were splitting the blocks, and the children were packing the shingles; old people were cooking meals; some men were hauling shingles to Green Bay in lumber wagons drawn by oxen; some men were harvesting, other threshing with flails, other burning logs and branches; many were making or brewing their own beer, and nearly all the men were smoking tobacco which they had raised on their own land." – Xavier Martin, Belgian immigrant, on conditions in the Belgian Settlement in 1857

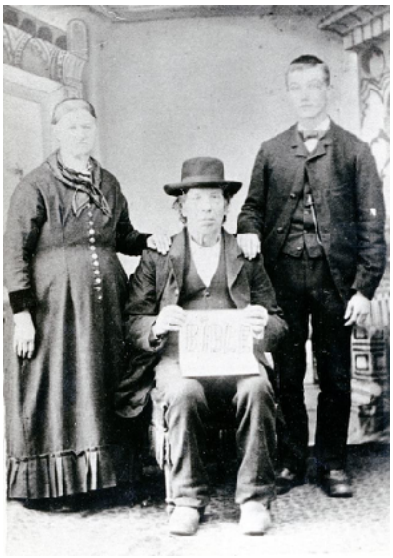
"They had lost everything and were facing complete ruin on the verge of winter…
With the courage and tenacity they had already given many proofs of since their arrival in August 1853, our Belgians set themselves to work to repair the damages. New houses quickly replaced the destroyed ones. New stables appeared on the ashes of the old. The reconstruction was pushed vigorously. Schools and churches more beautiful than the originals were soon functioning. Our colonists surmounted quickly this last ordeal." – Antoine De Smet, Assistant Custodian of the Royal Library of Belgium, on the Belgian settlers after the Great Fire of 1871,1953



Francois Petinoit & Daughter Minnie



Lambert Bodart & Marie Celestine Wolput



Phillippe & Anne Joseph Hannon & son



Monument to First Settlers at Town of Green Bay



Stanislas Haloute & Marie-Victorine Colon

2026 ACCOMPLISHMENTS and 2027 LOOK AHEAD

As we approach the end of another year, we look back on the work accomplished by BHC volunteers, donors and sponsors. These projects were completed in 2026:

- Launched WisconsinWalloon.org website to preserve the Walloon language
- Launched new and improved belgianheritagecenter.org to provide more information and historical content
- Installed stone pillars and decorative fencing along cemetery boundary to better designate the burial area
- Completed repairs and painting of the church steeple
- Repaired stained glass window frames and added glazing for protection

This work was made possible by the generosity of our donors, sponsors, volunteers and wonderful community support.

Projects for 2027 are being developed at this time. These are a few projects in the works:

- Replace carpeting in the church (estimate $27,000)
- Upgrade lighting and audio equipment for presentations (estimate TBD)
- Reset cemetery tombstones in new cement bases (estimate TBD)
- Create a new exhibit of the life of Adele Brice (estimate: $10,000)
- Replace the sidewalk to the west of the church (estimate: $4,000)

Watch our website and upcoming newsletters for more information. If interested in a donation for one of these projects, please email contact@belgianheritagecenter.org or call Bill at 920-559-3113.





Cemetery boundary project was funded by donations from John & Polly Alberts, Door County Community Foundation, The Maihaugen Foundation and Raibrook Foundation.



BHC steeple before and after painting and repairs.



Mosaic Glass Workshops Are Back!



BHC will again host two mosaic glass workshops this fall. Join us to make stained glass mosaic suncatchers using pre-cut shapes such as butterfly, heart, flag, Christmas tree, circles, etc. and precut stained glass chips in various sizes, shapes and limitless colors. Create your own custom art to hang in your window, use as an ornament or give as a gift. Sessions are led by Gary Chaudoir of Chaudoir Glass Studio in Sister Bay.

Walk-ins are welcome but reservations are strongly encouraged. Reserve early to ensure we can seat your group together. Call 920-619-6363 or email contact@belgianheritagecenter.org for reservations or information.

Family Workshop, Friday, November 27 – 9:00 to 2:00
Bring the whole family to BHC the day after Thanksgiving for a mosaic glass workshop designed for all ages. Workshop is priced per project ranging from $15 – $20 per item depending on size and complexity. Workshop start times are from 9:00 to 1:00. We recommend scheduling 60 to 90 minutes to complete your project. Workshop concludes at 2:00.

Christmas Spirits Workshop, Saturday, December 5 – 11:00 to 4:00
Gather your friends for a little Christmas spirit (and spirits) as you create your mosaic glass masterpieces. Workshop price of $40 per person includes one suncatcher/ornament, two drinks (wine, craft beer, cocktail drink or non-alcoholic beverage) and charcuterie buffet featuring Renard's cheese and Belgian chocolate. All participants will be eligible for a special drawing to win a little extra Christmas cheer.

This workshop is for adults age 21 and up. Workshop start times are from 11:00 to 2:00. We recommend scheduling at least 90 minutes to complete your project and enjoy the event. Workshop concludes at 4:00.





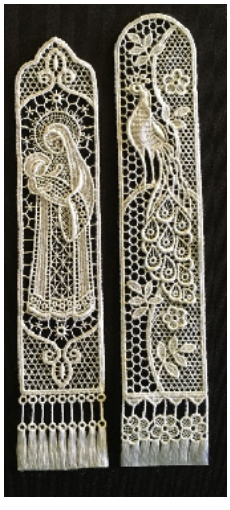
Every year we are impressed with the work of our workshop participants. Here are a few creative examples.

Holiday Specials for Belgian Themed Gifts

Looking for St. Nick or Christmas gifts for your favorite Belgians? Shop BHC! We have Belgian themed flags and apparel and you can stock up on chocolate stocking stuffers. Bobbin lace handmade in Brugges or custom art glass by Gary Chaudoir make especially wonderful gifts. Our selection of books offers something for all ages. Stop in or check out our merchandise catalog at belgianheritagecenter.org. For even more choices visit our online store.

Representative glass ornaments – available designs may vary.

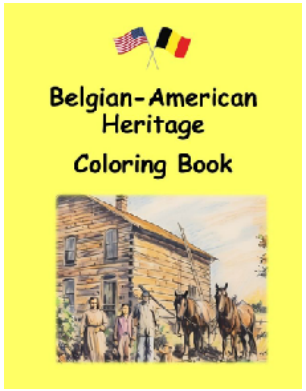




Handmade lace from Brugges, Belgium



Holiday Specials for Belgian Themed Gifts



The perfect St. Nick gift – Belgian Heritage Coloring Books! Just $5 each or three for $10, the books use actual images from BHC archives for children to color and learn about their heritage at the same time. The book includes questions for kids to ask adults about their families and Belgian traditions. Available at BHC or by emailing contact@belgianheritagecenter.org.

Wear your Belgian spirit! BHC is offering a special holiday price on Belgian themed t-shirts. Normally $15 each, but now through December 19, you can get 2 for $25. Buy one for yourself and give one as a gift! Mix and match sizes and styles from these four designs. Sizes S-XXL are available. Order early to ensure on time delivery. Offer applies only to purchases from the BHC store; offer does not apply to online store.



Don't forget chocolate – this high quality chocolate can't be shipped, so stop in and stock up!





St. Nick / Christmas Gifts at Christkindlmarkt!
BHC will be at the Kewaunee Christkindlmarkt at Lakehaven Hall in Kewaunee on Friday, November 20 from 3:00-9:00 pm and on Saturday, November 21 from 9:00-4:00. Enjoy an old-fashioned German Christmas market held at the historic Lakehaven Hall! Get a head start on your holiday shopping as you browse through a number of unique vendors offering exquisite apparel, one-of-a-kind ceramic items, homemade food items and much more!

BHC will have a variety of items available for your St. Nick and Christmas shopping needs, including authentic Belgian lace ornaments, chocolate, Belgian T-shirts and sweatshirts. Take advantage of holiday special pricing on t-shirts and coloring books.

The Kewaunee Christkindlmarkt is an annual event sponsored by the Kewaunee Area Chamber of Commerce and is part of a weekend event also featuring a Christmas Stroll of Kewaunee County businesses, a Friday night Holiday Parade of Lights, and a visit from Santa. Come enjoy the event and pick up a few items for those Christmas stockings!

BHC will be open on these dates for shopping and order pick-up. To pre-order, email contact@belgianheritagecenter.org.

Friday, November 27 9:00 - 3:00
Saturday, December 5 9:00 - 4:00
Saturday, December 12 9:00 - noon
Saturday, December 19 9:00 – noon
By appointment – call 920-619-6363

Belgian Heritage Center Donation Form

Name: _____ Donation: $ _____
Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to: **Belgian Heritage Center, PO Box 173, Brussels, WI 54204**. Donations may be made at www.belgianheritagecenter.org (*PayPal and major credit cards accepted*). BHC is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Donations to cover the cost of newsletter production and delivery ($10 per year per person) are greatly appreciated.
To receive BHC's newsletter via email, send request to contact@belgianheritagecenter.org.

Belgian Heritage Center
PO Box 173
Brussels, WI 54204

SALUTE TO OUR ANCESTORS

November 11 is Veteran's Day when we honor those who served in the United States Armed Forces. BHC salutes the service of our ancestors each year with a video of the pictures of veterans submitted for our archives. You can find the video on the BHC YouTube channel or on the Heritage & History page at belgianheritagecenter.org. Images are added every year. If you have an image to share, email contact@belgianheritagecenter.org.

Alex Monfils of Casco and Joseph Monard of Luxemburg served in World War I

