

Wisconsin Walloon

A LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN SHARP DECLINE

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WHAT IS WALLOON?

Walloon is one of four spoken languages native to southern Belgium. Walloon was primarily spoken in the region know as Wallonia.



LANGUAGE FACTS

- ❖ Walloon has remained relatively unchanged since the 1600s
- ❖ Prominent usage up until WWI
- ❖ In the 1930s, French was mandated as the public language
- ❖ Walloon has been in severe decline since WWII
- ❖ In the US, Walloon is spoken in an area approximately 100 square miles in Northeast Wisconsin

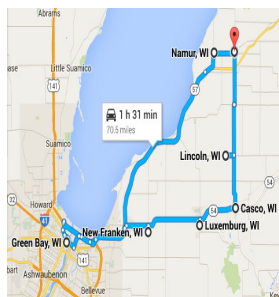


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NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN WISCONSIN

In 1852, eighty-one families from Wallonia departed Belgium and emigrated to America, causing a wave of 5,000-7,000 others to follow them. Farming, the primary employment of 30% of the Belgian population was no longer sustainable. Famine and disease crippled the working class and food prices soared, but wages stayed the same

The Walloon immigrants first settled in Kaukauna, Wisconsin. There they met Father Edward Daems, who informed them of the Bay Settlement, ten miles north of what is now Green Bay. Few of the immigrants knew any English and took advantage of the predominantly French population in Aux Premiers Belges, now Green Bay. They purchased land and used it for farming.



Image courtesy of Madeline Tautges

Image courtesy of Lizzy Ehrenberg

Upon arrival in Wisconsin, the Walloons faced several years of extreme poverty and sickness. As an extra source of income in the winter, they produced wooden shingles, the money from which went to buy cattle, farming equipment, and provisions. Eventually, the settlers were able to build roads, schools, churches and shops, which brought new industries, like shipbuilding, to the area.

On Sunday, October 8th, 1871, a fire destroyed much of the settlement, killing over 200 people and leaving more than 5,000 homeless. After the fire, many settlers returned to Green Bay in search of an easier life.

LINGUISTIC SITUATION TODAY

- ❖ Walloon is an oral language
- ❖ No formal written script
- ❖ All writing is done phonetically
- ❖ Walloon is only spoken by a handful of people
- ❖ Walloon and French are sister languages

COMPARISONS BETWEEN FRENCH AND WALLOON

English	Walloon	Phonetic	French	Phonetic
Walloon	Walon	[walo]	Walon	[walɔ]
Goodbye	Diè wåde	[dje wot] / [dje wot]	Adieu	[adiø]
Hello	Bondjoû	[bɔ̃dʒu]	Bonjour	[bɔ̃ʒur]
Hi	A	[a]	Salut	[saly]
Goodbye	A rvey	[arvɛ]	Au revoir	[o œvʁwa]
How do you say	Cmint dit-st on	[kmɛ̃ dɛstɔ̃]	Comment dit-on	[kɔ̃mɛ̃ di tɔ̃]
How are you?	Cmint daloz?	[kmɛ̃ dalo]	Comment allez-vous?	[kɔ̃mɛ̃ talɛ vu]
I don't know	Dji n' sais nèn	[dʒin se nɛ̃] / [dʒin se nɛ̃]	Je ne sais pas	[ʒə ne sɛ pa]

FUTURE WORK

Language revitalization is a long term process that seeks to save dead or dying languages and cultures

- ❖ Maori was one of the first organized attempts to conserve a dying minority and cultural language
- ❖ Hawaii and Navajo have made similar programs in recent years

OUR NEXT STEPS

The following are ideas to preserve and pass on Walloon to the next generation.

- ❖ Introduction of a formal written system based on Belgian Walloon
- ❖ Introduction of language immersion day camps
- ❖ Computer application designed for daily language practice

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