

Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

2012 Lyceum Series Draws Record Crowds

By Nancy Pfothenauer

The 2012 Lyceum series was another big hit, with record setting attendance and great audience participation.

In January, after the Annual Meeting at the Opera House, "Another Historic Picture Show" gave us a look at Jail Alley and Shake Rag over time. Seeing the pictures on the big screen is always a treat.

In February, cousins Joe Galle, Jerry Galle, Nick Galle, and Chuck Dahl told stories of their Italian families and their life in Mineral Point as newly arrived citizens. Many of their memories were of food, including the peppers brought over from the old country, grown in the gardens, and canned for the winter. Joe Nardi shared a great memory of walking home from school and catching a whiff of the wonderful odor of baking bread coming from his mother's beehive oven in the back yard.

In March, Paul Humbert, Mary Alice Moore, and Betty Lawinger lead us on a virtual stroll down High Street. We

looked at pictures from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s and reminisced about the stores that used to be downtown. Mary Alice remembered going into the Kroger's store in the Gundry and Gray building and putting down a dime for a loaf of bread.

Many thanks to Lucille May for coordinating the series, to Phil Mrozinski for helping with everything at the Opera House, and to Pastor Mary Ann Conklin and the congregation of the First Methodist church for hosting the 2nd and 3rd Lyceums. Also thanks to Jason Sable for videotaping the events and to the MPHS members who sent additional gifts which makes it possible to provide these programs at no cost.

The MPHS does this every year on Sunday afternoons in January, February, and March. If you missed this year's series, keep us in mind for next year! ●



Left: Jerry Galle and Nick Galle were on the panel for the 2nd Lyceum.
Center: Kroger's was in the Gundry and Gray building in the 1950s.
Right: Lucille May coordinated the Lyceums and introduced the panelists.

Who ARE Those Crazy Ladies?

By Nancy Pfothenauer

The photo we used for the 2012 events postcard drew more comments than just about anything we've ever mailed. Everyone loved it and everyone wanted to know more about it. In trying to find out what those women were up to, I stumbled upon a second version of the same photo that not only listed their names, it listed the names of the characters they played. I also found a different photo of the same group and a newspaper reference to the event.

The Iowa County Democrat, Jan 5, 1899, said...

"The Order of the Eastern Star will hold an Old Maids Convention in the Opera House on Tuesday evening, January 24, and it is hoped that the public may avail themselves of the opportunity to attend. Particulars later."

Apparently, the "Old Maids' Convention" was a play that made the rounds of church and civic groups all over the country for more than a decade. **The Milwaukee Journal, Oct 26, 1903, said...**

"The Young Ladies Single Blessedness Debating Society will meet in the Guild hall of St John's Episcopal church Nov 12 and all the women of

the church who have scorned nuptial bonds will confide to an appreciative public the reasons why."

In Pennsylvania, The Reading Eagle, April 16, 1910, said...

"Amusing Entertainment in Washington Street Presbyterian Church. 'The Spinsters' Convention' was the title of an entertaining programme... when the members of the Ladies' Auxiliary were the entertainers. The church was crowded. The young women represented spinsters, who were in convention. The sight of a man caused horror and the amusing incidents that interspersed the comedy caused hearty applause."

From The San Francisco Call, June 1, 1912...

"All the Priscillas, Abigails and Nancys of the class were present at the session of the Young Ladies' Single Blessedness Debating society. 'No One Loves Me' was one of the songs sung. The prayers of the members for the return of their lost youth were answered finally by the arrival of an agent with a patent 'elixir of life.' The convention broke up in an uproar." ●



The Old Maids' Convention" had them rolling in the aisles of the Opera House in 1899. Another photo of the event turned up in a Gundry album at the Mineral Point Room. One of the few male characters in the play was called "Dr. Killehoff."



The Young Ladies Single Blessedness Debating Society (the first name is the name of the character, the second name is the person who played that role.)

BOTTOM ROW: Mary Eliza Fraddler - Ida Treweek Curnow (Mrs Ed); Polly Jane Spratt - Millie Wallace Bray (Mrs Henry); Betsy Ann Bobbutt - Edith Wiedenfeller (Mrs Frank) **MIDDLE ROW:** Rozella Abigail Hedge - Mertie Lanyon Messerole (Mrs Jake); Patience Desire Mann - Martha Wearne Hales (Mrs W. G.); Josephine Jane Gunn - Ella Vivian Ludden (Mrs Frank); Chlorinda Thankful Peabody - Daisy Curry (Mrs. John); Penelope Gertrude DoLittle - Annie Uren or Nettie Wallace **TOP ROW:** Juliette Juanita Long - Agnes Chamley Jacka (Mrs. David C.); Rachel Rebekah Sharp - Lottie Legette Prideaux (Mrs Billy); Cleopatra Bell Brown - Laura White Shepard (Mrs Will); Tiny Short - Lenora James Rogers; Providence Abida Lilloknop - Lena Gillman Fox (Mrs Dr. Fox, Dentist); Jerusha Matilda Spriggins - Annie Penhallegon Jones Grace; Sophia Stuckup - Millie Treweek (Charley Treweek's sister).

ABSENT: Violet Ann Ruggles - Mrs. Nellie Hales; Calamity Jane Higgins - Lizzie Kitto; Charity Longface - Eunice Hanscom.

Oops!

Even though I confidently told the Lyceum audience that at least half of the people in the photo were men, it turns out, none of them are! My apologies to anyone whose grandmother I inadvertently insulted. At least I didn't say which ones I thought were men. ●

And We Have A Winner!

I told the audience at the January Lyceum that the first person to bring me more information about the photo would win a prize. The Lyceum was on Sunday and on the following Thursday, Gary Kaiser found a copy of the print at the Mineral Point Room with all the names of the people on the back. He brought it in and I told him his prize was a 13 x 19 inch print of any image from our collection. His choice: the crazy ladies in the hats! Thanks, Gary! Enjoy the photo. ●

Get Your Groove On!



Save the Date! **FOUNDERS' DAY**

Friday, July 27, 2012

We know you have them — tie dyed t-shirts you just couldn't throw away, long skirts, mini skirts, paisley shirts, jeans with patches, vests with fringes, head bands, love beads, worry beads, peace signs, Nehru jackets. Whether you kept them for nostalgia's sake or in the hope they would be in style again someday, here's your chance to wear them again.

Founders' Day is back and this year we're highlighting the Sixties. Mark your calendar for **Friday, July 27, 2012**, and get your groove on at Orchard Lawn. Details are evolving — watch the newsletter, the *Democrat Tribune*, and posters downtown for updates. Meanwhile, save the date. Don't miss the chance to Celebrate the 60s! ●



What Potent Blood Hath Modest May

By James Harris

On the warm, sunny afternoon of May 23, 1878, John Spensley and his wife, Mary, were entertaining guests including Mary's mother, Maria Waller, her sister and brother-in-law, Frances and William Coates, her sister Alice Roberts, Alice's four children, and John Addington in their home on North Bend street. Unknown to them a tempest was rapidly approaching.

Around four o'clock John Spensley noticed that the air had suddenly become very calm and intensely hot and stifling. He then saw the approaching funnel cloud, wider above than below, estimated to vary from 70 to 200 yards in width, accompanied by constant flashes of lightning, a continuous roar of thunder and large hailstones "the size of a crab apple."

John Addington was in the garden west of the house when he experienced "such a flash of lightning as I never saw, and such a clap of thunder as I never heard." He sought shelter in a woodshed 35 feet from the Spensley house. He related "When I had sat there a little while there came such a flash of lightning as I never saw in my life, never; and when the flash came the woodshed was gone just as quick as that. [H]ere I was, my face smothered with dirt and mud, and blood and everything... The woodshed was gone and when I looked up the house was gone."

At this time Frances Coates was in the house. She remembered "I did not notice its approach but heard the noise; I was upstairs at the time; the noise was similar to that made by a large freight train... The noise frightened me so that I wanted to go somewhere I would be safe, and went to the cellar." The terrified Spensley family and their guests hastened to the cellar, except for Mrs. Roberts and Maria Waller. Mrs. Roberts feared that one of her children remained upstairs and the two ladies began a search. Suddenly the storm struck and the ladies retreated to the cellar stairs. The following instant the house was torn in two sections and Maria Waller was borne through the air for 400 yards, her lifeless body dashed to the ground in a terribly bruised condition. Some years later her watch and ring were found in the garden west of the house.

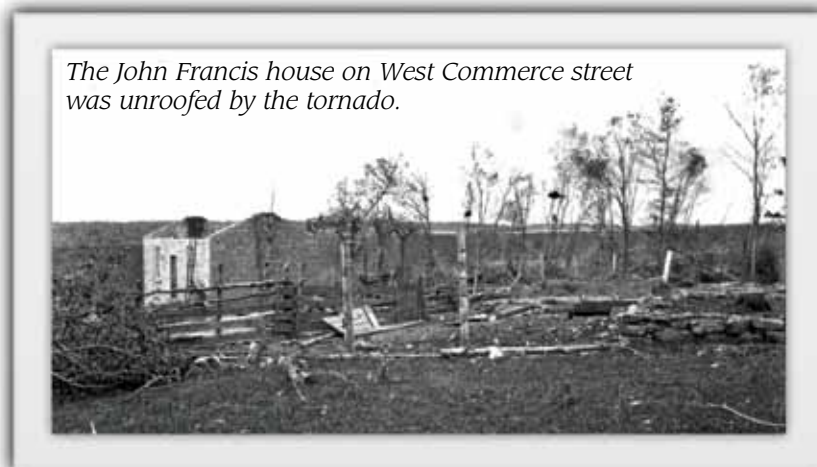
After the tornado passed there was nothing left of the house except the foundation walls. Timbers were smashed into splinters. One of the main sills was carried a hundred yards and driven nine feet into the ground. A piano taken by the storm was never found. The barn and carriage house, carriages and sleighs

were demolished, yet a horse standing in the barn was not harmed.

The storm's wrath continued to the residence of George Leonard where Mrs. Leonard was almost instantly killed, her body recovered in a ravine about a hundred yards from the house in a terribly mangled condition. John Addington's house was swept away and the residence of John Francis (West Commerce Street) was unroofed. John Unger who was asleep in the Francis house at the time stated "The tornado woke me up, and when I woke the room was full of fire, or lighted up like a lamp... the roof and ceiling went off with lightning." Benjamin C. Bennett's house (Dodge Street at West Commerce) was demolished. Anna Bennett saw the tornado approach "like a lolling cloud of smoke." She was carried aloft across an open area and dashed against a woodpile, suffering only minor injuries.

The following day vegetation in the track of the tornado appeared to be burned as if there had been a heavy frost. Leaves were withered, trees were blackened and shattered. Loss of livestock and other personal property was great. John Lanyon noted "This property was of various descriptions; such as stoves, boilers and cooking utensils, tables, bedsteads, bureaus, chairs, bedding, clothing, carpets, pianos, organs, and every variety of furniture and household goods; grain, hay, carriages, buggies, wagons, sleighs, threshing machines, reapers, cultivators, and other kinds of farm implements and machinery; besides windmills and a large amount of fences, and even headstones and monuments erected in cemeteries as memorials of the dead."

Thirteen lives were lost in Iowa County, and Mineral Point citizens incurred property losses totaling \$39,000 [well over \$1 million in 2012 dollars]. The monetary loss of \$12,000 suffered by John Spensley was second only to the loss sustained by brewer Charles Gilman. In an attempt to recoup some of the loss John commenced an action against the Lancashire Insurance Company on a fire insurance policy. A trial was held in Dane County in April, 1880. John was represented by his brother, Calvert Spensley, and the insurance company was represented by Moses M. Strong. Ultimately the court ruled against Spensley. ●



The John Francis house on West Commerce street was unroofed by the tornado.

Sources: *Abstract of Title; Census of Mineral Point, 1870 & 1880; History of Iowa County, Wisconsin, 1881; John Spensley v. Lancashire Insurance Company, State of Wisconsin, in Supreme Court (1882); Iowa County Democrat; Mineral Point Tribune; Spensley Folder, Mineral Point Archives, Mineral Point Public Library; Tax roll of Mineral Point, 1870 - 1882; The Story of Mineral Point, 1827 - 1941; The Wisconsin Tornadoes of May 23, 1878, by W.W. Daniels, University of Wisconsin (undated).*

News From Orchard Lawn

by Ainsley Anderson, Manager

Spring is springing at Orchard Lawn! I am busy acclimating myself with the ins and outs of the property, delving into the history of the Gundry family, and getting to know the members of the MPHS board.

I am working with the board to develop a new marketing plan for Orchard Lawn, which will be launched this summer. Meanwhile, I am connecting with photographers and wedding professionals in the area to discuss the unique setting that is Orchard Lawn.

In January I attended a wedding show in Platteville. In June I will be participating in the Wedding Planner and Guide show in Middleton; and I will attend their larger show of the year in January 2013.

In the meantime, I am working to promote Orchard Lawn as the perfect space for private parties (Bridal Showers, Baby Showers, Anniversary Parties, Family Reunions, etc). I welcome any ideas or feedback that members of MPHS might have. If there is something that you have always wanted to see happen at Orchard Lawn, or if you are interested in pursuing rentals for special events, please email me at OrchardLawn@gmail.com.

I look forward to making Orchard Lawn accessible to the community and sharing it as the "living room of Mineral Point." ●

Remembering Steve Jensen

Orchard Lawn's back parlor fireplace, with the help of many hands, has been restored to a fully functional coal or wood-burning fireplace. A critical but concealed component was custom fabricated by Steve Jensen of Mineral Point, a fourth-generation sheet metal craftsman whose family business was established in Chicago in 1892. Sadly, Steve passed away on February 2, 2012. "There are at least a dozen lights shining in Mineral Point because of him", said Jim Stroschein who worked with Steve and others in restoring the street lanterns surrounding the Pendarvis State Historic Site. Whether you enjoy the soft glow of lantern light on a summer evening stroll or the heat from a fireplace on a winter's day at Orchard Lawn, join us in warm thoughts of and thanks to a talented, funny and generous artisan. ●



Steve Jensen at work on one of the copper fish he made for the weathervanes of the Cowboy Church.

Thank You

A sincere thank you to the family of Barbara Wallis Ginn for the generous memorial gifts made in her name. Barbara, who passed away in January, was proud of her Mineral Point roots which included the Kendall, Wallis, James, and Jefferey families. Her friends and family felt that donations to the MPHS were fitting memorials to her. We agree and appreciate the thoughtfulness and support.

New Manager for Orchard Lawn

Welcome Ainsley Rowe Anderson, the new manager for Orchard Lawn. She joins the Mineral Point Historical Society with a background in the arts and work experience in sales, marketing, and management.



Ainsley grew up in Columbus, WI and graduated from UW-Madison with a degree in Theater & Drama. While in high school, she worked for the Columbus historical society and the Main

Street Program, heading up a complete reorganization and filing project of their historic photos.

Ainsley has been part of Mineral Point for quite some time; her parents, Bruce and Sharon Rowe, purchased a home and started an antique business here in 1999. In 2008, Ainsley and her soon-to-be husband, Travis, purchased a 150-year old home here and were married in Mineral Point in June, 2008. Ainsley says her favorite wedding pictures were taken on the porch at Orchard Lawn. Ainsley and Travis have a 2 year old daughter named Josephine, and will be welcoming a second baby in April.

In addition to her new post with Orchard Lawn, Ainsley spends her time working at Alley Stage and Rowe's Rock Cottage Shops and enjoying life in Mineral Point with her growing family.

The MPHS Board was delighted to find, in our own backyard, such an energetic, talented, and motivated young woman to manage all the details of the weddings, reunions, photo shoots, and private parties held at Orchard Lawn. Welcome Ainsley! ●

Stroschein Concludes 15 Years of Service

By Nancy Pfothenauer

Jim Stroschein, past president of the MPHS, recently resigned from the Board of Directors. As an independent video producer, his business is demanding more time and more travel and he is looking to pursue some new opportunities. Your editor recently asked Jim a few questions, via email, about his 15 years on the Board.

What changes have you seen in the society since you first started?

In 1997 it was clear that the longtime volunteers of the MPHS had greatly diminished in number. The society needed a new direction, purpose and new volunteers. Orchard Lawn was in very poor condition. The front porch was collapsing, the roof leaked so bad that we had to catch water in the attic in buckets and the basement was a mud pit. Mark had established contact with Tom Jeffris of the Jeffris Family Foundation and that gave us a bit of confidence that something could be done with the house. Dean Connors held a special board meeting and had three options on a list. The first option was to sell the house and 9 acres. A serious buyer had approached the MPHS and was willing to pay cash for the property and house. The buyer said he doubted the MPHS would ever be able to raise enough money to restore the house. This particular person had won the Grand Prize from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for house restoration so he knew his stuff. The second option was to fundraise and restore the house. The third option was to just try to carry on as best we could. The board chose the second option, even though none of us had any experience in fundraising. It was a pretty bold stroke and no one had any idea what we were getting ourselves into.

What do you consider your most significant accomplishments?

Despite Orchard Lawn being under restoration for more than a decade, we never took our eye off the fact that, as a historical society, it was our job to research and share Mineral Point history. I think 2012 was our 14th year of doing lyceums. When I speak to other groups, they are amazed at our track record. For 14 years we have done at least 3 individual lyceums each year, all on different topics. Lead mining, architecture, Black Hawk, the Zinc Works, archeology, historic photos, prehistoric rock art, the Mifflin Meteorite, High Street in the 1950s, we've covered it all and more. We do more history education than many state-owned facilities who receive taxpayer money. The MPHS receives no tax money of any sort. All of this work has been done by volunteers and that is nothing short of remarkable.

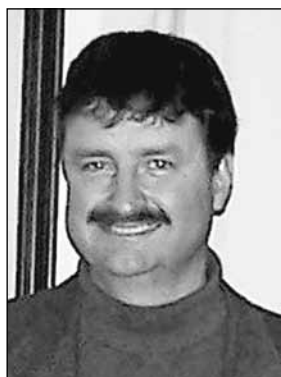
Your fundraising role was extremely important — how much did you raise in Phase I and Phase II?

We applied for and received two challenge grants for Orchard Lawn from the Jeffris Family Foundation. The first required

us to raise \$164,000 and the second \$155,000. We were successful in both phases. But I have to tell you, Phase One was a heart-stopper. We had to meet a November 30 deadline or we wouldn't receive any of the matching money. The whole Orchard Lawn project was at stake. On November 30 the total raised was \$164,030. We made it by \$30.

Any stories connected with fundraising?

Fundraising is a job that nobody wants to do but it can be exhilarating when people give. You have to create an exciting vision and then have the guts to go out there and sell it. I had a great fundraising team of Dean Connors, John Sharp, Beverly Holmes and Tim Marr and we did it. It was interesting. People felt honored to be asked. We made evening appointments with people, sat in their living rooms and told them about the restoration — which was really about making Orchard Lawn a useable jewel of this community. One lady gave us \$10,000, a few weeks later read about us in the newspaper and mailed in \$1,000 more. It is so gratifying to know that Orchard Lawn is restored, debt-free and has a growing endowment that will keep it in the public domain. I've always believed that Orchard Lawn can still be here, 200 years from now, owned by the MPHS community and performing its same function of being the Living Room of Mineral Point.



How does the MPHS compare to other historical societies you've seen?

I think historic sites today must have a compelling vision of how they can be relevant to their communities and to their patrons. You have to tell great stories that people in the 21st century can relate to and you have to offer something special that people can experience in three dimensions. You've got to offer them a personal, three dimensional experience at a historic site or there is no reason for them to leave their computers and visit. Historic sites that do not understand this will struggle to attract visitors and donors.

What should the society focus on in the next 5 years?

The board needs to decide this. I have opinions, naturally, but Matt and the next leadership team should set their own goals because they will be the ones carrying them out. I'm a huge believer in sustainability for historic sites. Don't overextend your volunteer and financial resources and always share your progress with members and donors. Find new revenue streams and continue to build the Stewardship Fund which is the key to the future of the MPHS and Orchard Lawn.

Thanks, Jim, both for your comments and for your years of service to the MPHS. ●



Notes from the President

By Matt Ostergrant, President, Mineral Point Historical Society

Comfort Zones

After nearly a decade of living in a modest but comfortable house in Madison, Denise and I shared a lack of fulfillment and began an extensive search for a new home. This search ended, much to our surprise and pleasure, with a small house in Mineral Point. However, anxiety and uneasiness arrived as we stepped out of our comfort zones to move forward around and over the obstacles along the path toward our new lives. Near the end of that path, after an exhausting day of packing followed by another of closings, moving and unpacking, we awoke the next morning in our new and better comfort zone of Mineral Point.

When Jim Stroschein announced his resignation from the MPHS board and I was asked to fill the president's position, I was again pushed out of my comfort zone. Being an introverted follower, uneasy around crowds and averse to public speaking, I am accustomed to being given a task and quietly going off to do it. Forgive me for going on about personal insecurities, but bear with me a bit longer, patient reader, for my point is this: we all need to leave our comfort zone from time to time. How else can we obtain improvement, accomplishment and, yes, the creation of newer and better comfort zones if we don't stretch ourselves?

Now that's quite enough about me, let's talk about you. Have you walked the grounds of Orchard Lawn in Spring when colonies of scilla and patches of bloodroot and wild tulips put on their brief show of bloom? Watched children search the grounds for Easter eggs? Witnessed high school prom couples posing for photos on the front porch? Sat in the reproduced Summerhouse (the latticed gazebo) and enjoyed the play of light and shadow? Savored your coffee with newspaper on the front porch, complete with porch swing and a premier view of the formal gardens? Shaken off the workweek at a Friday evening "Jammin' on the Porch" concert in summer or attended a Sunday afternoon Lyceum in the winter? You have? That's great! You haven't? Why not? All these things and more are FREE to our community and its visitors!

Well, sort of, as all "free lunches" come with a cost. They just don't happen but come from the generosity of many people and their gifts of time and money. People who share our passion in preserving this community's unique history. People who like historic houses, antiques and the stories attached to them, gardens and open spaces with acres of space for recreation and relaxation. People who value Orchard Lawn as "The Living Room of Mineral Point" and who are willing to stretch out of their comfort zones to maintain and improve this precious comfort zone for everyone.

Over the past 72 years, many people have supported the MPHS which has transformed Orchard Lawn into what we enjoy today but the work is never done. The sky is truly the limit for creating, improving and expanding MPHS projects, programs and outreach IF AND ONLY IF we have the continued support of our friends. If you are a MPHS member, have given a financial gift or a gift of your time, THANK YOU and please continue your support! If you value the MPHS comfort zone of Orchard Lawn and our programs, please join us. If you are willing to stretch a little or a lot out of your comfort zone to add your support, you are welcomed, valued and needed. Please drop me a line or call me with your ideas, comments or critiques. With your participation, your MPHS can become, in the words of Thoreau, "a success unexpected in common hours." ●

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Ainsley Anderson, Manager

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Mineral Point Historical Society Membership Form

January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012

All members receive the newsletter and free tours of Orchard Lawn.

Please check one:

- Individual (\$15.00)
- Family (\$25.00)
- Business (\$50.00)

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to the Mineral Point Historical Society and return this form to:

Mineral Point Historical Society
P.O. Box 188 • Mineral Point, WI 53565

Thank you again for your support!

Please remember to mail your membership dues.

Membership Update

As of mid-March, 213 members had sent in their dues. If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please don't forget to do so. Thanks!

Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

P.O. Box 188 • 234 Madison Street
Mineral Point, WI 53565
608.987.2884

Mark Your Calendars

Jammin' On the Porch

6:00 p.m. – 8:ish

Second Friday of the month.
On the lawn at Orchard Lawn.
Bring your own blanket.

2012 Lineup:

JUNE 8

Drivin' Wheel (*Rick Harris' band*)

JULY 13

Scott Stieber and Don Myers

AUGUST 10

Cupola (*Gregory Merrick's band*)

SEPTEMBER 14

LaBarge (*back by popular demand*)

Change Service Requested

www.mineralpointhistory.org

Brewer Album Helps Identify Collection Photos

Descendants of James Brewer recently loaned us a family photo album to scan. This captioned picture from the album is interesting in its own right, but it also helped us identify the people in several other images in our glass plate collection. The larger photo is from the Brewer family album; the smaller one is from the collection. ●

