

# Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

## Annual Meeting and January Lyceum a Success

By Matt Ostergrant

In spite of the snow, wind and slippery conditions, the Annual Meeting/January Lyceum at the First United Methodist Church Hall was well attended by a good number of hardy history lovers, some coming from as far away as Monroe, Wisconsin. Following the Annual Meeting the Lyceum topic was the final installment of *Mineral Pointers Remember: The Businesses of High and Commerce Streets*. The panelists were Mary Rink and brothers Jim and Norm Johnson. Lucille May, moderator, told the audience that the second half of the 20th century is now "the good old days" and that stories of Mineral Point from that period need to be shared and preserved while people are still here to tell them.

Attendees were given a handout with 1971 and 2013 images of High Street buildings beginning at Chestnut Street going downhill to Commerce Street. Commerce Street buildings included the old Shell Station at High and Commerce and Hook's Cheese Factory. Some of the many highlights of conversation generated by this event included:

- "Green Gardens" was a dance hall in the basement of Opie's Restaurant at 158 High (now Red Rooster).
- Mary Rink's mother, Mrs. Bishop, ran The Point Restaurant from 1954-1964 at 154 High.
- At 146 High, the center entrance door led upstairs to the American Legion Hall (uphill half) and a dance hall (downhill half).



- Campton's Grocery at 114 High had the following items on hand for sale to its customers: dynamite, gunpowder and for killing rats, cyanide! The Odd Fellows Hall was located above and separately owned (the only such split in Mineral Point's commercial buildings and still that way today). The ground floor owner is responsible for the basement while the upper floor owner is responsible for the roof.
- In the late 1930s or early 1940s a fire resulted in the loss of the second story of Slick's Liquor Store at 60 High, resulting in its present day configuration. Clarence "Slick" Clark also owned 40 and 52 High. In the late 1940s or early 1950s, Norm Johnson's father-in-law, "Lefty", won an \$1800 Chevrolet in a poker game! Herb Markgraf ran Slick's secret poker room and it was speculated that one or more farms were "transacted" during this particular poker game. Upstairs at 52 High was the Eagle's Hall, a fraternal organization.
- In the 1930s there was a McCormick-Deering implement dealer located at 32 High, now a parking lot.

As before, attendees thoroughly enjoyed this event and the number of stories exchanged were too numerous to capture, proving again the rich and diverse history and tales of our unique community. Our thanks to our friends at the First United Methodist Church for allowing us to gather in the church hall. And thanks to Lucille May for again arranging this year's lineup of free Lyceum programs. ●



# And the Password is... Mineral Point

Mineral Point has always had a soft spot for native son, Allen Ludden. Even though he moved away when he was three, Ludden apparently felt the same about Mineral Point and frequently referred to it as his home town. Ludden, best known as host of the TV game show "Password" in the 1960's and '70's, did, in fact, have deep roots here but discovering them takes some local knowledge and a bit of skepticism about Internet sources.

A multitude of online biographies state that Ludden's father, Elmer Ellsworth, was a Nebraska native. Technically true, this bald fact does not reveal the Mineral Point side of the story. Elmer was indeed born in Nebraska, in 1892, to Reuben and Charlotte (Coker) Ellsworth. The elder Ellsworths had been farming in Cobb, WI and already had 4 daughters when they decided to homestead in Nebraska in 1889. But after 11 hard years, and 5 more children, with the 10th on the way, the family came back to Iowa County in February of 1900 and settled on the "old Spensley farm" on QQ, now owned by Jim and Sharon Stroschein.

The Ellsworth children must have thoroughly enjoyed life on the Wisconsin farm. Jim Stroschein says "they were quite 'dynamic' when they lived on this farm. The newspapers have accounts of how they tobogganed down Spensley's Hill and crashed, breaking arms and legs. Some of the boys cut off fingers while woodworking, etc. What a bunch! Elmer painted his name

and the year in the attic of our house and the initials "EE" are carved in many places in the barn."

Reuben's parents, John and Eliza Ann, were early settlers in Southwestern WI, coming from Canandaigua, NY to Dane County in 1846 and then to Mifflin township in 1857. Charlotte's Wisconsin lineage is even longer; her grandparents (Allen Ludden's great-great-grandparents) Pierre and Sarah Calame were some of the very first settlers in the Preston/Wingville/Montfort area, building a log cabin in the Town of Clifton in 1836.

An article in the *WI Magazine of History*, Dec. 1937, describes Pierre Calame, born in Bordeaux, France, as a "colorful Frenchman of the early days who possessed such remarkable strength that he once carried a wood beam fourteen-inch stubble plow, weighing about 150 pounds, home from Galena, forty miles, on his shoulder, making the journey both ways afoot."

Allen Ludden's parents, Elmer Ellsworth and Leila Allen, both graduated from the Mineral Point High School in 1912. Elmer went on to the University of Wisconsin for one year but returned to Mineral Point and started an ice business, carving blocks of ice from a pond across the road from the Ellsworth farm. Remnants still stand of the dam that formed the pond.

In June, 1915, Elmer and Leila married and Allen was born on October 5, 1917. Sadly, Elmer was a victim of the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, dying early in January, 1919, from complications of the illness.

Leila's parents, Charles and Clara Allen, owned the Ellsworth farm for a short time, from 1918 to 1921, but the 1920 census lists Leila Ellsworth and Allen as living with her parents at 307 S. Iowa street in Mineral Point. Also in the household



Elmer and his brothers literally left their mark on the Ellsworth farm, including this graffiti in the attic.



Still visible on County QQ, the remnants of the dam that formed the pond where Elmer Ellsworth harvested ice to sell.



The "Ellsworth Farm" about 1920. Elmer Ellsworth's family returned here after 11 years of homesteading in Nebraska.

are her sister, Bessie, and two lodgers, young women who were teachers in the public school. One suspects 2-1/2 year old Allen might well have been doted on by the five women living in the house.

The 1920 census also lists an interesting neighbor, Homer J. Ludden, who lived a block away at 201 S. Iowa with his grandmother, Martha Ludden, and his brother, Alfred. Contrary to Internet reports, Homer J. was the son of Frank C. Ludden and Ella Vivian Ludden, not Dr. Homer Ludden; Dr. Homer Ludden was his uncle. (Also contrary to Internet information, Ludden Lake was named for Dr. Homer Ludden, not Allen Ludden.)

Homer J., who graduated from the local high school in 1911, must have known both Leila and Elmer in school and no doubt often saw the young widow and her little boy in the neighborhood. In October, 1920, Homer J. and Leila were married, in Janesville. Homer J. adopted Leila's son, who from then on was known as Allen Ludden.

As a boy, Allen did spend parts of some summers in Mineral Point and remembered our town with much affection. He also came to Mineral Point in later years, after he became well known as a TV star. In 1974, he hosted a game of Password at the Iowa County Fair, and in 1977 he was the narrator of the Sesquicentennial Pageant and grand marshal of a parade down High Street. Allen Ludden died in 1981 and is buried in the Ellsworth family plot in Graceland Cemetery, next to his biological father, Elmer Ellsworth. ●



As a child, Allen Ludden spent time with relatives in Mineral Point. On June 28, 1923 he was part of a parade to encourage residents to patronize a soft drink stand operated by friend Harry Mitchell in Jerusalem Park. In the photo: seated: Seymour Beers, a Straus boy, LaVern Batchelor. Standing, left to right: Charles Harris, Marion Batchelor, Merle Stephens, Ethel Mitchell, Esther Stephens, Margaret Mitchell, Patty Ludden, Eddie Brown, Allen Ludden, Jimmie Stevens, Harry Mitchell, two unidentified youngsters, Earl Mitchell. Helen Siebert is at the organ.



Amanda Blake ("Kitty" on Gunsmoke) and Bob Denver ("Gilligan" on Gilligan's Island) join Mineral Point native Allen Ludden for a publicity photo promoting the long-running TV game show Password.

## Play Password at the Library!

The Mineral Point Public Library honors Allen Ludden with our own version of Password. If you don't remember the show, or haven't seen it, the game is played by two teams, each with two players. A moderator gives a different word to each team and that team member gives a one-word clue to his/ her partner. The teams alternate in giving clues and making guesses until one comes up with the right word.

The Allen Ludden Password Tournament will be played at the Library on Sunday, February 23, 2014 from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. Roland Sardeson will be the special host. The game is free but pre-registration is necessary. For more information, call the Library at 987-2447 or go to the website at [mineralpointpubliclibrary.wordpress.com](http://mineralpointpubliclibrary.wordpress.com). ●



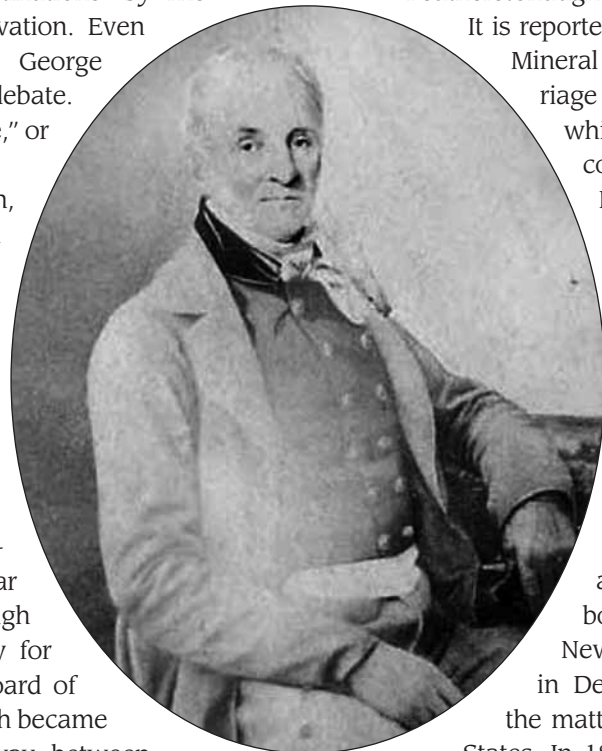
# Beauty is Bought by Judgment of the Eye

By James Harris

"It was an exceedingly miserable place.... A more melancholy and dreary place than this Mineral Point I never expect to see again." Who could this nefarious detractor of our fair city be? This charming village so recently acclaimed as a "Most Beautiful Town" by *Wonders of Wisconsin*, "Best Historic Town in Wisconsin" by *Wisconsin Trails*, and one of the "Dozen Distinctive Destinations" by The National Trust For Historic Preservation. Even the name of this irascible critic, George William Featherstonaugh, invites debate. Is it to be pronounced "Featherstone," or "Farnshaw," or "Fanshaw"?

Our subject was born in London, England in 1780 and raised in Scarborough, Yorkshire where he received a classic education at Stepney Hall Academy. At the age of 21, Featherstonaugh traveled throughout Europe and eventually to America. In 1806 he met and married Sarah Duane, the daughter of a wealthy former mayor of New York City and judge. The couple settled on the family farm near Schenectady, and Featherstonaugh became a corresponding secretary for the newly organized New York Board of Agriculture. In 1825 Featherstonaugh became involved in promotion of a railway between Albany and Schenectady. To gain knowledge of construction he returned to England where he became acquainted with the leading geologists of England, Scotland, and France. As his interest in geology developed he studied fossils of the Greensand, the base of the Thames, the tertiary beds of the Paris Basin and the mineral geology of Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall. In 1827 Featherstonaugh was elected a fellow of the Geological Society of London.

Shortly after Featherstonaugh returned to the United States in 1827 his wife died and he abandoned his interest in agriculture and moved to Philadelphia. Beginning in 1829 he conducted a series of lectures on geography in Philadelphia and at the New York Lyceum of Natural History. Between 1832 and 1838 Featherstonaugh carried out a number of geological field investigations in Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, and the Michigan Territory. In the summer of 1837 he made a lengthy journey to examine various mineral deposits



including the gold diggings of Georgia, the iron deposits of Missouri, and the lead mining district of Galena. It was on this sojourn that Featherstonaugh visited Mineral Point and later recorded a scathing report in his book, "A Canoe Voyage Up The Minnay Sotor." (London 1847).

Perhaps it was not just his sensory perception that formed Featherstonaugh's negative feelings about this place.

It is reported that on various occasions while in Mineral Point he demanded the use of a carriage and team owned by John D. Ansley which was declined due to a former commitment to the family of William S. Hamilton. Apparently outraged by the rebuff Featherstonaugh reportedly arranged for the temporary arrest of Ansley during the latter's visit to Philadelphia to generate interest in a Mineral Point copper mine and later interfered with Ansley's negotiation with London financiers for investment in a mining venture.

In 1838, at the behest of England's Lord Palmerston, Featherstonaugh acted as a commissioner in the boundary dispute between Maine and New Brunswick. He sailed to England in December, 1839 to file his report on the matter and never returned to the United States. In 1844 Featherstonaugh was appointed British consul at LeHavre, a post he held until his death in 1866.

Lest we reflect too harshly on the memory of this colorful early visitor to our city, there is some good to report. It is said that during the coup of Louis Napoleon in 1848 Featherstonaugh was responsible for rescuing Louis Phillipe, king of France, and his queen by smuggling them out of the country as his "uncle and aunt." ●

## Sources:

Conversations with Roland Sardeson.

Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography, *Featherstonaugh, G.W.*, 2008.

History of Iowa County, Western Publishing Company, Chicago, 1881.

Shakespeare, William, quote from *Loves Labours Lost*, 1588.

# Mrs. Peck's Opinion of George Featherstonhaugh

George Featherstonhaugh's book *A Canoe Voyage Up The Minnay Sotor* chronicled his tour of Wisconsin Territory in 1837. According to the *WI Magazine of History*, Spring, 1962, his hosts in the Territory found him "opinionated, ill tempered, and given to exaggeration. In short, he was the usual cultured Englishman of his time, making the usual disapproving American tour."

After a short time in Mineral Point, about which he collected a plethora of amusing but disparaging anecdotes, he traveled to the Four Lakes region (now Madison, WI.) There he was given frontier hospitality by Mrs. Eben (Roseline) Peck, who had arrived only a few weeks previously and had just moved into a hastily constructed cabin. Mrs. Peck provided meals, coffee, and a fine feather bed for three days and two nights for Featherstonhaugh and his companion; in return, Featherstonhaugh's account of his stay made fun of her, her home, her food, and her manners. In 1860, the *Baraboo News Republic* asked her to tell her side of the story; twenty-three years later, Mrs. Peck was still steaming. She went through the account, point by point, and refuted each one, with pithy commentary and opinions of her own.

She also said: "Now, we were well aware when he left this country, what his report would be, for he was entertained at Mineral Point for some length of time; he was supposed to be a gentleman, they were anxious to have him report as favorably as possible, for at that time they were heavily taxed on mineral — they gallanted him around in their carriages — informed him of the resources of our beautiful Territory — publicly dined him, and he finally returned their compliments by trying to swindle them out of their mines — John D. Ansley's copper mines in particular; but finding them too much for him, he left in a huff... After he left Wisconsin, Squire Ansley, with some friends, met other friends of Madison at our house, and talked the Featherstonhaugh matter over. Ansley observed that he had expended nearly a thousand dollars entertaining him whilst in the country, and he would also expend another to have him cowhided if he ever crossed our Territorial lines again..."

Excerpts from Featherstonhaugh's book and Mrs. Peck's reply can be found at <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/wmh/id/45031>. ●



## Membership Drive Off to a Strong Start

The membership forms have been coming in at a gratifying rate since December. If you haven't yet sent in your dues and additional gift, please do so. Your financial support of the Mineral Point Historical Society is appreciated — and essential. ●

## An Editorial

By Nancy Pfothenauer

Let's talk about the picture on page 3. It's a wonderful picture. It aptly illustrates the point of the story, Allen Ludden's roots in Mineral Point, but it is also dated with year, month, and date, almost every child is identified, and it was taken in a recognizable location, a rare trifecta for an old photo.

In spite of all that, the children in blackface may cause a small prickle of discomfort. Those creative children in 1923 were inspired by that tried and true American genre, the minstrel show, part of the country's culture since before the Civil War. Its only now, after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, and looking with our 21st century eyes, that we see the demeaning and hurtful aspect of the stereotype. (As a side note, if the children in blackface had been wearing the feathers and moccasins, would we have felt the same *frisson*?)

History isn't always "where the women are strong, the men are good lookin' and the children are above average," it can also be uncomfortable. What we do with the discomfort is the difference between learning from history and being doomed to repeat it.

For starters, we can look to our own lives. What aspects of our own culture are being mimicked by our children? When their children's children look at our photos in 91 years, will they be dismayed? What can we do now that will merit their approval then?

On the other hand, just the fact that an old photo of children in blackface makes us uncomfortable is surely a marker that we've made some progress in the struggle for acceptance and equality. ●

## Recipe Corrections

Ah, computers, they have minds of their own. If you tried the recipes in the last issue, you may have noticed an odd symbol in the list of ingredients. Apparently, the computer used by our printer didn't communicate well with the computer used by our designer, with the result that a small rectangle was printed instead of a fraction. In the pasty recipe, the little box should have been 1/2; in the chocolate cake recipe, the box should have been 1/4. We apologize for the glitch and hope no one's cake or pasty was adversely affected. ●



# News from Orchard Lawn

By Ainsley Anderson, Manager

As the snow blows and the temperatures plummet, I think fondly of the warmer months. Orchard Lawn is wonderful in any season and the snow certainly compliments the beauty of the exterior. The grounds are a great place for snowman-making and even snowshoeing — and I would encourage all of you to get out and enjoy them this winter.



However, I still think about the blooming flowers, changing leaves, the rousing music, and the memories made with family photos, parties, and weddings during the warmer months.

If you didn't get a chance to join us for Jammin' on the Porch in 2013, please do so in 2014. It's hard to beat those 2nd Fridays in June, July, August, and September. Packing a picnic and enjoying the free concert in the formal garden at Orchard Lawn with your friends and neighbors is an experience hard to beat in Mineral Point.

If you have an event to celebrate (anniversaries, bridal showers, baby showers, graduations) please consider Orchard Lawn as the location. The more people we bring to our location, who experience the beauty of the home and the grounds, the more we can do to continue our restoration efforts. When you choose to host an event at Orchard Lawn you're helping the Mineral Point Historical Society continue its mission of historical preservation and education.

I am always happy to meet with anyone interested in reserving Orchard Lawn for events. If you haven't been on a tour in a while please join us this year. It won't take more than an hour, and I guarantee that you will learn something new about Mineral Point, about the Gundry family, and you will be surprised by the beauty of this home that is available for your memorable events to come.

Happy New Year to all, and I look forward to seeing you at Orchard Lawn this year! ●

# One Cent A Year Salary

Meriden Morning Record (Connecticut) Feb. 9, 1904, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

The government pays the magnificent salary of 1 cent a year to Maurice Proctor for carrying the mail between Dodgeville and Mineral Point.

Mr. Proctor operates a stage line between the two cities and he makes a good income from the passenger service.

Recently he closed a contract with the government for three years agreeing to carry the mail one way each day, and his bid was 3 cents for that period of time. He is to receive his salary in three installments of 1 cent each. He recently received his check for his salary last year, but he is not going to cash it until he is in need of money.

Mr. Proctor is unique in the fact that he receives the smallest salary of any other person employed by the government.

The distance between Dodgeville and Mineral Point is eight miles. Mr. Proctor is very proud over the responsibility of having the United States mail in his care and enjoys the distinction of drawing the smallest salary on record. He also feel confident that if the government should desire to retrench, no effort would be made to cut his salary. ●



# February Lyceum — Houses of Mineral Point

The annual photo show at the Opera House will continue our tour of Mineral Point houses, past and present. Its always a treat to see selections from the photo collection on the big screen. Sunday, Feb. 16, 2014, 2:00 at the Opera House, 137 High Street, Mineral Point. Free admission! ●



Mineral Point Historical Society



# Notes from the President

By Matt Ostergrant, President, Mineral Point Historical Society

## Huzzah!

We're celebrating a landmark anniversary this year — 2014 marks the 75th birthday of the Mineral Point Historical Society! In 1939, after watching the wrecking ball flatten the carriage house at Orchard Lawn, eleven local citizens scraped up \$800.00 to buy out the demolition contract before that wrecking ball took aim at the house (in 1939, the average price of a new car was \$700.00). Then they asked Margery Gundry King, youngest child of Joseph and Sarah Gundry, if they could have the estate as a headquarters and museum if they established the MPHS. Her reply was affirmative — her price was one dollar.

And so began the great adventure of creating a historical society and maintaining a house that was already just over 70 years old. Along with the house, there were eleven acres of grounds which also needed attention. This project began in a small town trying, like the rest of the nation, to climb out of the Great Depression. Just a few short weeks after Orchard Lawn was saved, war broke out in Europe. Once our country became involved, I don't imagine much work was done on the house or grounds during the war years. Even thereafter the roller coaster cycles of ups and downs have threatened the existence of the Society. Scarcity of capital, unrelenting maintenance and repair demands, utility bills and even lack of interest could have scuttled the organization. At one point, President Max Fernekes expressed his frustration at being unable to get anyone to attend a board meeting! It's all well and good to save something beautiful from destruction. It's a whole other ballgame to keep something beautiful from being lost by such other "wrecking balls".

Not all that long ago, the Society had to make some tough decisions about the future of Orchard Lawn. Continue to "patch it up"? Sell it? Or take the plunge and boldly pursue a first-class restoration of the house and grounds? Imagine if that last option hadn't been chosen, or if the generous partnership of the Society's membership, the community, and the Jeffris Family Foundation hadn't successfully provided the funds (twice, mind you) for both phases of restoration.

Well, it all happened and the restoration work continues thanks to talented craftspeople, devoted supporters, and volunteers. Proud as we are to be the stewards of Mineral Point's rich history and intent as we are to do our very best to restore Orchard Lawn to its original luster, we take great pleasure in re-creating and maintaining a relevant, meaningful and dynamic venue for the enjoyment of our community and its visitors. And so the doors to "The Living Room of Mineral Point" remain open to all, thanks to the efforts of so many people who, since 1939, have been vigilant in looking out for any potential wrecking balls which may be looming on the horizon.

Sometime this year, we'll host a birthday bash at Orchard Lawn. It would surely add to the fun if you could join us in celebrating the first 75 years and to look forward to the next 75. That will take us to 2089, when Orchard Lawn will be a mere 221 years old. We're also counting on you to help us blow out all 75 candles! ●

Mineral Point Historical Society

## 2014 MPHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Matt Ostergrant, President  
Nancy Pfothenauer, Treasurer  
Ainsley Anderson, Manager

## BOARD MEMBERS

Judith Logue Clayton  
Lucille May  
Denise Ostergrant  
Matt Ostergrant  
Nancy Pfothenauer  
Peter Pfothenauer  
Carl Tunestam  
Richard Ivey  
Joy Gieseke

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Nancy Pfothenauer

NEWSLETTER DESIGN: Kristin Mitchell Design

©Copyright MPHS 2014

## Mineral Point Historical Society Membership Form

January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014

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.

*Mineral Point*  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

P.O. Box 188 • 234 Madison Street  
Mineral Point, WI 53565  
608.558.1937

## Mark Your Calendars

### Sunday, Feb. 16, 2014

Mineral Point Opera House;  
2:00 p.m.  
Photo Show Lyceum  
Houses of Mineral Point

### Sunday, Feb. 23, 2014

Mineral Point Library;  
1:00 - 3:30 p.m.  
Allen Ludden Password Tournament  
call 608.987.2447 for details.

### Sunday, April 6, 2014

Methodist Church; 2:00 p.m.  
Welcome Home Miss E. H.  
The story of the painting of and  
restoration of the portrait of  
Ena Hutchison.  
*Note Date Change*

Change Service Requested

[www.mineralpointhistory.org](http://www.mineralpointhistory.org)



Ice was harvested from several ponds in Mineral Point. This one looks like it was on Shake Rag. We don't know who the nattily dressed fellow in the photo is or what exactly is lying at his feet.