

Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point



POE and a Rappin' Raven!

Moody...macabre...madcap — the demented genius of Edgar Allan Poe. America's most-mysterious poet is back for a fifth visit at Orchard Lawn, lurking in the shadows, as we approach our spookiest holiday, All Hallows Eve.

Once again, local actors will perform verse, stories and fables from the Poe collection, on a small stage in the Gundry House double parlor, where theatergoers enjoy the privilege of seeing and hearing the performers up close.

And, as a surprise treat for Poe aficionados, the classic poem "The Raven" will be presented as a rap song, with an appropriately costumed hip-hop group on stage. For the irrepressible **Roland Sardeson**, it's a reprise of his customary role as the melancholy black bird, but with a revolutionary new spin.

Ticket sales from four "Evenings with Poe" are a major source of funds for the

continuing work of the Mineral Point Historical Society; and, in past years, the performances have played to "sold out" houses. The Poe vignettes are presented with one intermission, and a reception



follows the shows as the audience moves into the library and dining room at Orchard Lawn.

The guiding force behind the annual Poe event is actor/director **Coleman**, who auditions the players, runs the

rehearsals, provides the light and sound, and adjusts the program lineup to provide the most excitement for the audience.

The actors include **Susan Albright, Lyn Anglin, Frank Beaman, Coleman, Julia Dailey, Maureen May Grimm, Jen Olsen, Roland Sardeson, and Coris Schmitt.**

Behind the scenes, MPHS volunteers do heroic work. They include **Matt and Denise Ostergrant** as food and drink purveyors.

The secret for the success of "An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe" is the intimate and atmospheric setting of the Gundry House front room. The performers deliver Poe's words — some scary and some silly lines — with gusto, the stage is only a few feet away, and the after-show reception is great Halloween fun! Please make early plans to take in one (or more) of the shows, and reserve your "front row" seat today. ●

"An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe" Oct. 20 and 21 Oct. 27 and 28 - Curtain at 8 p.m. - \$20 tickets on sale at Berget's Jewelers (608)987-3218 or see "Poe" on the MPHS website and order your tickets at www.mineralpointhistory.org

Notes from the President

By Jim Stroschein, President, Mineral Point Historical Society

The other night I was flipping through the TV channels and caught the middle of a documentary about the Apollo 8 mission called "Race to the Moon."

I really wasn't in a frame of mind to watch a show about the space race, but within sixty seconds I was hooked. The filmmakers weren't focusing on NASA technology in 1968. They were talking about the human aspects of this particular mission: the astronauts, the skinny-tie/short-sleeve-shirt guys in Mission Control, and — most powerfully — the astronaut's wives and children in their living rooms, watching on flickering black & white television sets to learn the fate of their husbands and fathers.

I had seen this program listed in the TV guide but thought, "who wants to learn about Apollo 8 when we all know that eight months later, with Apollo 11, a human being would actually be walking on the moon? That was the big one."

But what the filmmakers did so well was to transport the viewer back to December 1968 when none of us knew how the Apollo 8 mission was going to turn out. After all, the flight plan had changed — at nearly the eleventh hour — from one to orbit the earth at 850 miles up, to one that would blast beyond Earth's gravitational pull and travel 230,000 miles to orbit the moon! In that year, this was a huge risk, a giant step into space. The film's producers convincingly placed the viewer into those tense moments when we didn't know the outcome of the voyage. And that's what made the story so fascinating.

History is powerful that way. We always hear the advice,



"Enjoy the ride. It's not the destination, it's how you get there." The best historians don't just teach us the end result — they show us how we got there. We know who won the Civil War, but it gets interesting when we think about how people reacted to the horrible circumstances of the war. We ask, "Why did Lee place Virginia above his country? What motivated a Union soldier to enlist? What was a typical camp meal? How would the plight of the ex-slaves have been different if Lincoln had survived?"

Or, closer to home, in the late 1840s when "gold fever" hit Mineral Point, what was it like to pack up your belongings and start for California? And in 1909, when Phil Allen, Jr. was accused of embezzling the First National Bank and the whole city into near-oblivion, how would you have viewed this trusted friend and pillar of the community?

What would Mineral Point be like today if the railroad had never come?

In history, the details matter. The what-ifs. The whys. The best storytellers put a human face on history. They put the viewer, or listener, where they can almost hear the Roulette wheel in Abner Nichols' tavern, or smell the Cornish paste coming out of Bob Neal's oven at Pendarvis.

As a historical society, we're mindful of this as we develop our new MPHS website, plan our lectures, publish our newsletter, conduct house tours and most visibly, plan the restoration of Orchard Lawn.

The home's old maps, pictures, walls — and even those old trees — have something to say.

Our job is to help people listen. ●

Your Society in Cyberspace!

The Mineral Point Historical Society steps into the world of electronic communications, launching a colorful and user-friendly website with the most appropriate name we could devise: www.mineralpointhistory.org.

The website is an informational gold mine, containing basic instructions about everything from how to find Orchard Lawn, where to park, when tours are available, and what events are scheduled, to old photographs, past exhibits, MPHS collections and archived newsletters and bulletins. Additionally, the site offers on-line shopping and ticket purchase pages.

The successful debut of the service is the result of persistent effort by Board Member **Nancy Pfothauer**, with help from **Peter Pfothauer**, **Jim Stroschein** and **Mark Speltz**. "I've been researching on-line for the last couple of years and I appreciate the importance of having information available on the web," said Pfothauer, "The Board has discussed establishing a website for several years and now seemed like the right time to follow through."

The site is illustrated with selections from the MPHS glass plate negative collection. "I love the photo collection," Pfothauer said, "and I was pleased that the images worked so well with the website design."

"The site will grow over the next few months as we add content," said Pfothauer, "I hope it encourages an interest in history and participation in the Society and mostly, I hope people just enjoy visiting the site." ●



Guess the age of this house?

If you guessed “brand new,” you join this cottage as winners of the MPHS “Way to Go Award.”

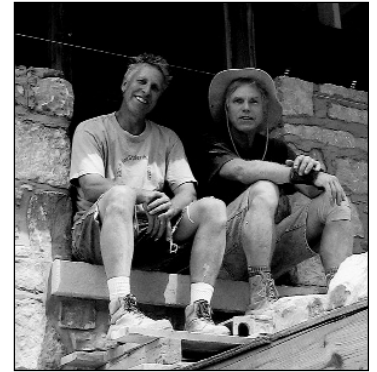
The two-story stone home is currently under construction on Spruce Street in Mineral Point, across from the Pendarvis historical site. The location, just off Shake Rag Street, has afforded many passersby the opportunity to wonder whether the house is old or new. It’s both.

Owner **Cathy Kitto**, together with builder **Randolph A. Fleming**, designed a simple floor plan that is very conservative in square footage, which is consistent with homes of a much earlier era.

Randy Fleming said, “This small home fits the client’s needs, and because it takes advantage of used stone, it’s ecologically friendly as well. I’ve built a number of small homes over the years,” he continued, “and I like this one in particular because it reflects some of the best qualities of old homes in the area: open design, roof pitch, room proportions, and window placement.”

Fleming and fellow stonemason **Roland Sardeson** gathered stones for the home’s walls from fields and barns within a 30-mile radius of Mineral Point, then carefully chose stones for size, color and pattern as the house went up. Inside those old stone walls the products and materials are today’s latest innovations, which include modern utilities, radiant heat in the floors and heavy insulation packed into 2X6 wall studs.

Fleming’s construction firm has executed a number of such “old/new” homes in the area. He is pleased to be blending old architectural values with current construction methods, and together with the owner, he’s proud of the results. ●



MPHS Collection First in New Digital Database

What does a massive cabinet once used in the Iowa County Courthouse have in common with a cast-iron garden chair manufactured by the Wearne Iron Foundry of Mineral Point, or a set of ceramic plates hand painted by Ena Hutchison? Answer: all can soon be viewed on-line at the **Wisconsin Decorative Arts Database**.

These and other selections from the MPHS collection of locally made furniture, ceramics and textiles are the first items to be documented for the on-line archive of 19th and early 20th century Wisconsin objects.

Project coordinator **Emily Pfothenauer** (MA-Art History ‘06 UW-Madison) worked extensively with the MPHS while researching her master’s thesis, “Furniture in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, 1830-1890” and is pleased to make Orchard Lawn the pilot institution for this exciting project.

The first of its kind in the state, the digital database is a collaborative effort of the Chipstone Foundation of Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Material Culture Program at UW-Madison. Bringing together a wealth of information from museums and historical societies across the state, the database will be a significant resource for material culture scholars, local historians, and casual browsers.

To see the Mineral Point objects go to <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/decorativearts> after Nov. 1. The information will also be available through the new Wisconsin Heritage Online web portal <http://wisconsinheritage.org> which brings together digital collections from throughout the state. ●



FOUNDERS' DAY

The First Annual Founders' Day Celebration was a major success, thanks to a lucky turn in the weather, the hard work of a troop of volunteers, and a resounding crowd of fun-seekers.

More than 125 patrons attended the three-hour gala in the Orchard Lawn gardens, and enjoyed an open bar, an elegant meal and the music and moods of the 1930s. In the gazebo, the Ken Kilian Quartet played the top tunes from 1939, the year the Mineral Point Historical Society was formed by eleven townspeople who saved the Gundry mansion from planned demolition.

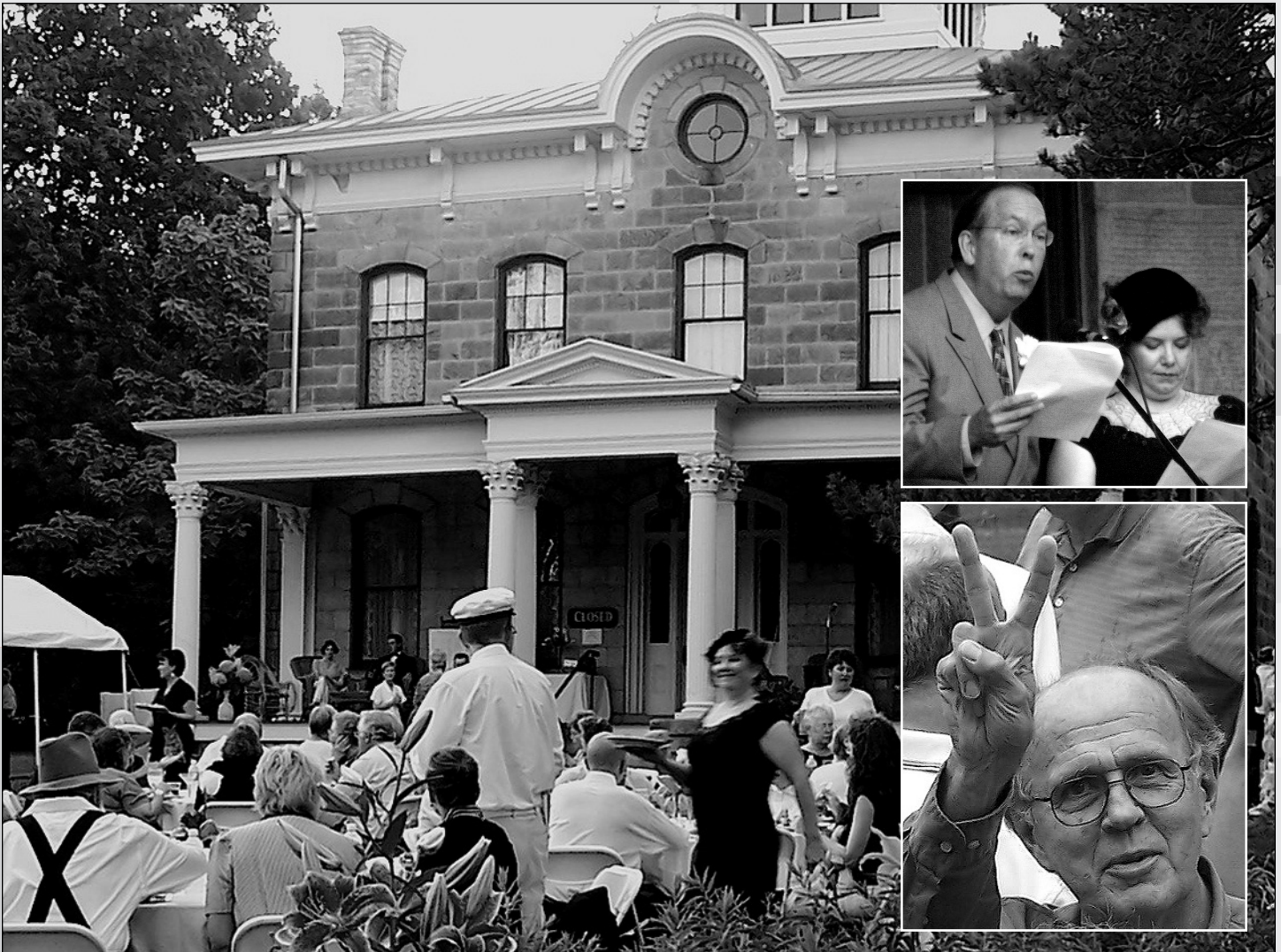
Spontaneously, as the swing tunes rolled out, some of the diners became dancers.

The year 1939 launched blockbuster movies, as Americans used laughter to battle the Great Depression, and Founders' Day recreated the festive film moments with guest appearances by members of the Shake Rag Players: Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara, Nick and Nora Charles, Esmeralda and the hunchback Quasimodo, and the characters from "The Wizard of Oz." Clare Mitchell — as Dorothy — sang "Over the Rainbow." A "Golden Age of Radio" broadcast captured the mood of the 30s, and aired a breathless on-the-scene report from Mineral Point with "details of the rescue of the historic Gundry House."

On the porch of the mansion, a poster display featured photos of the MPHS Founders, and information about the "Original Eleven," who acted with such courage in harsh economic times. Honored guests included descendants of some of the founders.

On that Thursday evening in July, threatening rain showers bypassed our celebration, and a gorgeous sunset accompanied near-perfect temperatures.

Many of the partygoers wore costumes from the 1930s, adding to the color of the event. And, after the dinner and the entertainment, lively conversation turned to "what to wear next year," when the Society celebrates life at Orchard Lawn in The Forties. ●





Opposite page top left: During the vintage radio show, Coleman sounds off while Maureen May Grimm awaits her cue.

Bottom left: Jim Ballard indicates he's enjoying the evening.

Below: Oz Oddities: Mike Mitchell, Clare Mitchell, Helen Davidson and Roland Sardeson. (Photo courtesy of Ryan Billingham.)



Founders' Day was created in tandem with the formation of the Gundry Legacy Society, which will use the annual July celebration to recognize and honor those who have made significant contributions to the Mineral Point Historical Society through their donations of time and money. In future years, a group of elected nominees will be inducted into the Gundry Society at the Founders' Day event.

Some of the inductees will be contributors to the MPHS Stewardship Fund, which employs planned giving to build our endowment through estate gifts, bequests and other contributions. The Fund is an important tool for the MPHS, to ensure that Orchard Lawn and the activities of the historical society remain a vibrant part of Mineral Point today and 200 years from now.

We encourage our patrons and friends to consider a charitable gift to the Society when making estate plans, rearranging an investment portfolio, creating a memorial, or an outright contribution of cash, stocks, bonds or other equities.

A donation helps the MPHS, obviously, but there are many benefits to the giver as well and a tailor-made contribution can be devised to offer the maximum tax savings. To find out more please contact us at **The Mineral Point Historical Society P.O. Box 188, Mineral Point, WI 53565** or visit our website at www.mineralpointhistory.org.

If history is an important element in your life, if the community's museum at Orchard Lawn has had some impact on your life, and if you support our mission of sharing the unique history of Mineral Point, please give some thought to leaving a legacy that will enrich the Gundry House and aid the many volunteers who have worked to keep the spirit of the founders alive for 67 years. ●

Wait til next year!

Next year, we move from the year of our founding into the turbulent 1940s.

In keeping with our educational mission, we will display artifacts and photos from the decade that saw America go to war, and emerge victorious. We'll also show our Founders' Day 2007 visitors what was happening at Orchard Lawn during the 40s, as the historical society began restoration of the property and charted a course to interpret the history of the city and its people.

But, as it was this year, we want to make Founders' Day an event marked with **fun, food, and music**. The celebration will take place on the lawn, using as its theme the home front's antidote to the terrible overseas combat, the "USO Stage Door Canteen."

At the Mess Hall, the "chow" will be very special. The PX will hand out beer and wine to all who answered the call to duty. The entertainment will be something the troops will write home about. And a return engagement for the Ken Kilian Quartet will fill a dance floor with jitterbuggers and fox trotters.

Look for your invitation in the early summer, and "join up!" ●



Digitize your Home Movies

By Jim Stroschein

I truly believe that somewhere out there, in a shoebox or in a dresser drawer, someone has home movies of an old locomotive pulling into the Mineral Point depot. Or of rambunctious kids playing at the lake in what is now Soldiers Memorial Park. Maybe even couples dancing to the big bands at the pavilion.

Regular 8 mm and Super 8 mm film cameras were in wide use, starting in the 1930s, and were used to document family vacations, birthday parties and home life until they were bumped aside by the first boxy video cameras. The old film reels are still out there, in storage since the last bulb in the projector burned out.

Those film reels may be important from a historical perspective. In between the shots of Junior blowing out the candles and Old Faithful blowing its top, there may be important scenes of local history.

What to do? Spend a few bucks and have them transferred to DVD or at least videotape. **The Camera Company** in Madison charges 14-cents per foot. Those plastic film reels that are about the diameter of a tennis ball hold 50-feet of film, so the cost would be about \$7/each. Once the film is transferred, you can run copies for your family, and if there are scenes of local interest a copy can be donated to the **Mineral Point Room**. Using the counter on your DVD player, you can provide written identification of who and what is on the film.

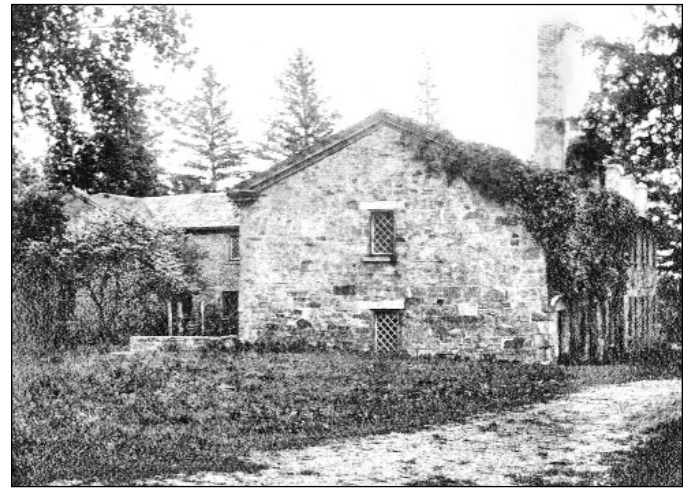
A man in St. Louis once promised me that he would give me a roll of 8 mm film he shot in the 1940s of his son riding a train from Mineral Point to Darlington, including footage of the conductor stopping the train because there were cattle standing on the tracks. After the man died, I spoke with his son and inquired about the film. He said, "Dad lost all that film during a flood 20 years ago."

Don't let that happen to your film! ●

Railroad Depot Closes for Updates

The Mineral Point Railroad Depot Museum plans to close its doors during the months of January and February 2007, to prepare the rooms for the new Railroad Diorama, which depicts the way the local rail yards looked in 1917. The curators will also improve and update some of the museum's other exhibit spaces. ●

Jubilee College as it appeared when March and Margery Chase visited in 1917.



Jubilee College

It's interesting how studying the history of Mineral Point so often turns up a link to the history of some other place.

Take Jubilee College, just west of Peoria, IL. Founded in 1839 by **Philander Chase** (also known for being the first Episcopal Bishop of IL, the founder of Kenyon College, and the first Episcopal Bishop of Ohio, among other things) Jubilee was intended to be a self sufficient community in addition to an educational institution.

Samuel Chase, Philander's cousin, was Vice President of the College; he and his wife **Sarah Russell Chase** lived there for many years, raised their family there, and are buried in Jubilee Cemetery.

The Mineral Point connection? **March Chase**, son of Samuel Chase, was the leader of the Episcopal congregation in Mineral Point for many years, in the mid 1800s. He and his wife were close friends of the Gundry's; their son, **March**, married **Margery Lambertson**, **Joseph Gundry's** granddaughter, who was raised at Orchard Lawn.

In 1917, March and Margery visited the site of Jubilee College and took pictures, one of which is printed here. Thank you to their grandson, **Bill Chase**, for sharing the family photo album that contained this image.

Jubilee College is now an Illinois state historic site and available for tours during the summer months. ●



Our Volunteers

When we sat down to prepare for Founders' Day, we agreed that the event had to be a classy affair. So, as we've done for other events, we called on **Carol Stevenson**, who brings an elegant touch to whatever she does. When she accepted our request to be the Event Planner, we knew things were in good hands.

Carol lives in a charming red frame cottage on Jail Alley. She operated the Mineral Point Toy Museum on Commerce Street for many years and her Fourth of July parties were legendary.

On the evening of Founders' Day, she was Wizard of the Weather, Dishwasher, Field General and All-Around Problem-Solver. Thanks, and hats-off to one of our most talented members: **Carol Stevenson!** ●

Membership and Annual Fund Campaign

The fall season is always an important one for the Mineral Point Historical Society. The strength of the organization lies with its members. Right now our membership is at an all-time high, with 275 households enrolled — more than 400 individuals. But more strength in numbers could mean more strength in the important work we do.

We exist solely because of the generosity of our members. Over half of our revenue comes from membership dues and donations. A hardworking Board and MPHS volunteers do a phenomenal job with a limited budget, we cannot manage our affairs without the strong support of our members.

In November, we will conduct our membership drive, to renew existing memberships and cultivate new members. We hope we can count on you to renew your membership for another great year, and encourage your friends to join us. If you are receiving this newsletter on a "trial basis," please lock in your full membership.

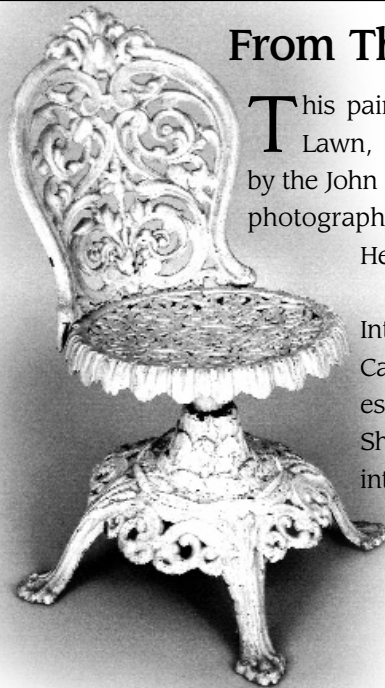
Our membership campaign includes a request for year-end gifts to the organization. So if you can add a little extra cash to fill in the budget gap, your gift will be deeply appreciated. These gifts are the primary means of keeping the organization financially viable.

Membership renewal letters will be sent out soon, although you can send in your 2007 dues at any time. This year, for the first time, you may pay dues by credit card, by mail, telephone, or on-line at www.mineralpointhistory.org. Thank you, in advance, for your support of the Membership and Annual Fund campaign. ●

Thank You

Fred Rand, of Madison, donated a book with an intriguing history: He purchased *Twentieth Century Etiquette: A Ready Manual for All Occasions* at the auction of Gundry family possessions in 1939, after family members left the mansion. He said he thought "it was time the book returned to Orchard Lawn." ●

From The Collection



This painted cast iron garden chair, now at Orchard Lawn, was made sometime between 1856 and 1880 by the John Wearne and Sons Foundry. It is illustrated in a photograph in Bertha Kitchell Whyte's "Wisconsin Heritage."

According to the "Architectural and Historical Intensive Survey Report," by Joan Rausch and Carol Lowry Cartwright, The Wearne Foundry, established in 1856, was located on Hoard (now Shake Rag) Street about two blocks from the intersection of Commerce and High Streets.

John Wearne learned his trade in Cornwall, immigrated to America with his wife and children in 1848 and began his blacksmith and foundry career in Mineral Point in partnership with another Cornishman, William Lanyon. ●

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Mineral Point Historical Society Membership Form

January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006

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

Please check one:

- Individual (\$15.00)
- Family (\$25.00)
- Supporting (\$50.00)
- Sponsor (\$100.00)
- Patron (\$500.00)
- Benefactor (\$1,000.00)

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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State: _____ Zip: _____

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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

Cornishfest: Pasties & Pleasure

The 14th Annual Cornish Festival used three September days to entertain and educate visitors who come to Mineral Point to celebrate the heritage of the region's settlers from Cornwall. Pendarvis marked the weekend with Pub Night and Celtic festivities. The sponsoring **Southwest Wisconsin Cornish Society** also staged a Genealogy Seminar, and continued its Cornish Language School for a second year. ●

Iowa County Fair is 150 Years Old

Another autumn event, the Iowa County Fair, looked back 150 years to its founding by the Agricultural Society and its 1856 exhibit of grain and vegetable crops, livestock, and fine needlework, laid out on five acres of land next to the town hall in Dodgeville. Later, Mineral Point mounted its own fair. Today, the two towns work together to produce five days of agriculture and entertainment, attracting a great Wisconsin crowd. ●



From the MPHS Photo Collection

The aftermath of a fire on High Street.

A downtown fire, though common in many 19th century towns, was rare in Mineral Point. Find out why in the January 2007 issue of this newsletter, and read the history of the city's Volunteer Fire Department. ●

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