

# Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

## Founders' Day Promises Fun in the Forties

By Frank Beaman

It was a decade overshadowed by a great war, which was fought on two fronts — in Europe and in the South Pacific. But there was a third front, the Home Front, where Americans banded together as never before, in a time of shared sacrifice and scarcity. The war was grim indeed, but the spirit of the American G.I. is remembered today as unquenchable, and civilians at home displayed similar determination as the entire population endured shortages of vital necessities so the war effort could move ahead and a generation of young men could come home to their families.

"Back to the Forties" is the theme of the Second Annual Founders' Day Celebration, the signature event of the Mineral Point Historical Society. We pay tribute to that turbulent decade, and to the progress made by the newly-formed historical society in the 1940s, with an evening of good music, good food and great friends.

The event takes place July 26 at Orchard Lawn/The Gundry House, beginning with a social hour at 6 p.m., followed by a dinner featuring 40s cuisine in a simulated armed services "mess tent," and then a star-spangled USO Stage Show, and finally, live music and dancing until 10:00 p.m.

New members of the Gundry Legacy Society will be inducted during the program. The honorees will be recognized for their significant contributions to the historical society.

The USO Review will recreate the wartime entertainment of **Bob Hope's** traveling troupe, including Hope, **Bing Crosby**, the **Andrews Sisters** and a host of celebrities.

Tickets are on sale for \$35 per person, and advance reservations are required.

The fashions of the 40s are an option for partygoers, and costumes — military or civilian — are encouraged.

Co-Chairs **Bill Grover**, **Greta Guenther**, **Frank** and **Sandee**

**Beaman** are working with a large group of volunteers to carry out the objectives of the event. The attention focused on the role of the nation's servicemen and women will be balanced by portrayals of life on the home front, illustrated by educational displays and tables of memorabilia. Those tables will hold items brought by attendees who have remembrances of World War II — at home or abroad.

"Orchard Lawn will be divided into two realms," say the Chairs for Founders' Day. "An olive drab world, the tent where the 1940s meal and beverages are served, and the red/white/blue world of civilian life, where patrons will relax and enjoy music under the stars."

The **Ken Kilian Quartet** will play the popular tunes of the period, and jitterbug and fox trot enthusiasts will dance in front of the broad porch at Orchard Lawn, on a special wooden floor constructed in response to last year's spontaneous

dancing at the Founders' Day event. The 2006 Founders' Day attracted a large audience, and this year's event has been the topic of planning and conversation for months.

Attendees should reserve their place by contacting the Society at 608.987.2884, or sending an e-mail to sandeeb@charter.net or by checking the website at [www.mineralpointhistory.org](http://www.mineralpointhistory.org). Checks should be written to Mineral Point Historical Society and mailed to P.O. Box 188, Mineral Point, WI 53565. ●



# Masterful Gardeners

By Jim Stroschein

**Karen & Phil Crawford** and **Verna & Tom Pilling** continue to volunteer their master gardener skills to the grounds at Orchard Lawn.

We caught them, along with a group of dedicated volunteers, spreading mulch on a Spring Saturday morning. ●



*Clockwise from top left: A little mulch now will save a lot of weed-pulling later (Tom Pilling). Phil Crawford puts his new toy to work. Cal Ferrill pretends to be enjoying his work. June Tate, Karen Crawford and Verna Pilling ready to do battle. Note: Please consider joining this enthusiastic group of gardeners. We need a few more people to help water the flowers during the summer. It's a fun group and complete training is provided. No heavy lifting is required! Call Karen Crawford at 987-2913 for more information.*



## Underground Water Lines

A manhole and new water lines were recently installed to service the grounds at Orchard Lawn. The new system will provide higher water pressure for watering the plants and will make the task much easier for volunteers. In addition, since the water used for the grounds is metered directly, it will not incur the sewer fees from the city. This will save the society a lot of money every year. Thanks to Tom Pilling and Phil Crawford for the ideas and execution of this work. ●



# The Civil War

*The MPHS and the Middle School join forces*

By Jim Stroschein

On May 19 & 20, Anne Palzkill's 8th grade social studies class brought their Civil War class projects and the traveling exhibit "**Frederick Douglass — From Slavery to Freedom**" to the parlor at Orchard Lawn for a collaborative exhibit with the MPHS.

Student projects included displays on Clara Barton, the Gettysburg Address, Sidney Shepard, Spies of the Civil War and the dedication of the gravesite of Mineral Point Medal of Honor recipient **Daniel B. Moore**.

The historical society had displays including the uniform and sword of Sidney Shepard and the pistol carried by

Samuel Prisk. **Ruth Jungbluth**, a Prisk ancestor, brought additional Prisk materials and was on hand throughout the two day exhibit to answer questions and discuss Mineral Point's participation during the war.

There were more than 50 visitors and the students enjoyed discussing their projects and informal conversations on the front porch of Orchard Lawn.

The historical society is pleased to work with the city's public schools, to further student's understanding of local history. Other joint projects are at the discussion stage. ●



Photo at left: The panel, "Frederick Douglass – From Slavery to Freedom" is a traveling exhibit from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in New York. Anne Palzkill wrote and was awarded a grant to have the display brought to Mineral Point for exhibit at the school and the MPHS. Mineral Point was the only small town school to receive the honor. Back row: Marty Groom, Adam Groom, Teacher Anne Palzkill. Front row: Caitlin Trickel, Tressa Weinbrenner, Garrett Smart, Dylan Smart, Ruth Jungbluth who was on hand to explain local connections to the war. Photo at right: Visitors viewing pieces from the exhibit.

## "Pointers for the Union"

*from the pages of **The Story of Mineral Point** published by the MPHS, 1979*

When Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, the attack that sparked the Civil War, Mineral Point was a city on the upswing. The population was increasing, as were civic improvements, and the school system had been reorganized. As the Iowa County seat, the city was a political center, and its support for the Union cause was wholehearted.

President Lincoln called for volunteers on April 15, 1861, three days after Fort Sumter, and the lead region

answered with a flood of recruits. The Miners' Guard, a militia formed only the year before, ballooned from 60 members to 130 in a single hour. The local men became part of the Iron Brigade and fought gallantly for three years of the war. The Farmers' Guard, likewise, saw action and provided a stream of soldiers from Wisconsin.

The home front in Mineral Point was active, fostering recruits by offering bonuses, providing wartime provisions and giving financial aid to the families of

servicemen. Women sewed and knitted, rolled bandages, organized banquets and picnics and benefit parties to raise money for the troops.

In May 1861 townspeople cheered as the Miners' Guard marched away, and in July 1864 welcomed the battle-scarred veterans home with a more stirring ovation.

And when the Civil War ended, they had even more to cheer about. Rising prices in both mining and agriculture brought a wave of new prosperity. ●

# Celebrity Days at Pendarvis

By Frank Beaman

If you enjoy fine dining, consider this restaurant review: "The cafe is operated by two men with no experience in the food service business. Their ancient stone cottage seats only 20 patrons, and serves only Cornish cuisine. Only three or four items are listed on the quaint little menu, and those dishes reflect the "working man's" taste. A "pasty," which is a large baked envelope with meat, onions and potatoes, serves a party of six. The side orders are pickles and relishes. Desserts include saffron cake, plum preserves and scalded clotted cream. If you want to be seated, you must call a day ahead, and you must be prompt or your reserved pasty will be given away."

It's hard to imagine a successful outcome for such a restaurant in today's fast food world, but when **Robert Neal** and **Edgar Hellum** started Pendarvis House in 1935, their tiny enterprise became world famous. The two men shared an interest in restoring the old houses built by the early Cornish immigrant miners; and, to fund their construction projects, they cleared out their first completed building and established a tearoom. They had gathered Cornish recipes and cooking techniques from Bob's sister, Will Gundry, who named the place "Pendarvis," drew a few friends to the house for tea and pastries, and the teachers and women's club dropped in, and word started to spread. Then Betty Cass wrote the first of many articles in the Madison newspaper. The dinner crowd grew.

Duncan Hines wrote a review in his best-selling national restaurant guide, *Adventures in Good Eating*, and raved about the simplicity of both the food and the surroundings. The popular *Saturday Evening Post* dubbed Pendarvis House "one of the seven finest restaurants in the U.S." The trickle of diners became a steady stream.

And the names were big names, as celebrities from the worlds of commerce, politics, literature and entertainment drove out to Mineral Point to visit the unusual little teahouse. Neal and Hellum operated the restaurant until 1970, when they retired, and the state developed the historic site that showcases the partners' life's work.

The world changed in the decades between 1935 and 1970, with the Great Depression and the Good War, and what followed. The cities grew, and the suburbs sprawled, and the pace of everyday living became supersonic. But Pendarvis House remained a quiet getaway destination in a charming small town, a place of subtle simplicity and authenticity.

It still is. ●



PENDARVIS  
HOUSE

Photo credit: G. Barry Telfair  
Photo/Mineral Point Archives.



## THOSE “UNCLAIMED” PASTIES

One story has it that Eleanor Roosevelt was turned away when she arrived late for her reservation at Pendarvis House. Truth, or fable, it is known that when diners failed to show up at the scheduled time, their meal was “given away.” Many of those meals were whisked away to grace the humble table of **Max and Ava Fernekes**, as the couple struggled to make ends meet. The Fernekes are generally credited with being the first artists to come to Mineral Point to make their living solely from their art. Later in life, their work became well-known and sought-after, but their early years benefitted — nutritionally — from the generosity of Neal and Hellum’s tardy patrons.

**Bob Neal** encouraged a number of artists to come to the city, and created a climate of acceptance in the community that led to a surge of creative endeavor in the 1970s, and to today’s strong showing in the arts and crafts environment in Mineral Point. ●

## BIG BAND DAYS AT THE LAKE

By Frank Beaman

Fred Jeuck’s Saxophone Banjo Band packed the pavilion in 1922, and the music lingered in the air over the dance hall and the lake for 35 years. (The pavilion and the lake were located in what is now Soldiers Memorial Park.) In the 1950s all the big bands played Mineral Point: Tiny Hill, Russ Morgan, Eddy Howard, Russ Carlyle, Jimmy Featherstone, Paul Whiteman, Guy Lombardo, the Dorsey Brothers and Jimmy “Dancing Shoes” Palmer.

Lawrence Welk and his orchestra entertained 983 dancers in July 1951, and the old ledger in the Mineral Point Archive shows a “take” of \$1,977 for that warm summer night.

Big names in a tiny Wisconsin town? The “why” of it is location, location, location. Mineral Point is situated midway between Minneapolis and Chicago, and the big bands in their buses found it an easy way to make a few dollars on a Thursday night—they had to stop for an overnight rest at the Old Royal Inn anyway!

The pavilion was built in 1921, with leftover funds raised to benefit World War I veterans. That long dance floor, and its bandstand, overlooked a lake formed by damming the Mineral Point Brewery Creek, and swimming and boating were popular. There were two bath houses in the big park.

The high school prom and symphonic events were also booked at the pavilion, but it was the bands of the Swing Era that filled the place, with tickets going for \$1.25 to \$2.50.

The music lasted for a long, long time, providing a flood of memories for Pointers, but the roof of the pavilion collapsed under the weight of snow in 1979. The lake where rowboats rented for \$15 per hour was drained. And, just two years ago, the bandstand was torn down. ●



## STAGE SHOW DAYS AT THE OPERA HOUSE

When the Mineral Point Opera House was built in 1915, replacing the Iowa County Courthouse, the city’s Municipal Building was the only structure in the Midwest to feature a theater, city hall and library under one roof.

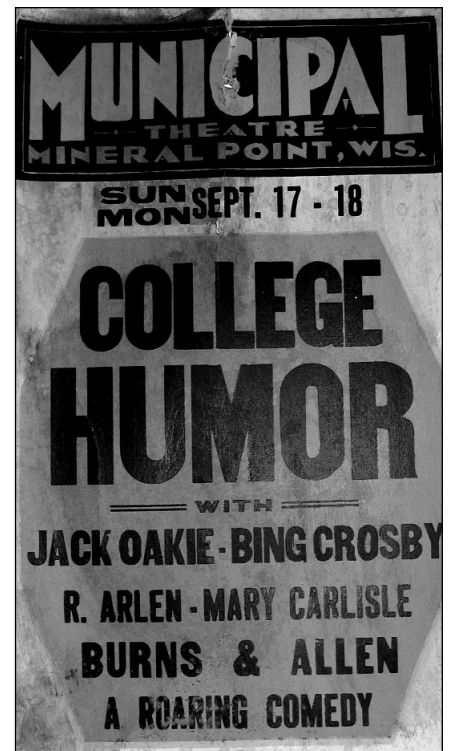
The Lewis & Stone Theatrical Co. of New York had 14 actors on stage for the opening production, “The Misleading Lady,” and all 725 seats were filled. The five-piece orchestra in the pit, hired for \$30, punched out the tunes, as the Opera House began a string of musical comedies, dramas, and vaudeville that stretched over several decades. The records are all there, handwritten in spiral notebooks, in the Mineral Point Archives. Among the entries: “Birth of a Nation” with Lilian Gish in 1916, the same year as “Miss Nobody from Starland.” The Irish romantic tenor Friske O’Hara starred in a 3-act comedy in 1917, and “Grace Baird and Her 12 Acting People” kept ‘em laughing with “six big vaudeville acts” — Ladies free, other tickets 15, 25 and 35 cents.

The Jack Brooks Traveling Troupe provided Fall and Winter plays, accompanied by the Cohan & Harris Theatrical Co. and the LaSalle Musical Stock Co. of Chicago, which could mount a cast of 30 players for its productions.

In 1919, the records show the growth of minstrel shows such as “Minstrel Flashes: A Down-to-date Musical Review,” featuring black face players named Bones, Sunshine, Calsomine and Snowball “the conversationalist.” The minstrel band played fox trots, waltzes and marches, with songs titled “Roll ‘Em” and “Mammy’s ‘Lil Pigon.”

As the years rolled by, big names came to the Municipal Theater in Mineral Point, grinding out shows to build their reputation as stage performers.

And eventually, as everyone knows, Hollywood exploded with silent films, then the “talkies,” and the era of the small-town stage came to a stuttering close. ●



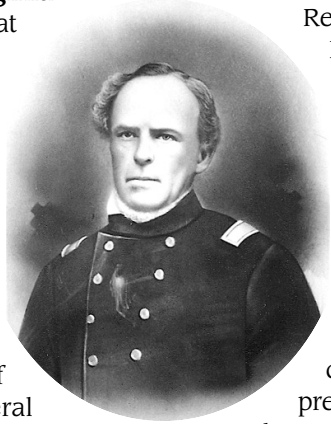
# The Two Burials of Levi Sterling

## A Gundry Descendant Solves a Family Mystery

By Joan Emerson Young

This curious tale begins in 1988, when I discovered a 1929 newspaper article that spoke of “a somewhat unusual procedure.” The news account reported that the remains of my great, great grandfather, **Levi Sterling**, his wife **Nancy**, and their children had just been moved from the Murrish Farm, located midway between Dodgeville and Mineral Point, to Graceland Cemetery in Mineral Point. The original burials had taken place from 61 to 75 years earlier. Levi’s daughter, **Virginia Sterling** (Gundry), my great grandmother, was visiting at Orchard Lawn and had arranged for and directed the move.

Levi Sterling was a prominent figure in Iowa County. He served in the Black Hawk and the Mexican Wars, supervised the first census taken in the Territory of Wisconsin, held several legislative positions, including the State Senate in 1850. He was 18 years older than my other great, great, grandfather, **Joseph Gundry**, and was well established when Joseph and his bride came to Mineral Point in 1845. In 1873, the Gundrys’ son Richard married the Sterlings’ daughter Virginia, and their daughter was my beloved grandmother.



the body of two-year old Charles would also have been reburied there. So, on that day, I stood looking at the new Sterling headstone.

### **But Where Was the Original Gravesite?**

**Nancy Pfothauer** [MPHS Treasurer] provided the next link. Her internet search indicated that in 1847 Levi had leased 160 acres of land in Iowa County Section 16. The Register of Deeds in Dodgeville confirmed that in 1856 Levi purchased 40 of those acres, and seven years later, while the 57-year old Levi served in the Volunteer Cavalry during the Civil War, his wife Nancy bought the other 160 acres. She died a few days later, presumably in childbirth, at the age of 38. Levi came home from the war, buried his wife next to young Charles, and settled down to tend to his family. Another document showed that Levi sold the farm in 1868, the same year Joseph Gundry built Orchard Lawn. Levi Sterling died months after the sale. I read the deed, and found this paragraph tucked away in the document, “...except one fourth part of an acre known as the burial ground, which is hereby reserved by the party of the first part...” Eureka!! I knew for sure that Levi’s family had once been buried in Section 16.

### **A Drive in the Country**

Utilizing a plat map, and driven by former MPHS President **Dean Connors**, we turned into the old property, bordered on the east by Hwy. 151 & 23, and on the north by Survey Road. It was deserted. We were uneasy to be

trespassing, but I was thrilled, sensing that we were close to discovering the original burial site.

### **Two Days Later, A Name Surfaced**

**Jim Stroschein** [MPHS President] described the current property-owner, **Robert Dalles**, as, “a generous retiree who is interested in local history.” A call to Mr. Dalles provided another clue: he bought the place from Albert Murrish, and Murrish had purchased it in 1917, 12 years before the bodies were moved to Graceland Cemetery.

### **The Pieces had Fallen into Place**

Just one more thing to do: I drove to the farm and Mr. Dalles and his wife **Leone** welcomed me. It was a lovely conversation. He pointed to his barn and told me that the Sterling family burial ground had been behind it, although no traces of the graves remain.

On the day my quest ended, it was too muddy to walk around the barn, but I was close enough to send my joyful great, great, granddaughterly vibes to the site, and to sense acknowledging vibes back from Levi Sterling. ●

Digging out the historical details on your home is sometimes difficult, often discouraging, but always rewarding. Joan Young’s patient search for answers finally paid off for her. If there is a similar search in your future, dig deeply into the available information. Enjoy the work, because research into history is important. And remember, your support of organizations like the Mineral Point Historical Society allows us to continue our efforts to enlarge and protect historic materials. ●

### **I Start Asking Questions**

Intrigued by the 1929 newspaper story, I visited Mineral Point last year to uncover clues about the burials. My first stop was Graceland Cemetery, but I could not locate the Sterling gravesite. I flagged down a young man who was mowing the lawn and, to my amazement, he rummaged about in a box and came up with the location and a list of the family members buried in the family plot. Levi, Nancy and three of their six children were listed, and I surmised that

# Going Once, Going Twice...

## ***The Ivey/Ludden Auction***

By Jim Stroschein

The May 26 MPHS benefit auction of items from the Ivey/Ludden household was a big success. The parking lot at the **Comfort Inn** was full and 85 bidding cards were issued. A zinc top table sold for \$120, a large oil painting (discovered in the attic) went for \$190 and vintage clothing, doll outfits, tools, Victorian chairs, vintage radios and books of all sorts found new homes.

The profit for the society came to more than \$3500 (in line with predictions) and all of the proceeds will be used to develop displays at Orchard Lawn that help tell stories of Mineral Point history.

Thanks go to volunteers **Glen Ridnour, Iona Loken, Sandy Molzhon, Penny Wick, Maureen Grimm (& Maggie), Judy DeVido and Sarah & Jason Burkhardt Sable.**

Most importantly, we are honored that **Harriet Ivey** and **Dr. Tom Ivey** donated the items for the sale.

**Bruce Ivey** reported that, during the auction, one of his grandchildren walked into the lobby of the Comfort Inn and looked up at the TV. Incredibly, they were showing a rerun of the game show "PASSWORD," hosted by **Allen Ludden** (Patricia Ludden's cousin).

Wonder if the password was "auction?" ●



## Stewardship Fund

The MPHS is more than half-way to its goal of creating a \$300,000 endowment fund that will allow the historical society and Orchard Lawn to stand long into the future. Please consider including the Mineral Point Historical Society in your will or other estate planning documents. It's easy, just clip this notice and bring it to your attorney or financial advisor. Donations can take many forms including cash gifts and planned giving, such as bequests in wills, gifts of insurance proceeds, annuities or trusts.

The Mineral Point Historical Society, Mineral Point, Wisconsin is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization classified as a 509(a)(2) public charity. For more information, contact Jim Stroschein, MPHS President at (608) 987-2301. ●

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## Mineral Point Historical Society *Membership Form*

January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you again for your support!

# From the Collection

## A Hidden Gem Emerges From Storage

By Jim Stroschein

On Wednesday, May 16, an email came into our webmaster Nancy Pfotenhauer:

"Hello, my mother, **Evelyn Blotz Janda** donated an antique shawl to the MPHS about 30 years ago. I am attaching a word document I created that has a couple of pictures of this shawl and describes its history. It was purchased by a Mineral Point resident during the California Gold Rush in 1849... My mother is nearly 90 years old now and she would like to see this shawl again if it is in your collection. **Mary B. Liebig**, Windsor, Wis."

**Sarah Burkhardt Sable**, who has been working to organize, catalog and properly store the clothing collection of the MPHS,

immediately sprang into action. The shawl was easily identified as she had recently assigned an accession number to it, however there was no documentation of any type relating to the item. Ms. Liebig's documentation via email is a fresh and exciting account of the history of this silk shawl that - as you might guess - is in delicate condition. For the complete story, and to view the shawl on display, visit Orchard Lawn during tour hours: Fridays & Saturdays 1 - 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. until mid-September. There is no admission charge for MPHS members..●



The donors of the shawl recently visited Orchard Lawn to view the article. From left to right are Mary Liebig and Evelyn Blotz Janda. Photo by Sarah Burkhardt Sable

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Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

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*Answer to question  
from from last issue...*



This house stands at the corner of Wisconsin and Doty Streets in Mineral Point, East of Farmers Savings Bank.