

Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

2007 Was a Great Year – Join us for 2008!

Your invitation to support the Annual Fund campaign of the Mineral Point Historical Society will soon be in the mail. We're hoping you will join us, or renew your membership, and that you will encourage your friends and neighbors to join the society, too.

We're exceptionally pleased with the number of new members we've enrolled. We like to think they have sensed the excitement, the air of anticipation, and the healthy determination that surrounds our ongoing work at the Gundry home, Orchard Lawn.

In 2006 and 2007, many visitors had never set foot on the grounds of our museum before. Events such as Founders' Day, the Civil War exhibit and "Jammin' on the Porch" attracted new names and new faces, and many of them became new members.

We noticed that the crowds who came to Orchard Lawn were a dynamic mix of young and old, with varied personal profiles but with a unifying belief in the importance of the historic heritage of Mineral Point.

With friends like that, we are ready to move forward!

But to move ahead, we need to have "many hands on the plow."

For years, the MPHS operated without conducting an Annual Fund campaign, although almost all charitable organizations have one. Then, several years ago, we decided that the society needed one too. An anonymous donor stepped

forward with a multi-year pledge to match extra gifts added to membership dues, in order to firmly establish the Annual Fund.

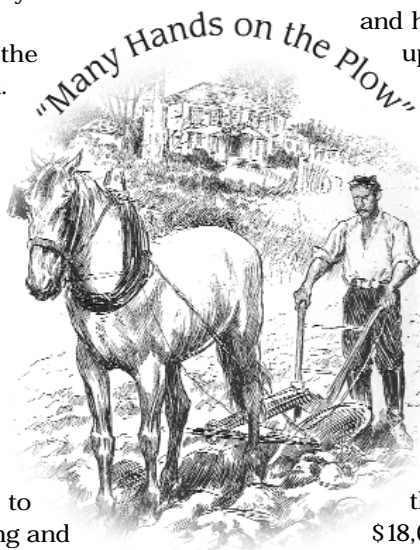
It worked. The Annual Fund drive has grown each year and has become a vital part of our financial make-up. Last year was the final year of the matching gift program, which means that this year is the first year we stand on our own, to raise the important dollars we need to operate.

Thus, it's EVEN MORE IMPORTANT for those who have the means to give a little more than the basic dues level.

We've kept the dues the same for 2008, \$15 for an individual, \$25 for a family, and \$50 for a business, because we want interested folks at any income level to be able to afford a membership.

Last year we received \$18,000 from dues, additional gifts, and the matching grant – two thirds of that was from the gifts/grant program. \$18,000 is more than half of our operating budget (the remainder comes from rental of the apartment, rental of the grounds for private events, income from special events, special donations, tours, and sales of books and note cards).

The operating budget pays for utilities, insurance, maintenance of the house and grounds, the newsletters, care of collections, exhibits, and educational programs. We truly operate on a shoestring and are able to do as much as we do because of the thousands of hours put in every year by the Board of Directors and other volunteers. ●



We know how to stretch a dollar, but we need a few dollars to stretch! Please help us continue the important work of the Mineral Point Historical Society by responding to our Annual Fund by sending in your dues and additional gifts and by inviting others to join.

Getting the Soldiers Back in Line

Old photos are much more than charming — they're useful. The vintage view of the girls in the garden, looking west to the gate, illustrates the carefully maintained approach to Orchard Lawn, in the days when carriages rolled up to the broad front porch. The photo also shows the "soldiers" (curbstones) that line the gravel driveway when they were relatively new, as well as the carriage step. On Sept. 12, 1882, **Joseph Gundry** noted in his diary that he paid \$28.00 for "firt on curbing"; a May 25, 1888 entry recorded spending \$11.00 "for stepping stone."

As part of the exterior restoration at Orchard Lawn, **Ivey Construction** will regrade the drives and **John Hubbard** will reset and repair the original soldiers and the stepping stone. This will return a significant section of the grounds to its original appearance. Additionally, the work will aid in draining water away from the house. The project will be guided by information acquired from this and other original photographs of the grounds.

The historical society has received

good news from our major benefactor, **Tom Jeffris and the Jeffris Foundation**, with acceptance and approval for the Site Plan for Orchard Lawn, meaning we are free to move forward with the restoration. We owe thanks to **Peter Pfothenauer** for leading the exterior restoration committee and for his efforts with landscape architect **Dennis Buettner** in preparing the plan. Thanks

as well to **Nancy Pfothenauer**, for collecting and identifying the many historic photographs, and applause for the very hands-on efforts of **Phil and Karen Crawford, Tom and Verna Pilling, Matt Ostergrant** and **John Sharp**. And thanks to Gundry family member, **Lee Williams**, for sharing the image on this page. Oddly enough, it's both a "before" and "after" picture. ●

Left; Gundry granddaughters, Margery Z. King and Harriet King, play in front of Orchard Lawn in 1904. Right; Workmen Troy Bourret and John Hubbard work with driveway stones

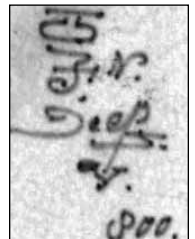


Handpainted Delft Vases Return to Orchard Lawn

by Nancy Pfothenauer



Gundry family members who were in Mineral Point for Founders Day had a special treat – a slide show of the family photographs we're using to research and plan the interior restoration. When the picture of **Sarah Gundry** in the library flashed on the screen, **Eula Jeanneret** exclaimed "I have those vases!" We zoomed in for a closer look and, sure enough, the vases in the 1901 photograph looked just like a pair that has been in the Jeanneret home since the 1950s.



After Eula and her husband, **Harry**, returned to Florida, they packaged up the vases and sent them to us. "They really belong at Orchard Lawn," Eula said. Thanks to their generosity, another original piece of the Gundry home is back in Mineral Point.

Research on the maker's marks on the bottom of the vases indicate they were made in Delft, Holland in 1892. According to Joseph Gundry's diary, Will Gundry came home from Europe on December 10, 1892. Perhaps he brought these vases with him as a Christmas present for his mother. ●

Left; Sarah Gundry in the library of Orchard Lawn, about 1901, with the Delft vases displayed on the mantel. Center; One of the pair of handpainted Delft vases recently returned to Orchard Lawn. Far right; The mark at the top is an apothecary jar, symbol of De Porcelyne Fles ("The Porcelain Jar"), the workshop in Holland today called "Royal Delft". In 1876, Joost Thooft bought the factory and added his monogram (the intertwined "J" and "T" below the jar) and the word "Delft" to the trademark. The "N" is the date mark, which indicates the vases were made in 1892. The other marks probably indicate the model number of the vases and possibly the painter of the design.

Boyer School Research Shows “Way to Go!”

by Frank Beaman

A log building in the quaint valley called Shake Rag Alley may be the oldest school in Wisconsin, with former lives as a church and a courtroom, or so goes the thinking of a determined group of history detectives.

Alan Pape, Jeff Schave, the Mineral Point Room and staff members of the Shake Rag staff are researching a hypothesis and documenting their path of discovery, before making a definitive claim that the 1828 cabin is the state's first schoolhouse.

Pape is a historical restoration specialist who once worked at Shake Rag Alley before moving on to Old World Wisconsin. Schave is a history teacher in Platteville with an intense interest in 19th Century American life. Mary Alice Moore provided research assistance in the archives of the Mineral Point Room, as Pape's theory began to bear factual fruit.

Pioneer schoolrooms were built with a door in the gable end of the building, and three windows on the sunny side of the structure. While preparing for a Log



Cabin Restoration Workshop, Pape noticed that the Shake Rag building was once laid out in that configuration, but had been changed in work done since the original construction.

That led to hours of research in census records, plat maps and other documents that offer the possibility that the cabin was the 1830 private school of Robert Boyer, mentioned in many historic accounts. It's also believed that Boyer lived across the street in the home now occupied by Al Felly, who funded a 1970s restoration of the valley.

Schave and Pape are pursuing the project, while Wisconsin historians watch with interest. And President Jim Stroschein sums up the historical society's point of view with a “Way To Go!” designation for the research team, saying, “This discovery should be celebrated, because the process of discovery, the process of moving from mere conjecture to proof, is as important as the find itself.” ●

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Mineral Point Gas Stations Featured in Documentary

by Mark Speltz

A video documentary, *Fill 'er Up: The Glory Days of Wisconsin Gas Stations*, aired on Wisconsin Public Television in July and featured photographs and film footage from Mineral Point. The 30-minute program spotlights the state's historic gas stations as icons of architecture, economics, and pop culture.

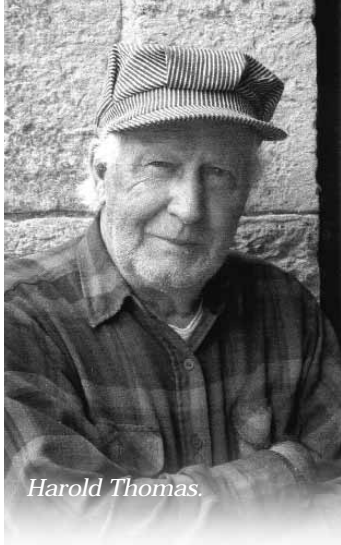
Marilyn Owens and her family kindly loaned photographs and film footage of the demolition of the former Standard Oil station that stood where Wayne's

Amoco is today. A wonderful photograph of the former filling station on Fountain and Chestnut streets was also featured. Other footage showed prize raffles and helpful driveway attendants providing full service, now a thing of the past.

The TV documentary is a companion project to a book being co-authored by architectural historian Jim Draeger and MPHS board member Mark Speltz, to highlight some 60 historic stations

statewide and chronicle the architectural development and history of these humble yet ubiquitous buildings. The book will be published in 2008 by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press.

If you missed the documentary, watch your public television listings, as the program will continue to air in future months and will eventually be available for purchase. You can also watch the entire 30-minute presentation online at www.wpt.org. ●



Harold Thomas.



Visitors at the Thomas barn for a Bachner book signing and Harold Thomas' 85th birthday.

Prairie Legacy, by Anne Bachner

Reviewed by Nancy Pfothenauer

Walter Thomas spent years dreaming about his big stone barn and working out the details of its plan before he and his sons started digging the foundation in 1879. Three years later this palace of a barn was done.

Walter and his sons, his brother-in-law **Isaac Jones** "a very skilled mason," **Timothy Jones**, the stone builder for the Jones clan of Spring Green, and various hired men quarried the stone, hauled it to the site, and shaped it into the magnificent structure that stands today. If you've driven from Dodgeville to Madison on Highway 151, you've seen it, on the south side of the road, just west of Barneveld.

In 2001, thanks to the efforts of **Anne**

Bachner, David Lowe, and others, the barn was placed on both the State and the National Register of Historic Places.

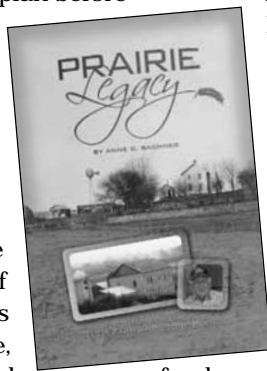
In 2005, **Harold Thomas**, Walt's grandson, and **Doug Thomas**, Walt's great-grandson, sold a conservation easement to the **Driftless Area Land Conservancy** which not only ensured the family that the farm would remain undeveloped, but provided them with the

funds needed to put a new roof on the barn and make other necessary repairs.

Now, **Anne Bachner** has taken the preservation of the barn a step further. With the help of the family, she's collected stories, photographs, newspaper articles, and other documentation. Her new

book "**Prairie Legacy**" tells the saga of four generations of the Thomas family, including the planning and building of the barn.

With an engaging writing style and an obvious love for her subject, Anne weaves her various sources into a "good read." The period photographs and authentic details she includes give us a glimpse of what life was really like for a farm family in Wisconsin from the beginning of settlement in the 1840s to the present.



Prairie Legacy is available at Foundry Books, Phoebe's Nest, Ben Franklin, the Cornish Corner, and from the MPHS at www.mineralpointhistory.org. A portion of the proceeds of each sale goes to the Driftless Area Land Conservancy. Highly recommended. ●

1946 Loan Document Surfaces by Jim Stroschein

During the Founders' Day party, **Bob Regan** said, "You've got to come and see this." He then introduced me to **Magdalen Schnurr Schafer**, daughter of **A.A. Schnurr**, one of the founders. She handed me a framed certificate, issued by Farmers Savings Bank on January 19, 1946, reflecting a \$300 loan to the MPHS, signed by nine of the original eleven founders, with a "PAID" stamp dated Aug. 10, 1946.

I was thrilled to accept a piece of our organization's history - especially coming from a descendant of one of our founders, and on Founders' Day, no less. Magdalen had the certificate professionally framed in conservation glass



and her inscription on the back reads, in part: "This note is evidence of nine local gentlemen who cared enough to obligate themselves to preserve the Gundry home."

The need for a \$300 loan in 1946 is evidence of the society's hardscrabble efforts to keep the organization going during some lean years. At present, we don't know what specific purpose the loan served, and we look forward to research that will dig into the details to come up with an answer. Stay tuned!

In the meantime, our sincere thanks to Magdalen for her generosity and her recognition of a true piece of Mineral Point history. ●

40s Bash is a Smash

The 2nd Annual Founders' Day celebration was a rousing success for the historical society. The gala on the lawn at the Gundry House provided an evening of food, fun and music for a crowd of 175. It was a welcome midsummer event for the entire community, and the ticket receipts added to the society's treasury.

The theme for the party was "Back to the Forties," and our costumed guests enjoyed a 1940s style dinner in a large Mess Tent, reflecting the impact of World War II, before moving to a brightly decorated garden to enjoy a recreation of a USO



The most popular 1940s costume? Right! "Rosie the Riveter."

Stage Door Canteen, and the dance floor in front of the porch where the Ken Kilian Quartet played the popular tunes of 65 years ago.

The event had an educational

purpose, too. Tables of memorabilia and carefully crafted displays illustrated the times, and some of the local people who lived here during the "Home Front" years.

The late-July weather was cooperative, the mood was festive, and members of the Gundry family were on hand to join in the fun.

Congratulations to the large hardworking team of volunteers who planned and executed the celebration. The committee is already working on next year's get-together; and, from the talk around town, it should be another big hit! ●

That Curious Little Building on the Corner of Fountain & Chestnut?

Prior to 1925, motorists in Mineral Point could buy gasoline and oil at several locations, including auto and implement dealerships and a curbside pump on High Street. However, there were no proper filling stations until **Josiah Paynter** built the city's first total service station on Fountain Street, the small, pre-fabricated building manufactured by the Milwaukee Corrugating Company and shipped westward in sections. Grange and Paynter Hardware pieced together the metal Spanish tile roof and sheet metal walls on site, likely following a set of enclosed instructions.

Paynter ran the station from 1925 until his death in 1934, after which his grandson, **Chester Owens**, operated it. Owens offered free crank case service in addition to washing, polishing, and greasing—despite the lack of an enclosed service bay. The station pumped gasoline from two hand-operated pumps. In 1940 the station



closed because of wartime gas rationing. The Owens family stayed in the business, however, and opened another station on High Street that is now operated by **Todd Owens**, a great-great grandson of Josiah Paynter. ●

Two Local Legends Honored

Two new members of the Gundry Legacy Society joined the eleven founders of the MPHS, during induction ceremonies at the Founders' Day event.

Lois Holland, a Mineral Point resident for 100 years, received honors, and a framed image of the Gundry home, in recognition of her significant contributions to the historical society, as a Past President and as a symbol of continued support for the organization.

Max Fernekes, a pioneering local artist, received a posthumous designation for his service as the second president of the historical society, and his dedicated efforts on behalf of Orchard Lawn. ●



One of the Jones Boys

by George Bechtel

You might describe the life of W.A. Jones, one of the icons of Mineral Point history, as a series of contradictions: a life ascending and descending, very much like the town he called his home. He was a conservative, a radical, a civic leader, but a crafty manipulator. He was foe — then friend — to the American Indians. Ultimately, you might know him as an old man who felt abandoned and lonely.

He was born in Wales in 1844, came to the Pecatonica valley, south of Mineral Point, at age seven; and was educated in rural schools and the old Platteville Normal.

He “ascended” successively and successfully as a rural and city school teacher, county and Mineral Point school superintendent, banker, legislator and politician.

He campaigned for William J. McKinley (“Will” to Will Jones, with first-name familiarity) and that led to his presidential appointment as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs — the first of four from Wisconsin. He served eight years, still the longest consecutive tenure on record.

During his service in Washington his attitude ascended from “civilizing the savages” — as he was initially charged by Congress in 1897 — to high regard and esteem for Native Americans, similar to the attitude generally extant in America today. His stormy administrative record reflects his attitude.

W.A. was dynamic, impetuous, innovative, and yet traditional.

He was involved in much development. He was a partner in the Mineral Point Zinc Works, a major source in the total U.S. production of paint and sulfuric acid. He was Manager of the Mineral Point Railroad. He was an officer during the rise and fall of the First National Bank. And he built the historic Jones House on Dodge Street.

His last years were spent in descent: he was suspect as a friend of the cashier who broke the bank, and he watched the decline of the ultimately obsolete chemical/acid plant.

His sudden death in 1912 was described as a suicide by Jones’ longtime secretary, Jesse Prideaux, in a 1970s interview with Bob Neal. The death certificate said “heart attack.”

In his later years he lived virtually alone in his big mansion, while his immediate family remained mostly in Chicago. After his death, the stately structure — one of the architectural splendors of the city — stood unoccupied but immaculately maintained until his last daughter died. It has since become a bed-and-breakfast, and has enjoyed major restoration efforts. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George H. Bechtel, who lives with his wife, Iva, in Florida, is well remembered as the Editor of the Mineral Point Democrat/ Tribune during the 1960s. George and Iva reminisced about those times in a popular 2005 MPHS Lyceum. He has completed a book about W.A. Jones, and says, “In fact, I have written the same book in four versions: one as a biography, then two — in response to a potential publisher’s suggestion — as historical novels, and finally again as a biography seeking a publisher.”

...and Mssrs. Weil and Beers

W.A. Jones and his two brothers built the first electric plant in Mineral Point in 1891, and developed all-night electrical power for the city’s busy zinc plants, which until that time operated only in daylight.

But the local man who was the “Father of Electrical Power” would be Henry S. Weil, a remarkable character who came to Mineral Point from St. Louis, sold Singer sewing machines from a horse drawn wagon, then sold farm machinery, and moved on to the Mineral Point Zinc Co.

Recognizing the potential of Edison’s invention, Weil approached the plant owner with a proposition for “superior illumination.” In 1892, he got a go-ahead from the boss, and installed a generator that supplied power to the zinc plant and 21 residential customers. Electrical usage was monitored by 21 separate meters, mounted on a wooden board in the power plant. Checking those meters and collecting from customers were two of Weil’s many tasks as a “one man company.” He was chief engineer, bookkeeper, plant manager until midnight, stock salesman for the firm, and the utility’s lineman who did the house wiring.

“Daddy Weil” worked at the power plant well beyond retirement years, became City Clerk in 1900, served many terms as Iowa County Supervisor and his obituary in 1947 ran on the front page of the newspaper.

When W.A. Jones built his home, Theron S. Beers was one of the construction workers, and Beers later hired on at Mineral Point Public Service, the power plant developed by Jones. He then settled down in a leather goods and harness shop in Mineral Point, using his experience with electrical power to devise a safety belt for utility company linemen, a model that became a nationwide bestseller. ●



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**Mineral Point Historical Society
Membership Form**

January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008

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!

**Don't forget to Respond to the MPHS
Annual Fund with a Generous Gift**

Notes from the President

By Jim Stroschein, President, Mineral Point Historical Society

The Evolution of a House, and an Organization



One of the enduring dilemmas with creating a house museum is choosing an era to represent. Most historic sites use a storyline, a particular event, or certain surviving architectural features to drive the decision to restore to a particular era.

But what happens when you have multiple stories to tell and various structural or decorative elements from different eras? Do you relegate certain items to the attic because they don't fit your interpretive picture?

At Orchard Lawn, I'm proud of the fact that we chose to deal with this challenge in a creative way: we decided to sub-title the restoration project as "The Evolution of a House." In reality, no structure is locked into a static time frame. As changes occur, layers of history are created. We decided to exhibit and celebrate those changes instead of hiding them in the attic or covering them with more paint or store-bought wallpaper. The task of interpreting a site that celebrates various timeframes becomes more complex to be sure, but the house tours are far more interesting and engaging.

Our organization is evolving as well. After years of strategizing and coordinating restoration fundraising campaigns, we are now turning our attention to the execution of the Phase Two restoration, and, just as importantly, are focusing some long overdue attention on our collection and exhibits. We are now entering a new, exciting sector of our historical mission, that of taking stock of our considerable assets and developing creative ways to share history with our members and the public. In the coming months, we expect to add many new volunteers to our team, including writers, researchers and those interested in exhibits and collections. As one member recently put it, "Now the fun stuff can begin."

Every volunteer organization needs sustaining funds from its members. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read about our upcoming Annual Fund. This end-of-the-year support is vital in keeping our educational programs free and ensuring that Orchard Lawn and the MPHS remain vital to this community's cultural life and "sense of place."

Your encouragement, volunteerism and support ensure that the evolution of the organization — with its resulting benefits to Mineral Point — will continue.

And, yes, we're going to have a lot of fun along the way. ●

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. ●

UW Student Works with MPHS

by Jim Stroschein

Christie Wilmot, a student in the Material Culture program of the Art History Department at **UW-Madison** worked with the MPHS this summer, researching various topics for the interior restoration of Orchard Lawn.

She read through the dozens of Gundry invoices archived at the **Southwest Wisconsin Room** of the Karmann Library, **UW-Platteville**, and at the **Mineral Point Room**, then copied and transcribed those that detail purchases made for the house or the grounds.

Christie also found sources of information about decorative arts in the Art Nouveau period, as one phase of redecorating at Orchard Lawn in the early 20th century relied heavily on this trend. She also found information about Tea Leaf Ironstone China, which forms a large part of our dinnerware collection and is displayed in the dining room during tour season, and she followed up on some of the research regarding the Delft vases (story on page 2).

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a UW student and are looking forward to doing so again. Many thanks to Christie for the hours she put in on her research. ●



Joan LaRosa, a Mineral Point resident and History major from UW-Platteville, joined MPHS veteran **Dick Austin** as the society's primary tour guides this summer.

In this photo, Joan (right) provides information for two guests at Orchard Lawn, as they examine one of the portrait's in the parlor.

The MPHS thanks Dick, Joan and guide **Doris Schaaf** for their dedication in sharing Mineral Point history with our visitors. ●

(Photo by Jim Stroschein)

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

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