

Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

SPRING 2005

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Treasures of the Southwest Wisconsin Room

We braved the "spring" weather on Sunday, February 20, and went to the Lyceum at Orchard Lawn. Guest speaker was James Hibbard, archivist of the Southwest Wisconsin Room in the Karmann Library, at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville. James is the author of the Platteville volume of the "Images of America" series. (Mineral Point is part of this series, too; that volume was authored by Herb and Barb Buell.)



James Hibbard, archivist of the Southwest Wisconsin Room at the Karmann Library, University of Wisconsin-Platteville

Jim Stroschein invited James to speak at the Lyceum and to tell us about the wealth of information in the SW Wisconsin Room, which is available to all. (See accompanying story about the SW Room and its collections.)

To illustrate the resources of the SW Wisconsin Room, James detailed the research he and his wife, Dori, did regarding two Mineral Point homes. They started with the 6' x 6' 1870 lithographic map of Iowa County, now in the collection in Platteville. Prominent families of the area contributed to the cost of printing the map; in return, drawings of their homes were featured along the top.



James chose three of the Mineral Point images, the Gundry House, the Cooper House and the Strachan House. Because the history of the Gundry House is well known and well researched, he decided to see what he could find out about the other two homes.

Taking the date of the map as the starting point, he looked at the 1870 census and found a Eustace J. Cooper, 32 years of age, listed as Superintendent of Lead Mines. The map itself showed the location of Mr. Cooper's home, west of Graceland

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MANAGER OF ORCHARD LAWN

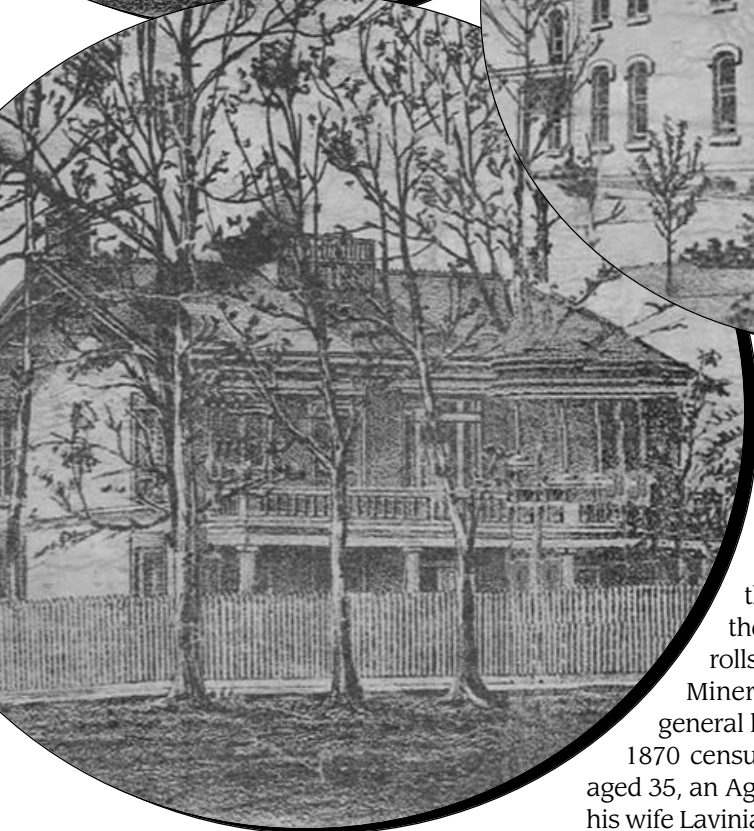
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NEWSLETTER DESIGN: *Kristin Mitchell Design*

Design and printing of the MPHS newsletter is funded in part by a grant from the Alliant Energy Foundation.



Top: Cooper House
 Right: Gundry House
 Bottom: Strachan House



Still curious about the house, James tracked it back in time by using the tax rolls. He found that the house had been owned by Henry Plowman, who printed and published the *Miners Free Press*. Checking old newspaper archives, James found a New Year's "wrap-up" story from January, 1855, which detailed the significant improvements about town for the previous year, including a "dwelling erected by Henry Plowman".

Following Henry Plowman's trail, James found circuit court records from 1859-61 indicating that Mr. Plowman signed a note for a \$1,000 loan from Peter Temby at 10% interest, using his house as collateral. Unable to repay the debt, his house was foreclosed and sold at sheriff's sale to David W. Jones for \$3,400 on February 17, 1868. Jones then resold the house to Strachan.

James showed us a current picture of the home, still with us on Ridge Street, and, interestingly, still known as the "Plowman House."

Other items in the SW Room that might help with researching a particular house or building are the newspaper archives, which contain obituaries, wedding announcements, birth and baptismal announcements in addition to news stories, the Agricultural Census, which shows the improved (tillable) and unimproved acres as well as the number of cows, sheep, pigs and type of crops on rural property, the Products of Industry Census, showing the amount of charcoal, zinc ore, etc. produced by various smelters, and many, many other things.

After James' slide show and talk, he and the audience repaired to the library for refreshments and conversation. Thanks to Jennifer Turkington and Doris Schaaf for hosting the lunch.

And thanks to Jim Stroschein for making the arrangements for another interesting and useful Lyceum and to James and Dori Hibbard for all of the work that went into preparing the presentation. 1

County Fairgrounds and the house is no longer there.

The second home James researched was the Strachan House. From the 1871 Mineral Point tax rolls and the 1895 plat map of Mineral Point, he knew the general location of the house. The 1870 census listed a John Strachan, aged 35, an Agricultural Machine Agent, his wife Lavinia, age 29, a 4 year old son, John, and a 2 year old daughter, Nettie. The household also included a 60 year old woman, quite possibly John's mother-in-law, and a domestic servant. We also know from the census that John was born in Scotland and by 1870 had acquired \$10,000 worth of real property and \$20,000 of personal property, so he was a man of substance.

James then located John Strachan in the probate records and found that he had died on April 9, 1874, at the age of 40. Using this date, he was able to find the obituary for Mr. Strachan.

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Cemetery, on what is now Fair Street. The map places the Mineral Point Mining Company in this vicinity, so the assumption is that Mr. Cooper was the Superintendent of this mine.

By the time of the 1880 census, Mr. Cooper was no longer a resident of Mineral Point, having moved to Des Moines. The Hibbards came to Mineral Point to see if they could locate the house, but that area is now the Iowa



Does Your House Have A Past?

How much do you know about your own house? If you built it yourself, or if you bought it brand-new, then you probably know almost all there is to know about it (and we hope you are keeping a scrapbook to pass on to your family or to the next owners.)

But if your house is older than you are, or if you are only the latest in a long line of owners, chances are it has some interesting history that you might be able to trace.

If you want to find out what your house was like before you lived there, James Hibbard suggests:

1. Start with the exact location. If you live in a city or village, your house is on a specific lot (or lots) in a particular block of a named survey or addition (for example, Lot 1 of Block 2 of Strong's Addition to the City of Mineral Point.) If you live in the country, your house is in a particular section of a named township, (for example, SE 1/4, Section 18 of the Town of Mineral Point.)

If you don't know this information, where do you find it? If you have owned your house for more than 15 or 20 years, you might have an abstract of title (if you have a mortgage on the home, your mortgage lender may have your abstract) which would have this information. Otherwise, your property tax bill should have this.

Or, you can look at the official map of your city or village, find your street address, and then the lot, block, and survey. The map for the City of Mineral Point is kept in the City Clerk's office. For rural residents, the plat book of your county will have the map of your township; your house is probably

marked on the map (houses are shown as little squares on these maps). Once you locate your house, you will be able to tell which section of the township it is in.

2. Find the age of the house. You might already have a general idea of how old your house is, if not, the architectural style may give you a clue as to when it was built. (A good book on house styles is "A Field Guide to American Houses" by Virginia McAlester, et al. And a good web site is www.architecture.about.com/library/bl-styles.index.htm)

If you are lucky enough to have an abstract, this may give you an idea as to its age. Using one of these clues, or just a wild guess if you have nothing else to go on, and the exact location of the house, look at the property tax rolls for your municipality for the years in which you think your house was built. Since the early 1900s, the property tax rolls have listed one value for land and another for "improvements" (buildings). If you find a year where the value of the improvements went from zero to several thousand dollars, you have no doubt found the year when your house was built.

3. Research former owners of the house. The tax rolls will have the name of the owner of the property when the house was built. From here, you can look up census records, probate records, and newspaper archives for more information about the people who owned and lived in your home. Using the tax rolls, you can work forward or backward in time to find the names of other owners. Who knows what fascinating information you will turn up? 1

The Mineral Point Local History Room

The Mineral Point Room has been a resource for local history since 1981, covering subjects from architecture to zinc mining. Materials available include:

- Census records and surveys, atlases and plat books;
- Business, mining, industry and railroad records;
- Church and school records;
- Native American collection including the first edition of Black Hawk's autobiography;
- Newspapers, in print and on microfilm;
- Personal papers, diaries, scrapbooks and letters;
- Theater memorabilia, including the papers of Allen Ludden donated by his wife, Betty White; and
- Genealogy materials to aid researchers.

Mineral Point Room Hours:

Wednesdays and Saturdays: 12:00–4:00
Thursdays: 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. (May–Oct).

Curator: Mary Alice Moore

Contact: Mineral Point Library 608.987.2447
or minptroom@hotmail.com

Location: Mineral Point Municipal Building
137 High Street (lower level)

The Southwest Wisconsin Room

(From the Wisconsin Historical Society web site)

The ARC is a cooperative project of the University and the Wisconsin Historical Society to preserve historical records in the six Wisconsin counties of Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, and Richland.

University students and faculty, genealogists, local-history writers, and other researchers are encouraged to use the Center.

Holdings

Archives holdings: More than 425 series of county and municipal government archives including court records (civil, criminal and probate cases), land records (deeds, assessment and tax files), naturalizations and selected county educational records.

Manuscript holdings: The ARC holds over 115 collections including private papers of prominent persons, e.g. Prairie du Chien physician and historian, Peter Scanlan and Platteville miner and land owner, John Hawkins Rountree; business records of general and hardware stores; area manufacturer's records, such as the Potosi Brewing Company; and microfilm of Southwest Wisconsin area church records along with oral history interviews with individuals of these churches.

Finding Aids

Detailed research tools at the ARC include registers and/or collection inventories for processed and unprocessed collections. Entries for archival materials may be found in the Library's OPAC (computerized card catalog). The ARC also has published guides to holdings of the Wisconsin Historical Society and other ARCs.

Network Transfer Provisions

This feature makes available in Platteville one of the nation's richest collections. Requests for temporary transfer of collections from Madison or other ARCs should be made to the Curator of the Platteville ARC. Other Research Resources:

Related collections available for use in the Southwest Wisconsin Room include: University of Wisconsin-Platteville and its predecessor archives (1840-); a book collection of local history and genealogy; census schedules from 1820-1920 with selected area indexes; vital history records; in house surname index to pre-1860 Iowa county records; computer indexes to photographs and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville newspaper; and onsite Internet access

Location:

Southwest Wisconsin Room-Karrmann Library
University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Platteville, WI 53818-3099

Phone: 608/342-1719

Hours: Sun - Friday 1:00 - 5:00; Tues. till 9:00;
closed Saturdays

Summer Hours: as above, except closes at 4:00 on
Fridays, and is also closed on Sundays

Contact: James Hibbard, Archivist

Manager's Report by Jennifer Turkington

While it might seem quiet around the Gundry House this time of year, we are actually keeping ourselves very busy planning and preparing for the upcoming summer season. Our main focus this year is to increase the number of private events at Orchard Lawn. Last year, eight weddings were held on the grounds; so far, four are on the calendar for 2005 and one for 2006. To attract more bridal parties to Mineral Point, we are working with Pendarvis, The Living Arts Center, and the Chamber of Commerce to develop a Wedding Brochure. We are also compiling a list of service available in the area to assist the bride and groom with planning their event. Please contact us if you would like to be included in this brochure.

With the help of Kristin Mitchell, we created a beautiful ad featured in this year's Wedding Guide which goes out as part of the Shopping News four times a year. Any comments or ideas that you would like to share about this or any other part of Orchard Lawn are always welcome. Thanks for your ongoing support. 1



Area Research Center Network

(From the Wisconsin Historical Society web site)

The Wisconsin Historical Society, the University of Wisconsin System, and the Superior Public Library cooperate in a network of Area Research Centers located at UW campus libraries throughout the state, at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and at the Superior Public Library. Each Area Research Center (ARC) serves a specific geographic region. Records created in and focused on the region served by a particular ARC are housed permanently at the appropriate Center. The Society maintains a courier service which allows members of the network to borrow collections housed elsewhere for use by their local patrons

Most materials held by the Archives may be borrowed by the Centers for use by researchers there. In addition, records particular to the local area are housed permanently at each Center and also circulate within the network.

Records created by county offices and other local government units for the region are housed at the Area Research Center, as are non-governmental manuscript collections of regional interest. Historical records gathered through the network generally are organized and cataloged by archivists at the Society. The materials then are returned to the appropriate Area Research Center. Most Centers also hold archival records from their campuses and additional special collection holdings not owned by the Society.

Archivists at each Center answer written and telephone reference requests and help the public use the network's resources. Archival collections usually located at the Wisconsin Historical Society or at one of the Centers may be transferred temporarily within the network to accommodate local historians, genealogists, students, and other scholars throughout Wisconsin. Before their initial visit, researchers are advised to write or call the appropriate repository since some collections may be on loan and hours may vary. 1

Recruiting!!! Wanted: Scrapbooking Enthusiasts

If you have the time and talent, we have a very willing student. Jennifer would like to learn how to best preserve the photos, newspaper articles, posters, etc that she collects over the course of the year. These items would be much more enjoyable (and useful) as part of a scrapbook, rather than being relegated to the filing cabinet. This could be done in a group or you could work on your own, in your spare time. If you would like to help with this project, please call Jennifer at 987-2884. 1



Mineral Pointers Remember

Sunday, March 20, 2005 2 p.m.
Orchard Lawn – The Gundry House

Last year we featured a panel discussion with three 90+ year old Mineral Pointers. The program was such a hit we decided to something similar. This year our March lyceum will feature four long-time Mineral Pointers – including Bob Mitchell of Mitchell Hardware fame – who will recall the days when the train whistles blew, kids swam at the lake on the Shake Rag and threshing bees were held in the fields. Join us for an enjoyable look back at the Mineral Point that was.

Questions? Call Jim Stroschein 987-2301 or email at stromedia@verizon.net 1



Did you know?

They are called tax rolls because the original documents were handwritten records on large (approx 16" x 24") sheets of paper, bound in soft leather. These documents were folded in half, then rolled, tied with a leather string, and carried about in the saddlebags of the assessors. 1



Membership Reminder

In 2004 we counted 200 membership units (300 individual people); so far this year we have received 170 memberships (230 people), including five new ones and twenty who were members earlier, but not in 2004. More than fifty memberships have not yet been renewed. If yours is one of them, please consider sending in your 2005 dues. Each of our members is important to us and we would hate to lose you! 1

Annual Meeting Report

The Annual Meeting of the Mineral Point Historical Society was held on Sunday, Jan. 16, 2005. President Jim Kackley reviewed the events sponsored by the Society in 2004, particularly, the "Brides of Mineral Point" exhibit, the garden restoration project, and the completion of the library in the Gundry House.

Mr. Kackley noted several 2004 Board activities, including defining the committee structure and composition, strategic planning for the Society, and relocating the business office to Water Street as part of a cooperative effort among local non profit organizations to promote efficiency and effectiveness.

He announced the 2005 goals for the Society, which include increasing the number of members, increasing the number of private events, continuing to sponsor public events, encouraging visitors to Orchard Lawn, expanding educational activities, successfully completing Phase II fundraising by November, 2005, planning and implementing Phase II construction by early 2006, and fostering multiple uses of the house and

grounds by all members so that Orchard Lawn truly becomes the "living room of Mineral Point."

Minutes of the annual meeting of 2004 were reviewed, the treasurer's report for the year 2004 was reviewed, and comments from the membership were elicited.

Board members were elected for a three year term. Nominating Committee Chair Jim Harris introduced the recommended candidates: Frank Beaman, Phyllis Bennett, and Mark Speltz. Mr. Harris noted that Anne Rogers had resigned and that, on Board action, Allen Schroeder had agreed to serve the remaining year of this position. As there were no nominations from the floor, a unanimous ballot for the three candidates was cast.

The members of the Society and of the Board thanked departing Board members, Anne Rogers and Jim Harris, for their years of service.

Following the business meeting, Dave Kjelland and Richmond Powers presented the first Lyceum of the season, stories about the newly restored Mineral Point

Depot. Using slides and anecdotes about the depot and the railroad, they shared the story of the depot from its beginning in 1856 to its closing in 1984. They also discussed the work that was involved in the restoration of the building and the establishment of the museum, including the collecting of pictures, tools, and other artifacts that are now on display.

Refreshments were served following the Lyceum.¹



Richmond Powers (l) and Dave Kjelland shared stories of the railroad and the restoration of the Mineral Point Depot at the Lyceum following the Annual Meeting in January.

New Board Members



Mark Speltz (l) and Frank Beaman were elected to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting in January.

A Mineral Point resident for two and a half years, Mark is a historian with Pleasant Company/ American Girl; previously, he worked on exhibits at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum and the Lake Superior Museum in Duluth, among other projects. He is currently working toward a Masters degree in History from UW-M and restoring his Mineral Point home. Mark and his wife, Kari, were married at Orchard Lawn in May, 2004.

Frank, a retired broadcast journalist, and his wife Sandee moved to their historic home in Mineral Point in 2003. Franks's interests are 19th century America and architecture and he has been known to portray Gen. Ulysses S Grant on occasion.

Both Mark and Frank are enthusiastic supporters of the Mineral Point Historical Society and have been members of the Public History Committee. We are pleased to welcome them to the Board. 1

Valentine Party

The Valentine Party at Orchard Lawn on Feb. 12, was marvelous! Rollie Sardeson dressed as Cupid, was worth the price of admission, but he was joined by several other talented folks. Coleman and Lyn Anglin reprised their reading of George and Muriel (or was it Grace?) the confused birdwatchers on their third, or maybe fourth, marriage, Frank Beaman read Teddy Roosevelt's moving tribute to his late wife, Alice, Carole Spelic had some great Shakespearean sonnets (there's more in those things than you think!), Jeanne Lambin read her original poem to a friend who broke up with a loser and then got back together with him (don't

you just hate it when that happens?), Sandee Beaman debuted with her first public performance (great job, Sandee!), and Maureen (Mo) Grimm read.

As if that wasn't enough, we were treated to wine and conversation before the performances, and more wine and goodies afterwards. Thanks to Jennifer Turkington and Denise Ostergrant for preparing and serving the food. Also thanks to Neil Anglin, ticket taker extraordinaire, and Scott Dietrich and John Fetters, kitchen and food server helpers.

If you missed the party this year, be sure that doesn't happen again next year! 1



Rollie Sardeson as "Cupid."

Notes from the President

By Jim Kackley, President, Mineral Point Historical Society

Having recently watched two winter lyceums at Orchard Lawn, I was once again struck by the richness of Mineral Point's history. It is so much fun to probe beneath the surface and learn the historic background of a place, a building, or a person.

In January, Dave Kjelland and Richmond Powers gave a superb overview of the history of railroads in Mineral Point. Now that the depot is open as a railroad museum, there are many tangible items to see and feel that evoke memories of the 130 years that trains came to Mineral Point.

In February, James Hibbard, archivist of the Wisconsin Room at UW-Platteville tantalized us with a host of pictures and maps about Mineral Point—all selected from the archives in Platteville. James took several nineteenth and early twentieth century homes and traced their history using tax rolls and other sources. He then toured our city and in many cases was able to find the houses. The Wisconsin Room at the Karmann Library at UW-Platteville is a great place to research if you feel the urge.

Why is history so important? Is this kind of research only for scholars or hobbyists? I think not. History helps tell us who we are and what we believe. It speaks to our work ethic and our morality. It reminds us of our reverence for the land and the value of family. It helps shape our future.

I hope you'll all join us for our next lyceum on March 20, and I hope you will treasure and use your membership in the Mineral Point Historical Society.1

Mineral Point Historical Society Membership Form

January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005

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

Please check one:

Individual (\$15.00)

Family (\$25.00)

Supporting (\$50.00)

Business (\$50.00)

Patron (\$100.00)

includes print of Orchard lawn

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

Can You Help Identify This?

We have a dozen photographs in the MPHS collection taken from approximately the same vantage point, with St. Mary's church in the background, before the school was built. The site is probably on Doty Street, east of the present day bank building. On the back of the photo is the note "In Fred Vivian's garden." It would be helpful if someone could connect a name to this family. If you have any clues as to the identity of the people in this picture or to the person who took it, please let us know!



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