

Mineral Point HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dedicated to Preserving the Unique History of Mineral Point

Phase 2: Promise and Purpose

The plans are in place. It will demand two years of extensive work, but a treasure trove of historic information and the invaluable help of volunteers will make Phase 2 of the Orchard Lawn Restoration Program a success, a source of civic pride and a crown jewel for Mineral Point's rich architectural heritage.

To restore the Gundry House and grounds to their 1905 Victorian splendor, there is much to be done. (Please see the ambitious "To Do List" on p. 2 of this newsletter.) But when the sawdust is swept up and the dust settles, today's 21st Century visitors will be able to see an authentic 19th Century family home and experience what the space looked and felt like 100 years ago.

That kind of authenticity will be possible because the project is a restoration. Not a remodeling, or a rehabilitation, a renovation, a redecoration, but a restoration.

"We could have slapped on a coat of off-white paint, and filled the parlor with overstuffed chairs from Pottery Barn," said Vice President **Jim Stroschein**, "but that's not what restoration is all about."

"It's not guesswork, to make the rooms look nice," he continued. "Restoration uses science — known facts, documents and photos — in a fascinating process of investigation and discovery aimed at accurately reproducing an historically authentic setting. When you restore a

property, your research tells you what was there at the time you've chosen, and you must then live with those historic elements, whether they appeal to the modern eye or not." Visitors want to know what choices the Gundry family made, 100 years ago.



Orchard Lawn, Stroschein said, is blessed with a strong building, which survives from 1868, but also with historic photos of the house and grounds, physical fragments of the "soft goods" of the house, and the diaries of homeowner Joseph Gundry.

The great challenge is honoring historical authenticity while maintaining active public spaces, in keeping with the Society's vision of Orchard Lawn as "The Living Room of Mineral Point."

"This is not a home museum with velvet ropes and 'don't-touch' signs," said

Jim Kackley, President of the MPHS. "We want theater in the parlor, music on the porch, and weddings in the garden."

In Phase 1, vital structural work was completed, and the kitchen and rest rooms were modernized. The Library was lovingly — and accurately — restored. Now, under Phase 2, the home's parlor and music room, foyer, dining room and upstairs bedchamber will become historically authentic, along with the sweeping lawns and gardens.

The upstairs exhibit spaces and the active public areas will be open to the community, during the restoration. Rooms undergoing restoration can also be viewed as "works in progress" once major construction is completed.

Half of the \$310,000 budgeted for Phase 2 work comes from the Jeffris Foundation. As founder **Tom Jeffris** noted, "To restore the building authentically and at the same time allow extensive public use is an exciting concept." Obviously, the general public agrees, and has supported both Phase 1 and 2 restoration programs.

Stroschein puts it this way: "This will be a topnotch restoration. The fact that a small-town historical society can pull this off is a testament to hundreds of volunteers, the Gundry family, Tom Jeffris, and the donors who have kept this place alive for 65 years." ●

Carrying out Phase 2 restoration work is possible only if the fundraising goal is met. To qualify for matching funds from the Jeffris Family Foundation, **we must raise \$155,000** by Nov. 30. So far, we have money and pledges totaling \$147,000.

Will you help put us over the top? Call Jim Stroschein at 987-2301 or the MPHS at 987-2884.

Just Passing Through

Orchard Lawn was the starting point of a recent three-day tour of historic sites in Southwest Wisconsin by **Dr. Ellsworth Brown**, Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and 24 members of the Society's **Board of Curators**.

After dessert in the library, MPHS Vice President **Jim Stroschein** provided remarks, a history of the property, an overview of the restoration projects and the rationale for the use of the Gundry House as a "no velvet ropes" museum.

Stroschein emphasized the importance of the **State Historical Society** working in concert with local societies and related some of the historic ties between Pendarvis and Orchard Lawn. He also thanked the group for providing the Office of Local History and described the help **Tom McKay** of that department has provided to the MPHS in the areas of fundraising and house museum interpretation.

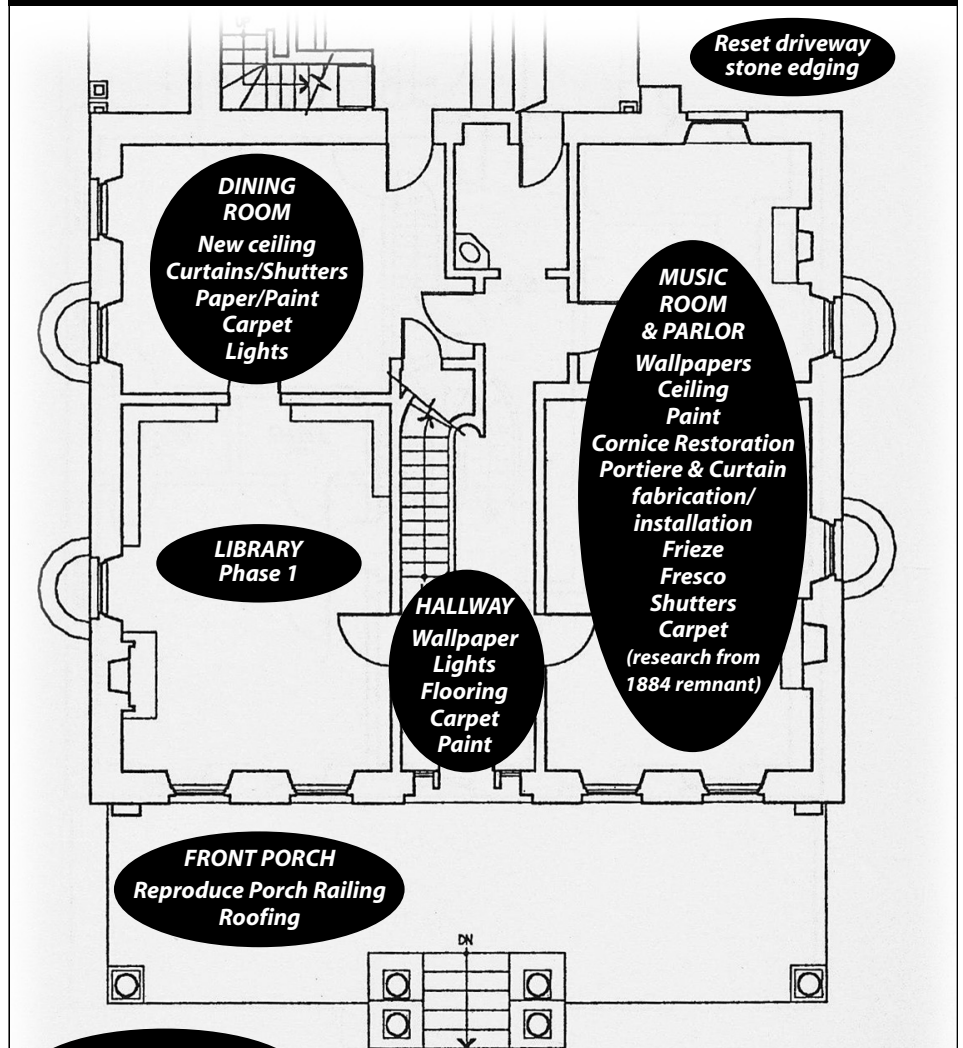
A class from the **Art Institute of Chicago** — two professors and 16 students — toured the home in the summer.

With "a-tour-and-a-talk" we welcomed about 40 members of the **Shorewood Historical Society** of Milwaukee on October 8. And we enjoyed a September visit from **Jane Sedlmahr** who now resides in Arizona. Her father, grandfather and great-grandfather all worked for the Mineral Point Railroad, and she added to our storehouse of historic materials by donating three photographs, including one of her great-grandfather posing on New Year's Eve 1882 with his old friend, Joseph Gundry. ●

Early Birds Get A Note!

We plan to mail a membership letter November 15th, reminding folks to send in their dues for next year. If we receive your 2006 dues before the reminder letter goes to the post office, we'll send you a little prize (one of the Fernekes notecards) along with your membership card. Help us save postage and give yourself a treat at the same time! ●

Phase 2: Promise and Purpose



ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

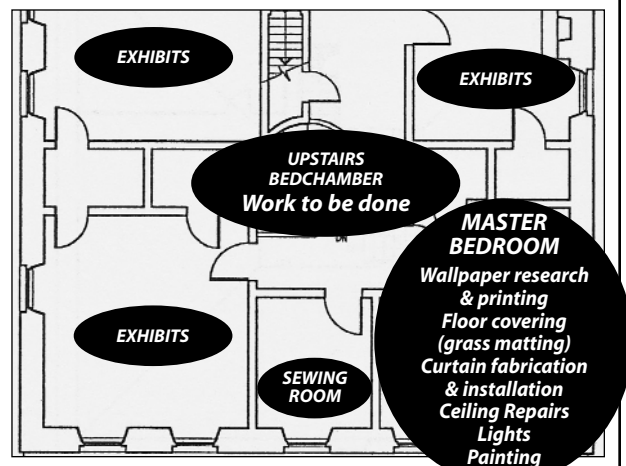
GROUNDS:

- Professional tree care
- Restore formal lawn areas and historic shrubbery
- Perennials, Hostas, Peonies, Cannas
- Re-establish Gundry specimen plants (trees and flowers)
- Re-establish limited number of Gundry antique apple trees
- Interpretive Signage (tree/plant identification; outlines for old bldgs.)
- Outdoor seating (benches, etc.)
- Exterior Lighting
- Create walkways and pathways
- Recreate historic fencing
- Parking Lot spaces

INTERIOR:

- Plaster conservation in belvedere
- Exhibit rooms remodeling
- Basement work, shelves, electrical
- Audio-visual system
- DECORATIVE ARTS—books, paintings, furniture and repairs

- PAINT ANALYSIS—to determine accurate historical colors
- Wallpaper/border
- Lights
- Floor covering
- Curtains made and hung
- Ceiling Repairs
- Paint



"Signs of the Times" Opens

As part of the annual Cornish Fest weekend, the Society unveiled a new exhibit, "Signs of the Times," in the upstairs rooms of the Gundry House.

The exhibit displays historic signage that once advertised local merchants and professional and service establishments. In addition to signs already stored at the Gundry House, the collection includes a number of signs loaned to the Historical Society by families who rummaged through their basements and attics for keepsakes in wood, tin, and ceramics.

Mark Speltz and **Scott Dietrich** have earned the honorary title "Curators," after combining their talents to piece together the "Signs" show in September. The exhibit replaces "Brides of Mineral Point," which enjoyed a one-year run in the museum's display rooms.

Board members Speltz and **Lucille May** issued a public appeal for loaned signage, and the community responded with about 50 tips, resulting in 20 usable signs for the exhibit.

"We're proud of the response to our appeal," said Speltz. "It shows that people are intrigued by the history of commonplace artifacts like these old signs, and happy to share the stories behind the signs."

The collection includes a 20-foot-long wooden sign, items from artist Max Fernekes' studio, a marker from a fabled-but-failed Mineral Point bank, beer barrels and steel outdoor advertising from the town's breweries, and a variety of business signs that once hung in front of places with very familiar names.

"They all have stories," said Speltz, "and they are the work of human beings; witness the old wood sign from a music store that speaks of the 'repare' of organs."

The "stories behind the signs" are included on large labels that accompany each piece in the exhibit. Be sure to stop by for a look at this remarkable gathering of local memorabilia. The Gundry House is open by appointment, and for special events like the upcoming "Evening with Edgar Allen Poe" and winter Lyceums. ●



A Poe "Pourri"

*Not "Nevermore,"
but "Once More."*

It's a fourth year for "An Evening with Edgar Allen Poe" at Orchard Lawn, and you're invited to spend a few spooky hours inside the Gundry House double-parlor, while local actors retell Poe's classic tales.

There are four performances, with an 8:00 p.m. curtain, on Oct. 14, 15, 21, and 22.

The event is a major fundraiser for the Mineral Point Historical Society, and the shows have been sold out in the three previous years. The Society hosts a generous food-and-drink reception following the performances.

The Director of Pedlar's Creek Productions, **Coleman**, puts it this way: "You'll tremble at the ceaseless beating of a deceased heart... you'll be visited by a disturbed, yet oddly familiar raven."

The actors include **Roland Sardeson**, **Jeanne Lambin**, **Frank Beaman**, **Judy Sutcliffe**, **Craig Jacobsen**, **Heather Harris**, **Linda Kaiser** and **Carole Spelic**.

If you've never brushed up against the Poe persona, and have not attended in past years, you may be surprised at the poet's breadth, his sense of the bizarre and the whacky, and his biting satire, as well as his better-known dark side.

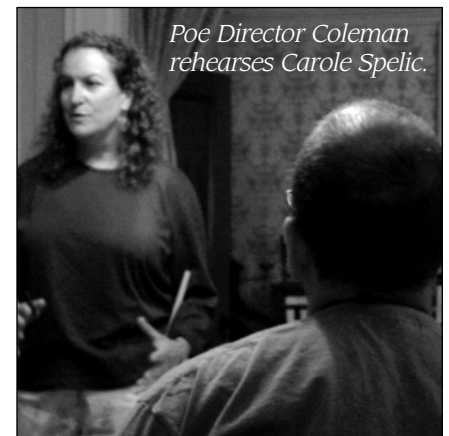
Tickets, at \$20, are available at Berget's Jewelers on High Street, and your place in the parlor may be reserved by calling (608) 987-3218. All proceeds benefit the MPHS. ●

Jammin' on the Porch

About 100 members and friends enjoyed an evening of music and good conversation, as "Jammin' on the Porch" made a successful return to Orchard Lawn on September 4. The Sunday concert featured **Cat Tail Creek**, an up-and-coming new group that strums and sings a pleasant mix of folk songs and American standards.

Will Sterba and **Carol Spelic** traded stories and groaner-jokes, and **Aaron** and **Monica Dunne's** talents as musicians/songwriters make them a welcome addition to the Mineral Point entertainment scene.

The picnic crowd on the lawn enjoyed perfect weather, and remarked on the beauty of the Gundry House formal gardens and the restored garden gazebo. And the event raised money for the Society's good works. ●



Buried Treasure

by Frank Beaman

First, **Matt** turned up an 1831 penny, while digging a hole for a fence post. Then, while digging a new flower bed, **Denise** found the bowl and stem of a clay smoking pipe. The **Ostergrants**, who live in a log home near Orchard Lawn, are doing “backyard archeology.” **John Broihahn**, archeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Society, calls it “accidental archeology.”

Broihahn speaks of “sheet middens,” the scattered materials associated with living in a home, items tossed, lost or inadvertently deposited in the ground. The “finds” are usually china plates and cups, old nails, arrowheads, tools and metal chunks from Mineral Point’s abandoned mines.

It’s exciting when the topsoil yields something historic, and Matt and Denise Ostergrant were curious to know more about their items, their significance, and the next step they should take to “do the right thing” with their discoveries.

Homeowners must dig, of course, in routine landscape work and maintenance, and occasionally an odd little fragment of history will turn up. Consider it good fortune, and preserve it carefully, talk about it, and show it off. But if you are tempted to grab a shovel and dig up the back yard, the advice of

those who really care about preserving our history is, “Don’t!”

It’s important to dig carefully, in a systematic and informed way, so that, if it’s appropriate, the discovery can be evaluated and investigated.

Ernie Boszhardt, at the Mississippi Valley Archeological Center in La Crosse points out that archeologists try to gather as much information as possible about the past from a small sample of sometimes poorly

preserved or fragmentary material objects. “Every find is a piece of the puzzle,” he said, “and a scrap of history you find today may turn out to be a vital part of a larger study of past cultures, even if that

study takes place 50 years from now.”

Preserving “buried treasures” is important. An estimated 80 percent of the archeological sites that once existed in the state have been destroyed or damaged by modern development.

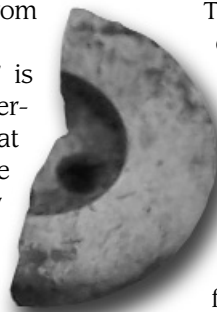
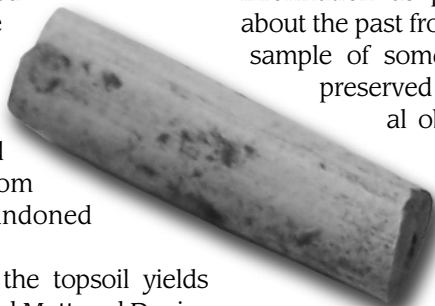
As archeologists battle this destruction, they employ a precise scientific process, the

“archeological method,” when conducting their studies. It involves research and study *in advance* of the excavation; and analysis, publication and curating of artifacts *following* the digging.

“What does all that have to do with uncovering a stray arrowhead?” you may be asking. The point is that you can follow a simplified “scientific method” in your back yard, when an artifact pops up.

An old flint point or stone tool may actually be a part of a larger collection of artifacts that would reveal the way ancient cultures lived, worked and hunted. Pottery shards may indicate the location of an old summer kitchen, and if a team of professionals comes in they may be able to study cooking and nutrition habits in bygone eras by carefully doing more work at your discovery site.

That doesn’t mean you should demand a team of archeologists when you report a finding. Archeologists are busy, dealing with road building and big construction, and often lack the time and funding to investigate backyard discoveries. But you can report your findings, nevertheless, and let the professionals help you with



research and good advice. (See the adjacent "How To" box for step-by-step instructions on sharing information.)

Remember, for every hour spent in excavation, an archeologist spends three or more times longer in the lab, analyzing what has been found.

As an "amateur archeologist," you have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to become a partner with the professionals, in the respectful study of our living history. ●

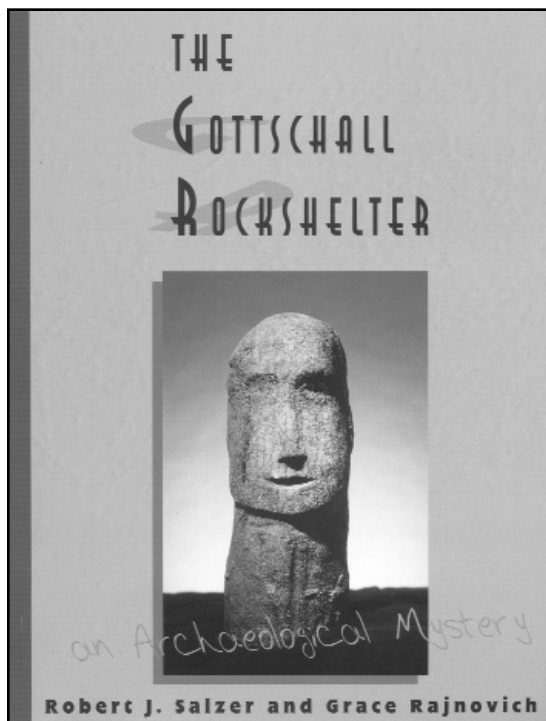
Image under headline: Spear point and stone tool found by Peter Pfothenauer.

Recommended Reading

"One of the Midwest's most dramatic rock art sites" is right here in Iowa County.

The Gottschall Rockshelter by **Robert J. Salzer** and **Grace Rajnovich** describes the investigation of this significant site by the authors. Profusely illustrated with photographs, maps, and diagrams, the book describes the site itself and the methods used to excavate it. Included is a synopsis of the saga known as "The Red Horn Cycle," the Ho-Chunk legend thought to be illustrated by the pictographs at the site.

Available from Prairie Smoke Press, 2366 Hillwood Dr., Maplewood, MN 55119-5575 ●



What to look for...

"Middens" turn up in scattered patterns, because they are simply dropped. But you may also uncover a concentration of items, or notice a difference in soils, reflecting past activity, such as...

Trash — near the back door or at a privy site

Building materials — where a building stood

Series of stones — a walkway

Unusual soil — old land fill or garden beds

Mounds of earth — a variety, including human remains (Note: grave sites are protected by laws, and your first call should be the police.)

Flat places where two streams of water meet, or plowed fields in river bottoms — if the "finds" are extensive, call in the pros.

...AND WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR DISCOVERIES:

1. Conserve the artifact by cleaning it, and store it in a safe place. Maybe the safest place is back in the earth, where it is stable and won't deteriorate.
2. Take a picture, with a ruler in the photo to show the scale of the item.
3. Make a map, to show the spot where you found the item.
4. Write it up, journal style, reporting how, when and where you made the find — include ALL details.
5. Contact the **Wisconsin Historical Society**, the **Mississippi Valley Archeological Center**, **Prairie Hawk** in Dodgeville or some other archeological organization.

Your own curiosity should lead you to do research on the historic period of your discovery. Use books and library resources to look up the item and its significance. Find an antique dealer or collector. Check the property's deed and gather information on previous owners. And don't forget the Internet. (On the embossed **Ostergrant** clay pipe, a Google search produced several "hits" and solid historical information.)

Look for organizations that might help:

Prairie Hawk Restorations, Dodgeville, WI and Dave Lowe, Rock Art Specialist (608) 935-9586

Wisconsin Historical Society — contact John Broihahn (608) 264-6496 (supports programs and research throughout the state).

and the **Charles E. Brown Archeological Society**, South-Central Wisconsin (at the Wisc. Historical Society in Madison, meets monthly, offers field trips & volunteer opportunities. Contact Amy Rosebrough.)

Mississippi Valley Archeology Center — Ernie Boszhardt (608) 785-8463 (at UW-La Crosse, involved in researching, preserving, and teaching the archeological resources of the Upper Mississippi River region.)

Three Rivers Archeological Society at Beloit College (608) 363-2119

Wisconsin Archeological Society, in Milwaukee, Oshkosh

or contact the **Office of the State Archeologist** in Madison ●

A Family's Journey: From Cornwall to Mineral Point

by Ruth Jungbluth

Ruth Jungbluth, a MPHS member and great granddaughter of Samuel Prisk, shares with us some of the family's and Mineral Point's early history.

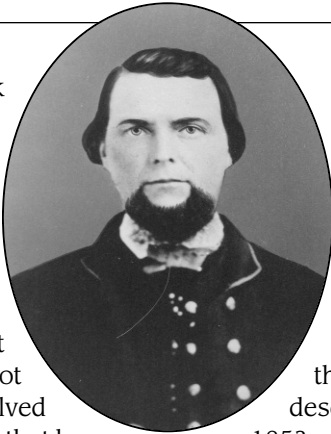
In 1831, Thomas Prisk left St. Blazey, a small village on the south coast of Cornwall, bound for "the lead region of Michigan Territory." We don't know whether he reached his destination; the Black Hawk War was at its height and he may not have risked becoming involved in the fighting. We do know that he returned to Cornwall in the latter part of 1832.

In July, 1833, he embarked for America once again, accompanied by his pregnant wife, Honor (nee Provis) and their two sons, Samuel, five, and Paul, two. The ship sailed for New Brunswick, Canada, where the family's journey was interrupted long enough for John Provis Prisk to be born on August 16, 1833.

On September 10, the family boarded the brig "Myra" and sailed to Philadelphia. From there, they took a canal boat to Pottstown, PA, then a stage over the Appalachian Mountains to the headwaters of the Ohio River. Even though winter was approaching, Thomas engaged passage for the family on one of the many rafts plying the Ohio; from Pittsburgh they traveled down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to Galena.

On April 1, 1834, at Galena, Thomas obtained a permit from the government for himself and his brother John, who arrived from Cornwall that spring, to mine lands at Mineral Point.

According to "The History of Iowa County, 1881," Thomas built a log home near Jerusalem Spring, most likely on the corner of Fountain and Chestnut



Streets. He was accused of "making it very stylish by smoothing the logs on the inside."

In 1850, Thomas Prisk and the two older sons, Samuel and Paul, left for the gold fields of California, traveling across the western prairies and deserts by wagon train. In

1853, Thomas and Samuel returned to Wisconsin. Although there is no record of their success as gold miners, or lack of it, when Samuel married Jane Oke in 1854, her wedding ring was a wide, pure gold band made from a nugget he brought back from California.

In 1861, Samuel and his brother, Thomas W., enlisted in Mineral Point's second militia troop, the Farmer's Guard, made up entirely of men from Iowa County and formally activated at Camp Randall in Madison, as Co. E. 11th Reg. WI Vol. Inf.

Above: Samuel Prisk joined the Farmer's Guard from Mineral Point in 1861. The pistol he carried is on loan to the MPHS and is on display at Orchard Lawn.

Right: Samuel and Jane Oke Prisk. While Samuel was fighting in the Civil War, Jane provided for their four children and tended the small farm on the south edge of Mineral Point. She raised berries, apples and grapes for sale, kept bees and sold honey, worked as a midwife for her neighbors, and took in washing.

The Company distinguished themselves during the siege and capture of Vicksburg in 1863; a monument on the battlefield commemorates their heroism and includes the names of both Samuel and Thomas W. Prisk. Thomas W., who was promoted from Private to First Sergeant for bravery at Vicksburg, was sent home on invalid leave in May, 1865; Samuel was not formally discharged until Sept. 28 of that year. ●



Share Your Stories

Do you have family stories, letters, diaries, or pictures you would like to share with the other members of the MPHS? If you do, we'd love to print them in the newsletter. Please contact us by phone at 608-987-2884 or e-mail at mphistory@mhtc.net or regular mail at PO Box 188, Mineral Point, WI 53565. We will scan photographs or photocopy documents and return the originals to you. We are interested in all eras of Mineral Point/Iowa County history, from the early days to the present. ●

Berget's Shows the "Way to Go"

The Historical Society has created the "Way to Go!" award, to salute local businesses that recognize the importance of historic preservation. Our first honoree is **Berget Jewelers** at 257 High St., proprietress **Chris Phillipson** and building owner **Joe Weier**, whose 17-year dream is now a work in progress.

"I knew that, underneath the chisel stone and white paint and boarded-up windows, there was a Greek Revival treasure," said Weier. Using old bricks salvaged from the razed City Hall in Dodgeville (in storage for 15 years) Weier worked with historic photos, with Action Restoration of Arena, and with

the Mineral Point Historical Preservation Commission to take the masonry building back to its 1880s profile, and to resolve a number of problems that cropped up during the repair and reconstruction of the brick walls. Cornice work, detailing and painting lie ahead, as Weier implement his plans to carry the old structure even further back in time. ●

Mineral Point's first Library, a stage coach stop, harness shop, shoe store, deli. The 1841 Reed-Bennett building.



Notes from the President

By Jim Kackley, President, Mineral Point Historical Society

I'm pleased to report that we are coming down to the end of the fundraising for Phase 2 of our restoration plan. At this point we're about \$8,000 shy of our \$310,000 goal. We would certainly welcome any financial help you can provide. It's not too late to show your support for the worthwhile mission of your historical society.



We're confident enough in the outcome of our fund drive that the Board has set up two committees, Interior Restoration and Grounds Restoration, to complete the plans shown on page 2 of this newsletter and to oversee the restoration work.

2006 should be an exciting year, thanks to all of you who have pledged or donated so generously!

We now shift our attention slightly. Obviously, we'll watch all the details of the restoration, but we'll also think and talk about our other goals: our programs and events for the coming year. I've mentioned that usage of the house and grounds increased dramatically this year, and I'm delighted. For some time, though, I've wanted to expand our educational offerings and program offerings to serve the community. We'll be doing that as well.

There's an insert in this newsletter, which gives you an "early-bird" opportunity to renew your Society membership, or to join us as a new member. Memberships are the life blood of any not-for-profit organization, and we hope you'll take a moment to sign the membership form, complete the questionnaire about your interests and your intentions, write a check that will make you feel good, and drop everything in the mail to us. I'm pleased to tell you that, again, one of our member families has agreed to match all gifts that you send above the standard membership amounts. So the MPHS gets a \$2 benefit for your \$1 gift. We hope you'll help us by taking advantage of this offer.

Finally, please accept my personal invitation to see our new exhibit, "Signs of the Times," which reaches back to pre-Civil War days and features a wonderful collection of visual treasures, complete with a history of each sign. What a treasure!

Once again, thanks to all the volunteers and members who make Orchard Lawn and the Mineral Point Historical Society such a vibrant place. ●

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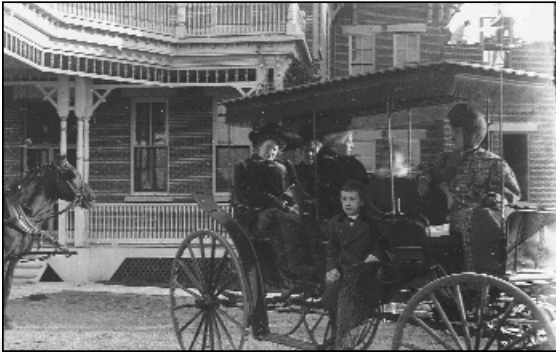
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NEWSLETTER DESIGN: *Kristin Mitchell Design*

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About the Photo Last Time

Mark Speltz found a postcard of the Iowa County Asylum in the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections. The ladies in the carriage seem to be in front of one of the buildings, which were on the site of the present day Bloomfield Manor.



From the MPHS Photo Collection

This was a familiar sight back when most, if not all, clothing was made by seamstresses and tailors. Note the bolts of cloth stacked to the ceiling. Any ideas as to which shop this was?



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