

# THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

Vol. 3, No 6

ILLUSTRATED

August, 2014

WORDS AND WHIMSEY DEPICTING THE GOOD LIFE IN MINERAL POINT, WISCONSIN

## STREET ARTISTS PAINT THE POINT

### ENGINEERING STUDY YIELDS CITY STREETS INFO/PHOTOS

—★—  
**Chestnut St. declared  
city's #1 Problem in  
street repair study;  
2nd St. scores water  
main & paving OK.**  
—★—

Mineral Point's aging water mains and sewers have been inspected by a television camera, a device small enough to float through the city's underground pipes to record their condition. A resulting survey was presented to the City Council last month. Chestnut Street was named "the area with the most needs."

Delta 3 Engineer Bart Nies said his firm sampled inflow and infiltration of roots in a limited number of locations in the city and found 50 broken pipes and 211 areas where tree roots have invaded the pipes.

The survey is part of an ongoing study to update the city's Capital Improvements Plan. The Nies report cites 29 priorities for street work, the category that includes water and sewer repairs. The count on this year's water main breaks stands at 27, and each break costs \$5,000. Many of those ruptures occurred on 2nd Street, and the council has approved repair work for 2nd Street (\$72,580 estimated cost).

Faults in the city's older utilities are wasting water and forcing emergency repairs by city work crews, which drains taxpayer dollars.

But the fix is very expensive.

The council discussed funding for local infrastructure work, but Nies said the city does not qualify for several possible grants because the average income of the city's population is too high.



PHOTO: A lucky shot by the Editor, in the raceway at the dynamic Iowa County Fair.

If you look carefully at the photo above, you'll notice that neither man nor beast has feet in touch with the ground.

Perfect symbolic image for the month of August, right?

Two months of summer are gone, and we wonder where they've gone. Lost, we decide, in a blur of passing days.

We're all bumble-bee-busy.

But, for most of us, the rare privilege of living in Mineral Point eases the burden of the daily job, school chores, and the confusion of a messy world.

For most of us, it's been a summertime of fresh air, friendship and fun.

June was *not* fun. Too wet, too wild, with threatening skies day after day and real dangers from punishing and damaging unnatural weather.

We try to set aside our growing suspicion that many unnatural climate conditions may become the norm.

We pitched in, of course, to help our neighbors pick up fallen limbs, or bake something for the families who suffered big losses in the storms. The city crews were heroic in the town's cleanup effort.

But, as our friends rebuild, we move on. We're on summer hours now, and we are bustling about with hiking, biking, cookouts, reunions, parades and parties.

Summer means open-air markets, sidewalk chitchat, and lots of music — guitars strumming in the taverns, the Opera House concerts, and Jammin' on the Porch to brighten our Friday nights.

Long days with daylight savings time and a lingering twilight should give us more time to read, so we renew our pledge to find a quiet place to dig into a good book.

Or, maybe to find quiet time for ourselves. Does anybody remember solitude?

We know we can't avoid our, ahem, responsibilities. We should fix something, help someone, finish the tasks we've been putting off, right? Okay, we'll think about it.

In the meantime, we have vacation days, and gas prices are down. We push the kids out the doors ("No Child Left Inside?"). And we note the opening of the Iowa County Fair, which gives us a chance to look for "floating horses."

We'll see you around!

### ALL CITIZENS INVITED TO WATCH & BUY

The 19th-Century French Impressionists called it "plein air," but modern-day Mineral Pointers are calling it a "First Annual Paint Out," three days of outdoor artistry to capture the charm of the town's unique buildings and landscapes.

Arts Mineral Point (AMP) has recruited some forty participating artists, raised funds for awards, found volunteers and judges for a juried show, and organized a schedule that will offer finished art works for sale to the public.

AMP now invites interested spectators to follow along as the artists pick a colorful site within the large Mineral Point Township area and spend all day Thursday and Friday, Aug. 7-8, painting the scene. The artists will turn in their work, framed and ready to hang, on Friday evening, then enjoy an Artist's Reception.

On Saturday, Aug. 9, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m., a "Quick-Paint" competition will be a test of both speed and skills.

At noon on Saturday, three galleries, Bottle Works, Longbranch and Wantoot, will open a Silent Auction, taking bids for the completed paintings at prices set by the artists. The auction includes a "buy-it-now" feature that allows a purchase without bidding.

Winners of cash prizes will be announced after the auctions close at 7 p.m. Saturday.

AMP's Paint-Out committee also offers a match-making service, to allow patrons to commission a painting of their home or business place.

And, AMP has created a clever tracking application, using GPS to find the location of a painting artist in real time on an interactive map. Check the link on AMP's homepage, [www.artsmp.org](http://www.artsmp.org).





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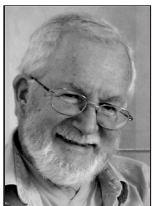


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2014

IN THE INTERESTS OF  
COMMUNITY AWARENESS  
AND FURTHERANCE  
OF HISTORIC UNDERSTANDING



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## Shopping News

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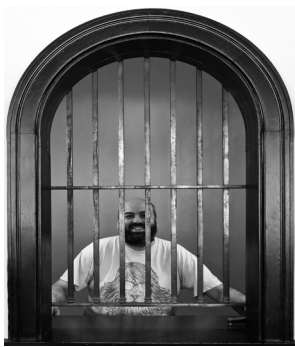
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## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Check Sandee Beaman's  
Online Events Calendar  
Go to

<http://hwy23events.wordpress.com>  
And simply click on an event  
to get all the details.



## Parrish Johnston to Opera House Mgmt.

"It's all about living up to our slogan,  
'A Theater for ALL the People.'"

The big fellow behind the bars of the ticket cage is the new Manager of the Mineral Point Opera House (MPOH), a landmark historic building that will celebrate a century of operations next year.

Parrish Johnston was the choice of the nine-member all-volunteer MPOH Board, which created the part-time Manager's position after a re-organization earlier this year. An Opera House benefactor stepped up to fund the job for a year and a half, by which time Johnston and the Board hope to have a solid operating budget for continuing performances of music, drama and community events.

"We want to celebrate the diversity of our community," Johnston told the *Times*, "by increasing the number of performances and by broadening the kind of shows we put on the stage." Using a trial-and-error approach, the theater will book a variety of entertainment vehicles, market the events aggressively, then keep track of what works and what doesn't.

"We plan a heavy events calendar, featuring shows and concerts that will appeal to a range of different audiences, adding country music, big band swing, folk music, and a mix of popular movies to the serious art films of recent times," he said.

Johnston is making contacts to snare other future attractions.

The theater's new website, [www.mineralpointoperahouse.org](http://www.mineralpointoperahouse.org) has posted the performance schedule through December and a new rental rate structure.

Johnston says MPOH will also work to stage benefit performances to raise funds for community services and charities. The theater offers a discount to local schools and creates "packages" for events booked for several days.

"Mineral Point lies halfway between Minneapolis and Chicago," Johnston said, "so we will try to book groups for a stop here, as they travel between the big cities.

Asked about the roadblocks to the Board's ambitious plans, Johnston pointed to the purse. "We don't have an operating budget that allows us to pay up front for big name entertainment, so we'll try to strike deals that will get the best groups on our stage."

The city owns the opera house, and city crews perform some of the building's maintenance, so MPOH pays no rent. The theater's Board can make decisions without the city's approval, but must raise its own funds for operations.

In his tiny balcony-level office, the new Manager is amassing a pile of historic movie posters and theater memorabilia, which may be sorted and displayed in a future public exhibit.

He's also gathering stories from local residents who have vivid memories of days in the old vaudeville and movie hall. Those stories will be fleshed out for next year's celebration of the one hundredth year of theater operations.

But, right now, Johnston has more pressing tasks, to work toward the goals of a place he calls "a magnificent palace."

## A Stand-out Century of Theater

Dedicated as "Theatre for all the people," the Opera House saw its first stage performance in February, 1915. A drama, "The Misleading Lady" came to Mineral Point after a one-year run in New York City.

For many years the theater was a standout in Driftless Wisconsin, with live drama, grand opera and symphonic music wowing a full house three or more times a week. Old news accounts say the schedules for passenger trains were often changed to allow patrons to stop here to see the top artists of the day.

When Clark & Stark of Madison designed the building, it rivaled Chicago theaters

in beauty and practicality. The colors were pastels and golds, but with bold reds in the stage curtain and ornate draperies. The auditorium originally seated 700 people.

In its vaudeville days, the Opera House was part of a circuit of theaters, along with others stretching from Baraboo to Racine. In the late 1920s, silent movies became popular and stage productions began to fade. And, by the time "talkies" came, the theater had already become a full-time movie house.

Its one-year restoration (on time/on budget) takes this fabled civic attraction right back to its glory days.



## ARTS TOURISM BOOSTS WISCONSIN LOCAL ECONOMIES

### BUT STATE FUNDING IS PALTRY

Southwest Wisconsin is a target for travelers, drawn by the area's natural beauty and cultural offerings. Many of these destinations combine art and tourism and, by doing so, reap solid economic benefits.

Unfortunately, the state's funding for arts tourism has waned in recent years. In a new study, released by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Wisconsin is now ranked 48th in arts funding, with a meager 14 cents per person spent to boost the arts.

Neighboring Minnesota is ranked Number One, with \$6.31 per person invested in culture-related industries.

A skimpy outlay of state dollars drags down the economy of communities with an artistic climate and a need for tourist revenue. That, in turn, hurts the state's economy.

It's easy to "do the math."

When state and other subsidy sources run dry, it falls to not-for-profit organizations and individual benefactors to step in and work to fill the gap.

In 2010, two non-profits, the Wisconsin Arts Board and Americans for the Arts published an economic impact study stating that non-profit arts organizations annually generate \$535 million in economic activity, which results in nearly \$65 million in local and state tax revenues, 22,872 full-time equivalent jobs and \$479 million in resident income. Note: those figures were recorded in 2010, during the Great Recession, and may be much smaller than present-day totals. In the last four years, state support has steadily declined, even as the recovery was under way.

Across the nation, states are competing for the revenue they know heritage/cultural tourism can provide.

Most marketing and public relations campaigns focus on those who spend money in an artistic atmosphere — they tend to be over 50, looking for good food and local culture, and they often tell gallery owners that viewing the work of artists and artisans provides excitement, brings pleasant memories, and gives them a good reason to return to the community.

The rewards of a creative climate also enrich the towns who play host to the cultural tourists. It's usually called "quality of life," and it attracts new residents and makes daily life more enjoyable.

Arts tourism is more than a buzzword.

Arts Mineral Point (AMP), the city's new non-profit arts advocacy group, is showing us how arts and heritage tourism is supposed to work.

AMP has pledged to improve our artistic climate, but relies on local support without tax dollars or outside subsidy.

This month, AMP's ultra-smart "Paint Out," puts visiting artists on local streets where they will entertain us. It boosts traffic in local galleries, stores and restaurants. It gives townspeople a chance to buy appealing local art. It pumps the AMP treasury, while compensating participating artists fairly. And, they'll come back next year.

The event pays for its costs.

A good idea, self-sustaining. Good for the local economy as well as the city's historic and artistic profile.

## Gator sighted at Shake Rag Alley!



Emily Haverland, Ainsley Anderson,  
Di Sterba, Megan O'Connell & Mike Christensen

It's been high on the school's Wish List for ten years, says Mike Christensen, the man at the wheel of the 2005 John Deere, purchased from Richie's Implement in Barneveld with dollars loaned by Farmers Savings Bank. A small group of donors have

pledged to make payments to bring this important vehicle to the Shake Rag campus.

The Gator will haul chairs and tables, move supplies, make the trip to the Quonset Hut, and carry a few passengers uphill to the Alley Stage.

A most-welcome work horse!



# OPENING DAY AT THE COUNTY FAIR

On Aug. 28th, the gates swing open and the Iowa County Fair gets under way, offering five days of exhibits, livestock judging, live music, foods contests, 4-H events, harness races, tractor pulls, a demolition derby and a wide variety of farm displays. Rides on the carnival midway. Cotton candy.

When the Fair first opened, in Dodgeville in 1851, it was considered a major social event for citizens of the Old Lead Region. The organizers declared it a big success, but the Fair lapsed into a five-year hiatus and didn't resume until 1856, which is the date used to calculate its history.

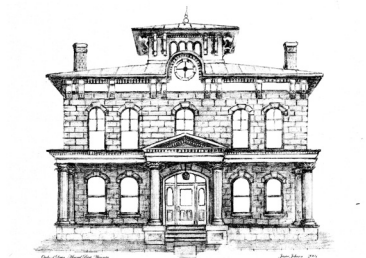
The year before, 1855, the "County Seat War" erupted. Dodgeville and Linden sent petitions off to the Wisconsin Legislature in a noisy effort to snatch county government from Mineral Point. For several years, that ugly political tug-of-war had strong impact on the fair, the area's premier summertime event.

In 1858, Mineral Point staged its own festival, and so "dueling fairs" were held, a week apart, until 1914, when Dodgeville held its last fair.

Back in the 1850s, the fair's exhibitors paid \$1 to show off their wares, and the public's ticket price was only 10 cents.

Today, the money picture is different, but the County Fair enriches Mineral Point in a number of ways: it brings weekend visitors to the city's shops, restaurants and lodging. It adds luster to the city's reputation as an agricultural center, and it offers farmers, young and older, a chance to exchange ideas with others who live off the land.

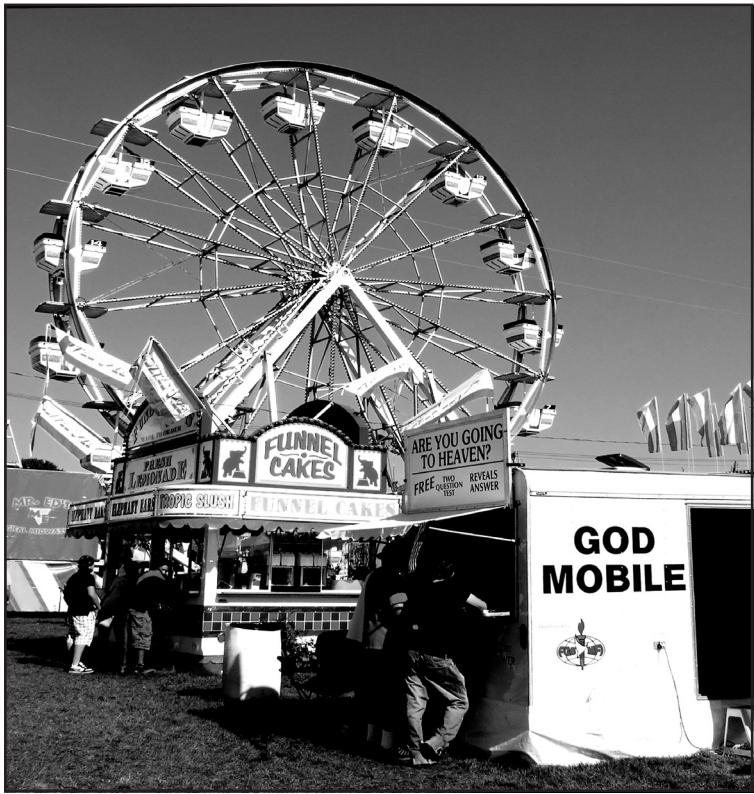
And, for the crowd strolling through the midway, cheering at the grandstand, or debating the merits of the farm animals, the Fair means fresh air, vivid colors, friendly folks, and a close-up look at 21st Century farm life.



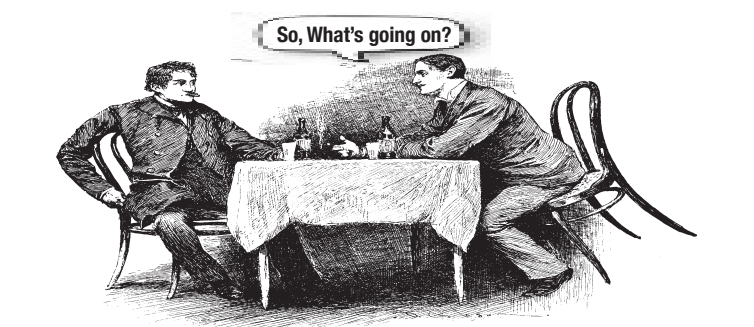
## ORCHARD LAWN MARKS 75 YEARS

The Mineral Point Historical Society's home museum will celebrate its 75th anniversary on Sat., Aug. 9th. Festivities get under way at the Gundry home and gardens at 5:30, and ticket-holders will enjoy a picnic dinner, drinks and old-fashioned lawn games.

The event commemorates the 1939 founding of the local Society in the "almost-razed" 1868 mansion.



At the Iowa County Fair a ride on the Ferris Wheel and a stop for Funnel Cakes are two "musts." A visit to the nearby God Mobile, to find out if you're *really* going to Heaven, is optional.



## GALLERY NIGHT - SATURDAY THE 2ND

Begin the month with a stroll and say Hello to local artists, while the galleries are open until 9 p.m. Several galleries have slated special exhibits; Kenneth Koskela is back in town at the Long Branch. Audrey Christie's art is featured at de la Pear. And the Opera House is offering Backstage Tours from 6 to 9:00 p.m.

## JAMMIN' ON THE PORCH - AUGUST 8TH

Bring a picnic for the town's best lawn party, in front of the broad front porch at Orchard Lawn. Hear the folk music of **The Matriachs**, an all-female band from Galena. 6:00 to 8 p.m.

## DAIRYLAND DARE - AUGUST 9TH



High speed bikers whiz through the city's streets on this Saturday morning, and take a short breather at Soldier's Memorial Park.

This 9th Annual Event is part of a busy day in Mineral Point.

Check the stories elsewhere: The 75th Year at Orchard Lawn, and the city's First Annual "Paint-Out," a three-day event.

## YEAR 25 AT JOHNSTON'S GALLERY - AUG. 9

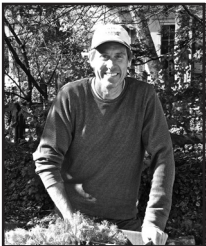
Congratulate artist-owners Tom and Diana Johnston for a quarter century of creative retail enterprise. Enjoy munchies, prizes and a commemorative gift for patrons at an Open House on Sat., Aug. 2nd, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

## CITY WIDE GARAGE SALES - AUG. 15-16

Your chance to buy back the stuff you sold last year! Maps as well as a list of what's being offered will be available at Berget Jewelers, the Chamber, and the homes holding the sales.

## AND, ON SATURDAY MORNING, IT'S THE FARMERS MARKET !

Water Tower Park -- 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. The place for healthy food and friendship.



**"I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to just enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.**

**-- E.B. White**

## LOCAL DOLLARS STAY PUT

Buying local products at our locally-owned businesses keeps money circulating close to where you spend it, and that sale creates a ripple effect as these businesses and their employees in turn spend your dollars another time.

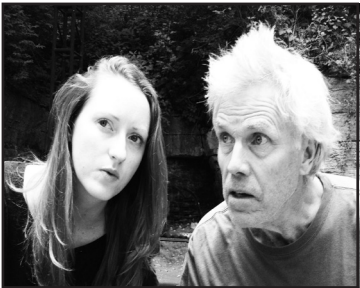


For every dollar spent at a local business, 45 cents is reinvested locally.



But for every dollar you spend at a corporate chain, only 15 cents is reinvested in the local community.

## "PROOF" OPENS ON THE ALLEY STAGE



Boasting an all-star local cast, Alley Stage presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Proof" by David Auburn. The production opens on Thursday, August 14th and closes on Saturday, August 23rd. The cast members are local favorites Ainsley Anderson, Deb Baxter, Roland Sardeson, and Caleb Stone. The director is Bruce G. Bradley, who directed last season's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" at Alley Stage.

The play tells the story of Catherine, a young woman grieving the death of her father, Robert, a mathematical genius at the University of Chicago who suffered prolonged bouts of mental illness. The daughter must come to terms with the fact that she may have inherited both the genius and the mental problems of her father. She must also deal with her sister, Claire, who is trying to uproot her from Chicago, and Hal, an ambitious student of Robert's, who has stumbled across a mathematical **proof** (a stage in resolving a math problem) that changes the course of mathematical history.

The play features adult themes and language.

Tickets for the outdoor stage production are on sale at [www.alleystage.com](http://www.alleystage.com) and at the door, \$15 adults, \$10 students.

## THIS JUST IN:

## BOGUS INFO DISCOVERED IN POPULAR EMAIL NOTE

Internet users "shocked," but vow to read similar trash.

Contrary to a viral email message, August 2014 is NOT a special month on the calendar, a "phenomenon you'll see only once in your life."

Indeed, the month boasts five Fridays, five Saturdays and five Sundays; but the odd pattern occurs much more than just once in 823 years, as the message claims, citing a Feng Shui adage and promising a "bag of money" as a reward to the reader who forwards the note to online friends.

The 2014 calendar repeats itself in the year 2025, only 11 years away. A month that contains five Fridays/Saturdays/Sundays occurs nearly every year. After August 2014, the next occurrence is in May 2015. Furthermore, *any* 31-day month that begins on a Friday will have five weekend days.

By the way, don't look for the four-day payoff. None of the Internet's gobbledygook is actually linked to Chinese mysticism.

As [urbanlegends.about.com](http://urbanlegends.about.com), a good source for checking this kind of email puts it, "Sharing a woo-woo message doesn't confer magical powers, no matter how many times you cut and paste."



John Sharp took the "Best in Show" award at the 2014 International Woodcarvers Congress in Maquoketa, Iowa, the longest-running competitive carving show in North America. Sharp's "Cross Hobbled" statuette, depicting a cowboy saddling a wild horse, bested more than 450 entries from the U.S., Canada and England in the juried competition.

Sharp said he was "totally surprised" when informed of the honor. [No one familiar with John's fine bladework should be surprised.]



**Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.**

**-- Oscar Wilde**





# FLOTSAM & JETSAM

by Frank Beaman, Editor

When I read recently that the bikini made its debut 68 years ago, and I flashed back to the Surfer Craze of fifty years ago, and that in turn made me think of the woman I met, and photographed, at Cleveland's Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2012.

Her sparse gray hair was done up in two little pigtails resembling goats' horns, she sported zillions of freckles, but she looked to be a tanned, athletic retiree in her early 70s.

She hailed from southern California and she had a story about the Beach Boys in 1961. She said the Wilson brothers, as young performers, were going nowhere when their dad called a meeting and told the boys, "I want you to drop your rock 'n roll junk right now, and switch to songs about surfing and West Coast beach life."

One of the boys pointed out, "Dad, we don't know anything about surfing!!"

Dad said, "So, go down to the beach and hang out with the surfer crowd – learn how they talk, what they like, what they do, and sing about it."

Down at the beach, the brothers got lucky. They found a young girl who taught them everything they would need to know to produce many of the nation's top songs, sung in the close harmony that became "the surfer sound."

Aha, alert reader, you've guessed it by now, right? The woman with the good story was *the* Surfer Girl, immortalized in the #1 Hit album of the same name, back in 1963.



I found out Billie Jo was battling skin cancer, no doubt the result of all those glorious days of fun, sun, surf, afternoon drives in the little deuce coupe ... you know, all that California Dreamin'.

A few months ago, I spent two hours in a long line of overseas travelers until at last I reached the desk of the U.S. Customs agent. The crowd was huge and there were few on-duty officers, so the agent only glanced at my passport and then waived me, and my luggage, to the exit door.

No questions. No inspection.

Elsewhere in government, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) last year audited 20% fewer tax returns than in 2012. That's good news for wealthy Americans, the most-audited group and the usual winners in the \$385 million gap between what taxpayers owe and what they pay. IRS enforcement revenue has fallen more than \$4 billion in the past four years, and that's bad news because every dollar spent on tax enforcement yields \$6 in new government revenue.

Turns out, both the I.R.S. and the Customs Service are victims of 2010 congressional budget cuts (a 14% slash for tax inspectors) and the cuts have led to sharply reduced staffs, inferior public service, and, ultimately, sloppy enforcement of the laws.

Think about it: the Budget-Buzzards in our fractured government, while screaming about our borders and income taxes, have chopped the funding that would enable Customs to catch smugglers and the I.R.S. to catch tax-dodgers. So, agents have a tough job, and can't do it.



I got a call from a plumber the other day, and followed up on the tip: got the new Home Pages phone book, looked in the Yellow Pages under "Plumbing Services" where I see Dan's...and Doyle...but both plumbers have the same phone number! *Dan's* number.

Same mistake in the White Pages. Doyle (987-2213) has been flushed, you might say.

Careless work by American Marketing & Publishing LLC? Yes, but it's covered by a clause in their fine print that says, in effect, "s\_\_\_\_t happens."

That's language a plumber should understand.

## Some Things Never Change

The Congress of the United States is in deep trouble. More than ever before, the public attitude toward Congress is a mixture of indifference, amusement, and contempt.

When citizens of a democracy begin to hold their legislature in contempt, democracy itself is in danger.

Never before in history has Congress talked so long to accomplish so little.

These words were taken, verbatim, from the Saturday Evening Post "The Failure of Congress" Fifty-one years ago Dec. 7, 1963



B. Franklin, Printer

He was 22 years old when he opened his shop in Philadelphia, printing everything on a hand-operated press.

It was a complex process.

Ben Franklin first ordered lead type from Europe, then built — one metallic letter at a time — lines of type slugs that ran backwards and upside down. A finished page weighed 80 pounds. He made his paper from old linen rags, dipped in water to open the fabric's pores to receive the ink. The ink was a tacky concoction of tree sap, linseed oil, and soot, applied by quickly pounding on the type face with leather ink beaters, which look like boxing gloves on sticks. Finally, he pulled a lever to drop the heavy press, forcing the ink through the paper page, a step that took 15 or 20 seconds. Ben and a second printer could knock out about 2,000 copies of a single page in a day of work.

And, the readers were ready and willing. In Colonial times, the printing press was radio, television, the Internet and Twitter rolled into one.

Franklin got rich from printing contracts, legal documents and paper money, then started *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, a 1729 newspaper that became "must" reading. Later, with his annual *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Franklin's wit and wisdom was widely circulated.

He "retired" at age 42 and went on to become a renowned scientist, inventor, politician and diplomat.

But, when he wrote his own epitaph Ben Franklin wanted only the title, "Printer."

Fast-forward to today.

We curse when the ink-jet machine won't give us a crisp, clean printed page in less than ten seconds. And, grrrrrr, you have to change the darned ink cartridge every month or so!

## A WAY WITH WORDS



## EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT THE WEATHER

### WEATHERMAN IN BAD MOOD

**In Mineral Point, hundreds of trees were broken, cars and rooftops were smashed. No one was hurt.**

**1,500 insurance claims filed at American Family Co., for weather damage in southwest Wisconsin in late June.**

**UW - Platteville recorded damage at Pioneer Stadium, three dorms and an Engineering Bldg. on the campus.**

**Alliant Energy worked to restore electric power to 7,000 homes after one storm.**

**High winds in Madison tore up an estimated \$7-10 million worth of property.**

**Gov. Walker called a State of Emergency in seven southwest Wisconsin counties due to severe flooding.**

A steady drumbeat of frightening weather forecasts, after a brutal winter and a gray, soggy spring.

The Driftless Region may have escaped the scouring of the great glaciers, but it seems we cannot escape the nasty temper of our present-day Badger climate.

Two local groups, *Sustain Iowa County* and *Iowa County Chapter of Citizen's Climate Lobby*, meet regularly to talk about climate change, and what the citizenry can do to battle "weird weather."

Educator Chuck Tennessen leads the discussions. "The effects of climate change are here," Tennessen says, "and although the general public may be confused about global warming, the scientific community is convinced that the chief driver of ever-increasing temperatures is the release of greenhouse gasses from burning fossil fuels."

What to do? The options, according to Tennessen, can include: 1. Despair 2. Ignoring the problem or shrugging the shoulders, and 3. Learning more and getting engaged. For Option Number 3, Tennessen shouts "Bingo!"

"Many of us can and must do more," he says. "We can be aware of our energy usage and change a few habits to lower our energy appetite."

To find out what YOU can do, check out the monthly joint meetings of the local climate groups. At 11 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month, at Gray Dog Deli, the groups hear a teleconference with a national speaker and discuss actions to address environmental issues. Sit in on the next session, or call 987-3835 for additional information.

### AL GORE IN GOOD MOOD

In the pages of *Rolling Stone* magazine, the former Veep and Prophet of Climate Gloom gave readers words of cheer.

"There is surprising — even shocking — good news: Our ability to convert sunshine to usable energy has become much cheaper far more rapidly than anyone expected." Gore writes, "The cost of electricity from solar cells is now equal to or less than the cost of the other sources of power to the grid. Around the world, some 80 countries are plugging into solar power, and by 2020, as the industry grows and prices shrink, 80% of the global population will live in regions where renewable power will be competitive with fossil fuel generation."

In the U.S., where almost half of all new electric capacity came from wind and solar energy in 2012, 166 coal-fired power plants have closed, or announced they'll close, and 183 proposed plants have been cancelled since 2005. And, while the cost of carbon-based energy is going up, the cost of solar power has dropped 20% per year since 2010. The cost of wind energy has also dropped since 2009 — down 43%, making it cheaper than coal.

Gore predicts the use of natural gas, trumpeted as the alternative to coal-fired power, will also fall victim to a continuing decline in the cost of solar and wind technology.

The key is *decentralization*: the big fossil-fired power plants designed to feed electricity to a national grid are giving way to smaller renewable energy installations such as rooftop wind turbines and solar panels, which energize a single home and push surplus energy back to the power company.



## LAST WORDS

There were three Indian squaws. One slept on a deer-skin, one slept on an elk skin, and the third slept on the hide of a hippopotamus. All three became pregnant, and the first two had a baby boy. The one who slept on the hippo skin had *twin* boys. This goes to prove that the squaw of the hippopotamus is equal to the sons of the squaws of the other two hides.

If necessary, Google "Pythagorean Theorem"

**OPTIMISM IS A POLITICAL ACT. Those who benefit from the status quo, or those fearful of uncertainty, are perfectly happy for us to think nothing is ever going to get any better. They are mistaken. We hope.**