

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

ILLUSTRATED

Vol. 3, No 10

December, 2014

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

DRIFTLESS FILM FEST



PACKS A PUNCH, AND A CROWD

The 5th Annual Driftless Film Festival reeled off more than a dozen films at the Opera House in November, drawing strong applause for documentary and independent movies, long and short.

The four-day Festival, partially funded by a Kickstarter campaign, also ran bonus films on evenings after the Festival schedule was completed.

Parrish Johnston, Manager of the Opera House, said "All in all, everything went well. When compared with last year's programs, attendance was up by about 7-12 people for all shows during the day."

Johnston said the opening night feature, "Life Itself," (based on the autobiography of Film Critic Roger Ebert) produced an audience of 120. The best-received movie was "Keep On Keepin' On," the moving story of an elderly jazz trumpeter who becomes the teacher/mentor of a young blind pianist. The film enjoyed a crowd of 110 on a Friday night, and was re-run as an encore showing on Nov. 20th.

A Driftless Film Festival Winter Series is planned, with films running in December, January and February. This month's feature is "Jingle Bell Rocks," a cinematic look at holiday-themed music. See it on Dec. 5th at 5 p.m. and Dec. 7th at 2 p.m. Tickets are available at Berget Jewelry and on brownpapertickets.com



On the store's shelves, the incoming Christmas candy canes were offered for sale right next to the outgoing Trick or Treat goodies.

Thus did the Holy Season begin in Walmart America.

Oops, sorry. Perhaps that was a too-cynical opener for this column about December.

But, isn't it odd? Every year, everyone speaks ruefully of the commercialization of the Holiday Season. It's wrong, we say. And yet, every year, the merchandisers dictate the way we observe sacred days.

Isn't there a way to celebrate valuable traditions without hanging price tags on them?



TIMES TO "HIBERNATE"

With this edition, the *Times of Mineral Point* suspends its publication until May, 2015. The term "hibernation" may be a bit elegant, but it's meant to convey the fact that, like the bear shown above, the one-man staff of this newspaper needs an idle period to slow down and regroup for spring.

Oh, well. Let's move on.

Winter's chill arrived with headline-making bluster.

On November 18th, all fifty states reported freezing temperatures. Buffalo, New York was buried under seven feet of snow, but we got by with only two inches of snow, powdery, short work for a shoveler.

So, away we go! Alternate Side Parking, please, as the city's snow-clearing vehicles emerge, an almost humorous display of diversity: dump trucks, pickups, skid steers — anything that runs after you bolt a blade onto the front end.

Our business places ponder their winter hours, a difficult balancing act that is often a necessary consideration for their economic survival.

Some High Street storefronts have new tenants, a good sign

for the city's slow recovery from the recession of 2008. And, Lands End is hiring an army of part timers to handle the holiday shopping rush.

The citrus truck rolls into Dodgeville. Egg Nog stands alongside the brandy bottles, and Hooks Cheese rolls out its 15-year old cheddar.

Weekend sports is, so far, a gleeful time for pumped-up Badger and Packer fans.

We enjoy the beauty of our landscape; we greet our good neighbors on the Candlelight Walk, and we try to ignore the news that: "Two women in California camped out in front of a Best Buy big box, to be first in line for 'holiday bargains.'" They snuggled in sleeping bags 22 days before Black Friday, the kickoff date for the annual retail madness.

NEW WEBSITE CREATED FOR OUR READERS

We're celebrating thirteen months of publication, and we have been persuaded that this newspaper must, reluctantly, enter the Digital Age.

Our brand new website, timesofmineralpoint.org, is now online, offering readers digital copies of current and past *Times* issues in scrollable form. Just "click and read."

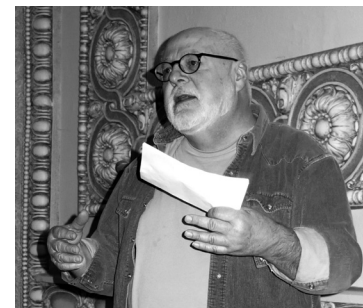
We confess to some sadness, however, because most of the tactile pleasures of reading a printed paper will be gone.

We won't argue in the print-vs-digital debate; we'll just welcome readers from other cities and the rolling hills of rural Wisconsin who have no access to the *Times* unless we post it online. Keep reading!

CHAMBER EXECUTIVE DEPARTS

The Executive Director of the Mineral Point Chamber of Commerce has accepted a job in Dubuque, and will leave the city this month. The Chamber has advertised for candidates to fill the local position.

In a statement to members, Paige Murphy said, "I have been truly blessed to work with a successful and generous group of business men and women over the past three years. It has been a positive and remarkable professional experience."



Film Group Revived

Second-Sunday Shows Begin on January 11th

Artist Tom Kelly and three other volunteers have formed "filmzmp" in an effort to revive the local Film Society, which fell idle when the Opera House closed its doors for its year-long restoration.

As envisioned by its founders, **filmzmp** will be a monthly gathering for those who relish foreign and independent films.

On the second Sunday of each month (except July and December), members will enjoy a 5 p.m. social hour with provided snacks and drinks, followed by the featured film.

A \$75 membership buys ten film showings and includes pre-movie refreshments. The organization is actively seeking seventy members, the number needed to pay film rights, food, rental and other expenses.

Send your check to **filmzmp**, P.O. Box 24, Mineral Point.

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

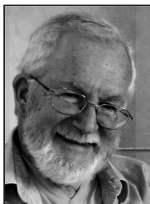
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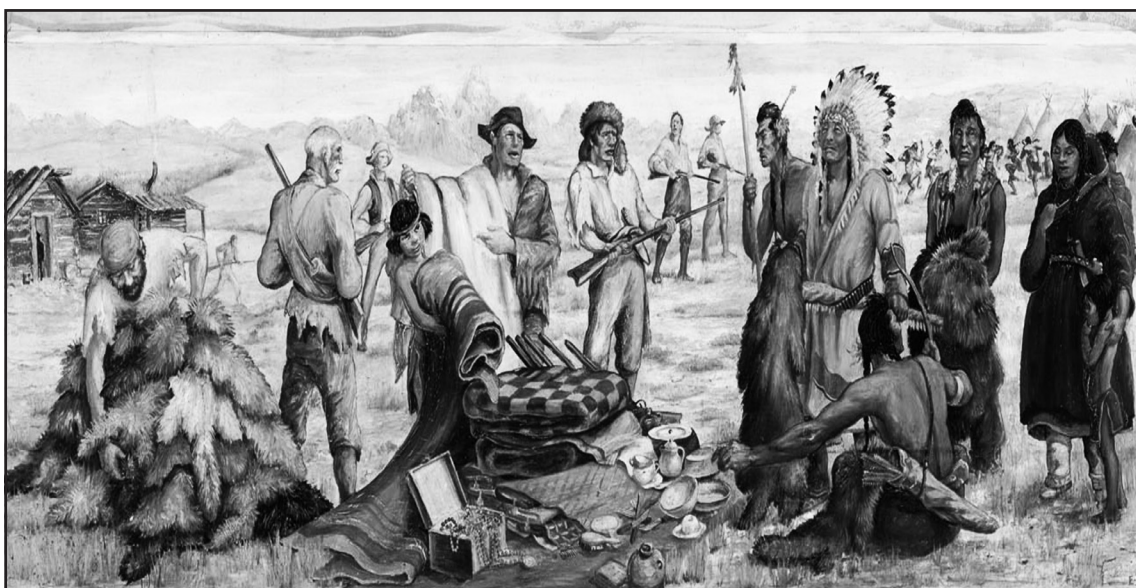
WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Check Sandee Beaman's
Online Events Calendar

Go to

<http://hwy23events.wordpress.com>

And simply click on an event
to get all the details.



Fur trader and Native Americans. a canvas from the Smithsonian Institute

The land we trod today was once home to Paleo peoples, Ice Age nomads who tracked animals into Wisconsin as the glaciers melted. Then came the Archaic, the Woodland and Hopewell hunter-gatherers, and the Mississippian culture. By 1600 A.D., the traditions of the Oneata had emerged, and tribes gathered in permanent villages to plant seeds, fish, hunt in the forests, and trade with other tribes.

The harsh work in these early communities was shared equally: women controlled the use and care of the land and men controlled the distribution of the land's goods — goods that were considered community property. All members of the tribe shared goods in equal parts. The tribes established territorial rights, however, and intrusion into another tribe's turf was often the road to warfare, but the idea of "owning" land did not exist. Indians felt linked to land, and lived off the land, but did not consider themselves land-owners. Thus, land, the basis of the shared economy of village life, was never "For Sale."

Then came the Europeans, and with them came a long period of peaceful co-existence and market harmony. French fur traders and Jesuit missionaries from Quebec landed in Wisconsin in the 1620s, and Dutch and British traders soon joined them in cordial commerce with the Indian tribes.

The early Europeans were no threat to the native villages. The Jesuits sought converts; the fur traders sought beaver pelts, which were shipped across the Atlantic to be fashioned into coats and hats. The Indians had a stockpile of furs. The Europeans brought in firearms, cloth, sewing needles, cooking utensils, knives, axes, and shiny trinkets. These were attractive items for Indians, who slowly abandoned their bows and arrows and other traditional household staples in favor of the newcomer's glittering trade goods. (One article of trade, alcohol, did the Indians no favor; their old cultural rules had no provisions to stop overindulgence.)

On the whole, however, the interchange between Native Americans and the French and English traders was an early model for a healthy balance between supply and demand.

European traders intermarried with Indian women, and the women enjoyed a rise in status when they became brides to the prosperous traders.

A Frenchman named Le Seuer set up a trading post on the Fever River in 1700, and Galena became a hub for the extraction and export of minerals from the Old Lead Region of Wisconsin. The site became a village in 1822, more populous than Chicago, as August Farrar and his Fox wife became agents for the American Fur Co., handling goods from Canada and Green Bay. In the village, women and old men worked in the hills to pull minerals from the earth. The ore was traded and shipped downriver.

And the word got around.

Within a decade, the news from the Lead Region brought in eager immigrants as well as hundreds of "Yankees" — mainly Eastern and Southern Americans — to join contented French and British traders.

But the Yankees had a much different agenda to achieve economic success, and their arrival produced a chilling effect to more than a century of warm relations between the White and Red settlers.

Since the earliest canoes had landed, Native Americans and the Europeans had simply exchanged goods by bartering, a way of business considered mutually beneficial. The trading post had been the locus of economic life for peoples of different heritage but common lifestyle, and land ownership was incidental, even irrelevant.

But the new Americans, unlike the earlier Europeans, wanted to stake a claim for land as a site for lead mining. They also wanted to buy acreage to plow and plant.

This produced an odd encounter. Imagine, if you will, the door of a wigwam. The Yankee knocks and says to the Indian, "I don't want to trade goods with you, I want to buy your land." Slightly puzzled, the Indian replies, "But, I don't own land; I only live on it and draw my living from it."

A pause, then the American frontiersman says, in effect, "Well then, with help from new government laws and treaties, I'll TAKE your land."

And that's what happened.

The Americans also tricked some Indians into selling lands

where they had always lived, shattering long-held customs of the native villagers.

During previous years, the years of cordial trade relations and mixed families, the fear of Indian hostility was relatively low. But as aggressive American settlers moved west, seeking land and overwhelming the basic beliefs of the native culture, the federal government stepped up its long-range program to reduce Indian property rights and herd the natives into smaller and smaller enclaves. The land grab began with a series of small wars in the 17th Century that destroyed and scattered many tribes and pushed the Potawatomi, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Sauk and Fox from Michigan into Wisconsin.

In the 1820s, as Galena and Mineral Point began to grow, the government passed laws to give favored land officials the power to issue friendly land leases to white Americans while stripping the tribes of ancestral grounds or moving entire tribes to new and unfamiliar or disputed territory.

Treaties in 1804 and 1816, written in language that often confused and misled tribal leaders, nibbled at Indian holdings; and, in 1929, the unfair Treaty of Prairie du Chien dispossessed local Indians of every foot of land where there were indications of lead ore.

The Blackhawk War and other one-sided skirmishes were the bloody outcome of President Andrew Jackson's *Indian Removal Act* of 1830.

Wisconsin's first Governor, Henry Dodge, was among the bold "Indian Removers" who rode the plains to carry out a brutal campaign.

By 1850, Native Americans lived in isolated reservations.

The Yankees moved west.

Friendly fur trading became a page in history books.

In mid-19th Century America, the Indian "warrior" was now a "savage." The once great hunter was now the hunted.



The Seal of 1812 reflects the state's attitude: "Civilization Succeeds Barbarism"



Amorpha Candescens -- the "LEAD PLANT"

It's a member of the Pea family, a deciduous shrub that grows to three feet tall, blooms from July to September with small purple-gray flowers, and is usually found on prairies, bluffs and open woodlands.

American Indians called the plant "Buffalo Bellow" because it was showy during the bison rutting season. Its tough spikes gave it another name: "Prairie Shoestrings." But, in Driftless Wisconsin, the name of choice was "Leadplant."

Amorpha Candescens was used by various indigenous peoples to treat pinworms, eczema, rheumatism and other ailments. The Oglala used the leaves as a tea, and they also combined its leaves with bison fat to make a mixture for their smoking pipes.

As miners flocked into Wisconsin, Leadplant was seen as one of many flags flown



by Mother Nature, a bush that told Indians and prospectors lead ore was hiding beneath the soil where the plant grew.

This belief gained so much credibility that, as the story goes, competing miners would spot a stretch of Leadplant and race each other to the nearest land office to stake a claim.

In the early days of Galena's growth as a mining center, the plant was considered a well-established indicator of lead content below the surface. At that time, European settlers ran a trading post, and Indians dug for lead in the hills near the village. The accounts say "women and old men too weak to hunt would dig chunks of lead from the ground." At the trading post, the formula was "a bushel of corn for a bushel of lead."

That trade practice did not move north from Galena into Wisconsin; but, so we've been told, when the state's miners explored available plots of land in the Driftless Region, they were always on the lookout for the Leadplant.

The 19th Century images
of the "Vanishing Indian"

have lived on in public
monuments and popular
folklore. But, in recent
years, historians have
begun to "revise" the
wildly inaccurate
old narratives, to own up
to what really happened.

The Native American
did not "vanish."

He was cheated and robbed.

Pushed into slums.

Annihilated.

SOURCES: History of Iowa County, 1881; ONLINE: UW-Green Bay, Marquette Univ; website of *Real Dreamcatcher*; Wikipedia; Wisconsin Historical Society



PAINT THE POINT WINTER EDITION

Outdoor artists, a colorful crew who captured Mineral Point's charm on canvas this summer, will revisit the city in February for a Winter Edition of the popular "Paint the Point."

Arts Mineral Point (AMP), supported by local sponsors, will stage the plein air event as an invitation-only competition for participants from the August "Paint Out." It will be a three day event with twenty artists each submitting two paintings for judging, then a show and sale on Sat., Feb. 7th.

AMP Leader Ried Knapp says, "We are leveraging the great success of the August event, and taking advantage of our central location between four midwestern states. Our event will be one of a few outdoor competitive events in the northern states in winter."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAIRS MEET WITH REGIONAL PLANNERS

The Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee has taken a solid step in its pursuit of solutions for community concerns.

On Nov. 13, the committee's co-chairs sat down with two regional planners to sketch out an agenda for further discussion and progress on the city's most pressing problems.

Mary Jo Ceniti, President of Farmers Savings Bank, and Joe Witmer, the bank's Vice President, hosted the meeting with Troy Maggied and Edward White of the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC). The Editor of the *Times* sat in.

During a recent interview with this newspaper, Planning Manager Maggied extended an invitation to interested parties in Mineral Point, saying the SWWRPC would work with Pointers to identify the city's problems and thrash out possible solutions.

The Chamber's committee acted on that invitation, and discussion at the November meeting produced a solid First Step: consensus that the city's Comprehensive Plan, a survey mandated by state law, should be brought up to date. That plan was developed in 2005, and a review before the ten-year anniversary would seem to be a wise course of action.

INCUBATOR EXPANDS CREATIVE TERRITORY

Arts Mineral Point (AMP) is working with the owner of the historic Cannery building on Water Street to recruit new tenants to several second-floor spaces adjoining AMP's arts incubator.

The arts advocacy group is finalizing an arrangement with Robert Oberhauser, Pres. of BEC Controls, to oversee the promotion, marketing and rental of finished office quarters on the northern side of the big building, steps away from the 1,200 square foot room now open to artists seeking clean, affordable studio space.

The new agreement with the building's owner expands the creative scope of the center by welcoming business clients.

Several built-out offices are available for rent, handsomely finished, ready for occupancy. There is also a reception desk and conference room near the stairway from the parking lot to the second floor.

A painter and a local rock musical group are negotiating rental agreements for spaces in the AMP's Cannery Incubator.

To learn more, contact Brian Stuart, at bstuart@wcinet.com



EXPANDED GALLERY NIGHT ON DEC. 6TH

It's the annual Candlelight Walk, an opportunity to greet local artists and merchants in the spirit of the December holidays. Arts Mineral Point (AMP) has solidified and expanded the event by soliciting wider participation by local businesses and increasing the hours, now 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Special events: A "Gallery of Candy Wreaths" at High Street Sweets; Tania Richley's nature photography at Phoebe's Nest; Steven Kozak's photo-realistic paintings at Longbranch Gallery; see Clyde Paton's ink-brush drawings of Mineral Point at the Bottle Works; and at the Pear it's hand-crafted ornaments by Jean Campbell and Joy Gieseke + vintage Christmas houses crafted by Caroline Sherman. Gray Dog Deli is hosting a Bluegrass performance at 8 p.m.

It's strolling and shopping with sidewalk luminaria, roasted chestnuts and carolers, as a vintage city celebrates the holidays.

SANTA DROPS IN AT SHAKE RAG ALLEY

For kids and proud parents, too, Dec. 6th is a lustrous day in the Shake Rag valley, when Santa and Mrs. Claus pose for photos with excited children on the knee of the Jolly Old Elf. It's a crafty day as well -- a chance to build a gingerbread house and other holiday delights. Photos, \$10, from 10-Noon. Check the school's website for details on 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. craft opportunities.

A WELSH FAVORITE, WITH MUSIC

Commemorating the 100th birth anniversary of poet Dylan Thomas, it's his most-celebrated "A Child's Christmas in Wales," interpreted by Coleman, in the parlor at Orchard Lawn. A performance and music by Jennifer deCoste. Dec. 4,5,6 at 7:30, with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, Dec. 7th. Tickets at Berget Jewelry.

"NUTCRACKER" BRIGHTENS A WEEKEND

The holiday favorite from the Theatre of Ballet Arts and the Platteville Community Theatre comes to the Opera House stage on Fri., Dec. 12, with two performances on Saturday at 7:30, and a 2:30 matinee on Sun., Dec. 14th. Tickets at Berget Jewelry.

WALKER HOUSE SLATES HOLIDAY EVENTS

The historic inn plays host to a Gala Fundraiser for High School Arts on Dec. 6th. A dinner party for young people, with their art work offered for sale, to benefit the school's art fund..

On Dec. 12-13, "Just Plain Fun" debuts. It's a free event, stretching from 3-9:30, with a \$10 pizza dinner at 5:30 p.m.

And, Pointers will welcome in 2015 at a Dinner & Dance on New Year's Eve, with music by the ever-popular Point 5 band.



LOCAL HEROES: Vendors at the Indoor Farmers Market



Leah Crubel Photography LLC.

For a good time, click on Leah Crubel's page: www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.844059462280800.1073741867.177372932282793&type=1

CITY HALL CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL

Volunteers have announced their plans for a 100-Year Celebration of the Mineral Point Municipal Building, the unique 1915 structure that houses City Hall, the Public Library and the Opera House under one roof.

A Feb. 15, 2015 event will recognize Pointers who have served as stewards for the building: city office-holders, the library's literary caretakers, and those who have worked for the theater and its storied stage.

The afternoon will begin with films and presentations, including a preview showing of a new video from filmmakers Tony Wood and Claudia Looze about the history of the Opera House. Special guests in the audience will be recognized. Open House tours throughout the building will welcome visitors with food and drink from local restaurants.

The planners solicit personal stories about the building, and events occurring there over the years. There are "Save the Date" postcards in many local establishments with space on the postcard's back to share a memory of an experience in one of the three public places. The cards will be displayed on the day of the celebration.

It's rare to find a single structure that accomodates a city's most important resources, all restored and modernized.



A RAMP ON THE TREEWAY

Mike Christensen and John Sharp have combined their woodworking talents to create a much-needed pathway connecting two buildings at the Shake Rag Alley School.

It's a "Woodlander-Style" stairway from the Quonset Hut, atop the Rte. 23 hill, to the Cabinet Shop in the valley.

In a visit to Kevin May's farm on Ferndale Road, the two men chainsawed heavy wooden slabs from a storm-damaged 127-year old white oak tree. The oak discs were laid on a gravel base and rustic rails were erected.

The volunteers estimated the total cost of the pathway at a bargain price of \$125.

READ THE 2005 CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN by the SWWRPC:
www.swwrpc.org/Publications/Comrehensive%20Plans/2005_City_MineralPoint_Comprehensive_Plan.pdf



“How’s all that
hopey-changeey stuff
working out?”

- - Sarah Palin, Feb. 2010

FLOTSAM & JETSAM

BY FRANK BEAMAN, EDITOR

The Countess of Cuteness whipped up a Tea Party crowd in Memphis, denouncing the one year old Obama administration by putting the Palin spin on the GOP’s constant talking point for 2009 — that the inept new man in the White House would surely fail. She mocked the President and the “Hope and Change” idealism of his 2008 campaign, asking her audience, “well, how’s all that that hopey-changeey stuff working out?”

Last month, the mid-term election may have answered her question.

The electorate stayed home, brooding, after a campaign that was ugly, dispirited and devoid of substance.

But, as so often happens, the city of Mineral Point did what other places seldom do. To be sure, we shared the nation’s anger and frustration with the campaign, but while the U.S. voter turnout was the worst in 72 years, 66% of all registered Pointers went to the polls to mark their ballots.

Thank you to the voters, the ballot-counters, and the brave candidates for office — good Citizens, one and all!

The image of the U.S. as bursting with entrepreneurial zeal, it turns out, is more myth than reality. And, falling entrepreneurship means fewer jobs are being created. It also reduces the innovation essential to economic growth and rising living standards.

The number of startups in the nation dropped by more than half from 1977 to 2010.

It reflects the mindset of our times, in which active, intelligent people turn inward instead of outward, choose despair over desire, opting to meet economic challenge by doing less, not more.

Doing less is not what made America great.

Austerity has been tried, in Europe, the Congress, in the Wisconsin Statehouse and in Iowa County, and, like “all that hopey-changeey stuff,” it doesn’t seem to work.

History tells us economic hard times have never been helped by cutting back, running from risk, and turning away from good opportunity.

The best, perhaps the *only* way out of a recession, local or national, is growth.

And the risk of doing more, doing something innovative, is often overblown. Truly smart entrepreneurs minimize risk by experimenting behind closed doors to find out what works and what doesn’t. Then, and only then, does the smart risk-taker open the doors to the public.

Last month, in these pages, I wrote about “The Potluck Model,” a way to bring interested people around a table, to share experiences that might improve our community.

At a potluck, everyone contributes by brewing up their favorite dish, but “something new” is welcome in a cordial, non-critical atmosphere.

A potluck requires work, but the work is done in anticipation of a good outcome.

Sour grapes are never listed on the menu.

Back-biting isn’t allowed.

In 1900, a white man in America could look forward to 47 years of life. A century later, he could expect to live to age 75. The Society of Actuaries has just published a new mortality table that states that both boys and girls born today can expect to live to age 90.

All right, let’s move on to the important stuff. I read with alarm and astonishment about our newest fad: plumping up the posterior. The Booty Biz is big, we are informed.

Surgery (\$13,000 for the “Brazilian Butt Lift”), gym classes, workout videos, and \$40 padded panties are among the possibilities, but there’s a serious downside: some desperate women are going to phony doctors who inject silicone, and even bathroom caulk, into their buttocks.

The craze is traced to Kim Kardashian’s “reality” show, which began seven years ago. The, uh, Actress has posted photos of her backside to her wannabe-bootied 21,000,000 Instagram followers. And, one of them, a New York mother of two is quoted as saying, “A flat butt can ruin an outfit.”



She should be sentenced to spend six hours sitting in front of the paintings of Peter Paul Reubens.

OK, now I’ll butt out.

FYI:

SHOPPER, BE AWARE: It’s the perfect stocking-stuffer, and keeps the dollars flowing in our community. Check out the Chamber’s Mineral Point Gift Certificate, available in \$5, \$10 and \$20 denominations.

To give a truly useful gift to employees, friends, and the folks who provide your daily services, just make a quick purchase at Berget Jewelers, Mineral Point Collection or the Chamber office, then tuck the certificate into the handsome (provided) envelope along with a list of 84 businesses that will honor the gift—that’s almost every place in town.



SURFER, BEWARE: Today’s instant communications carry the threat of a quick scam by an army of bad guys out there.

A Mineral Point resident tells a whale of a tale about a sale he made on the popular Craig’s List internet site. In bouncing telephone texts, his “buyer” promised a money order for the agreed price, then claimed an “assistant” overpaid with a MoneyGram, and asked the seller to refund the difference. Two MoneyGrams arrived, at \$999 each, \$1,828 more than the sale price. Our suspicious local hero played victim for several days, aware of the fraud, then popped the scam’s bubble.

He told the *Times*, “I tell this cautionary tale in the hope of putting this sort of character out of business. Never accept a money order or check from someone you don’t know. Even if the bank cashes it and it bounces it is your problem.”



...BE VERY
AFRAID!

2000: Y 2 K WILL KILL US ALL!

2001: ANTHRAX WILL KILL US ALL!

2002: WEST NILE VIRUS WILL KILL US ALL!

2003: WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
WILL KILL US ALL!

2004: SARS WILL KILL US ALL!

2005: BIRD FLU WILL KILL US ALL!

2006: E. COLI WILL KILL US ALL!

2007: VACCINES WILL KILL US ALL!

2008: THE BAD ECONOMY WILL KILL US ALL!

2009: SWINE FLU WILL KILL US ALL!

2010: BP OIL WILL KILL US ALL!

2011: OBAMACARE WILL KILL US ALL!

2012: THE END OF THE WORLD IS HERE!

2013: NORTH KOREA WILL KILL US ALL!

2014: EBOLA WILL CERTAINLY KILL US ALL!



“The only thing we have
to fear is fear itself.”
-- Franklin D. Roosevelt 1933

The Christmas Truce



From: Illustrated London News, 1914

FRANCE: December 1914 – A number of German and Allied soldiers put aside their weapons on Christmas Day, climbed from muddy trenches and celebrated the Christian holiday by exchanging conversation, tobacco, chocolate, bully beef, and even buttons from their uniforms as souvenirs.

In the week leading up to Dec. 25, the combatants decorated trenches with candles and makeshift trimmings, and German and British soldiers shouted greetings and sang songs across the front lines of the fighting.

On Christmas Eve, the men put the war on hold and mingled in “No Man’s Land,” playing football, singing carols, and toasting each other.

Several troops also formed details to bury fallen comrades together as the unofficial truce lasted through the night.

It was a few moments of peace on the killing fields of the Western Front, brief respite in an old-style war. In World War I, enemies met face to face and fought ferociously. But, after the battle, the foes looked at each other as fellows, the victims of dark times and foolish decisions. They shared a soldier’s sentiment: that “the ones who make war are not the ones who fight it.”

World War One is usually called “The Great War,” and “The War to End All Wars.”

It didn’t work out that way.

During a full century of war, from 1914 to 2014, the “boys in the trenches” have become “the boys—and girls—in the Humvees.” The Browning rifle/bayonet has morphed into the AK-47. Biplanes have been displaced by unmanned drones.

The evolution of all the hardware of war has created an industry that has made warfare contractors rich, but weaponry has not changed the nature of warfare. War, from its earliest eruption, has been “collective political violence” in which people must die.

Millions of people must die.

In history’s wars, estimating the dead is always a controversial exercise, and best guesses vary widely. Battlefield chaos does not lend itself to precise calculation, and casualties are sometimes hidden or distorted by spinning new names. (The civilian deaths in recent U.S. conflicts were dismissed as “collateral damage,” i.e. “people killed accidentally/incidentally by attacks on the intended military targets.)

A truly believable list of “Wars by Death Toll” would estimate all deaths directly or indirectly caused by war: the battlefield casualties, civilians, and war-induced illness, famines, genocide, etc.

The deadliest war was World War II. From 1941-1945, some 60–85 million people were swept away — 2.5% of the world’s population. 25 million were military casualties. (Russia had heaviest losses.)

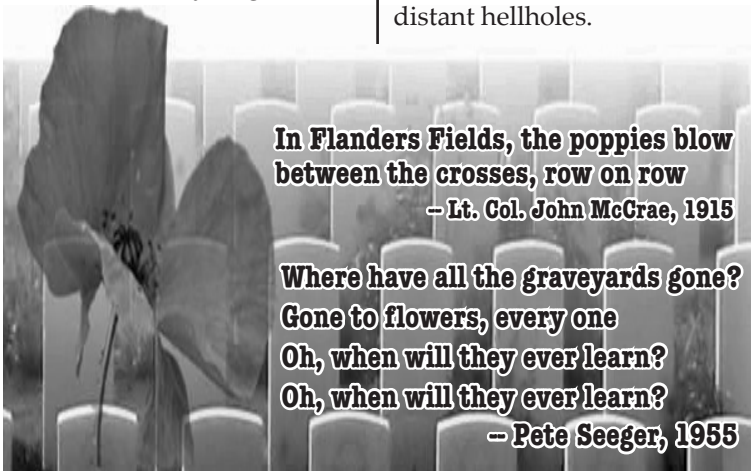
World War I cost 17 million lives; but, with wounded and war-related casualties, the grim total rises to 37 million. Some 6 million Allied soldiers and 4 million German fighters never came home.

The Korean “Police Action” killed 1.2 million. Viet Nam’s death toll swings from 800,000 to 3.8 million. The first Gulf War took a million lives. And, our 13-year “War on Terror,” made up of the Iraq War, with 177,000 to 1.12 million casualties, and the Afghanistan War, with 47-62 thousand deaths.

But the numbers are not the real story, as any member of a war-stricken family knows. The real story is the human cost of war, measured by the dog tags of our young people.

In 21st Century America, war has become permanent, perpetual, and — for some — highly profitable.

The sabers rattle, our taxes buy the bombs, and we look the other way. In today’s all-volunteer armed forces only 1% of our population serves. So, unless a son or daughter is in uniform, most Americans hardly notice the slaughter of the kids we send off to die in distant hellholes.



In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow
between the crosses, row on row
-- Lt. Col. John McCrae, 1915

Where have all the graveyards gone?
Gone to flowers, every one
Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?
-- Pete Seeger, 1955