

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

ILLUSTRATED

Vol. 3, No 9

November, 2014

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

“ACTION !” AT THE DRIFTLESS FILM FESTIVAL

MOVIES ROLL
from
NOV. 6th - 10th
Kickstart meets
Dollars Goal

The 5th Annual Driftless Film Festival, anchored at the Mineral Point Opera House, opens with a promising score of independent films gathered from all over the world.

On Thursday, Nov. 6th, at 7 p.m., the festival gets underway with a short feature, “At Home in The Shop,” a glimpse into the sawdusty world of Master woodworker Edward Wohl of nearby Ridgeway. The evening’s first feature-length film is “Life Itself,” based on the memoir of film critic/social commentator Roger Ebert.

Films of sweeping variety follow. You’ll find the full schedule on the fest’s website www.driftlessfilmfest.org.

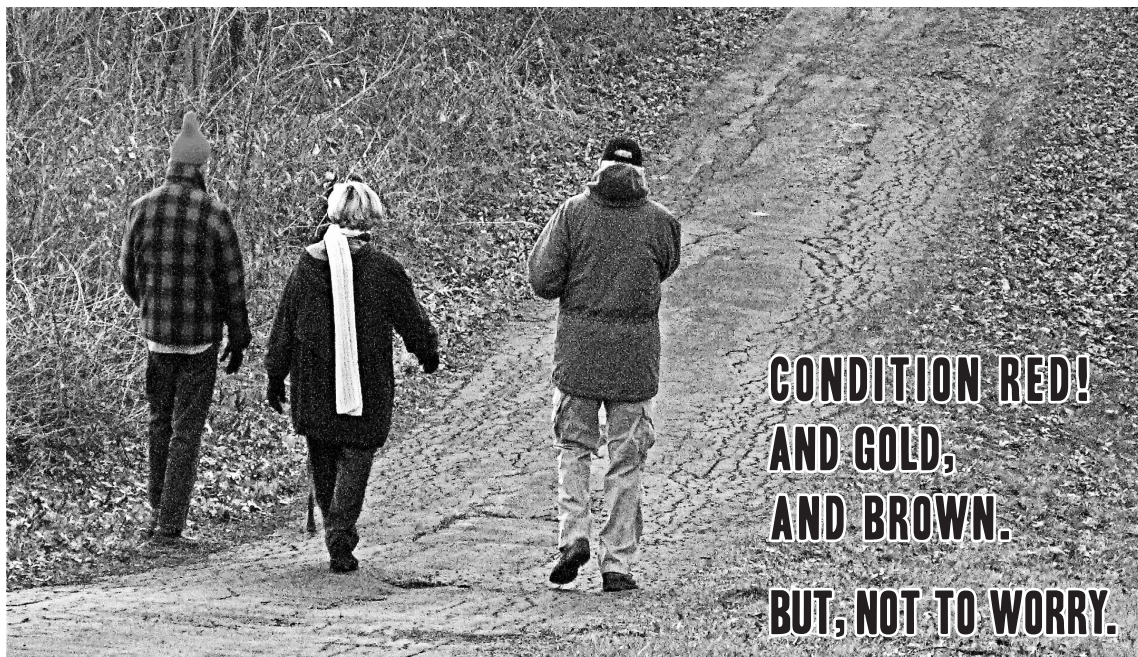
Links on the website offer previews and summaries.

A \$30 pass for wall-to-wall filmwatching is available on the website, which also tells how theater-goers can purchase individual tickets online or at the door.

After the Thursday night kickoff film, movies, shorts and documentaries will run all day from Friday through Sunday, with early shows at 10 a.m., afternoon features, and a nightcap at 7 p.m.

The festival met financial goals with Kickstarter, a fundraising method that allows patrons to make supporting pledges online. Attaining the Kickstarter goal meant the festival’s managers could better promote the event, bring in filmmakers, and cover printing and other costs.

The Festival is a tantalizing event for local movie devotees, who hunger for good films shown on a regular basis on the Opera House big screen.



**CONDITION RED!
AND GOLD,
AND BROWN.
BUT, NOT TO WORRY.**

Oh, all right, we know the brilliant fall colors are just chemical interplay, test tube stuff, but standing at a table in a laboratory won’t make it happen. Not without a little sunshine, the key ingredient as deciduous trees and the juices in their leaves do their thing.

In Driftless Wisconsin, we normally don’t entertain bus loads of leaf-peeper tourists, as they do in New England, but perhaps we should. This year, anyway.

A reader told us about a drive on Mill Creek Road (out Rte 39 to QQ to Q, etc.) and other country roads got rave reviews. But, actually, the trees on city streets were spectacular enough, and asked only for your attention — no need to fill the gas tank.

The fall color is only one of the best of several examples of good fortune we’ve relished in recent days. We’ll make note of all of them when we sit down to scribble our annual Thanksgiving List.

It’s a lengthy list.

We enjoy so many small town blessings, which lift our spirits and provide balance for a rural life that is sometimes a little bit, uh, inconvenient.

Topping our Thanksgiving list is what we consider new optimism and vitality in the city. Mineral Point still battles the Recession of 2008, but a flurry of interest has filled a few vacant storefronts on High and Commerce Streets.

The birth of the Cannery Arts Incubator and a highly-successful Fall Art Tour has given our creative culture a jolt of adrenaline.

The crowd that cheers the Pointers, Badgers and Packers have had good times in the stands and on weekend TV.

In the fields and pastures, the hay got baled and the cows got milked, and the harvest set some new crop records for Driftless farmers.

Fall is the best time to be outdoors, to rake the leaves, navigate a corn maze, buy veggies at the Farmers Market, and roll down a rustic road.

And, autumn is also a good time to be indoors when the day is chilly. We relax with friends and family. We are wowed, equally it seems, by tavern food and pasty parties at the church.

After a slimy election campaign, we’re still speaking to our neighbors.

Now, we begin buttoning up for a Wisconsin winter. It’s to be “average” this year, the experts tell us. We hope so.

We have much to be thankful for. Mineral Point remains a remarkably rewarding home for its residents and visitors, a special haven from a messy, often hostile world.

But there is work to be done. If we’re up for it.

This month, the *Times* uses a Page 2 “Snapshot” to focus our attention on the region’s challenges and opportunities. The goal of the article is to provide useful information on “where we stand today.” That gives us a vantage point, which in turn may produce an idea of where we might stand, tomorrow.

NOVEMBER ELECTION: HO-HUM

These words are written before the balloting, but it’s safe to make a prediction about how modern Americans deal with their privilege/duty to vote in mid-term elections.

Basically, we don’t vote. The turnout total is shameful.

When we do vote, we vow

to “throw out the bums,” and then we return them to office. (90% of the House, 80% of the Senate, with similar totals in the Wisconsin Statehouse)

Our system heavily favors incumbents. They enjoy the friendly maps, big money and celebrity needed to win.

So, on Nov. 5th, it’s likely the war to gain political turf in a polarized landscape will begin anew, with those we elected plotting steps to the next election, as quaint notions like The Common Good and Better America become mere footnotes in our history books.

FALL ART TOUR
ATTRACTS
A GOOD CROWD
—★—
GOOD DOLLARS, TOO

“Our best, ever!” was the way one gallery described the financial impact of this year’s Fall Art Tour.

“We don’t have numbers, but it was definitely way up there; we were run ragged,” said another merchant.

And, at a local restaurant, the word was, “usual number of diners, but a stronger ring at the cash register.”

That “Stronger Ring” is the best way to think of an event, now in its 22nd year, that stays fresh, brings arts tourists to town, and gives hard-working artists and artisans a strong economic boost. In the days before the event, they build a big inventory to welcome guests at their open studios.

The regional Tour is run by a group from Baraboo, Spring Green and Mineral Point.

Tom and Diana Johnston have coordinated the local segment of the Tour since its first year. Potter Christy Cole coordinates online/social media promotion.

“The idea,” Diana says, “is to give visitors a behind-the-scenes look into the lifestyles and works of artists who live in our beautiful rolling hills.” She credits fellow artists, who fund the event with help from dining and lodging establishments, donations to a Friends organization, and a subsidy from the city government’s Tourism Commission.

“All indications point to one of the best Fall Arts Tours in our history,” Johnston says, “and this year’s success will make next year even better.”

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

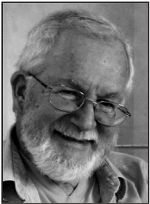
Published by



MINERAL POINT PRESS

216 NORTH IOWA STREET
MINERAL POINT, WI 53565

PARTNERS WITH POINT FORWARD
IN THE INTERESTS OF
COMMUNITY AWARENESS
AND FURTHERANCE
OF HISTORIC UNDERSTANDING



EDITOR & PUBLISHER

FRANK BEAMAN
EAGLE-EYED PROOFING
SANDEE BEAMAN

Photographs by the Editor
unless otherwise noted.

frankbeaman2@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shirley Barnes
Mike Christensen
Jan Johnson
Diana Johnston
Ried Knapp
Troy Maggeid, SWWRPC
Mineral Point Archive
Sandy Scott/Judy Sutcliffe
Brian Stuart

PRINTED BY
WOODWARD PRINTING SERVICES
PLATTEVILLE, WISCONSIN
© COPYRIGHT 2014



THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

is published without cost to its readers and printed without advertising content.

Pick up the **TIMES**
in several locations
in the city.
THANKS, merchants!

We send an issue to every
home in Mineral Point,
tucked in the bundle of the

Shopping News

with delivery during the
first week of each month,
May through December.

Call the FREE Shopping News
at (608) 348-2374 if you are not now
receiving each Tuesday's delivery.



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.



statistical A SNAPSHOT OF SW WISCONSIN

The Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC), headquartered in Platteville, examines five counties in the Driftless Area and works with communities and organizations to foster growth and develop solutions to local challenges. Created by an Executive Order in 1970, with 85% of its budget from outside the region, the SWWRPC provides low-cost expert planning and economic development services to communities in Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette and Richland counties. The Commission holds meetings, attended by volunteer representatives from the five counties, and issues reports and white papers on community issues.

To tell our readers how Iowa County is statistically shaped, the *Times* draws excerpts from some of the SWWRPC's published literature to fashion a "snapshot" of current economic conditions in the five-county region. Bracketing their words with quotation marks indicates the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the regional planners.



"GROW WISCONSIN" — A GRASSROOTS SURVEY, LAUNCHED IN 2011, WITH LOCAL DISCUSSIONS WITH 200 PARTICIPANTS AND 37 PUBLIC MEETINGS.

The group drafted six "livability principles:" 1) Provide more transportation choices; 2) Promote equitable, affordable housing; 3) Enhance economic competitiveness; 4) Support existing communities; 5) Coordinate/leverage federal policies and investment; 6) Place a higher value on our communities and neighborhoods.

DEMOGRAPHICS: In the 2010 Census, there were 150,000 residents in the five Driftless counties; of the 60 towns in the region, only Monroe and Platteville top 10,000 in population.

Iowa County had 23,687 people in 9,579 housing units.

Mineral Point claimed 2,487 people (down 130 in a decade), 1,147 households, 648 families. 27% of the households had children under 18, while 45% held married couples, and 43.5% were households shared by non-families. About 17% of the residents were over-65 and living alone. The age breakout: 21% under 18, 60% from 18 to 64, and 18% over 65. The city's median age was 43.7 years. Racial makeup: 98% White. Gender: 48% male, 52% female.

The region's **POVERTY** rate is pegged at 10%, "a population lacking health insurance, healthy foods and access to transportation. The demands are greater than the services provided."

The **OVER-65 CROWD** in the five-counties surveyed is 15%, higher than state and national totals and growing at a rate of 7% in the last ten years as Baby Boomers enter the age group. "Current facilities, transportation and programs must be expanded/modified. Preventative health care is important because costs went up almost 16% between 2007 and 2010."

In **EDUCATION**, 90% of the over-25 age group have a high school diploma, but only 19% have a Bachelor degree and 29% hold Associate status, much lower than the state's 26% Bachelor and 35% Associate totals. "Earnings and poverty rates are correlated with educational levels."

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, Pre-K to 12th Grade, has been declining steadily, but Mineral Point's enrollment remained steady, above 700. In the past seven years, "school taxes have gone up 14%, while school funding from state government has been slashed."

A **WORKFORCE TRAINING GAP** is present, with as little as 3% of skilled jobs filled by local graduates, "thus, firms are hiring workers from elsewhere." Farm related jobs "have gone begging, and **EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IS NEGATIVE** for general business/commerce, teaching, electrician, accounting and secretarial, carpentry, culinary arts, masonry and computer work."

It's a **LABOR/INDUSTRY MISMATCH** "employers often cannot find skilled workers to fill full-time, well-paid positions. The unemployment rate is relatively low, but that may be misleading, because many workers hold multiple or seasonal jobs."

The **AGRICULTURE** economy has many local plusses, "with abundant natural resources, good water and an adequate growing season. Crops are diversified, and a dominant dairy industry provides farm and manufacturing jobs." Many farmer-owners are reaching retirement age (average 65 for owners, 55 for operators). "Young farmers struggle to raise money for land and machinery."

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY, the region's economic backbone, produce a "multiplier effect," as successful businesses pay employees who in turn support still more businesses. Good natural resources boost manufacturing, service and, increasingly, research and development jobs. The region has generally weathered the recession well, with economic stability and a low debt rate.

However, **ENTREPRENEURSHIP** has declined in recent years due to limited access to start-up capital, gaps in broadband coverage, and competition between cities. "Communities should work together to attract new business to the region and boost manufacturing, which provides 22% of earnings." Among the other job categories, "Visitors" provide 16% of the total economic base, "Government" 12%; "Agriculture" 10%; "Finance" 6%; and "Construction" less than 2%.

CULTURE & CREATIVITY is distinctive and diverse because of strong community identity and historic traditions. Proximity to larger cities draws art/heritage tourists to the area. But, "compared to state totals, the region has not kept pace in tourism spending, employment or income. The region needs better marketing and coordination between cities, affordable studio space for artists, financial support for arts advocates, and efforts to attract younger arts-hungry people. It's possible to take economic advantage from tourism without becoming tourism-dependent."

HOUSING is a priority issue in Mineral Point, as evidenced in recent comments from the School District, the Chamber of Commerce and City Government. A separate SWWRPC regional study reported that, in the five-county Driftless area, 74% of occupied housing is owner-occupied, with 26% rented units, a rate higher than state and national norms. 36% of homes are mortgage-free, again a high figure, and the region has fewer foreclosures than the state total. The housing market is showing strength, but "it's clear more affordable housing, and housing alternatives, are needed." The median year homes were built is 1963, older than state and national ages, and 34% of homes were built before 1940 "and likely demand higher maintenance and energy costs."

The median value of a local home stands at \$130,145, much lower than the nationwide \$185,400 market value. Among homes, 81% are single-family housing (again, higher than state and national rates), 10% are vacant. "A lack of housing diversity limits households seeking a new address." Available rental units make up only 2% of total units, far below the standard 5%. An aging local population "will drive demand for senior-friendly homes and retirement/medical facilities; and, interestingly, homes vacated by elderly residents may open up housing to a younger generation."

With a **MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME** of \$43,011 for the region, affordable household expenses would be \$1,075 or less per month (30% of average monthly income). Also, overall cost-of-living expenses run a bit higher when you crank in the cost of long commutes, a tangible factor in Iowa county, where 40% of workers drive to their job site in other counties.

Finally, and significantly, Iowa county is the only county in the Driftless study in which the registration of **NEW HOME PERMITS** has been **steadily declining** since 2009. In home-building, identified as a key community issue, we're still stuck in the Great Recession, or so it seems.

[Editor's Comment: If you're still awake, please continue to the right-hand column on this page.]

So What?

Comments from the Editor

Thanks for wading through this oh-so-gray page of words and numbers. To compile it, I distilled several documents from the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC), and I interviewed planner Troy Maggeid.

I highly recommend scrolling through the full study online at: <http://swwrpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Grow-Southwest-Wisconsin.pdf>.

Digging into the SWWRPC work, I was impressed with the positive tone of many of the report's major "sound bites:" "While there are certainly challenges—population loss, transportation accessibility and deteriorating infrastructure—the opportunities abound and there are many aspects of rural America worth preserving." And, "Our goals are to increase community and population centers, new/better housing options, creating funds that attract and support move-in families, building Industry Clusters and other business support systems, constructing spec buildings, promoting and providing dollars to encourage risk-taking, and increasing community awareness and engagement for strategic planning and genuine cooperative economic development."

There are, however, some disturbing words in the report: Iowa County, with so much potential Tourism trade, trails Grant and Green counties in "Direct Visitor Spending." We are not finding skilled workers to fill available good jobs. And we're not building affordable or senior-friendly housing to attract and accommodate new residents.

In a number of ways, the SWWRPC list echoes some of the worries expressed by three Mineral Point study groups interviewed by the *Times* this summer. The School District, the Chamber, and the City's Tourism Commission found common concern with these community issues: an aging infrastructure and the high cost of fixing streets and sewers, a good school system struggling with reduced state funding, sluggish recovery from the 2008 recession, and an inadequate housing stock.

It's encouraging to know we are discussing our community issues and exploring possible solutions to our problems.

Perhaps it's time to accept an open invitation from Planner Maggeid of the SWWRPC to set up a new project, tailored specifically for Mineral Point, and work with the commission to draft targeted surveys and pragmatic plans to guide us in the days to come.

To get started, we'll need to get interested citizens around a table, find a few dollars, and resolve to "go to work."

BRAVO!



OPERA HOUSE STRATEGY A HIT

A round of applause for the decision to book shows of wider variety; it is filling the seats.

When the Opera House Board of Directors reorganized and named Parrish Johnston as Manager, the new operations chief promised changes in the way some performances are selected. The idea, the theater said, was to attract a broader cross-section of the entertainment genre, to add new flavors to earlier programs that leaned heavily toward art films and folk music concerts.

Judging by the numbers supplied by ticket-sellers, the strategy is working well for both the theater and its audiences. And, many members of the audience say they've enjoyed their very first Opera House visit.

In recent months, a New Orleans Preservation Jazz ensemble played to a boisterous crowd, a musical tribute to Country-Western artists put 200 in the house, an offbeat comic scored well, and the concert with Point5 and Grand Marquis was a rowdy success.

Berget's Jewelry sold eighty tickets to known Mineral Point residents for "Sweet Dreams & Honky Tonks," and many purchasers admitted they had never set foot in the Opera House, but were drawn by the chance to hear Country music.

Small theaters with limited seating capacity often cannot afford the set performance fees of traveling entertainers, so many venues—including the Opera House—negotiate a split of the revenue generated by the shows. It's a formula that spells more performances and a better bottom line for our non-profit theater, so it's welcome news for the historic stage at City Hall.



What's Cooking?

Charlie Socher, chef at MP Dining Co., will teach two culinary classes at the Shake Rag Alley School of the Arts. At his restaurant this month and next, he'll teach "How to Prepare Chicken Breasts Three Ways." After the class, he'll sit down with his students to enjoy their dinner.

Trained in Paris, a name chef in Chicago, Charlie adds new touches to old favorites.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AT CITY HALL

One hundred years makes it an antique, but the unique and historic building that houses the Opera House, the Public Library and City Hall is fully functional, working every day for the city's residents.

A local committee is drafting plans for an ambitious Centennial Celebration on Sun., Feb. 15, 2015. It will be a day without an admission charge, featuring special presentations (still in the planning stage) and stories and images submitted by families who are willing to share their historical experiences related to the municipal center.

Pointers are invited to jot down a story or memory, a personal experience or a tale passed from generation to generation. The stories and images will be displayed at the celebration, then archived in the Mineral Point Room.

Committee members are Lynn Goninen, Don Hawkins, Debi Heisner, Therese Hess, Parrish Johnston, Kristin Mitchell, Barb Polizzi and Lauren Powers.

A DECADE AT SHAKE RAG ALLEY SCHOOL

As celebrations go, the ten-year birthday bash was a quiet party at the Shake Rag Alley School of the Arts.

But it has been a decade of experimentation and growth for the school, a learning center still young when compared with many other arts and crafts schools around the country.

In an open letter to financial supporters, Board Pres. Don Hay listed the school's landmark accomplishments over the decade that began with the purchase of the historic Shake Rag Valley in 2004. "The dream came true," said Hay, "and continues today, more vibrant than ever."

Co-founders Sandy Scott and Judy Sutcliffe wax a bit nostalgic as they look back at the progress made in the Shake Rag Alley classrooms and open-air workshops. "In the early days, there was no blueprint, no book of instructions — we tried new ideas and many of them worked, and we enjoyed great support from donors, staff workers, teachers and Board members."

Sutcliffe and Scott have written a book about the school's "history, patterns and people from 2004 - 2014," available at Longbranch gallery.

Sutcliffe said, "Our Board is strong, with young members and fresh viewpoints" And Scott added, "I think Shake Rag Alley has an opportunity to become a magnet for Midwest America, at a time when arts and crafts are flourishing."



DISCOVER A LOCAL TREASURE

The Chamber of Commerce hosts 3rd Annual Local Treasures Night on Sat., Nov. 1st, with stores open until 8 p.m. to showcase hidden gems: a meet-and-greet opportunity for food and drink, music, artwork, crafts and writing.

FARMERS MARKET MOVES INDOORS

The popular Saturday morning food n' fun event escapes the cold by setting up shop (with a few less vendors) indoors at 114 High Street, across from Library Park. Open 8:30 to 11 a.m., with the length of the indoor market dependent on the strength of the buying public and product availability. So, drop by, invest in fresh, local food, and keep the Farmers Market open.

DRIFTLESS FILM FESTIVAL, YEAR FIVE

The Opera House is the sole venue for this year's FilmFest, an event that draws a movie-loving crowd from all over the Midwest. Nov. 6 - 9, with a couple of bonus films on Nov. 10 & 13.

The best way to size up the Film Fest is to click on their website, www.driftlessfilmfest.org and navigate the pages and links to choose the movies and buy tickets. See the story on Page One.

A SHAKE RAG ART LOTTERY 50@50=50

It works this way: 50 local artists have painted 50 canvasses, and 50 lottery tickets will be sold, at \$50 per ticket. The fun starts in the Quonset Hut at 6:30 on Nov. 15th, with a social hour followed by an exclusive, one-time performance of the "Santaland Diaries," with Sam Murn returning as Crumpet the Elf. Then, one by one, lottery tickets are drawn and everybody wins one of the pieces of original art. Call the Shake Rag School office for tickets, 987-4499 or visit www.ShakeRagAlley.com.

how to tie a turkey



Talking Turkey

250 million turkeys are raised in the U.S., per year.

736 million pounds of turkey are consumed on Thanksgiving Day.

200,000 calls are made to the Butterball Turkey Talk Helpline by nervous home chefs.

25 miles per hour is the top speed of a wild turkey.

1988 is the year former supermarket clerk Derrick Johnson claims he invented Frozen Turkey Bowling.

1 is the top ranking, owned by Texas, for U.S. states in the category "Most Thanksgiving Day Cooking Fires." (No doubt due to the popularity of deep-fried turkeys)

86 pounds is the weight of the winning bird in London's "Heaviest Turkey" competition in 1989. (World Record)

1983 was the year the famous movie line, "It ain't cool bein' no Jive Turkey so close to Thanksgiving" was first uttered (to Eddie Murphy in *Trading Places*.)

THIS JUST IN:

CUBS FALTER; FAIL TO WIN WLD. SERIES

The baseball season is over, and, once again, the Chicago Cubs have finished in a very familiar place — the cellar.

If you don't know why this happens, year after year, we take you back to 1945, when Greek tavern-owner William "Billy Goat" Sianis was rudely ejected from Wrigley Field for attempting to bring a goat to the World Series.

Details of the story vary, but the tavern's version goes something like this: The Cubs were up two games to one over the Detroit Tigers, and they were about to play Game Four. Sianis, whose tavern was across the street from Wrigley Field, hoped to bring his team luck, so he bought two tickets: one for him, and one for his pet goat, Murphy. But, at the gate, the ushers wouldn't let him bring the animal inside, ticket or no. Sianis appealed his case all the way up to the team's owner, P.K. Wrigley, who said the man was welcome but the goat was not, because "the goat stinks."

According to the legend, a downcast Sianis then slapped his curse on the team, saying, "The Cubs will never win a World Series so long as the goat is not allowed in Wrigley Field." The Cubs went on to lose the next three games of the Series to the Tigers, and Billy promptly sent Wrigley a telegram that read, "Who stinks now?"

In spite of multiple attempts to placate the ghosts of Billy and Murphy in recent years, the Cubs haven't won — or even appeared in — the Fall Classic since.

Source: Writers Almanac, on Natl. Public Radio

LOCAL SCHOOLS SHORTED; TAX LEVY IS THE LIKELY ADJUSTMENT

The Wisc. Dept. of Public Instruction has published its school funding report; and, once again, most rural school districts must deal with shrinking aid from Madison.

Mineral Point's 2014 state funding level is \$4,847,542. Last year's funding from the state was \$4,883,293. That works out to a \$35,751 loss in state aid, or a -0.73% decrease.

School Superintendent Luke Francois tells the *Times*, "The decrease does not take away from the services that can be offered by local schools (who must work within the state's revenue limit) but does pass the burden of making up those lost dollars to local property tax payers in the form of the next tax levy."



FLOTSAM & JETSAM

BY FRANK BEAMAN, EDITOR

This newspaper hit your front porch on Nov. 4th, the day of the mid-term election.

You DID vote, right?

I know, I know, there are so many reasons NOT to bother with the ballot box in today's toxic political climate. Being a truly informed voter requires full-time attention, and everything about current campaigns — the lies told in truckloads of televised finger-pointing, the machinations of the PACs, the gerrymandered districts and bogus "voting reforms" — all seem designed to keep you away from the polls, dazed, angry and nauseated.

As a student of politics for fifty years, I've witnessed the demise of statesmanship, the auction of government to the highest bidder, the surrender of Congress and Statehouse to partisan hacks, and the mugging of City Halls and Public Schools by those who control their purse strings.

The saddest thing, perhaps, is what polarized politics has done to personal friendships. At too many levels of American life, we are warring camps, two glowering armies flying ideological flags. And, few dare to come out of the trench to speak with the enemy.

As a political reporter, I used to think America was a centrist country, and extreme views were held only by a few noisemakers on the fringe. But, recent evidence points to polarization that has become deeply rooted in our economic condition and personal values and beliefs. If that's true, Washington did not *create* our nasty, partisan politics — splintered Washington actually *reflects* a splintered America.

Today's political campaigns serve only to tell a seriously uninformed public how bad the other party is. An election campaign, thus, is little more than propaganda, unencumbered by rules of conduct, to squeeze voters more tightly into pre-existing belief boxes.

We are under-informed and over-manipulated by today's political professionals, who are well-paid to mix the next batch of Campaign KoolAid they've enticed us to drink.

Remember Citizenship?

That's the old-fashioned name given the study of the mechanics of governance and our rights and responsibilities as citizens. Sadly, citizenship is undertaught in our schools, only whispered in our homes, and invisible in the popular media: the network newscasts, tabloids, and pundit-squawks of TV's left or right-wing echo chambers.

No wonder we often cannot answer even the most basic and simple political questions.

We simply aren't equipped to understand the complex political process, and we get only scant information about the candidates. So, we suffer a campaign cynically engineered for targeted audiences, delivered in crafted soundbites, slogans, platitudes, accusations — all packaged for playback to a gullible voting public.

Ignorance, and its partner, Fear, are not accidental by-products of our politics; they are among the main objectives.

We deal with attack ads on TV and scurrilous notecards in our daily mail because they WORK. We hear office-seekers repeat, as parrots do, the talking points of their handlers because "staying on message" WORKS. The game is to "feed the loyal base" and then to "dazzle the 'swing' voter."

We've swallowed political poison throughout American history.

We have tolerated it, funded it, and even applauded it.

Let's face it, changing our ugly politics would prove to be a long, hard process. But we should hold our noses and try to change something so badly broken.

How? By study and discussion that weighs opposing viewpoints; by casting an informed vote; by demanding full and fair news coverage to identify untruths; by working for campaign reform.

Putting it bluntly, we'll have to RAISE HELL, to expose and dethrone bought-and-paid-for office holders, the charlatans of the campaign trail, and the shadowy figures who bankroll our current universe of fear, folly and falsehood.



LINCOLN VS. DOUGLAS

A SIDEBAR STORY

In Wisconsin, the Campaign of 2014 was political warfare fought in ugly 30-second outbursts on television screens.

The closest thing we had to an unscripted exchange of views by competing political candidates—the sort of encounter that might actually produce a surprise—was the broadcast debate.

Historically, we've held fast to campaign debates because of the impact of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, seven face-offs in Illinois towns. The two candidates for the Senate had already debated in Chicago and Springfield, so the memorable contests were all held in smaller cities. The debate in Freeport, Illinois drew large numbers of people from neighboring Wisconsin, who wanted to hear the candidates' views on the issue of slavery.

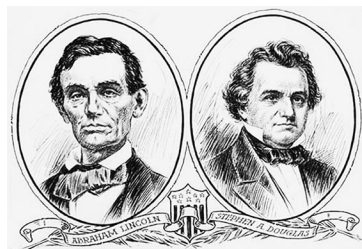
The format for debate was: one candidate spoke for 60 minutes, then the other candidate spoke for 90 minutes, and then the first candidate was given the final 30-minutes for his "rejoinder."

The audiences not only sat still for three hours, they were said to be "enthralled."

Newspaper coverage was intense. Chicago papers sent stenographers to create complete texts of each debate, and reprinted the dialog in full, with some partisan edits. The newspapers that supported Douglas edited his speeches to remove any errors made by the stenographers and to correct his grammatical errors, while they left Lincoln's speeches in the rough form in which they had been transcribed. In the same way, pro-Lincoln papers touched up Lincoln's speeches, but left the Douglas text untouched.

Lincoln lost the election for Senator in Illinois, but he sat down to edit the texts of all the debates and had them published in a book. His fans snapped it up.

The widespread coverage of the original debates and the subsequent popularity of the debate book led eventually to Lincoln's nomination for President of the United States by the 1860 Republican National Convention in Chicago. There, he was dubbed "Honest Abe."



Here's a Review Question:

Would the Lincoln-Douglas debates play on YouTube?



Coming to the Potluck?

In several editions this year, including this one, the *Times of Mineral Point* has pointed to community concerns, to issues we felt merited our readers' attention. The words on these pages were not designed to alarm readers, and we didn't intend to be teachy or preachy, but an account that outlines a community problem and then speaks of a possible solution is often perceived as a list of "shoulds" and "oughts," of "dos and don'ts." It can sound like a boss's commands.

Fact is, the best solutions to community problems depend on choices made by "We the People," not by a few elected officials, not by "experts," and certainly not by a newspaper editor.

We live a good life in this remarkable city. We have solid, friendly and cooperative relationships with our neighbors.

We can build on that.

Ideally, decisions about the city's future would emerge as thoughtful public *consensus*, after adult discussions have produced a workable agenda.

The *Times* doesn't fancy a Top Down Model for civic betterment, in which a Boss gives us "shoulds," and "dos and don'ts." That model starts with a diagnosis that we are sick, damaged, incompetent, incapable, that we are failing.

Instead, we suggest what you might call the Potluck Model, expressed by shouting, "We're all at the table now!!"

Following a Potluck Model, we assume people care about each other, and Better Times — shared by all — is the goal. Tablemates are not sorted and ranked; they are simply asked to bring something tasty to share. All cooks participate. All enjoy the respect of the others. At a potluck, you don't criticize the recipes; you nurture fellow chefs, you listen and contribute ingredients.

This newspaper will continue to publish information to make readers aware of "what's stewing and brewing."

But, the menu, the stirring, the oven time, and the line at the buffet? All that stuff is up to We, the People!

A New Look for Gallery Night in December

Arts Mineral Point (AMP) is reworking the playbook for the local institution known as Gallery Night, to make the event longer, stronger and more lucrative for the city's artists and merchants.

In 2015, Gallery Night sponsorship will expand beyond art galleries to include all of the tourism-based businesses who see the value of the event to the local economy.

AMP will preview some of its revised concepts at the December 6th Gallery Night, initiating new promotion and marketing practices designed to draw more visitors to the city's business places. The AMP team will buy radio, print and magazine advertising within a fifty-mile radius around Mineral Point. Other promotions, some on the social media, will also be generated.

AMP Board Member Jan Johnson says the marketing campaign will focus on a key demographic: the arts-friendly shopper who makes travel plans for their family.

AMP's plans for the event will widen participation by stores and restaurants who have been invited to join artists and galleries for extended hours, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

"Every dollar an arts tourist spends circulates in the local economy about seven times," Johnson says. "Those dollars support a mutually beneficial enterprise for both local artists and local businesses, and the 'ripple effect' provides tax revenue and helps pay family living expenses."

"AMP's goal," says Johnson, "is to make Mineral Point THE destination for discriminating visitors."



ROBERT FROST'S ANSWERING MACHINE

Your call's important;
thanks a heap,
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
So leave your message at the beep.

We get the politics we deserve.