

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

ILLUSTRATED

Vol. 3, No 7

September, 2014

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

DO THE MATH

EVENTS EQUALS DOLLARS

Elsewhere in these pages, we speak of a long weekend in August when streets, shops and restaurants in the city were crowded with visitors from all over the Midwest.

The 1st Annual "Paint Out" signed up fifty street artists. Bikers in the Dairyland Dare took on the city's challenging hills. And, perfect weather brought the Weekenders who have become a part of the Mineral Point tourism profile.

Out-of-towners can provide real dollars for our community. Every bed in town (about 90) was booked, some for as many as four days. Downtown restaurants and stores enjoyed brisk business.

With artists' early registrations and a 25% commission on "Paint Out's" thirty-one auctioned paintings, the not-for-profit Arts Mineral Point (AMP) organization enjoyed a significant fundraising event.

The Dairyland Dare bicycle race brought 1,100 riders from twenty states; some got off their bikes to stroll our streets.

An earlier 2014 event, a Haiku Festival coordinated by Gayle Bull at Foundry Books, brought seventy poets to the city from homes in the Midwest and Canada. They were guests in the city for three to four days.

Well-executed public events can produce tangible benefits for non-profits, our historic sites, public gathering spots, and retail, lodging, and dining establishments. It's exciting to see crowded streets. And the city's good reputation moves up another notch.

The overall impact of Mineral Point's heritage tourism is significant, and with smart decisions and hard work can boost our local economy to much greater heights.



AN EDUCATOR WELCOMES HIS PUPILS

September is a page-turner. Summer's idleness ends, and with it ends the illusion that idleness is acceptable. We now speak of "getting back on track, back to work, back in the groove." Or, perhaps, the rut.

Schools open up, shake off a few months of dusty heat, and teachers and the front office scan a long list of tasks that must be done before the halls fill with reluctant learners.

The teacher's reward for long hours at low pay is the discovery that some of the learners are *not* reluctant, but are eager, even if they must hide their enthusiasm from their classmates.

For parents, the opening of classes prompts another long ToDo list and a sizable outlay of time and cash for books, supplies and school wardrobes.

Within the family's four walls there is spirited debate about the appropriateness of those wardrobes, the use of makeup, new rules for smart-phone use, choice of friends, the opposite sex, and sharing the family automobile. And, if a late-teen is off to college, the family faces a universe of new uncertainties involving complex choices and heavy costs.

Kids and parents trudge on. School is their job.

And Mom and Dad turn the page of the calendar and sigh. Daily work seems to change its character as autumn nears.

The summer smile fades.

Labor Day is second only to January 1st as a day to draw up new resolutions, to turn over a few new leaves.

At the desk where this newspaper is written, we've turned over a leaf or two.

This is our seventh issue, and we learn as we go along. We learn by making mistakes, and we try to fix them. We learn from our readers, whose comments are welcomed.

Most of all, we learn about the remarkable community in which we live, discovering what explorers have discovered since ancient times: that we actually know very little about our spot on the map.

There are *many* communities within our community. We tell the world about "Art, Architecture, Ambience," but the city's artistic community is only one of our centers of interest and activity. A fourth "A" is agriculture, and we should remember we are, for a fact, a farm service town.

For many Pointers, local schools are the most important facet of daily life. For many others, it's the family's church, the place where they spend their time and energy.

The good news—it's *really* good news—is that the city's diverse communities are not at war with each other. There are occasional sideways glances, perhaps a few chuckles, but peaceful coexistence and harmony are the general rule.

We are not divided by the ways we differ. We are united by the ways we are alike.

We tend to focus on the things we have in common. We measure what matters to everyone in the city, not solely to the moneyed interests.

Call it "Commonomics."

That term is gaining ground in the literature of those who gather to suggest new ways to improve their communities. In Commonomics, citizens work to make their town a place where, by choice or crisis, people are trying to figure out how to transform something they've known into something better for all.

The *Times* is dedicated to that idea—that we can make an astonishing city even better by talking, and then acting, in sensible, adult ways.

In this edition, we'll tell you about some of the discussions now under way in Mineral Point, as townspeople meet to solve problems and map new, positive directions.

But, while we talk about the future, we should applaud the present day's pleasures.

After the high winds of June, we are grateful for a cool patch last month, day after day of sunshine and seventies. The pesky gnats finally left town, so summer's long twilight was the perfect time and clime for grilling a few brats, chilling a few Spotted Cows, and hanging out with our neighbors.

22ND ANNUAL CORNISH FESTIVAL



Plans call for a Variety of Heritage Events



In the years when Mineral Point was only a cluster of rude huts and cottages in the Shake Rag valley, as many as 15,000 rugged miners sailed from Cornwall and landed in Wisconsin's Old Lead Region.

We celebrate our Cornish legacy every year, and this year's Festival is a delight for "Cousin Jacks and Jennys."

From Fri., Sept. 26 through Sun., Sept. 28, dozens of events are on tap, to recognize Celtic contributions to our history and to welcome visitors who would enjoy the study of the unique ways of the Cornish.

The Southwest Wisconsin Cornish Society coordinates the weekend, working with the Pendarvis Historic Site, the Public Library and other locales to stage workshops, lectures and local tours.

The traditional kickoff for the Festival is pub games, live music and brews on Friday night at the Kiddleywink Pub in the Pendarvis Row House.

At a number of locations in the city, Saturday brings a full day of Celtic learning, lore and laughter, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. And, in the evening, the Opera House presents *West Wind*, a concert with several energetic groups performing songs, jigs and reels from both old and new traditions.

Samhain Spirits, at 4 o'clock on Saturday, brings back to Pendarvis some of the Cornish spirits who move in both natural and supernatural worlds.

It's a one-of-a-kind weekend! To find out more, click on

www.cornishfest.org

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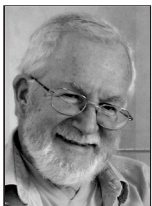


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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Check Sandee Beaman's
Online Events Calendar

Go to

<http://hwy23events.wordpress.com>

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

COMMITTEES DISCUSS LOCAL ECONOMY

PANELS FROM THE CHAMBER, THE CITY, AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS DRAFT PLANS FOR LOCAL GROWTH

As Mineral Point pulls its economy from a punishing recession, a spirit of optimism has infused three discussion groups that have important issues to consider and heavy tasks to accomplish.

The Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee is working to increase the city's businesses, tax base, and home sales. The Tourism Commission, an arm of city government, seeks ways to bring more overnight visitors to town. And a School District Strategic Plan outlines ways to make local schools a model for other rural districts.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Formed about a year ago, this volunteer committee is exploring ways to develop new business enterprises, which would boost the city's tax base and increase local jobs.

Co-Chairs Mary Jo Ceniti and Joe Witmer, of Farmers Savings Bank, say local industries are now advertising for additional employees, but good jobs remain unfilled because Mineral Point does not adequately offer housing and other amenities to attract workers in manufacturing. Ceniti and Witmer speak of a need for one or more new residential subdivisions with modern homes offered at modest cost — "but not quick-built rows of houses as seen in many other cities." A Chamber housing survey is planned.

The committee is probing the possibility of a new Tax Increment Financing District. (TIF, a public financing method, is used as a subsidy for redevelopment, infrastructure, and other improvement.) There is an existing TIF area on Business 151, where the Quality Inn and other buildings stand. Unlike that industrial park, however, a new district might contain up to 35% residential development.

The committee is pondering ways to find businesses to fill the city's empty storefronts, and a program to provide rent subsidies, to encourage new tenants, is one possibility.

Use of the city's Revolving Loan Fund is another good option for start-up businesses that are seeking financing.

The group recently installed blue signs to aid motorists in navigating to the city's attractions. And, their new video will list the city's strengths.



Ceniti and Witmer say the Chamber is looking for good ideas from the public, and they place importance on a positive community spirit: "Attitude is vital. We must be careful, but we CAN grow, and we SHOULD."

TOURISM COMMISSION

It's a city agency, appointed by the Mayor, made up of a solid cross-section of the local lodging industry, and it uses Room Tax revenue to support the commission's efforts to boost local tourism.

Deb Donaghue, who chairs the panel, says there is often confusion about the role of the Commission. "We're not part of the Chamber," she says. "Our job is to purchase broadcast and print campaigns that bring overnight tourists to the city. Spending by those tourists, in turn, cycles new tax revenue to the city."

The commission lobbied the City Council to increase the room tax from 3% to 5%, and then doubled the annual budget for city promotion and marketing.

The commission maintains a small grant program to aid groups that promote tourism.

"Mineral Point should position itself as the tourism hub for the Driftless Region," says Donaghue. "In a way, we are *already* the hub, the starting point for out-of-towners who check in here, then explore the rest of the countryside."

At her business, Brewery Creek Restaurant and Inn, she has learned that tourists are often drawn from Spring Green, Platteville, and other regional cities. And, the Commission's zip code analysis found Madison provided the most overnight guests, followed by the Twin Cities of Minnesota.

She praised the "look and feel" of Mineral Point. "Tourists love our old buildings and our hilly terrain," she says, "and we must preserve those attributes as our basic fabric."

Donaghue cited an improving housing market as a sign of economic vitality, and said tourists who might move to town to make a living should be sought out, and welcomed.

The commission's new tourism map/folder will promote the city's charm, character, and its surprisingly dynamic schedule of local events.

MINERAL POINT DISTRICT SCHOOLS

In an interview conducted just before the public schools opened for the fall semester, District Superintendent Luke Francois expressed pride and optimism in the face of tough times for rural schools.

In the past four years, state funding for schools has been slashed more quickly than in any other state, and Wisconsin is second only to Alabama in largest cuts per pupil — \$1,038 less per student in the 2013-14 school year than in 2008. The cutbacks force administrators to choose between staff and program reductions or asking taxpayers for more money. "When I came to Mineral Point four years ago," Francois says, "state per-pupil funding had been rising every year since year 2000, but in 2010 it swung from plus-\$250 to minus-\$600. If you take minus-\$850 and multiply by our 700 students you see what we're facing."

The Department of Public Instruction pegs total investment per student in Mineral Point at \$10,472. Of that total, 57% comes from state aid, 39% from local taxpayers, 3% from grants, and 1% from the federal government.

Obviously, when state funding shrinks, something has to give. The result, Francois says, is, "There's no fat in the district's \$12 million budget. We've worked hard to live with economic realities, stay on track with our educational goals, and maintain our standards, in spite of rising costs and bare-bones support."

A Fair Funding bill has been introduced in the state legislature, but chances for passage are slim because the bill helps rural schools (50% of all of the state's schools) but most lawmakers are from big cities.

Aid to Wisconsin schools is based on a complex Equalization Formula. "The goal," Francois says, "is to meet a state-imposed cap on school funding." In recent times, a number of communities have voted to increase that top limit, and if done in Mineral Point, revenue from the state would increase.

The district applies for grants, Francois told the *Times*, but a referendum on operating costs may be the only way to bring financial relief.

Enrollment in Mineral Point schools stands at 730 students, essentially the same as in several previous years. Farm kids are leaving the district while young families are moving in. Open enrollment has produced more move-ins than move-outs. And, home-schooling families have joined the public schools because they've realized that Mineral Point works to personalize learning. A rising enrollment would mean more revenue from property taxes, so the superintendent would like to see more families with school-age children move into the city. "But that means there must be good jobs, a good housing market, and all the other things that make a new home attractive," he says.

Supt. Francois is listening, and contributing, to the work of the district's Strategic Plan study group, which meets regularly to draft a long-term living document to guide the district's schools. "Everything we do should be attached to the principles of our strategic plan," Francois says. "If action agrees with the plan we should say 'yes;' if not we should say 'no.'"

The district's Wisconsin Student Assessment System test scores have steadily risen to "Top 3" status in recent years, with superior high school scores on the standardized exams and solid improvement throughout the rankings.

Francois considers most of the mandated tests a measure of "basic competency, a way to make sure our students have really learned it." And, with the state's Report Card forthcoming this month, Francois says, "We've made some very demanding shifts, and I predict we'll exceed expectations when compared with other districts around the state."

The superintendent sees the controversial Common Core standards as a flexible tool for learning, "a road map, not marching orders."

The district has growing needs: salaries for the staff, building maintenance, enough teachers to keep classes small and personalized, and funds to keep up with today's fast-moving technologies.

And, there are state-run programs that siphon funding from local schools. Mineral Point lost \$76,000 in school aid this year, diverted to taxpayer-financed charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine.



"We seek a vibrant program across all areas: math, science, the humanities, fine arts and sports," says Luke Francois.

NOTES FROM A BUSY WEEKEND



LIVELY “PAINT OUT” BOOSTS GOOD WILL, TOURISM & CITY’S ARTS REPUTATION

The city’s first “Paint Out” was by all measures a success. It brought forty-five painters to a juried competition, displayed their work, and offered gallery-goers an opportunity to purchase one of the many canvasses portraying an outdoor scene in Mineral Point.

Arts Mineral Point (AMP) made good use of volunteers and used contributions from local sponsors to entertain the visiting plein air artists, mount their completed work in three galleries, judge 120 entries, and award cash prizes to the artists who best captured the city’s colors and character in three days of outdoor painting.

AMP Committee Member Ried Knapp, owner of Wantoot Gallery, said the artists were unanimous in their praise for the scenery in Mineral Point Township and the people they met on the streets. Knapp quoted the visitors as saying, “This place is an embarrassment of riches; the problem is deciding what NOT to paint!”

“Two artists,” Knapp told the *Times*, “said they wanted to move to Mineral Point.”

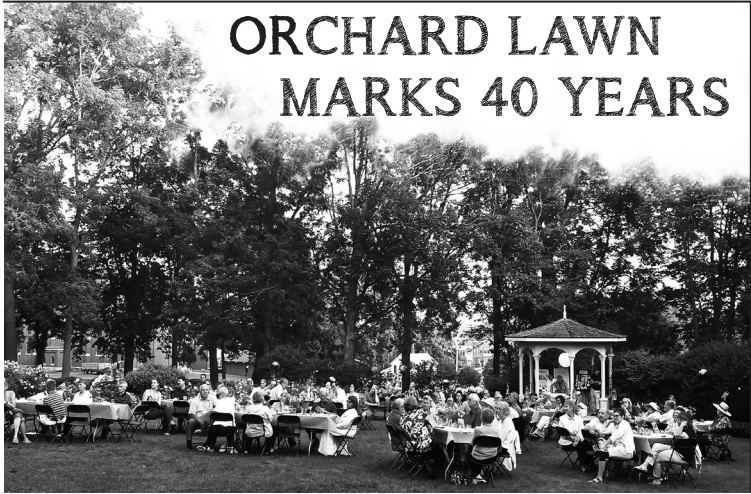
Thirty-one paintings were sold as patrons flocked to the galleries for silent auctions. Forty-eight unsold works have been moved to display space at the Pendarvis site, and are now available for purchase.

AMP took a 25% commission on every painting sold, and when combined with the registration fees paid by the competitors, a significant sum flowed into the AMP treasury.

“Good sales were a boost to the organization’s working capital,” said Knapp, “which will enable future events and programs that benefit the arts community.”

AMP is already drafting plans for “Paint Out, 2015”, and many visiting artists say they are eager to return to Mineral Point to set up their easels once more at favorite vantage points on city streets and country lanes.

A new tradition is born!



ORCHARD LAWN MARKS 40 YEARS

The August 9th evening was picture-perfect, as eighty friends of the Mineral Point Historical Society gathered for a picnic on the lawn of the Gundry home. The event

commemorated the 1939 founding of the Society, when eleven determined history-lovers raised enough money to buy out the contract of the demolition company hired to tear down the 1868 house and

its outbuildings. The home and gardens are undergoing careful restoration but are offered to the community as “the living room of Mineral Point,” open for a variety of uses. Pres.

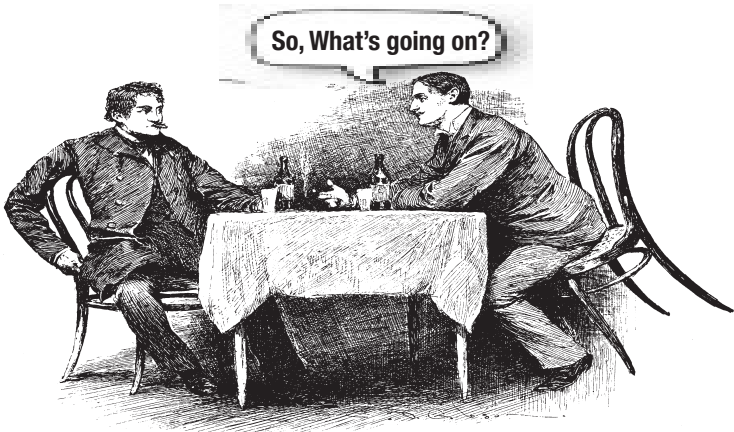
Matt Ostergrant recognized several volunteers who maintain building and grounds, and Carole Spelic, who has coordinated the Society’s popular “Jammin’ on the Porch” music events in recent years.



The first early riders whizzed down the Rte 23 hill and took a hard turn onto Doty Street at Five Points

DAIRYLAND DARE

Bikers camped out here, and were spotted as they visited stores, restaurants and galleries. Several spent time viewing the work of the painters who spread the city’s colors and character on “Paint Out” canvasses.



MATSURI, A JAPANESE FESTIVAL

Mineral Point celebrates the cuisine, colors and character of Japanese culture on the weekend of Sept. 5th - 7th. The Shake Rag Alley School of the Arts hosts the event, with workshops, lectures, demonstrations and many other activities taking place at several locations: Foundry Books, Bruce Howdle studios, Kusaka, Bottleworks, and the Public Library. There are sessions on sushi making, crafting trays, Raku pottery, wood block printing, calligraphy, kites, dyeing techniques, martial arts and more. On Friday night, a movie by a famous Japanese director will be shown at the Opera House, and a special Kabuki performance is set for Alley Stage on Saturday night. Free events for kids, too.

Details on the school’s website, www.shakeragalley.com

JAMMIN’ ON THE PORCH

The popular Friday night series continues with the music of “Better Daze,” Mineral Point’s classic rock band. Bring a picnic, folding chairs, a bottle, and a happy outlook. 6 to 8 p.m. on Sept. 12th, on the lawn at the Gundry home, Orchard Lawn.

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN BOOK FESTIVAL

Mineral Point’s Little Creek Press plays host to a day of workshops, inspiration, bookselling, networking and jollity. Authors and other literary types conduct fourteen 90-minute sessions with aspiring writers, and there are sales and booksignings, too. At the Public Library on Sept. 13, beginning at 9 a.m. Check the schedule and reserve your seat at swwiobookfestival.com

Best-selling author and humorist Michael Perry headlines an evening performance at the Opera House. (See Below)

“MICHAEL PERRY RUNS HIS YAPPER”

The title says it all. Perry, author of the noteworthy first book, “Population 485” (his adventures as a volunteer fireman) and a flock of other books, headlines a talk at the Opera House on Sept. 13th at 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$15, from the Book Festival.

Perry is no stranger to Mineral Point, but his amusing stories about his life as Rural Renaissance Man are sure to please.

BETH KILLE IN CONCERT

The Alley Stage welcomes Beth Kille, an award winning artist from Madison who has been cranking out her unique blend of rock, country, folk and blues since 2000 in house concerts, coffee houses and festivals.

She is committed to the advancement of young musicians and is sought out by private students and workshops for her song-writing knowledge. Saturday, Sept. 20, 7:30pm. Tickets \$10

SWEET DREAMS & HONKEY TONKS

It’s a new revue that presents the best-loved songs of the classic country artists Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline and Johnny Cash. Tributes in music and captivating stories of their colorful lives. Starring Tom Waselchuk and Jami Lampkins.

At the Opera House, Fri., Sept. 19th.

Tickets, \$15, from www.brownpapertickets.com

MASCOT THEORY AT ALLEY STAGE

The music of The Mascot Theory has been called “a full-fat, high-energy dose of Americana-tinged, folk-country rock.” Check it out on a musical evening on the outdoor stage at 7:30 on Sat., Sept. 20th.

IF THE 22ND CORNISH FESTIVAL IS PART OF YOUR PLANS, HERE ARE TWO CORNISH EXPRESSIONS THAT MAY COME IN HANDY:
“**KERNOW BIS VYKKEN**” MEANS “CORNWALL FOREVER!”
AND
“**MY A VINN EVA KOREV**” MEANS “I WOULD LIKE TO DRINK BEER.”

THIS JUST IN:

CELEBRITY BECOMES RUDE & CRUDE AT PUBLIC EVENT

Legions of Film Fans Send Encouraging Tweets to Film Star Facing Court Date

It happened at a Manhattan performance of “Cabaret.”

Shia LaBeouf, 28, actor and Major Celebrity, behaved very boorishly as a member of the audience, smoking cigarettes, slapping people on their back-sides, shouting to the actors on stage, then yelling at security personnel who carried him from the theater.

He is quoted as screaming, “Do you know who I am?”

In brief, here’s an account of who he is: LaBeouf attained early Celebrity status by playing a goofball on the Disney Channel, then graduated to a few films after (gasp!) catching the eye of Steven Spielberg. At the gala premier for his film “Nymphomaniac” he wore an odd paper bag over his head.

The Tabloids loved it.

The actor has a long record of alcohol abuse, but he says he’s getting good advice from Fellow Celebrity Brad Pitt. His public tantrums include picking a fight outside a strip club and urinating on a wall in a crowded restaurant. Now, ejection from a Broadway show.

LaBeouf is no stranger to the police who try to maintain order at Celebrity Watering Holes. They know who he is.

But he asks “Do You Know Who I Am??!!”

There can be only three answers to that question: 1) Yes, 2) No, and 3) I don’t care.

A number of Celebs have tried to pull rank with that “Do You Know Who...”question in recent days: Reese Witherspoon, Rihanna, Alec Baldwin, Charlie Sheen, and countless professional athletes.

Americans usually recoil at this kind of posturing (it’s worse than cutting in line) and one wonders how someone who enjoys all the material privileges of modern life could be so lamely desperate.

But, stardom is its own profession, and needs constant feeding to maintain the brand. If one is famous for being famous, perhaps the question is a plaintive cry, “Will I dissolve if you don’t recognize me?”

Number 3: “I don’t care” is the likely response from average people, those who do not carry the weight of fame.

As Garrison Keillor (never a Hot Celebrity) put it, “Why should I care about a kid who makes headlines by wearing a baseball cap backwards?”





FLOTSAM & JETSAM

by Frank Beaman, Editor

Everything on television is constantly changing: the flickering picture on the screen, the program schedule, and the new batch of “hot” shows.

The well-paid executives who fashion TV tell us their programming simply reflects American tastes and the ever-changing demands of our pop culture. They say TV viewers actually *want* to watch frothy news, the political shoutfests, silly/sexy sitcoms, “reality” shows, cops, crime, violence, and visits to hermits, hoarders, swamp folk, and Honey Boo Boo’s dysfunctional family.

To find quality TV fare, you must search diligently.

But I digress.

It’s my duty to make you aware of the latest trends in TV-Land, and a new show on the VH1 channel may push television to a new plateau.

Or a new depth.

“Dating Naked” features just-introduced strangers, looking for love, and they’re buck naked when they meet.

Another sociological breakthrough is running on the FYI channel. It’s “Married at First Sight,” in which two strangers who have been paired by supposed experts begin their new relationship by getting married, and then deciding, over time, if they like each other.

TV wows us again, taking our penultimate adolescent objectives—seeing someone naked/getting married—and making them a *starting* point instead of the “end game.” So, if TV goes “All Nude All the Time,” who could be surprised if somebody opens a nude beach on the shores of the Pecatonica?

Indeed, television mirrors American culture. And, in many ways, seventy years of TV has made us a society that asks only to be entertained.

Further, many people will believe nothing until they see it on the tube. They should, for sanity’s sake, go the other way. They should believe very little of what they see on TV. The popular shows are carefully crafted, not for enlightenment, but to deliver audience to the program’s advertisers. We’re aware most programs are pure theater, but many shows deceive naive viewers (on “Man, Alone, in the Woods,” ask “So, who’s holding the camera?”).

Most news programs have succumbed to TV’s entertainment values, and are loaded with crime stories and fires (with an on-scene reporter announcing that the blazing building behind him is on fire). Those stories fill our news programs because they are easy and cheap to shoot. Boring-but-important news usually doesn’t make it on the air. And, a shocking percentage of news stories are packaged news segments provided by public relations firms pushing a hidden sponsor’s products, books, or political view.

Furthermore, it’s now clear there is a lot of “fake news” out there. Not “fake” like Jon Stewart’s Daily Show, but outright lies, artfully composed and photographed, offered to TV outlets that are too lazy or stupid to screen the fabricated “news story” and kill it.

What to do? The couple below might give us a hint.

You know, maybe *nudity* on TV is the least of our worries.

School Days in the 1930s



Sweet Clover School, a frame building that once stood on County Highway DD, represented one of six school districts in the larger Mineral Point school system. The one-room school was moved to its half-acre lot, according to local histories, and served rural children until it was torn down in 1962 and its lumber was auctioned.

In the 1930s, a decade depicted in the painting above, students in rural Mineral Point attended classes in one-room schools like Sweet Clover or Skunk Hollow, schools with fanciful and colorful names. The teacher, who earned \$65 a month, conducted a school day divided into 15-minute segments: a quarter-hour for kids in the third grade, a quarter-hour spent with fourth graders, and so on, until the day ended. Lunch and recess were the only interruptions. In a school like this, the teacher (usually single, female, with one year of post-high school training) performed all the chores for the eight grades enrolled there: teaching, starting the furnace, keeping the building clean, and supervising the playground activity. Teachers often boarded at homes in the school district during the winter months.

Sweet Clover School drew up its own rules for conduct, called

the Seven Laws: “Be there when the morning bell rings. Don’t leave your seat without permission. Come in promptly from recess. No noisy play outside. Don’t damage books or furniture. No talking. No whispering.”

The teacher was to keep track of all infractions, and wielded the power of expulsion.

School supplies consisted of a box of crayons, writing paper, an eraser, a ruler, and a penny pencil. Students brought home-made paste to the school, and in the winter it froze.

The school year was shorter then, and there were no snow days; the students just grabbed their sleds and swooped down hills to the school in the valley. Mittens and jackets dried on and around the woodstove.

Spring arrived on May Day, when students went into the fields to pick early wildflowers.

And, eighty years ago, the Christmas program was held in the afternoon. No electricity. So, of course, no lights for the stage.

The last day of school found all the students picking up sticks and limbs and “spiffing up” the schoolyard to get ready for the big school picnic. There was a baseball game, and all the fathers would join in to prove they could still run the bases.



TWO CITIES, TWINNED

REDRUTH is an old mining town in rugged hill country near Lands End, in Cornwall. The town began to take shape in the 12th Century, and as copper and tin were dug out and smelted Redruth became the urban center of the giant Cornish mining industry.

The city, population 14,000, has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It has restored the historic railroad depot used by lines to convey processed minerals.

You can tour the abandoned mines and smelting furnaces.

There is a cinema on Fore Street, the city’s main drag, with stores, restaurants and cafés nearby.

Buzzards darken the skies.

The name Redruth is said to have been derived from the waters of a stream so discolored with the iron oxide of tinning activities that it ran red. “Ruth,” in Cornwall, means “river ford.”

This year, Redruth gossips were buzzing about a new “Pasty Drive-Thru,” but the developer’s plan was withdrawn and his site is now up for sale.

MINERAL POINT is an old mining town in Wisconsin’s hilly Driftless Area. The first settlers came in 1827, and as skilled Cornish miners found work here the city grew to become the center of the lead and zinc industry in the Old Lead Region.

The city, population 2,500, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It has restored the historic railroad depot used by lines to convey processed minerals.

You can tour the mine sites and visit a mining museum.

There is an Opera House on High Street, the city’s main drag, with shops, restaurants and galleries nearby.

Turkey vultures fly at dusk.

The name Mineral Point was no doubt considered a step above the earlier “Shake Rag Under the Hill,” which probably was a very apt description of the city in its 1830s rough-and-tumble days.

This year, Pointer gossips are buzzing about a new cafe specializing in Mexican food and drink, and are anxiously awaiting its opening day.



A Generous Crew at Quonset Hut

When the Shake Rag Alley School of the Arts drew up the plans for the extensive remodeling of the Quonset Hut, the planners made “using local contractors” one of the major goals of the project.

Brad and Anita Berget, who just started a new local business, stepped up. Their firm, Specialty Building Services, provided four coats of sealants and surface hardening agents for the hut’s 3,200 sq. ft. of concrete floors. The Bergets and their children pitched in on the day the floor protectants were spread.

The school had a budget for the job. But, when the bill came in, the total charge for labor and materials was only 12% of the school’s estimate. The balance, more than a thousand dollars, was an in-kind contribution from the Bergets.

The building has been used extensively this summer, but completion of the entire project is set for spring 2015.

LAST WORDS

It happened in Alaska, at a debate between three men running for the Republican nomination for a seat in the U.S. Senate. Two of the candidates ran with traditional GOP positions against big bad government, which is somewhat interesting because Alaska gets more federal money per person than any other state. The third wannabe, Joe Miller, is a Tea Party stalwart who specializes in anti-immigration/pro-gun points of view.

The debate, however, dealt mainly with oddly personal information. Miller, it was revealed, was once charged with carrying a gun in an airport, and all three have speeding tickets on their record.

But, at one point, the questioning became more intense:

“Are you afraid of heights?” “No.” “No.” “No.”

“Have you eaten salmon this week?” “Yes!” “Yes!” “Yes!”

The entire staff of the *Times of Mineral Point* endorses the view that America needs more of this kind of hard-hitting inquiry in political reporting.

