

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

ILLUSTRATED

A CASUAL COMPENDIUM: WORDS AND WHIMSY TO INFORM AND AMUSE THE LOYAL READER

HISTORICAL SOCIETY PICKS FIVE FOR BOARD

★
Lyceum panelists
explore local
Newspapers and
read from
historic pages.

★
The Mineral Point Historical Society
elected five new Board members on
Jan. 17th at the organization's Annual
Meeting and Lyceum.

Following the Board elections, four
members of the Society conducted
readings from actual news accounts of
the Mineral Point Democrat/Tribune,
arguably the oldest newspaper in Wis-
consin, originated in 1829 mining days.

Outgoing President Joy Gieseke
saluted other retiring Board Members
Carl Tunestam and Dick Ivey, along
with Peter and Nancy Pfothenhauer
(both Board members since 1989).

The new Society Board members are:
Paige Grimm, Mark Hogan, Nancy
Schmit, Lyn Strangstad & Shan Thomas.

The Board has promoted Ainsley
Anderson from Manager of Orchard
Lawn to Executive Director of the
MPHS. She reported nine weddings
held in the Gundry home in 2015, and
eight weddings are already booked for
2016. And, to applause, Gieseke related
near-completion work in the Orchard
Lawn restoration program led by for-
mer MPHS Board Pres. Jim Stroschein.

The photo below shows the Board in
an informal huddle, discussing a slate
of officers for an upcoming election.

★
A 2nd Lyceum of the local historical
society is slated for 2 p.m. on Sunday,
Feb. 21st, and the topic is "The Lively
History of Soldier's Park."



THE STORY BEHIND THE HOLIDAY: AN UNFORTUNATE PRIEST NAMED VALENTINE

We can trace Valentine's Day into the
far reaches of history, back more than
1,500 years to the establishment of the
Feast of St. Valentine in the 5th century.
But, nobody is sure exactly which of
the many martyred Valentines we hon-
or on February 14th.

[WARNING: Some of the following
graphic images may be disturbing.]

The most believable story is the most
grisly. In 278A.D., Father Valentine, a
priest in Rome in the days of Emperor
Claudius II, was executed.

Under the rule of Claudius the Cruel,
Rome carried out many unpopular and
bloody campaigns. The emperor had
to maintain a strong army, but recruit-
ing soldiers was difficult, and Claudius
believed Roman men were unwilling
to join the army because of their strong
attachment to their wives and families.
To fix the problem, Claudius banned all
marriages and engagements in Rome.

Valentine, realizing the injustice of
the decree, defied Claudius and con-
tinued to perform secret marriages for
young lovers.

When Valentine's actions were dis-
covered, Claudius ordered he be put
to death. The priest was arrested and
dragged before the Prefect of Rome,
who condemned him to be beaten to
death with clubs and to have his head
cut off. The sentence was carried out on
February 14, in the year 270 A.D.

Legend also has it that while in jail
St. Valentine left a farewell note for the
jailer's daughter and signed it "From
Your Valentine."

[WARNING: Here's more horrific and
wretched imagery to ruin the sweet holiday.]

Ancient Romans celebrated a mid-
February festival called Lupercalia in
honor of Lupa, the wolf who was said
to have suckled Romulus and Remus,
the twins who went on to found the
city of Rome. The pagan fertility fes-
tival sacrificed goats and dogs, and
young men would cut strips from the
skins of the goats then get naked and
run through the city in groups. Young
women would line up to be spanked
with the switches, believing it would
improve their fertility. Lupercalia was
still wildly popular long after the Ro-
man Empire was officially Christian,
and it's not difficult to see why the
Church wanted a different sort of holi-
day event to take its place.

Chaucer, the Duke of Orleans, and
Wm. Shakespeare get deserved credit
for establishing St. Valentine's Day as a
romantic occasion.

And, hundreds of years later, with
more than one billion mass-produced
greeting cards and good postal service,
the tradition of sending lacy love notes,
red roses and boxed chocolates contin-
ues. And, they're often signed "From
Your Valentine."



"PAINT THE POINT" THE WINTER EDITION

Outdoor painters from several mid-
western states will visit the city and set
up their easels to capture Mineral Point
scenes during this month's picturesque
cold-weather season.

The Winter Edition of "Paint The
Point" is an invitational competition
featuring up to twenty-five artists who
participated in the "Paint Out!" event
last August. Artists start their plein air
creations on Wed., Feb. 10th, and will
submit two paintings for judging by art
professionals two days later.

On Friday evening, Feb. 12, visiting
artists are invited to join Arts Mineral
Point(AMP) volunteers and sponsors
for an Artist's Reception, exhibit pre-
view and the presentation of awards,
followed by a complimentary dinner.
The prizes total more than \$2,000.

Completed paintings will be exhib-
ited and sold from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on
Sat., Feb. 13th, at Tequila Point restau-
rant at 43 High Street. New this year
are Purchase Awards, which allow an
art collector to buy a canvas in advance.

(See www.artsmp.org for details.)

The first annual "Paint the Point"
competition in 2014 was a successful
outing for both the artists and AMP,
the local arts advocacy organization.
The event has built a new awareness
for Mineral Point's artistic community
and has established the city as a prime
location for creative endeavor.



Lisa Stauffer, from Duluth, last year's
Winter Winner, returning this year.

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IN THE INTERESTS OF
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AND FURTHERANCE
OF HISTORIC UNDERSTANDING



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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.

and TROUBLE TIME/ROUGHS UP PRESIDENTS



Photos of Barack Obama after his
election in 2008 look like they were
taken much longer ago. Now, his face
has deeper creases and crow's feet,
while his hair has turned white.

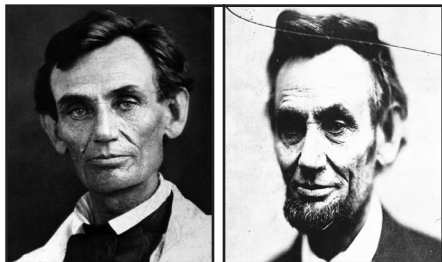
And, to turn a simple image
into a metaphor, some of the fire in
his eyes may have faded a bit.



We find few photographs of a robust,
smiling president, once that president
has served his term.

Our Chief Executives take a beating
from the stress of leadership, the heavy
decisions they must make, the rigors of
running for office, and the "slings and
arrows" of their angry critics.

No one has been immune. [Well,
maybe, Millard Fillmore]



Lincoln may have suffered the most.
The Civic War made his last days a
time of mental torture. Two months be-
fore his murder, "Honest Abe" hardly
resembles the candidate (Left photo) of
1858, just seven years earlier. Lincoln
drew ugly and profane insults for his
appearance and his midwest accent, as
much as his anti-slavery policies.

Two months be-
fore he died in 1945,
F.D.R. looked frail
and sickly, showing
the impact of polio,
a Great Depression
and World War II.
He was only 63.



The weight of the presidency has
worn down the Americans who were
bold enough to take on the massive re-
sponsibilities of the Oval Office.

And, sadly, their reward for service
has often been harsh words of scorn.

The Founding Fathers were tarred
and feathered by hateful language in
the colonial days. The revered Thos.
Jefferson, so widely quoted by today's
politicians both Left and Right, was a
target for the Federalists, who warned
that under Jefferson, "murder, robbery,
rape, adultery and incest will be open-
ly taught and practiced." John Adams
was vilified as a "warmonger with a
violent temper" as his enemies spread
the rumor that he was insane.

A hundred years later, Theodore
Roosevelt was attacked so often he
crafted a speech that defended the
presidency while taking a poke at his
critics: "If he fails, he fails while daring
greatly, so that his place shall never be
with those cold and timid souls who
neither know victory nor defeat."

Teddy's cousin, Franklin D. Roose-
velt, his New Deal policies, and his
wife we're all labelled "Socialist power
grabbers," by both liberals and con-
servatives. Truman was "just a piano
player." Eisenhower was "our timid
war hero." Kennedy, "a show boater."
LBJ "killed our boys in VietNam." Nixon? Well, pick any epithet and it
applies. Ford was "a stumbler." Carter
was a "downer" (after writing a Crisis
in Confidence speech that would play
pretty well in 2016). Reagan was "clue-
less." Bush 41 provided material for
Saturday Night Live. His son "W" was
"the worst of the Bush Bunch." And,
Clinton "couldn't keep it zipped."

In politics—federal, state and local—
just mention a name and you'll find a
list of scurrilous, vicious accusations,
false rumors and personal attacks in
the chronicles of their time in office.

In many cases, the mud slung at our
elected officials goes far beyond disre-
spect. It is personal and truly hateful.
Critics don't just "take issue" with an
adversary, they *despise* him.

The rancor echoes through the hall-
ways in capitol buildings today. We
hear "You lie!" during a State of the
Union address, and Supreme Court
justices boycott the speech. We study
the faces of opposing politicians as they
deliver their talking points on the cable
channels. They glower; they sneer; they
snarl. In Madison, a lawmaker flips the
middle finger at a legislative foe.

For seven years, we've watched Pres.
Obama's enemies do all they can to
make his administration fail, after can-
didly announcing that was their goal.

The contempt is nothing new. The
question is, can political dysfunction
and sabotage cripple the government?

We need to wait until history judges
who was an effective leader, and who
was a loser, but we're an impatient
people. Furthermore, we need to re-
mind ourselves that, as the years go by,
historical opinion *changes* because our
history is constantly *evolving*.

Presidential historians have come
to a consensus regarding the qualities
that so-called Great Presidents have
exhibited. The historians say effective
leaders "possess a vision of an ideal
America, base policies on what serves
the nation best, and use persuasion to
convince Americans to consent to their
vision." Excellent goals, indeed, but
every candidate says he or she aims for
those ideals. All have the right answer,
to "Make Our Country Great." We just
have to listen to them, right?

But, an under-informed electorate is
ill-equipped to deal with "the vision
thing," and shows little patience with
civil discourse. Angry voters seem to
want a noisy show, with bombast and
bickering, without much attention to
the *real* issues and matters of import
and substance. Right now, they're get-
ting the show they want, so, sad to say,
we're getting the politics we *deserve*.

We are a nation of deep divisions,
with ideological gulfs that have existed
since the beginning. Torn by region,
race, religion, and today's stormy rhet-
oric, Democrats and Republicans seem
to be inhabiting different planets. And,
more and more, they can't talk to each
other in civil tongues.

In his valedictory State of the Union
speech last month, Barack Obama used
his considerable oratorical skills to try
to rekindle "Hope and Change," the
optimistic themes of political promise
that got him elected.

He said he regretted his failure to
bring political opponents together.

Predictably, his supporters thought
Obama pulled it off, in "one of his most
eloquent nights, ever." And, his GOP
adversaries, predictably, dismissed the
speech as "Lefty platitudes."

And so it goes.



PAPA BUSH AND THE ROOTS OF TODAY'S CORROSIVE POLITICS

It's not likely to be a best-seller, but
"*Destiny and Power: The American
Odyssey of George Herbert Walker
Bush*" is a Jon Meacham biography
with an important message. The book
reveals "Papa" Bush as a decent man, a
public servant servant who worked at
many jobs in government and sought
to improve the American condition.
"Destiny" also reveals the historical
moment, the tipping point, when the
nation began its destructive slide into
ever-deepening partisanship, growing
ideological polarization, and the mar-
riage of politics and celebrity.

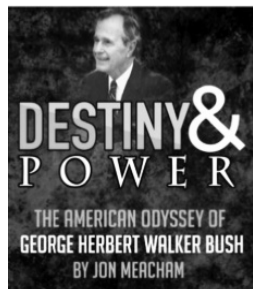
"I feel like an asterisk," said the elder
Bush, reflecting on his place in history.
"I'm lost between the glory of Ronald
Reagan—his monuments everywhere,
the great hero—and the trials and trib-
ulations of my son," George W. Bush.

The 41st President grew up with a
daily Bible verse, and a favorite was
the passage from Corinthians, "It is re-
quired that those who have been given
a trust must prove faithful." He proved
himself faithful with a succession of
important government positions before
Reagan picked him as Vice-President.

President Bush did things in a quiet,
strong, and personal manner that has
seemed to go by the wayside in recent
years. But, his style, candor, and his
affinity towards foreign affairs are con-
tinuing assets for the U.S.

His defeat after a single term was
"ugly," he said, because he realized
he no longer understood the country
he led. Most of the cultural elements
that now define our fractured politics
surfaced in the Bush-Clinton contest
in 1992, and some of those elements
plague candidate Jeb Bush today.

"Destiny" is the story of a "minor
president" of a generation ago, and
tells readers not only the country we
were, but the country we've become."



Vice Pres. Biden ALWAYS enjoys
a josh or a joke, so that's a given,
but what's remarkable in the
photo is that Democrat Obama
is pictured here as he ALMOST
coaxes a sly smile from the
Republican Speaker of the
House, Paul Ryan of Janesville.



A CHOICE: OR



The Twinkie is a junk food icon with thirty-nine ingredients, most of them chemically made without the fuss of real pastry. 290 calories per serving, 37 grams of sugar, intricately packaged in plastic and backed by a hefty marketing budget.

How can a supermarket sell Twinkies for less money than a bunch of carrots, when carrots provide real nutrition at about thirty calories a pop?

That's an innocent question, the kind a public health researcher from Mars might ask after dropping to Earth for a visit. And, in all likelihood, he would ask, "Why does a nation that's overfed and overfat live with government agricultural policies that are at cross-purposes with its public health goals?" Finally he might ask, "How come people who spend the least on food are the ones who are the most overweight?"

To answer the questions, employ the First Rule of Investigation: "Follow the Money." It's simple. Foodmakers have discovered they can make *foodlike substances* at less cost than *real* food.

Chemicals gives the product a long shelf life and, consequently, more chances to sell. The grocery chains realize a better markup from imitation food. All sorts of middlemen—truckers, distributors, advertisers—take a cut.

And the farmer? The farmer gets the fewest pennies out of the food dollar.

"You've got a CRAZY food system," the Martian says. You answer, "Yep."

It IS possible to eat delicious, healthy, economical meals, all at the same time, but it's hard to do that because of the way we get our food. As a result, we face what the Surgeons General call "an epidemic of obesity."

The Local Food movement is growing, with more Farmers' Markets and CSAs, a new emphasis on food freshness, and food preparation centers like Mineral Point's Innovation Kitchen. But, most Americans eat the wrong foods in the wrong way because that's the way the food system operates. We eat what the food marketers advertise, what they issue coupons for, and what's "hot" as the latest foodie fad.

In the American supermarket, where some 30,000 items tempt you, the aisles are laid out so the fresh foods—dairy, meat, fish and produce—stand on the fringe, while towers of processed food and drinks dominate the center of the store. Your dollar will buy 1,200 calories of fattening chips or cookies, but only 250 calories of, say, carrots.

Save a bit of blame for the Farm Bill, the federal catch-all that rewards industrial farming and treats small-scale or organic farming as a quaint activity in which no one has a stake. And, farms overproduce because farmers get a subsidy check based only on how many bushels they can grow.

The result is a food system awash in corn sugars and trans fats that make up the Twinkie, and dirt-cheap meat and milk from animals fed growth hormones and grain, not pasture grasses.

So, Mr. Martian, that's the answer. The least healthful calories to power the body are the cheapest to make, and the corporations who make the "faux food" enjoy the blessings of Congress. The government does almost nothing to help the grower of fresh produce.

But, we CAN eat fresh and healthy if we take the trouble to EAT LOCAL.

To beat a crazy food system, we've got to IGNORE it.



The BEATLES songs & stories A Concert to HELP the OPERA HOUSE!

It's been fifty years since the Beatles created headlines as the most popular band in the world. The "Fab Four" has sold millions of records, as have other rock quartets, but no other band has won the respect of serious and classical musicians. Today, all the big-city Symphony orchestras keep a "Beatles Medley" on hand because even the most sober-sided audience can't resist the youth, vigor, freshness and rhythmically-layered sounds of "the boys from Liverpool."

On Sat., Feb. 20th, Pointers have a chance to enjoy a Madison quintet that has "Beatles Purity" as its mission. The members of "GET BACK WISCONSIN" have studied the entire Beatles' body of work, and faithfully re-create the original recorded arrangements of each song. Band members also *share* with the audience: anecdotes, insights, and inside stories to add to a listener's appreciation of the Beatles legacy.

For their concert in Mineral Point, GET BACK has chosen four themes: "Early Beatles," all singalong-friendly; "50 Years Ago Today;" and "Studies in Contrasts," featuring different musical approaches; then "From Sgt. Pepper to the End." You'll hear plenty of songs, and you'll like the commentary from a group of academically, professionally-trained, fun-loving musicians.

The Times of Mineral Point has underwritten expenses of the evening, so all proceeds provide funding for the Opera House Marquee project, an effort to dress up the entryway to the theater with new signage, lighting, and structural repairs to the 1915 marquee.

Concessions and beer will be sold, and one lucky listener will win a huge, colorful, "definitive" Beatles book.

Your \$15 ticket supports the project, and gives you a rocking and rolling night to remember, a great mid-winter escape from Wisconsin's cold.

AN OPERA HOUSE BENEFIT CONCERT FEB. 20TH - 7:30 - TICKETS AT BERGET'S

....and Two Days Earlier

A Grammy-Nominated Cajun band, The Revelers, will fill the Opera House with the sounds and rhythms of Swamp Pop, Zydeco, Country and Blues
Hear this band from Lafayette, Louisiana at 7 p.m. on February 18th.

Tickets are on sale at Berget's.

ARTS GROUP CELEBRATES TURN OUT AT MEMBERS ART SHOW IN THE CANNERY



AMP's Ried Knapp talks on local artistic climate. L to R: Ben Russell, Author Mark Hirsch, Knapp, Sharon Stauffer, Kathy Knapp.



Donors Laura & Gary Cisler at the loom with Kandy Keuler.

In mid-January, Arts Mineral Point welcomed fifteen local artists as the AMP Cannery Arts Incubator opened a show of their varied art works: paintings, photos, statuary and mixed media.

The incubator now boasts three artist-tenants, occupying offices and shared creative space.

Three traditional-style looms, donated by Pointers Laura and Gary Cisler, are in working order and

in place, and a weaving program is being planned. The Incubator has also installed a donated potter's wheel, available to artists interested in clay work.

AMP's mission is to establish a location where artists can meet, create, collaborate, exhibit, and, perhaps, consider Mineral Point for their home.



AT LAST WE CAN COME IN FROM THE COLD

The Powerball Lottery Jackpot has finally been claimed after setting new records every day, building to a total of \$1.6 billion when twenty well-hyped drawings produced no winner.

The odds of winning the largest prize in U.S. lottery history were 1 in 292.2 million. (Your odds of being struck by lightning this year are 1 in 960,000, and your chances of getting struck by lightning *while drowning* are 1 in 183 million, still smaller than hitting PowerBall.)

But, hey, the folks at the convenience stores were "rambling and gambling."

THE LOTTERY IN HISTORY

Queen Elizabeth I held England's first recorded state lottery in 1569 to raise funds to rebuild some harbors, make England more competitive in global trade, and for *Reparation of the Havens and Strengths of the Realme and Towards Such Other Public Good Works*. Her lottery was limited to 40,000 entries of 10 shillings each—a price considered too steep for most commoners. But, people lined up at the west door of St. Paul's Cathedral in London to buy their tickets.

The prize was 5,000 pounds, part paid in cash and the rest paid in tapestries, silver plate, and good linens. To sweeten the pot even further, the queen offered all entrants a "get out of jail free card" for all crimes except murder, treason, and piracy. The total jackpot was equal to the number of tickets sold, but the prize wasn't paid out for three years, so the crown enjoyed an interest-free loan.

Aha!! Governments quickly learned this valuable lesson: the lottery, a sort of "voluntary tax", is a great way to bring in extra revenue to fill state coffers. The British colonies, including Jamestown, were founded and settled with the help of lottery funds.

Today, forty-four states use lotteries to snare dollars for roads, bridges and other public projects, schools, and the state's general fund. Eleven states collect more from their lottery than from their state corporate income tax.

Wisconsin buyers spent more than \$20 million per week in the recent Powerball frenzy. Payday is here, so the state will send 1/3rd of the total "take" back to Powerball, divide the remaining 2/3rds to pay the prizes, reward the retailer, and pay for ads/promotion. About 30% of the 2/3rds remainder will be set aside to fund property tax credits (averaging less than \$100) for eligible property owners.

In 2015, the state's property tax relief figure stood at \$166.4 million, meaning Wisconsin rang up sales near \$1.66 billion on the Lottery. That's enough to fund Mineral Point schools about 165 times over. Or, say, build and staff a flock of Gambling Rehab Centers.

Ticket-buyers might not like that Rehab Center idea. "Why take a chance on a project like that?" they might say, "chances are it'll never pay off."



FLOTSAM & JETSAM

BY THE EDITOR, FRANK BEAMAN

Search your childhood memories.

Do you remember “Chicken Little?”

The story is one of a small number of folktales that make light of paranoia and mass hysteria. The best-known version features a chick who believes “the sky is falling!” when an acorn drops on its head. The frightened chick decides to warn the King and entices other fowls—Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Loosey, Turkey Lurkey—to join the quest.

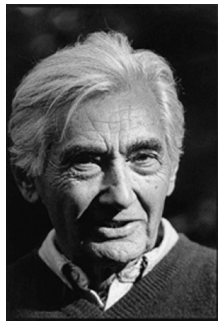
Uh-oh, they run into evil Foxy Loxy.

There are many endings. In the most familiar, a fox invites them to its lair and there eats them all. Another story has Cocky Locky survive long enough to advise Chicken Little, who escapes. In others, all are rescued and finally speak to the King.

The moral to be drawn changes, depending on the version. Where there is a “happy ending”, the moral is not to be a “Chicken” but to have courage. In other versions where the birds are eaten by the fox, the fable is interpreted as a warning not to believe everything one is told.

The old story seems a perfect fit for today’s uncertain media-driven world of fear, fantasy and falsehood, where dread has become an ingrained habit and our daily pre-occupation.

A climate of hype and hysteria creates a universe of anger, noise and lies, and you are tempted to give up on real hope. But, don’t do it! There are hopeful voices out there, and their positive words remind us of lessons taught by history and common sense.



Howard Zinn (1922-2010) was a historian and social activist, a political science professor at Boston University who wrote more than twenty books, including his best-selling and highly influential *People’s*

History of the United States.

“To remain hopeful in bad times is *not* foolishly romantic,” Zinn wrote. “Hope is based on the fact that our human history records not only cruelty, but compassion, sacrifice, courage and kindness,” he said. “If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do good. If we remember those times and places where people have behaved magnificently it gives us the energy to act and at least the possibility of sending the world in a different direction.”

He adds, “If we *do* act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future, because the future is an infinite succession of

our present days. To live as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is destructive around us, is in itself a marvelous victory.”

Which is a lot like saying, as hopeful people in troubled times often put it, “If you live in fear, the bad guys win.”

Easy thing to say. Not so easy to live without the fear that is manufactured for us, hour by passing hour. Twenty channels on television tell us just how terrible it is, who might be to blame, who is doing what to whom, how we must bar the door.

Our larger world is filled with rage as otherwise sensible people loudly argue emotional imponderables at the post office, the bar, on Facebook, and even inside our own living rooms.

Our smaller world, a world we can *choose* to live in, offers reassurances from a gentler history and the warmth of family, friends and community.

The question is, can we train ourselves to accept good news as readily as we accept the latest terror?

Perhaps we’re just too connected to everything and everyone, too plugged in to our electronic gadgets.

Every news event now triggers a sort of ritualized dance of anger and fear. The outrage machine is cranked by talk radio, the cable networks, Twitter, blogs, and political party propaganda. So, as media *consumers*, we dig deeper into the bunker we’ve chosen.

In Frank Herbert’s book, *Dune*, the author writes, “Fear is the mind-killer, the little-death, but I will face my fear and permit it to pass over me and through me. And, when the fear has gone, I will remain.”

[Full Disclosure: *Dune* was an epic novel in 1965 but, note, it *IS* Science Fiction.]

If you are now hungry for a few specific “How To” tips for doing the right thing in tough times, the Anglican cleric John Wesley (1703-1791) was the founder of the movement called Methodism, and he came up with a pretty good list of “action items:”

“Do all the good you can.
By all the means you can.
In all the ways you can.
In all the places you can.
At all the times you can.
To all the people you can.
As long as ever you can.”

Or, as my Grandma Anna Waymire would say, “Keep your chin up, and put your left foot down, then your right foot, and get marching! Move on! Left foot-right foot, left foot-right foot!”



TEARING UP HIGH STREET?

“That water main is 107 years old and keeps breaking — it’s a clear and present danger,” said one High Street property owner. “Taxpayers deserve reliable city services,” said another, “and a water main that fails without warning is unacceptable; it’s time to replace it!”

“Not so fast,” said Mayor Gregg Bennett. “The water main broke in the 2014 winter’s extreme cold, and wasn’t a big problem before this year.” The mayor pointed to a long list of Priority Problems, and the high cost of repairs. “This would be the Nightmare on High Street,” he said, “so we have to pick our projects carefully.”

Those are quotes from local citizens in the June 2014 edition of the *Times*, looking back on rough weather and several water main breaks.

Since that month, Doty, South and Chestnut Street repaving work has been completed. And, this month, the City Council is talking once more about our aging infrastructure and an ambitious rebuilding of High Street to repair the old mains and install new underground utility services. The discussion is in a decidedly preliminary stage, but council members estimate the work would entail months of street disruption and a \$2 million price tag.

Water & Sewer Committee Chair Lori Pittz told the council she had met with City Engineer Bart Nies, who recommended reconstruction in two phases, following a year of planning. The project would tear up High Street and the sidewalks, and bury utilities, including wiring for street lights.

City Clerk Debi Heisner said the estimated cost would approach the legal maximum the city could borrow.

Council members, however, feel completion of the project is vital. “We can keep fixing [main breaks] one at a time, but the problem won’t go away,” said Ald. Linda Hurley.

Mayor Bennett said, “They did the street in the 1980s, didn’t do the water main, and now we’re paying for it.”

Council members expressed concern for High Street business places, indicating a need for future discussions and participatory pre-construction planning to design the work in a way that would keep local storefronts accessible to shoppers and tourists.

The Mayor called for a study committee, exchanges with High Street merchants, and public hearings. And, Engineer Nies will revisit the topic at a council meeting on Feb. 9th.

The most pressing issue, of course, is money. The city’s borrowing power is limited by laws that cap funding from public debt. And, in recent years, state funds for rural towns, schools and infrastructure repairs have been reduced by the legislature. Some communities, Janesville to name one, have gone to referendums to taxpayers for approval of projects. Others have worked to adjust the limits of city debt. Still others have imposed a Wheel Tax.

How Mineral Point might handle the situation will shake out of discussions ahead. The bulk of the Doty Street repaving cost (\$1.1 million) was funded by a hike in the water/sewer rate.

The problems inherent in an aging infrastructure are common concerns in many cities. Spring Green and Platteville have rebuilt their major streets.

The photo above is a view of downtown Dixon, Illinois, as the city repaved its main business area in a \$5 million, 22-block project to replace old water mains, sewers, streets and sidewalks. They dug one or two blocks at a time, rather than cutting a long stretch, to give shoppers access to storefronts and keep a pathway open to offices.

Galena, Illinois used a similar game plan for a street repair program that was so successful the city’s merchants threw a party for the construction crew when the work was finished — on time and on budget. Galena ran gravel paths and boardwalks to storefronts as crews dug, block by block, and directed traffic to parallel streets near retailers’ back doors. The City Engineer told the *Times* “The biggest thing was good communications with everyone involved: weekly meetings and a newsletter to keep all hands up to date.”

Galena financed the work with Tax Increment Funding (TIF) and rushed the work schedule to complete repairs in three months, in time for the start of the city’s extensive tourist business.

Galena’s City Engineer said there were few complaints from property owners and an understanding public.



JULIUS CAESAR
walks into a bar, sez
“I’ll have a Martinus.”
BARKEEP: “You mean
a Martini?” **CAESAR:**
“If I’d wanted two, I’d
have asked for them.”