



A Tour of Potosi and British Hollow

On November 24, 2013 I joined the Old house Enthusiasts in a tour of Potosi and British Hollow hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Roger Sedgwick. We were shown many of the historic homes and business buildings of the village, and enjoyed dinner at the Potosi Inn and desert at the Segwick home. One of the highlights was St. Thomas Church, and its new altars complete with a relief sculpture of the face of Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, who founded the parish in 1836 .

Potosi sculptor Gary David did a magnificent job. The main altar is of solid oak with walnut columns and weighs over 1000 pounds. There are two side altars, featuring Mary on the left and Saint Thomas on the right. The Mazzuchelli sculpture is on the St Thomas altar. David spent 1800 hours creating these altars. You can see a video of him at work installing the altar at the Telegraph Herald internet site at:

http://www.thonline.com/news/tri-state/video_61a7aa34-b043-11e1-9715-001a4bcf6878.html

A Fantasy Tour

Potosi is such an old and interesting place that I often wish I could take a tour through time and see the places where the various events which I have read about occurred. Here are some of those events and my questions:

1. On February 23, 1844 Charles Latimer, an brilliant Englishman who loved to drink and debate was killed in a gunfight with a man named Gloster, after arguing with him “at the saloon of Clark and Woods.” Where did this gunfight occur, and where was the saloon located?
2. On November 29th 1873 a Potosi miner and Civil War veteran named Robert Turner killed his brother Albert by nearly decapitating him with an axe as he came out of the “mineral hole.” He and his two brothers supported the family by mining. Roberts’s explanation was that there were too many mouths to feed. He boasted that he had killed 40 men. A search for fourteen year old Olney Neely of Ellenboro who had disappeared two weeks earlier resulted in the discovery of his body, another victim of Turners axe. Turner spent the rest of his life in the State Prison and died May 28, 1902. Where did this family live? Is the “mineral hole” he worked still in existence?
3. On November 13, 1916 a “tramp” started a fire in the Potosi jail that spread to many businesses causing much damage. The man in the jail apparently incinerated himself. Exactly where was that jail? What did it look like?
4. Gertrude Stoker, a longtime columnist wrote that in 1917 while blacktopping the road through the business district of Potosi, workmen broke through the street into the roof of a buried log cabin. Why was a cabin buried far below street level? Stoker believed that this cabin indicated habitation of the area before any recorded history. Whose cabin was it? How old was it? Proper archaeology could have answered at least some of my questions.
5. On October 17, 1931 Victor Irish of Potosi threw a party. Young Susan Jansen of Dubuque and her boyfriend Leo Conrad of Dyersville attended. They were both 21 years old. There was drinking and dancing into the late hours. Conrad went to his car. He refused to come in when Jansen asked him to do so. She returned to the house. About 1:30am she said she was in the kitchen and heard a gunshot. She went outside and saw Conrad lying on the sidewalk in front of the house. She went inside and said to the others “there is something the matter with Leo and you better go see him.” They found him outside, bleeding from the head, a 25 caliber revolver beside him. There were no prints on the gun. There were no powder burns on the head wound, so forensic experts in Madison determined it was not a suicide. Jansen was charged with murder. The charges were later dropped for lack of evidence. The crime was never solved. My question: where is that house? What became of Susan Jansen? In this case we have the newspaper photos below.

Principals and Scene of Potosi Mystery Death



The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal presents exclusive pictures of principals and the scene of the tragedy early Saturday morning at Potosi in which a .25 calibre bullet snuffed out the life of Leo Conrad, 21, of Dyersville, Ia., and Cassville, Wis.

To the left is Miss Susan Jansen, 21, of Dubuque, who is accused of firing the shot. Miss Jansen was photographed yesterday in her cell in the county jail at Lancaster. Above is a view of the Victor Irish home in Potosi, scene of the dancing and drinking party which ended in Conrad's death. The cross distinguishes the spot where Conrad's body was discovered. To the right is District Attorney Otto Christensen, Lancaster, who is in charge of the investigation.

—Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal photo

6. I believe that most of the locals have heard of the Osceola Indian burial site about two miles south of Potosi, which was rich in copper artifacts and was apparently discovered by the same Victor Irish mentioned above and his fishing partner Ralph Turner in 1945. That site was dated to 1500 B.C. That is very fascinating, but the following from internet site "Forbidden Archaeology" really threw me for a loop:

"Two Giant Skeletons Near Potosi, WI"

"The January 13th, 1870 edition of the *Wisconsin Decatur Republican* reported that two giant, well-preserved skeletons of an unknown race were discovered near Potosi, WI by workers digging the foundation of a saw mill near the bank of the Mississippi river. One skeleton measured seven-and-a-half feet, the other eight feet. The skulls of each had prominent cheek bones and double rows of teeth. A large collection of arrowheads and "strange toys" were found buried with the remains."

Is this a complete fabrication? I don't know yet, but I am looking into it. Like any historic town, Potosi has many secret corners, but it is a wonderful place to visit.