

Lanesboro resident captures spirit of community in new book

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Steve Harris stands next to a framed copy of his book cover in his Lanesboro home. Harris has recently published a book about a town Harris describes as being filled with simple pleasures. Harris will read an excerpt from his book and hold a book signing at the Lanesboro Public Library on Wednesday, June 13, from 6 to 7 p.m. MICHELLE ROWLEY/NEWS LEADER

By : MICHELLE ROWLEY
NEWS LEADER

Steve Harris recently authored a book, giving it a simple name, “Lanesboro, Minnesota,” for a publication about a town filled with what Harris describes as “a series of simple pleasures.”

Harris and his wife, Susie, are innkeepers and owners of Anna V’s Bed & Breakfast in Lanesboro.

The inspiration for the book was spurred in Sparta, Wis. “Four years ago we saw a book in a gift shop called ‘Illustrated Sparta’ and Susie said she could see Lanesboro having a similar book,” Harris recalled.

After talking with the sales clerk they discovered that she, Lisa Gaunky, was the author of the book, which is mainly composed of her sketches with brief descriptions of the drawing’s significance to Sparta’s history.

“My first thought (for the book) was mostly drawings with extended captions,” explained Harris, “but then that kind of flipped. There are just a lot of interesting things about Lanesboro that needed more than captions.”

Gaunky is also the illustrator for Harris’ book.

Harris describes the book as a “personal walk through Lanesboro,” which combines its history, its residents, and his own exploration of the town’s attractions.

“The first section is about the history — how Lanesboro came to be and how it has reinvented itself a number of times over the last 150 years. The second part talks about the places of Lanesboro; there are all kinds of great experiences that people have here and opportunities I captured in the book. The way I did it was talking to people but also going around and doing them myself,” explained Harris.

Experiences he captures in the book include breakfast at the Spud Boy Diner, a bike ride on the Root River Trail and hiking at Eagle Bluff.

“I wanted to offer a personal view of Lanesboro; I went and did this stuff and then wrote about it,” he said.

Harris explained that the only book resource he used to write his book was “Images of America: Lanesboro, Minnesota” by Don Ward and Theo St. Mane, which was published in 2002. “A number of things that are available now that people do weren’t available then, or have grown.”

Harris wanted to capture the experiences available at the time he wrote “Lanesboro, Minnesota.” In the “What Brings You to Town” page in his book, he does acknowledge that some of the experiences he writes about may not be available to the reader.

“To paint a picture of Lanesboro is to capture a moving target,” Harris wrote. “What I describe in places may no longer fit your current Lanesboro experience.”

Harris interviewed many of Lanesboro’s residents to determine if there are common threads that brought them to the town.

“I distill it in what I call ‘The Spirit of Lanesboro’,” Harris said. “One woman I interviewed described this very well. She said no one is here because they’ve been transferred for their job. People are in Lanesboro because they want to be here.”

Common “spirit” threads he outlines in the book are a love of nature, creativity and community.

As mentioned previously, the first section of Harris’ book, “The Past,” details Lanesboro’s rich history.

“It looks at things like how the town got established, how the dam came to be, how we got connected with Buffalo Bill, and the great hotel that was here,” said Harris.

Lanesboro’s stone dam celebrates its 150th birthday this year and 2019 marks Lanesboro’s 150th anniversary as an incorporated city.

Harris, who was a bit shy about presenting his work, had local resident Philip Dybing read Harris’ chapter about the dam at the May 20 celebration of its birth.

Harris will be selling his book at upcoming Lanesboro events such as Art in the Park on Saturday, June 16, and Buffalo Bill Days, Aug. 3-5.

Harris will read an excerpt from his book at the Lanesboro Public Library on Wednesday, June 13, from 6 to 7 p.m.

“Lanesboro, Minnesota” is also available at many shops throughout the town, including Lanesboro Arts, The Peddler and Black Crow. Harris can be reached directly at info@annavb.com.