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Confirm Ad placement by July 15th!
Anything received after these dates can NOT be guaranteed!

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***Locations in bold are "anchor locations" in the zone

From the Editor

"Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree, I sold you and you sold me"
 — George Orwell, 1984

A bit of a follow-up to last month's column, in which this local Cassandra warned about Brits bearing gifts... and gift shows. Yes, a few more details have emerged: the mysterious show is now being touted as "a variety/comedy/reality show," whatever *that* is. Entertainment bible *Variety* (of "Hix Nix Stix Flix" fame) reports, "200 people from a small town essentially become stars for a night as they compete in various comedic challenges and (sometimes unwittingly) act in pre-taped comic sketches." Yep, this isn't going to be a mellow Ken Burns documentary, bathing Ellenville in a golden glow of sentiment or admiration. Oh, and the host is to be "Veteran Brit broadcaster Johnny Vaughan." Say, didn't we fight a War of Independence to tell those guys to take a long, wet hike?

Brit producer Michael Davies adds, "The show's about getting comedy from real people." *And there it is!* "Each episode of "My Kind of Town" will start with 200 people being flown or bused in to an elaborate studio set in Gotham. At the top of each seg, producers will cut to a live remote from the small town, where all 200 grand prizes at stake will be laid out on Main Street. We then select one person who has to carry the burden for the entire town. That person will likely be chosen for a reason, perhaps because he's looking for a shot at redemption. In between the start of the show and the final big prize contest, members of the audience will compete in various comedic sketches, games and surprise bits. All the games will be designed to take advantage of 'an inordinate amount of research' the producers will conduct on the townspeople."

In other words, *Big Brother meets Monty Hall and Benny Hill*, for a quick-fix amusement of the great unwashed masses, at guess-whose expense? Feeling all warm and fuzzy yet? Shudder!!!

Please don't misconstrue. This is not to disparage those sincere — even smart — local folks who went to the auditions out of curiosity, or to have some fun, or escape a humdrum day, or even to showcase some genuine talent (rather than the "fun, strange and different talents" the producers now admit to seeking), or even in the belief that this might be a good thing for us as a small, needy community seeking a moment of "Hey, look at us! Please?!"

Sorry, but the only word that comes to mind is *Exploitation*. As in, "Hey, rube, how much will you accept to [chuckle] eat a bug or [guffaw] take a pie in the face?"

About 230 years ago, some folks around here got tired of being *exploited*, of paying nuisance taxes to pay off some royal bigwig's imperial debts. They decided, in the course of human events, that sometimes a people had to grow up, say "Thanks, but no thanks!" and chart a new and independent course, based on mutual respect, personal dignity, and the rewards of one's own labor and enterprise accruing to those who make it happen. No quick fixes... No cap-in-hand cringing... No "Don't rock the boat, there's a good lad" pats on the head. But, well, *that's* what Independence is truly about.

Some good things *are* indeed brewing here, with the potential for real and long-term rewards, where *we* get to call the shots and call it truly *ours*. Much of it will need persistent, unglamorous, behind-the-scenes labor... you know, the kind that turned the Brits from Empire-owners into, well, game show producers and hosts.



Cover: The 1989 Administrative Office Building of the Ellenville National Bank, Ellenville, Town of Wawarsing, Ulster County, New York, USA, Earth. Briefly used by Provident Bank when it acquired ENB in 2003, the building is now mostly vacant, and is looking for a new owner. Arguably the tallest building in this part of Ulster County, will it be the home for a new crop of white-collar professionals... or perhaps a new municipal hall? Stay tuned!

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Editor: Steven Krulick, Editor@Wawarsing.Net, 845-647-2868

Ad Rep: Janet McDonnell, Ads@Wawarsing.Net, 845-647-4620

Wawarsing.Net Committee: Mary Sheeley, Bill Tochtermann, Barbara Hoff, Dianne Turner, Steven Krulick, Sylvia Fogarty