

Now & Then in Ripon ... Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

Tour of homes will feature some of Ripon’s historic houses

A variety of historic and modern homes will be featured Saturday, Dec. 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Ripon’s bi-annual Dickens of a Christmas Tour of Homes. The homes will showcase unique design elements and exquisite holiday décor throughout the tour.

Tour tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 the day of the tour. Advance tickets may be purchased online on Eventbrite or at the Ripon Chamber of Commerce, 401 Watson St. Check-in will take place at the Chamber office and day-of, cash-only, tickets may be purchased at that time.

This year’s Tour of Home locations include the Arnetveits (W13827 Skyline Circle), the Beckers (121 W. Thorne St.), the Clements (903 Nordane Ave.), the McCarthys (536 Watson St.), the Peers (500 Eureka St.) and the Reeves (954 Watson St.).

The Pedrick-Lawson House, First Congregational Church and the Little White Schoolhouse also will be open for tours during the duration of the event and do not require a ticket.

Below is information on three of the historic houses featured on the tour, with another two to follow in next week’s *Commonwealth*.



THIS UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH shows the Italianate house at 121 W. Thorne St. at the corner of Ransom Street. Built sometime around 1860, by Cyrus Pedrick (1830-1915), this house is best known for its fourth owner, Daniel Pankhurst (1823-1890) who purchased it in 1875. His son and granddaughter were trustees of Ripon College and donated the house to the college which used it until 1962. *submitted photo*

121 W. Thorne Street

The Italianate house at 121 W. Thorne Street at the corner of Ransom Street is located in Ripon’s Southwest Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built sometime around 1860 by Cyrus Pedrick (1830-1915).

In 1849, Pedrick moved to Ripon with his parents and siblings and was one of the community’s first settlers. He was in the monument business in Ripon until 1866, when he moved to Wauwatosa, Wis.

This house is best known for its fourth owner, Daniel Parkhurst (1823-1890) and his wife, Cynthia Capron Parkhurst (1825-1918). They came from Vermont to Berlin in 1854 and then to Ripon in 1875 when they purchased the home.

Daniel worked as an agent of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Co. until he died. His daughter, Alice Parkhurst Farr (1852-1888), and her husband, Albert G. Farr (1851-1913), then took over ownership of the house. Albert was a trustee of Ripon College from 1897-1913.

Just a block south of the campus of Ripon College, the house was deeded to the college by Parkhurst’s granddaughter, Shirley Farr (1881-1955). Farr was briefly an associate professor of history and French at the college and in 1913 she replaced her father as a member of the Ripon College board of trustees.

The house was first used by Ripon College from 1917-1921 as the residence for President Henry Coe Culbertson (1874-1933). The house later was used for the Pi Delta Omega sorority (Alpha Xi Delta). It also housed women students until Johnson Hall was completed in 1962.

It then was sold and become the home of Ripon College professor of chemistry emeritus Earle Scott (1922-2002). Scott taught at Ripon College from 1962-1987.

Ripon College had two houses over the years called the Parkhurst House, this included what also was known as the “Hughes House.”



THIS 1898 PHOTOGRAPH of 500 Eureka St. at the corner of West Oshkosh Street shows the Italianate house with a cupola, which was removed at a later date. This house was a considered to be in the country and sat on the southeast corner of large farm. *submitted photo*

500 Eureka St.

The Italianate house at 500 Eureka St. was built for Edward Brockway (1832-1912) and his wife, Susan McKnight Brockway (1833-1910). Brockway came to Ripon in 1849 and started a dry goods business and flour mill.

In 1856, he established a bank which eventually became the First National Bank of Ripon.

Historians vary on the age of the house. Some say it was built in 1855, others say it was started around that time but took at least five years to complete and other information states that the house was completed in 1862.

The house is located on the corner of Eureka and West Oshkosh streets. Set on the corner of a working farm when it was built, the house was considered to be in the country and had a rural route address with the post office. The farm extended from Eureka Street on the east and Hamburg Street on the west with the southern boundary being Oshkosh Street and the northern boundary being Highland Avenue.

Brockway sold the home in 1872 to William Ralston (1828-1881) and then moved out of Ripon in 1876. Ralston only owned the home for two years before selling it in 1874 to Allen Harwood (1818-1893) and his wife, Ann Penfield Harwood (1920-1915). Harwood was in the lumber business and the mayor of Ripon twice.

The Ripon Commonwealth Press Centennial and Progress Edition of 1965 had this to say about the Harwood farm: “The main house and other buildings were of cream-colored brick, all on a generous scale, with a tree shaded front and side lawn, large apple and cherry orchard to the north of the entrance drive. Opposite the house was the garden with every kind of berry worth preserving. ... The drive led to a line of outbuildings with large ‘carriage house,’ carpenter shop upstairs, horse stable and chicken house, with a pig pen farther out toward the cattle barn and silo.

“North of the orchard another drive off Eureka Street came by a house occupied by the resident farmer and his family. To the rear was the windmill, well and the dairy buildings where milk cans were washed, filled and loaded to go to the creamery. It was a dairy farm of 80 acres, partly meadow and corn for silage, but most of it in grain, wheat and oats.”

The house was sold in 1904 to Peter Hammen (1855-1925) and his wife, Magdalena Rosenthal Hammen (1863-1950). Hammen was a farmer and had eight children.

After World War II, the farm that was north and west of the house was developed into a subdivision for housing and the city grew over and around the farm. Wa Wa Avenue was named after one of the farms cows and Gary Street was named after Hammen’s great-grandson.

Highland Avenue received its name by being the highest-point of the Hammen family farm.

The house remained in the hands of the Hammen’s children until 1973, when the house was purchased by Dan Zei, who worked at the First National Bank of Ripon. This was the same bank the original builder of the house founded in 1856.



THE PEDRICK-LAWSON HOUSE at 515 Ransom St. was built in 1856 and is in almost original condition, having no overhead lighting and no running water. It is maintained as a museum by the Ripon Historical Society. *submitted photo*

515 Ransom Street

Also included in the Dickens’ Tour of Homes is the Pedrick-Lawson House at 515 Ransom St. This house has been owned by the Ripon Historical Society since 1973 and is maintained as a museum. It has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places individually since 1976. It also is listed on the register as a contributing building to Ripon’s Southwest Historic District.

The house was built in 1856 by Marcellus Pedrick (1828-1899) and has had only three owners besides the historical society since that time.

The third owner to live in the house was Louisa “Belle” Lawson (1874-1973), who occupied the house for 54 years from 1919 until 1973. The house and its barn are in almost original condition with no overhead lighting, only two electrical plugs and no running water.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information follow us at Facebook/riponhistory or www.riponhistory.org.



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