

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

## Old safe found in the basement of Headliners Limited

Several Now & Then articles have shared what have been found in the basements of Ripon businesses.

Recently, the Ripon Historical Society received a call about an old safe and adding machine found in the basement of Headliners Limited, a hair salon located at 123 Blackburn St.

The Headliners building was built by Elaine Briece (1917-2011.) Briece grew up in Fairwater and graduated from Ripon High School in 1935. She then attended beauty school in Milwaukee.

Starting in 1937, Briece worked for 28 years as a beautician and operated a yarn shop inside the Ripon Beauty Shop at 508 Watson St. It was owned by Belle Pickard (1888-1972). Briece also rented a room from Pickard and lived upstairs from the beauty salon. This building is now the main museum of the Ripon Historical Society.

After Pickard closed the salon in 1965, Briece built her own beauty salon at 121 Howard St., called "Elaine's Beauty Shop" and Briece lived in the apartment above the salon.

Needing additional parking space, she built a new salon building at the corner of Blackburn and Scott streets, which opened in the fall of 1969. To build this salon, Briece razed the Ripon Hotel which then stood on that specific land.

A sign on the exterior read

in script, "Elaine's Coiffures, Gifts." This new 3,000-square-foot building housed her beauty shop, gift shop and a rental office space first occupied by the stock brokerage of Phillip Haengsgen representing West America Securities Inc. Briece lived in the second-floor apartment.

The safe found in the basement of Headliners has the name G.F. Horner written on it. Gustavus Francis Horner (1840-1919) came from one of the early pioneer families to Ripon.

His father, John Scott Horner (1802-1883), named Ripon after the family's ancestral home of Ripon, England. Although born in Wisconsin, Horner lived with his maternal grandmother out east until he was 13 years old.

He then came back to the Ripon area in 1854 and the next year was a student at Ripon College (then known as "Brockway College.") He worked for a grocer and then went into the wheat and produce business until 1878. He was then clerk for the city and municipal court for 10 years.

The door of the safe reads "Barnes Safe & Lock Company of Pittsburgh, PA," which opened in 1870. The safe has no "h" on the end of Pittsburgh which helps to date it. Pittsburgh added an "h" to the end of its city name in 1911, dating the safe between 1870 and 1911.



**THIS PAINTING** of Elaine Briece, by a noted Ripon artist, is on display at the Ripon Historical Society, 508 Watson St. Briece started in the beauty salon business in Ripon in 1937 and later built another salon now found at 123 Blackburn St.

*submitted photo*



**THIS SAFE, ONCE** owned by Gustavus Francis Horner (1840-1919), along with a hand-operated adding machine was recently found in the basement of Headliners salon at 123 Blackburn St. *submitted photo*

However, in looking at Horner's age, one can speculate that the safe dates from the 19th century. The adding machine is circa 1910, patented by Charles Wales and produced by the Adder Machine Co.

Horner's father had a home located at 336 Scott St., just a few blocks east of the current day Headliners salon. In 1870, Horner built a new home for himself at 406 E. Jackson St. on land given to him by his father.

This house also was occupied by his son, Gustavus B. Horner (1878-1960.) Gustavus started The Horner Agency in 1931, selling insurance. In looking at Ripon telephone directories this business was located at "Scott &

Public Square" from 1931 until 1946. Then in 1947, the agency was first run out of an out building next to the Horner home at 406 E. Jackson St. and then out of the home itself.

Anne Horner Calden (1901-1988) was a graduate of Ripon College and lived in her great grandparents' home at 336 Watson St. She was a teacher before working for her father as an insurance agent in the family company and then she took over the agency in 1960.

Calden later sold the agency to Russell Troutd (1934-1998). Troutd was a 1952 graduate of Ripon High School and a 1957 graduate of Ripon College. He worked for The Horner Agency

since 1960, before purchasing it.

The insurance agency stayed in the home at 406 E. Jackson St. until 1962. The 1963 telephone book shows it moved to the "Commercial Building" and was in this location until 1970.

The house on Jackson Street has been razed and Alliance Laundry Systems sits on the land it once occupied.

The Ripon telephone book from 1971 shows The Horner Agency moving to 121 Blackburn St., a rental space in the now Headliners building. It stayed in this location for approximately 28 years until Troutd passed away.

The safe and adding machine found in the basement of Headliners could have been too old or too heavy to move when the agency closed and left the building. Or perhaps the items were just forgotten about and sat in the basement undiscovered until recently.

Briece's building at 123 Blackburn St. was sold in December of 1987 to Christy and Ronnie Hahn, and JoAnne and Allen Stibb. The Hahns bought out the Stibbs in November 1998.

"When I first purchased the building in November of 2000 Elaine Briece used to stop in," said Kim Mack, who owns Headliners Limited. "I wish I would have asked her more questions."

However, the question of why the safe was found in the basement has been answered with the knowledge that The Horner Agency once occupied part of the building.

*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.*

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