

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

Hot cigars & pepper in fan: Ripon's news was never dull

The *Ripon Commonwealth Press* printed a centennial edition in 1965 celebrating its 100th year of producing a newspaper in Ripon.

Robert Rashid (1912-1972), the former editor of the *Ripon Commonwealth* wrote, "For several days now I've been poring over back issues of the *Ripon Commonwealth* looking for something that would characterize Ripon of those days. I think I found it; just one word: people. No, come to think of it, it's two words: 'Interesting people.'"

Rashid went on to write about and then reprint both heartwarming and some of the more unusual happenings in Ripon between 1865 and 1965.

The following are a few of the more unusual clips from the newspaper that were printed in the centennial edition.

Drama lovers sneeze: It was pepper in fan – Oct. 24, 1913.

The program of last Friday evening was a great success in all ways. The large audience was much appreciated by the dramatic club. The pleasure of the evening was somewhat marred by a spasm of coughing and sneezing which struck the entire audience. Some black pepper was thrown into the fan chamber by two schoolboys who were properly punished for their mean trick.

Flips hot cigar onto lady's dress – August 1911

Last Friday night at the Armory Theatre, someone threw a lighted cigar stub in the audience with the result that it landed in a lady's hair, and then fell to her waist, burning a hole in the garment. This is an act that should be met by the stern arm of the law as such a thing might have proven serious. Had the stub ignited the lady's hair, which it might have done

before being noticed, it would have resulted in the fellow's arrest, and he would have had to pay a fine. This occurrence is one that should not happen again, and if it does, the management of the theatre will take steps to apprehend the miscreant.

Kickers oppose im- proving walks – July 14, 1887

The proposition to improve the walks and remove the hitching posts from the public square is being opposed by the same old kickers who oppose every movement for the benefit of the city. These old kickers would no doubt like to see grass growing in the streets for cows to graze on ... it is mighty hard work to make a town with a lot of "old fogies" opposing everything that will benefit the place.

Riponite fined in prohibition days – May 10, 1929

Six men and two women pleaded guilty to violations of the prohibition laws in circuit court at Fond du Lac last Monday and received fines totaling \$1,400 and alternative jail sentences aggregating 17 months. ... One of the women receiving a \$100 fine (equal to \$1,850 today) was Mrs. Rose Novack of this city who claimed that the pitcher full of liquor seized in her lunchroom here was found in the kitchen where it was being used in plum puddings.

Loomer's feet tip stove, hot coals – Feb. 5, 1885

Monday morning Hubert Loomer had his feet upon the edge of the stove at Wakefield's drug store, when they slipped off, tipping the stove over, the hot coals rolling out on the floor. For a time it looked as if Ripon would have another conflagration, but the



THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF the July 3, 1909 celebration on what is now known as "Rotary Square" shows a daredevil hanging from a rope above the street. The *Ripon Commonwealth Press* centennial edition from 1965 featured unusual things found in the paper since its founding in 1865. *RCP file photo*

fire was extinguished before any damage was done. Loomer keeps his feet on the floor now.

Lady's screams drive intruder away – Oct. 16, 1884

Last Tuesday morning about 3 o'clock, Miss Anna Geise, a worthy and respectable lady who lives on Blackburn Street, was disturbed by some brute who should have been rewarded with six or eight ounces of cold lead for his exploit.

The lady was alone in the house save for a dog whose barking awoke her. She first heard someone trying to fit a key to the back door. They worked very carefully but she heard them and at once got up, lighted a lamp and hastily dressed herself.

The wretch then went to the front door and began fitting a key in it. Mrs. G. screamed from fright and said if he did not go, she would shoot. At this point the fellow pushed the door open and came towards her, when she dodged behind

him and ran into the street crying murder. Before anyone came to her relief the fiend had run out of sight.

It is a burning shame that such things should happen in this city and no steps be taken to ferret out the perpetrator. If ever a little city needed a good night watch it is Ripon.

Electric scorecard told gridiron play – Oct. 3, 1924

Through the efforts of a group of live wire merchants and business men and the "R" club of Ripon College, Ripon football fans will be able to witness all the big games, play by play, of the country as well as the Ripon games when played out of town, through the medium of a huge electric scoreboard which is being erected in the vacant space directly north of the American National Bank.

The plays will be flashed a few seconds after the actual play has taken place. Such games as the Yale, Harvard, Army, Navy, Princeton, Uni-

versity of Wisconsin and Ripon conference games will be flashed on the board so realistic that it will be just as though one sat in the bleachers or on the sidelines.

Police check cars in gas saving move – Sept. 13, 1918

A number of special police were stationed at the principal street corners of Ripon last Sunday to record the numbers on the autos as they went. The government has requested that no unnecessary travel should be done on Sundays to conserve gasoline. It would be well for auto owners to heed their request. Take a walk next Sunday.

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, visit www.riponhistory.org, [facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety) or [instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/](https://www.instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/).



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