

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

## Dogs on telephones and other 'interesting' Ripon tales

By Pat Grahn

The *Ripon Commonwealth Press* produced a centennial edition in 1965, celebrating its 100th year of producing the newspaper. This centennial edition reprinted some more of the unusual happenings and little tidbits about Ripon found in the *Commonwealth Press* between 1865 and 1965.

The editor at that time, Robert Rashid (1912-1972) 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 of think of it, it's two words "Interesting people."

Rashid went on to note, "People. Interesting people. And what was true of Ripon then is true of Ripon now. Names may change, but the characters who give Ripon its character don't. Look around. You'll see what I mean."

The following are a few of the interesting historical clips from the newspaper that were reprinted in the centennial edition.

### Interesting people make Ripon what it is – Aug. 26, 1965

There was the night the local telephone operator called Karl Butzin's father to report that someone must be in his furniture store because the receiver had been knocked off the desk telephone and she could hear someone breathing. At 2 a.m., the elder Butzin went to the store and found that the operator was right. Only it wasn't someone, it was Schnapps, the Butzin's dog, who had been locked in the store by mistake and was smart enough to call attention to his plight by using the phone.

There was Warden Charlie Schlumpf and his tussle with Josephine, the fragrant vagrant, who wouldn't stay out of Ripon. Josephine, a sweet black animal with a white stripe down her back, made her first appearance in Ripon in front of an egg packing plant on Watson Street early one morning.

It took Charlie several hours to get her out of town, but he finally did, in spite of her perfume. A couple of weeks later Josephine was back in town, stealing chickens. Charlie was called in on the case again ... but the memory lingered on for quite some time.

### City Hall tower afire – April 20, 1911

The fire bell rang out its undesirable tones about 9:30 o'clock Tuesday evening. The firemen responded promptly and made all arrangements necessary, but apparatus did not leave the engine house because no one knew where the fire was.

However, the teams remained hitched until the investigation of who turned in the alarm was over. Just as the teams were about to unhook, someone discovered that the cupola or belfry on the City Hall directly over the engine house was afire.

It was discovered that an electrical light wire on State Street crossed a wire of the fire alarm systems, which made the bell ring and set fire to the tower.

### Paper struck out against licenses for city saloons – April 7, 1881

Never was the outlook better to make Ripon a good place to live in. The rummie say that grass will grow in the street; but it is better to have grass in the streets than drunkards.

The whisky men say it will cost lots of money to fight the saloons, and our city treasury will suffer by not getting \$700 or \$800 for license. This is bosh. What is \$700 or \$800 for the entire city compared with the fearful cyclone of immorality that these saloons create in the community?

Who wants to put a price on the manliness and honor of this boy, and for a few blood-stained dollars, authorize a hoard of lazy, ignorant, vicious vagabonds to set snares for our boys?

Is it not better to have the assessor find more property in the city upon



**AN EDITORIAL IN** a 1918 *Commonwealth* complained that the bubbler in front of the post office was not accommodating to children. They recommended that a cement block be placed in front of it for children to step up on. This photo was taken by Harry Parfitt (1878-1935) in 1915 and features his wife, Anna Parfitt (1882-1959), holding their daughter, Martha (1914-2013), so that she can take a drink. The post office was in the same building as the City Hall, located at the triangle of Scott and West Fond du Lac streets at Watson Street.

*submitted photo*

which to assess the taxes than to get that money from the saloons? What is wealth but earnings, and taxes will be less. We want more men to pay their honest debts who now spend their time and money in the saloons.

### Post Office Bubbler Was Built Too High – July 5, 1918

In providing the public a drinking fountain in front of the post office, one phase of its service seems to have been overlooked, and that is the fact that no provision has been made for the accommodation of our diminutive inhabitants. There are many too small to drink from the bubblers unless elevated sufficiently by others to enable them to secure a cooling draught. A cement block placed in front or at one side of the fountain would solve the problem for the little ones and be in no one's way. Why cannot the city fathers make this provision?

### Milk jumped to 6 cents a quart back in 1907 – Oct. 25, 1907

Notice is hereby given that on and after November 1, 1907, the price of milk will be advanced one cent per quart in the city of Ripon, and old at the following prices: 17 quarts for \$1, 8 quarts for 50 cents, 4 quarts for 25 cents. Twenty-five percent cream for coffee 30 cents per quart; thirty-five percent cream for "whipping" forty cents per quart. The Milkmen of Ripon.

(In 1907, \$1 is equivalent in purchasing power to approximately \$34 today. There are four quarts in one gallon of milk and Ripon's milkmen charged 25 cents for a gallon of milk. This would be equal to approximately \$8.50 today. Depending on the brand and type of milk, Hy-Vee in Ripon currently sells milk between \$2.50 and \$5 per gallon.)

### Pay street lighter for unlit lights – April 20, 1885

Why are some of our streetlamps left burning until noon every day or two? Why are some of them not lit at all day or night? Why do the city fathers pay \$150 per year to a certain party for lighting these lamps if he is not expected to do it? Why does his man not give the matter his personal attention instead of hiring a substitute at \$75? Why can't the substitute do it for the city as well for \$75 as he does for the regularly paid street lighter? Why doesn't somebody kick and why haven't we as much right to kick as anybody?

(The pay of \$175 in 1885 is worth the equivalent of \$5,030 today; \$75 would be worth \$2,500 today.)

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



**THE RIPON COMMERCIAL** Club brought the Cosmopolitan Shows Carnival Co. to town between June 28 and July 2, 1909. There was a comedy acrobatic boxing stunt, a flying trapeze show, aerial tumbling act, a Ferris wheel and merry-go-round, two balloon accessions, music and more. The carnival group ended each day with a "thrilling high dive into a net" in front of the Carnegie Library, which was built in 1905 at 401 Watson St.

*submitted photo*