

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

Italianate house on Hwy 44 is one of area’s best, most intact

Recently, on a local Facebook page, someone posted a photograph of the house at N9119 Highway 44 asking about the property’s history.

The farm is about a mile northeast of Ripon on the way to Pickett. It features a large Italianate home with a double-brick outhouse just southeast of the house, and a square carriage house/granary and other farm buildings across the highway from the house.

The 1874 Fond du Lac County Plat Map shows this property being owned by Orramel H. Chamberlain (1822-1888). He came to Wisconsin in 1849 and in 1852 married Harriet Webber Chamberlain (1829-1909) of Ripon. The couple had six sons and five daughters. Oramel purchased the 160-acre farm off Highway 44 on Nov. 21, 1855. He raised wheat, taught school and served as the Ripon township superintendent of schools, magistrate and justice of the peace.

The Wisconsin State Historical Society did a historical architecture and history inventory of the farmstead in 2007. It dates the house to 1874, 18 years after the Chamberlain family moved to the property.

The house that was built is an L-shaped cream brick Italianate with returned eaves with brackets and segmental-arch windows. The state notes that an interesting feature of the Chamberlain house is the oculus (small window) accenting the gable of the house. An oculus (from Latin meaning “eye”) is a circular opening in the center of a dome or wall.

The architecture/history inventory database in the Wisconsin Office of Historic Buildings shows 53 Italianate residences in the city of Ripon and eight more in the town of Ripon.

Italianate-style houses are a part of a distinct 19th-century

phase in classical architecture. It was first developed in Britain around 1802 and became popular in the United States between the late 1840s and 1890. These houses featured projecting eaves supported by corbels, pedimented windows and doors, arched-headed windows, cupolas, hipped low-pitched roofs and more.

Since the house was built 150 years ago, only a few alterations to the outside of the house have taken place. One was a low, one-story, gabled, enclosed entrance porch on the north end which was most likely erected in 1918. In approximately 1978, clapboarded rails and panes of glass were installed near a door and a porch was enclosed at the same time.

On the interior, the second floor of the farmhouse was subdivided into a small apartment around 1951 to 1952. This was rented out to tenants beginning in 1952.

To the southeast of the house is a brick-veneered, hip-roofed two-hole outhouse that is currently in poor condition. Before the age of indoor plumbing, houses had an outhouse or privy built away from the house to be used as a toilet for human waste. Most outhouses had to be moved often as they were built over a hole in the ground, which would fill up with waste. Having a brick outhouse showed that a family had wealth as it was almost impossible to move an outhouse made of brick and a new one had to be constructed. Having a two-door, two-hole outhouse also showed wealth as most outhouses had one door and one hole.

Across the street from the house is a square, Italianate carriage house/granary. It is embellished with board cornice boards enriched with paired, scrolled brackets. A hip-roofed cupola finished with shingles crowns the roof. At one time,



THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF the brick Italianate house at N9119 Highway 44, Ripon, was taken in 1974 by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Note the round oculus (window) under the front gable.

Wisconsin Historical Society photo

this building had vertical boards on the exterior, but metal siding simulating vertical boards were added around 1987.

Two garage-door openings are found on the south-facing façade, which overlooks Highway 44. One was added around 1940, about the same time the carriage house was converted into a granary. The other door dates back to 1974, when a concrete floor was also added.

Also across the street from the house is a circa 1900 dairy barn, two circa 1940 concrete stave silos, a metal tractor shed from approximately 1940, a circa 1920 chicken coop, a circa 1950 equipment shed, a circa 1960 corn crib and a circa 1975 pole barn.

In 1883, the Chamberlain family moved to Chickasaw County, Iowa. The property was subsequently sold to Seymour W. (1845-1916) and Katie Hollister (1846-1896). The Hollisters sold the property in 1891 to Gerhard Fuiten (1850-1925) and Catherine Volkert Fuiten (1850-1933). The farm was sold for \$13,260 in 1901 (approximately \$480,000 today) to Ava S. Knapp (1870-1907) and Allison Weaver (1838-1911). Jane Knapp inherited the property in 1908 who then sold it to James Gleason in 1912.

The German National Mortgage Co. of Ripon acquired the property from Gleason in 1913.

For 88 years, the house and acreage then was owned by the Duzinski/Duzinske family, who were dairy farmers. The differ-



THIS UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH shows the two-door brick outhouse behind N9119 Highway 44. This indicated that the family had some wealth. This outhouse still stands, but is not in good condition.

Wisconsin Historical Society photo

ence in the spelling of the last name is reflected on the family gravestones. The reason for the change in spelling is unknown.

John Duzinski (1851-1945) and Mary Hersz Duzinski (1856-1922) purchased the property in 1918 for \$20,925 (approximately \$429,000 today). The farm then was purchased in 1923 by their son, Michael Duzinske (1888-1976), and daughter-in-law, Rosa Pugh Duzinske (1896-1949), who paid \$16,000 (approximately \$290,400 today).

Mike and Rosa’s only child, Gerald Duzinske (1918-2006), inherited the property in 1976 and lived in the house until he died. Gerald’s obituary noted that he was a beekeeper, grew apples, cash crops, beef cattle and eggs. He never married.

The property is not listed on

the National Register of Historic Places as no paperwork to earn this designation has been presented by any of the home’s owners. However, the Wisconsin Historical Society notes that the house does qualify to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places and is “one of the best and most intact late Italianate residential designs in Ripon and its vicinity.” Once placed on the National Register, the house would qualify for 25% state tax credits for any restoration.

*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.*



THIS 1974 PHOTOGRAPH shows the square carriage house/granary across the road from the house at N9119 Highway 44.

Wisconsin Historical Society photo

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