

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

Honoring the early women who helped shape Ripon

The Ripon Public Library has launched its 100 Extraordinary Women of Ripon capital campaign to assist with the renovation of the library entrance and adjacent circulation and staff work areas.

The library is asking the people of Ripon to donate \$1,000 to honor a woman who has made an impact on their life, whether it be a loved one or in someone's memory.

"When women come together, extraordinary things can happen," the library said.

Because of this, the Ripon Historical Society wants to look back at some of the early women who helped shape Ripon.

There is little written about the early women settlers of Ripon, but Joseph Little (1819-1896), who moved to the Ripon area just after its founding, mentioned these women in his writings. His memories were published later in the *Ripon Commonwealth Press* and then in Sam Pedrick's 1964 book, "The History of Ripon, Wisconsin."

"These pioneer women, wives of the early settlers, were many of them brought up in homes of luxury and wealth in the Eastern states," the book noted. "They were a brave, courageous and determined class of women, quick and easily adapting themselves to the situation, enduring labor and hardships and privations without murmur or complaint. Happy themselves, they made their homes happy. To the toil, labor, economy and good management of these brave,

resolute and self-denying women the early settlers are indebted for much of their prosperity."

Phebe Ann "Annie" Strong Clark Starr

Phebe Ann "Annie" Strong Clark Starr (1824-1904) came to the Wisconsin Phalanx at Ceresco (a community now a part of Ripon) in 1844 with her parents. In 1847, her brother Nathan Strong II (1813-1852), left Ceresco and founded nearby Berlin. Annie had married Temple Clark in 1847, but divorced him before marrying William J. Starr (1821-1879) in 1857. Divorce was very unusual at this time, but unlike the rest of the country divorce was acceptable in the Phalanx.

Upon her death, she donated 9.5 acres of wooded land adjacent to South Woods to the city of Ripon. This land, known as "Annie Starr Woods," is administered by the South Woods Park Association.

Margaret Spiers Dellinger

Margaret Spiers Dellinger (1824-1899) also was one of the first women settlers in the Ripon area. She also came to the Wisconsin Phalanx at Ceresco in 1848. She brought her 3-month-old daughter and then gave birth to the first white male baby in Ripon, Daniel (1850-1929). Dellinger first lived in the Phalanx Long House, which was located near the present day Ceresco Park on

Union Street. Her husband, George (1819-1894), was brought to Ceresco to repair the Phalanx mill. They then built a home just east of



Millicent Pedrick

Ripon's present day City Hall. Dellinger had seven children.

Millicent Pedrick

Millicent Pedrick (1801-1885) and her husband, Samuel Pedrick (1791-1850), along with their four sons and a daughter came to Sheboygan, Wis., in 1848.

In April 1849, two of the sons were sent out to check the area for a desirable place to settle. These two were the first prospective settlers to visit David P. Mapes (1798-1890) at his farm.

Mapes, along with John Scott Horner (1802-1883), are considered the co-founders of Ripon. Horner provided the land and named the city after his ancestral home of Ripon England, and Mapes acted as a promoter of the new community. Mapes made an offer for land to the Pedrick family and the sons accepted.

Before returning to their family, who was then staying in Taycheedah, they built a shack to house the family. After the family arrived, they built a more comfortable house at the south-

east corner of Rotary Square at 123 Watson St., where Soul Patina now is located.

At that time, there were only three buildings in Ripon: the Ripon House hotel, Northrup's Dry Goods store and the Pedrick house. The original Pedrick shack house, called the "Shanty on the Creek," became a place to hold church services and Ripon's first schoolhouse.

After Millicent's husband died of malaria in their home on the square in 1850, Pedrick stayed in Ripon. She is buried in Hillside Cemetery.

Of her four sons, only Marcelus (1828-1899) stayed in Ripon and established family roots.

Philena Hill

Philena Hill (1816-1866) came to Ripon with her husband, Asa (1810-1895), and seven children in 1849.

They built the second home in Ripon, which was located on Blackburn Street. It is believed that Hill was one of the women who attended the 1854 meeting to establish the Republican Party.

Her son, Charles (1851-1936), was the second white child born in the new community of Ripon.

It is believed that the first sewing machine in Ripon was owned by Hill. The sewing machine had been invented in 1846, and by 1860, 110,000 of these machines had been sold.

Beverly Thomann's 1981 book, "When a Woman Wills, A Narrative History of Ripon, Wisconsin Women" noted that Hill, "died when only 50 years

of age — a pioneer woman who had produced seven children, transformed a crude frontier house into a real home, and almost daily endured hardship, danger, and struggle for survival.

"One can only imagine what strength and courage were hers as she did her share to build what is now Ripon."

When Starr, Dellinger, Pedrick and Hill came to the Ripon area there was not much in the way of creature comforts.

The 1850s was a period of growth in the community. Grocery and dry goods stores sprung up along with a furniture store, doctors' offices, attorneys and a photographer.

The first train came through Ripon in 1856, providing not only transportation in and out of the community, but also a way to both receive and ship goods.

By the end of the decade, wheat was being shipped from Ripon at the rate of 350,000 bushels a year.

Ripon College was established in 1851, and a ladies department opened at the college in 1853. Several school houses for the younger grades were built during the decade between 1850 and 1860. By 1860, there were a little more than 2,000 residents of Ripon.

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.



Philena Hill



Daniel Dellinger

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