

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

New year, old Ripon: Celebrating early 1900s' history

When the old year ends and the new year begins, people often are introspective. Looking back 125 years, the population of Ripon was 3,818 in 1900 and fell to 3,739 in 1910.

The book "A Souvenir of Fond du Lac County Wisconsin," printed in 1904, stated that Ripon had "many excellent lines of goods manufactured within her borders. Flour mills, a box factory, creameries, foundries, machine shops, harness shops and a brewery indicate the diversity of the enterprises carried on."

A few Ripon companies were individually mentioned, including the Bouton & Germain Glove Factory. The business sold "their hosiery, leather gloves and mittens, from Maine to Alaska." Bouton & Germain Glove was started by Ferdinand Straus (1842-1912) and operated in Ripon before it moved to La Crosse.

Also included was Heath & Butzke "wagons and vehicles of all kinds," which were "eagerly sought for and bought in the northern states of Michigan to the Dakotas." Heath & Butzke Carriage Co. was located on the south side of Jackson Street just off Blackburn Street. It encompassed 125, 129, 131 and 135 E. Jackson St.

The book also noted that Ripon had "four excellent hostelrys, of which Hotel Englebright is the finest in the state outside of the large cities." The Hotel Englebright was built as the Woods Hotel in 1872. The hotel, which was located at 100 E. Jackson St., the current location of Ripon City Hall, burned to the ground in 1949.

Ripon, as the book stated, was not isolated due to "means of the iron tentacles of two great and through railways."

There were "four rural free



THIS NEW YEARS postcard from 1907 was sent to O.E. Herman Zobel (1847-1911) and Pauline Kahl Zobel (1852-1930), 603 Watson St. Herman owned a grocery store in Ripon from 1873 until 1900 with his brother, Julius Zobel (1849-1925). The store had two locations, the last was the building at 121 Watson St., which the Zobels built in 1878. This is the current home of Edward Jones. *submitted photo*

delivery routes. A fine system of waterworks ..., gas and electric light, paved streets, numerous enterprising, wide-awake business firms, many churches, efficient dental and medical service, two banks, two express offices and everything else in generous proportion."

It concluded that Ripon was an "eminently and up-to-date city, and a most desirable one for residence."

In 1905, Ripon saw the opening of the Carnegie Public Library at 401 Watson St.. This building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, served the community for 67 years before a new building was built at 120 Jefferson St. The original library building on Watson Street houses the Ripon Main Street office, as well as the Ripon Chamber of Commerce. The 1972 library building is currently under renovation.

The Dec. 29, 1905 *Ripon Commonwealth* revealed that the eighth-annual New Year's party "given by Company D, W.N.G.," would take place

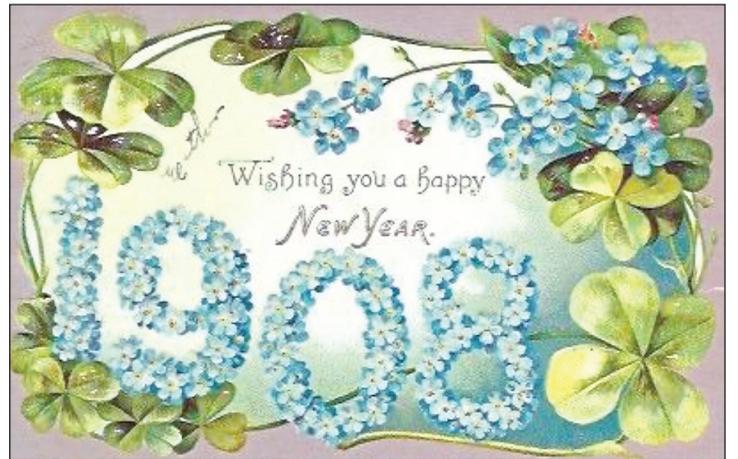
at the Armory. The article declared that "Nearly all the young people of Ripon — and we are all young who think so — are planning to attend."

Admission to the party was 35 cents and dance tickets were \$1. This would be approximately \$13 and \$37 today. The Armory was located on West Fond du Lac Street, approximately where the U.S. Post Office parking lot is today.

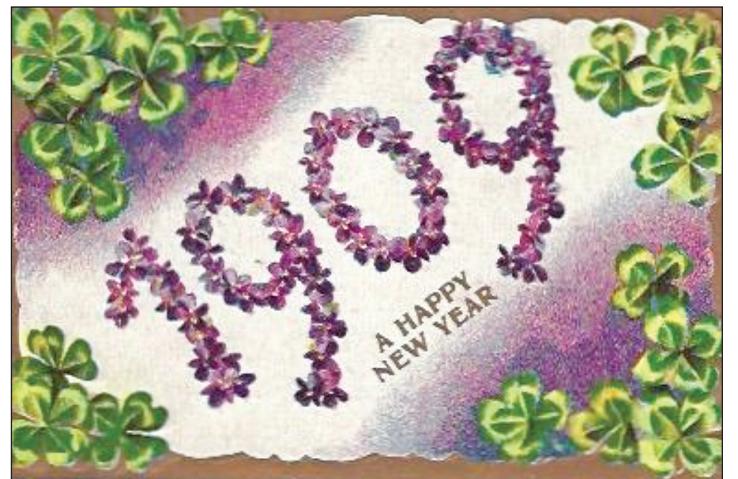
An advertisement in the Jan. 10, 1905 *Ripon Commonwealth* for a business called "The Boston Clothing Co." read that "The last leaf is torn from the calendar, and we write down a new year 1905, and begin where we left off. But we begin right. There will be no step backward."

This store was owned by John E. Brown (1839-1925).

Ripon historian Sam Pedrick (1868-1963) wrote that Brown came to Ripon in 1865 and "engaged in the merchant tailoring business. ... He always had a large store in Ripon." The advertisement ended by saying, "May the new year



THIS 1908 NEW YEARS postcard was sent to Elizabeth Hein Krueger (1877-1963), who lived at 518 Newberry St. Postcards were popular between the late 1880s and into the 1920s, however, the golden age of the "Penny Postcard" was between 1907-1915. Today, they are referred to as "the text message of their time." *submitted photo*



THIS 1909 POSTCARD had New Years greetings written in German on the back. Ripon was first settled by people from England, but later Irish, German and Polish immigrants came to the community. In the early 1900s, it was common to have community members and businesses utilize languages other than English. The card was mailed to O.E. Herman Zobel (1847-1911) and Pauline Kahl Zobel (1852-1930) at 603 Watson St. Herman came to Ripon from Germany in 1860 with his parents and siblings.

be kind, and when time shall harvest 1905, may we all be here and able to again to say A Happy New Year."

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wis-

consin. 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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