

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

Famous landscape artist has ties to Ripon

The rise of Jens Jensen (1860-1951), a street sweeper who became one of the nation's first champions of landscaping architecture and preserving the natural environment, was featured in the PBS special "The Living Green."

But most people don't realize that Jensen worked in Ripon.

Jensen was born in Denmark to a wealthy farming family. For the first 19 years of his life, he lived on that farm, which cultivated his love of nature and the earth's environment.

As a young man during World War I in Europe, he started drawing landscapes as an escape from the war's harsh realities. The war also then led to his decision to immigrate to the United States.

Starting out as a laborer in Florida, Iowa and eventually Illinois, he was promoted to foreman and began designing gardens for notable city parks systems that grew to include his vision for water features and exotic plus native plants.

Once Jensen became recognized for his work, he accepted a request to help campaign and save the Indiana Dunes ecosystem from commercial developers, who sought to mine that area for sand along Lake Michigan and its inland areas.

Connections to Ripon

Later, in the early 1900s, Jensen created landscape architecture that included plantings for private residences throughout the Midwest.

As his knowledge and popularity continued to swell, he was called upon to work in Wisconsin

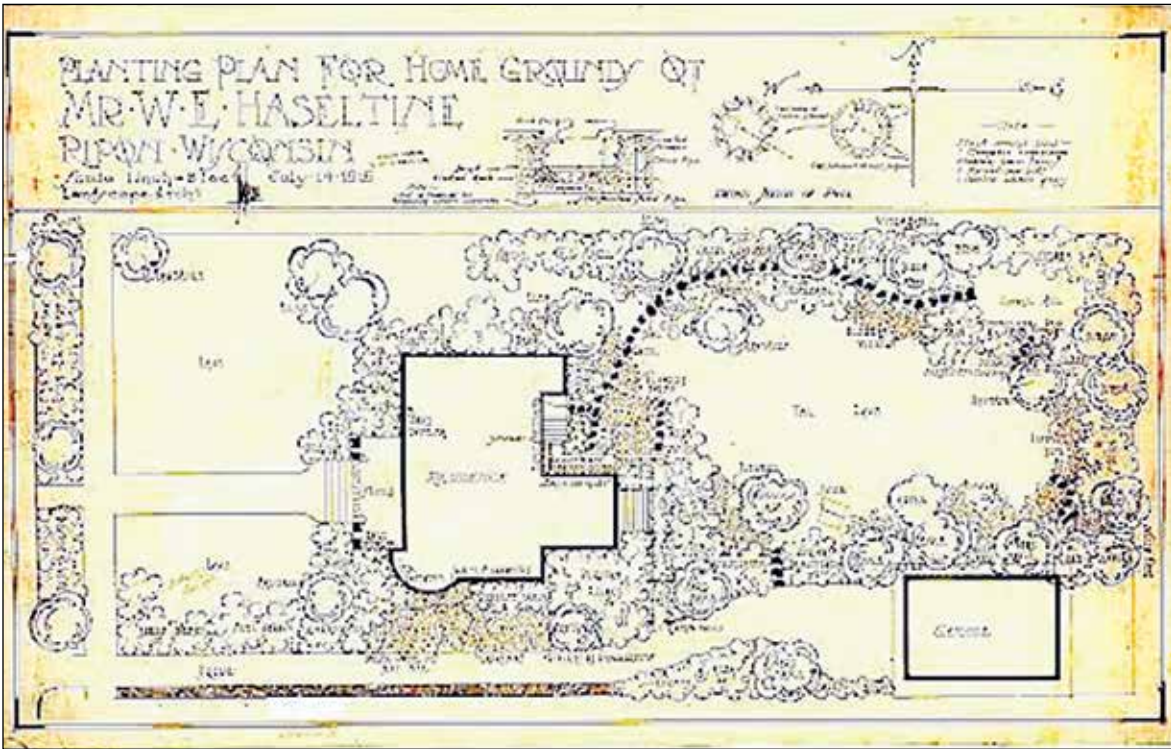
to help conserve thousands of acres of natural habitat in Door County, which also was under the threat of development and could be lost. It was at this time that Jensen was contacted by Ripon's William E. Haseltine (1864-1963) and Florence Reed Haseltine (1882-1969).

Haseltine was educated in Minnesota, but made his home in Ripon based upon knowledge of the lumber industry. He bought, owned and operated the Oakwood Hotel in Green Lake and also became affiliated with the evolving Ripon Power & Light Co.

Florence was the daughter of the local Reed family and was educated in Ripon and the New England Conservancy. William and Florence owned the Georgian-revival architecture home located at 537 Watson St. and commissioned Jensen to design a landscape plan and installation that is now documented and archived in the Bentley Historical Library at Michigan State University. This university also archives the lifetime collection of Jensen's drawings and papers.

Interestingly, the original drawings Jensen made for his projects (including the Haseltines' project) were always drawn in pen and ink on linen fabric (not paper), and their details on his plans are still visible and legible for reading and reference today.

The Haseltines' landscape plan consisted of a variety of trees: ash, crimson maple, hawthorn, birch, elm, hazelnut and chokecherry; shrubbery: ninebark, lilacs, viburnum, barberry,



DATED JULY 14, 1915, the Haseltines of Ripon sought a natural landscaping consisting of shrubbery, trees, flowering plants and a small water feature. This original plan is drawn in pen and ink on linen fabric by famed landscape architect and habitat creator Jens Jensen. *submitted photo*

forsythia; and various roses and colorful flowers: lilies, philodendron and witch-hazel. Flowering colors were listed primarily as yellow and white blended. All were suitable for Wisconsin's planting zone, including many native plant species.

Love of landscape architecture leads to enduring friendship

Although a small installation for such a famous landscape architect, the Ripon project generated a personal friendship and connection between the Haseltines and Jensen that lasted for many years.

In one of Jensen's letters, he wrote "As far as my places (installations and projects) in Wisconsin (state) are concerned, they are all rotten, with exception of the job I am doing in Ripon. This job consists of a lot about 75' x 200' or perhaps less than that, but they (the Haseltines) are people with a souls and I take as much delight in making this little garden as any work I have ever done (nationwide)."

From the date the inquiry was sent to Jensen to ask him about possibly working in Ripon in 1915 until August 1936, Jen-



THE HASELTINE HOME at 537 Watson St. can be seen with landscaping. Descendants of the Haseltines still live in the house and are working on restoration to the house and yard. *submitted photo*

sen remained in touch with the Haseltines and landscape architecture professors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Jensen was so taken with Wisconsin that he eventually built a 125-acre learning institution named "The Clearing" in Ellison Bay that still exists today. It offers a combination of learning, history, tradition, social interaction and quiet reflection, plus nature.

Jensen continued to work on large city municipal green spaces and parks systems, along with the Indiana Dunes, but died at his

home in Door County on Oct. 1, 1951 at the age of 91.

Descendants of the Haseltine family still own the house at 537 Watson St. that Jensen landscaped in 1915 and are working on restorations to this beautiful home and lawn.

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.

Answers to the Crossword Puzzle from the April 19th issue of The Commonwealth Express

TARAS	ELSA	ATEAT	CITE
ELISE	LAHR	DHABI	ANEW
ALVIN	EDAM	MASSE	THEE
SHIFTE	EVERY	LETTER	ONE
HEE	AVA	PAIN	ENSNARED
OARS	ATTEND	ART	OPINE
PLACED	DOWN	TO	SEEM
UTERI	PIGEON		STEW
DRAMA	NECKING	HELLOS	
OED	TOENAIL	CARAMBA	
ZPV	IBW	DSB	DLFEUI
ERIT	TREA	ADORN	ERSE
SOLDER	HOLY	WAR	ISLES
	APHIDS	APART	
ERGS	SITE	THE	PREVIOUS
LEAPS	NPR	WASTES	RANT
MT	SHASTA	GIST	SOSTWA
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MOOR	UDALL	AFEE	AURAL
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