

# Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

## High school class pins, rings once were popular mementos

With high school graduation around the corner, the Ripon Historical Society is featuring one of its artifacts from Ripon High School (RHS).

Mary Peterson of Red Wing, Minn., took a trip to Ripon last year with her sons to drop off her mother's class ring at the society.

The ring is gold with a hexagon shape on the front and engraved "RHS 25." It belonged to Arvilla "Arva" Schmuhl Winkler (1907-2000), who graduated from RHS 97 years ago and was a member of the class of 1925.

Winkler, the daughter of Frank (1863-1937) and Alvena Worth Schmuhl, was born in the township of Metomen, but the family moved to a farm in Fairwater around 1915.

Every Sunday evening, she drove a car to Ripon and stayed with relatives of her mother. Peterson believes that this was Harry and Nellie Hinz (sometimes spelled Hins or Hintz), who lived at 633 Woodside Ave.

She then attended Ripon High School during the week and drove home to Fairwater each Friday evening.

It was not unusual that Winkler had to travel and stay away from home to attend high school.

After Wisconsin became a state in 1848, it focused on establishing a system of primary education and a state university.

The first schools in Wisconsin to offer advanced education beyond the elementary or primary grades were called "academies" and were privately funded.

In the mid- to late-1800s, very few public high schools were funded by cities. Most students who wanted to attend high school had to pay tuition at a nearby high school, as well as find someplace to live while attending



**THIS 1925 CLASS** ring belonging to Arvilla "Arva" Schmuhl Winkler was recently donated to the Ripon Historical Society by her daughter from Minnesota.

*submitted photo*

the school.

Not until 1901 did the state Legislature enact a law enabling any student prepared to enter high school, and who lived in a rural

district, village or city that had no high school, to enter any high school in the state without paying tuition. It was also around the same time that Wisconsin also provided state aid to fund public high schools.

In 1900, only 209 Wisconsin school districts operated high schools and by 1923 more than 400 school districts operated high schools. During the 2018-19 school year, the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction reported that there were 421 school districts that operated 517 public high schools.

After graduation, Winkler attended the Oshkosh Business College to become a secretary.

She then started working in Waupun, where she met her husband and spent her adult life.



**THIS GRADUATION** photograph of Arvilla "Arva" Schmuhl Winkler (1907-2000) ran in the 1925 Ripon Tiger yearbook.

*submitted photo*

This class ring was most likely one of the first at RHS as before this time classes had pins.

This is only the second class ring that the Ripon Historical Society has in its professional archives collection. The other RHS class ring is from the class of 1950. The historical society does have a class pin from 1917.

The tradition of class rings started in 1835 at West Point Military Academy. Class rings are worn as a remembrance of a student's time at a specific school.

Years ago, classes selected one style of class ring, which everyone in the class would purchase. Today, the rings are more customizable and personalized. The tradition of wearing a class ring is fading away and fewer rings are being sold each year.

There are no specific numbers tracking this decline, however, a 2011 report showed that traditional yearbooks have also been declining at a rate of 4.7% per year.

The Ripon Historical Society welcomes and appreciates the donation of items that were made in Ripon, owned by Ripon-area people or have Ripon on them in some way. Documents and photographs are also welcomed.

For donations, call the society at (920) 748-5354, or email [riponhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:riponhistsoc@gmail.com).

*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](http://www.riponhistory.org).*

## Boys & Girls Club exceeds 80% of Ripon fundraising goal

In just three months, Ripon-area citizens and businesses have donated more than half a million dollars to the \$10 million fundraising goal of the Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area to build a state-of-the-art facility in downtown Ripon.

The club had raised \$7.5 million as of mid-February, when it announced the start of its public phase to raise the additional \$2.5 million needed to build the 30,000-square-foot, two-story complex.

As of Monday, donors have given \$8,067,711 toward the facility, which will include four early-childhood classrooms, youth program areas, gymnasium, a performing arts studio and a skilled-trades center for teens.

"We are delighted that we are more than 80% toward our fund-raising goal, which not only brings us closer to putting shovels in the ground, but also provides the Ripon club with some initial operating capital," Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area CEO and Ripon College alumnus Jason Presto said. "This initial show of support — and we anticipate much more to come — assures that we will maintain our construction timetable of holding a groundbreaking in July."

Presto explained that the project's specifications have been let out for bid and that general contractors' bids will be opened at the end of May.

"The club's relationship to the community should be a reciprocal one, which is why we have encouraged all bidding general contractors to solicit subcontractor bids from local contractors," Presto said.

General contractors who have been invited to bid the project include CD Smith Construction, Miron Construction, Northcentral Construction and Boldt.

Presto invites interested subcontractors to contact these companies right away to express their interest in the Boys & Girls Club project.

Plans to build a Ripon club began seven years ago, when an ad hoc group of community leaders organized to evaluate Ripon's needs and the subsequent impact that a Boys & Girls Club could make in meeting those needs.

After several meetings and interviews with school leaders, parents, community leaders, business owners and potential donors, it was unanimously decided that the best way to serve the youth of Ripon and meet its needs was to build a site equidistant between the schools to serve youth most efficiently.

The club, which has been operating since 1997, has sites in Berlin and Green Lake, and operated a site at Ripon College last summer. So popular was the Ripon site that it had a waiting list. This year, the Ripon summer site has expanded to serve even more youth. All three sites have grown exponentially as the needs in the communities have continued to expand.

"Being located in a rural

area poses a different set of challenges to those residing here," Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area Director of Development Ashley Bartol said. "Access to resources is limited and transportation is one of the greatest barriers to obtaining those resources if available. The club can be an extension of those resources. We listen to youth, families and the community as they voice their concerns and then raise our hand to help."

"We will bring this same level of passion to the Ripon community so we can meet their needs. We truly do whatever it takes to help youth in our communities."

The Lyke family, who led the charge during the capital campaign's quiet phase by donating a substantial gift to the Ripon site, joined other honorary campaign chairs like Tom and Carol Joseph, the Webster's Marketplace family and Tim and Vicky Wuest in supporting the club's mission and recognizing the need to bring an organization like the Boys & Girls Club to Ripon.

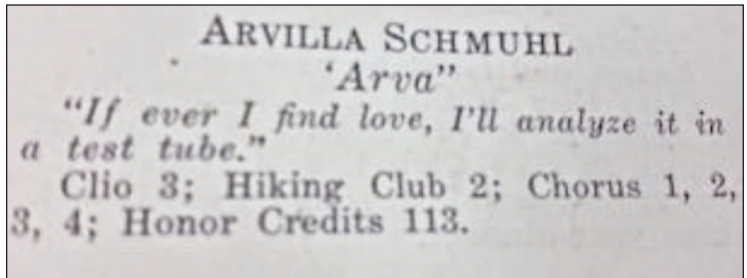
"For the decades we've been in Ripon, we have enjoyed firsthand the joy of living in a community that cares for its children," the Lyke family said in a joint statement. "But we also have seen youngsters struggle with challenges — poverty, broken families, substance abuse, cyber bullying, domestic violence, homelessness — that frankly continue to expand. We know a Boys & Girls Club in Ripon will address needs and provide opportunities to all of our youngsters — those at-risk and vulnerable, and all others, who surely will benefit from the exciting programming, enrichment activities and encouragement a club provides in so many ways."

Presto described the commitment by those in the community to bring a club to Ripon as "astounding."

"We've seen firsthand how much pride Ripon takes in its community and those that reside there," he said. "By bringing a club to Ripon, the community is not only impacting youth who live here now, but they are impacting generations to come. They are changing the trajectory of so many youths' lives and we are excited to be part of that journey as we work together to create great futures."

After breaking ground in July, the Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area plans to open its doors to the public in the summer of 2024. To follow the club's progress or donate to the public phase of the campaign, visit [www.bgctric.org/followripon](http://www.bgctric.org/followripon) or call the club at 920-361-2717.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area serves youth in Berlin, Green Lake, Ripon and the surrounding communities with its headquarters being located in Berlin. Contributions raised for the Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area remain in and for the clubs and the youth they serve.



**THE 1925 RIPON** Tiger Yearbook had this to say about Arvilla Schmuhl Winkler, graduating class of 1925.

*submitted photo*