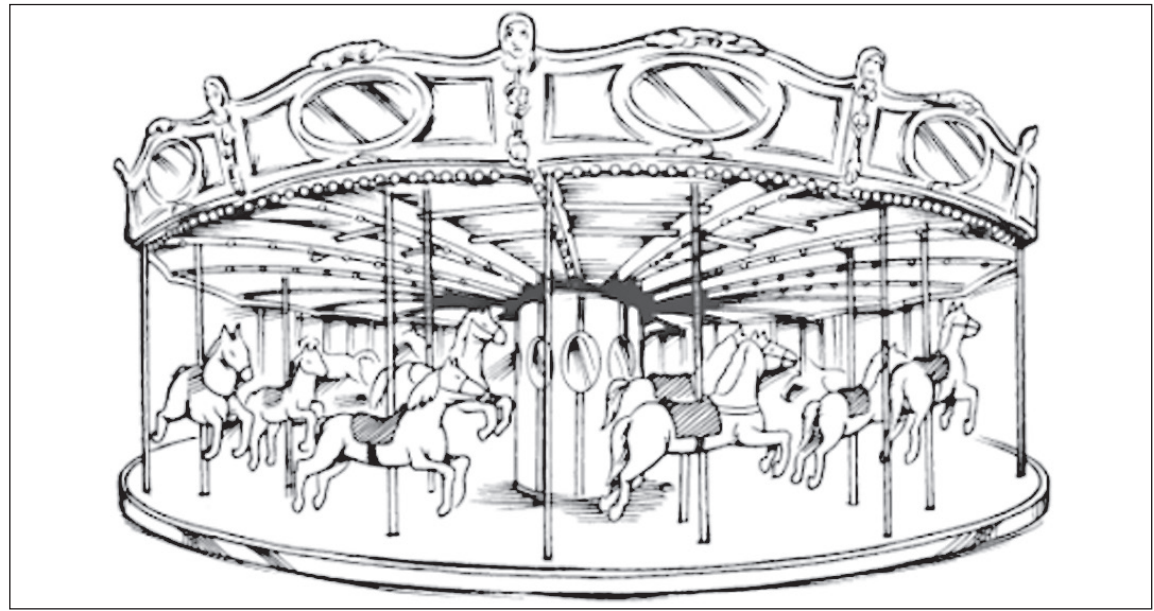


Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society



THIS IS A drawing of a whirligig, which is better known today as a merry-go-round. A whirligig at the Village Green provided entertainment to Riponites at the turn of the 20th century. *submitted drawing*

Ripon’s Village Green once was home to a merry-go-round

On Friday nights in the summer, the people of Ripon enjoy gathering for music at the Village Green.

More than a hundred years ago, for a few summers at the turn of the 20th century, many of Ripon’s residents could be found in the same location enjoying the “whirligig.”

The whirligig was a merry-go-round that, during the summer months, could be found where the Village Green now is located at the corner of Watson and Seward streets, opposite the former Carnegie Library building at 401 Watson St.

Riponite Lilian Zobel (1892-1985) wrote about the whirligig stating, “It was one of my happiest childhood memories. The whirligig was set up in a rental location ... there was a decided low spot just east of the street level wooden sidewalk. The whirligig was set up in this natural depression and was reached by five or six wooden steps, which lead down from the street level walk. The spectators (and there was always a crowd, who watched from the sidewalk, stood behind a fence with a railing.”

Zobel noted that Herman Gehrke (1885-1968) “as a young lad circulated among the crowd on the sidewalk level and sold tickets at 5 cents a ride.” Five cents in 1900 is about \$1.65 today.

She went on to note, “For riders there was a double row of horses of the usual type and a chariot or two. The whirligig was run by a steam engine and lighted by gasoline lamps and torches. A mechanical hurdy-gurdy (organ) in the center drum of the whirligig furnished music during the ride.”

The whirligig was owned by brothers Gustav (1865-1934) and Emil J. Gehrke (1874-1947), along with August Nast (1845-1919.) The Gehrke brothers also operated a painting and home decorating business and Nast was a house painter. Herman, Emil’s son, went onto to own a paint store at 316 Watson St. and lived at 340 Belleville St.

These men operated the whirligig in Ripon, but also dismantled and took it on a wagon or train to other neighboring towns. Zobel explanted after a few years of operating in Ripon, the whirligig was sold to someone from Princeton because, “they had too much other business of their own main trade.”

The Ripon Historical Society doesn’t currently have any photos of Ripon’s whirligig. It has been told it was used in Berlin and later sold to Princeton.

Individuals who have photos that they or their ancestors may have taken of the Ripon whirligig are asked to contact the Ripon Historical Society by email at riponhistsoc@gmail.com or by calling 920-748-5354.

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.



THE LITTLE WHITE Schoolhouse is moved from its prior location on Blackburn Street to West Fond du Lac Street in April. The Ripon Historic Preservation Commission is sending a letter to the Ripon Chamber of Commerce supporting the move. *Craig Tebon photo*

Historical Preservation Commission makes official support of LWSH move

Building should be on National Register of Historic Places, says commission

By Roger Mathews
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The Ripon Historical Preservation Commission voted to send a letter of approval to the Ripon Chamber of Commerce for its recent move of the Little White Schoolhouse from its prior location on Blackburn Street to its current location on West Fond du Lac Street.

“We felt that it was their thing to handle,” Ripon Historical Preservation Commission Chairman John Splitt told the *Commonwealth*. “They can do whatever they want with it. It has already been moved like six times, so there is nothing that is special about where it is.”

The Ripon Historic Preservation Commission received a draft of a letter written by member Matthew Koski last week Wednesday during its monthly meeting, approved the wording and voted to send the letter as a show of support.

“The Ripon Historical Preservation Commission finds the Ripon Chamber of Commerce’s relocation of the Little White Schoolhouse to be consistent with

the history of the structure, and we believe that this action will better serve its mission of continued preservation and education,” the opening statement of the letter read.

As a whole the commission believes that regardless of its location, the Little White Schoolhouse should be recognized and protected at the local, state and national level, and its advocates for the building to be reinstated on the National Register of Historic Places.

In other business, the Ripon Historic Preservation Commission took no action on a request from J’s BBQ for a garage door for its patio dining area due to lack of information from the applicant.

Splitt said the issue was set to be addressed in Tuesday’s Common Council meeting so that the applicant can move forward with construction for its planned opening in September. The council meeting finished after press time. For more information, see the Aug. 17 *Commonwealth*.

The commission also approved designs for street name plates and historic district plaques presented by City Administrator Adam Sonntag.

The Haas Brewing Stable also was discussed at the meeting last week Wednesday, but the commission agreed to table the matter of setting a date for a cleanup day until the September meeting.

Trinity church’s Paul Ethington will be ordained as a pastor Sunday

Paul Ethington, lead pastor of Trinity Evangelical Free Church, 777 Harvey St., will be installed as an ordained pastor Sunday, Aug. 13 at 10:15 a.m. at the church.

He was affirmed without reservation from a council regionally and then by the Evangelical Free Church of America’s Ordination Council.

Ethington went through a four-year process to become ordained. First he became licensed by writing a 20-page theological paper followed by a two-hour defense with the Licensure Council.

The license means he is representing accurately the beliefs and doctrine of the denomination. He completed this



Paul Ethington
in 2020.

Next, to be ordained, he authored a 40-page paper telling his viewpoints on each of the 10 doctrinal statements that are

fundamental to the denomination. Ordination shows that the pastor has mastered the teachings of his church.

Ethington was questioned extensively in July 2022 by a council of six other pastors. Several members of his congregation went with him, including his wife, Pam, to support him.

The recording of the council, Ethington’s paper and the minutes of the council were sent to the National Evangelical Free Church of America, which also then affirmed his ordination.

The people of Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Ripon will celebrate together this honor with their pastor Sunday, Aug. 13. Those interested may attend.

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