

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

Fishing poster casts new light on Ripon's sporting past

The Ripon Historical Society headquarters and museum, 508 Watson St., is open to the public Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and by appointment. The docents that staff the museum on those days often are pleasantly surprised with items that people bring to donate to the society.

Recently two sisters drove to Ripon to drop off a 1942 fishing contest poster from "C.A. Kohl's Sport Shop, Ripon, Wis." The poster had been found in their parents' home in Neshkoro and they wondered if the historical society wanted it.

Their father, Dennis Koats (1937-2018) was an avid outdoor person, loved to fish and his headstone in St. James Catholic Cemetery in Neshkoro reads "Gone Fishing." They believed that the poster came from Steffy's Harbor Bar in Neshkoro, which was owned by their grandfather, Richard Koats (1907-1988). Advertisements and references to Steffy's Harbor Bar were found from 1941-1949 in the *Princeton Times-Republic*.

Ceylon Arthur Kohl (1886-1974) owned C.A. Kohl's Sport Shop, located at 103 W. Fond du Lac St., from 1940 until 1957. Ceylon grew up in Ripon and in 1906 graduated from the Western School of Embalming and Sanitation in Milwaukee. He worked as a mortician in Plymouth and Sterling, Ill. He returned to Ripon in 1916 when he and his brother Frederick "Fred" Kohl Sr. (1884-1971), purchased the Barlow and Seelig Hardware store.

Fred had started working for the Barlow & Seelig Hardware Co. in 1903. The hardware store was located at 214 Watson St. In 1908, Barlow and Seelig had started making clothes washing machines in the tin shop behind their hardware store. This business grew rapidly, and they established the Barlow & Seelig Manufacturing Co. to concentrate on production of the washing



CEYLON ARTHUR KOHL (1886-1974) is shown in his sport shop, which was located at 103 W. Fond du Lac St. from 1940 until 1957. Kohl was a native of Ripon and was a charter member of the Ripon Rotary. *submitted photo*

machines. They sold the hardware store in 1916 to the Kohl brothers. The washing machine manufacturing company moved to a facility on Shepard Street.

Barlow & Seelig Manufacturing Co. was later renamed "Speed Queen," which has become the present-day "Alliance Laundry Systems."

The company is still located in the Shepard Street location in Ripon.

The hardware store building at 214 Watson St. burned down in 1922 and a new building was built in the same location. It was at this time the name of the store was changed to "Kohl Hardware Co." Farrell's Fine Furnishings now occupies the Kohl hardware store building.

In 1930, Ceylon organized and was president of the United Hardware Stores of Wisconsin. His obituary

states that he was later associated with Devoe Reynolds Paint Co., however where this company was located and what Ceylon did for this company is not known. He started his C.A. Kohl's Sports Shop in 1940, which he ran for 17 years.

Ceylon was a charter member of the Ripon Rotary Club. He also was instrumental in organizing the Green Lake chapter of the Izaak Walton League. The Izaak Walton League of America was founded in 1922 and its mission is to conserve, restore and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of natural resources.

Ceylon also served on the trout committee for the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, working for the betterment and preservation of trout streams. He was a member of the Ripon Masons,



THIS FISHING CONTEST poster from C.A. Kohl's Sport Shop in Ripon recently was donated the Ripon Historical Society by the daughters of Barbara and Dennis Koats (1937-2018) of Neshkoro. The shop was located at 103 W. Fond du Lac St. and was owned by Ceylon Arthur Kohl (1886-1974) from 1940 until 1957.

submitted photo

and the Ripon Rod and Gun Club.

In 1909, Ceylon married Ruth "Mildred" Eckersley Kohl (1886-1978). They had three daughters together and lived at 541 Woodside St.

The fishing poster has been added into the archives of the Ripon Historical Society and will be preserved for future generations.

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, visit www.riponhistory.org, facebook.com/ripon-historicalsociety or instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/.

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