

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

Tour of homes will feature some of Ripon’s historic houses

A variety of historic and modern homes will be featured Saturday, Dec. 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Ripon’s bi-annual Dickens of a Christmas Tour of Homes. The homes will showcase unique design elements and exquisite holiday décor throughout the tour. Tour tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 the day of the tour. Advance tickets may be purchased online on Eventbrite or at the Ripon Chamber of Commerce, 401 Watson St. Check-in will take place at the Chamber office and day-of, cash-only, tickets may be purchased at that time.

This year’s Tour of Home locations include the Arnetveits (W13827 Skyline Circle), the Beckers (121 W. Thorne St.), the Clements (903 Nordane Ave.), the McCarthys (536 Watson St.), the Peers (500 Eureka St.) and the Reeves (954 Watson St.).

The Pedrick-Lawson House, First Congregational Church and the Little White Schoolhouse also will be open for tours during the duration of the event and do not require a ticket.

Below is information on two of the historic houses featured on the tour. Three other homes were featured in last week’s *Commonwealth* and may be found at [www.Ripon-Press.com](http://www.Ripon-Press.com).



THIS CIRCA 1899 photograph shows the Italianate home at 536 Watson St. with a larger front porch and large chimney on the roof. Both were removed over the years. The house remained in the greater Reed family for 144 years. submitted photo

536 Watson St.

The Italianate-style house at 536 Watson St. is located in Ripon’s Southwest Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A small Greek Revival house, which had the address of 538 Watson St., was moved off of the large corner lot at Watson and Watertown streets so that 536 Watson St. could be built. The smaller house was turned 180 degrees and moved to the corner of Watertown and Ransom streets, where it remains today.

Lewis Reed (1843-1887), his wife Angeline Wolcott Reed (1848-1923) and their three children were the first of the extended Reed family members to occupy the house.

Found written above the door frame of the attic stairs at 536 Watson St. is the statement “Moved into this house May 1, 1879.”

Reed was a Civil War veteran and became a lawyer in 1867. He was elected municipal judge in 1869 and was also an officer of the First National Bank of Ripon.

A *Ripon Commonwealth Press* article from 1977 notes that “Unlike most houses constructed at that time, the home has always had a central heating plant which was first coal fired and now fueled by oil.” The article went on to state that “There has apparently always been running water in the house as well.”

It was speculated that there was a cistern in the attic for collection of water, which was pumped through the house. Marble-topped sinks were found in each bedroom.

The *Commonwealth Press* article also reported that there is 1 1/2 feet of airspace between the inside and outside walls that acts as insulation. The inside of the house has 11-foot ceilings downstairs and 10-foot ceilings upstairs. It also has a large skylight in the roof.

When it was built, the house had a large front porch, which wrapped around to the northern wall. The porch was taken off the home in the 1970s and was replaced by a smaller one. The line of the original porch still can be seen in the brick on the northeastern front side.

The property also features a large barn, which has been converted into a garage. It housed a grooms quarters on the second floor. An iron fence, which once kept wondering cows, horses and pigs off the property, still surrounds the corner property.

Starting in 1931, Reed’s grandson Alfred Reed (1907-1953) was the next family member to occupy the house. Alfred lived there with his wife, Grace Coit Reed Bright, and their three children. Like his grandfather and father, Alfred was an attorney, but later became the president and then chairman of the board for the Ripon Knitting Works.

The house then was passed to Alfred’s sister, Katherine Reed Grout (1905-1983) and her husband Richard Grout (1906-1984).

Katherine’s son, Gerald Reed Grout (1931-2010), and his wife, Lynn Jones Grout, took over ownership of the house in 1970. Gerald was a graduate of Ripon College and was the bank president at the First National Bank of Ripon.

Gerald’s son, Michael Shohoney, moved into the house in 1999. Michael lived there with his wife, Jeanne, and three sons — Ryan, Ross and Reed — before selling it in 2022.

After 144 years, this ended the occupancy by Reed family members.



CHILDREN PLAY OUTSIDE of 954 Watson St. on Labor Day in 1954. The house is located on the corner of West Griswold Street across from Barlow Park. It was built in 1952 by American architect Russell Barr Williamson (1893-1964), who was an apprentice, draftsman and later chief designer and project planner to Frank Lloyd Wright from 1914-1917. submitted photo

954 Watson St.

In 1952, a modernist home still known as the “Diedrich House” was built at 954 Watson St. at the corner of West Griswold Street across from Barlow Park.

At that time, Henry (1893-1977) and Muriel Diedrich (1913-2005) were known for entertaining and sought to build a residence with a large sweeping great room and flow for their family and guests.

This led them to review open-concept living and Prairie-style architecture exemplified in the work of the famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959).

In fact, the Diedrichs had the house designed by American architect Russell Barr Williamson (1893-1964), who was an apprentice, draftsman and later chief designer and project planner to Wright from 1914-1917.

After Williamson left Wright’s employment, he started his own architecture firm in Milwaukee and designed many buildings. The house at 954 Watson St. is the only known Russell Barr Williamson design in Ripon. He also designed two homes in Green Lake and three in Fond du Lac.

The house stayed in the Diedrich family until 2009. The second owners, Dave and Rebecca Reeves, always wanted to own a Williamson-designed home. The couple searched throughout Wisconsin several years to find a Williamson home and were excited to find one in Ripon.

In 2000, the house was featured in a book written by Williamson’s son.

The interior of the home includes rare Pecky cypress wood, large modern windows, original built-in modernist furniture and mixed materials, including wood and stone, giving it a modernist and Prairie-style feel. It has been opened to the public several times.

*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.*

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Answers to the Crossword Puzzle from the December 4th issue of The Commonwealth Express

COVES	HIHO	ABCS	ABET
ALIVE	ADAR	GRILL	GURU
LEOIV	SELA	SODOI	OMAN
VOLLEYBALLS	NEWSH	SSE	
ESS	NOEL	BEATREPORTER	
ETRE	TRESS	UAE	
STEPHENC	STE	TENTERS	
ACRE	SHAKENUP	ADFREE	
THREEP	OPERAGOER	ISAW	
ERE	BOWWOW	SHELTON	
	DORIA	MARKS	
	NONAGON	STOOGES	PIA
SLAW	THERAPIST	SOWING	
SERAPE	DAMAGERS	ATRA	
TARTARS	ASH	ATOMIZER	
OCR	EDITS	ALIF	
LIGHTWEIGHTB	ALLS	ADA	
ALA	BADGE	DOWNWARD	DOG
TINT	TESTL	XENAEIDER	
TACO	TRINA	EVER	AMORE
EDEN	SNOB	REST	DENSE