

Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society



THIS UNDATED PHOTO shows a football game at Ingalls Field. Seen in the background is the former St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church and school.

submitted photo



HOPP STADIUM WILL host its first competition Saturday, when the Ripon College Red Hawk football team welcomes Cornell College. Kick off is set for 1 p.m.

Steve Davis drone photo

Hopp Stadium to open Saturday; Franzen Science Center construction begins

Ripon College’s new Hopp Stadium is scheduled to host its first competition Saturday, when the Red Hawks football team will host Cornell College.

The home opener on Saturday, Sept. 16 against Illinois College was played at Ingalls Field.

With major construction scheduled to finish last week Friday, Saturday will serve as a soft opening with the essential elements of the stadium expected to be finalized.

A grand opening is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 21, at which time the college hopes to have nearly all interior and exterior branding, as well as elements of the game day experience installed and implemented.

In addition to the stadium, the game day experience will include a food trailer, pop-up apparel store and occasional pre-game programming.

“It’s hard to believe that we’ll be playing our first game only five months after the ground was broken,” Ripon College Athletic Director Chris Schumacher said. “While the full stadium experience won’t be complete until

later this year, we are eager to introduce this dynamic space to our immediate and extended community. The college is grateful to Boldt and Kahler Slater for their efficiency and accuracy throughout the design and build process.”

The Oct. 21 grand opening will host women’s soccer vs. Monmouth College at 9 a.m. and football vs. Lake Forest College at 1 p.m. Additional details regarding pre- and post-game programming are forthcoming.

In early August, construction began on the \$24.5 million renovation and expansion of the newly named Franzen Science Center. The 68,500 square feet of new construction and renovated space will include labs, classrooms and third spaces as well as a Makerspace and advanced physics labs in support of the launch of the college’s new engineering program, announced in June 2023.

The Franzen Science Center will continue to facilitate labs and classes throughout the duration of the construction process and is projected for a December 2024 grand opening.

Ingalls Field grew from being used more for track and field

Saturday will mark the first time Ripon College will have an on-campus stadium for Red Hawk football and soccer games, as well as other events.

Built across the street from the Willmore Center, the new \$8.5 million Hopp Stadium will feature a 2,000-seat grandstand with viewing opportunities on the campus’ Sadoff Hill and an outdoor plaza.

The new stadium’s formal entrance will be at the corner of Thorne and Union streets.

In prior years, both Ripon College and Ripon High School scheduled and played their football games at Ingalls Field, located at the corner of East Fond du Lac and St. Wenceslaus streets.

Ingalls Field is a half mile east of the Ripon College campus and one block north of Ripon High School. The athletic field was named after John G. Ingalls (1849-1908), who was a member of the Ripon College class of 1876. In 1887, he donated the land which became Ingalls Field.

Born in Massachusetts, Ingalls moved to Wisconsin as a young boy. He served in the Civil War and in his mid-20s became a student at Ripon College. Ingalls was a high school principal and then worked for Western Farm Mortgage Co. and Hartford Steam and Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co. before passing away at age 59.

In its early days, Ingalls Field was used more for Ripon College track and field events or field days. Field days included foot races, bicycle races, events such as the sledge throw, vaulting with pole and frivolous events like sack races and tug-of-war. The

first intercollegiate Field Day at Ingalls Field was in 1890.

Charles Dunbar (1868-1964), a graduate of Ripon High School and Ripon College class of 1892, is credited with being responsible for Ingalls Field being utilized for football.

Dunbar played halfback on the first Ripon College football team, which was established in 1891. In 1941, Dunbar wrote down his memories of early football at Ripon College noting, “we played on the lower campus where the new commons is being built.” Dunbar was speaking about Frank J. Harwood Memorial Union which houses the Great Hall.

As a student and immediately after college graduation, Dunbar headed a campaign to fund Ingalls Field for football.

In 1930, a small building named “Athenian Hall” was moved from Ripon College campus to Ingalls Field to use as a fieldhouse. This was razed in January 1983, when the field was refurbished. In 1939, Ripon College sold Ingalls Field to the city of Ripon for use by the Ripon Area School District with the understanding that the college still would have the right to use it for athletic competitions.

Lights were added to Ingalls Field in 1944. This was made possible by a \$10,000 donation (equivalent to \$173,688 dollars today) from three local industries: Barlow & Seelig Manufacturing (now Alliance Laundry Systems), the Ripon Knitting Works (located where Ripon Drug now stands) and Ripon Foods, Inc. (who manufactured Rippin’ Good Cookies).

This large donation also covered the cost to put lights in at Barlow Park for evening baseball games.

From 1983 until 2007, Ingalls Field also received a new press and statistician’s box, field lights, concession stand and ticket booth, along with other upgrades. It features artificial turf, which was first installed in 2008 and replaced in 2020. The field has a seating capacity for 3,500 spectators.

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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