

# Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

## Historic homes await next chapter

Two of Ripon's oldest homes are currently for sale.

The first is located at 621 Ransom St. It was built in 1857 in an Italianate style with the front door facing Watson Street.

Lifelong Ripon resident Lillian Zobel (1892-1985) wrote about the house in 1978 saying, "Originally that house faced west. A wooden sidewalk with cross slats led down the considerable slope to Watson Street. Beautiful elm trees boarded the walk."

In 1907, the home's land facing Watson Street was sold and the entrance to the house was changed to Ransom Street. The cupola also was removed from atop the building at that time.

It's speculated that the house once sat between Watson and Ransom streets and it was physically moved closer to Ransom Street. Another thought is that the house once was attached to an octagon-shaped original house. Neither idea can be verified.

This home was built for Philo England (1799-1871) and Armida Ruth Soule England (1799-1875), who moved to Ripon in 1854 with their three children.

The Englands' son, George A. England (1837-1883), owned the house after his father's death. It later was sold to another one of their sons, Frederick England (1831-1897), and his wife, Julie Anna Mozley England (1853-1941). When Frederick died, Anna continued to live in the house until 1926, therefore the home



**THE WOODEN ITALIANATE**-style house at 621 Ransom St. was built in 1857. Its front door once faced Watson Street.

*submitted photo*

remained in the first-owner's family for almost 70 years.

In 1918, Anna converted the house into two apartments and only spent summer months in Ripon, choosing to spend the winters in California. She rented out an apartment to a series of Ripon College professors.

In 1926, William H. Barber (1878-1973), a professor at Ripon College, purchased the house. Barber held different positions at Ripon College from 1909 until 1946. His wife, Esther Darrow Barber (1891-1975), was a music professor at the college and retired in 1956.

When the Barbers purchased the house, they modernized the building by adding central heating. They also replaced stoves, added oak flooring to replace a painted wood and closed some doorways. A detached garage was added at that time.

The house continued to be

owned by professors until the current owner. It is located in the Southwest Historic District and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The second historic house for sale is located at 610 Liberty St., which was built in the early 1850s. It is an octagon-shaped house made of grout, an early form of concrete. The house was built for Jacob Woodruff (1813-1893), who was one of the founders of the Republican Party in Ripon in 1854.

The house was passed down to Woodruff's son, Ensign Woodruff (1855-1946), who moved to California and sold the house in 1906 to Arthur E. Steinbring (1879-1950).

Steinbring passed the house to his son John "Jack" Steinbring (1929-2019), whose children sold it in 2021.

The house remained in the Steinbring family for 115 years before it was sold.

Approximately 100 octagon-shaped houses were built in Wisconsin and Ripon once had several octagon buildings. This house on Liberty Street was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

The National Register only has 68 octagon houses listed across the United States.

*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 OCTAGON-SHAPED** grout construction historic house at 610 Liberty St. was built in the early 1850s. *submitted photo*

## Vines & Rushes will host farmland access and transition event Sept. 12

With the majority of food and fiber producers over the age of 55, the rate of retiring producers is significantly disproportionate to the rate of emerging farmers.

Coupled with this dilemma, the loss of United States' farmland to developmental sprawl and foreign investors is making the farmland nearly impossible for emerging farmers to access due to high real estate prices.

The Farmland Access Hub and Renewing the Countryside, along with their partners Foxhead Regenerative Agriculture Project (FoxRAP) and Golden Sands RC&D, are working to remedy these issues by creating educational and networking opportunities for landowners and farmers around farmland transition.

In an effort to bring people together for learning and discussion—as well as to draw attention to farmland owners interested in transitioning their land with a positive community legacy—the Hub is planning a cluster of regional landowner/landseeker meet-and-greet events in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa in September.

The primary goals of these events are to:

- Support and bring attention to farmland becoming available to emerging farmers;

- Introduce and illustrate the

support provided by the Farmland Access Hub and the Farmland Access Navigator program;

- Provide education around farmland transition techniques such as alternative models of transition, easements and other resources available to preserve farmland for the future, and technical support for both landowners and landseekers entering a transition agreement;

- Provide technical and financial education by engaging with service professionals such as loan officers from the Farm Service Agency, DATCP Farm Center staff and agents from the Natural Resources Conservation Service;

- Boost community knowledge and participation in issues surrounding farmland access.

FoxRAP and Golden Sands will hold one of these events Tuesday, Sept. 12 from 1 to 5 p.m. at Vines & Rushes Winery in Ripon. Attendees will gather for the educational and networking session, with light refreshments provided. Session participants may tour the farm and winery, and continue the conversation.

This event is free and open to farmland owners and seekers.

Follow this link to register in advance: [www.farmlandaccesshub.org/hubsponsoredevents](http://www.farmlandaccesshub.org/hubsponsoredevents).

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