

# Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society



STUDENTS GATHER IN front of the two-story octagon-shaped Ceresco schoolhouse where Jennie Cate went to school in the 1800s.

submitted photo

## Jennie Cate shares memories of pioneer days in Wisconsin

A collection of Jennie Cate’s (1848-1944) writings reflecting upon early pioneer days in Wisconsin was shared by one of her descendants. The collection chronicles her knowledge and observations of many people between her family’s home in Berlin, her school days in Ceresco, plus her and her husband’s, Daniel Cate’s (1843-1910), home in Ripon.

This article is the first of a series of Jennie’s memories , which she wrote in 1933 when she was 85 years old.

“Now that I mingle less in present day activities, my mind goes back to the early pioneer days of Wisconsin. My mother and father were pioneers, not I. As a child, I enjoyed a free life, and any adventure seemed good enough to me. ... They (her family) came direct [into Wisconsin], urged by the opportunities of a new country and free land, and more than that, water-power and standing timber.

“I think the plunge into the wilderness of trees and mud brought more discomfort than they (my parents) had counted on, as maybe it does with most early settlers in different wild territories and states, in one way or another. While not drought nor grasshoppers, prairie dogs nor blizzards, there were tree stumps and red clay in roads and excavations. The road to the nearest station or next settlement was cut through the trees, and since then, with all the work put into it for draining, filling and bridging, in wet weather it was not easy to travel over in [many] places.

“A long bridge over the marsh was the much-dreaded part of the trip through to Strong’s Landing, eventually called Berlin. This station did not meet all of our need[s] for supplies, and trips were then made into Ripon — some trips made as far away as Milwaukee — if we could afford the horse, or needed horses with which to make our trip and that was seldom. ‘Buck’ and ‘Brindle,’ our oxen, were for the most part our faithful helpers.

“But, as a child, why should I worry? I was having a good enough time, and I did not feel the difficulties and lonesomeness of those pioneers who were bearing the burdens of the day. We soon had plenty of help to do the hard work of digging and installing mills and machinery from those who were glad to earn something to tide over their own needs.

“People began clearing their land and brought in logs to be sawed into half shares. They then raised good crops on the same land that held their log houses; later log homes were replaced by wooden frame housing with plenty of timber and a saw mill located so nearby.

“There were even calls for lumber from areas of the country that did not have timber — lumber was also available from Markesan and the prairie country surrounding Ripon. To offset my family’s lumber bill, I was given to board with a family and attended the Octagon Schoolhouse in the nearby area called Ceresco — located not far from the Fourierite Building

(the Ceresco Longhouse), famous in its time. Professor Frye was the head of the Ceresco School. I was introduced to some children at the school, much to my surprise, as the ‘little girl from Indian Land’ (hailing from the Northern States and also pioneer country.)

“In the very early days, the Indians came through Wisconsin in long cavalcades of Indian Ponies, loaded down to two or three times their size with blankets and tents, and some provisions, I suppose, but they usually stopped to ask for more. They were respectful and harmless, and greeted us with a friendly ‘Bju!’ (as it sounded to me) — probably acquired somewhere from the French word ‘Bounjour!’

“They wore bright-colored blankets wound stiffly around them from shoulder to feet, and earrings and beads encasing and twisted into their hair, which hung down the backs of both men and women. Sometimes a baby was deftly snuggled in the blanket. They lived farther North around streams and lakes and came through to their old camping places around the Fox River areas. We were generally expected to hand out something to them (as a showing of good will) — bread, salt pork or just anything edible.”

*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*

## Ripon offers business planning program for entrepreneurs

Ripon Main Street, Inc. and Envision Greater Fond du Lac’s IGNITE program announced the return of Ripon’s Entrepreneurial Training Program.

This comprehensive seven-week course is designed to guide aspiring entrepreneurs through a step-by-step approach to writing a professional business plan.

The course is designed for those who are considering starting a business, but also is beneficial for existing small enterprises aiming to expand their operations.

The cost to participate in the entrepreneurial training course is \$150, which includes essential handouts and materials. The cost to participate in comparable courses typically starts at \$1,000 or more; however, Ripon Main Street, Inc. and IGNITE are partnering to offer this program at a reduced rate to stimulate business startups and expansions.

The Ripon Entrepreneurial Training Program covers topics such as research, marketing, organizational matters, financial planning and projections, and managing growth.

The course, which takes place Tuesday evenings from March 5 to April 16, aims to empower participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to formulate a comprehensive business plan.

As an added incentive, completed business plans will qualify for a \$5,000 cash prize awarded to the creator of the best concept.

As a preview of the course, Main Street and IGNITE will host a complimentary introduction to business-planning seminar titled “Starting a Business in Ripon.” This informative session will take place Tuesday, Feb. 27, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate office, 110 Blackburn St.

The seminar will cover fundamental aspects of launching a business and provide an opportunity for prospective entrepreneurs to register for the Ripon Entrepreneurial Training Program.

For more information or to discuss the program in greater detail, call the Ripon Main Street office at 920-748-7466.



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