# Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

# Ripon safecrackers were never found

Almost 100 years ago, on Sept. 12, 1924, Ripon residents received a Commonwealth story about "safecrackers" who had broken into one of Ripon's train depots to commit a crime.

Ripon Train Baggageman Ansel P. Hyde (1880-1964), who lived at 339 East Sullivan St., arrived for work at 5:45 a.m. at the Milwaukee & Horicon train depot (which was located nearby today's Ripon Area Builders at 426 East Fond du Lac St.) to find that the depot's heavy safe's door had been blown off of its hinges.

Hyde immediately reported the crime scene to Ripon Police Chief Fred W. Allen (1870-1945), who lived on Hall Street, and railway officials in Milwaukee. A detective was sent from Milwaukee and upon investigation tire tracks were spotted outside the train depot along with men's footprints.

Evidence pointed to an automobile that may have been carrying the robbers and that they possibly arrived in Ripon on Highway 23 from the direction of Fond du Lac.

#### The break-in

Ripon police speculated that up to three robbers carrying heavy overcoats entered the depot using a pry bar to open a window in the men's restroom.

Once inside the building, they pried open the door to the ticket room. The police again speculated that the three overcoats were then used as a "silencer" to disguise the sound of the blast that tore the safe's door from its hinges.

Upon explosion, large pieces of metal from the safe broke out a window and wall between a boiler room and the men's restroom. A wall clock inside the train station had stopped at 3 a.m., leading authorities to believe that this may have been



THIS PHOTO SHOWS the Milwaukee & Horicon Railroad Depot safe with door blown off its hinges on the right, along with ransacked debris. RCP file photo

the possible time of the blast.

When officials inspected the scene, they found that a hole had been drilled in the lower corner of the safe and nitroglycerin was poured into it as well as around the safe's door seams.

The nitroglycerin then was covered with bar-hand soap to hold the explosive chemical in place. Nitroglycerin is typically detonated by a type of "shock" to the chemical such as heat or flame leaving a smokeless explosion. The robbers' expert use of nitroglycerin pointed the Ripon police to the possibility that they were professional criminals.

City of Ripon residents were asked to be on the lookout for up to three suspicious individuals based upon the number of heavy overcoats left behind at the scene of the crime.

According to the Milwaukee & Horicon Railroad, the safecrackers did not steal any train tickets, but made away with \$73 in cash (which equates to \$1,284.29 in 2023). This cash

was locked in the safe and was from the prior day's ticket sales.

#### Additional clues

Ripon resident Anna Guenther (1874-1951), who lived on Fond du Lac Street, reported to the Commonwealth that "she heard a loud explosion at about 3 a.m., which awoke her from sleep. She thought perhaps this sound was from the nearby Ripon Pickle Factory or freight train cars arriving along tracks behind her home.'

The Commonwealth also printed that shortly after the robbery "Two unknown men were reported driving in Ripon and were later seen in Rosendale, but no one was arrested."

There were no arrests or convictions for this crime.

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.

# Maui wildfire relief candle fundraiser held by St. Peter's Parish

Saint Peter's Episcopal Church is raising funds to help the victims of the wildfires in Hawaii in support of the Red Cross's relief efforts for families who have experienced displacement due to

The parish is working with Door County Candle Co. to raise the funds, offering 16-ounce candles at a cost of \$30 each. The candle is called "Maui" and the scent is of a Hawaiian passion fruit called Liliko'i. Each candle will burn for 75 hours, according to the company's website.

Door County Candle is working directly with the American Red Cross to provide financial donations which fund meals, disaster health, mental health services and spiritual care, which help families and individuals begin the recovery process.

Although the candle company has raised more than \$40,000 for the cause, Saint Peter's Parish's goal is to raise \$600 to contribute. Candle orders will be available for pickup at the Parish of St. Peter office, 217 Houston St. in Ripon. Purchasers will be contacted via the method provided on the order form once they are ready to be picked up. Orders must be placed by Sept. 24.

Please stop by the parish office or call 920-748-2422. Email mandy@stpetersonripon.com to receive assistance with candle orders. Accepted forms of payment include, cash, check, Venmo (@ stpetersripon) and Tithe.ly. Make checks payable to St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Add Maui Candle to the memo field of the check.

# Ripon Immanuel Church will participate in Back to Church Sunday

"Back to Church Sunday," part of a national movement of churches across America, will be held Sunday, Sept. 17 at 10:45 a.m. at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Ripon. Everyone is welcome.

Since it started as a call to action and invitation for the church in 2009, the National Back to Church Sunday movement marks its 14th year and continues to gain momentum. More than 5 million Christ followers have participated through 30,000 churches.

It is a day focused on uniting the church to equip and empower members to be inviters. Eight out of 10 people say they are open to visiting church if invited — they are just waiting for an invitation.

For Back to Church Sunday, Ripon Immanuel will have a special service that features live music from its praise band, a backpack blessing (or tote bag or duffle bags) for all students, teachers, school staff, coaches and administrative personal and tasty treats.

People also are invited to experience Ripon Immanuel's traditional service, which begins at 9 a.m and features hymns, organ music, traditional liturgy along with the backpack blessing.

"This year's Back to Church Sunday campaign is designed around a celebration theme encouraging current church attenders to invite friends and neighbors to come experience the support, hope and friendship available at a local church, as well as discovering the deeper, spiritual benefits that faith can provide," the Rev. Heather

Ripon Immanuel is located at 401 W. Fond du Lac St. For more information, go to www.riponimmanuel.org or call 920-748-6695.

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