

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

Meat market operated in Ripon for more than 90 years

Today, “Gents,” a retail store featuring men’s home decor, vintage vinyl records, original art, leather items, hats and apparel is located at 211 Watson St.

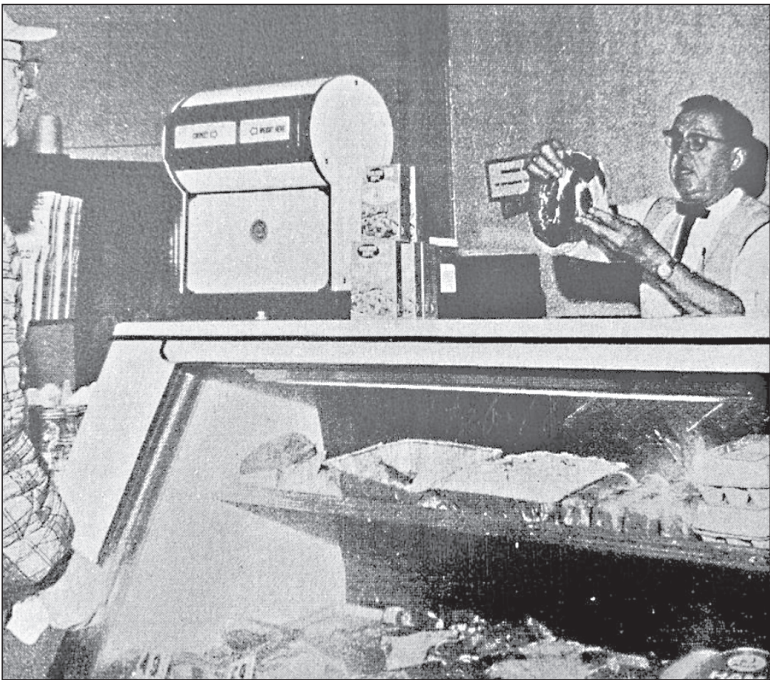
However, for years this was the location of a meat market that was the longest continuous business in Ripon’s commercial district.

The Graf & Jussen Meat Market opened in 1865. The owners were O. Louis Graf (1832-1916) and Edward Jussen (1829-1922). Both men were immigrants who were born in Germany.

Graf came to America in 1849 and arrived in Ripon in 1865. He married Caroline Bohnert Graf (1839-1926) in 1860 and they had three children.

Jussen came to America in 1854 and to Ripon in 1865. He and his wife Theresa Weber Jussen (1848-1925), had five children and lived on Jackson Street.

Their meat market building burned in an 1868 Watson Street fire. Although the location of their first meat market and the location after the fire are unknown, the building at 211 Watson St. was built around 1870. Research confirms The Graf & Jussen meat market at this location as far back as 1876. The address at that time was 42



ERV JONAS (1907-1986) owner of Erv’s Market helps customer John Deuhring (1884-1970), who lived at 306 State St., in 1965. Erv’s operated during the 1960s and was the last of several meat markets located at 211 Watson St. *RCP file photo*

Main St.. Later, the street name and numbering system in Ripon was changed.

In 1887, George Graf (1861-1940) took and managed his father’s half of the business.

Jussen’s sons, George Jussen (1872-1938) and William Jussen (1876-1937), worked with their father at the meat market until

he retired in 1902. They owned and operated the business after George Graf retired in 1916, changing the name to “Jussen Brothers Meats.”

When the Jussen brothers retired from the business, it was taken over by Otto Falk (1906-1966). Around 1946, he sold the business to Don Dolske (1912-1981), who ran the meat market for about 15 years as Don’s Meats.

That business was sold in 1961 to Erwin “Erv” Jonas (1907-1986). Jonas had learned the meat cutting trade working for a market for 15 years, and then R-Line Foods for 20 years.

Jonas changed the name of the business to “Erv’s Market.”

A 1965 *Ripon Commonwealth Press* article noted, “Erv’s Market carries a full line of fresh meats and sausages, making most of its own sausages, wieners, bologna and bacon. Meat is purchased from area beef, hog and poultry raisers. Slaughtering is done at Don Dolske’s slaughterhouse on the Dolske farm in rural Ripon.”

The market also sold cheese, fish and some grocery items.

A grandson, Dan Jonas, noted in a 2006 *Ripon Commonwealth Press* article that “there used to be a big pickle jar and the guys would hang out around it and



THIS UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH is in the Jussen family file within the archives at the Ripon Historical Society. The Graf & Jussen Meat Market was located at 42 Main St. (now 211 Watson St.). Although unmarked, it is possible the individuals seen here are George Graf (1861-1940), Edward Jussen (1829-1922), George Jussen (1872-1938) and William Jussen (1876-1937). *submitted photo*

you can see where they would drop their knives into the floor for fun.”

Jack Jonas (1932-2021), who worked with his father at Erv’s Market on a part-time basis added “I remember we used to have sawdust on the floor to absorb spills. We would get the meat in and if you got blood on the floor, you could just sweep up the sawdust. Eventually, OSHA made us get rid of that.”

Erv’s Market closed around 1969, ending a run of more than 90 years that there was a meat market business located at 211 Watson St. The building sat empty until 1993, when John Splitt and Colleen Kok purchased it, restored the exterior and renovated the interior. The building still retains the walk-in refrigeration cooler from the meat market days.

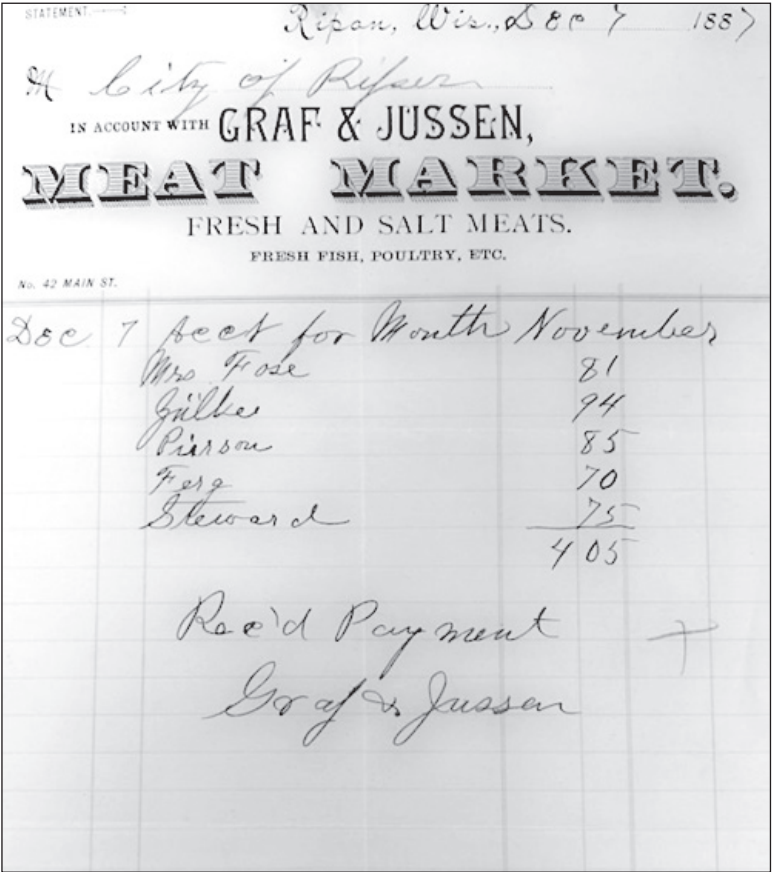
Until 2001, Splitt and Kok ran a custom furniture and gift

shop named “Old Market Woodworks.” Other retail businesses occupied the building as well, with Gents being the most recent store. Whenever Gents is open, individuals can stop in to ask about the vintage meat cooler, which now is used as a retail display area. As a contributing building in the Watson Street Commercial Historic District, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Ripon Historical Society is Wisconsin’s oldest continuously operating historical society.

It is located at 508 Watson St. and is open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information follow us at Facebook/riponhistory or www.riponhistory.org.



THIS 1887 INVOICE from the Graf & Jussen Meat Market is part of the Ripon Historical Society archives. The meat market was located at 42 Main St. (now 211 Watson St.). The building housed a meat market for more than 90 years. *submitted photo*

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Answers to the Crossword Puzzle from the April 10th issue of The Commonwealth Express

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| ASCETICS | IDCARD | CABAL |
| GLADIOLI | TAILOR | AROMA |
| LOVEKNOT | DIVINE | SCRAP |
| OPEN | TOG | SIXKS |
| WED | ETHNIC | LEOS |
| WYLLIE | LAUD | WART |
| CHEESES | ANDI | AGITATES |
| LOLA | RDA | DAS |
| OWLS | RRS | LLOYD |
| UTE | CAYS | ELBA |
| TORAH | ETAL | EMMA |
| BRER | BIGD | ISAK |
| INJAIL | MAGLI | SHU |
| FOOTSO | RE | HUE |
| SWEET | TEA | TEND |
| MEGS | DYCE | VETTE |
| PASTA | AUDI | ELAINE |
| IVIES | TREND | END |
| NIXED | TELNET | TEARINTO |
| ELENA | AUTEUR | INPIECES |
| SAISSY | SPARSE | CDTOWERS |