

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

## Selfridge Apartments' building was built in 1928

Found in the middle of the Victorian homes along Watson Street is an apartment building at 602 Watson St. Built in 1928 the "All Modern' Apartment House" sits on the corner of Watson and Watertown streets.

An August 1928 *Ripon Commonwealth* reported that "The new apartment house is very attractive and located in one of the prettiest parts of Ripon's residential districts."

This classical revival-style two-story brick building is located in the Southwest Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The eight-unit building was the result of a cooperative effort by the Ripon and Waupun realty companies.

The Ripon Realty Co. included Sam Pickard (1897-1973), James Stone (1873-1970), Fred Chittenden (1883-1950), James Middleton (1889-1952) and Herman Diedrich (1864-1954).

Pickard and Stone were bankers; Chittenden and Middleton owned the Middleton Lumber & Fuel Co.; Diedrich owned the Diedrich Agency Ripon Realty Co., which rented out the apartment units.

The building contractor was

A. Wolden of Waupun and the architects were Auler, Jensen & Brown of Oshkosh. In 1930, this architectural firm also designed the Art Deco First National Bank at 114 Watson St.

A full-page insert in the *Ripon Commonwealth Press* invited the public to attend an open house of the new building Friday and Saturday, Oct. 5 and 6, 1928. The insert stated, "In line with Ripon's steady growth, the Ripon Realty Company saw the urgent need of a building offering the many modern conveniences of a home on a very economical rental basis and affording the tenant the privilege of a long-term lease so that he would not be faced with the constant dread of his home sold."

The insert went on to note, "Ripon's ALL-MODERN Apartments have been designed by an expert in the apartment house line, every conceivable modern device being installed for the convenience of the tenants. Heat is furnished by the Realty Company, together with janitor service. A complete unit of electrical refrigeration is installed in every apartment. Each apartment is equipped with a four plate gas range and oven.

### Visit Ripon's New Modern Apartment House

#### FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Ripon's First All-Modern, Eight Family Apartment to Hold Open House for Public Inspection on Friday and Saturday, October 5 and 6—9 a. m. to 9 p. m.

**To the Public:**

We announce with a great deal of pride the formal opening of Ripon's first ALL-MODERN Apartment House. In line with Ripon's steady growth, the Ripon Realty Company saw the urgent need of a building offering the many modern conveniences of a home on a very economical rental basis, and affording the tenant the privilege of a long term lease so that he would not be faced with the constant dread of having his home sold.

Ripon's ALL-MODERN Apartments are designed by an expert in the apartment house line, every conceivable modern device being installed for the convenience of the tenants.

Heat is furnished by the Realty Company, together with janitor service. A complete unit of electrical refrigeration is installed in every apartment. A Kewaunee incinerator in the basement solves the garbage question. A Crane Automatic water softener provides constant hot running soft water the year round. A strictly modern laundry, equipped with stationary tubs and Big 3, Barlow & Seelig washing machinery, etc., is placed at the convenience of each tenant. Also a large locker room in the basement is furnished each tenant. Vapor heat is furnished under the supervision of a competent janitor. Each apartment is equipped with a four plate gas range and oven.

Yours for a BETTER RIPON, **RIPON REALTY COMPANY.**

#### General Contract for Apartment House

BY **E. WOLDEN**  
Telephone No. 66 Waupun, Wisconsin

When You Visit the Apartment House You will see:

Luxor Shades, at the windows.  
Kirsch Rods, at the windows.  
Gold Seal Linoleum, in the kitchens and bath rooms.  
Velvet Carpets on the stairs and in the halls, all furnished from our house furnishings department.  
Estimates cheerfully furnished for any size and kind of drapery or floorcovering requirements.

**Faustman's**  
ON THE SQUARE  
Ripon, Wis.

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"The Bank That Service Built"

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The Latest and Best in Electrical Refrigeration!

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##### BIG "3" WASHER

"3" 3

Installed by **BARLOW & SEELIG MANUFACTURING CO.**  
Ripon, Wis.

##### PAINTING and DECORATING

by **Thresher-Huber Co.**  
Fond du Lac, Wis.  
Phone 3499

##### We Sold the Lot

Wrote the INSURANCE And Are Now Handling the RENTALS

**The Diedrich Agency**

##### MILLWORK FOR APARTMENT

by **Moore & Galloway** through **MIDDLETON LUMBER & FUEL CO.**

**THIS FULL-PAGE** insert in the *Ripon Commonwealth Press* from October 1928 invited the public to an open house for the new apartment building found at 602 Watson St. *submitted photo*

"A Kewaunee incinerator in the basement solves the garbage questions. A Crane Automatic water softener provides constant hot running soft water the year around. A strictly modern laundry, equipped with stationary tubs and Big 3, Barlow & Seelig washing machinery." Barlow & Seelig became Speed Queen and is known today as "Alliance Laundry Systems."

The insert also bragged of "A large locker room in the basement" for each tenant and "vapor heat" being furnished "under the supervision of a competent janitor."

Surrounding information on the apartments in the insert were advertisements from the various Ripon companies that provided building materials, refrigerators, stoves and other services.

The advertisement for Faustman's "On the Square" in Ripon stated, "When you visit the apartment house you will see Luxor Shades at the windows. Kirsch Rods at the windows. Gold seal Linoleum, in the kitchens and bathrooms. Velvet carpets on the stairs and in the halls, all furnished from our house furnishing department."

An October 1928 *Ripon Weekly Press* noted that "Each apartment has four rooms and bath, living room with a disappearing bed, dining alcove, kitchen and bedroom. Built in cabinets have space and area



**SELFDRIDGE APARTMENTS SIT** on the corner of Watson and Watertown streets in Ripon. It was built in 1928 as the "All Modern' Apartment House." *Jonathan Bailey photo*

immediately accessible in both kitchen and dining room."

The *Weekly Press* also reported that "One major feature is the installation of Masonite sound deadener. Two thousand dollars (equal to \$37,500 today) was spent to assure absolutely sound proof apartments. There are 21 inches of sound deadener between the first- and second-floor ceilings and side walls, assuring cool apartments on the second floor in the summer time." The building also had a brick garage for tenants.

At some point, the apartment building was renamed the "Selfridge Apartments."

Harry Selfridge (1858-1947) was born in Ripon and was an American retail magnate who founded the London-based Selfridges department store.

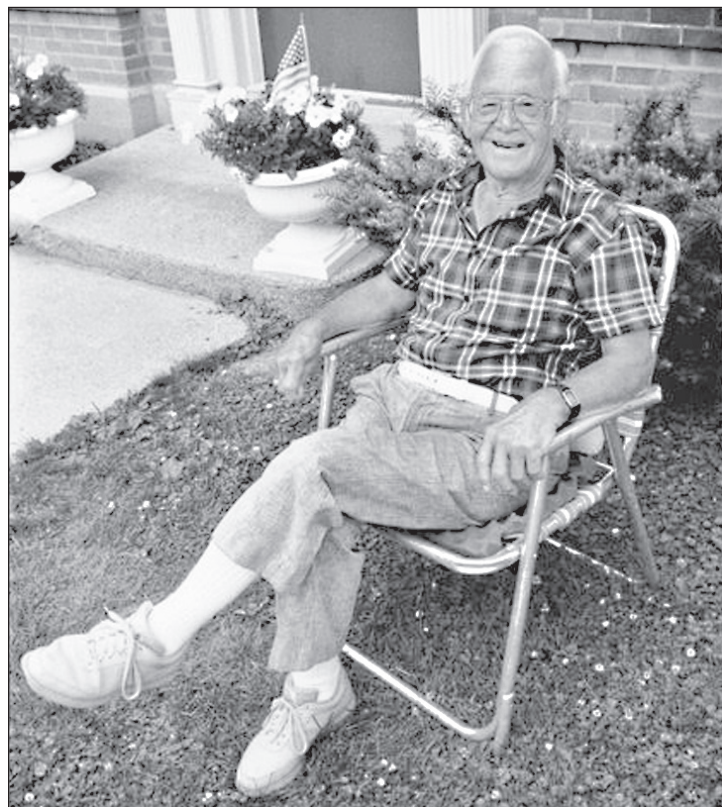
In 1949, Milton "Milt" Wer-

din (1912-1998) became the custodian of the apartments. He and his wife, Clarabele Souls Werdin (1913-1983), lived in the building until their deaths.

Milt was best known for owning Milt's Liquor from 1947 until 1993. He also was known for sitting in a lawn chair in the front yard of Selfridge Apartments, reading the paper and watching people pass by.

*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, visit [www.riponhistory.org](http://www.riponhistory.org), [facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety) or [instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/](https://www.instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/).*



**MILTON "MILT" WERDIN** (1912-1998) sits in a lawn chair in the front yard of the Selfridge Apartment building at 602 Watson St. in 1994. He was well known for reading the paper, watching and greeting people who passed by. Werdin (1912-1998) became the custodian of the building in 1949 and lived there until his death. *Tim Lyke photo*

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