

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

Houses sprung up in Ripon following World War II

The population of Ripon grew after World War II from 4,566 people in 1940 to 7,053 in 1970. This meant that in a span of 30 years almost 2,500 people moved to Ripon and both houses and apartments were needed to house them. Compare that growth to today, where the population in 2020 was 7,863, which means that the population of Ripon only grew by 810 individuals over the 50 years since 1970.

To address this need, post-World War II new houses sprung up around town similar to the one located at 138 W. Oshkosh St.

Started in the late summer of 1953, the house was completed by 1954. The area it was built upon was the farm of Peter Hammen (1855-1925), who came to Ripon in 1904. He passed the farm onto his son who developed it for housing sites.

The farm bordered Oshkosh Street on the south and approximately Highland Avenue on the north. On its eastern edge was Eureka Street, and the western edge was around Gary Street.

The house at 138 W. Oshkosh St. was built by Frank Katerzynski (1899-1990) and his wife, Myrtle Schmuhl Katerzynski (1917-2001). Married in the late 1940s, they lived on Warren



ABOVE LEFT, A house is built at 138 W. Oshkosh St. in 1953 on the former Hammen family farmland. Above right, at the time there were no houses located behind it. That area is filled with houses today. The house at 138 W. Oshkosh St. still stands. *submitted photos*

Street and started building the house at their ages of 54 and 36. Frank had lived in the Ripon area all his life and was a machine operator at Speed Queen, retiring in 1970. Myrtle went to Ripon High School and also worked at Speed Queen, and later Ripon Laundry. Before retirement, she worked in food service at Ripon College. Myrtle had one son from a previous marriage.

Historic information donation

Recently, the Katerzynskis'

granddaughters donated all of their information about the building of their house to the Ripon Historical Society. This includes cost estimates, receipts, photographs, building permits and more.

One receipt dated June 26, 1953 shows that the Katerzynskis ordered and paid for a Lewis Manufacturing Co. "Brentwood" style home from Bay City, Mich. The *Ripon Commonwealth Press* around that time featured many ads for houses that could be ordered in a prefab manner or "kits" of materials shipped to a builder's location. The homeowner then also could hire local craftsmen to assemble the house kits.

A floor plan for the Brentwood home states that it had two bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen and living room with a fireplace and a one-car garage.

"This popular ranch-house design, measuring 53 feet in width, is the ideal home for a wide city-lot ..., advertising information read. "The garage being attached as an integral part of the structure gives the appearance of increased size, enhancing its impressiveness. Besides the excellent interior arrangement of the Brentwood, one of the especially attractive features is the expansive picture-window."

The body of the house was to be a white color with Salem yellow shutters. The inside trim of the house was to be made of pale birch wood, except for a white enamel for the kitchen and bath.

The select roof shingles were deep red, and oak flooring was specified for both the kitchen and bathroom. A building permit from the city of Ripon shows that in 1965 the Katerzynskis also added porches onto the home at an estimated cost of \$100 (\$942 today in 2023).

The price for this 959-square-foot house was \$4,335.25 for which the Katerzynskis paid \$4,206.18 (approximately \$46,878 today) after a 3% cash



discount. This included roofing and roofing felt, nails, all needed wood for the house, wallboard, shutters, flashing/tinwork, weather stripping, interior woodwork, interior flooring, doors (including the garage door) paint, and more.

Two freight receipts from the Chicago & Northwestern railroad dated Aug. 14, 1953 totaled \$240.20 (\$2,679 today) to ship these materials for the house to Ripon. The Horner Insurance Agency, located at 406 E. Jackson St., issued a receipt in August 1953 for \$22 (\$245 today) for \$10,000 (\$111,614 today) worth of insurance coverage on the new house under construction.

An estimate of \$791.25 (\$8,795 today) dated Oct. 3, 1953 was given by Gozinski Brothers, 536 E. Jackson St., for a home foundation. This estimate was marked paid in November 1953.

The Gozinski Brothers did concrete, masonry work and plastering, and also issued a June 17, 1953 invoice of \$1,085 (\$12,061 today) for plastering, the chimney, fireplace and back plastering the foundation.

Martin B. Langdon Electrical, 537 Scott St., presented bills between 1953 and 1955 totaling \$265.78 (\$2,954 today). Wisconsin Power and Light charged \$7.50 (\$83 today) in July 1953 for a 15-foot "ditch allowance."

A receipt for kitchen cupboards from Sears, Roebuck & Co., located at 307 Watson St., was dated in April 1954 and totaled \$193.79 (\$2,154 today).

An estimate from Ripon Sheet Metal Works of Ripon totaled \$835 (\$9,281 today) for the "Heil KF series automatic oil-fired winter air conditioner" (furnace with automatic controls), 275-gallon fuel tank, pipe for the tank, electrical wiring duck work and registers at the baseboard.

A plumbing quote dated Jan. 26, 1953 totaled \$921 (\$10,237

today) and was from Lenz and Wells Plumbing and Heating Contractor of Green Lake.

Various receipts from Ripon Lumber Co. (whose telephone number was Black-42) totaled \$76.39 (\$849 today).

A bill dated July 28, 1953 from Louis Buelow, a general contractor at 554 Scott St., showed carpenter labor billed at \$1.75 per hour (\$19.45 today).

In May of 1955, 26 landscaping plants and three trees for the yard were delivered from McKay Nursery of Madison totaling \$122.25 (\$1,454 today).

Finally, various hand-written notes from the Katerzynskis show the sum total amount paid for the house was around \$7,300 (approximately \$80,844 today).

They kept a detailed list of what they paid for in cash themselves and what they financed through a bank.

Loan settlement papers dated Nov. 30, 1956 from Ripon Federal Savings and Loan Association, 207 Watson St., show that the Katerzynskis paid off \$700 (\$7,638 today). \$5 of this was for the title and abstract company.

A tax receipt from Fond du Lac County dated in 1956 had the assessed value of the house at \$4,600 (\$450,194 today) with taxes being \$213.44 (\$2,329 today). Included in the receipts was one dated April 16, 1970 from attorney Eugene Bitters of Ripon for \$20 (\$152.99 today) to draw up new wills for the couple.

The house still stands today and 70 years later it is a testament to the Katerzynskis' organization and dedication to building a home in Ripon.

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 BRENTWOOD—A Charming Home In the Ranch-House Style

This popular ranch-house design, measuring 53 feet in width, is an ideal home for a wide city lot or a suburban location where a house does not have to be restricted in width.

The garage, being attached as an integral part of the structure, gives the appearance of increased size, enhancing its impressiveness. The garage can be enlarged to 20' x 20' for 2 cars at an additional cost which will be quoted on request.

Besides the excellent interior arrangement of the Brentwood, one of the especially attractive features is the expansive picture window, measuring 53 feet in width. The clear view corner section is plate glass being flanked by the 2 chevron windows.

Height of ceiling, 8 feet.



FRANK KATERZYNSKI (1899-1990) and his wife, Myrtle Schmuhl Katerzynski (1917-2001), selected this home plan to be built at 138 W. Oshkosh Street in 1953. *submitted photo*

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