

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

From chauffeur to community pillar: Arthur Jolly's story

In the early years of the automobile, Arthur Jolly (1885-1956) became a chauffeur to two wealthy Chicagoans who had an estate on Green Lake.

Born in England, Jolly later settled in Ripon and is buried in Ripon's Woodland Cemetery.

Victor Lawson (1850-1925) published the *Chicago Daily News* from 1876-1925. He also was president of the *Associated Press* from 1894 to 1900 and was on its board of directors from 1900 until 1925. He married Jessie Strong Bradley Lawson (1851-1914) in 1880, and they both honeymooned and vacationed on Green Lake.

During the summer of 1888, Jessie was on a boat tour of Green Lake when a storm caused the boat captain to take shelter at Lone Tree Point on the northwestern part of the lake. The Lawsons were both looking for a refuge from the city and Jesse convinced Victor to purchase 10 acres of land at Lone Tree Point. They expanded this to become a 1,100-acre estate, which they called "Lone Tree Farm." This estate is now home to the Green Lake Conference Center, W2511 Highway 23, Green Lake.

The Lawsons traveled back and forth between Chicago and Green Lake, as well as to Europe and Africa, and they shipped cars to their various travel destinations.

In 1908, the Lawsons built a large garage on their Green Lake estate which had employee living quarters on the second floor. This garage building was razed in 1997 to make room for the Bauer Lodge.

The Lawsons acquired a variety of automobiles over the years, including a Cadillac roadster, Locomobile, Mercedes, Pierce Arrow, Stanley Steamer, an electric car and others.

The 2003 book, "Just Do It Jessie's Way!" by Kathleen Kleinpaste, noted that the Lawsons had George Lewis (1883-1938) from England as a chauffeur in Chicago and wanted a second driver.

They decided to interview for candidates in England, so Lewis wrote to his friend, Jolly, suggesting that he interview for the position.

"Jessie interviewed five men, but Arthur got the job because he was on time," the book stated. "Promptness was one of Jessie's cardinal rules!"

Jolly was the personal driver for Jesse, however he also drove Victor as needed and traveled internationally with the couple. Jolly also captained



THIS UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH shows the two chauffeurs of Victor Lawson and Jesse Strong Bradley Lawson. George Lewis is believed to be on the left and Arthur Jolly on the right. The photo is taken at the Lawsons' 1,100-acre Green Lake estate looking southwest toward Lone Tree Point. This estate is now home to the Green Lake Conference Center.

Dartford Historical Society photo

the Lawson's boat on Green Lake. The boat named the "No Hurry" still can be found on the grounds of Green Lake Conference Center under a shelter along the lake front just west of its original boat house.

The book apprised that in an interview done in the mid 1900s by Blanche Longman for an article titled "The Lady of Long Tree Point," Jolly stated that "Sometimes we thought that Mrs. Lawson was 'peculiar.' You had to get used to her ways. But there was never anyone who treated her help any better. She worried about us all — she wanted to be sure we got enough to eat and had a comfortable place to live. I don't think anyone could have been more kind or better to work for, as long as you did what you were told."

Jolly also noted that the Lawson employees did not always understand Mrs. Lawson's requests and didn't always agree with her. However he felt that she seemed to always be correct so they would just shrug their shoulders and say, "Oh well, just do it Jessie's Way."

The book also informed that "For some unknown reason Jessie would not allow her picture to be taken, so it is only by some determination and a little bit of luck that a few pictures have been found."

This is because Jolly "somehow managed to get a couple of pictures of her during his years of employment."

In 1916, Jolly married a girl he had dated in England, Rose Tidy Jolly (1885-1957).

Rose then worked as a chamber maid at the Lawson estate. They had two children: Henry (1917-1976) and long-time Ripon resident Gladys Jolly Hritsko (1919-2010).

Before she passed away, Hritsko donated two photo albums of her fathers from the Lawson era to the Dartford Historical Society in Green Lake. They featured photographs of the estate, employees and its cars. The albums also hold postcards from Jolly's travels with the Lawsons.

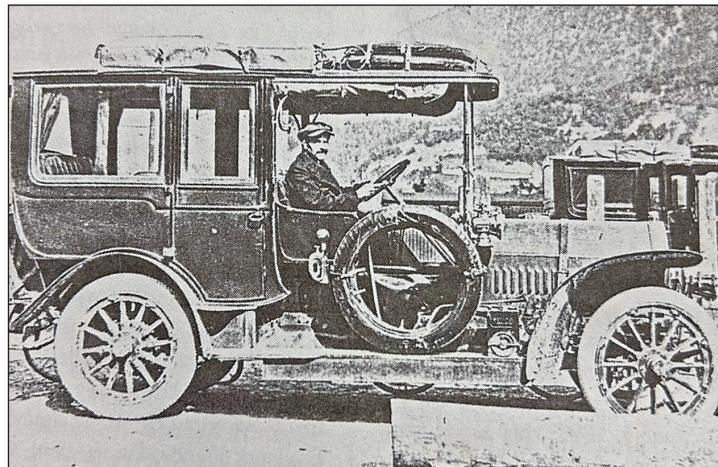
After Jesse passed away in 1914, Jolly continued working for Victor. At some point, the Jolly family moved from the Lawson Estate to Princeton.

Jolly's name was listed in the May 8, 1919 *Princeton Republic* as a "nozzleman" for the Princeton fire department.

An April 1920 issue of the *Ripon Weekly Press* stated that the family had moved to Ripon so Jolly could work at one of the city's garages. Jolly also became a U.S. citizen in 1920.

Early summer issues of the 1926 *Ripon Weekly Press* carried advertisements for the Public Service Garage with Jolly as the "proprietor."

July issues of same paper had articles and advertisements for the new Sasada Motor Car Co., then located at 112 E. Fond du Lac St., noting that Jolly had been hired to run their "mechanical department."



THE BOOK "JUST Do It Jessie's Way!" by Kathleen Kleinpaste features this photo of what is believed to be Arthur Jolly. Jolly was one of two chauffeurs for Victor Lawson and Jesse Strong Bradley Lawson of Chicago and Green Lake. *submitted photo*

The copy informed, "With Mr. Jolly's years of successful experience, we feel that we are enabled to give the people of Ripon a service par excellence on their cars."

After Victor's death in 1925, the H.O. Stone Co. purchased the Lawson's estate, naming it "Lawsonia" and hoping to turn it into a resort for wealthy Chicagoans. Jolly was hired to work for the company, and a Sept. 19, 1929 issue of the *Ripon Weekly Press* reported "Mr. and Mrs. Jolly and family, residents of this city for a number of years, have moved to Green Lake to reside. Mr. Jolly is employed at Lawsonia."

Due to the Great Depression the H.O. Stone Co. went bankrupt in 1931.

The Oct. 15, 1931 issue of the *Green Lake County Reporter* stated that Jolly "and John Lepinski leased the new Malcom Garage in this village."

The article noted that Jolly would be in charge of the mechanical division and "is a mechanic of wide experience, having been engaged in that business for a great many years. He formerly held positions with the Nash and Ford garages in Ripon."

Hritsko, Jolly's daughter, stated in an oral interview that her father "was one of the best mechanics Ripon ever had. He worked on all of the big and fancy cars."

She recalled that he worked at the Biegick Garage, which was located at the current site of J's BBQ, 333 Watson St. This was confirmed by a 1942 article in the *Ripon Weekly Press*.

Ripon historian Sam Pedrick (1868-1963) wrote about Jolly in his Pedrick Genealogy Notebooks. He remembered that when H. Gordon Selfridge Sr. (1858-1947) visited Ripon in 1935, Jolly wanted to meet

him. "He said that he had acted as chauffeur for him in England," Pedrick wrote. "I introduced him to Mr. Selfridge, who seemed not to remember him."

Jolly stated in the Feb. 2, 1942 *Ripon Weekly Press* that he had been a chauffeur for Selfridge when he lived in England.

Selfridge was born in Ripon and was an American retail magnate who founded Selfridges department store in London, England. He was the subject of a 20-episode British period drama on PBS Masterpiece, which ran from 2013 to 2016.

The *Ripon Weekly Press* from Dec. 24, 1954 featured an article about the Ripon Odd Fellows organization. It was noted that Jolly gave a talk to the Odd Fellows about his experience in joining an Odd Fellows Lodge in 1905 in England.

The article stated that he had transferred his membership to the Ripon Lodge in 1946, although Ripon newspapers show him involved in the Ripon Odd Fellows in the 1920s and 1930s. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization which is no longer found in Ripon.

Jolly worked for Ripon Knitting Works for 10 years before his retirement, which would have been between the early 1940s and 1950s. While in Ripon, the Jollys lived at both 121 Howard St. and 515 W. Fond du Lac St.

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.

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