

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

James L. Stone family served Ripon for 65+ years

James Lauriston Stone (1873-1970) was born in St. Albans, Vt. and moved to Ripon with his family when he was 4 years old. His family lived at 222 Hall St. Over the years, the U.S. Federal Census shows his father as a farmer, musician and sometimes chaplain.

James L. Stone's first unpaid job at age 10 did not reflect his serious future. He was the unofficial "brew-taster" at Ripon's Haas Beer Brewery.

He would stop by when barrels of beer were aging and be ladeled into individual glasses for him to drink to determine whether it was ready for public consumption. In 1883, Riponites assumed that was why James (then known as "Jimmy") was described in the local newspaper as having "a twinkle in his eyes, seemed frisky, and often seen hanging around the brewery."

A young Ripon business man emerges

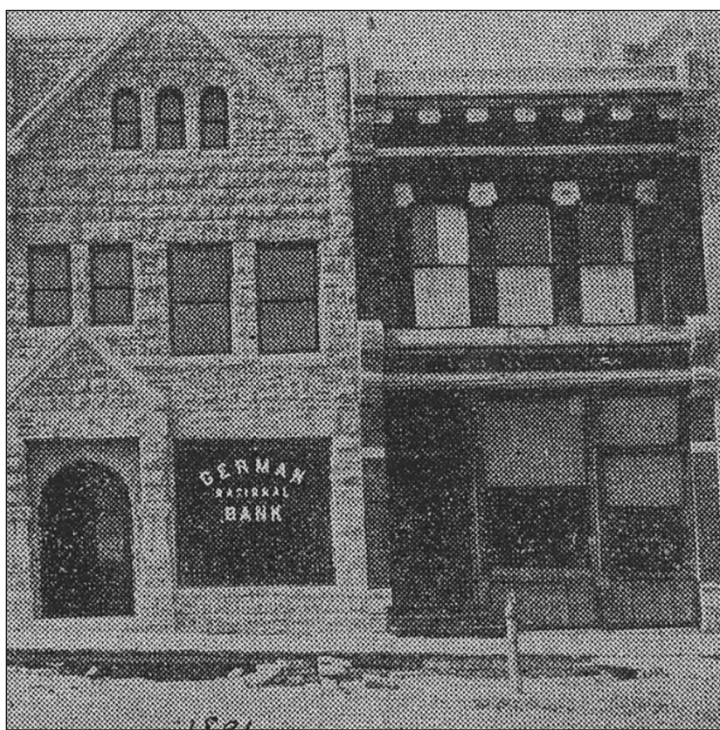
James L. Stone's paid job from 1899 to 1907 was assistant postmaster as an employee of the city of Ripon. He quit this job after nine years to become a clerk at the German National Bank, which catered to the German immigrant population of Ripon.

When he resigned at the post office, the Ripon newspaper read: "His (Mr. Stone's) smiling countenance and merry good natured greeting will always be remembered, and all will regret the change."

Stone then held the roles of bank cashier, director and eventual president for nine years.

Mergers led the way to Ripon's diversified commerce and more

The first bank in Ripon was initiated and owned by Richard Catlin (1809-1874) and Edward Payson Brockway (1832-1912). It was sanctioned and approved for operation by the U.S. government in Washington, D.C. Later, the German National Bank was formed by different individuals to serve German-speaking settlers in Ripon and local communities. In 1930, these two banks



THE GERMAN NATIONAL Bank was located next to the First National Bank founded in 1856-1857. The banks were located on Watson Street, seen here as a dirt road. *submitted photo*

were consolidated to become the "First National Bank" of Ripon.

Stone also became a Ripon College trustee and president of the Wisconsin Bankers Association while the School of Banking was founded in Madison endorsed by 13 states.

Professional & Personal Integrity

Stone was named by Wisconsin Gov. Phillip LaFollette (1955-1925) to serve on a committee to reorganize banks throughout Wisconsin.

His duties at that time also included working as secretary, treasurer and vice president to the Ripon

College board of directors. From 1933 to 1962, he joined the board of directors at Oshkosh B'Gosh Mfg. Co. and the Ripon Knitting Works.

It was during this time that Stone was acting treasurer, deacon and trustee of Ripon Congregational Church, first-president of the Ripon Kiwanis Club and a 32nd degree Mason.

He also was awarded two citations from the United States Treasury for war finance programs, including the selling of war bonds.

Stone rose in banking experience throughout growth years in Ripon commerce and businesses. When two existing

banks were challenged with competition as another private bank was founded in town, it was Stone who was called upon to lead the Ripon First National Bank with resources totaling \$1,332,545.00 in 1945 (equal to \$23,289,097.53 in 2024), enabling Stone to witness Ripon industrial, commercial and farm expansion.

Ripon's First National Bank was solid throughout the Great Depression. It closed in 1933 as ordered by then-President Franklin Roosevelt during his nationwide "bank moratorium" for only one week. It reopened strong and reported only one foreclosure on a mortgage in Green Lake County.

New loans were slowed and deposits dwindled, naturally, due to money and employment shortages. But the bank remained open to offer change for local merchants as they continued to operate businesses. Stone was in charge of overseeing this and made sure certain banking customers were taken care of during this nationwide fiscal turmoil.

Stone often was called upon to make formal speaking engagements and participate in private events. For example, in 1953, he walked Miss Alice Jean Dysart (1909-1979) — prominent in Ripon social circles and whose father had



RIPON'S GERMAN NATIONAL Bank issued and guaranteed its own currency. *submitted photo*



THE FIRST NATIONAL Bank also issued its own currency guaranteed by monetary holdings. *submitted photo*

passed away — to the groom during her wedding ceremony to marry Stanley Morton Herlin (1909-1967). Herlin was a regional salesperson for Speed Queen Laundry Equipment (now Alliance Laundry Systems) and eventually became the 50% owner, president and contract sales leader for the Ripon Knitting Works.

Demonstrated loyalty

The local Ripon newspaper printed a resolution to Stone which stated "(Bank) President Stone has repeatedly and consistently demonstrated his loyalty and devotion to his associates and record growth of the (First National) bank during the years of his leadership. He has been a source of pride and satisfaction to all. Be it resolved, that on behalf of stockholders, directors, officers and employees, as well as customers and friends, we do hereby express our deepest appreciation and gratitude for James L. Stone."

He was in banking for 62 years, and he died at age 97.

The Stone family lived at 115 Thorne St. and also owned 117 Thorne St., where Stone's sister Harriet (1868-1939), who never married, lived nextdoor (a duplex building). The Stones left their home in 1967 to sign themselves into a room at the

Ripon Memorial Hospital, where they lived for three years until their final days. This was an interesting turn of events as there were retirement or "old-folks" homes at that specific time, but signing oneself into a hospital for any number of years pre-dated today's assisted living arrangements.

Stone's wife, Clara Louise Sherman Stone (1881-1971), served as the auxiliary of the Wisconsin State Historical Society and was a volunteer at the Ripon Historical Society, Ripon Art Center, Ripon Library and First Congregational Church of Ripon. She also was a member of the American Association of University Women. She died at age 90.

The Stone family members are buried in Hillside Cemetery, located next to the Ripon College campus.

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



Louise Stone



James L. Stone

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