

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

## Car dealership, livery once located on Scott Street

In an earlier Now & Then in Ripon, the history of the Pastimes Pub & Grille building at 120 Scott St. was revealed.

Today, the brick Pastimes building sits alone just east of Watson Street and south of a city parking lot. A deck is located on its eastern side for people to enjoy outdoor dining in good weather and a grass lawn leading to Blackburn Street.

This building was not always the only building on this stretch of Scott Street.

At one time, two buildings sat to the east of it. The area that is now the restaurant's deck was first a livery barn, then a car dealership and repair shop, and finally an auto parts store. The grass lawn at the corner of Scott and Blackburn streets building was first a blacksmith shop and then a sheet metal company.

An 1892 Sanborn Fire Map shows Lewis Trager's Livery at 122 Scott St. with a small building east of it at 126 Scott St. No information could be found on Trager. The 122 Scott St. address on the 1892 map would later be known as 124 Scott St. The livery later was sold to Richard Prout (1868-1919). He expanded the small building to the east of his livery barn and then occupied both 124 and 126 Scott St.

A September 1920 article in the *Ripon Weekly Press* stated that Wist's Garage, 120 Jackson Street (the current site of Traded Treasures) was sold to Adolph Denbrook (1897-1973) and Charles F. Pohl-



**THIS UNDATED PHOTO** looking northeast shows the Lewis Trager livery shop at 122 Scott St. with a blacksmith shop on the corner of Blackburn Street at 130 Scott St.. It is not known what the smaller middle building at 126 Scott St. was used for. The livery shop area is now the outdoor deck area of Pastimes Pub & Grille at 120 Scott St. *submitted photo*

man (1971-1939). The article reported that the two men took "over the garage building and business but also the Prout livery barn property on Scott Street, which was recently purchased by Mr. Wist. The name of the new business will be changed to the City Garage. They will continue to handle modern pleasure cars and trucks, as well as tractors, and will have excellent mechanics in charge of their workshop department."

An April 1921 *Ripon Weekly Press* reported that the old Prout livery barn on Scott Street was being renovated as the new home of the City Garage, a Chevrolet dealership and automobile repair shop.

It noted, "The old front of the building has been torn down and the new front is already partly constructed."

An early June 1921 issue

of the *Ripon Weekly Press* noted that the building had been finished and that the City Garage would occupy "a thoroughly modern building. The remodeled building on Scott Street affords the company with a strictly modern and up-to-date garage, equipped in every detail with the latest and best in every line of the business. A new oil pump has been installed. ... Ample room is afforded in the new building for the more efficient handling and storage of cars."

The earliest photograph of the City Garage building at 124 Scott St. was a photo taken when the U.S. Post Office at 220 Blackburn St. was being built in 1924 south across Scott Street. It shows Allinson & Heiman Implements (now Pastimes Pub & Grille), the City Garage and part of the old Prout livery barn. Later photographs show that a new façade to match 124 Scott St. also was put on the eastern section of the livery barn at 126 Scott St.

Various interests in the City Garage were sold over the years until 1938, when Wilbur Van Metre (1905-1987) moved to Ripon and purchased the business. A 1939 photograph of Van Metre's Chevrolet dealership and garage shows that at that time they still sold gasoline at the location with a sign stating that the cost was \$1 for six gallons. One dollar in 1939 is \$23.01 today, which would be about \$3.83 per gallon of gas.

Van Metre had come to Ripon from General Motors Acceptance Corp., where he was the Milwaukee territorial manager. In 1944, he added an Oldsmobile dealership. He expanded the business into the



**THIS UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH** shows Ripon Sheet Metal Works on the corner of Scott and Blackburn streets next to the City Garage, a Chevrolet dealership. The building was originally a blacksmith shop. The land the building sat on is now a grass lawn. *submitted photo*



**THIS 1956 PHOTOGRAPH** of Van Metre's Chevrolet-Oldsmobile at 124-126 Scott St. shows that the old blacksmith shop which became home to Ripon Sheet Metal Works and sat east of the dealership had been razed. The current Pastimes building at 120 Scott St. may be seen on the left-hand side of the photo. At that time it was used to house auto parts. *submitted photo*

Allinson & Heiman Implements building in 1945 to use for auto parts.

In 1960, Van Metre ran for supervisor of the 2nd Ward. Information published about Van Metre at this time stated that not only did he own the Chevrolet and Oldsmobile dealership, he also was president of Van Metre's Inc., which operated 20 school buses. He was president of Van Metre Transportation, Inc., which leased semi-trailer trucks to Speed Queen (now known as "Alliance Laundry Systems"). In addition, he was a partner in the R&V Leasing Co., which leased cars.

In 1963, the Van Metre's car dealership moved to West Fond du Lac Street, where Homan Ford now is located. The building at 124-126 Scott Street was purchased from by Automotive Sales and Service of Fond du Lac. A December 1963 *Commonwealth Press* stated that "Mr. Van Metre, however, retains the west building, which formerly housed the Van Metre Chevrolet-Olds parts department. This building will be used for storage by Van Metre's. The main garage building on the corner of Scott and Blackburn streets will be used for the Fond du Lac firm's auto parts and accessories business."

In 1987, Tom Emerson of Milwaukee purchased the auto parts sales and service store, which eventually became NAPA Auto Parts. Emerson moved his business to 805

Fond du Lac St. in late 1990. The building on Scott Street was razed sometime after 1992.

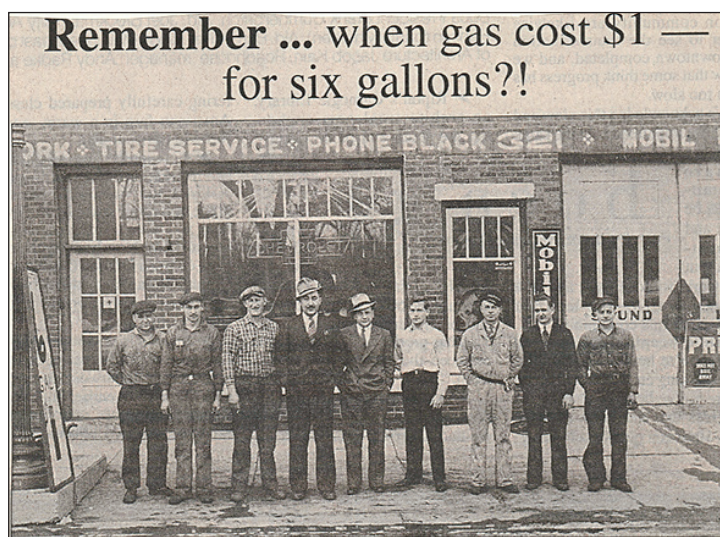
On the corner of Scott and Blackburn streets at 130 Scott St. was the Murtha blacksmith shop, which was started by John Murtha (1852-1949).

The building was purchased in 1922 by Owen Riant (1880-1962), whose business and residence in Fairwater were destroyed by a fire. Riant repaired plows and other metal objects and did acetylene welding.

Ripon telephone directories show that Ripon Sheet Metal Works took over the corner building. The company was owned by Herbert Washkoske (1890-1959) and Walter Wahoske (1897-1985) from 1925 until 1950, when Washkoske retired. The company then continued under the ownership of Wahoske. A 1956 photograph of the next door Van Metre's Chevrolet-Oldsmobile dealership shows the building at 130 Scott St. had been torn down after the Ripon Sheet Metal Works moved to a new location.

*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://facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety) or [instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/](https://instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/).*



**THIS IS THE** staff of Van Metre Chev-Olds in 1939. The business was located at the northwest corner of Scott and Blackburn streets, where Pastimes Bar & Grill is now. W.D. Van Metre sold cars at the location until 1965, when he built a new building that later was occupied by Lee Lancaster and now, by Lee, Katie and Chris Baird's Baird GM. Staff back then included, from left, Walter Marvin, Ervin Poblitz, Larry Loughlin, Byron Goodrich, W.D. Van Metre, Bill Gehri, Marland Burt, Hilary Heinecke and Louis Albrecht. Van Metre came to Ripon from General Motors Acceptance Corp., where he was territorial manager out of Milwaukee for eight years. Note the sign on the left, which offers gasoline for \$1 — for six gallons! *RCP file photo*

**THIS 1939 PHOTOGRAPH** of Van Metre Chevrolet and Oldsmobile dealership at 124-126 Scott St. was featured in the *Ripon Commonwealth Press* as a throwback to Ripon's past. *submitted photo*