

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

## Ripon's early building progress and builders

A question often asked at the Ripon Historical Society is "do you have any copies of blueprints for my house or commercial building?" The answer is "no" as most houses and buildings have been bought and sold many times over and for some reason blueprints are misplaced and lost throughout history.

There also is speculation that first buildings, including those within the Ceresco Settlement and Ripon city area, may not have utilized specific architectural plans. Expert builders, lumbermen and masons (plus carpenters) might have sketched a structure with a purchaser or owner and started building based upon their own experience.

Early builders knew how to create foundations, walls, windows and roofs plus interior finishes. As cities and communities started progressing this created the need for architects, designers, and building rules and regulations (now codes) for safety and appropriateness purposes which everyone became required to follow.

### Notable builders in Ripon

Although not all early builders in Ripon are documented, several are referenced within the historical society archives — sometimes on real estate property titles and in local history books.

Marcellus Pedrick (1828-1899) and brother Cyrus Pedrick (1832-1919) are cited as early builders in Ripon who constructed both commercial business buildings downtown and residential houses for individual homeowners. Their construction work grew as early settlers and immigrants moved here. Marcellus owned and operated a lumber and woodwork trim business, and at one time the Ripon Marble Works.

Other builders were A.S. Howe, who also dealt in building materials; the Ganes & Lobb Builder Co.; and Andrew Kesky Builders. Later, notable builder Frank Farvour (1919-2006) was a carpenter and contractor recalled for using the finest construction materials in Ripon while he also owned and operated the Ripon Land Surveying Company.

### Architects involved in

### Ripon

An 1886 edition of *Inland Architect & Builder*, a monthly journal published in Chicago with an annual subscription cost of \$3, is archived in the University of Michigan Library and lists a few architects working in Ripon.

They include:

► George Wren (1833-1914), an English Immigrant who also worked in Oshkosh and Fond du Lac;

► Asa Newell (A.N.) Barney (1829-1925), who is listed as "an architect & builder" in the Pedrick Genealogy Notebooks.

Later, in the 1920s and 1930s, several architects names are mentioned including:

► William Waters (1843-1917), an award-winning architect credited with designing the large Georgian Colonial home located at 750 Ransom St. in Ripon and also the Town Square Community Center Building in Green Lake. Waters worked primarily in Oshkosh. Many of his buildings are on the Register of Historic Places today and he is noted for creating the "Wisconsin State Exhibit" at the Columbia World's Fair in Chicago of 1893.

► Aulor & Jensen of Oshkosh designed the J.B. Barlow English Tudor residence on Watertown Street in Ripon.

► Aulor, Jensen & Brown of Oshkosh designed the Art Deco First National Bank in Rotary Square in downtown Ripon.

► Russell Barr Williamson (1893-1964), lead designer for famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright, designed the modernist Diedrich Home located at 954 Watson St.

### English Tudor House

The English Tudor cottage-style home at 203 Watertown St., designed by architects Aulor & Jensen, was built by Farvour in 1930. It was innovative both in design and its use of recycled materials that were quoted in the *Ripon Weekly Press* newspaper as "a combination of past, present and future."

Materials included recycled bricks from the demolished Arcade Mill chimney smokestack, which stood not far from the former Aroma's Bar and Grill.

The Arcade Mill chimney bricks are interspersed with red



**THE J.B. BARLOW** Family's English Tudor home located at 203 Watertown St. was built using many recycled materials. *submitted photo*

bricks taken from the first-ever brick home in Ripon, which was razed. The fireplace chimney in the Tudor-style house includes bricks that came from the Boyle family homestead that once stood on Sheboygan Street in Fond du Lac. The rough-hewn wood boards on the house's exterior came from the Dantz Tavern that was located between Ripon and Marquette, with some of this exterior wood also coming from a demolished house owned by David Thomas of Green Lake.

Leaded glass windows prevail throughout the interior of the house and plank floors have mosaic inlays of real ebony wood. Light-colored oak woodwork trim is used throughout the house. Plaster is more of a "peasant" or old-world finish, including heavy sand, and the fireplace is plastered with fragments of sandstone. Mortar was installed in a Spanish Mission method using a concrete-mix that gives it a sturdy yet old-world appearance.

Originally designed to have three bedrooms with built-in closets, this home also included one-and-a-half bathroom facilities and was the first house in Ripon to utilize total gas utilities for the hot water heater, stove and furnace. The home's builder, Farvour, used best-quality materials and craftsmanship.

### Art Deco Design First National Bank

Constructed in 1930, the former First National Bank of Ripon (now operated as "The Heist" entertainment venue) was designed by architects Aulor, Jensen & Brown of Oshkosh and was built by the Immel Construction Co. of Fond du Lac. The building's exterior and interior consisted of long vertical design-lines throughout to accentuate the building's height and provide a modern, art deco design that was an emerging trend in the 1930s.



**THIS IS AN** artist or architect's original drawing of the former First National Bank at 114 Watson St., hand-colored and printed as a postcard for mailing. *submitted photo*

The exterior is made of a smooth Texas-originated stone. Interior finishes include mixed materials of stone, concrete and marble plus oak and birch wood trim. Stairways are made of metal, marble and terrazzo.

The public-facing first floor contained the bank's main customer lobby, plus conference and meeting rooms for customers to speak privately with bankers. The internal employee-facing second floor consisted of hallways with workrooms for banking disciplines including cashing, meeting areas and executive offices.

Within the back side of the (non-public side) walls, interior gun openings were at one time manned by guards to defend the bank for security purposes.

### Summary of Builders and Architects

To date, the Ripon Historical Society has only heard of four

local blueprints to be in existence, including one commercial downtown business building and three private residences.

Blueprints may be scanned and archived while owners retain their original copies. The Ripon Historical Society can arrange to have a blueprint scanned locally and given back to building owners while retaining a copy for future reference in the historical society's professional archives.

Individuals with any specific architect or builder stories to share about their building or residence may call the Ripon Historical Society at 920-748-5354 or email [riponhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:riponhistsoc@gmail.com).

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

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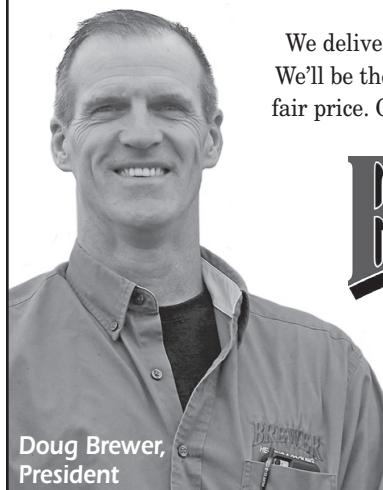
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