

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

## Adaptive reuse of buildings started in Ripon long ago

In October 2020, the Ripon Historical Society wrote an article titled "Ripon's forgotten buildings" that focused on carriage houses.

These buildings were used by early citizens of Ripon for storage, equipment, carriages and buggies, sleds and sleighs, and most of them housed horses, chickens and possibly a milk cow at even in-town locations.

Larger carriage houses had rooms to store hay and animal food, and many had small apartments for servants and caretakers to live in year-round, using wood-burning stoves for heat during the winter months.

Since the article in 2020, the Ripon Historical Society discovered there are two former carriage houses that were converted into full-time houses as residences for families.

They are examples of "adaptive reuse," which is defined as "the process of reusing an existing building for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed for."

The first reuse building the historical society learned about is at 327 East Jackson St.

This was a large carriage house made of cut limestone blocks and built by the John Scott Horner family.

Horner came to Wisconsin in the mid-1800s as the territorial governor of Wisconsin before it was declared a state. Horner's family's home is being restored and is located on Scott Street facing the former Gothic Mill Pond across from what now is Our Saviour's United Church of Christ. Horner's family members hailed from the East Coast, built their large home on Scott Street and owned enough acreage that

their carriage house faced Jackson Street. The Horners' carriage house was built in 1850, with some additions and is listed as "remodeled in 1891" on its city property description.

This house is categorized as a blend of Georgian and Italianate architecture of limestone that matches the main house that it once served. Listed locally as a "period garage" house, this structure is within the Tygert Street Historic District.

The second reuse building discovered is at 638 Woodside Ave. This was a large carriage house/barn for one of the properties seen in the Fond du Lac County Historical Atlas dated 1874, and it appears to be first-noted as a private residence to the Starr family according to Fond du Lac County tax rolls.

It is a wooden frame construction originally finished with shingle siding and a gambrel roofline making it an example of Dutch Colonial architecture. The second floor may have been added to make space for bedrooms. The upstairs windows and eaves might not have been part of the original floor plan.

Current owners were told the house was a reuse building that originally was a carriage house or barn. The owners explained to the historical society that occasionally when their laundry machine is on spin cycles, flakes of dried oats would appear from either a wall or the ceiling boards where they (the oats) were once stored to feed a horse or other large animal. This building is within Ripon's District 2 Register of Historic Places.

Today, carriage houses are used for modern living in many towns and cities across America.



**THE HISTORIC HORNER** house's carriage house now is a stand-alone residence at 327 Jackson St. *submitted photo*

They sometimes offer somewhat hidden physical building locations, which provide privacy (located behind or at the back of properties), multiple architectural styles and character, and often have no building code or site regulations as they can be grandfathered in to their existing locations. Sometimes carriage houses are even used for office spaces, hobby and carpentry shops, and guest houses depending on their actual size and floor plans.

Individuals who know of any additional carriage houses that have been converted may email [riponhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:riponhistsoc@gmail.com) or call 920-748-5354. The Ripon Historical Society would love to hear about them.

*The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operat-*



**ONE OF PERHAPS** many buildings that existed on the William Starr property, this former carriage house stands as a permanent residence at 638 Woodside Ave. *submitted photo*

*ing historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

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