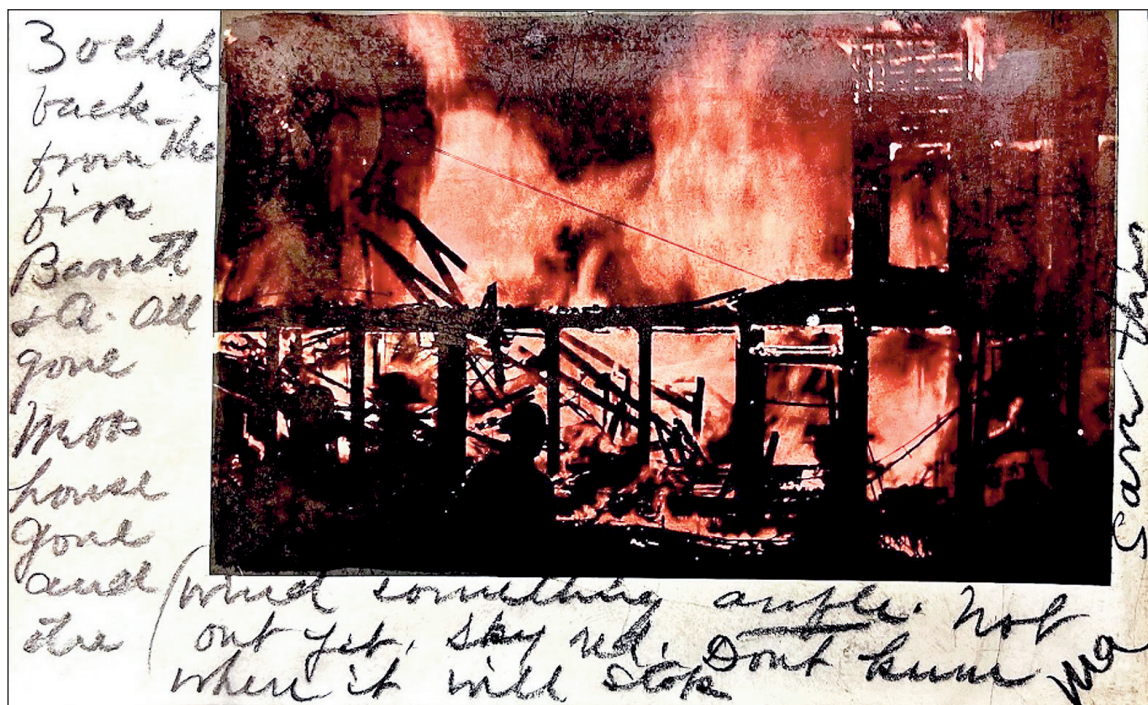


# Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society



**THIS PHOTO INCLUDES** handwritten notes that read “3 o'clock. Back from the fire. Barnett & A all gone ... House gone and the wind something awful. Not out yet, sky red. Don't know when it will stop. Ma – Save This”

Ripon Historical Society photo

## Fires often swept throughout Ripon

Fires were not uncommon in the 1800s due to the inherent materials being used in buildings and homes combined with candles and lamps for lighting, wood burning and coal stoves for heating. There are records of entire blocks of downtown business buildings that were burned to the ground — even those made with stone walls and facades due to their wooden inner structures and flooring.

One example is the former Pedrick Opera House (currently the site of Knuth's Brewing Co.), which seated 600 people comfortably. The opera house burned in 1904, spreading fire onto the top floor of the Mapes House Hotel next door.

A week later, the Barnett & Anderson Lumber Co. (located behind current Miller's Tavern) burned throughout the night.

August Seidler (1854-1918), night watchman at the Ripon Knitting Works (currently Ripon Drug) glanced out of the upper-floor windows of what was then a three-story factory and saw flames coming from the lumber yard sheds across the street. Seidler notified the fire department to what the *Ripon Commonwealth Press* quoted as “one of the fiercest fires in the history of Ripon.”

The lumber storage shed was 15,000 square feet in size and was filled with wood and related building materials. High flames kept the structure from being entered by firemen as water was poured onto the outside of the building and sheds.

A dozen water hoses were manned by firefighters, but a



**A VINTAGE POSTCARD** shows Barnett & Anderson Lumber Co.'s office

submitted photo

strong wind blew flames onto residences on the east side of the street, and other buildings were possibly going to be consumed by the raging inferno.

Intense heat and embers broadcast the fire further than expected, causing 20 additional fires needing to be extinguished at one time.

The Ripon Volunteer Fire Department was praised for its bravery and effort, citing heroic work in the face of danger.

The cause of the blaze wasn't determined, but was quoted as started by “an incendiary”—this could have been started by a person or type of accelerant.

Simultaneous to the lumber yard burning, it appeared to firemen and police that another fire was attempted to be set on the second floor of a restaurant in the same block downtown.

The Barnett & Anderson Lumber Co. claimed a loss of \$12,000 (equal to \$415,843

in 2024) in lumber materials, plus \$3,000 (equal to \$103,960 in 2024) in building structures, but was only insured for \$12,000 maximum.

Office buildings, residences, carriage houses or barns, and buggies for transportation that went up in flames totaled another combined \$6,000 (equal to \$207,921 in 2024) in losses. Some of this amount was underinsured, making those specific losses to not be covered. A few businesses were relocated to temporary office quarters to help them continue operating while their work spaces were rebuilt.

*The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is located at 508 Watson St. and is open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

For more information follow us at Facebook/riponhistory or www.riponhistory.org.

# RHS' Roost wins Frank Zuerner science teaching award

Ripon High School's Brad Roost recently was recognized by the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers (WSST) for his work with science education in the state. WSST recognizes teachers of science annually for their achievements.

The Frank Zuerner New Teacher Scholarship is presented annually to recognize teachers with great potential in the field of science. The scholarship is given annually to individuals who are in their first five years of teaching and have demon-



Brad Roost

strated enthusiasm and passion for science teaching, as well as significant potential for future leadership in science education.

Roost has been teaching a variety of science courses in the Ripon Area School District for the past five years.

His colleague shared these thoughts: “I am particularly impressed by Brad's commitment to building relationships with students. If you ask the students at Ripon High School, who they view as either a safe space or trusted adult, many of them identify Brad as their person. He is so dedicated to the students academic, physical and emotional well-being.”

In the five years Roost has been working at Ripon High School he has taken on several leadership roles outside his classroom teaching responsibilities.

He developed and launched an Earth Science curriculum, secured nearly \$20,000 in grants to improve educational opportunities for Ripon students and worked with the National Honor Society and Gender Sexuality Al-

liance. He also has been active in the summer school and after school tutoring programs.

Roost's commitment to students, community, and education is echoed in the following statement shared by his principal, Bill Kinziger.

“Mr. Roost goes above and beyond by ded-

icating numerous hours outside of regular school hours to support his students academically,” Kinziger said. “His commitment extends to participating in and organizing various student events, creating a sense of community and belonging that greatly benefits the school environment.”

WSST is the largest membership organization in Wisconsin focused on the advancement of science education since 1958. It has a mission of promoting, supporting, and improving science education in the state of Wisconsin by providing leadership, advocacy and programs to enhance the teaching and learning of science. The awards and recognition committee is responsible for providing recognition of accomplishments by WSST members that support the goals of WSST.

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