

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

Riding into history: Ripon's Sgt. Maj. Hargrave remembered

Every year on Nov. 11, the United States celebrates Veterans Day. This day has been a federal holiday since 1926 and once was called "Armistice Day," marking the end of World War I on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918.

While Memorial Day honors military members who have died in the line of service, Veterans Day recognizes all veterans who have served in the various branches of the U.S. military.

This year for Veterans Day, the Ripon Historical Society honors an early settler to Ripon, Walter O. Hargrave II (1833-1913). Hargrave came to the Ripon area with his family in 1851 at age 18. His father had purchased land in the township of Ripon just northeast of the city of Ripon and farmed the land. Being born in Scotland, his father named the farm "Inverness" after a city in the Scottish Highlands.

The Civil War started in April 1861 and did not end until April 1865. Hargrave enlisted in the Calvary Regiment of the 1st Wisconsin Volunteers and served in Co. M. Records from Co. M show Hargrave (sometimes spelled in Civil War records as "Hargraves") enlisted Sept. 1, 1864 as a private. He then held the rank of sergeant major from March 1865 until



FEATURED ON THE right side of this photograph is the Civil War saddle of Walter O. Hargrave. Hargrave had a farm in the township of Ripon just northeast of the city. He served in Co. M Calvary Regiment of the 1st Wisconsin Volunteers. The saddle is on display at the Oshkosh Military Museum, 4300 Poberezny Road.

submitted photo

his regiment was mustered out of service July 19, 1865.

On May 10, 1865, Hargrave's regiment along with the 4th Michigan Cavalry took part in the capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) in Georgia. The two regiments shared in a \$100,000 reward, (worth about \$1.9 million today.) The reward was divided and the amount each soldier received depended on rank. A sergeant major like Hargrave received \$250.15 which is equal to \$4,872 today. In 1865, a sergeant major

was paid \$252 per year, so his reward equaled approximately one year's pay.

The Ripon Historical Society has Hargrave's military spurs, hat and cartridge pouch in its collection of military items. None of these artifacts are currently on display, but have been in the past.

The Oshkosh Military Museum, 4300 Poberezny Road, has Hargrave's Civil War saddle on permanent display. The saddle was designed by Capt. George B. McClellan (1826-1885) after he studied European cavalry tactics and equipment. The U.S. War Department adopted the saddle in 1859. The saddle was simple, lightweight, sturdy and designed to support the rider and his gear. It became the standard issue in various models for all horse units until the 1940s, when the last horse cavalry and horse artillery units were disbanded.

Today, special ceremonial mounted units still use a version of the saddle.

The Wisconsin Veteran's Museum, 30 W. Mifflin St., Madison, has several Civil War artifacts from Hargrave including two carrying bags, canteen, two carbine slings and three pouches.

Found in the archives at the Ripon Historical Society is Hargrave's family history.



THIS CIRCA 1882 photo of Walter O. Hargrave and wife Antoinette Meyer Hargrave was taken at Lockwood's Studio, which was located on the second floor of 123 Watson St.

submitted photo

Included in these are Hargrave's pocket-sized diaries from 1860 until 1878. However, Hargrave did not write in these diaries during the time he was serving in the military.

Sometime after Hargrave was discharged from the Army in July 1865, he purchased his family farm. The 1874 Fond du Lac County plat maps shows that the farm had 160 acres. His parents then moved into the city of Ripon and in 1870 moved to Kansas.

Hargrave married Antoinette Meyer Hargrave (1855-1934) in 1874. Antoinette also was a pioneer settler in the Ripon area and was born on a farm in the township of Nepeuskun. The Hargraves had eight children. Four of their children and seven grandchildren graduated from Ripon College.

The Hargraves moved into the city of Ripon in the fall of 1902 while their sons continued

to farm the family land.

The Pedrick Genealogy Notebooks, found online through the Ripon Public Library, notes that Hargrave died of "acute cystitis with infection."

The family is buried in Ripon's Hillside Cemetery.

To see Hargrave's saddle or to learn more about veterans in the area, the public may visit the Oshkosh Military Museum, 4300 Poberezny Road, which is open Fridays to Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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



CIVIL WAR ITEMS including a hat, cartridge pouch and spurs belonging to Ripon resident Walter O. Hargrave II are found in the artifact collection of the Ripon Historical Society. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison houses more of Hargrave's Civil War items and his saddle is on display at the Oshkosh Military Museum.

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