

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

George Louis Field served as Ripon’s keeper of the bank

George Louis Field (1836-1912) was cashier of the First Bank of Ripon, which was founded in 1856, and noted as a foremost banker of the state of Wisconsin.



George Louis Field

Humble Beginnings

Born into a family of early European settlers who were living in New Berlin, N.Y. in 1836, Field was fatherless by age 15.

After attending school and some business training, wearing a new suit and with \$15 in his pocket, he began his own journey through life. He started working in an accounting room at Boardman, Gray & Co. in Albany, N.Y. earning a salary of \$125 per year (the equivalent of approximately \$4,342 in 2023). There he gained a solid reputation and the confidence of his employers.

Field was eager to see the emerging American west frontier and moved to Watertown, Wis. in 1857 at the age of 21 to become a bookkeeper and teller at the Bank of Watertown. In 1860, he married Imogene Harger (1840-1920) of Watertown.

Hard work led to promotions

Following this, and based on his reputation, Field was offered a position in 1856 to become a first-ever bank cashier in Ripon by owners Richard Catlin (1809-1874) and Edward Payson (E.P.) Brockway (1832-1912).

One of Field’s trusted jobs was to carry the bank keys in his pocket every day to unlock and open the business. Field was promoted to general



THE FIRST-EVER Bank of Ripon Keys carried by George Louis Field are curated in the Ripon Historical Society archives.

submitted photo

manager and cashier, and later he became a stockholder and director of business when the original bank was reorganized as the First National Bank of Ripon in the 1860s.

Field was noted for promoting industry, prosperity and social progress. Later, Field became bank president and Ripon’s financial agent to important matters, such as financing and rail transportation systems.

In 1897, Field was elected mayor of Ripon and served one annual term. U.S. Federal Census states that the Field family resided at 190 Scott St. Upon retirement, Field was recruited to also serve as a bank executive in Fond du Lac.

Although he accepted and served in this role, he remained forever loyal to Ripon. He and his family members are

buried in Hillside Cemetery.

Their graves are marked by a towering Celtic Cross, which is a European symbol associated with Irish, Scottish, Welsh and British heritages and also communicates infinite love.

The circle within a Celtic Cross has no beginning or end, and some religions view this as a depiction of the halo of Christ. Individual Field family member headstones surround this large monument at ground level.

Family Legacies

George and Imogene Field were parents to four children, two of whom died young.

One daughter, Amy Douglass Field (1864-1952), graduated from Ripon College and went on to become a member of the Ladies Auxiliary of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, a founding member of the Ripon Ladies’



THE FIELD family burial plot in Hillside Cemetery with a towering Celtic Cross.

submitted photo



THE FIRST NATIONAL bank of Ripon is seen here in 1856 with a wooden sidewalk when Main Street/Watson Street was an unpaved and dirt road.

submitted photo

Library Association and member of the Ripon Study Club. She also served as a president of the American Legion Auxiliary in Ripon.

At age 30, she married Dr. Edgar Cole (E.C.) Barnes (1865-1954), a physician and surgeon who attended Ripon schools, including Ripon College, and Rush University Medical School in Chicago.

Barnes served as a military captain in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War, major officer surgeon in World War I and as a colonel in the Wisconsin National Guard for a combined 25 years of service, while simultaneously being a medical doctor. He also was also a member of the Masonic Lodge, Knights Templar and Ripon American Legion.

E.C. and Amy resided at 344 Jackson St. The day of their wedding at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, the *Ripon Commonwealth* printed “On May 3, 1894, a morning breakfast was served to 650 people on the lawn who were invited to and would attend the Barnes-Field wedding at noon that same day.”

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 or www.riponhistory.org.

ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON



(920) 560-1000

osifv.com

PROPANE



(920) 748-5005

coileilandpropane.com



To become a Preferred Business, please call 920-748-3017 or email office@riponpress.com



Ripon Area Preferred Business (RAPB) is a program developed by Wisconsin Media Group. RAPB features premier businesses throughout Fond du Lac and Green Lake Counties. These businesses are featured monthly in print, online, in social media and elsewhere.

