

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

## A century later, price of health still sparks conversation

Health care costs always have been a topic of conversation. Historical articles from the *Ripon Commonwealth Press* and *Ripon Weekly Press* almost sound like they were written today.

A 1918 *Commonwealth* article stated, "All communities have advanced in professional prices and so on account of the advance in the cost of drugs, surgical material and instruments and on account of the higher expense of keeping rapid means of transportation, in short, due to the tremendous advance in the expense of maintaining a physician's business, the doctors of this community" raised their fees.

The *Ripon Weekly Press* ran a notice Sept. 11, 1919 about the increase of local doctors fees. It noted, "This move is in keeping with the policy of physicians and surgeons throughout the state" and added that other doctors from Fairwater, Brandon, Rosendale and other towns in the county endorsed the cost increase.

The notice also stated that the price increases were "not exorbitant in the least, but is in keeping with efficiency and service which must be rendered by the professional man today."

Ripon did not have a hospital until 1936 and doctors of that time had office hours, while also visiting patients in their homes. The article stated that house calls within the city limits would cost \$2 during the day and \$4 at night (approximately \$37 and \$74 today).

For those people wanting a house call in the county in addition to a day-time consultation cost of \$1 and \$2 for night consultation (approximately \$18 and \$37 today), travel costs would be billed at \$1 per mile.

If a patient came to the doctor's office the cost would be \$1. Seeing a

### NOTICE!

Price Schedule in Accordance with State and County Standard Charges, to Take Effect in this Community October 1st, 1919.

**Local Calls**—Day \$2.00; Night \$4.00.

**Country Calls**—Day, \$1.00 per mile or fraction thereof plus \$1.00 for each consultation. Night, \$1.00 per mile or fraction thereof plus \$2.00 for each consultation.

**Office Calls**—\$1.00 and up.

**Obstetrical Work**—\$20.00 plus mileage. All post partus calls regular fee extra. Surgical interference, \$10.00 and up.

**Surgery**—Charges to depend largely on nature of service. Minor Surgery, initial charge \$5.00 to \$35.00. Major Surgery, initial charge \$50.00 and up.

**Dislocations**—Initial charge, small joint, \$10.00 and up. Initial charge, large joint, \$35.00 and up. (After Treatment Extra)

**Consultations**—\$5.00 plus mileage. Telephone consultation when advice is given on new case, \$1.00.

**All Medicines and Surgical Dressings Extra Charge.**  
Livery, Extra Charge.

This Schedule Has Been Agreed to by All Physicians in this Community.

**THIS ADVERTISEMENT REGARDING** price increases for area physicians ran in the Sept. 11, 1919 *Ripon Weekly Press*.

doctor in his office could prove to be an issue for some patients as most doctor offices were located on the second floor above the stores of Watson Street.

The charge to deliver a baby was \$20 (approximately \$373 today), plus mileage. Postpartum calls were billed

at the doctor's regular fees. The cost for "surgical interference" in a birth would cost "\$10 and up" (approximately \$187 today).

The newspaper did not list the cost for surgery and only stated that the cost

"depends upon the nature of the work."

If a doctor or patient wanted to consult with another physician, the cost of this would be \$5 plus any mileage (approximately \$93 today). Any telephone consultations "when advice is given on a new case" were billed at \$1 each.

The newspaper noted that "All medicines and surgical dressings" were not included in the charge and would have an extra charge depending on the type and amount of medication given. If the doctor needed to rent a horse or carriage, there would be an additional charge.

Physicians of that time included Dr. Edgar C. Barnes (1865-1954) who was a doctor in Ripon for almost 60 years before retiring in 1948. His father, Dr. Henry Barnes (1834-1918), graduated from medical school in 1858 and served in the Civil War as a physician.

The younger Dr. Barnes followed in his father's footsteps and served in the Spanish American War and World War I, each time returning to his office at 222 Watson St.

Dr. Eldon Watson (1896-1961) served as a physician and surgeon in Ripon for 22 years with an office on the second floor of 320 Watson St. His daughter, Patricia Watson Wissing, remembered that her father "was on call 24 hours a day," keeping office hours and making house calls within the city and to farms in the area.

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

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Sliced Pit Ham .....	\$4.49 lb.

Good luck deer hunters! Deer drop off hours during the deer gun season, Nov. 22nd-Nov. 30th will be from 7am-5pm every day except Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27th we will be closed. There will be no after hours deer drop available during the gun deer season.

 Prices good thru 11/22/2025 WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

Mon-Fri 8:00-4:30  
Sat 8:00-12:00

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