

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

Memories from past Ripon College off-campus houses

In the early 1900s Ripon College was expanding in popularity, student enrollment and curriculum. Vintage *Crimson* Yearbooks quote “everybody is in something” referencing opportunities for students to participate in

various fields. This included 18 college clubs plus 11 fraternities and sororities. Some of those fraternities and sororities lived off-campus until additional dormitories were built to accommodate a total on-campus student

life in the 1960s. Here are memories of off-campus fraternity and sorority housing options with a few student experiences and memories from the 1920s into the 1950s:

Duffie House



**THE DUFFIE HOUSE** was located at the corner of Seward Street and Woodside Avenue next to the college campus. This building was razed.

Duffie House accommodated up to 20 males who promoted college events and hosted open-house parties. Housemates also planned and hosted annual “Valentine’s Day” and “Green Lake Welcome Spring” gatherings.

**House Motto:** “So we grew together like a double cherry, seeming parted, but yet like a union in partisan.”

**College student memories:**

- “A well-lighted 6-by-8 study room open all hours.”
- “Alarm-clock-proof sleeping quarters less the inmates are disturbed.”
- “Closely resembles a reformatory.”

Merriman Hall



**THE FIRST-EVER** Merriman Hall, seen here just east of campus, was open for only two-years.

The first-ever Merriman Hall (later replaced in 1939 by a more modern Merriman House) accommodated up to 17 males who managed multiple clubs at the college. It also hosted an annual Merriman Alumni member banquet.

**House Motto:** “Whose high respect and rich validity did lack a parallel.”

**College student memories:**

- “A good house located one block from the ‘Spoon’ (restaurant or diner).”
- “Thirty steps to the Dean’s Office.”
- “Large attic smoking room.”
- “Don’t tell all you know.”

Sanford House



**SANFORD HOUSE WAS** located on Congress Street. This building was razed.

Sanford House accommodated up to 18 males who helped lead sports teams and *The Crimson* yearbook staff. They promoted college functions plus their own social life.

**House Motto:** “Let the world slide, let the world go; A fig for care, and a fig for woe! If I can’t pay, why I can owe, and death makes equal high and low.”

**College student memories:**

- “Comfortable mansion between the (city of Ripon) standpipe and Hillside Cemetery.”
- “The only off-campus house that gets its damage deposit back.”
- “House members are always present.”

Woodside House



**WOODSIDE HOUSE WAS** located on Thorne Street and Lincoln Street, next to Bowen’s Woods. This building was razed.

Woodside House accommodated up to 26 males who were active in every college club, and held the highest percentage of honor roll students. It was a popular house located uphill from Bowen’s Woods on Thorne Street.

**House Motto:** “As o’er the glacier’s frozen sheet breathes soft the Alpine rose, so through life’s desert, springing sweet, the flower of friendship grows.”

Harwood Hall



**HARWOOD HALL WAS** located at the corner of Woodside Avenue and Thorne Street.

Harwood Hall accommodated up to 17 females in sunny rooms with gracious porches and a veranda. Roommates included academic scholarship recipients and club activists. They hosted informal fudge parties, kitchen food snack gatherings, card parties and fireplace chats.

**House Motto:** “Such a household, despaired the squire! Tis enough to drive a sane man beside his wits.”

**College student memories:**

- “Hard to describe, but awfully nice.”
- “Four-passenger davenports (couches).”
- “Well ventilated sleeping porch with ashtrays.”
- “House song is ‘Nobody Cares’ drawn upon from a 1930s movie.”

Lyle Hall



**LYLE HALL WAS** located at the corner of Woodside Avenue and Oak Street. This building is currently a private residence.

Lyle Hall accommodated up to 15 females who were active in clubs and dramatics. It was known for after-dinner gatherings throughout multiple parlors, singing and pranks. An open ballroom third-floor was turned into a “bunk house” of beds as a group sleeping quarters.

**House Motto:** “Are linked in one, and young hearts bloomed out like violet bells upon selfsame stem — pouring the dewy odors of life’s spring into each other’s bosoms.”

**College student memories:**

- “Complete with a bathtub.”
- “Emergency fire escape climbs to the upper floor windows and door”
- “These girls are the cleverest gang.”

Parkhurst Hall



**PARKHURST HALL WAS** located at the corner of Thorne and Ransom streets. This building is currently a private residence.

Parkhurst Hall accommodated up to 13 females. It was a brown frame house located one block south of campus at the corner of Ransom and Thorne streets with a porch and parlors for hosting informal parties. Fireplaces in almost every room added charm to winter months.

**House Motto:** “This is the place. Stand still, my steed, let me review the scene, and summon from the shadowy past the forms that once have been.”

**College Student Memories:**

- “Main hallway well suited for track.”
- “A girls’ dorm with perfect ladies.”
- “Built along the lines of a summer resort.”

Tracy House

Tracy House or “Tracy Hall” was the second off-campus house that carried this name. This building accommodated up to 12 males who hosted open house parties following Ripon College Homecoming football games. In the late 1950s this location was changed to house a female sorority. The building was named in honor of Ripon College educator Clarissa Tucker Tracy, who taught English literature, botany, biology and math. She also wrote poetry and was an amateur artist.

**College Student Memories**

- “In the mid-1940s this place housed a speech department, radio station and National Forensics League.”
- “Art classes were taught here by Artist-in-Residence Lester Schwartz.”
- “Dancing to radio music, and refreshments was confined to the evenings.”

Today Ripon College offers eight on-campus residences. In most cases, first-year students are housed within groups fewer than 20 individuals.

Those who pledge fraternities and sororities continue to live in their halls until sophomore year.

Upperclassmen move into a variety of on-campus living quarters as they advance toward graduation.

There are additional off-campus housing options over the years for which the historical society needs photos and college memories of to



**TRACY HOUSE OR** Tracy Hall stood at the corner of Thorne Street between Ransom and Watson streets across from Parkhurst House. This building was razed and is the location of Horicon Bank.

include in our professional archives. If anyone has information about the dorms that occupied Dawe’s Cottage, Barker House, Lowe House, Pedrick House or The Elms House, call the historical society at 920-748-5354, or email [riponhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:riponhistsoc@gmail.com).