

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

Arcade was a community near Ripon in 1800s

Many people know that Ripon started out as two communities. The first was Ceresco, founded in 1844 around the Ceresco Park area off Union Street. In 1853, the villages of Ceresco and Ripon were united by legislative act and named "Ripon."

What many people do not realize is that there was another small community known as "Arcade," sometimes also referred to as "Arcade Acres," bordering the western edge of Ripon. Arcade was located around the intersection of Highway 23, Arcade Glen Road and South Koro Road. This would be near the former Route 23 Mexican Cuisine restaurant, 1300 W. Fond du Lac St.

Arcade would today be referred to as a ghost town, which is a community that is no longer in existence. Wisconsin has several ghost towns, showing the shifting dynamics of the state's settlement over time and reflecting its rich history.

Arcade is not found on the Wikipedia list of ghost towns, although Ceresco is on the list. It is also not found on the Ghost Town USA website or in the book "Wisconsin's Lost Towns," by Rhonda Fochs.

The Ghost Town USA website, and the books "Ghost Towns: Yesterday & Today" and "Dust in the Wind: A Guide to American Ghost Towns" by Gary Speck classify ghost towns into categories or classes.

Class A is a barren site; Class B has rubble and/or roofless building ruins; and Class C is the classic ghost town which is completely abandoned with standing buildings. Class D will have a small resident population and many abandoned buildings, and Class E has many historic buildings and a reduced popula-



THIS IS ONE of the few remaining buildings in the community of Arcade. When the building was built and the original use is not known, but at one time it housed Brown's Piano & Antique Store owned by Robert Brown (1891-1979). The building is located on the west of South Koro Road, just north of Highway 23. *submitted photo*

tion from its boon years. Class F is a restored town and Class G is a town joined to or was absorbed by a neighboring/thriving community.

Ceresco would be considered a Class G ghost town. Arcade also could be considered a Class G because some of the original community does fall within the Ripon city limits.

One early settler to the Arcade area was Henry Willard (1817-1895), who owned a stone quarry located east of Arcade Glen Road and south of Silver Creek Dentistry, 1209 W. Fond du Lac St. Those who drive behind Silver Creek Dentistry can see the remnants of this quarry. Willard purchased 150 acres of land on both the east and west sides of Arcade Glen Road in 1844. Stone from this quarry was used as the foundation for many of Ripon's early buildings.

An article in the March 13, 1857 *Ripon Home* stated that the Arcade Mill had just been completed. It was built on Silver Creek near where Koro Road turns to the west. There was a dam built along Koro Road where it turns to the east. The mill cost \$14,000 (equal

to \$574,000 today) and was owned by Tomb, Paddock & Co. This mill was found on the original land of Willard and it ground corn and wheat.

The *Ripon Home* article stated, "Numerous dwellings are springing up in the vicinity of the mill, conspicuous among these is the Arcade Hotel, kept by B.F. and F.A. Morse."

The *Western Times* newspaper from Feb. 5, 1858, held an advertisement for a new store in Arcade located across from the Arcade Mill. It was called the "Peoples Store of Arcade" and was owned by S.M. Brown. This could have been Stephen M. Brown (1832-1879), who later owned a livery stable in Ripon.

A March 1860 classified ad in the *Ripon Weekly Times* stated that Reuben Button (1830-1910) had a house and six acres of land for sale in Arcade near the Arcade Mill. The ad stated, "Will take a pair of horses and wagon in payment."

Button moved out of state and is buried in Wyoming.

The *Ripon Western Times* from Dec. 25, 1857 mentions Arcade as related to a public meeting for a Ripon City Charter. The paper noted, "It was then voted that a charter be obtained, including Ceresco and Arcade within its limits, and also that the city be divided into three wards."

An 1874 plat map shows 15 buildings in Arcade near the corners of what is now Highway 23, Fond du Lac Street and South Koro Road. The 1878 Historical Atlas of Wisconsin displays "Arcade Station" on the western edge of Fond du Lac County. These early plat maps show West Fond du Lac Street being called "Arcade Road."

Arcade had a one-room school with its own School Board and district. It also sat on land originally owned by Willard and was located west



THIS 1860 MAP shows Arcade just north of West Fond du Lac Street (then known as Arcade Road), which was later extended westward to create Highway 23. The Arcade Mill was located on Silver Creek and a school stood not far away. The community is now a part of Ripon and is considered a ghost town. *submitted photo*

of Arcade Glen Road near what is now Gibbons Road. Karel DeGraf Mincy attended the school in the 1950s and wrote in a note found in the archives of the Ripon Historical Society, "It had no indoor bathrooms and no water. We each had to take turns going across Highway 23 to a small grocery store to get our drinking water."

This school combined with the Ripon School District in 1956, and the school building was put up for auction in 1957.

The Arcade Mill burned to the ground Nov. 29, 1907. The mill was never rebuilt, however, the brick chimney remained standing for about 22 years. Bricks from the chimney were used between 1929 and 1930 to build the English-revival house at the corner of Ransom Street at 203 Watertown St. This house is in the Southwest Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The current city of Ripon Dog Park, N8663 S. Koro Road, is located in the Arcade area on land that once was a farm and the city dump. In 1998, the farmhouse which sat on the dog park land was moved 2.5 miles north.

One rusted metal building still remaining in Arcade is located on the west side of South Koro Road, just north of Highway 23. The original use and date it was built is not known, but at one time it housed Brown's Piano & Antique Store and was owned by Robert Brown (1891-1979).

Other buildings that were located in Arcade have been lost to time.

There are two other ghost towns south of Ripon. One is known as "Reeds Corners" and is located in the town of Metomen. Named after Warren Reed (1824-1874), a post office was established in Reeds Corners in 1852. The railroad had obtained a right of way through Reed's 160-acre farm with a written guarantee of a train depot being located there. But for some reason the station was established a half a mile south on the land of Edwin Reynolds (1815-1901).

The Reeds Corners post office was moved to the community of Metomen in 1873 and a railroad depot opened. Reynolds's wife, Dorcas Dame Reynolds (1816-1901), became the postmaster. Metomen is described in John E. Hunt's 1853 *Wisconsin Gazetteer* as "20 miles west of the county seat, with which it is connected by a plank road. ... It has 250 inhabitants; with two stores, three hotels, and two mills, two churches and five religious denominations."

Other nearby ghost towns include Utley near Fairwater, Sacramento near Mascoutin Golf Course outside of Berlin and Delhi between Eureka and Omro.

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 or instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/.



THIS PHOTO TAKEN at the Arcade School was featured in the Dec. 28, 1945 *Ripon Commonwealth Press*. Pictured are, sitting, from left, Thomas Harvey, Fern George, Ronald Brink, Stanley Brink, Patsy Harvey, Allen Miller, Steven Vande Brink, Barbara Harvey, James Lehman; standing, teacher Gertrude Dettman Gloyd, Jean George, Mary Vande Brink, Ruth Humbright, Dolores Keplin, Lois Albright, Alice Vande Brink, Richard Harvey and Janet Lehman. The school was closed in the mid-1950s. *RCP file photo*