

Ripon Historical Society 2025 Annual Report and Review

A major focus of the Society in 2025 was outreach, creating a wider public awareness of the resources the Society offers, and building stronger ties with schools, the college, and community groups.

Our 2025 spring line up of events included presentations by Kurt Diedrich, Susan Apps-Bodilly, Paul Porter, Dr. Ann Gibney, as well as three genealogy workshops hosted by board member, Lara Grant, at the Ripon Public Library.

Last spring, the Society was also the recipient of a \$2,000 grant from the Webster Foundation for the Exhibit Development Experience Internship Program. Money from the grant was used to purchase materials to enhance the internship experience and to improve the quality of exhibits.

The society is continuing to expand access to collections through our online catalog. For example, our entire WWI and WWII propaganda poster collection is now online as well as the Lola Smith Photograph collection, featuring 1940s era gardens in Ripon.

Last summer we participated in the Chamber's Twilight Garden Tour, with about 80 visitors touring the historic gardens and buildings. We also installed a new historical marker in Ceresco Park to commemorate the Wisconsin Phalanx and Warren Chase. We are grateful for the City's assistance with the installation.

Last fall we hosted a successful cemetery tour with about 40 in attendance and an heirloom appraisal event.

On November 6, the new annual exhibit opened with a successful reception. In seeking more engagement with local organizations, Director, Caron Sisko, and Ripon College interns collaborated with Art MidWisconsin to create a hybrid museum exhibit and art show. About 40 were in attendance and three of the 15 art pieces for sale in the exhibit were sold. The Society greatly appreciates those who gave cash donations at the event.

We have just launched a new campaign to build community ties with local businesses called "Friends of the Ripon Historical Society." Businesses, local organizations, and philanthropists now have the option to become a Friend at a level of their choosing, beginning at the \$250 level, called the Ripon History Advocates, and up to the \$5,000 level, called the Warren Chase Dream Makers.

Membership is holding steady at the same level as 2024. Total attendance for events, tours, and presentations totaled about 700 visitors, about the same as 2024. Donations and memorials were up from 2024 by about 34%. Expenditures went down in 2025 by about 15%, and total budget receipts were up from 2024 by 13%. The Society's endowment funds had a 15% growth increase from 2024.

In 2026, we will continue to expand online access to the collections through our CatalogIt HUB, accessible through our website. We will continue to make our exhibits more interactive and collaborative to engage visitors more fully. We will continue to work to build community ties with local businesses to help support our mission.

Lastly, to our community of members and supporters, this year's accomplishments were only possible because of you. Your belief in our mission drives us forward.