

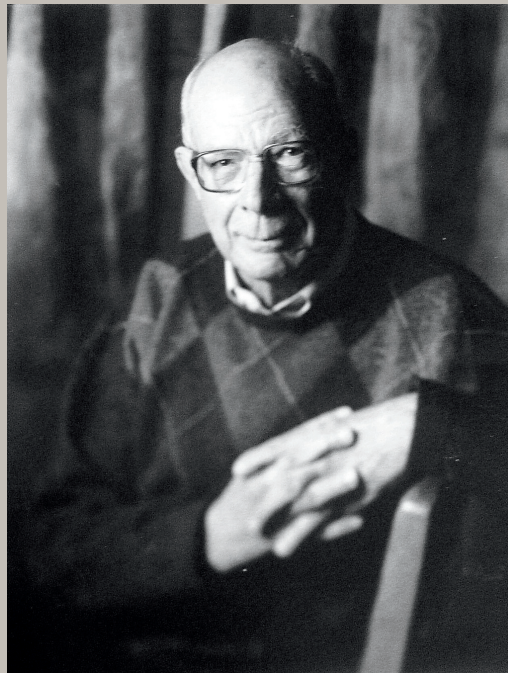
RIPON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Sharing History Since 1899



**Our Commitment to
Preserving Ripon's History**

2025-26



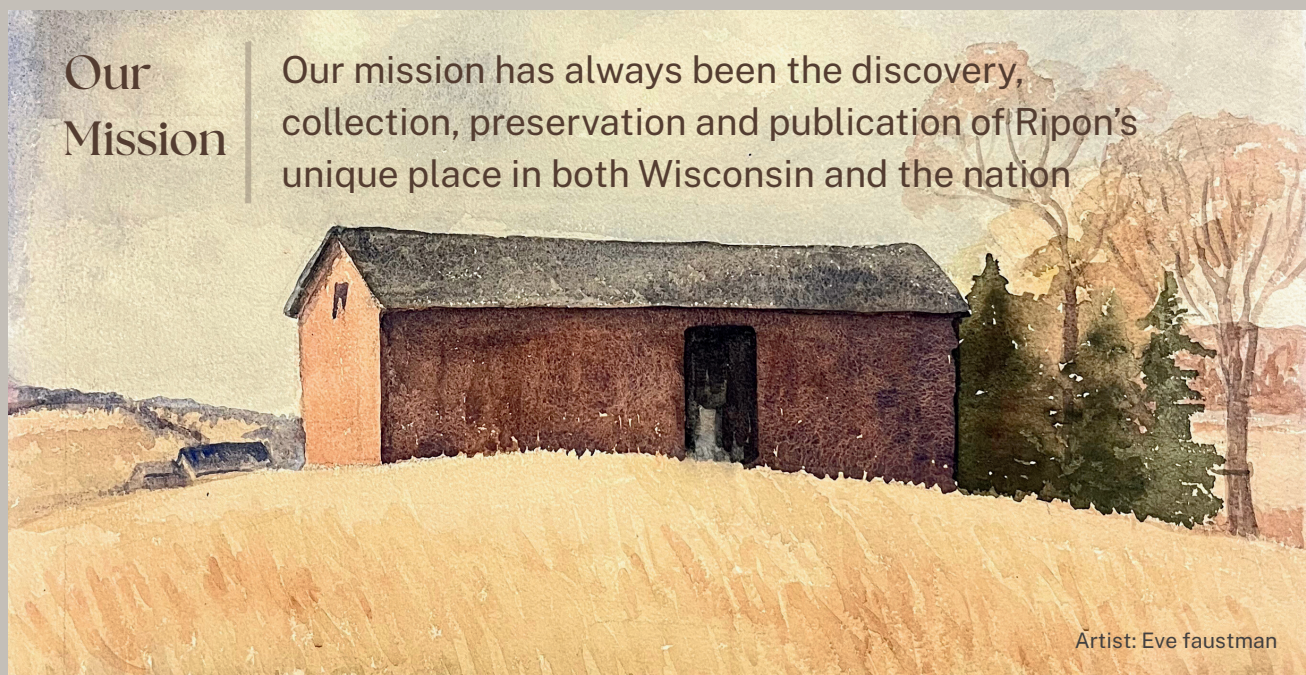
“We’re part of the continuing education of the community.”

George Miller
(1919-2011)

George was a veteran of World War II, a published scholar in history, and a long-time professor of history at Ripon College. In the mid-1950s he became a member of this Society where he was elected immediately to its Board. He then served on that Board continuously until his retirement in 2009, having also served several terms as President. As an indispensable source of knowledge about Ripon and its history, George embodied the Society’s mission.

Our Mission

Our mission has always been the discovery, collection, preservation and publication of Ripon's unique place in both Wisconsin and the nation



A Letter from the Museum Director, Caron Sisko

On behalf of the Ripon Historical Society, I would like to express sincere gratitude for our donors and the hard work from all our volunteers. Their support is invaluable for helping us to advance our mission to preserve Ripon's unique history. The Society's successes come from such dedication and generosity. Many of our volunteers serve as the point of first contact with visitors. They give tours, answer questions, and connect researchers with information.



Left: Volunteer, Pat Lubinsky, center, our resident expert on the life of Belle Lawson. Right: volunteer and board member Chris Wiegand and Archivist, Carol Sachen.



The Society was founded out of a concern to preserve the early history and development of Ripon and the Wisconsin Phalanx. Founded in 1899, it is the oldest continually operating historical society in the State of Wisconsin.

Attorney Samuel M. "Sam" Pedrick was the youngest of the Ripon Historical Society's original charter members. For fifty years he researched, collected and wrote material about Ripon and its people.

Left: Sam Pedrick

The result became what we now know as the Pedrick Papers. A part of this collection is the eighty volume Pedrick Genealogy Notebooks which are a treasure of information documenting the early families and individuals in Ripon and surrounding areas.



The Society's headquarters, known as the Pickard House, is located at 508 Watson Street. Belle Pickard ran Ripon's first beauty salon at this location from 1912 to 1965. In 1968, she donated the house to the Society. This building is open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



Above: The library, in the Pickard House. Our library is managed by a volunteer librarian, Sarah McGowan.

The Archives & Library

In 1998, in honor of the Historical Society's 100th anniversary, an addition was constructed to provide space for a library, office, archive, and artifact storage area in the Pickard House.

Our library collection of rare books is available to the public for on site research. We boast a professional and climate controlled archive with records relating to families, businesses, and organizations. The historical and cultural records are available to the public by appointment.

Right: The archive, in the Pickard House. Our archive is managed by archivist, Carol Sachen.



The Pedrick-Lawson House

A Time Capsule of Mid to Late 19th Century Life in Ripon

The Pedrick Lawson House, located at 515 Ransom St., is owned and maintained by the Ripon Historical Society. It was listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Marcellus Pedrick (1828-1899) came to Ripon in 1849 from New York and built the house for his wife around 1856. Pedrick held the local franchise for grout making. Grout, an early form of concrete, makes up the blocks of the exterior walls.

Hollis Atkins, who operated a funeral home and furniture business in Ripon, lived in the house with his family from 1903 until 1918. Atkins improved the home by adding electricity, a water system, hot water furnace, hardwood floors, and a red brick fireplace.

Louisa La Belle Lawson (1874-1973), known as Belle, moved into the house in 1919, living there until her death. Belle bequeathed the home to the Ripon Historical Society in her will in the early '70s.

The Pedrick-Lawson House serves as a time capsule for visitors, offering a glimpse of late 19th century life in Ripon.



The Barn

Another space for learning and public engagement is the barn. Just as with the Lawson House, authenticity is the approach in this space. The barn features spaces for a carriage, horses, and work areas.

The Society's barn reflects what a barn would have looked like in Ripon's early history.



THE WAYS WE SERVE THE COMMUNITY

Exhibits

Exhibits are another way that we make history accessible to the public. We curate a new main exhibit annually, based on a theme. The annual exhibit space consists of two rooms on the main level of the Pickard House. Parts of our permanent exhibit space periodically change as well.

Exhibits are an important part of what we do because they act as a tangible window into the past.





Tour of Hillside Cemetery

Tours

Throughout the year, the Society offers tours both on and off site. Our volunteers frequently host architectural walking tours of downtown buildings and historic residential areas, as well as tours of Hillside Cemetery. We have given tours to local organizations, Ripon College Alumni, and even members of the Experimental Aircraft Association.

Internships

Each year, the Society partners with Ripon College to provide students with fall internships. Interns work closely with Museum Director, Caron Sisko, to install the annual exhibit which culminates with an exhibit opening and reception. At the opening, the interns offer a presentation about the exhibit. In 2024, the Society received grant funding from the Webster Foundation for durable goods to elevate the internship experience and the quality of the annual exhibit.

Right: Fall 2024, Ripon College interns, Raquel Potter and James Branksi, and Professor Travis Nygard.





Genealogy Workshops

Our genealogy workshops are offered to the public at no cost. In 2025, our resident genealogist, Lara Grant, hosted a three-part genealogy program to help participants learn the steps of discovering their own family trees in partnership with the Ripon Public Library. In 2026, the three part workshop will be offered again, in the Pickard House.

Left: Genealogist, Lara Grant, assists a workshop participant.



Educational Programming Elementary Education

The Society regularly hosts field trips for 2nd and 5th graders. Children learn about what life was like for the people of Ripon in the 19th century. Last year, 2nd graders from Barlow Elementary, were particularly wowed by the special guest, Alexander Perry, vintage organ enthusiast from Indianapolis, who gave a demonstration about the reed organ in our front parlor. (see cover)

Left: Barlow Elementary 2nd graders examine a Rippin' Good Cookie Factory drum mold.

Educational Programming Undergraduate Learning

The Society routinely hosts class visits from Ripon College to tour the museum and study primary sources related to class research topics. Professor Becky Matzke's students visit every fall to view artifacts related to World War II and to learn what it was like on the home front, in Ripon.

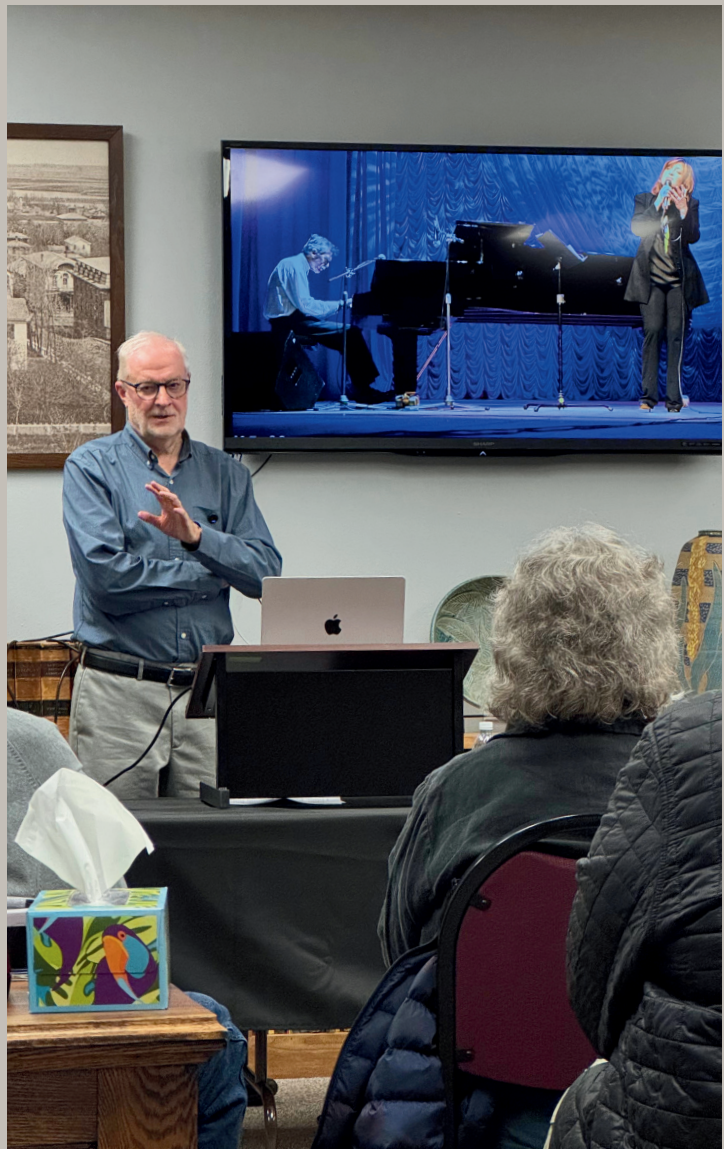
Professor of Art, Travis Nygard, has visited with his Museum Artifacts and Cultural Heritage class to tour of the Lawson House, Pickard House, and the barn. Students also come learn about how the Society operates, the various aspects of the work we do, and all the people involved in making it happen.

Speaker Events

The Society hosts several speaker events throughout the year that are free and open to the public. In Spring of 2025, presentations were given by Kurt Dietrich, Susan Apps-Bodilly, Paul Porter, and Dr. Ann Gibney.

Top right: Professor Nygard's Museum Artifacts & Cultural Heritage class.

Bottom right: Guest speaker Kurt Dietrich.

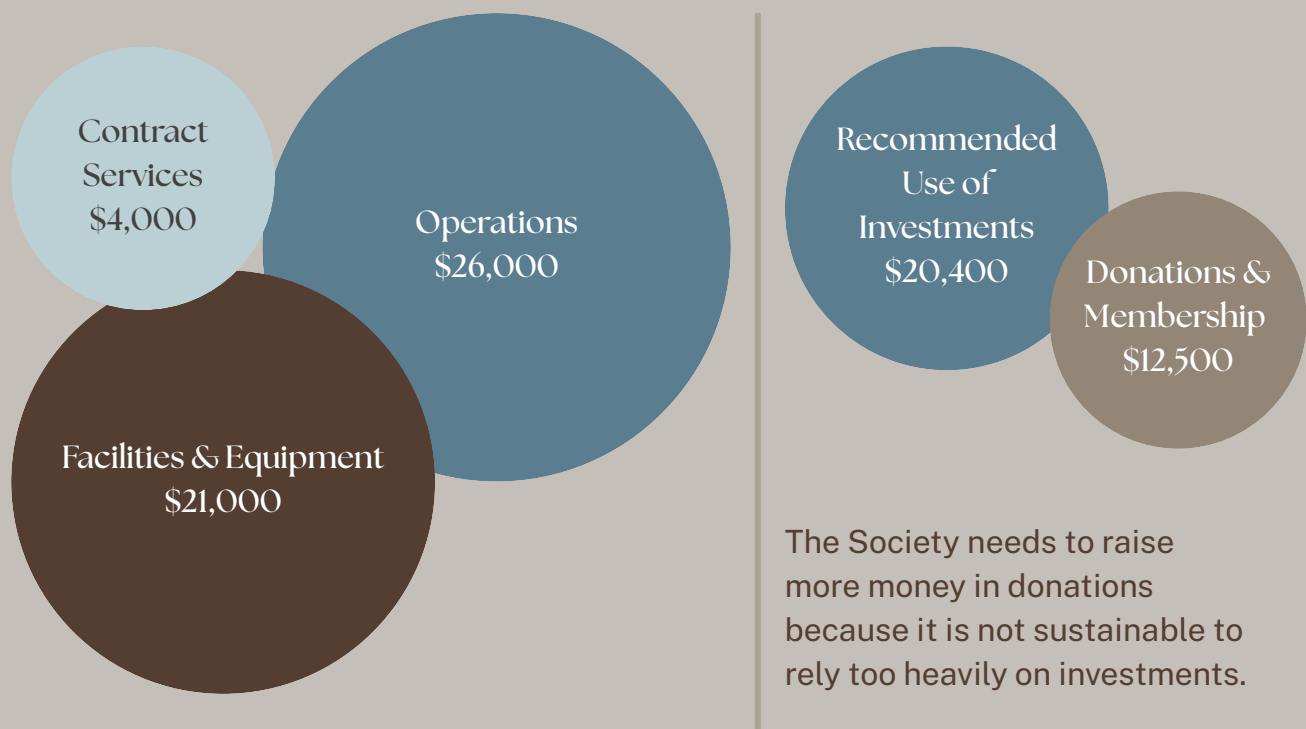


Museum Expenses

Although exhibitions and programs are often the most visible aspects of a museum, a significant portion of resources goes toward essential operational expenses that keep the museum open and its collections accessible. A majority of expenses fall into these categories:

- **Collections care:** Conservation, storage, and handling are all necessary to preserve artifacts and ensure they remain available for future generations. A cloud-based collection management system is used to catalog records and artifacts.
- **Maintaining the facility:** From utilities and security to essential maintenance and repairs, it is necessary to provide a safe and welcoming environment for visitors and the collections.
- **Community engagement:** The museum actively seeks to connect with the community through the print & digital newsletter, website, and online collections.
- **Staff:** Experienced and trained staff are necessary to oversee the collection management system, coordinate events, and track membership.

Annual Budget for Facilities & Operations





A Standard of Excellence

Former President, David Sakrison, accepts Gold Thwaites award.

In 2022, the Ripon Historical Society was the recipient of the Reuben Gold Thwaites Trophy For Local History from the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Reuben Gold Thwaites Award was previously given to the Ripon Historical Society in 1975 for outstanding service to the Ripon community.

The Society was recognized for succeeding in its commitment to not only sustain but to strengthen the organization through community engagement, public programs, and telling stories that reach new audiences.

Making a Difference Paths to Success

We are proud to support the next generation of museum professionals by helping them to be strong candidates for graduate programs. All Ripon College students who have taken part in our internship program have gone on to enter graduate programs in museum studies or public history.



Right: Fall 2023 interns, Lili Alderson, Amanda Von Ruden, and Clara Carlson

Publications

The stories we share today both serve the community and honor a legacy.

Since 2020, **Now & Then in Ripon**, a newspaper column by the Ripon Historical Society, has appeared on a weekly basis in the *Ripon Commonwealth Press*. The articles focus on the history of Ripon, WI, including its people, events, businesses, and other aspects of Ripon's history that are of significance.

For twelve years, Sam Pedrick published a weekly article on Ripon's history in the *Ripon Commonwealth Press*. These articles then became the basis of the book, **A History of Ripon, Wisconsin**, published in 1964 and edited by George Miller.

Access to Collections

One of the most important features of our collection management system, CatalogIt, is the HUB which features a number of our collections online. Increased access boosts educational potential and helps to preserve delicate artifacts through the use of digital copies. Below is some of what we offer online:

- Annual Exhibits -Virtual Edition 2022-2024
- Lola Smith Photograph Collection
- Quilt Collection
- World War I & II Propaganda Collection
- Now & Then in Ripon Collection, 2023-2025
- Library Collection

Page 6 January 16, 2025 The Ripon Commonwealth Press

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

Historic Ripon: A city of music and craftsmanship

Editors note: This is the first of two Now & Then in Ripon articles written by Ripon College students during last semester with the Ripon Historical Society.

By Raquel R. Pötter

While Ripon often is associated with the founding of the Republican Party in 1854, it also boasts a rich musical history that has shaped its culture.

Ripon's musical legacy is reflected in the talents of both Ripon College's famous alumni, as well as local residents and students.

In the 1930s, the Zobel Family Music Studio on Scott Street became a hub for musical talent.

Among the many instruments displayed were violins crafted by Frank P. Farvour of 932 Woodside Ave. Farvour was a Ripon resident for more than 50 years and a second-generation violin maker spanning over the course of three decades. Farvour, also a well-known contractor and builder,

had his violin marketed by Edgar and Lillian Zobel at the Zobel Studios.

The Zobel Music Studio featured several skilled instructors, including Philip A. Laffey, who studied under some of the most renowned violinists of his era.

On April 7, 1929, Edgar Zobel hosted a recital in which Laffey gave a public performance using one of Farvour's handcrafted violins.

Though the violin was unvarnished, its sound was comparable to the finest instruments Laffey had encountered throughout his training under Carradine and Leopold Auer.

This event is captured in "The White Violin," a memoir written by Farvour's grandson, Franklin B. Farvour, documenting his "Gramps' surprise."

"As I amused myself gazing about, I was startled to see the unfinished violin, strung and ready to play, on top of the piano. I just couldn't contain myself, excitedly I poked Gramps and striving to keep

the violin brought to life in the hands of Laffey, left a lasting impression on the lives of both Franklin and his grandfather.

The full story of the White Violin is on display at the Ripon Historical Society at the "Melodies in Time: A History of Music in Ripon" exhibit. According to the 1900 U.S. Census, Ripon's musical history also includes another notable violin maker in Daniel G. Nellis.

Born in Lyons, Wayne County, N.Y., his family relocated to Kenosha, Wis., in 1855. He enlisted in the band for the 4th Wisconsin Volunteer Cavalry in July 1861, but was discharged in October of that same year only to be reenlisted in Company F of the 4th Wisconsin Volunteer Cavalry. He was discharged again a few months later due to disability. He eventually settled in Ripon, where he lived until his death in 1902. Currently on display at the Ripon Historical Society is a

heritage remains significant as it showcases the continued value of local craftsmanship and the arts in shaping its identity.

In an era where mass production often overshadows individual artistry, the legacy of figures like Frank P. Farvour, Laffey and Nellis highlight the importance of preserving and celebrating traditional skills, honoring not only the past but also inspiring current and future generations to engage with their community's artistic and cultural life.

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.

PICTURED IS THE Zobel Studios storefront on Scott Street circa 1928.

from talking out loud said, "Gramps look on the piano!" Gramps hadn't noticed it either and was taken aback at what he now saw.

The unexpected use of the violin, brought to life in the hands of Laffey, left a lasting impression on the lives of both Franklin and his grandfather.

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FRANK P. FARVOUR is pictured on what is believed to be his wedding day in 1890.

THE NELLIS VIOLIN was handcrafted in 1900.

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Photograph

Clare Mears Regal Lilies 1...
Photograph

Dr. EC Johnson House Wit...
Photograph

Edgar Zobel's Tulips 1943
Photograph

Eugene Schallern's Tree W...
Photograph

Fred Miller's Japanese Qui...
Photograph

Above: Now & Then article from January 2025, written by a Society intern. While the Society's primary Now & Then writer is volunteer, Pat Grahn, other volunteers periodically contribute articles.

← **HUB** 🔍 Search Lola Smith Photogra

ALL

EXHIBIT 2022: ART AND AR...

EXHIBIT 2023: SHARING AN...

EXHIBIT 2023: THE STORIES...

EXHIBIT 2024 MELODIES IN ...

GLASS NEGATIVE COLLECTI...

LIBRARY

LOLA SMITH PHOTOGRAPH ...

NOW & THEN IN RIPON: LOO...

NOW & THEN IN RIPON: LOO...

NOW & THEN IN RIPON: LOO...

PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

PROPAGANDA POSTERS: W...

QUILT COLLECTION

To visit the CatalogIt HUB, just go to our website at **riponhistory.org** and click on, **"EXPLORE OUR COLLECTION."**

Our Vision

Our vision is to inspire curiosity and lifelong learning by creating engaging and meaningful experiences with historical collections and stories.

Looking to the future, our organization will be appealing to younger audiences through educational programming, providing more online content for researchers, and fostering collaborations with both the community at large and local organizations.

Looking Ahead

- K-12 education will focus on programming based on first person accounts of what it was like to live in Ripon in the 19th century.
- Our newly formed community archive, **Your Story, Ripon's Story**, will expand and grow, bringing the Ripon community together by sharing Ripon's history, enriching our understanding of Ripon's history through community participation.
- We will foster partnerships with local organizations in new and exciting ways. For example, the artist organization, **Art MidWisconsin** is partnering with us to create a spectacular exhibit, debuting in November 2025.
- Our most fragile and historically important documents will be scanned for online access to researchers and students.



**Accessibility and Outreach
Drive Our Work.**





Help us to carry out our mission and vision for sustaining the organization and serving the community.

How do I Become a Friend?

Choose Your Level

Ripon History Advocates \$250

Belle Lawson Sustainers Club \$500

Samuel Pedrick Founders Circle \$1000

David Mapes Pioneers \$2,500

Warren Chase Dream Makers \$5,000

Make Your Donation

Donations can be made via the “Friends” donation form option on our website or by check.

Receive Recognition

Friends will receive recognition in our March newsletter, and on our website page, “Friends of the Ripon Historical Society.” Anonymous gifts are also welcome.

A Message from the Board of Directors

The Ripon Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing Ripon's history . We believe in building a strong, supportive community, and we know you share that vision. We're reaching out to you because we recognize your dedication to our shared community, and we believe that by partnering with local businesses and philanthropists we can make an even greater impact.

Your support will make a tangible difference. Donations at any level can help sustain us so that we can continue to be a place of learning and inspiration, connecting people with Ripon's history in meaningful ways.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ripon Historical Society,
Board of Directors

Board of Directors

Steve Riemer, President
Dani Moore, Treasurer
Ian Stepleton, Secretary

Lara Grant
Matt Koski
Lee Prellwitz
Eric Przybyl
Joe Walker
Chris Wiegand

Museum Director

Caron Sisko

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Ripon Historical Society
Since 1899