

## ***Small Historic Towns across America.***

as presented by Mr. Stadt's on-line Freedom Project Education U.S. History classes in the Fall and Winter of 2014. You can learn more about our classes by visiting us at: [www.fpeusa.org](http://www.fpeusa.org)

# Ripon

Birthplace of the Republican Party

### **Brief history of Ripon, Wisconsin**

Ripon, Wisconsin is a city in the Fond du Lac County of Wisconsin, and was founded in 1849 by a New York steamboat captain named David P. Mapes. The town, and most of its streets, were named by John S. Horner and Mapes. Mapes built a grist mill with Horner near what he thought was a beautiful "silver creek weaving its way through Wisconsin's rolling hills", and they called the



establishment "Ripon" after their ancestral home of Ripon, Yorkshire, a cathedral city in England. Mapes then started to develop this new settlement for more than a decade by constructing a flour mill and a public house, and ended up giving away tracts of land to people who wanted to settle the land and establish their businesses in the area. He gave away these tracts of land to people so long as they made specific improvements to the community or built certain buildings before a certain time. The first tract of land Mapes gave away was to a man named E.L. Northrup, who built Ripon's first store. Mapes then placed railroad tracks leading south to Milwaukee, and north to Wolf River, and even convinced the federal government to relocate the post office from the nearby town of Ceresco to Ripon. By 1850, Ripon had a post office, mill, hotel, blacksmith-shop and several stores, and began attracting settlers and growing rapidly.

On the evening of March 20, 1854, a group of irritated individuals met in a small schoolhouse to express objection to the opening of Kansas and Nebraska to slavery. Many were sick and tired of the corruption and failures of their respective political parties and the U.S. Congress in their ability to prevent slavery from taking root in the West. This group of individuals, coming from many different backgrounds, resolved their differences and joined together to unite against slavery. They called their new political party the "Republican Party", and they came out of the schoolhouse determined to water down and eliminate the presence of slavery across the United States. "We went into the little meeting held in a school house Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats. We came out

of it Republicans and we were the first Republicans in the Union,” wrote Alan E. Bovay, one of the founders of the Republican Party. Bovay’s friend Horace Greeley took to making the name familiar by publishing the story in his Eastern newspaper.

### **Location and Driving Directions from closest major U.S. Airport**

Ripon, Wisconsin is located about midway between Milwaukee, WI and Green Bay, WI. From the Outagamie County Regional Airport near Appleton, WI, take Challenger Drive to County Highway CB. Turn left to merge onto US Highway 10, then exit onto Interstate 41 towards Oshkosh, WI. After driving southwest towards Oshkosh for 17.6 miles, take exit 116 and turn right onto WI-44. After driving for 15.7 miles on WI-44, turn left onto Douglas Street, and turn right onto East Fond Du Lac Street to enter into Ripon, Wisconsin.

### **Who was President when this town was founded? And, what was the political environment in America at that time?**



Ripon, Wisconsin was founded when Zachary Taylor was President of the United States. At the time, the United States was in the heart of Westward Expansion, moving west to claim new territory and establish communities for mining, cattle herding, and other forms of trade. Also, many railroads were being built by both private investors and federal contractors across the United States to enormously increase the efficiency of transportation of goods, and some railroads were ambitiously built to connect the East Coast to the West Coast. In fact, many people on the East Coast thought that they would lose their economic



competitive advantage once the new territory in the West built enough railroads to surpass the East Coast in trading and the transportation of goods. In addition, the United States was just recently engaged in the Mexican-American War, where the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to end the war with Mexico. This treaty made the Rio Grande the southern border of Texas, gave California and New Mexico to the United States, and made the United States owe Mexico

\$15 million while having Mexico owe the United States \$3.25 million. The end of this war brought some great changes in the ever-increasing size of the territory owned by the United States, and led to an even greater impact on how the world sees the United States as an independent country.

### **Oldest businesses/largest businesses today.**

The oldest and largest business existing in Ripon, Wisconsin today is Ripon College, a four-year liberal arts college. It was founded on January 29, 1851, just two years after Ripon was established, by David Mapes and a group of townspeople on top of a hill. It was originally chartered as Brockway College, because a man named William Brockway was the one who bought the most stock in the college after it was offered by the college's board of trustees that the person who bought the most stock in the college was the one who could name it. The name was eventually changed to Ripon College in 1864. Today, Ripon College's campus includes 250 acres of tree-covered landscape and 25 buildings.



### **City government.**

"A mayor and eight council members serve the community. The mayor is elected to a two-year term and council members to a four-year term. Two council members represent each of the four districts. The city council regularly meets at 7:00 on the second Tuesday and fourth Monday of the month in the council chambers of city hall. Various committees and commissions support the mayor and council in the decision-making process. A full-time city administrator carries out the council's decisions and manages the overall operations of the city." – *City of Ripon Website*

### **Where can we stay if we visit Ripon?**

Lodging and accommodations in Ripon include "Boarders by Cobblestone Inn & Suites", "Comfort Suites at Royal Ridges", and the "Ridgewood Inn Motel".

### **Why would I want to visit this historic small town.**

I would want to visit this historic small town because its the location of what I believe to be one of the greatest turning points in the 19th century of American history. This historic event can truly teach us the importance of finding common ground with those we would most commonly disagree with. The Republican Party was formed because people from all different backgrounds wanted to stand under one banner: the idea that slavery is evil, and that everyone has the right to be treated equally under the law. These individuals, disgusted with the lack of action, strength, and fortitude from their respective parties, knew that they had to fully turn the atmosphere of public opinion against slavery, or else one of the essential principles in the Declaration of Independence would not be truly fulfilled and could be lost forever. The heroism of these individuals cannot be

understated, because their ability and willingness to be open-minded to the opinions of others and to bond together under common ground is what has most likely saved us from the continuation of slavery today. If it wasn't for the formation of the Republican Party, there may not have been the strong leadership of Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, because he would have found no party that truly represented what he believed in.

This event that occurred in this small town is important because it ties back to what I believe needs to happen in our political system today. I believe both the Democrats and Republicans in Congress have been more lenient with socialist policies than ever before. The president's promises of "Hope and Change" have never really come true, because his methods for implementing these changes are fundamentally flawed. People are detrimentally exhausted of excessive government policies that do not work from both sides of the aisle. What the American people need is a party willing to fight for individual rights, fight against socialism, limit government intervention and, as Ronald Reagan put it, raise "a banner of no pale pastels, but bold colors which make it unmistakably clear where we stand on all of the issues troubling the people". Transparency should be a top priority, and this party will need to stay clear of the dishonest acts of extortion practiced by both of the mainstream parties.

In conclusion, I believe this town is an important gem in American History, because it leaves behind a meeting that is the blueprint for positively disrupting the current political climate for any generation regardless of the time period. And a positive disruption in the current political climate is exactly what the American people need.



**Links you may wish to visit.**

- <http://www.ripon.edu/riponhistory/>
- <http://www.riponmainst.com/riponmainst/about-us/history.html>
- [http://www.cityofripon.com/index.asp?SEC=6EB5F4ED-4C81-45A5-AB06-92893D56CA57&Type=B\\_LIST](http://www.cityofripon.com/index.asp?SEC=6EB5F4ED-4C81-45A5-AB06-92893D56CA57&Type=B_LIST)
- <http://www.riponmainst.com/riponmainst/businesses/services.html>