

# COURAGEOUS PAST. INSPIRING FUTURE.

The Legacy Campaign for  
The Little White Schoolhouse

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**BIRTHPLACE OF  
REPUBLICAN PARTY**

In 1852 Alvan Earle Bovay of Ripon met with Horace Greeley in New York and advocated dissolution of the Whig Party and formation of a new party to fuse together anti-slavery elements. At the same time he suggested the name "Republican" because he felt "it was a good name . . . . with charm and prestige."

The opportunity to act came in January 1854 when Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Bill which permitted the extension of slavery beyond the limits of the earlier Missouri Compromise. Three months' debate on the bill created upheavals in all the existing political parties. When the bill passed the Senate on March 3, 1854, Bovay promptly called a meeting of 53 voters in the little white schoolhouse to organize a new party. Years later Bovay recalled "We went into the little meeting. Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats. We came out Republicans and we were the first Republicans in the Union. On February 22, 1856 a national organization to establish a national organization whose name "Republican" was adopted for the party. Among those present were Horace Lincoln



We invite you to join us in preserving a cornerstone of American history—the Little White Schoolhouse. This humble building, standing strong since 1853, is not just a museum but a beacon of hope, resilience, and inspiration. It is a place where the story of ordinary citizens effecting extraordinary change is told, where the seeds of democracy and civic engagement were sown and is home to the event that put Ripon on the map.


The Little White Schoolhouse has welcomed thousands of visitors over the decades, teaching them about the power of small actions and the ripple effect they can create. However, maintaining this National Landmark and ensuring that it continues to serve as a source of inspiration for future generations requires significant resources. To secure its future, the Ripon Chamber of Commerce—the owner and operator of the Little White Schoolhouse—is raising a \$4 million endowment. This endowment will provide the necessary funds to maintain the museum, enhance its exhibits, and expand its educational programs.


Also part of The Legacy Campaign, the Ripon Chamber will be raising \$2 million to transform the property that the Little White Schoolhouse resides on into a dynamic center for engagement and community development. The Legacy Center will be at the heart of this transformation. Located in the adjacent building, it will offer tours, educational workshops, and community events designed to inspire visitors to dream big, serve their community, and change the world.

**To make this vision a reality, we need your help.** Your contribution will ensure that the Little White Schoolhouse continues to be a place where history is not only preserved but where it comes alive for each new generation. Together, we can ensure that this landmark remains a vital part of our shared heritage and a source of inspiration for all who visit.

Please join us in this vital effort to preserve and protect the Little White Schoolhouse for the future. Your support will make a lasting difference, helping to secure the future of this historic landmark and its mission to educate and inspire.

Thank you for considering this important request. I look forward to partnering with you to preserve this extraordinary piece of history.

  
Mandy Kimes  
Executive Director  
Ripon Chamber of Commerce

  
Joan Karsten  
President | Little White  
Schoolhouse Board of Directors



Top Left: 75th anniversary celebration of the birth of the Republican Party at Ripon. Governor Walter J. Kohler, Sr., stands on the podium in front of the Little White Schoolhouse. Bottom left and Right: The Little White Schoolhouse as current museum.



The Little White Schoolhouse was moved to the Ripon College campus near the tennis courts in 1908.



The Little White Schoolhouse during the 75th Anniversary of the Republican Party held at Ripon College in 1929.

**IN THE LITTLE WHITE SCHOOLHOUSE A DECISION MADE BY A SMALL GROUP OF RIPON CITIZENS CHANGED THE COURSE OF OUR NATION'S HISTORY.**

Built in 1853, this simple frame schoolhouse holds a powerful history. The Little White Schoolhouse was Ripon's first public school and was used as such until 1860 when the community outgrew it and it was moved and remodeled to be a private home. Three families lived in the home over the next 40 years, including


George W. Peck, who later became the governor of Wisconsin and author of, "Peck's Bad Boy Series."


One year after the schoolhouse was built a meeting was held there to oppose the expansion of slavery brought by the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. That formative meeting, led by Alvan E. Bovay, a young lawyer from


New York that had moved to Ripon to settle with his family, brought a dedicated following of individuals together who pledged to organize and fight against the spread of slavery. Slavery, was a political and moral issue that had absorbed the minds of people during that time. Bovay, then a member of the Whig political party, insisted


that the vitality of the Whig party was gone and urged the formation of a new party that would bring together all the anti-slavery forces in the country. He gave the name of the new political party "Republican" and a spark was lit across the county as this new political party was born. This incredible history is Ripon's unique connection to the


development of the nation. The question of slavery eventually led to the election of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln. He fought to preserve a more perfect Union of people, by the people, for the people and worked to abolish slavery once and for all.


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**1853**
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**1854**
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**1860**
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**1908**
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**1929**
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**1940**
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**1951**
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**1974**
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**2005**
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**2023**

## A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER TO PRESERVE RIPON'S PLACE IN HISTORY

By the turn of the twentieth century, the schoolhouse that once served as the gathering space for the formative meeting of March, 20 1854 had fallen into disrepair and was headed to demolition.

The Commercial Club, chartered in 1908 that later became the Chamber of Commerce, worked together with Samuel Pedrick, a prominent lawyer and local historian to raise the \$1,200 needed to save the schoolhouse and preserve it. \$1,200 in 1908 has a relative value of \$92,656 today!

Generous donations came from almost 70 community members and even a few who were in attendance at the meeting in 1854! An original handwritten list shows names like Haas, Diedrich, Barlow, Buchholz and Selig. No gift was too small ranging from \$1 to \$500.

They even organized a community baseball game to help with the fund-raising. They broke up into teams and named one the "Republicans" and the other the "Democrats. The game ended in a tie and raised \$103.05 which is close to \$8,000 dollars today!

One newspaper clipping explained, "The Republican party not only is destined to live....and it behooves the good people of Ripon, where the Republican party had its inception, to preserve as a historical spot the house in which the meeting was held."

The Ripon community rallied behind the incredible history that took place over 170 years ago. It is an incredible example of passionate and generous community members coming together to preserve history that inspires.



Top Photo: The Little White Schoolhouse in transit from its location on the Ripon College campus to it's location on Blackburn Street in 1951. Bottom Photo: A community baseball game helped raise funds to restore the Little White Schoolhouse in 1908.

**ITS OUR TURN TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THIS IMPORTANT PLACE OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

We are looking for partners who will help preserve this inspiring piece of history through a \$4 million endowment. Your participation will help ensure that the impact of what happened 170 years ago will live on in the next generation.

The Little White Schoolhouse is more than just a relic of the past; it is an active center for learning and leadership. It is a symbol of America's early commitment to free primary education. For it is only with such education that ordinary people gain the self confidence and moral courage necessary

to be the active citizens needed for a democratic republic to succeed.

The Little White Schoolhouse's endowment will not only provide the necessary funds to maintain the museum, it will make a significant impact in expanding its educational programs.

The history of the Little White Schoolhouse shows us that even small groups of active and determined citizens can accomplish great things. Your support of the Little White Schoolhouse endowment will help to secure the future of this historic landmark and its mission to educate and inspire.

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**

- Developing and implementing educational workshops and community events.
- Hosting field trip programs focusing on key historical and civic topics.
- Collaborating with local educators to align museum programs with school curricula.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Fostering strong relationships with local schools, community groups, and organizations.
- Offering volunteer opportunities to local residents to assist in tours, historical reenactments, and special events.
- Engaging with artists, writers, and historians to contribute to exhibitions and events.

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

- Establishing programs that develop leadership skills in young people.
- Encouraging civic engagement and social responsibility.
- Providing mentorship opportunities, leadership workshops, and community service projects.

Left: Secretary of War, James W. Good, speaking at the Republican Diamond Jubilee Celebration in Ripon on June 8th, 1929. Center: A tour at the Little White Schoolhouse. Right: Current displays at the Little White Schoolhouse.



**EMBARKING ON A NEW CHAPTER  
FOR THE SCHOOLHOUSE—  
AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVOLVE  
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS  
AND OUR COMMUNITY.**

As part of *The Legacy Campaign*, we are seeking to raise \$2 million to renovate the adjacent building to be a modern museum that engages visitors with new displays, technologies and interactive experiences. The Legacy Center, will offer tours, educational workshops, and community events designed to inspire visitors to dream big, serve their community, and change the world.

Just as the schoolhouse was once used as a gathering place for the community,

The Legacy Center will be a place for important events and conversations. Located on a high-traffic street, it's visibility will provide visitors with a convenient place to stop to gather information about our community. The Legacy Center will enhance the experience of what it means to be the birthplace of the Republican party—creating a positive economic impact for our community and adding to what Ripon already has to offer as a tourist destination.

**NOTABLE FEATURES**

- A welcome/orientation area for group tours to gather.
- A presentation venue made by enclosing the existing drive-thru.
- A gift shop area so it can be moved out of the historic building.
- An area to display an expanded collection of diverse and significant historic artifacts.
- Private offices and meeting rooms.
- A kitchen, break room and restroom



Preliminary drawings and renderings of the Little White Schoolhouse's proposed Legacy Center.



## OUR VISION

To offer a dynamic and modern Museum that is a regionally recognized hub of collaborative learning, and leadership development. A place where every guest learns from the past and is inspired for the future.

## OUR MISSION

To uphold the unique and relevant history of the Little White Schoolhouse. To serve as a gathering place for leadership development and community events. To inspire every person to make a difference in the world around them.



Everyday people in everyday places **can** make a difference!

Please join us in *The Legacy Campaign* for The Little White Schoolhouse  
[lwsh.org/legacy-campaign](http://lwsh.org/legacy-campaign)

