

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Ripon's Little White Schoolhouse Re-Listed on the National Register of Historic Places**

**Ripon, WI 7/26/24** - The Ripon Area Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce that the Little White Schoolhouse has once again been added to the National Register of Historic Places. This recognition comes after the application was reviewed and approved by the Wisconsin State Review Board in May. The application was subsequently submitted to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, an official with the National Park Service, where it received final approval.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources.

The Little White Schoolhouse holds a significant place in American political history. On March 20, 1854, the first local Republican Party in the nation was formed at a meeting held in the Little White Schoolhouse in Ripon, Wisconsin. The schoolhouse was initially listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. In 2023, the schoolhouse was moved to a new site, necessitating its reapplication to the National Register.

As early as 1874, prominent Republicans identified this building as the birthplace of the Republican Party. Alvan Bovay, the organizer of the 1854 meeting, described the event as a moment of history, stating, "The actors in this remote little eddy of politics thought at the time that they were making a bit of history by that solitary tallow candle, in the little white schoolhouse on the prairie; and whether ever recognized and published or not, they think so still."<sup>1</sup> This quote, found in Henry Wilson's "Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America," is the origin of the school's name.

The Little White Schoolhouse is also significant for its commemorative value. In 1908, the Ripon Commercial Club, with the help of Samuel Pedrick and the Ripon community, purchased and preserved it as a historic relic, moving it to the Ripon College campus. Over the years, it has been relocated several times to ensure its preservation and accessibility to the public. In 1949, the Republican Educational Foundation (REF) was established to create a museum and education space honoring the history of the Republican Party. The REF moved the schoolhouse to Blackburn Street in 1951, where it served as a museum.

In 1987, the Ripon Chamber of Commerce acquired the schoolhouse to promote and preserve its history. After a restoration in 2007, the schoolhouse was relocated once again in 2023 to its current site, continuing to operate as a museum with the opportunity to have a visitor's center dedicated to interpreting the historic events that took place inside its walls.

"Preserving our past is essential to understanding our present and shaping our future," said Mandy Kimes, Executive Director of the Ripon Chamber of Commerce. "We believe the Little White Schoolhouse is a centerpiece of Ripon's history and heritage and can't wait to welcome many visitors for years to come."

For more information, please visit [lwsh.org](http://lwsh.org) or contact the Museum at [birthplace@ripon-wi.com](mailto:birthplace@ripon-wi.com)

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<sup>1</sup> (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1874), II:410.