

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>
COUNTY: <b>Fond du Lac</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Little White Schoolhouse; "Birthplace of the Republican Party"**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Little White Schoolhouse**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Southeast Corner of Blackburn and Blossom Streets**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Ripon**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: COUNTY: **Fond du Lac** CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Foundation for American Principles and Traditions**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Ripon**

STATE:  
**Wisconsin**

CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Fond du Lac County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Fond du Lac**

STATE:  
**Wisconsin**

CODE:

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings; National Register**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1961; 1973**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Historic Sites Survey; State Historical Society of Wisconsin**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1100 L Street NW; 816 State Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Washington; Madison**

STATE:  
**D.C.; Wisconsin**

CODE:

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Little White Schoolhouse is a simple, small, one-story frame building sided with clapboards and painted white--a typical one-room schoolhouse in appearance. The only architectural ornamentation of note consists of a paneled single front door framed by simple pilasters carrying an entablature. In front of it is a small, square, open porch with two plank steps leading up to it.

The original appearance of the school is not known, but so far as can be determined the exterior is preserved in original form. The interior has undoubtedly been altered little except for its conversion from a schoolroom into a small museum of local history.

The schoolhouse has been relocated several times. Its original location was at the corner of Blackburn and East Fond du Lac Streets just two blocks south of its present location. Subsequently moved to the Ripon College campus, where it remained from 1906 to 1941, and relocated one more time, it was returned to Blackburn Street in 1941. The building is owned and operated by a private foundation which maintains the property in very good condition and keeps it open to the public during most of the year.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

March 20, 1854

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |                                      |   |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | osophy  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The simple one-story clapboard and frame building known as the Little White Schoolhouse at Ripon, Wisconsin, is generally regarded as the traditional birthplace of the Republican Party. Here on March 20, 1854, 53 petitioners of Ripon called a meeting of local citizens to protest the Senate's passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which permitted the extension of slavery beyond the limits of the Missouri Compromise. The protest resulted in the formation of a new, albeit local party, drawn from the ranks of disgruntled Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats. The gathering at Ripon illustrates the spontaneous and widespread origin of the Republican Party. The Party coalesced from disaffected local groups in places like Ripon throughout the Northeast and West. It was the first party to have formed without the aid of an outstanding leader. Ultimately, delegates of such dispersed assemblies gathered at Pittsburgh and called for a national convention of Republicans in Philadelphia in 1856 for the purpose of selecting a standard-bearer.

History

In January 1854, Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which permitted the extension of slavery beyond the limits of the Missouri Compromise. The bill was the catalyst for the formation of the Republican Party. Throughout the Northeast and Northwest, groupings of disaffected Whigs, Democrats, and Free Soilers met to protest the bill. Out of these assemblies the Republican Party coalesced as a national organization over the next 2 years, emerging in 1856 with the explorer and hero of the day, John C. Fremont, as standard-bearer of the new party.

One of the protest gatherings was called on March 20, 1854, in Ripon, Wisconsin, by 53 petitioners to organize opposition to the bill when it passed the Senate on March 3. The assembly met at the Little White Schoolhouse on Blackburn Street. Contemporaneous records seem to be lacking with respect to that meeting and many others held afterward. But years later, one of the prime movers of the Ripon protest, Alvan Earle 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."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butterfield's History of Fond du Lac County (1880)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Binkley, Wilfred E., American Political Parties: Their Natural History, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1944.

Michigan Historical Society, "Inventory-Nomination Form--"Birthplace of the Republican Party," pending in the National Register, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation.

Pedrick, S. M., "The Rebulican Party's Origin," reprinted from the Ripon Weekly Press, November 25, 1915, reprint not dated.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		43° 50' 38"	88° 50' 11"	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than 1 acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of Historic Sites and Architectural Surveys, National Park Service**      DATE: **11/8/73**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L Street NW**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **District of Columbia**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/>      State <input type="checkbox"/>      Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ <i>Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Wisconsin	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance (page 1) Little White Schoolhouse

Bovay described the debates on forming a "great irresistible Northern party ...." The objectors were worn down, an organization was formed, and a party committee elected. "It was no fragmentary movement," Bovary recalled. "It contemplated the consolidation of all shades of antislavery opinion under the name Republican."

Who were the First Republicans? Alvan Bovay's claim that his townfolk were, has led to an unending debate between Ripon and other communities, such as Jackson, Michigan, over who is entitled to that honor.

The Jackson assembly met on July 6, 1854. It was a gathering to test sentiment throughout Michigan and grew out of many previous local protests, such as the one at Ripon in Wisconsin. The large response to the call to Jackson compelled the assembly to move to a large grove of oak trees, then on the edge of town. A platform was approved and nominees for office elected.<sup>2</sup>

The first adaption of the party name--Republican--is a disputed issue, with Ripon and Jackson both vying for the honors. Alvan Bovay may have suggested the name to Horace Greeley as early as 1852. He insisted in later years that the Ripon protesters had considered themselves Republicans. On the other hand, the Jackson assembly's official recognition of the name seems to be a documented verity. The reality appears to be that the party title--Republican--was discussed fairly generally and its precise origins as the party label are not likely to be uncovered. Furthermore, the issue over the naming of the party is not critical to the reality of an emerging political movement. In fairness to the Jackson assembly, it would seem that the elements of a party phenomenon--nominees for office, the adoption of a platform, committees, etc.--are more clearly evident in the Jackson meeting.

The question appears to turn on the character of the site itself--and site it must be since the gathering was held in the open air in a grove of oaks. Perhaps it is best to use the words of the Michigan Historical Commission in nominating the site to the National Register: "Houses and other structures have completely obliterated the beautiful grove ...." A monument on the curb at the northwest corner of Franklin and Second Streets commemorates the site. "Therefore, the area has been altered, due to the city's growth."

<sup>2</sup>Jackson meeting described in Inventory-Nomination Form, "Birth of the Republican Party," pending in the National Register, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation.