

THE FOUNDING OF RIPON COLLEGE

The City of Ripon was founded in 1849 and at that time was a small village of about dozen buildings. However, a group of citizens dedicated themselves to the promotion of education in Ripon to encourage community growth.

In January 1851, a charter was granted by the state to form a higher learning institution in Ripon.

- The college was named Brockway College, after its largest private donor, William Brockway. The name was changed to Ripon College in 1864.

Key Milestones & Traditions

- **Early Co-education:** Beginning as a lyceum, teaching anything from arithmetic to Plato, the school was converted to a four-year private liberal arts college in 1863. Its first class — four women: Luthera H. Adams, Harriet H. Brown, Susan A.W. Salisbury and Mary F. Spencer — was graduated in 1867.
- **The College Days:** Launched in 1868, the student newspaper is the oldest continuously published college newspaper in Wisconsin.
- **Athletic Rivalries:** Ripon's football team played Lawrence College (now Lawrence University) in 1893 in what is believed to be the oldest ongoing college football rivalry in the state.
- **Alumni Legacy:** The college has a prominent history of nurturing notable actors, most famously Spencer Tracy (Class of 1924), Al Jarreau (Class of 1962), and Harrison Ford (Class of 1964).

Campus Architecture

- During a snowstorm on Jan. 29, 1851, the first building, Brockway Hall, later to become East Hall, was staked out by Alvan Bovay and David Mapes:

“By such men were the stakes for the first building of Ripon College pounded into the frozen ground. Their courage and confidence went into the foundations of the institution, and are part of the rich heritage of all its beneficiaries.”

Samuel Pedrick, *A History of Ripon Wisconsin*



LEFT:
East Hall, Ripon College,
Note students perched on
top railing of cupola, which
no longer exists today.
Inset: present day East Hall.

Funding was an
issue in the small
community with
limited means...

*“The leaders of the project parted with
their gold watches and other prized
processions brought from the east, gladly
sacrificing the luxuries of the past for the
hope of the future.”*

Samuel M. Pedrick, Class of 1891, in
a sketch published in the 1964 book
A History of Ripon, Wisconsin.

Citizens dedicated to Education in Ripon...

Ripon College was founded by a group of nine citizens who met to charter the Lyceum of Ripon—a local corporation dedicated to "mental improvement and the promotion of education." This direct effort by the town's pioneers successfully secured the college charter that established Ripon College in 1851.

- **Captain David P. Mapes:** The founder of the village of Ripon who donated the initial land for the college.
- **Alvan E. Bovay:** Ripon's city clerk and a key figure in establishing the modern Republican Party.
- **Jehdeiah Bowen:** A local businessman who came to Wisconsin out of having known David Mapes in PA. He was a long-serving member of the college's board.
- **Ezra Lathrop Northrup:** An early pioneer and merchant and brother-in-law to William Brockway. Northrup donated money for the college in Brockway's name.
- **Warren Chase:** Leader of the Wisconsin Phalanx.
- **John Scott Horner:** In 1849, Horner teamed up with Captain David P. Mapes to establish the village. Horner officially named it "Ripon" after his family's ancestral home of Ripon in Yorkshire, England.
- **Asa Kinney:** Pioneer, politician, and military officer who played a notable role in the early civic history of Ripon.
- **Almon Osborn:** Pioneer, farmer and civic leader.
- **Edwin Lockwood:** While engaging in civic and educational development, he made his primary living as a local farmer.