

Now & Then in Ripon ... Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

Did you know Ripon almost joined GL County?

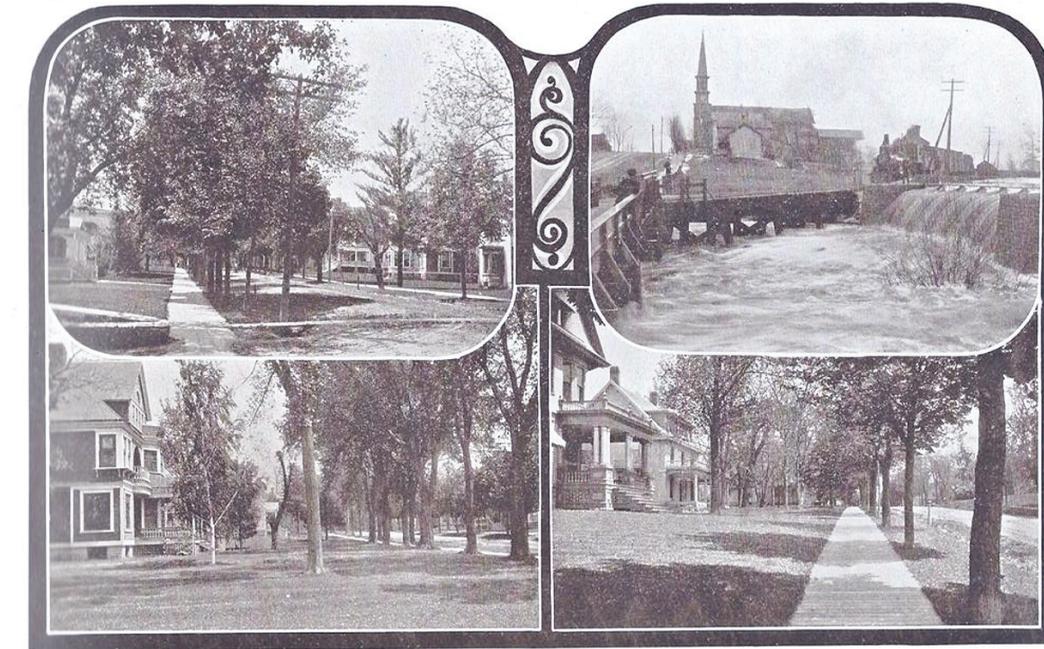
Ripon is located on the north-western corner of Fond du Lac County. Over the years, some people have wondered why the community is not located in Green Lake County.

Fond du Lac County was formed in 1836 and organized in 1844. The county is located on the south end of Lake Winnebago and Ripon always has been a part of it. The county got its name from the early French traders who were in the area in the 1700s and means "the foot of the lake."

Green Lake County, located to the west of Ripon, started out as a part of Marquette County in 1836. That territory was fully organized in 1848, the same year that Wisconsin became a state. Green Lake became its own county in 1858.

In 1859, a movement existed for Ripon to secede from Fond du Lac County and join Green Lake County, making Ripon the county seat. In 1858, the state Legislature passed a bill to annex a part of the Fond du Lac County to Green Lake County.

This bill was promoted by Alvan E. Bovay (1818-1903), who was a member of the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1859 and 1860. Bovay was an attorney and came to Ripon in 1850,



Watson Street, Looking South.
Hall Street, Looking East.

VIEWS OF RIPON, WIS.
PHOTOS BY A. D. EVANS

The Water Fall.
Jackson Street.

THE 1904 BOOK, "A Souvenir of Fond du Lac County," featured six pages of Ripon photographs including this one. Surprisingly it also featured six pages of Green Lake County photographs. In 1859, Ripon tried to secede from Fond du Lac County and become a part of Green Lake County.

when it was a community of only 13 houses. He was a Ripon College trustee when it was first formed as Brockway College in 1851. Bovay is one of only five known founders of the Republican Party in 1854.

The proposed bill to move

the Ripon area to Green Lake County was approved March 11, 1859 and the *Western Times*, published in Ripon, declared the division should take place for several reasons.

"Our commercial relations

have all been severed from

Fond du Lac by the erection of the Milwaukee & Horicon railroad," it read. "We are obliged to travel 50 miles by rail or 24 by wagon, requiring two days, to transact the smallest item of county business."

The *Western Times* contin-

ued by publishing "Owing to the great similarity of soil in the eastern and western towns, it has been a very difficult matter to equalize the assessments of the two localities satisfactorily.

"We are, to all intents and purposes, a foreign people to Fond du Lac. We are the commercial center of Green Lake county most of the shipment of grain by the farmers of that county being made in Ripon."

The paper went on to state, "We regret exceedingly the bitter warfare that must inevitably follow from the refusal of the citizens of Fond du Lac to consent to a peaceful separation. Having exhausted every other means to obtain a peaceful separation, we are now fully resolved to fight for it."

The matter of the succession came to a vote Nov. 8, 1859 and lost by 107 votes. Ripon remained in Fond du Lac County.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information, visit www.riponhistory.org, facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety or instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/.

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