

Jehdeiah Bowen, 1817–1891

Pioneer, Merchant, Politician, and Civic Leader

Jehdeiah Bowen was a highly influential 19th-century pioneer, merchant, and politician who played a vital role in shaping the civic, educational, and political history of Ripon. Born in South Wales, he immigrated to the United States in 1830 and moved to Ripon in June 1850.

- **Republican Party Founder:** Bowen was one of the key figures who worked alongside Alvan E. Bovay to form the new political coalition that became the Republican Party. He served on the original five-member organizational committee selected during the famous March 20, 1854 meeting at Ripon's Little White Schoolhouse.
- **Public Office:** He served two terms as the Mayor of Ripon (elected in 1859 and 1868). He also served as the city's Postmaster from 1861 to 1866 and was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1871.
- **Ripon College Co-Founder:** Bowen was one of the original nine directors of the Ripon Lyceum charter granted in January 1851, which laid the foundation for Ripon College. He dedicated substantial time to the institution, serving as the college treasurer for 25 years (1855–1880).



Local Commerce: He operated a highly successful general store on the northwest corner of Ripon's public square, entered the banking industry in 1864, and established the **Ripon Knitting Works** factory in 1880.

Additionally, **Bowen's Woods**, a dedicated nature preserve located along Thorne Street on the edge of campus, bears his name.

Right: 1883 oil portrait of Jehdeiah Bowen painted by early Wisconsin artist Mark R. Harrison. (Ripon College Art Collection)