
DAVID P. MAPES: WHEELER & DEALER

David P. Mapes was the primary promoter and deal maker in starting what would become Ripon. Mapes would catch travelers passing through and ‘interview them.’ If he saw potential he would promote his venture; if not, he would send them on their way.

- Mapes saw the need for education as one way to attract desirable citizens. By late 1850 he helped to organize, along with other Ripon citizens, the Lyceum of Ripon. This higher education institution would become Brockway College, and later Ripon College.
- Mapes realized that building a railroad extension to connect Ripon to Horicon and Milwaukee was essential for growth. As no financing was available for such a risky venture, Mapes and others used the tactic of that period of convincing farmers to mortgage their farms to persuade the rail companies to build. Mapes mortgaged his own farm, as well. These actions convinced the Ripon & Horicon Railroad to build and be in operation by December 1856.
- By the late 1860s he was, along with other Ripon businessmen, developing what is now Winneconne, Wisconsin. Mapes was married three times and had children by all three wives. He published the book *History of the City of Ripon* in 1873 when he was 75 years old. Mapes always seemed to put development before his own well-being and so never accumulated much personal wealth. He died at the age of 91 in Winneconne.

“In 1845, I did find it right here in the midst of these beautiful and fertile prairies and openings, right here upon the banks of your beautiful Silver Creek. Those of you who were here early enough to have seen it as nature made it, with its silvery creek leaping and jumping over rock and gravel, between its sloping green banks and skirted with handsome groves upon hills and in valleys, will, along with me, remember its great beauty with almost a regret that it must make way for your present splendid improvements, your princely stores, your gorgeous palaces, and the activity of an energetic go-ahead city.” - D. P. Mapes

