

John Scott Horner 1818–1903

POLITICIAN, LAND SPECULATOR, AND CO-FOUNDER OF RIPON

John Scott Horner was born in Virginia. In his early years, he practiced law. In 1834, he married Harriet L. Watson, daughter of James Watson, a U.S. Senator from New York.

In 1835 President Andrew Jackson appointed Horner as Secretary and Acting Governor of the Michigan Territory followed by Secretary of the Wisconsin Territory. Horner was appointed by Jackson as the Register of the Green Bay land office the following spring, an office he held for eleven years.

The pay for being Register was minimal, so Horner resumed the practice of law. His practice proved lucrative, and in late 1838 he became the first purchaser of land west of Fond du Lac including the Silver Creek water power section and land on the south shore of Green Lake.

Friends urged him to return to his native Virginia but in 1847 he moved to his farm, Westwood, on the south shore of Green Lake. While there he was elected probate judge for Marquette County and served 1849–1854.

During that time, David P. Mapes and Horner reached a purchase deal for a ¼ section of land controlled by Horner to develop Mapes' vision of a village. Horner provided the property, retained the right to name the city and also name the principal streets. He chose the name "Ripon" after his ancestral home near Ripon, England. Street names included Watson, Blackburn, Jefferson, Cass, Houston, Washington, Spaulding, and Doty.



Above: Built around 1850, Horner spent his retirement years at his home on 336 Scott Street.