

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

MARCH 20, 1854

ON A SNOWY NIGHT IN RIPON, CITIZENS MET AT THE LITTLE WHITE SCHOOLHOUSE TO PROTEST THE EXPANSION OF SLAVERY THAT WOULD COME AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION, THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT.

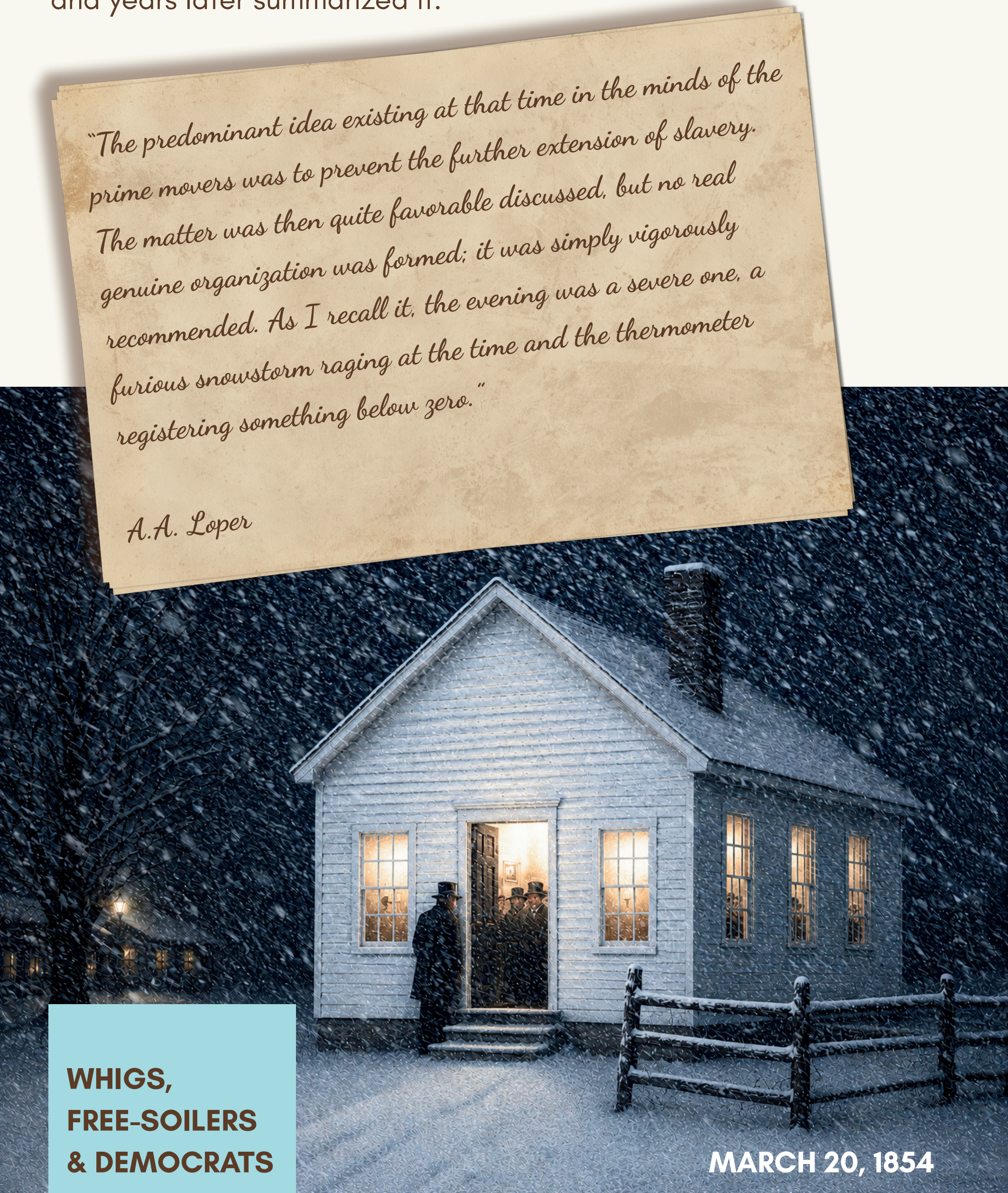
TWO MEETINGS THAT BECAME HISTORY

There were two meetings held in Ripon which led to the naming of the Republican Party.

- The first held at the Congregational Church on February 28, 1854 included women. At that meeting it was agreed that in the event that the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was adopted, old political parties should be cast aside, and an entirely new organization should be started.
- The second meeting was at the Little White Schoolhouse on March 20. Alvan Bovay spoke to the effect that the new party should, and in all probability would, be assigned the name Republican, but he advised against naming it at that time.

At the second meeting, a formal vote dissolved the town committees of the Free-Soil & Whig parties and five men, consisting of Alvan Bovay, Amos Loper, Abram Thomas, Jehdeiah Bowen, and Jacob Woodruff (3 Whigs, 1 Free-Soiler, and 1 Democrat) were appointed as the committee of the new organization.

- Amos Loper’s son A.A. Loper attended the meeting “out of curiosity” and years later summarized it:



In mid-19th-century America, the Whigs, Democrats, and Free-Soilers clashed primarily over the expansion of slavery into western territories. **As the United States expanded following the Mexican-American War, this explosive issue fractured existing coalitions and ultimately led to the demise of the Whigs and the rise of the Republican Party.**



Alvan Bovay

Alvan Earle Bovay (1818-1903) was a lawyer, educator, and political reformer best known for helping found the Republican Party in Ripon. Originally from New York and educated at Norwich University, Bovay moved to Ripon in 1850 and became active in the growing anti-slavery movement. In 1854 he organized meetings at the famous Little White Schoolhouse, where citizens united against the expansion of slavery and adopted the name “Republican” for the new political party.

Alvan Bovay and Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, were close political allies and personal friends who worked together to found the Republican Party. Their collaboration combined Bovay’s grassroots activism in Wisconsin with Greeley’s massive media platform in New York.

Bovay also helped establish Ripon College and later served in the Wisconsin State Assembly and as a Union Army officer during the Civil War.

