7th annual reunion celebration is Sunday, May 19

The seventh annual Red Oak Grove reunion celebration will take place at the church Sunday, May 19. An 11:00 a.m. interdenominational service will be followed by a noon potluck dinner in the church basement. Those attending the meal are asked to bring a dish of food to share, and their own table service. Coffee and a cold fruit drink will be furnished.

The 122nd annual meeting of the Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association will be called to order at 1:00 p.m. in the church basement. All events are open to the public; however, only members of the Cemetery Association may vote at the meeting. Anyone who owns a plot in the cemetery or has a relative interred there is a member.

The service will be conducted by Pastor Ron Lashmit of Tipton; Jeff Kaufmann of Wilton, Cedar County supervisor and former state legislator; and Bob Rickard of Tipton, president of the Cemetery Association. Mary Barnum of Tipton, and Don and Maureen Boddicker of Laramie, Wyo., will provide music. Mr. Kaufmann will speak on “Red Oak Grove’s Timeless Legacy of Dedication and Vision.”

Volunteers at the April 6 church and cemetery day cleanup included, Row 1, L-R: Katelyn Curry, Rachel Bierman, Ashlynn Curry, Liz Bierman, Carter Hill.; Row 2: Greta Bierman; Row 3: Barb Rickard, Julia Hargrave; Dave, Landon and Trina Hill; Row 4: Kirby Bierman, Mike Pelzer, Kim Pelzer (face hidden), Jeff Curry, Rosalyn Hill, Gary Eichhorn. (See article, Page 3.)
Trip to Vicksburg sesquicentennial, other Civil War sites

From May 23 through 27, the Cedar County Soldiers’ Monument Association and the Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association are sponsoring a five-day bus trip to Vicksburg and three other Civil War battle sites: Champion Hill and Corinth, both in Mississippi, and Shiloh, Tenn. At least 17 Cedar County soldiers are buried at Vicksburg, three at Corinth, and six at Shiloh. The Iowans will place sprigs of red cedar with patriotic ribbons on their graves.

A highlight of the tour will be the rededication of the Iowa Civil War Memorial at Vicksburg National Military Park May 25 (designated “Iowa Day”). The memorial dates from 1906. It includes a list of Iowa regiments and batteries that took part in the Siege of Vicksburg, which ended July 4, 1863, when the city surrendered to Union forces. Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant will be present for events of the day.

At Vicksburg, the Cedar County group will also visit the Mississippi Monument and the grave of Capt. William T. Rigby (see story, below). There are still seats on the bus. For details, contact Sandy Harmel, Cedar County Historical Society Museum, (563) 886-2899.

Our history: Capt. William Titus Rigby and Vicksburg

William Titus Rigby was a Cedar County native who had a major role in creating the Vicksburg National Military Park. He was born Nov. 3, 1841, at Red Oak Grove to Washington and Lydia Barr Rigby. In July 1862, Will enlisted in the 24th Iowa Volunteer Infantry. He was elected second lieutenant of Company B, and in August 1863, promoted to captain. In three years as a Union soldier, he served in Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia.

Rigby graduated from Cornell College in Mount Vernon in June 1869. He then went into farming, also spending much of his time promoting the establishment of a national park to commemorate the Vicksburg Campaign. In October 1895, he was elected secretary of the new Vicksburg National Military Park Association. Congress passed a bill Feb. 21, 1899, authorizing creation of the park. Eight days later, Rigby was appointed a commissioner of the new park. He moved to Vicksburg and devoted the remaining 30 years of his life to the park.

From a 1988 article: “In a relatively short period of time, Will Rigby took Vicksburg National Park from a park that existed solely on paper and turned it into a functioning reality . . . His untiring efforts to do equal justice to the soldiers of both North and South won for him the admiration and respect of his colleagues and the citizens of Vicksburg.” At age 88, Rigby died May 10, 1929. He is buried at the park he worked so hard to develop.
Well done, Red Oak Grove cleanup volunteers!

The annual church and cemetery cleanup Saturday, April 6, was very successful, with 28 volunteers helping. The church interior was completely cleaned. Outside, volunteers cleaned some monuments and straightened others. Children picked up sticks in the cemetery. After the work was done, Barb Rickard served a tasty luncheon in the church basement.

Cleaning in the church were Kirby, Greta, Rachel, and Liz Bierman; Jeff, Ashlynn, and Katelyn Curry; Gary Eichhorn; Julia Hargrave; Dave, Trina, Landon, and Carter Hill; Rosalynn Hill; and Mike and Kim Pelzer. Cleaning monuments: Richard Bohrn, Paul Buchmayer, Randy Crist, Gary Lilllis, Drew Oberfrank, Bob Rickard, Rich, Kiaya and KiaLeigh Urban. Straightening monuments: Mike Herring and Neil Smith. A big thank-you to all!

At the April 6 cleanup day, outside workers included, L-R, Mike Herring, Gary Lillis, Paul Buchmayer, Neal Smith, Rich Urban, Randy Crist. Not pictured Kiaya, and KiaLeigh Urban, Drew Oberfrank, and Bob Rickard.

Mike Herring (foreground) and Neal Smith use a Hy-Lift jack to straighten a monument.

Paul Buchmayer was one of the monument cleaners.

Trina Hill (foreground) and Kim Pelzer clean windows on the south side of the sanctuary.
Founding Members, Presbyterian Church of Red Oak Grove, 1841

John Chappell, Elizabeth Sturrock Dallas (Mrs. Charles Dallas), Robert & Elizabeth Pirie, Robert Dallas, Miss Sarah Dallas (later Mrs. Elza Carl), John & Isabella Sturrock Ferguson, John Safley, and Samuel Yule

Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery have been listed on The National Register of Historic Places since February 3, 2010.

Mission The Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association, Inc., comprises a historic church and perpetual care cemetery dedicated to its upkeep and preservation.

Vision The vision of Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association is to further enhance the park-like setting of the church and cemetery by encompassing nearby Rock Creek and Red Oak Park (founded in 1894), through the following actions:

- Revise Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery’s National Register of Historic Places designation to include Red Oak Park;
- Acquire approximately five acres of land lying between the cemetery and the park, making the two entities contiguous;
- Build walking paths and additional cement driveways to access the cemetery;
- Clean and reforest the timbered area west of the church to accommodate a labyrinth, walking paths along Rock Creek, and paths linking the cemetery and Red Oak Park.

The Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association, Inc., is a 501 (c) (13) organization, and all donations are tax-deductible.

For information about church rental, purchase of plots, or other matters pertaining to the church or cemetery, contact Bob Rickard, Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association president:

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