

RED OAK GROVE REPORTER

Issue No. 8

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This wrought iron gate and arch were a gift to Red Oak Grove Cemetery from Congressman Robert G. Cousins in 1905. (More about Mr. Cousins, Page 2)



Robert G. Cousins at 41. Photo courtesy of Brenda R. Cousins, great-great-niece



The grave of Robert Cousins, his parents, and his sister.

Fifth Annual Red Oak Grove Reunion; Two Anniversaries

A cordial invitation is issued for the fifth annual Red Oak Grove Reunion Sunday, May 15, at the church. This spring contains two anniversaries: 170 years ago March 1 the church was founded, and 90 years ago May 8 the present church building was dedicated.

The Reunion schedule will be the same as in previous years, with an 11 a.m. service, followed by a potluck dinner in the church basement. At 1 p.m., the annual meeting of the Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association will be called to order.

Pastor Ron Lashmit of Tipton and Iowa State Representative Jeff Kauffman of Wilton will conduct the service. Dan Boddicker of Tipton will have charge of special music. Those attending the potluck are asked to bring a dish of food to share, and their own table service.

Robert Cousins, Native Son of Red Oak Grove

Robert Gordon Cousins was born Jan. 31, 1859, at Indian Lodge Farm in the Red Oak Grove area. His parents were James L. and Mary Dallas Cousins. Young Robert showed early promise in his studies. After completing the one-room Towhead School, he enrolled at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, earning a bachelor of civil engineering degree in 1881.

Wishing to pursue law, the young man worked in the Cedar Rapids law office of Col. Charles A. Clark, a distinguished attorney and Civil War veteran. After passing the bar examination in 1882, Mr. Cousins practiced in Audubon, Iowa, and Pierre, South Dakota.

He next worked briefly on the staff of the daily Cedar Rapids Republican. Then he returned to Tipton and established his law practice. In 1885, Mr. Cousins was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives at age 26. When his term ended, he resumed legal practice in Tipton, acquired a large clientele, and was elected Cedar County Attorney.

In 1892, voters of the Fifth Congressional District sent Robert Cousins to the U.S. House of Representatives. He was in Washington, D.C., for eight terms (16 years), serving for part of this time as chairman of House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

In Congress, Mr. Cousins distinguished himself as one of the outstanding orators of the late 19th century. He stirred the hearts of his countrymen with his speech following the 1898 explosion of the battleship Maine in Havana harbor, which killed 266 Americans. In 1901, he gave a powerfully touching eulogy for President William McKinley.

In the spring of 1905, Mr. Cousins presented an ornate wrought iron gate and arch to Red Oak Grove Cemetery, where his parents and both sets of grandparents were buried.

Three years later, at age 49, the Congressman from Red Oak Grove unexpectedly announced his retirement from politics. He returned to Tipton and opened a law office, but “seemed indifferent to his surroundings,” and spent much time in seclusion. He continued to read widely, and enjoyed discussing the beautiful things of life, such as art, music, literature, and oratory. From time to time he gave a public lecture or a funeral eulogy. But it was no secret that this intelligent, gifted man wrestled with the demon of alcoholism.

In January 1931, Mr. Cousins was admitted to University Hospitals at Iowa City. He remained a patient there until his death June 20, 1933, at age 74. His final resting place is Red Oak Grove Cemetery, beside his parents and sister, Annie. The eulogy at his funeral referred to the tragedy of his situation: “He was much. He might have been everything.” One historian termed Robert Cousins “the most brilliant piece of wreckage in the political history of Iowa.” Yet despite the sadness, Mr. Cousins is proudly remembered for his great mind, his outstanding oratorical talent, and his years of public service

OUR MAN IN DES MOINES

State Representative Jeff Kauffman of Wilton was sworn in as Speaker Pro Tem of the Iowa House of Representatives in January. At the first four Red Oak Grove Reunion services, he ably delivered the message. He will do so again at this year's service May 15.

GET ME TO THE CHURCH ON TIME

Three weddings are scheduled at Red Oak Grove Church in June, July and October. In May, a P.E.O. chapter will hold its meeting there. The church may be rented for \$200, of which \$50 will be refunded if the church is cleaned after use and the keys returned. See Page 4 for Contact Information.

IN MEMORIAM

William "Bill" Penningroth, 83, of Tipton died Jan. 18, 2011. His funeral was Jan. 21, with burial at Red Oak Grove Cemetery. He was the son of Edward W. and Eunice Johnson Penningroth. His wife, Mary Jean Rhoads Penningroth, is among survivors.

William Franklin Wallace, 77, of Tipton died March 1, 2011. His funeral was March 4; burial will be at Red Oak Grove Cemetery. Mr. Wallace's parents were William A. and Marion Driscoll Wallace. Survivors include his wife, Barbara E. Birch Wallace.

One of the last members of Red Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, Edith Marjorie Tittle Hass, 96, died March 9, 2011. The daughter of William and Leta Shepherd Tittle, she was the widow of Harold Hass. Her funeral was March 12; burial was in Tipton Masonic Cemetery.

DAVIS SURVIVED WAR, BUT LOST HIS WIFE

One hundred and fifty years ago this month, the U.S. was plunged into the Civil War. A number of veterans of that war are interred in Red Oak Grove Cemetery. Among them is John Whiteley Davis (1824-1887). A Red Oak Grove resident, he enlisted April 7, 1862. His maternal grandfather, John Whiteley, fought in the Revolutionary War.

Davis' wife, Mary Terrell Davis, died of sunstroke July 31, 1862. His sister and brother-in-law, Betsy and John Safley, provided a home for the Davis children – Meg, Laura, Charles, Joshua and Abner – while their father fulfilled his military obligation. He was captured in 1864 at Tilton, Ga., later released, and mustered out July 25, 1865. He never remarried.

Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association Officers and Board Members

Bob Rickard, President
Cecil Mathias, Vice President, Operations
Lori Ostrich, Vice President, Administration
Mark Penningroth, Treasurer

Karen Taylor, Secretary and Historian
Keith Whitlatch, Board member
Daisy Wingert, Board member

Web site: www.redoakgrovecc.com

Founding Members, Presbyterian Church of Red Oak Grove, 1841

John Chappell	Elizabeth Sturrock Dallas	Robert and Elizabeth Pirie
Robert Dallas	(wife of Charles Dallas)	John Safley
Miss Sara Dallas	John and Isabella Sturrock	Samuel Yule
(later Mrs. Elza Carl)	Ferguson	

**Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery were listed on
The National Register of Historic Places February 3, 2010.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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