

Red Oak Grove Reporter

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Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery

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2022 Project Targets Needed Basement Improvements

By Mike Herring, Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery Board

To our many valued Friends of Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery: This article gives information about the 2022 project undertaken by the Cemetery Board to move our 101-year-old church well into the late 21st century. Over the years, we have been approached by potential brides seeking a wedding venue, who went elsewhere due to out-of-date amenities – such as the original 1921 furnace (nicknamed “the Beast” for its size), lack of air conditioning, no changing rooms, and a dining hall with minimal charm and character.

To address these issues, we first decided to upgrade the heating-ventilation-air conditioning (HVAC) system. While the century-old “Beast” never failed to produce heat, its working days were numbered. It was replaced with two new energy-efficient gas furnaces, one to serve the upstairs sanctuary, the other to heat the dining room and rest of the basement. Air conditioning units were added for both zones. The new furnaces and AC units will provide a more comfortable environment at all times of year.

Like most restoration projects in older buildings, one decision usually leads to a cascade of additional ones. For the new HVAC system, an electrical upgrade will be required to power the AC units.

Removing the huge “Beast” and its fuel barrel from the furnace room, and placing the new, smaller furnaces along the east wall, created a large space that will be converted to a bride’s changing room. Dressing tables, mirrors, bright lighting, and a small beverage refrigerator will be included. A separate changing room for the groom’s party will also be added.

The Board then looked at the dining room to determine how to add warmth and charm. While the church has held up well, we are starting to see basement wall plaster failures, caused mainly by freezing and thawing. Fortunately, we don’t have a serious exterior-to-interior leakage problem. We chose to add 2-by-4 framing to the north and south walls. Blown-in foam insulation will seal out any exterior-related moisture. The framed, insulated wall will make heating the basement in winter much more cost-efficient. Drywall with an attractive textured finish will

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15th Red Oak Grove Celebration to be May 15

The public is cordially invited to the 15th annual Red Oak Grove Reunion Sunday, May 15, at Red Oak Grove Church northwest of Tipton. A non-denominational service at 11 a.m. will be followed by the 131st Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association’s annual meeting. A potluck dinner will be held in the church basement following the Annual Meeting. Those attending the potluck are asked to bring a covered dish and table service.

Pastor Ron Lashmit of Tipton will conduct the service. Special music will be provided by Richard Bohrn. This will be a great opportunity to be part of the Red Oak Grove Community and learn of its importance in the history of Cedar County.

2022 Project Targets Needed Basement Improvements continued...

complete the basement wall improvement. Needed electrical updates will be hidden in the walls.

To finish the dining room and changing rooms, 2-foot square carpet tiles will be installed. This will add visual and physical warmth and character to the rooms, and should dampen the annoying echoes we have dealt with forever! An interior decorator's help will be enlisted.

This is admittedly an expensive and expansive undertaking! The HVAC and basement wall repair projects, representing two-thirds of the total cost, are needed to preserve physical structural integrity of the church. The wedding changing rooms are "nice to do" additions, offering space, convenience and privacy to wedding parties and hopefully making Red Oak Grove more appealing as a wedding venue. The Board knows these wedding-related additions will not pay for themselves by church rental fees alone. However, we hope to provide a helpful service that will add to our

Friends of Red Oak Grove base, allowing us to recoup associated construction expenses from donations over time.

As of April 25, "the Beast" had been removed, a cement overlay poured, and new furnaces and AC installation and ducting completed. Removal of the south wall failing plaster has started, but has slowed due to booked events. After a May 14 wedding and the May 15 Reunion Celebration and annual meeting, we will proceed full steam ahead with finishing the 2022 project.

Your donations will be greatly appreciated, as always. And as always, the Board has the best interests of Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery in mind with these decisions. When interviewing contractors, the stated goal was to ensure that 78 years from now, future Board members will have a structurally sound building to take into the 22nd century.

In Memoriam: Red Oak Grove Cemetery

Jonathan Roger 'Jon' Beranek, 56, of Tipton died Nov. 15, 2021, at Trinity Hospital, Rock Island, Ill.

Funeral: Nov. 20, Fry Funeral Home, Tipton. Survivors include his wife of 27 years, Susan Laing Beranek; children Alicia, Brittany, Jesse and Brady Beranek; two sisters and two brothers.

Lee H. Meyers, 74, of Tipton died Dec. 11, 2021, at home. Funeral: Dec. 15, Chapman Funeral Home, Clarence. Survivors: his wife of 54 years, Penny Elwood Meyers; children Mark and Matt Meyers and Megan Becker; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; a brother, and two sisters.

Mary Louise Arnold Beckmann, 100, of Mechanicsville died Jan. 24, 2022, in Prairie Hills hospice care, Tipton. Celebration of life: Jan. 28, Fry Funeral Home. Mrs. Beckmann, widow of Vernon Beckmann, turned 100 April 10, 2021. Survivors: three sons: Raymond of Texas; Tom, Tipton; and John, Mechanicsville; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and special nieces Linda Pledger and Florence Dauber.

Elmer "Nick" Mixell, 93, of Tipton died Dec. 20, 2021. Memorial service: Dec. 29, Red Oak Grove Church. (Private family burial later.) Mr. Mixell's birth surname was Radke; a twin brother died in infancy. He lost his wife, Ellen Sander Mixell, in 1962. Survivors: daughter Kim Gadke of Tipton, son Frank Mixell, and three grandchildren.

Merlin John Laing, 71, of Tipton died April 3, 2022, at a Cedar Rapids hospital. Funeral: April 7, Fry Funeral Home. Survivors: his daughter, Susan Beranek of Tipton; four grandchildren; three sisters and three brothers. He lost his wife, Joyce Maiden Laing, in 2012.

Wedding Bells

Levi Heath and Tessa Lukarsky will be united in marriage May 14, 2022 at the Red Oak Grove Church.

Seventh “Wreaths Across America” Dec. 18, 2021



Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery held its seventh annual “Wreaths Across America” event Dec. 18, 2021. Live balsam wreaths from Maine, adorned with red ribbons, were placed on the monuments of 78 veterans interred or commemorated at Red Oak Grove Cemetery. Their service ranged from the War of 1812 through the Vietnam War.

Prior to the wreath laying, a brief ceremony was held in Red Oak Grove Church, starting at 11:30 a.m. Tipton’s VFW Post 2537 and American Legion Post 123 presented colors. Afterwards, those attending visited over coffee and cookies in the church basement. Daisy Wingert, member of the Red Oak Grove Cemetery Board, organized the event.

The next “Wreaths Across America” will be held December 22, 2022 at Red Oak Grove.

Weather Smiled on Annual Cleanup Day April 23

A beautiful spring day was presented to volunteer workers who cleaned the Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery April 23. The church (both main floor and basement) was cleaned thoroughly, and in the cemetery, old monument decorations and veterans’ flags were picked up. The cemetery was also cleaned of all sticks and tree limbs, which were placed on the burn pile for future disposal.

Many thanks to these volunteers: Cemetery, Mike Herring (chair), Myron Holden, Mark Penningroth, Drew Oberfrank, Rich Urban, and Eric Storjohann. Eric also works in the cemetery throughout the year. Church: John Barnum (chair), Nancy Stewart, Naty Oberfrank, and Wanda Whitmer.

Historical Note: The new Red Oak Grove Presbyterian Church was dedicated May 8, 1921, with three services in morning, afternoon and evening. The dedication had been scheduled twice earlier (March 13 and April 17, 1921) but snowstorms forced cancellation. The building dedicated in 1921 is the one we have today. It replaced a small, earlier frame structure built in 1858-1859. What happened to that first Red Oak Grove Church building is unknown.

Mrs. Sarah Dallas Carl, 97, died April 20, 1916. The widow of Elza “Elzy” Carl, she was the last survivor of the ten founding members of Red Oak Grove Presbyterian Church. Its founding date was March 1, 1841.

Laing family has been in Red Oak Grove 155 years

The surname Laing appears on many stones in Red Oak Grove Cemetery. William M. Laing came to Iowa from Aberdeenshire (county), Scotland, in 1853. On Nov. 12, 1855, he married Mary Milne from Aberdeen City. She had a daughter Margaret, 3 ½. Between 1857 and 1873, William and Mary had 10 children, losing three of them in infancy. Jean (Jennie) Safley, William Jr., George D., Barbara A. Mitchell, John Henry, James Robert, and Allan Raymond lived to marry. Margaret's married name was Wintermute.

The Laings lived first in Scott County, moving to Cedar County in 1867. William and Mary belonged to Red Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, and both are buried in the adjacent cemetery. All the children except Jenny and William Jr. also rest there.

Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association board member Daisy Wingert is the granddaughter of James R. and Lily Marker Laing. Daisy's parents were Max and Mary Margaret Laing Schroeder.

THE RED OAK GROVE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION, Inc., comprises a historic church and perpetual care cemetery dedicated to its upkeep and preservation. The vision of Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association is to further enhance the park-like setting of the church and cemetery, forming a unified site with Rock Creek and Red Oak Park (founded 1894).

The Presbyterian Church of Red Oak Grove was founded March 1, 1841, by ten immigrants from Scotland: John Chappell, Elizabeth Sturrock Dallas, Robert and Elizabeth Pirie, Robert Dallas, Miss Sarah Dallas (later Mrs. Elza Carl), John and Isabella Sturrock Ferguson, John Safley, and Samuel Yule. In 2007, the Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association assumed care of the church building.

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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