

# Red Oak Grove Reporter

Issue No. 36

*Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery*

Spring 2025

## Don't Miss the Red Oak Grove Reunion & Celebration on Sunday May 18th

**S**pring at Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery is beautiful and a true gathering spot as family members place spring flowers and memorials at the graves of loved ones. Another May tradition is a special church service followed by a delicious potluck meal on the third Sunday of each May that you don't want to miss.

Please join this unique service when we remember and celebrate our blessings, the many Scottish settlers who built the church and cemetery, those who followed in their footsteps, the many volunteers that have served the parish, and those that keep this current National Registered Historic site so lovely. The service starts at 11 am and the potluck follows so bring a dish to share.



## April 19th was Spring Cleaning Day at Red Oak

**T**hank heavens for our dedicated volunteers who spruce up the cemetery and church grounds and who clean the inside of the church. Construction dust from the new elevator, made inside cleaning more intense this year. Everything is now ready for upcoming 2025 celebrations, weddings, the pie social and other festivities. *Speaking of weddings*, pass the word around to friends, family and neighbors that Red Oak Grove Church is a quaint, picturesque, and reasonably priced wedding venue in Cedar County!

# New Elevator Installed

**Y**es, an elevator has been added to the church, allowing grandma and grandpa and all visitors to access both the lower-level fellowship hall as well as the upper-level sanctuary! 101 Mobility of Iowa City was the company hired for the project. Scott Smith, from 101 Mobility, in the photo, was checking the framework built by Dan Roberts, Sugar Creek Builders of Tipton, in April prior to the elevator's arrival. The elevator is in the southeast corner of the sanctuary, where the church office was located. Mike Herring, holding the door, and John Barnum and Scott Shroeder, all Red Oak Grove Cemetery and Church Board Members, moved furniture from the former church office to the Cedar County Historical Society to make room for the elevator.



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## In Memoriam: Red Oak Grove Cemetery

**Rosalyn Lee (Spear) Hill**, 88, passed November 24, 2024 in Tipton, IA. She was born September 1, 1936 in rural Tipton. Graveside interment services were on December 1, 2024 at Red Oak Grove Cemetery. Rosalyn is survived by her children including: Steve (Mary) Hill, Tamara (Doug) Meixner, David (Trina) Hill, and Diana (Rich) Gaibreaith. She had eight grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren and a brother-in-law, Kay Connelly.

**Craig Larry Ruchotzke**, 70, was born January 5, 1955 in Anamosa, IA and he died on March 20, 2025 in Coralville, IA. A graveside service and interment for family was held at Red Oak Grove Cemetery on March of 2025. He is survived by siblings: Kirk (Betta) Ruchotzke, Connie Albaugh, Cathy Ruchotzke, Roxanne (Kerry) Koch, Barbara (Alex) Taylor and several nieces and nephews.



# Bob Rickard: An Extraordinary Visionary

Bob Rickard has been the person to make dreams come true at Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery for the past two decades. He became President in 2005 after joining the Board of Directors with Hazel Hughes' persuasion in 2002. Bob is a perfect example that dreams make things happen! According to Bob, "Things just happened, I just did things." That's an understatement as Board Member Mike Herring views Bob's involvement. He wrote the following memoir about Bob.

A couple of years ago, history professor, historian, politician, and friend of Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery (ROGchcem), Jeff Kaufmann, in his (nearly) annual address at one of ROGchcem's May Celebration & Reunions, themed his oration, "Voices from the Past." Jeff spoke specifically about what the ROGchcem Scottish pioneers' vision must have been when planning their 1840s church and cemetery. How proud they must be now, looking on their creation from above.

As I sat listening to Jeff's beautiful soliloquy that day, while staring out from the church's second-floor "tree house" sanctuary view, I wondered what our pioneer forefathers would have to say to Bob Rickard. Why this of all questions that day? The answer is simple. In my opinion, Bob has poured every bit of the amount of blood, sweat, and tears into the "vision" continuation of what his ancestors themselves did nearly 180 years earlier, when establishing the church and cemetery.



*Barb and Bob Rickard in 2024 at Red Oak Grove Church*

From the last sentence below, "... his ancestors themselves did 180 years earlier..." is a particular subject matter. Bob's ancestors were the founding fathers/ mothers of ROGchcem. If you wandered the cemetery grounds, you would find the Rickard name engraved in monuments that date back to the mid to late 1800s. Furthermore, if you were to delve into Bob's genealogy, you would find that Bob's mother, Bernice Safely, is a descendant of the Safely family, one of the seven founder families. Going back further yet, Bob's family roots can be traced to William Brewster, a passenger on the Mayflower.

When Brenda (Emick-Herring), Red Oak Grove Reporter, editor, and I interviewed Bob for this article, we learned many fascinating tidbits about Bob that explain much more about his ROGchcem "vision." Bob has the heart of a teacher because he was a teacher. This tender heart lends itself well to nurturing the Red Oak founders' 1840s vision. Bob is passionate about the cemetery grounds' pristine park-like setting because he was a former golf course groundskeeper. In fact, Bob, along with 50 other charter families (each kicking in \$50.00), developed and owned the West Branch Country Club. In the 1990, after retiring from IL, he was the greenskeeper at the Tipton Country Club and mowed at Red Oak Grove for many years. This vision, nurturing, and love of Red Oak led Bob to get ROGchcem commemorated as a National Historic Registered site.

*Continued on page 4 ...*

## ***Rickard continued...***

Today, with Bob's leadership, ROGchcem hosts many time-honored events such as the "old-fashioned" annual church service and potluck, where we've had up to 90+ attendees. If you haven't ever attended this event, you are missing out on a historical treasure. Please plan to participate in this year's celebration on Sunday, May 18, 2025. On the first Sunday in October (this year's date is October 5th), ROGchcem hosts an "old-fashioned" ice cream and pie social; another 'should not miss' event. Lastly, on the second Saturday of every December (December 13th this year), ROGchcem honors our interred Veterans, as we participate in the national Wreaths Across America ceremony. It should be noted that ROGchcem is one of only three or four private Iowa cemeteries that have made it a priority to honor Veterans locally with a Wreaths Across America program.

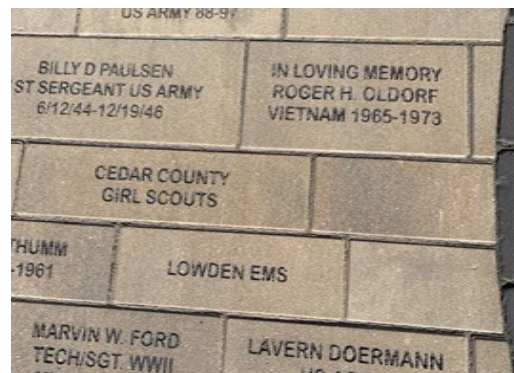
It would have been easy for the literal foundation of the 1920s church building and the park-like aesthetics

of the cemetery to crumble into despair, as so many historical church buildings and cemetery grounds have done all over the world. Thankfully, Bob has claimed it as a personal quest not to allow that to happen on his shift! If you've visited and experienced the manicured ROGchcem grounds recently and have asked yourself how, or better yet, who, is responsible for preserving the beauty of the church and cemetery, look no further than Bob Rickard.

Bob's tenure at Red Oak Grove spans the task roles of cemetery caretaker, sexton, president of the board, and Chief Visionary Officer (CVO). This visioning must never be lost, and that is why Bob has mentored the Board of Directors, which he hopes will continue his passion long after he is gone. It is a tremendous obligation, but Bob has laid the groundwork to ensure that the founders' 180+ year-old vision continues.

## **Engraved Pavers for Sale for the Cedar County Freedom Rock**

**P**itt Herington, a famous Civil War hero, once lived in the Red Oak Grove area. He has a memorial stone and bronze plaque by the front door of Red Oak Grove Church. Pitt is painted on the Cedar County Freedom Rock and is the large, front-and-center soldier in the middle. Pitt is the only Medal of Honor recipient from Cedar County. Iowa artist Bubba Sorensen has painted a Freedom Rock in every county in Iowa. Cedar County's Freedom Rock is on the front lawn of the courthouse in Tipton. This amazing outdoor art is a way to honor Iowa veterans and current military service men and women. There are pavers of support surrounding our Freedom Rock, and the sale of pavers has reopened. The paver plaza will be enlarged this June by RVM Landscaping of Stanwood, IA. Families, individuals, volunteer groups etc., may purchase pavers this summer. Some examples of current pavers at the site are shown in the photo. You may follow the progress of the project and get paver order forms on the Cedar County Freedom Rock Facebook page.





# Wreaths Across America Celebrated Its Heroes on December 14th, 2024



*Daisy Wingert welcomed and led the ceremony. Bruce Cary was the guest speaker, Ron Lashmit led the invocation, Bridget Owen was the vocalist, and Boy Scout Troop 76 led the Pledge of Allegiance.*

**W**reaths Across America's mission is Remember, Honor, Teach. ROGhcem is honored annually to remember deceased Red Oak Grove Cemetery veterans. Bruce Cary, the featured speaker last December, was 17 years old when he joined the US Navy. He was in the Sonar Tech program during the Vietnam Crisis from 1964-1967. Their objective was to service

sonar devices on US military ships. The sonar devices detected enemy submarines in the seas all over the world. Bruce was stationed in Hawaii and remembers being on the waters near Germany, France, Taiwan, and Japan. It was a life-changing experience, and he was honored to share his memories and roles during the Vietnam Crisis at Wreaths Across America.



*Each ceremonial wreath had a flag representing one of the seven military branches. Roy Morris served in the US Army from 1974-1976, he is pictured placing a wreath on a veteran's headstone. He served in the reconnaissance and Blues Platoon. He said the platoon had about 100 members, "... but not many returned from the war."*

# Tipton's All High School Reunion is August 9, 2025

The saying, "time flies," is so true! Can you believe Tipton High School is celebrating its 100th anniversary on August 9th. The planning committee says this is a 'Once in a Lifetime' opportunity to celebrate the high school's 100th year (1925-2025). The evening banquet is at the Mathews Building at the Cedar County Fairgrounds from 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. Meal tickets are \$25 per person. The day's itinerary

and details may be found on the committee's Facebook page @ Tipton High School 100th yr Celebration. Red Oak is inviting visitors to explore Red Oak Grove Church and Cemetery on Saturday, August 9th, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to see the many updates, remodeling projects, including the bridal changing room, elevator, and overall beauty of the church and grounds.



Contact Bob Rickard, president of the Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association, for information about plot purchases, church rentals, wedding venues, or other matters pertaining to the church or cemetery.

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Our web site is: [www.redoakgrovecc.com](http://www.redoakgrovecc.com) • Find us on Facebook: [redoakgrovechurchandcemetery](https://www.facebook.com/redoakgrovechurchandcemetery)

## Mark Your Calendars So You Can Attend:

- All High School Class Reunion Red Oak Tour – August 9, 11 am- 1 pm
- Pie and Ice Cream Social – Sunday, October 5, 2025 at 1 pm
- Wreaths Across America – Saturday, December 13, 2025 at 11:30 am

*Please consider making a lasting legacy to Red Oak Grove Cemetery Association, Inc. by asking your attorney to include in your will, a final gift to the Red Oak Grove Association.*

*Send your gift to Bob Rickard at the address above.*