



THE FEDERALIST

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New honors at Woodland Cemetery for Iowans who fought 19th-century wars

Mike Rowley, Iowa View contributor. Des Moines Register. Published 6:30 a.m. CT May 24, 2020

Numerous 100- to 150-year-old graves that were not marked only weeks or a few months ago now have 240-pound veteran stones.

As the weather improves in this spring of COVID-19, restless but responsible Iowans are looking for places and ways to safely enjoy the season. With playgrounds, equipment and parking lots like Gray's Lake roped off like a crime scene to keep people away, other areas have suddenly become more popular.

One of increasing pedestrian traffic seems to be our local cemeteries, particularly those older ones that are not likely to still have many burials. Woodland Cemetery is within walking distance of the many who call downtown Des Moines home. This historic setting offers nearly 70 acres of cobblestone streets and is the final resting place for over 80,000.



Oliver Perkins' monument stands tall among the trees at Woodland Cemetery, in Des Moines. (Photo: Kelsey Kremer/The Register)

From the 38-ton obelisk marking the grave of Oliver Perkins that cost \$12,000 in 1912 or the Savory mausoleum of one of Iowa's early notable women, to the simple family-made marker for Infant J. Butorac, and everything in between there are images to inspire reflection for all.

Recently visitors may have been doing a double take. This older cemetery that now averages only a handful of burials each year seems to have new gravestones emerging from the ground like spring tulips. Numerous 100- to 150-year-old graves that were not marked only weeks or a few months ago now have 240-pound veteran stones.

Much of this has been the work of three generations of men. Retired firefighter Robert Niffenegger, 86, myself (retired vaccine sale representative Mike Rowley, 62), and NCMIC insurance employee Tim Rowley 33, along with assistance from Des Moines cemetery officials Ganesh Ganpat and John Woolson, have been researching, documenting and seeing that some of the previously unmarked veteran graves are now marked.



Robert Niffenegger kneels last week at the grave site of Albert William Lytle, a veteran soldier of the Civil War. SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

What started as a 2020 one-year goal of marking at least five War of 1812 veterans' graves has in only a few months grown to nearly 30 graves of veterans from the War of 1812, the Mexican American War, the Civil War and the Spanish American War now having been marked or approved for marking.



Eight new headstones for Iowa soldiers are seen in April 2020, ready for placement in the cemetery. (Photo: Mike Rowley/Special to the Register)

These include Albert Lytle, Robert Dickens & William Early. All were of African descent. There is William Buzick, a veteran of the War of 1812, and his son William, who was a veteran of the Civil War. There is Grandison Able, who despite having served in both the Mexican American War and the Civil War had to elicit the help of a congressman to get him a \$12-per-month pension. There is Benjamin Brown, who spent the last 17 years of his life at the Old Soldiers Home in Marshalltown. There is Dr. John Granville Kimball, who had several spouses and for whatever reasons was known as John Granville and John Kimball. There is Henry Moreland, who was born in England and rose to the rank of captain during the Civil War. There is Jacob Lee Englebert, who wrote many recollections for the Iowa State Register. Melville Wright enlisted as a private and rose in rank to captain before being wounded at the Battle of Pea Ridge. Dan S. Newsome was a young man who was married for only a month before leaving to serve in the Spanish American War. He soon died of infection at the age of 27. His wife was the first in the Iowa-Nebraska agency to draw a \$12 pension. Sadly, she too would die, only 17 months later. Peter Holmes, of African descent, was forced to serve the Confederate Army early in the Civil War and was at Fort Sumter and Bull Run. He later served in the Union Army from 1862 to 1865.

The stones can only give a glimpse of the individuals they honor. The research and stories found to document them are often fascinating. These examples of service, sacrifice, stories and lessons exist in nearly every city and rural cemetery in Iowa and are just waiting to be rediscovered and shared with future generations. It is easy to get sidetracked while perusing old newspapers.



contributed by Compatriot Mike Rowley

Mike also noted that “Several of our fellow members have worked on projects to identify Iowa veterans of various wars and conflicts. Ron Rittel worked for years on the Last Civil War Veteran in every County in Iowa. Others have seen that every Revolutionary War veteran buried in Iowa is recorded.



Taking a cue from past efforts of the Women's Relief Corp of SUVCW, members of the Iowa SAR Color Guard scattered flower petals on Veteran's graves in the GAR sections of Woodland and Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines, Iowa on Memorial Day 2020.

In 1923, the Des Moines Register published a story about 97-year-old Daniel Riley Gonder, Iowa's last surviving veteran of the Mexican-American War. contributed by Mike Rowley

LAST MEXICAN WAR VETERAN IN IOWA IS 97

Is One of Forty Survivors of Struggle.

Rippey, Ia., Sept. 29.—(Associated Press)—Iowa's only veteran of the Mexican war, and one of some forty living men in the United States who saw service in that almost forgotten struggle, is Daniel Riley Gonder, 97 years old, of Rippey, Ia.

For seventy years Mr. Gonder has been out of the army, and he has lived to hold on his knees his great-great-grandchildren and tell them of a world virtually made over in his lifetime.

When he sailed down the Ohio river toward Vera Cruz in 1847, he and his comrades sang a popular song of the day, "My Lily of the West."

The west they sang of then was in the great wild open spaces of Ohio and Kentucky, and this western lily the ditty honored was of the demimonde of Louisville.

Mind Bright, Active.
One day this week—a day much like any other—Mr. Gonder sat on the front porch of his granddaughter's home here, in a rocking chair.

At either side lay a cane, and in each hand he held a fly swatter, which he plied vigorously.

He was quick to note the ap-

proaching caller and his thin blue eyes twinkled as he extended a bronze hand in greeting.

It was not hard to get him to talk, and he conversed in words which smacked of Noah Webster's spelling book and the Leatherstocking Tales. And this, in fragments, was his story:

A farm laborer in Newton county, Ohio, when the Mexican war broke out, he went one day to the county seat on business, and when he stopped at the tavern he found it full of soldiers under General Zachary Taylor, on their way to fight the "greasers."

Then He Volunteered.
"Don't you want to volunteer?" one of them asked him, and he decided he did. A few days later he sailed with his company down the Mississippi and boarded a schooner at New Orleans, which took him to Vera Cruz.

Landing there, the men marched to fortifications a few miles inland, manned by troops under General Scott. Actual fighting was infrequent; the principal task of the men was to battle the guerrillas who plied their banditry in the region, and their tankes had the help of many Mexican loyalists in opposing the guerrillas.

Life in the army was a curious mixture of remnants of tradition and habit from the war of 1812 and the emergence into the new customs which were made historic in the civil war.

Hardtack and Water.
The soldiers were given only hardtack and water, except when they were sick, when they got tea.

The soldier who, on a salary of \$7 a month, desired a greater variety of food, bought his own potatoes or cabbage, or foraged in the vicinity of his camp.

This life grew irksome to some of the soldiers, and they would scratch their flesh, disinfect the wound and tie over it a copper

penney, which, within a few days produced an open sore easily passed as gangrene.

This won discharges for many. But those who remained loyal had not many months to wait, for the war ended in 1848 and the troops came home.

Expert With Scythe.
Mr. Gonder, who had marched overland with his detachment from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, returned with his comrades to the coast and embarked on the "Chief of Boston" for home, returning to Ohio late in 1848.

For several seasons he worked on farms in Ohio and Pennsylvania. He became famous for his ability with a scythe. In the days before even the grain cradle was perfected. For such skilled labor he was paid 50 cents a day, or a bushel of wheat.

In 1850 he began to farm for himself, but meanwhile he had won a wife, through a deed performed while he was on his way home from work.

A Mr. Leeding had recently came to the community with his son, Robert. Leeding, for years a poor clergyman in England, had inherited a fortune and come to America to invest it.

A group of neighborhood bullies were taunting Robert and charging that his father had fled to America to escape prosecution for some crime, fugitives from European justice then being common in the United States.

Young Gonder drove the bullies off and the friendship that sprang up led to his marriage to Mary Ann Leeding, a daughter of the clergyman, who came on from England a few months later.

Came to Iowa in '81.
In 1845 Mr. and Mrs. Gonder moved to Illinois and in 1844 they came to Iowa, settling near Rippey. Mrs. Gonder died in 1912. Their direct descendants include five sons and daughters, twenty-one grandchildren, fifty-three great grandchildren, and fourteen great great grandchildren.

Mr. Gonder can tell them stories of a time when none of the most common conveniences of today were to be found in the average home, unless as rare luxuries.

The boys wore long tow shirts until they reached their middle teens. Young Daniel's mother made him his first trousers when he was fourteen. They were of "lints of woolsey" and had no pockets. When Daniel pointed out the defect, his mother told him:

"Daniel, you are a poor boy without money or knives or trinkets to carry in your pockets. If you had pockets in your pants, you might be tempted to steal things to put into them. You don't need pockets." So Daniel's trousers were pocketless until he reached adulthood.

Strong for Temperance.
Daniel's first work for a neighbor won him in remuneration an old deck of cards. He traded it to a neighborhood bachelor for an English reader. With only a few months of schooling, he found the reader virgin soil and later he acquired one of Noah Webster's spellers, by study of which he completed his education.

Mr. Gonder has no particular recipe for long life. He has used tobacco, he said, since he was a young man, and he used to drink home made grog and brandy. He stopped drinking years ago, however, because he felt the habit was one easily carried to excess.

"Temperance," he remarked, "is a divine attribute."

He was reared with a high regard for women, he relates, and he always hated the "greasers" because of their contempt for women.

His clear and retentive memory, he attributes to his life long custom of remembering things rather than writing them down. Keeping memoranda and diaries weakens the memory, he says. So he made his mind serve him as a

IOWA'S ONLY MEXICAN WAR VET

Daniel Riley Gonder, 97 years old, of Rippey, Ia., is this state's sole survivor of the Mexican war. In his boyhood Kentucky and Ohio constituted the wild west of the United States.



record, and he retains an accurate account of every important event in his life.

Seen the Whole Elephant.

A Mason and an Odd Fellow since his residence in Illinois, a Christian church preacher by avocation, both in Illinois and Iowa, and a justice of the peace in both states, he has had a big part in the life of the communities in which he has lived, and he still takes active interest in public affairs. He has difficulty in walking recently, but his mind is clear and his hearing and eyesight are good. He wants now to round out 100 years of life and to vote in at least one more presidential election.

Mr. Gonder cast his first presidential vote for Cass, democratic candidate in 1848, but turned republican and voted for Fremont in 1856 and has been a republican ever since.

He chuckles merrily as he finishes his tale.

"Yes sir," he says, and laughs in his throat, "if I haven't seen the whole elephant, you can shoot me."

AT THE CHURCHES

CHURCHES OF CHRIST.
CENTRAL—Rev. W. A. Shullaberger, pastor. Morning service at 11, subject, "Kierkegaard's Gospel." Evening service at 7:45, subject, "The City Four Corners." Music by the Angelus chorus and quartet. Bible school at 9:45.
GRANT PARK—East Twenty-fifth street and Capitol avenue. Rev. J. E. Reese, pastor. Public school at 10. Lord's supper and sermon at 11, subject, "The Glory of Christ." Christian Endeavor at 8:45. Evangelistic service at 8:15, subject, "The Virgin-

ginity episode. Rev. Ivar F. Pearson, pastor. Morning service at 10:30, subject, "The Conflict Between the Good and the Evil." Sunday school at 11:20. Epworth League at 6:15. Evening service at 7:30, subject, "The Master's Call." Ladies Aid will meet Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

PRESBYTERIAN.

CENTRAL—Fourth and High streets. Rev. Frank Chalmers, pastor. Sunday school at 9:45. Morning service at 11. Young people's meeting at 6:30. Evening service with community singing at 7:30.
CAPTAIN GROVE AVENUE—Sunday school at 10. Morning worship at 11. Christian Endeavor at 6:30. Evening service. Morning service at 11, subject, "Merry, merry pastor of the church, will preach both morning and evening."
LUSH PARK—Thirtieth street and Thompson avenue. Rev. R. H. Fisher, pastor. Morning service at 11, subject, "Building a Church." Evening service at 7:30, subject, "A Good Memory." Sunday school at 10. Christian Endeavor at 6:30. At the close of the morning service a congregational conference will be taken on the question of building a new church edifice.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

FIRST—927 Eighth street. Sunday school at 9:30. Services at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Bible class meeting Wednesday evening testimonial meeting at 8 o'clock.

CONGREGATIONAL.

PLYMOUTH—149 Ellis St. Methodist pastor. Morning worship at 11. Reception of members and communion service. Church school at 10. Christian Endeavor at 6:30.
WAVELAND PARK—Rev. Wayne L. Water, pastor. Morning service at 11, subject, "Hear ye, Hear ye, Hear ye." Sunday school at 9:45. Christian Endeavor at 7.

UNITED BRETHREN.

CASTLE MEMORIAL—Rev. G. W. Johnson, pastor. Morning service at 11. Evening service at 7:30. Sunday school at 9:45. Christian Endeavor at 6:30. Subject, "The Christian's Witness." See how often directed superintendent of the Cedar Rapids district.
S. ANDREWS—Thirty-first and Jew streets. Morning service at 11. Subject, "The Glorification of Christ." Evening service at 7:45, subject, "The World's Biggest Business." Rev. E. T. Aldrich, formerly of Dayton, O., the new pastor, will preach both morning and evening.
UNITED PRESBYTERIAN.



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“The Yellow Fever Outbreak of 1793: Nine Lessons and Observations”

Is history repeating itself? Read this timely article from *The Journal of the American Revolution* <https://allthingsliberty.com/2020/03/the-yellow-fever-outbreak-of-1793-nine-observations-and-lessons/>

Covid-19 Emergency Forces Changes

Until further notice, all quarterly meetings of the IASSAR, GSW1812-Iowa, and SUVCW Dodge Camp #75 are cancelled. The IASSAR summer conference, usually held in June, also has been cancelled. We encourage compatriots to take all precautions in order to remain healthy in the face of this worldwide emergency.

General Society of the War of 1812 in Iowa

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