

Tipton Conservative
Sept. 6, 2006 Editorial

Our Prairie Heritage . . .

Editor's note: Curtis Frymoyer, a Sugar Creek Township farmer and editor of the Cedar County Historical Review for 32 years until his death in 1990, cared deeply about Cedar County and its history. Along with his wife Frances, who died in 2003, the Frymoyers also cultivated a life-long interest in the flora of Cedar County, including, especially, that which is in Rochester Cemetery. The following, written by Curtis, was printed in the 1974 edition of the Cedar County Historical Review.

When Colonel David Walton first came to Cedar county in the fall of 1835 to seek a location for settlement, the county was almost completely covered with virgin prairie except for some timber along the streams and some scattered oak groves on the higher ground. The many varieties of prairie grasses and flowers must have made this country appear to be one vast and breathtaking flower garden. Confirmation of this description may be found in the remarks of Judge Irwin who presided over the first session of court held at Rochester in May 1838. According to E. E. Edwards, who was present in the courtroom, Judge Irwin "spoke of the distance he traversed to

reach Rochester; of the beautiful country he traveled to reach the village; of the blooming flowers; and how his heart filled with admiration at the sight of the beautiful landscape, and adoration for the ever-living God who fashioned the prairie, forests and rivers and filled the air with the perfume of flowers." (Cedar County History of 1878).

The largest remnant of that prairie still remaining in the county is the area included in the Rochester cemetery. Here, from early April until late November may be found the many descendants of the flowers and grasses which so impressed Judge Irwin. Week by week the many wildflowers burst into life, display their blossoms and then fade away in a succession of bloom that seems incredible. Each variety takes its turn in covering the hills and valleys with brilliant color and sometimes a dozen or more different flowers will compete for attention at the same time. In autumn the prairie grasses come into their own when the big blue stem, Indian grass and others may reach a height of six feet or more.

The Rochester cemetery is one of the showplaces of Cedar county and we are fortunate to have it as a reminder of our prairie heritage.