

## **Rochester Cemetery Is Well Known Throughout State**

To the Editor, *Tipton Conservative*  
9-27-06

I live in western Iowa but my ancestors lived for some time in western Scott county; New Liberty, Donahue and surrounding areas. When I come out to visit or do some genealogy research I have also been stopping at the Rochester Cemetery. It is reminiscent of a prairie remnant we had on our family farm which through the generations helped us maintain a connection with the land as it once was. Through an estate settlement that remnant got away from us and it no longer exists; there are many times when we wish we could still have it.

The Rochester Cemetery is a memorial park encompassing Iowa's history since before it became a Territory and contains the graves of the very first pioneers, as well as Civil War veterans, and representative of every generation since then. The graves of these pioneers are nestled in the comforting surrounding native prairie, an environment in which many of them would feel most comfortable. The constantly changing color and textures of the prairie flowers were one of the sustaining values in hard and difficult life. Our modern lifestyle has eliminated the massive prairies that surrounded them until remnants, such as the Rochester Cemetery, are all that is left, and this one is particularly unique because of the uncommon number of plant species present there.

Steven Longmire has authored a full length book on the Rochester Cemetery, featuring many photographs, which is scheduled to come out in 2009. It is already mentioned in other books, such as Claudia McGehee's Ode to Tallgrass Flowers and Plants. It is also the focus of a whole variety Internet web sites sponsored by such diverse groups as the United Methodist Church, the U of I Herbarium, and many others. The Iowa Prairie Network has spread its fame throughout the state and formed the Friends of Rochester Cemetery group to help control invasive plants. It is already well-known throughout the state and is coming into the national consciousness.

With every other community in Iowa looking for some feature upon which to center their identity, Rochester is fortunate. Here you have this ready made feature which could make you the envy of every town in the state. Author Steven Langmire said, in an interview in the Spring 2006 issue of Voices From the Prairies, "The cemetery is a unique combination of cultural and natural resources, so deeply intertwined I can not imagine pulling them apart." The Rochester Community has through the years been the curator of this treasure and I can not help but think it would be celebrated if it continued to do so in the future.

Larry Grill  
Schleswig, IA