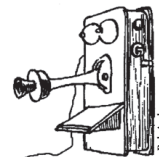


Peoria Partyline



... connecting the extended Peoria community

Volume 11, No. 2

June 2015

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Peoria Partyline Mailing List

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Headstone Mystery Makes Headway

In 1954, preparations to build a new house for the Nibbelinks involved removing the old sidewalk. A stone—which lay between the porch and the sidewalk—was lifted out, turned over and there it was! A civil war gravestone! “N.A. Leonard, Drum Major, 15th Iowa Infantry.” Was he actually buried right there?

The builders dug deeper and probed, but determined that this was not his burial site. His coffin would have been only inches from the basement wall of the new house.

The mystery—along with an uncomfortable feeling—continued for the next 60 years. Then, after attending a presentation about Marion County’s abandoned cemeteries, I learned that one clue for locating an abandoned cemetery was the presence of a pine tree or trees planted near the burial site. There is an old pine tree near our house. My father had told me that this pine tree already had its forked crown and full height when he was a child—around 1915. Had it possibly been planted there during the Civil War to mark Mr. Leonard’s grave site?

There was no record on the farm deed of a Leonard having owned the farm previously, so my next step involved searching in the library and on the internet trying to locate information about N.A. Leonard. I was very careful not to reveal the reason for my interest. I really didn’t want publicity about a discovery that might result in having to display the gravestone right next to our house.

During a phone conversation with our son Mitch, we mentioned our unsuccessful efforts. Curious, he and his friend started their own research. Less than two hours later we received some interesting information, along with pictures of the Peoria Cemetery entrance. Nathan A. Leonard is actually buried and has a stone in the west area on the very south edge of the Peoria Cemetery, near a pine tree!

We now realized that there are two stones for N.A. Leonard. Why? If his gravestone is in Peoria, why did an official marble headstone—issued by the U.S. government—end up as a stepping stone at our place? Had it possibly come here years earlier along with the piece of the Peoria Hotel that had been moved to the farm? (See www.peoriacr.org page 2 of the June, 2013, edition of the Partyline). That mystery still remains.

Tipped off by an article in the Chronicle, we met Tom Gaard, and also attended a ceremony in Pella on Memorial Day, 2014, at Pella’s Oakwood Cemetery when headstones for three Civil War soldiers were dedicated. The ceremony was led by a color guard of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War—Company A, 49th Iowa Regiment “The Governor’s Own Iowa Rifles”—attired in Civil War uniforms.

Research done by Tom Gaard and David Lamb (M.A. Military Historian/Archaeologist)
- Continued on page 3



The Makings of Peoria’s Memorial Day



While the present Memorial Day service at the Peoria cemetery may seem like a relatively new event for us—this really isn’t factual. At one time Peoria was well-known for its Memorial Day celebration, but instead of being sponsored by the Peoria church, it was sponsored by the Grand Army of the Republic, known as the G.A.R.

Following the end of the Civil War, veterans of the Union forces formed local groups for patriotic, social and veteran’s assistance purposes. When united, these groups (the G.A.R) were also a powerful political force. In the 1890’s the G.A.R had a national membership roll of 490,000 that aligned with the party of Lincoln. Interestingly, for several election

- Continued on page 4

42-Year Graduate Gathering

On Sunday, November 16, the Peoria Christian Grade School's graduating class of 1972 held a reunion in the Peoria gym.

It was fun to gather around a display table of items from the 70's—which included great memorabilia, such as lunch pails, graduation dresses, class photos, a phone, etc.—before MC Byron Vander Molen welcomed us and we sat down. Mike Vander Hart opened with prayer, and then we enjoyed a delicious lunch. Featured was a hot lunch reminiscent of those the School Circle used to prepare—sloppy joes, a bag of chips, a cup of ice cream and a bar or cookie. The menu was greatly expanded that day, however, as the graduates each brought a salad to share.

The tables were beautifully decorated, and thankfully we didn't have to sit in our desks to eat. Did those desks get smaller than when we were students?



After lunch, a time of sharing memories was enjoyed. Somehow not much was recalled from the classroom, other than the way Mr. De Jager used to direct singing. Who was it that answered one teacher's question with "I don't know and I don't care?" Hmmm. We're not telling.

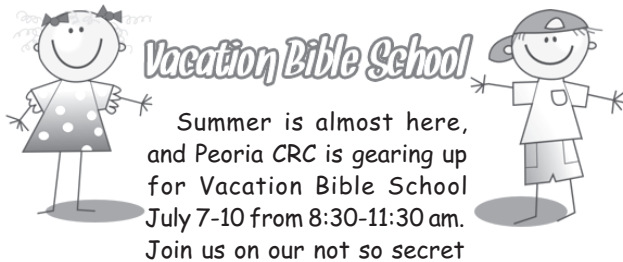
Most student memories were of games and recess activities. Ball games and the trauma of choosing teams, building huts, sledding down the hill, extra long recesses before the bell system was installed and playing foursquare were all recalled.

Three former teachers present—Lois Klyn, Judy Vos, and Doris Nibelink—also shared their memories of some behind-the-scenes teacher fun, such as playing pingpong.

Later in the afternoon several of the group tested their skills and joined in a game of foursquare—bringing back more old times. Any sore muscles the next day?

Thanks to Byron Vander Molen and Laurie Nieboer for getting the group together. I think everyone had a great time.

Laurie Nieboer, Doris Nibelink



Summer is almost here, and Peoria CRC is gearing up for Vacation Bible School July 7-10 from 8:30-11:30 am. Join us on our not so secret

mission as we study the stories of spies in the Bible. We will be discovering the difference between the real God and counterfeit gods and through singings, games, crafts, and Bible stories, we will learn more about the mission God has assigned us as agents of His truth. All kids are welcome to attend, and kids at heart are welcome to help! Contact Tammy Veenstra at 641-780-2885 or tmmvns@hotmail for more details or visit the church website to register. (www.peoriacrc.org)



GEMS (the Girls Everywhere Meeting Jesus Girls' Club) will be starting up again at the Peoria Church this fall. The club is geared to girls in grades 4-8, and every young

girl that age is most welcome. Contact Michele—the club coordinator—at 641-628-8315.



Sewing Night

On Wednesday, July 8, all ladies from the community are welcome to join us at the Peoria Church for fellowship and sewing projects. This year we will be making pillowcase dresses for Haiti and pillowcases for the University of Iowa Hospital. No sewing experience necessary. (Call 641-780-2885 for information.)

In Loving Memory



Cornie Vander Linden began farming at the age of 12 to support his disabled father, and helped care for his mother and siblings. He loved to learn, travel, and be involved in church and community functions. His children remember seeing him kneel by his bed to pray. He taught them about God—making sure they attended church and Christian schools. He could be a stubborn Dutchman, had a dry sense of humor and loved to crack jokes.



Leona Van Wyk was born and raised in Mahaska County. She lived several houses down from the Peoria Church as a child. After marrying Lester, the two of them raised four sons on a farm nearby. She loved to cook, garden, quilt, scrapbook, and spending time with her family. A member of the Peoria Church, she was known for her great sense of humor and making others feel special.



Otto Vos grew up near Peoria on the family farm. Father to four with first wife, Ruth, he built Peoria Feed and Grain and made it a successful business. With second wife, Judy, he raised one son, and was involved with his business as well as a wide variety of ministries. His love for his Lord and the Word was the testimony of his life. A loving father and husband, Otto was a friend to everyone. His love for God never wavered and he was a lifelong member of the Peoria CRC church.



Sheryl Van Wyngarden grew up in the Knoxville area, met and married Daryl, and they raised two children on the VW family farm in the Lower Grove area. A member of the Lower Grove church, Sheryl sang in the Voices in Praise quartet. She was an inspiration and blessing to all. She loved singing, cooking, geocaching, and playing with her grandchildren. She had an amazing passion for life and lived life to the fullest every day.



**Neighbors are much more than just names!
Grab a cup of coffee and let's meet the Plants!**

The little red-brick house at 135 Peoria West Street has been the home of Lacey, Ellie and Riley Plants since they moved into Peoria in January 2014. They appreciate living in Peoria because of the central location—near enough to town, but quiet—and a beautiful view to the west. Lacey was born in Cuba City Wisconsin which is 20 minutes northeast of Dubuque. She attended Madison Area Technical College and then got her bachelors degree online. She moved to the Pella area in 2008 and works for DHS in Oskaloosa.

Ellie, who is 6 years old, attends kindergarten at Madison Elementary School in Pella and Riley, who is 3 years old, attends daycare. When they get home the energetic girls love to dance around the house with Mom and play with Anna, the 9-month-old dachshund/terrier they've adopted.

When the weather is nice, outside is where the family loves

to be. They are happy to resume regular walks by Lake Red Rock, visiting area parks and fun picnics now that the winter is over. They also regularly visit Lacey's family back in Wisconsin, where Ellie and Riley love playing with their cousins and spending time with Grandpa and Grandma.

One cause dear to the family's hearts is the American Heart Association. They like to support it by participating in fundraisers and encouraging others to do the same.

Thanks, neighbors, for letting us get to know you a little. We look forward to having you as part of our community.

-Pastor George Den Oudsten



Co-Line Retirement

Gaylord De Jong was honored with a retirement party on Friday, Feb. 27 to celebrate his 24 years with the company. "He is an honest, hard-working, and caring man, and he did his absolute best for every customer as well as for Co-Line," said owner Dale Brand.

Gaylord will be working for a farmer part-time, helping his son with a remodeling project, and staying busy in his own shop.

In appreciation, a Co-Line gold key card was given to Gaylord so he can purchase materials—at employee cost—for the next 24 months.

Dakota Access Pipeline Update

Dakota Access has started negotiating with landowners, and a letter of intent has been written to use I+S Group engineers for inspecting and protecting the people of Mahaska County if the Iowa Utilities Board gives the project final approval. If laid, Mahaska County would hold the 3rd most pipeline in the state—over 32 miles.



- Headstone Mystery Continued

gist) provided more information. Military records they gave us showed that Nathan Leonard enrolled in Oskaloosa on October 22, 1861, and later mustered as a private in company B—of the 15th Regiment of Iowa Voluntary Infantry in Keokuk—on November 9, 1861 at the age of 43.

In March, 1862 Nathan was promoted to drum major. Drummers were used to help give orders to the troops by code prior to the battle. Drums could no longer be heard once a battle had begun. At that time drum majors were assigned the task of helping to remove injured or dead soldiers from the front lines.

Nathan was discharged for disability on July 11, 1862 on account of "Camp Disease." He died at home in November, 1862, of chronic diarrhea—which is what he really had—and there are affidavits from both his military surgeon and his private family doctor that document his decline and death over a period of some five months following his discharge. Sadly, medical science would not learn about amoebic dysentery for another 20 years.

In 1863, Nathan's wife applied for widow's pension for deceased soldiers and was awarded the sum of \$8 per month. That was later increased by \$2 per month/per child to help care for their two youngest children until they reached age 16.

There is a record of a military headstone being ordered for Mr. Leonard in 1888, some 26 years after his death. We still don't know why it was ordered that long after his death, or how and why that stone ended up at our farm. But, we intend to honor Mr. Leonard's military service and have his military headstone placed by his grave in Peoria.

David Lamb and the color guard already have several presentations scheduled on Memorial Day, 2015, to honor previously forgotten soldiers. Tentative plans are in place for Peoria's Memorial Day, 2016, service to include an official recognition of Nathan Leonard's military service. We intend to have his military headstone in place prior to that.

-Jon and Doris Nibelink



Craig and Crystal Rapinchuk were very blessed with the birth of their first daughter—little Bayleigh Addyson—on November 3, 2014.



Brothers Dakota and Landon love their baby sister and have been a big help to Mom and Dad in caring for her.



... heard about it on the partyline ...

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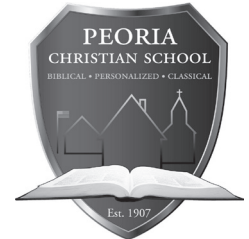
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Service of Remembrance

Monday, May 25, 2015 9 a.m.

Peoria Cemetery

Speaker: John C. Roose

BYO lawn chairs

Homemade cinnamon rolls, juice, coffee will be served after the service.

Inclement weather/Peoria gym

- Memorial Day Continued

cycles it was nearly impossible to get on the Republican ticket without the endorsement of the G.A.R. Three years after the Civil War ended—May 5, 1868—the Grand Party of the Republic was also instrumental in establishing Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. May 30 was the date chosen—probably because by that time flowers would be in bloom all over the country.

In the glory days of the G.A.R., a Washington, D.C. newspaper—known as The National Tribune—aligned with the group and became the unofficial champion of their causes. Here is an edited June 21, 1883, snippet from that paper:

“Comrade J. L. Billings, Peoria, Iowa, writes us that Shiloh Post—of that place—mustered last January, with seventeen charter members, but now has double that number. The comrades are about to build a hall. Memorial Day was observed in Peoria by the Shiloh and Alloway (of Lynnville) Posts. All the graves in the neighboring cemeteries were visited and decorated and appropriate services were held. A number of speeches were made. About 1,500 people—the largest assemblage ever collected together in Peoria—attended the exercises in the Methodist Episcopal church in the afternoon.”

Each local post—as it was organized—was given a number and allowed to choose its own name (if no other post had already claimed it). Shiloh was one of the great battles of the Civil War, in which a number of Peoria soldiers participated. One—Lieutenant Simon Gary—was hit with a rebel ball

on the first day of fighting. He survived, and later on moved from Peoria to Kansas where he served as a Sheriff. Another—Lieutenant William Dodd—had to command the forces on the second day of battle as all of the first day’s officers were killed or wounded. This Lt. Dodd later lost his life when he was hit in the head by a cannon ball. Because of these men and their connections to Peoria, it is speculated that is why the local post was named Shiloh. The Lynnville post chose the name Alloway in memory of a wounded soldier home on furlough who was killed in a mob riot of Southern sympathizers in Peoria in 1863.

The Oskaloosa Herald also reported on the 1883 Peoria celebration. They reported that “there were about 100 teams and 2,000 persons present.” Think of the challenges we have today in getting 100+ people to our Memorial Day gatherings. How would it go to host 2,000 people without any electronic help? There is also mention of a Peoria band—showcasing their new suits and new horns from New York—marching that day and in a pre-Memorial Day parade in Peoria on May 5.

Who would have thought that our Memorial Day celebration has such a rich and interesting history? Next time you bring your lawn chair to join others in the cemetery, take a few minutes to reflect on what happened over 130 years ago—at the same time of the year—in the little village of Peoria. —Calvin Bandstra



Community Hog Roast: Friday July 10, after the VBS program, at 7 pm. Peoria Church. Great food and fellowship for everyone!