

## For Immediate Release

DeKalb Township Historian Steve Bigolin will conduct a walking tour of beautiful and historic Oakwood Cemetery, on Saturday, October 10, at 1:00 P.M. It is expected to last approximately 2 hours, and in the event of rain the tour will be rescheduled. Oakwood is located just off North 1st Street behind the Congregational Church, where parking is available.

Oakwood Cemetery is DeKalb's second oldest cemetery, dating from 1865. When originally established however it was called "Oakland," changed to Oakwood early in 1889. No reason for the name change is preserved in the various historical sources.

Prior to 1865 there was no cemetery serving the DeKalb community. It had long been common practice to bury the dead either on their own property, or in places where it was safe to do so. Most would later be moved to cemeteries when they came into existence. In September of 1854, the "DeKalb Center Sewing Society" purchased a few acres of open prairie for \$124.50 from Norris Sweet, for what became Evergreen Cemetery, at present day South 7th & Taylor Streets.

An unsuccessful attempt was made within ten years to expand Evergreen, and when this failed, steps were taken to acquire land elsewhere for a second cem-

etary. Five wooded acres were purchased from Dr. Rufus Hopkins for \$175.00, on May 3, 1865. The new site was a half mile or so northwest of downtown DeKalb, and just off the "Main Road" - North 1st Street - with its northern boundary formed by the Kishwaukee River. Thus was born Oakwood Cemetery.

The tour will include the last resting places of farmers Thomas Dodge, Albert Schryver, and Alexander Ray; Rev. C. Malmberg; banker Ellzey Young; Justice of the Peace Eli B. Gilbert; merchants H. H. Wagner & Charles Flinn; Photographer Jonas Olsson; some children; and many others. Several impressive family plots dot the landscape, with the George Gurler plot having five of its seven markers flush with the ground, which is unusual for Oakwood. Obelisks from as early as the late 1860's, stone trees, a pair of small mausoleums, and other interesting monuments will be viewed. A century of local cemetery history will also be discussed.

Oakwood is still an active cemetery, owned by DeKalb Township since the late 1990's. The park-like setting behind the Congregational Church (built in the 1950's) remains appealing to people in the 21st Century, just as it did during the late 1800's.

Tour participants are encouraged to wear comfortable

walking shoes, as the ground is uneven and rutted. Donations will be accepted. For more information call 815-758-8282.

