



OLD FASHIONED


Ice Cream

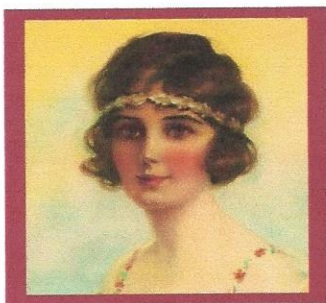
SOCIAL

Urbandale Historical Society

AT
Olmsted-Urban House

June 25, 2023

An illustration of a soft-serve ice cream cone with white vanilla swirls, a red cherry on top, and a waffle cone base.



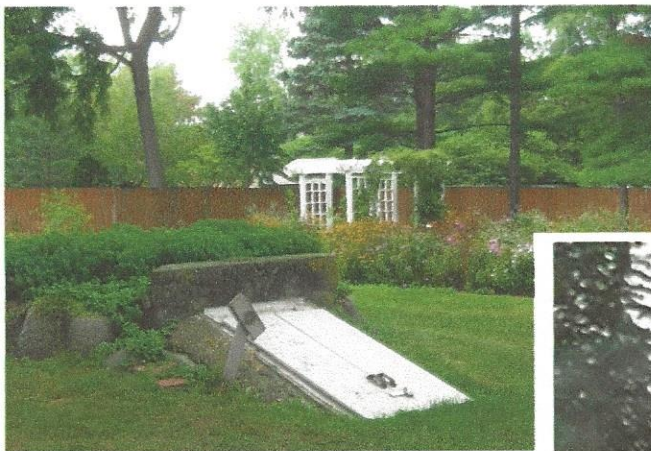
*B*ack in 1923 one sentimental young lady added this nostalgic photograph, of a much treasured outdoor gathering, to her memory book.

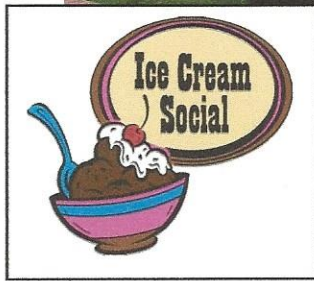
The pages are a bit tattered now from years and wear and perhaps even from "dreaming over" that picture too. Still, you can almost hear the happy chatter drifting off the page from this delightful scene ... in the good old summertime, one hundred years ago.

We may never know if it was merely a picnic in the park, the celebration of a special occasion or perhaps even a much looked-forward-to Ice Cream Social. But by saving this photograph, it is quite apparent that warm memories were definitely made that day, and in this way, those special memories were preserved to fondly recall again and again.

As the decades pass from one to another, families and friends continue to gather together to share the joys of another summer season. And now we come to another Ice Cream Social too, under the trees, 'round and about that familiar white frame four-square on 70th Street here in Urbandale – the Historical Society's Olmsted-Urban House.

With their almost comical fog horn on-the-road warning devices and their cozy rumble seats, those grand vintage motor cars, similar to the ones in that old photograph, may have jumped their last puddles into the past and are now replaced by more modern vehicles. The faces and smiles seen during the Roaring Twenties of the last century may also have changed, but no matter the date or the era, the spirit of friendship is still the same as when Grandma lived here!





Looking back, I can't help but wonder what was Grandma's recipe for an Ice Cream Social, especially when our country's birthday might have been just a little over a week away?

The first thing that comes to mind would be a show of patriotic colors and our grand old Flag. When she was just a little girl there were 48 stars on a field of blue. Now, of course, there are 50 and our Old Glory still catches the breeze with honor and dignity in remembrance of those who fought for the freedoms we now hold dear.

And so, without a doubt, Grandma would have begun to decorate accordingly – bunting on the porch, “red, white and blue” on the tables, and when everything was finally set in place, she would have then lovingly collected all the ingredients for her special holiday

pies. Cherry and blueberry, perhaps rhubarb and apple, or maybe peach and even a cake or two. And to these she would add a little extra "dash of love"! It should go without saying that all her tasty treats warmed body and soul, and they definitely warmed the heart! For each and every one of those wonderful creations was always served with a smile! Now whenever you come to "Grandma's House" for that much longed-for Ice Cream Social, isn't it lovely to find that little has really changed since Grandma's day?



Tempting slices of pie and cake still draw visitors to the long serving table out beyond the front porch. At one end even pumpkin pie and fruit-filled desserts. At the other end busy workers all wearing smiles, as they serve lemonade and vanilla ice cream, cold and sweet!



Who could ever resist a picnic or an Ice Cream Social such as this, under the trees on a beautiful summer day?



Neighbors visit while waiting their turn and picnic tables quickly fill. Later little ones with ice cream faces and rascally giggles and grins, playfully dart in and out of the shadows, as their dads dream over a display of vintage autos on that glorious summer afternoon.

One hundred years ago in 1923, the automobile was becoming the marvel of the day! That was the year Firestone unveiled their first production balloon tire and gasoline cost a mere 14 cents a gallon.

That was also the year when a number of National Parks and monuments were established, like Bryce Canyon in Utah, Hopewell Culture in Ohio, as well as Carlsbad Caverns and the Aztec Ruins

both located in New Mexico. With such exciting sites available for those with a sense of curiosity and adventure, and if one had a set of wheels to take them there, either of these fine motor cars might have tempted travelers and would possibly have become "King of the Road" – the Chevy Roadster (\$570) pictured below on the left, or the Studebaker 5 passenger Touring Light-Six (\$995) on the right.



Unfortunately, we did not have either of these earlier models on display this year, but the LaSalle Cadillac Club kindly provided two of their classic vintage automobiles and those beauties (pictured below) brought us into the 1930s –1940s and to our own grandparents' day.



Where farming was concerned, Grandma may have had her "Bossie", but this year we had "Annabelle", Hiland Dairy's Ambassador of Good Will!



From what we understand the Dairy had its start 85 years ago in Springfield, Missouri. 1938 was the magic date and it all began with only a small herd of cows and a few delivery trucks. These days their plants and distribution centers are scattered across the Midwest and now they also have "Annabelle"!

"Annabelle" is that one special cow which, inside her picket fence-on-wheels, she travels 'round town to represent Hiland Dairy and the real cows that made it all possible . . . the milk, cream, butter, delicious ice cream too! And what would an Ice Cream Social be without its sweet and frosty confection!



Ice cream was not sold in grocery stores until the 1930s but it certainly was an American favorite long before then. It is said that our first president actually spent \$200 for ice cream during the summer of 1790, and Inventory records of Mount Vernon, taken after Washington's death, revealed that he even had two pewter ice cream pots on hand for this frosty dessert.

President Thomas Jefferson also loved ice cream. In fact, he was supposed to have had a favorite 18-step recipe for a similar delicacy which resembled a modern-day Baked Alaska. But the ice cream we had wasn't super fancy, it was simply a rich creamy wonderful vanilla and it is still served with an extra little "dash of love"!

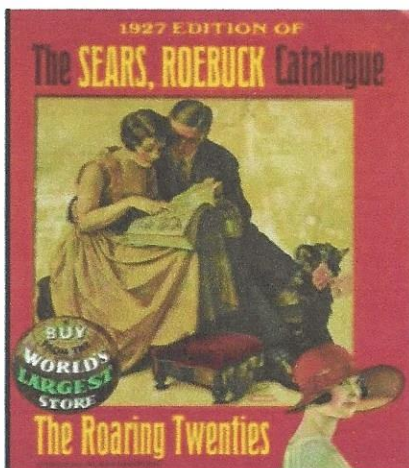
We missed the live music for our Ice Cream Social this year – the banjo players with their jaunty straw hats and the talented keyboardist who always brought back to us, lovely old time melodies and memories of dear people and places from long ago. But Scott Joplin "made an appearance" nonetheless, via recordings from the porch! His marvelous crisp syncopated



Ragtime tunes introduced us to another era, further inspiring our visitors to take a “walk back in time”!

For in addition to the Ice Cream Social, the Olmsted-Urban House was also open for tours. I know that Grandma herself would have been as proud as punch when our newcomers shared their many complimentary comments on the wonderfully appointed parlor, the beautiful frocks in the Sewing Room and the charming playthings of the past in the Children’s Room upstairs across the hall. For many of our guests it was a walk down memory lane. For our littlest visitors it was, I dare say, a “culture shock” . . . not an electronic toy or a video game in the entire house!

But the children of the early 20th Century, along with their parents and grandparents, “made their own entertainment” with music



and games, listening to the radio, dreaming over the Sears and Roebuck Catalog, or perhaps just gathering together as a family to share their thoughts and hopes and the day’s adventures with one another.

I remember how exciting it was to search through the treasures we found in that Sears and Roebuck “Wish Book”. And if we discovered we couldn’t afford our heart’s desire, at least “we had each other”. If the truth be told, who could really ask for anything more!

Sewing Room



The Olmsted Girls and Grandma "bad each other" too, and they smile down on us from their honored places in the Sewing Room each and every time we come to visit.

On our tour, we learned that this particular room was a favorite, for the clothing on display represents a variety of eras and fashions, and it is easy to happily "journey through the decades" here.

Our visitors found themselves traveling from the 19th Century with the long filmy gowns of Great Grandmother's time, to the lengthy

strands of beads and pearls, and drop-waist dresses of the exuberant Roaring Twenties.

We even marched on to the somewhat more familiar styles of the mid 1940s - to the kind of dresses I remember my mother wearing. A soldier's uniform is also on display, How it brought to mind thoughts of patriotism once again, and no doubt special memories for other Twentieth Century "kids" like me.

More than anything else, it is probably the clothing, variety of accessories and bobbed hair style that define the era, and this



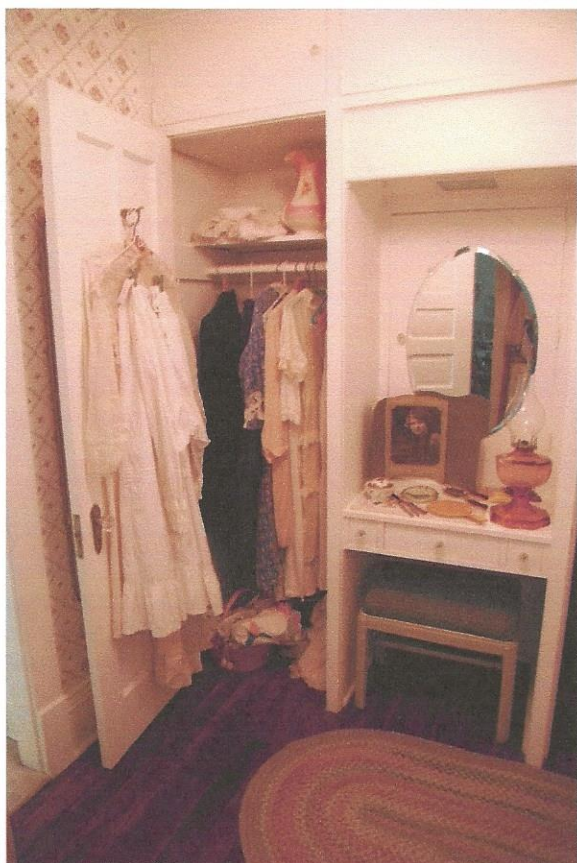
Sewing Room is a wonderful reminder of how both men and women dressed in the more formal days of the early 1920s and '30s.



When we walk into this room, the spirit of each era is still very much alive and well, and speaks to us in a thousand different ways. If we listen carefully, we can almost hear and feel the presence of those who lived and loved within these walls. With such wonderful visual reminders and a true appreciation for the past, we can nearly experience a real sense of the days that-used-to-be.

Dressing Room

What woman, from any era, would have loved such a room as this, for dressing and primping and in becoming the lovely vision that we often find in so many of those delightful vintage photographs!



The sweet picture on the dressing table is of Maytie Urban. We have Maytie to thank for appreciating the past and helping to preserve many of the antiques we see in this fine old home.

Bathroom

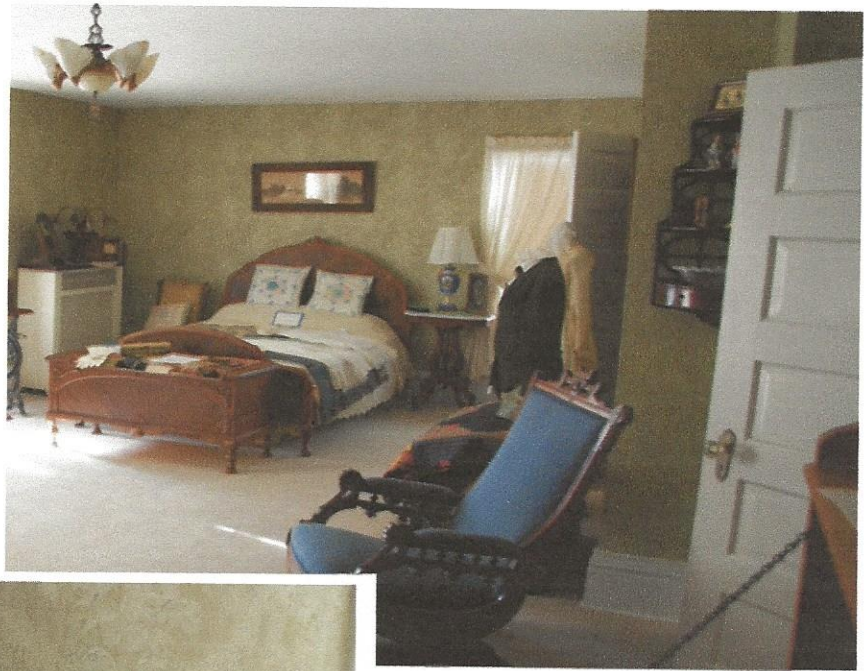


*A straight raiser,
a shaving strap
and below a little
corner cabinet
which is filled
with Old Time
medicine bottles,
also ...*



*Bloomers and
silk stockings,
and a wooden
washboard for
good measure!
These are just a
few of the items
you might find
in a bathroom
of the 1920s and
the '30s.*

Bedroom

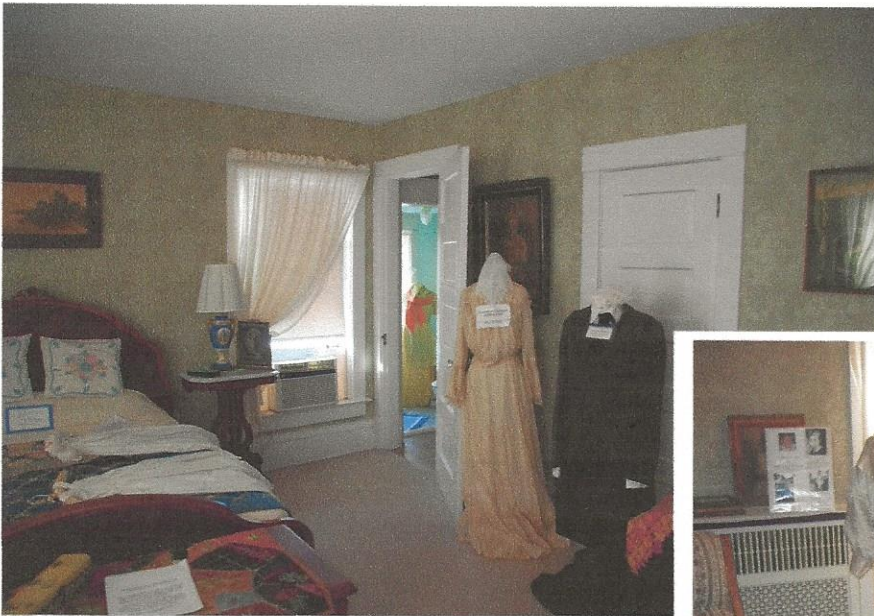


When the house was built in 1904, what is now a large Master Bedroom originally had been two smaller rooms.

This was once a room for a comfortable repose, and is now a display area for silk rugs made from silk hosiery, balls of rags to be fashioned into braided rugs, memories of those who came before in wonderful nostalgic photographs, and many lovely quilts. Even a horsehair sleigh blanket is on display here during the winter months.

Two years before the house was built Millard Olmsted (one of two Olmsted sons) married his sweetheart Olive Stewart on the 4th of June, at the McDivitt Grove Church. Olive's wedding dress and Millard's wedding jacket are also on display along with the wedding Guest Book.

Looking over this comfortable room and its many period furnishings, it is interesting to know that in 1923 a 9-piece bedroom set would cost about \$199. Some of the furniture here, however, was original to the house, possibly family pieces, and some had been donated down through the years.

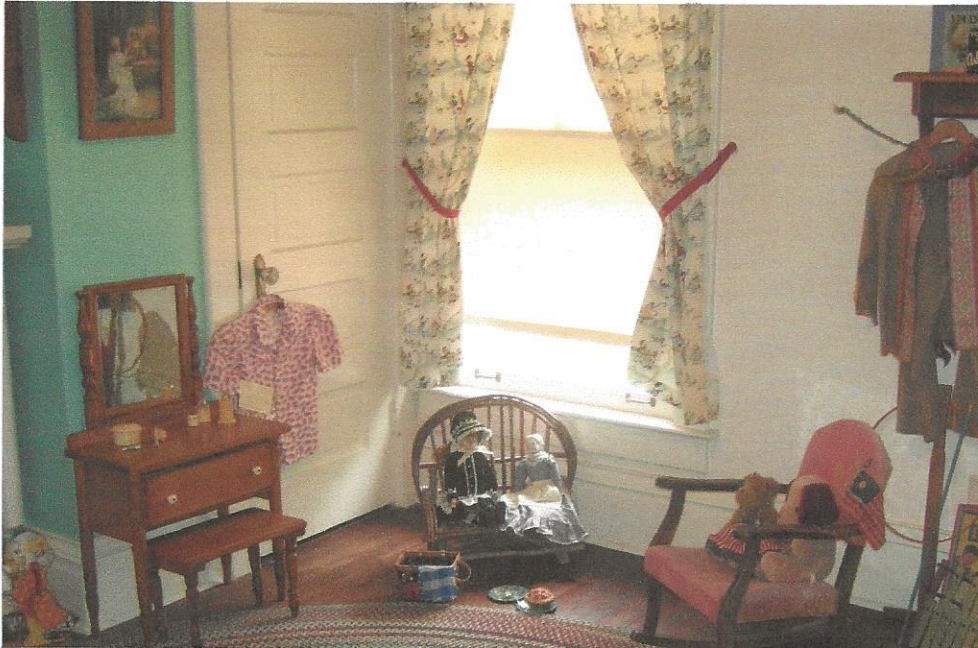


Pictured at left are the clothes that Olive and Millard Olmsted wore on their wedding day.



The spinning wheel and yarn winder at right are somewhat more recent donations representing a much earlier era.

Children's Room



Among the many visitors impressed with our little collection, was the Astengo Family - Mom, Dad, two daughters and a friend.

For some of our visitors, the last stop before heading back down to the first floor again was a cozy little room at the top of the stairs. It is here where the children of yesteryear, both in play and in slumber, may well have dreamed their day away.

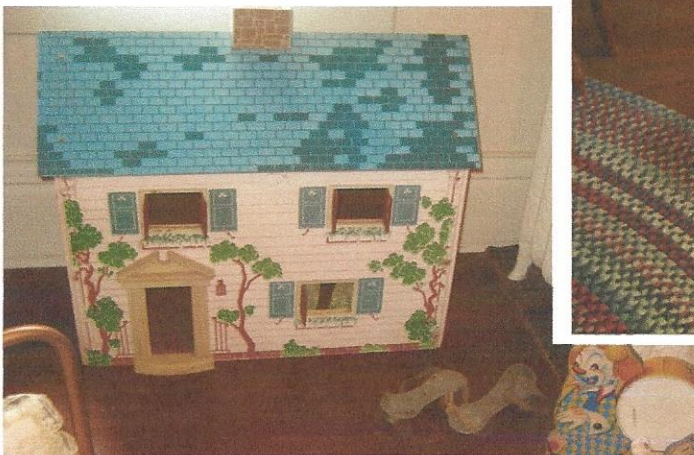
Once a bedroom it now holds a collection of playthings of the past ... handmade toys, child-size furniture, dolls and teddy bears, pull toys and roller skates. There is even a tiny piano for the future

musician and a miniature Hoosier cabinet and tiny waffle iron for a budding chef or the homemaker of tomorrow.

Everywhere you look there are toys for dreaming, and for a number of our guests, some who had never even been to the Olmsted-Urban House before, there were toys that actually brought back many treasured memories. The special joy for our visitors, was in sharing those memories, as they themselves dreamed the day away among another child's little treasures from long ago.

When researching the events of 1923, it was interesting to learn that brothers Roy and Walt Disney found the Walt Disney Co. that year. Of course we all know what joy Walt brought to the little ones who once played in this room, and to a whole host of other children up to and including those from our own century too!

Below a dollhouse and roller skates and at right, two dolls, with a picnic basket and tiny cherry pie, are also enjoying their own Ice Cream Social!



The Parlor



In 1923 a living room set (that is, 3 pieces of upholstered mohair) would cost in the neighborhood of \$395, and a six-room house itself might cost around \$4,000 depending on the part of the country where the house was located. This house, however, was built in the fourth year of the Twentieth Century by Leander Olmsted and has been owned by the Urbandale Historical Society since 1987.

The parlor, as seen in the above picture, originally consisted of three separate rooms. It now has a large seating area with a cozy alcove, and was a most comfortable place to relax in the evening, while enjoying a radio program or reading the latest news of the day.

With a piano and a pump organ also part of the furnishings, it was plain for our visitors to see that back then, music was a very important part of family life. A cylinder phonograph, with its collection of interchangeable music "tubes", and a record-playing victrola, were also a wonderful source of entertainment.



Visitors touring the house and stopping in the parlor to visit with friends.





**Our Cynthia Dabrieo
sharing a sweet smile**

KITCHEN

Last but definitely not least, we come to the kitchen, the “heart of the home”! In 1923, one hundred years ago today, you would have found the cost of eggs used in Great Grandma’s baking, only 13 cents per dozen and a leg of lamb for her Sunday dinner, would have been a mere 40 cents per pound! We have to remember, of course, that paychecks were on the low side then too, and that everyone would eventually be touched, in one way or another, by the events of the late ‘20s and the Great Depression that followed.

In the above picture our loyal volunteer Cynthia Dabrieo, dressed in a colorful patriotic apron, spent her day washing away those delicious crumbs that remained on the baking dishes of the many donated homemade pies. She also made sure that sweet lemonade kept on flowing throughout the afternoon!

While Cynthia busied herself in the kitchen, the ladies in the dining room were converting those luscious pies into equally luscious slices. These were placed on paper plates then carried outside to the long serving table where lines of visitors eagerly awaited their treats.

Whatever would we do without those awesome volunteers who bring this wonderful house to life time and time again. They are the ones – from the more seasoned workers to the very youngest helpers – who really represent the spirit of the times.

Because of the hours they spend in work and preparation, we are able to gather together here and once again celebrate each delightful event. They are the ones who, by donating their time and talents, remind us why we always have such a happy heart whenever we even think about coming to “Grandma’s House”!!



Caron Osberg far left, Jo Henry in red and Barb Sheets at far right

Just a Few of Our Volunteers



Tim Askland, Larry McBurney and Mike Ulm

I wish I had a picture of the very littlest helpers, but I will never forget the sweet little girl who so graciously asked, after I enjoyed my treats, if she could carry the tray away for me.



Beth Haigh and Deb Jacobs

Only some volunteers wore an apron, but all wore a smile, as they served the ice cream, tasty pies and lemonade.



**Mike McIntire, Cami Johnson,
Janell Ryearson and Caron Osberg**

Our hard-working volunteers seemed to have had as much fun as our visitors had in sharing friendship and fellowship on that wonderful afternoon!

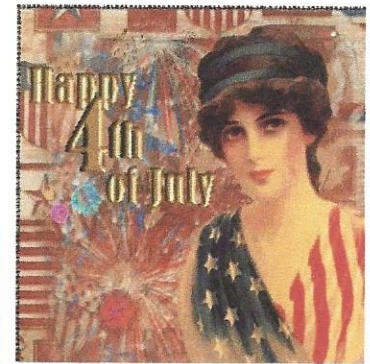


Kenny Neal and Sue Askland



Jan Hall and Gene Haigh

Mary Polson and Curt Darling



Virginia Gee's interesting display shows 4th of July buttons down through the years and vintage Ice Cream Social memorabilia.



Our visitors came from far and wide, even one family from Texas! But this cute little pooch and the charming young miss were lowans, and they just couldn't miss another Ice Cream Social!



As I do every year after greeting guests up in the Children's Room, I joined my husband to finally take pleasure in those wonderful Ice Cream Social treats. The supply of cake and pie slices had thinned out considerably, but I found a tempting slice of pumpkin pie and relished every scrumptious bite, together with lemonade and that special frozen dessert we all long for on a hot summer day.

We gathered together with friends and neighbors at a picnic table under the trees, and like so many visitors around us, we happily exchanged news and friendship before the Social officially came to a close. Then, with camera in hand, time had come for me to make one last tour of the grounds surrounding "Grandma's House" to see what scenes I may have missed capturing my first time around.

When the white frame pergola came into view toward the back of the house, I remembered in an instant the Butterfly Garden, with its beautiful field of colorful flowers waving in the breeze! How could I have ever forgotten that special place!

There is a kind of mystery and wonderment in a garden where the miracle of life continues to endure and mystify. It is there creation continues as the humble caterpillar transforms into the exotic creature of flight we call the butterfly, and quietly slips in and among the flowers to happily visit and pollinate those delicate fragrant blooms. How gratifying to see that I was not the only one who appreciated the garden, for others had also taken pleasure in this marvelous magical place.



WAYNE ROBBINS BARN



Bob Simon and his wife Verda with son Scott in the middle



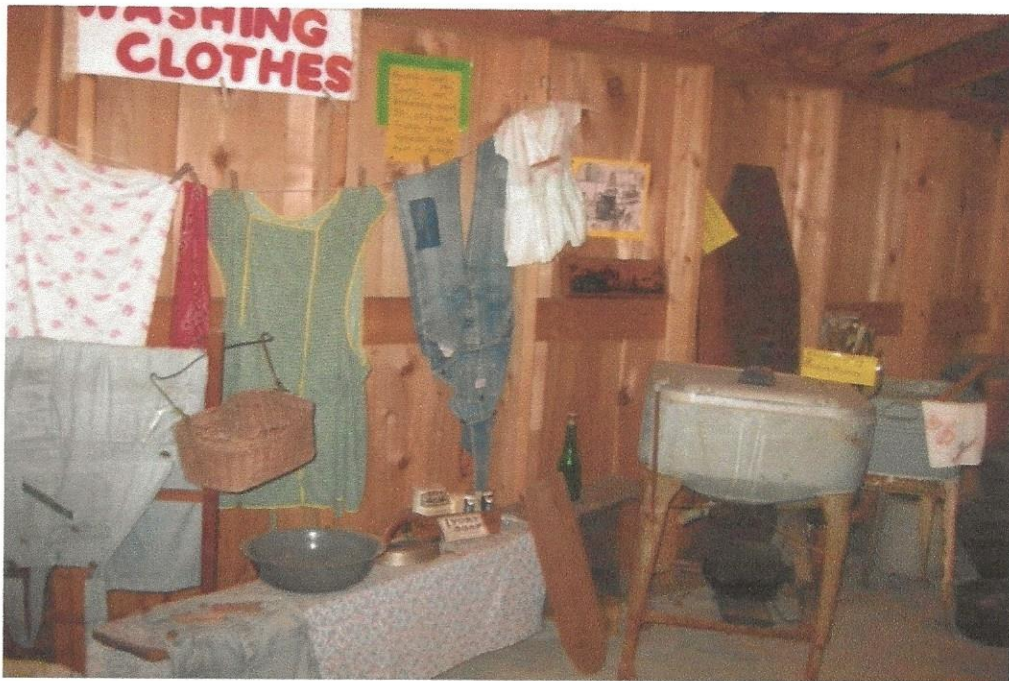
Then, as I turned around, there was "Annabelle" looking down at me from her picket fence pasture in front of the barn! More folks were there too, including our long-time friend Bob Simon. He came to welcome those who stopped to visit our memories of the family farm.

I only peeked just beyond the door this time where the bundle of cornstalks stood across from a bale of hay. But I knew many farming tools were on the back wall, and if I walked through the left-hand doorway, I would have seen the Dairy Display with which "Annabelle's" bovine compatriots would surely have been familiar.



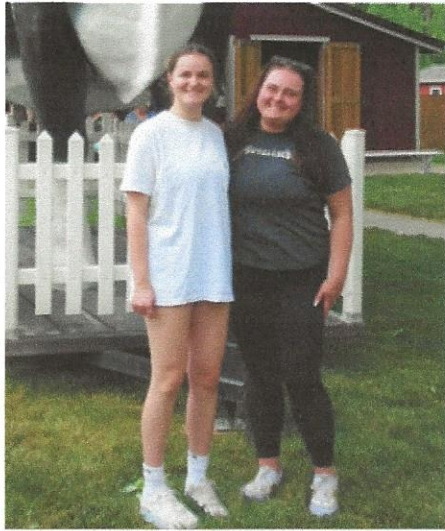
Glass milk bottles, carrying case, cream separator and drawing

And in another room I knew there was a display of the eye-opening world of early Twentieth Century washday items which would definitely amaze the now Twenty-first Century lady of the house. I wonder too, how the homemaker of yesterday had ever gotten through washday with only a metal tub, a washboard, lye soap and a clothes-line on which to dry the newly washed items through every season of the year?



Metal washtubs and various laundry items once used by early Twentieth Century homemakers

Be that as it may, who could resist a "walk in the past" through a lovely old house or a nostalgic old barn? Who could ever resist an Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social, celebrating friendship and fellowship, even an early 4th of July, under the trees on a glorious summer afternoon!



Heidi and Abby Baker

**Friends, neighbors, dear
ones ... in the Good Old
Summertime!**

Today more sweet memories were in-the-making. Perhaps there will be another delightful photograph for another memory book, just like there was for that young woman in the long ago whose photo I shared at the beginning of this writing.

Perhaps even some of our visitors will also have taken a special photo here that has already found its way into their own memory book to be saved and treasured for a long time to come! At least that's what usually happens to me whenever I stop for a heart-warming visit to "Grandma's House", especially at Ice Cream Social Time!

Carol Lee Riekenberg



Our loyal volunteers and President Norm Huitt already looking forward to making more grand Ice Cream Social memories next year!



NOTE: Special thanks to our roving photographers Abby and Heidi Baker, who shared so many of their beautiful pictures with us which we are enjoying today!