

# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

4010 70<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
URBANDALE, IA 50322  
(515) 270-2917  
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## Winter 2023

### Fall Pancake Breakfast and Urbandale Lions Club

This past October 22 the Urbandale Lions Club once again provided us with a sumptuous pancake breakfast. They have provided us with this event for the past two years which serves as a Fall fundraiser for the Historical Society. They served pancakes to 110 people and raised \$800 for the Society. It was a beautiful day and a fun event for all.

The Urbandale Lions have certainly made a name for themselves with their pancake operation but they are much more than simply pancakes. The Urbandale Lions Club has been around since 1946. Their motto is *We Serve* and that they do. Just since this past July they have raised almost \$8,500, donated over 430 man/woman hours and provided service in some form to over 3000 people. They do this by working with UCAN to fill food bags and boxes for those in need in the community, serving at the UCAN dinner and making



pancakes for the UCAN Breakfast with Santa event this past December. They host the Annual Homecoming Pancake dinner as a fundraiser. The Lions provide eye screening as part of the Kidsight program. They provide this service to almost all the preschools in Urbandale. As well, they collect eyeglasses and hearing aids and get them to the State Lions organization for distribution to those in need. The Urbandale schools have always been a special project of the Urbandale Lions. They man the ticket booths for the athletic events, though now it is 'simpler' with the electronic ticketing.

### Historical Society Programs

In our last newsletter we updated you on our plans for monthly programs at the Olmsted-Urban House. We have had several and have more scheduled throughout 2023.

In October Terry Nielsen, retired Urbandale Police Officer, gave us a very interesting presentation on the history of the Urbandale Police Department. There was much to talk about (see our article by Virginia Gee for more information). Several have asked if we could invite him back for another round of stories from the days gone by.

November, we had Carol Holmquist from the Urbandale Public Arts Committee talk about Art in Urbandale. While in the early days there was not much art to speak of in Urbandale, today we are graced with sculptures and a variety of art throughout our community.

December saw our annual Christmas celebrations. We had our Annual Christmas Open House on the first Sunday in December. The house was decorated to fit the season and we had a good showing of people to tour the house and enjoy the season. Carol Lee Riekenberg has once again prepared a booklet of the Olmsted-Urban House for Christmas. A copy of her book and others of the Historical



events is available for viewing at the house and some will be posted on our website. The second Sunday of December was our

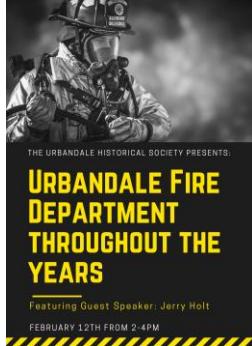
program after noon and Norm Huitt made an enjoyable presentation of the Night Before Christmas bringing many of his 'toys and books'.



Our program for January was modified as Jan Herke was down with the respiratory (not COVID) crud that has been going around. Though we 'cancelled' her talk for that Sunday, we will have her next Fall to share with us the story of the Urbandale Parks and Rec. As a back-up Pat Finnerty did offer a talk about the founding 'fathers' of Urbandale.

Going forward we have a full slate of programs planned for the Historical Society through the year. All of our programs will be held at the Olmsted-Urban House, 4010 70<sup>th</sup> St., from 2-4 pm. On the second Sunday of each month with exceptions for Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day.

- **February 12** (2-4 pm), we will host Chief Jerry Holt who will share with us the [History of the Urbandale Fire Dept.](#)
- **March 12** (2-4 pm), Myrna Johnson will visit us and talk about the [Iowa Public Radio Centennial](#).
- **April 16** (2-4 pm), Gina Wright will present the history of the [Urbandale Chamber of Commerce](#)
- **May 21** (2-4 pm), Pat Finnerty will share the life of Urbandale's own hero: [Glenn McDole](#).
- **June 11** (2-4 pm), Mindy Williamson will talk about the [Iowa State Fair over the Years](#)
- **June 25** (2-4 pm), Annual Urbandale Historical Society [Ice Cream Social.](#)

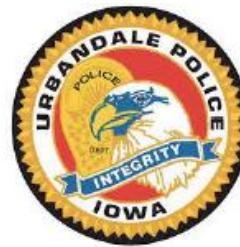


Watch our website: [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) and Facebook page for updates. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. Don't forget to bring a friend.

In addition to our monthly programs we are going to have a monthly Open House at the Olmsted-Urban House the first Sunday of each month beginning with February 5. The house will be open from 2-4 the first Sunday of the month for people to visit, tour and talk. We need to have two people at the house during these times. If you would like to help us

please call and leave us a message (515-270-2917) or e-mail us at [urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com). Ginny Campbell is heading up this activity and she would be most pleased to have your help. We are also revising our "Tour Guide of the House" so you will have a better appreciation of the history of the house and our collections.

## Urbandale Police Department



Terry Nielsen, who retired after 40 years with the Urbandale Police Department, spoke on the history of the Department at the first of the 2022-2023 program meetings in October.

The Police Department is currently staffed by 58 sworn officers, 9 civilian staff and police dog K9Basco. The Department is led by Chief Rob Johansen. There are three divisions including Patrol, Criminal Investigation and Support Services operating out of the building at 3740 86<sup>th</sup> Street.

Law enforcement has undergone many changes since Urbandale was incorporated in 1917. After early businesses were added, there was mention at the meeting of the Urbandale Betterment Association that some control was needed. A "merchant policeman" was hired in 1940 at a salary not to exceed \$19 a month. Harry Hull was sworn in as the official Town Marshall. His other duties included grading streets, spreading gravel, filling holes, hauling garbage, reading water meters, catching stray animals and enforcing traffic regulations. Harry and the City Clerk were the only paid City employees for a number of years. They worked out of the cement block building at 3807 70<sup>th</sup> Street which also served as the City Hall and the Fire Station.

The first full-time Police Department in Urbandale was organized in 1958. Gaylord Martin was hired with a salary set at \$400 a month. He was on duty from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Dave Spurgin had the patrol shift from 7 p.m. until 5 a.m. A 1946 Chevrolet had been used as a message car and for "police duties" but in 1955 a new blue Ford Tudor equipped with a heavy-duty generator was purchased for \$1,686.

In 1960 Wayne Woods became the third full-time police officer and that made 24 hour on-duty protection available. Records listed a patrolmen's salary as \$425 per month with a \$10 per month clothing allowance.

In the 1960's the Police Department was now one of several city departments housed in the new city hall at 70<sup>th</sup> and Roseland. In 1965 Wayne Woods was officially named Chief of Police and the Department had increased to six policemen.

By 1970 the Department was located at 9401 Hickman with a staff of 14, Wayne Woods was still the Chief of Police.

By 1974 there were 19 officers with three policemen on duty every shift and a dispatcher on duty 24 hours a day. There was now an Investigation Division as well as a Patrol Division. An Auxiliary Police unit was formed to supplement the regular department. These were volunteers working under the direct supervision of regular officers. Cars were equipped so police could get messages directly.

The Department now operates out of the facility at 3740 86<sup>th</sup> street with many changes in technology and equipment. In addition to the regular patrols and investigations the Department interacts with the community in a variety of ways: Safety City, Citizens Police Academy, Bike Patrol, Neighborhood Watch, Support of Special Olympics, Veterans Memorial, Shop with a Cop at Christmas, Police Memorial Service, and Special Emergency Response Team.

As described in the early days "Around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in weather ranging from balmy to blizzard, Urbandale residents rest easier and Urbandale children are safer because the Urbandale police are on the job."

We owe them our thanks and support.

## Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation



It was a busy year for the Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation, formerly known as the Urbandale Education Foundation. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, this group re-branded with a new name, logo, and website with the shortened name of "URBSAF".

The Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation also includes the Dollars for Scholars program and the Urbandale Alumni Association. Last year URBSAF gave out \$18,600 in student scholarships and \$23,000 for teacher grants. Teacher Grants is a program started by URBSAF to award money to teachers who submit a proposal for a classroom project or classroom needs that are not within the school budget for their classroom.

For the 2023 year the following URBSAF fundraising activities will be going on to fundraise for student scholarships and teacher grants.

**April 29<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, Dollars for Scholars Pancake Breakfast** (Urbandale Lions) at the Lions Park Shelter house.

**June 26<sup>th</sup>, Monday**, the URBSAF Annual Golf Tournament at the Hyperion Golf Club. Various prizes on each of the holes and auctions also are included in this event. A boxed lunch and dinner are included in the cost.

**July 1<sup>st</sup>**, Saturday is the U-Fest event at the Giovannetti Shelter House and surrounding area. The band "Faculty Lounge" will be performing along with food and drinks being available for purchase. Class Reunions are welcome to meet at U-Fest.

**Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>**, Saturday will be the Distinguished Alumnus of the year event at Stoney Creek Hotel. Classes donate baskets for an auction as part of their fundraiser. Last year Rick Kading from the Class of 1976 and Kading Properties won the award for his dedication to the City of Urbandale and Urbandale Schools through multiple projects and donations.

Information for all these events and their costs, plus the opportunity to make a donation can be found at:  
[www.urbsaf.org](http://www.urbsaf.org).

In addition, further information can be found by contacting: Meribeth Haynes, President of URBSAF :  
[haynesm@urbsaf.org](mailto:haynesm@urbsaf.org)  
Aaron Young, Communications Director for URBSAF:  
[younga@urbsaf.org](mailto:younga@urbsaf.org)

## Marketing and Fundraising

With a goal of future growth in membership and fundraising, the Urbandale Historical Society board of directors established the Marketing Committee in 2021. The committee currently consists of five members: Susan Bonnicksen, Polly Carver-Kimm (co-chair), Meribeth Haynes, Jo Henry and Todd Kimm (co-chair).

The committee's first activity was updating the Urbandale Historical Society's brochure with new text and photos. An updated donation card, with suggested levels of giving was created for inclusion in the new brochures. These brochures are available at Society events, and used in solicitation of business support.

In July 2021, committee members distributed "Be a Fan of the Urbandale Historical Society" fans to attendees of the Urbandale Fourth of July parade. It was a blistering hot day and the fans were appreciated by many. The fan distribution was targeted at raising awareness of and fostering good will toward the Society.



Under the board of directors' oversight, the committee has successfully held two pancake breakfasts. With support from the Urbandale Lions Club, the first pancake breakfast was held in October of 2021, raising \$650. The second annual event in October of 2022 netted a total of \$1085 in donations. Plans are in place for a third pancake breakfast in fall of

2023. The committee is extremely grateful to the Lions Club for their support.

The committee is also looking to establish an annual spring fundraising event. Plans are underway for a Vendor Fair on the lawn of the Urban-Olmsted House on **May 6, 2023**. The goal of the event is to provide a venue for small, independent business owners or direct sales representatives to

representatives to sell their items on pre-measured spaces provided by the Urbandale Historical Society. Vendors would pay a fee (tentatively \$45 per space) to be a part of the event. Discussion is also being held on a potential plant sale to be held in conjunction with the vendor fair, along with possible food sales.

The Marketing Committee has created a card that outlines a \$200,000 fundraising goal for the Society, which includes:

- Reserve Operation and Maintenance Fund: \$50,000. These funds would boost the Society's reserve fund, which has been depleted by declining revenues over recent years.
- Emergency Use Fund: \$50,000. Monies in this fund would prepare the Society financially for a major emergency expense, such as sewer or water line repairs.
- Air Conditioning: \$30,000. An immediate goal to install central air conditioning in the Olmsted-Urban House would allow year-round events in the home.
- Future Capital Expenses: \$70,000. As a nearly 120-year-old home, the Olmsted-Urban House is likely to need future structural repairs and maintenance. There is currently no fund to address future needs.

The Marketing Committee is pleased to have the support of the Board of Directors. With an eye on fiscal responsibility, the committee hopes to expand knowledge of the history of Urbandale through continued or new events.

## Wreathes Across America

On Saturday, December 17 the Urbandale-Johnston VFW Post 9668 participated in the *Wreathes Across America* (WAA) event at the McDivitt Grove Cemetery. The event was co-sponsored by the VFW Post, Urbandale American Legion Post 663, and Urbandale Parks and Recreation. Along with 103 wreaths to lay on the Veterans headstones, they had six ceremonial wreaths for the five branches of the

military, and one for POW-MIA. They had over 40 volunteers for the distribution of the 103 veteran wreaths. An additional wreath was placed at Merle Hay Chapel Hill Cemetery for Harold Jacob's (103 year old Post Charter Member) headstone who passed away one year ago this past December.



Dennis Applehons, Commander of the Urbandale-Johnston VFW Post, noted the special contributions made by people that made this a successful event: **Jan Herke**.

Urbandale Parks and Rec. and WAA Co-coordinator for McDivitt Grove Cemetery and her Urbandale Parks and Rec. team. They were responsible for the publicity, WWA posters, press & news releases, securing parking at New Hope Church for the volunteers, and storage of the 12 boxes of wreaths until December 17. **David Junck, (Vietnam Veteran)** Ogden, Iowa who donated the Ash wood used to construct the six easels for the Commemorative Wreaths. **Tom Jamison**, transported the wood from Ogden to his garage where he spent days, planing, sawing, drilling, gluing, sanding, assembling and varnishing the wooden easels. **Keith Cottington** who supplied the sound system. **Mike Knight and American**

Mike King and Michaela Legion Post 663 volunteer

Legion Post 665 volunteers (Roger, Keith, Larry, Al, Mike, Matt, and Mark) coordinated the distribution of wreaths from the shipping boxes throughout the cemetery. **Larry McBurney**, Urbandale City Council, was the main speaker and performed masterfully at keeping the ceremonial program on track despite the brutal cold.



The Wreaths Across America began in 1992 by a Maine businessman named Morrill Worcester. He was the owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine. As a 12-year-old paperboy for the Bangor Daily News he won a trip to Washington, D.C. His first trip to our nation's capital was one he would never forget, and Arlington National Cemetery made an especially indelible impression on him. This experience followed him throughout his life and successful career in business, reminding him that his good fortune was due, in large part, to the values of this nation and the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

In 1992, Morrill found himself with a surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the holiday season. Remembering his boyhood experience at Arlington, Worcester realized he had an opportunity to honor our county's veterans. With the help of former Maine senator Olympia Snowe, arrangements were made for the wreaths to be placed at Arlington in one of the older sections of the cemetery, a section which had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year.

As plans were underway, a number of other individuals and organizations stepped up to help. James Prout, owner of local trucking company Blue Bird Ranch, Inc., generously provided transportation all the way to Virginia. Volunteers from the local American Legion and VFW posts gathered with members of the



community to decorate each wreath with traditional red, hand-tied bows. Members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C., helped to organize the wreath laying, which included a special ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

This act of generosity became an annual tribute that went on quietly for several years each December, led by Morrill and his family until 2005, when a photo of the stones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet. Suddenly, the project received national attention. Thousands of requests poured in from all over the country from people wanting to participate, to emulate the Arlington wreath project at their national and state cemeteries, or to simply share their stories and thank Morrill Worcester for honoring our nation's heroes.

Unable to donate thousands of wreaths to each state, Worcester began sending seven wreaths to every state, one for each branch of the military, and for POWs/MIA.

In 2006, with the help of the Civil Air Patrol and other civic organizations, simultaneous wreath-laying ceremonies were held at over 150 locations around the country. The Patriot Guard Riders volunteered as escort for the wreaths going to Arlington. This began the annual "Veterans Honor Parade" that travels the East Coast in early December.

The annual trip to Arlington and the groups of volunteers eager to participate in Worcester's simple wreath-laying event grew each year until it became clear the desire to remember and honor our country's fallen heroes was bigger than Arlington, and bigger than this one company.

In 2007, the Worcester family, along with veterans and other groups and individuals who had helped with the annual veterans' wreath ceremony in Arlington, formed **Wreaths**

**Across America** (WAA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, to continue and expand this effort, and support other groups around the country who wanted to do the same. The mission of the group is simple: *Remember. Honor. Teach.*

In 2008, over 300 locations held wreath-laying ceremonies in every state, Puerto Rico and 24 overseas cemeteries. More

than 100,000 wreaths were placed on veterans' graves. Over 60,000 volunteers participated, including members of national veterans' organizations and the American Gold Star Mothers.



December 13, 2008, was unanimously voted by the United States Congress as **National Wreaths Across America Day**. In 2011, WAA and its national network of volunteers laid 325,000 veterans' wreaths at 750 locations in the United States and beyond. WAA was able to include ceremonies at the Pearl Harbor Memorial, as well as Bunker Hill, Valley Forge and the sites of the September 11, 2001 tragedies. WAA accomplished this with help from 902 fundraising groups, corporate contributions, and donations of trucking, shipping, and thousands of helping hands.

The wreath laying is still held annually on a Saturday, each December, and has expanded to include more than 2,100 locations and 2.2 million wreaths. For the first time in 2018, their mission expanded overseas with the placement of 9,387 veterans' wreaths at the Normandy-American Cemetery in France. Each wreath is placed by a volunteer and the names of our fallen said out loud to keep their memory alive.

It is hoped that this event will continue here in Urbandale at the McDivitt Grove Cemetery. For more information, please contact **Dennis Applehons** at the Urbandale-Johnston VFW Post, **Mike Knight** at the Urbandale American Legion Post or the website [Wreaths Across America](http://Wreaths Across America) where much of the information for this article was found.

## Take a Tour of Urbandale

Ten years ago, Virginia Gee prepared an informative sheet 'Take A Tour of Urbandale' for the Fall 2013 newsletter. It was designed to suggest a car route around Urbandale to visit some of the important historical sites in town starting with the "Old Urbandale" on 70th Street to the



"New" Paragon Park out west. Copies of the sheet were printed and made available as a hand-out to visitors at the Olmsted-Urban House. In addition, copies were provided to

the Community Greeters to use as they met with newcomers to Urbandale. The goal is to help Urbandale citizens have a greater appreciation for the history of the community. An updated version has been prepared and is available at the Olmsted-Urban house and on our website ([www.Urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.Urbandalehistoricalsociety.org)). Perhaps you and your family will enjoy "taking the tour" of our community.

## In Memoriam

**Marie McDivitt McDowell** passed away October 25, 2022. Though she was not currently an active member of the Urbandale Historical Society, donations in Marie's memory have been received by the Society. Marie was the daughter of Conrad and Maude McDivitt Landon with pioneer William McDivitt as her ancestor. She was a 1948 Urbandale High School graduate. She lived the rest of her life in Urbandale and daughter Lois and son Larry were both UHS graduates.

**Barry Lynch** passed away on December 7th, 2022. Barry was a long-time member of the Historical Society. Barry was born on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1931 and lived his early years on the family's century farm in Gilmore City, IA. He married Betty (Lehner) Lynch in 1960 and dedicated his life to raising their four children in Urbandale, IA.

## Membership Notes

### New Members

Johanna Schmitt  
4526 79th St.  
Urbandale, IA 50322  
515-244-0681  
[joschmitt34@yahoo.com](mailto:joschmitt34@yahoo.com)

Will Page  
527 E. Sheridan Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50313  
515-243-5740  
[page@dwx.com](mailto:page@dwx.com)

Josh and Kathleen Riessen  
15601 Aurora Avenue  
Urbandale, IA 50323  
515-979-5244  
[kathleen@kathleenriessen.com](mailto:kathleen@kathleenriessen.com)

### New Address

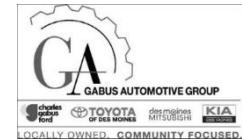
Tom & Jannette Olmsted  
6 Arrowhead Lane  
Groveland, MA 01834  
940-725-0076  
[thomas.olmsted@sbcglobal.net](mailto:thomas.olmsted@sbcglobal.net)

Our membership year runs January to December. We are currently in the process of collecting membership renewals and, as always, encouraging new memberships. Last year (2022) we had 95 paid memberships, 26 of whom were new. Sadly, we are losing a few members each year as they pass on. So far for 2023, we have 23 paid members, 3 of which are new and 20 renewals. To help with renewals and new members, we have upgraded our website to now accept credit card payments for membership. If you go to our website: [www.Urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.Urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) and click on the

Membership tab you will see that we have made it simple and easy for you to select your level and complete the renewal form. Since there is a cost for credit card transactions, we have had to add a handling fee. Of course, if you would prefer to send us a check and avoid the handling fee, that is also quite acceptable. We have included the form below. At this time, we are not able to include donations online, though we are looking into that option. For now, donations, memorials and brick orders need to be sent by check to the house.

We are working on a new Directory for 2023 so to be included, please be sure to renew your membership.

## Acknowledgement of Supporters



## URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION

Membership is on a calendar year: Jan. 1 to Dec. 31

Donations are tax deductible.

Supporting: \$25

Patron: \$100

Name on permanent plaque: \$1,000 and up

Sustaining: \$50

Benefactor: \$500 and  
up

Other

### Special Gifts – Memorials are appreciated

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Would be willing to receive the newsletter electronically (need e-mail address)

### Please indicate your interests below:

Collecting & preserving Urbandale's history

Tour Guides for School Groups & others.

Building/Grounds/House Maintenance

Special Events and Projects (Ice Cream Social Christmas)

Office work

Have Urbandale information, photographs or memorabilia to donate or lend for copying.

Gardening /Yard work

Programs and Trips

Publicity

Housekeeping

Refreshments

Website: [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org)

e-mail: [urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com)

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