

Urbandale Development 1930

Bob Simon is a regular volunteer at the State Historical Building. He sometimes has an opportunity to look at microfilm of old newspapers. In the May 24, 1930 issue of the Des Moines Register, he found this article giving merits of living in Urbandale, which then had a population of 700. It's interesting to see what Mayor J. O. Munn and others had to say to encourage development in Urbandale almost 80 years ago. This is the article as it appeared.

This City of Ours

Des Moines Register May 24, 1930

Urbandale Boasts Everything a Big City Has Except a Big Bonded Debt.

The ideal for a municipality – that's the goal of Urbandale, a sparsely populated small city on the northwest edge of Des Moines which today boasts a population in excess of 700.

Urbandale, prior to the war, was just a part of Webster Township. It was that part in the southeast corner which today measures approximately six square miles, three east and west and two north and south.

Boasts Little Indebtedness

Low taxes, comparatively cheap land and all of the advantages of the city with the exception of water and gas have been responsible for the fairly rapid growth of the city in the past few years, according to Mayor Munn.

The city boasts of no indebtedness with the exception of a small bonded debt incurred by the school board for improvement of the community's educational facilities. The city once incurred a bonded debt of \$5,000 for street improvements, but this has long since been retired.

Street Car Service

Urbandale today has street car service every fifteen minutes during the day, with the exception of the rush hours when trippers are pressed into service and two owl runs between midnight and 5 a.m. then regular service is instituted. Then Mayor Munn, in discussing the city's past, present and possibilities for the future, contrasted this service which is comparable to that on most of the lines in Des Moines, with the service in Urbandale twenty years ago when street cars arrived and departed every hour and a half.

Paving an Aid

Another important factor in the development of the community is the Douglas Avenue paving which was laid by Polk County four years ago. This paving extends westward from the Catholic Monastery at the beginning of Merle Hay road to approximately seven rods west of the west boundary of Urbandale.

According to old timers in the community, most of the land now occupied by the business district and immediate surroundings was originally owned by John Cruikshank, who now lives on Fifty-eighth Street just south of the Urbandale car tracks.

"Pays Double in Des Moines"

IN SPEAKING OF TAXES, Mayor Munn called attention to a five acre piece owned and occupied by Glenn Hoffman, an employee in the Des Moines streets department. Half of the land lies within the city limits of Des Moines and the other half, that upon which are located the improvements lies in the city limits of Urbandale.

"Mr. Hoffman pays Des Moines double the tax that he pays our city, yet all the improvements are located in and taxed for the benefit of Urbandale" the mayor declared. Mr. Munn then referred to his own five acres, upon which the Munn home is located, for which the treasury of Urbandale is enriched \$76 a year for taxes.

Officials of the city meet once a month in the school house to transact the city business and discuss needed improvements or regulations. For these meetings the mayor and members of the city council each receive one dollar, providing they answer roll call.