



URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

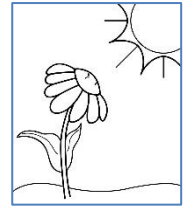
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Spring 2024

Christmas at the Olmsted-Urban House

This past December the Olmsted-Urban house was once again decorated for the season. We had our Annual Christmas Open House on Sunday, Dec. 3. Santa was present along with a variety of activities for the family and



featuring an appearance from a choir from the Urbandale High School. The weather was nice, though some snow might have added to the scenery.



The following Sunday, Dec. 10, the House was open for tours and refreshments as well. While we did not have all the activities there still was a good turnout and the house was still decorated in her finest for the holidays. Carol Lee Riekenberg has once again prepared a beautiful booklet to



capture the magic of the day.

Programs

We have had several interesting and enjoyable programs so far this year. We are holding our Monthly programs at the **Urbandale Library from 2-4 pm** on the **second Sunday** each month.

In January, Dr. Angela Franklin, President of Des Moines University, shared the history of Des Moines' medical school (DMU). She traced its origins from an offshoot of the Kirksville (Missouri) program founded by Dr. A.T. Still to the founding of Des Moines' school (1898) by his nephew, S.S. Still and his wife. The school has had several locations over the years with its latest and newest campus in West Des Moines.

The story of the Urbandale American Legion and VFW was told by Mike Knight (Urbandale American Legion) and Dennis Appelhons, (Urbandale VFW). The groups were an integral part of Urbandale over the years and we can see much today of their handwork in our community activities. In the course of the discussion, it was discovered that a plaque dedicating a flag to the Urbandale schools was in a pile of concrete at the High School. This plaque will be preserved and used in the near future.



This past Sunday Retired Urbandale Fire Chief Jerry Holt took us on a tour of the Urbandale Fire Department from its earliest beginnings to today. Our fire department has grown from a very loose volunteer group housed at Walker's Grocery store on 70th St. to a professional outfit housed in three facilities. Our first 'fire truck' was a two-wheeled cart pulled by horses.

On Sunday, **April 14**, Mr. Will Page will offer us a chance to learn about our homes with a presentation on **'What Style is My House?'** Bring a photo of your home, or one you especially like, and he will share information of the architectural style and period of your home.



Our **May 19** program will feature Staci Stanton sharing the history of the Urbandale Library. Note this date is the third Monday as Mother's Day is May 12.

The **June 9** program will be a special reception honoring long-time Urbandale residents Virginia Gee and Bob Simon. They have been the heart and soul of the Urbandale Historical Society for many years. We are taking the opportunity to celebrate and honor them for all they have done for our community over the many years. This celebration will be at the **Olmsted-Urban house from 2-4 pm**.

Rounding thing out will be the Annual Ice Cream Social and 4th of July celebrations. Our Annual Ice Cream

Social will be the Sunday, June 30 at the Olmsted-Urban House from 2-4 pm. We are hoping to see everyone at all of these activities.

May Market

The Urbandale Historical Society's May Market is slated for **Saturday, May 4 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**, with a rain date of Sunday, May 5. The event will be held on the beautiful lawn of the Olmsted-Urban House. Vendor registration is currently underway, with approximately 40 vendor spaces available. Each 10' by 10' space is \$45 and all registration fees benefit the Urbandale Historical Society. Crafters, direct sales like Tupperware, and antique vendors are encouraged to register for a space by emailing maymarket1904@gmail.com. Follow the Urbandale Historical Society on Facebook to share our social media post inviting vendors to register, and look for more posts that will publicize the event. Mark your calendar to attend the event to pick up great Mother's Day gifts and other special items.

URBANDALE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

A group of the Urbandale Alumni are working on a project to remodel the 'Heritage Room' on the second floor of the Olmsted-Urban house. This room currently houses a plethora of items relating to the Urbandale schools and city. We need a better way to display and store the items.

The Urbandale Alumni Association will be having a dedication ceremony at the Urbandale Historical House on Sunday, June 30th in conjunction with the Ice Cream Social. The dedication will be for the installation of the flagpole that flew on top of the K-12 building at 70th and Douglas. Details will be coming out on the Urbandale Alumni Association Facebook page and the Urbandale Historical Society Facebook page closer to June 30th. In addition, as a fundraiser for the Urbandale Alumni Association, they will be selling both 4x8 and 8x8 pavers that will eventually go around the flagpole. Urbandale graduates, families, school staff, and others may purchase a brick to put their name on and the year they graduated, or worked at Urbandale Schools. Order forms will be available at the Ice Cream Social for a brick. This project was the last project that Audrey Collins DeCarlo (Class of 1964) was working on when she passed. The flagpole area will be dedicated in her memory. This pole is to be erected on the ground of the Olmsted-Urban house in the vicinity of the pergola.

Urbandale City Flag Project

We mention in our last newsletter of the Urbandale City flag redesign project. Things are progressing quite smoothly. Over 400 submissions have been received. The committee has been working at narrowing the designs and looking at ways to incorporate the ideas and concepts expressed in the survey information and the designs.

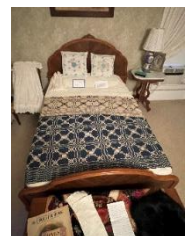


The next steps will be for the Flag Design working group to forward approximately ten potential flag designs to the Urbandale City Council for their review and assessments. The Councilmembers will then select approximately four designs that will be presented to the public for their rating. During April these prototype flag designs will be available to public review and rating. The Flag Design Committee will then review the public input and determine the flag design to present to the City Council. The final new Urbandale flag will be unveiled and presented at the Mayor's State of the City address on July 2, 2024 and will lead the Urbandale 4th of July parade.

So, our homework assignment is to watch the Urbandale website (www.urbandale.org/flag) after April 2 and provide our input and rating on the prototype flag designs presented. This is our opportunity to select the symbol for our community. More information about this project and how you can participate can be found at the Urbandale City website: www.urbandale.org/flag.

HEIRLOOM COVERLET

One of the treasured items at the Olmsted-Urban House is a hand-loomed coverlet which is displayed on the bed in the master bedroom on the second floor. When it was donated by Ruth Olmsted McKinney in 1987 it was estimated it was at least 150 years old. Ruth's mother Olive Stuart, was born in 1875. In 1902 she married Millard Olmsted and probably brought this family coverlet with her.



The coverlet was woven by her great-grandmother Ruth Hadley Stuart when the family was living in North Carolina before they moved to Iowa. The jacquard pattern woven with indigo blue threads on the top and repeated with light brown threads on the underside make a unique pattern for this hand-crafted homespun heirloom.

Oliver Smith

Persons interested in Local History often wonder about the origin of the names of Urbandale streets. Bob Simon, of the Urbandale Historical Society, has provided the answer to the question regarding Oliver Smith Drive which runs west from 70th to 74th Street. Oliver Smith, who owned property in the area, was a well-known architect from Des Moines.

Mae Nelson in her book, *Listening and Learning*, mentions that the Oliver Smith property was located south of Douglas. She says he raised horses, some for racing, but there is no factual documentation.

Smith and his wife did not live on the farm but at 1148 Tenth Street in Des Moines. Recent research indicated that Smith played a significant role in Polk County architectural history in the early 1900s before his sudden death in 1916. The headline story from the front-page article in the May 29, 1916 issue of the Des Moines Register reads: "Oliver O. Smith well known architect and businessman expires suddenly at home. Mr. Smith and his wife had just returned from his stock farm after spending the afternoon looking over his blooded herd of Shorthorn cattle. Apparently, he was in the best of health and spirits. He had been talking to Mrs. Smith when he said he was going upstairs to take a bath. A thud was heard in the bathroom and Mrs. Smith hastened to ascertain what it was. She opened the door and found her husband laying on the floor. The Doctors called declared death had been instantaneous and the result of heart trouble." He was only 48 years old and had been a leading architect in Polk County.

According to the Des Moines Register article: "Mr. Smith was the son of J. B. Smith, who died several years ago. His father also was an architect. He had lived all his life in Des Moines, where he was born forty-eight- years ago. Mr. Smith received his early education in local schools and studied later in St. Louis and Boston. His labors were confined to designing buildings in this city. Mr. Smith was a member of the Smith & Keffer. Recently he was appointed architect for the school board. The Historical building, the city library, Mercy hospital and all of the buildings at the fairgrounds are some the structures which he drew the plans. He was a thirty-second degree Mason, Shriner and a member of Pioneer lodge. Mr. Smith was twice married. His second wife was Miss Mae McPheeters, who with a daughter, Miss Edna Smith, of Dallas Center, survive him."

In 1898 the firm Smith and (Frank) Gutterson had been awarded the commission for the first State Historical Building on Grand Avenue near the State Capitol, the

iconic structure is now known as the Ola Babcock Miller Building. In 1899 the firm was responsible for the design of the original Des Moines Public Library near the riverfront, now the World Food Prize House of Laureates.

Perhaps an even greater longtime contribution to Iowa history was Smith's major role over the years in the development of the State Fairgrounds. In 1903, after being located at various sites, the State Board of Agriculture thought the time had come when the State should appropriate money for a permanent Fairgrounds. It was agreed the most pressing need was a Livestock Pavilion which they hoped would be the first permanent facilities that would add grandeur to the grounds.

The next building proposed was for exhibits for agriculture, dairy and horticulture departments. Seven architectural firms were invited to submit plans. Smith and Gage of Des Moines won the job, possibly because architect Oliver Smith had designed the impressive State Historical Building. Smith chose to use the same dark red brick and light stone planned for the Livestock Pavilion. These materials and colors would become a unifying theme throughout the grounds.

Over the years, Smith was associated with firms responsible for the planning and design of the Administration Building, Amphitheater, Horticulture Building, Machinery Hall, Horse Barn and Swine Pavilion.

The red brick Women's and Children's Building, with the distinctive red tile roof was dedicated at the 1915 Fair and cost about \$75,000 to build. Domestic Science programs were to be held dealing with Home Furnishings, Nutrition and Child Development. Fairgoers enjoyed resting on the wide porch unique to the building.

The Cattle Barn was planned to be completed in 1920. It was to have stalls for 1600 head. Perhaps the most visually interesting of the livestock barns is the Sheep Barn with terra-cotta rams' heads adorning the building's perimeters and blue- and cream-colored panels near the entrance,

Most of the buildings designed by Smith and Associates are still an important part of the Fairgrounds landscape.

In addition to outstanding architectural work in Polk County, Smith was also responsible for designing libraries and court houses in other parts of the state.

There are two other Urbandale connections to the Smith property. In 1918 Millard Olmsted purchased a parcel of land (Lot 11 of Maryland Acres) from Smith's widow, Mary Mae Smith. In 1920 he in turn sold this to the Urbandale Independent Community School District

so a school could be built, A two-s story brick building opened in 1925.

In 1920 a group of Urbandale residents wishing to establish a church obtained a lot near the corner of 70th and what would become Oliver Smith Drive from Smith's widow. An enclosed basement was built to serve as the first Urbandale Community Church which was dedicated in 1921. The rest is history.

Notes from Members

We know that the newsletter and other mailings are read because we occasionally get notes commenting on an article or happenings. Two notes we received recently merit sharing with everyone.

Joe Lamb commented (corrected) some information regarding the Lamb Dairy display we mentioned in our last Newsletter.

"Thanks for the copy of your newsletter. I noted a few corrections to point out. Bob Lamb made the original four model buildings for the display. Joe Lamb made the model of the dairy building and display table in 2023. Bob delivered milk for Ray Stuart in a Model A Ford sedan. They often had to pull it with a horse to get it started during winter. He never delivered with a horse drawn wagon. His father, Harold, did use the horse drawn wagon for deliveries. Bob had several delivery trucks in the 1930s and 1940s and bought a new 1950 Dodge Route Van (In 1941, he bought the last new commercial vehicle in Des Moines before WW II). In 1950 or 51, he sold the dairy to Fairlawn Dairy of West Des Moines and worked for them and finally worked delivering milk for AE Dairy for a few years until his retirement.

A scale model of the horse drawn milk delivery wagon, built by Bob, is on display in a glass enclosed case above the Lamb farmstead display.

Another note was from **Carol Boals**, also commenting on the Lamb Dairy article.

"Bob delivered Milk to us. Mom, Ruth Dunn, saved the cream at the top of the bottles to make sour cream/raisin cookies, the best! " Ask my brother-in-law **Rick Boals**, what is his connection to Bob's Lambs milk house? [*there must be a story here*].

Kay Valerius Dostal, the youngest of the Valerius girls, is a member of my church in Naperville. She and her husband, Mark, attended the dedication of the new Valerius elementary school. I also liked the articles about Matie Urban. On Halloween she was such an elegant lady serving us punch in her fancy cups as we sat at her big table. We loved going to her house?

John Urban was a very good clarinet player in 1st chair. Because I took private lessons from Mr. Simcake, my neighbor on 69th street, the band director let me play in the H.S. band in the 6th grade with the 3rd chair clarinet. It was a big deal for me to play with the big kids!"

These note and stories add so much to the rich history of our community. Please feel free to share with us

your stories of life in Urbandale

Memorials



We lost a true icon of Urbandale this past January 8 with the passing of Don Brush. Don was born on December 17, 1939, to James Basil and Mabel Elena (Kenner) Brush of [Brooklyn, Iowa](#). He was the youngest of four children and grew up on the family farm west of Brooklyn. He began his education at a small country school located in Bear Creek Township and graduated from Brooklyn High School in 1958. He was active in various organizations during his early years including youth groups and an altar server at St. Patrick Catholic Church, the Bear Creek 4-H Club, school sports and music activities, and Boy Scouts. Don had the honor of becoming the first Eagle Scout in Brooklyn.

Don attended St. Ambrose University in Davenport and graduated with a degree in accounting. In 1963, he married Kathryn Louise Beran of Victor, and upon graduation, they moved to Urbandale where he began his professional career with the Des Moines Office of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.

Don was a Certified Public Accountant by profession and a Certified Internal Auditor, earning an Executive MBA degree from the University of Iowa in 1990. Don spent a majority of his career with Wells Fargo & Company where he eventually retired as Vice President & Manager with the National Specialty Asset Management Group. Don also held roles as Financial Officer & Controller of Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company and Vice President & Auditor of West Bank.

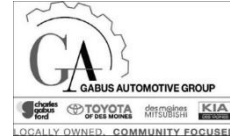
Don served the City of Urbandale as a City Council Member for 28 years and Mayor for two years. He was a long-time member of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Urbandale. Don was active in various local organizations including a charter member of the Urbandale Jaycees, the Board of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Executive Board and Chair of the Metro Waste Authority, the Boards of the Urbandale Library Foundation, the Urbandale Development Association, and the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce and together with his wife Kathryn a very active member of the Urbandale Historical Society.

Among survivors are his wife, Kathryn, sons, Steven (Melissa) Brush of Clive, and David (Erin) Brush of Lake Forest, IL; Susan Brush DeMouth of Lake Suzy, FL. and nine grandchildren.

NEW MEMBERS

Tom & Delores Cook 9341 Parkside Ln. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-276-1817 deeck04@gmail.com	Jeremy & Kristin Mouchka 4039 70th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-205-7464 kmouchka@gmail.com
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORTERS



MEMBERSHIP

Our Membership year runs from Jan 1 through Dec 31. For all those who have renewed for 2024, thank you. Enclosed is a renewal form. As well you can go online at www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org under the Membership tab.

URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

Donations are tax deductible.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting: \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron: \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Name on permanent plaque: \$1,000 and up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining: \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor: \$500 and up | <input type="checkbox"/> 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:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting & preserving Urbandale's history | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening /Yard work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Guides for School Groups & others. | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs and Trips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building/Grounds/House Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events and Projects (Ice Cream Social Christmas | <input type="checkbox"/> Housekeeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office work | <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have Urbandale information, photographs or memorabilia to donate or lend for copying. | |

Website: www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org

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