

Mural at Lions Park

One of the newer groups working for Urbandale is the Public Art Committee. Members are appointed by the mayor and work to establish and implement community and public art projects in Urbandale.

More than a dozen outdoor sculptures have been selected and placed in various parks and sites around the community. Art work has also been hung in City Hall and a changing display of artists' works can be viewed in the meeting room hallway of the Urbandale Library.

But an interest in art is nothing new in Urbandale. A newspaper article from the Urbandale News in 1985 tells of an early citizens group interested in encouraging an art project for the community. There are many familiar names included.

The mural described is still in place on the west wall in the Ralph Whitten Shelter House at 72nd and Prairie. There are no windows in the room, so this mural still provides a pleasant background.

Mural at Lion's Park – An article from the Urbandale News - November 21, 1985

Nearly six years ago, in March of 1980, a Lion's Club Committee pondered over ideas for a mural to decorate the west wall of the new Shelter House at Lion's Park. It was decided early on that the

scene would have to represent the community, a view that would be looked upon by citizens with pride, a scene that could aptly be described as "strictly Urbandale."

Committee members included Lee Couch, Lee Reinig, Fran Gabus, Denny Neal and Mae Nelson. Denny Neal, a professional artist, who drew the sketches for the "Country Parson" column, was the artist consultant for the project. He worked with sketches made by Mae Nelson and envisioned a pastoral scene similar to a panoramic view of Living History Farms.

It would take nearly 100 volunteer hours to complete the project, a scene depicting the Flynn mansion, the Church of the Land (which had not been built at the time) and the Urbandale Water Tower.

Original committee members Gabus, Nelson and Neal were assisted by two senior citizens, Ima Newbrough and Leona McDivitt. Two high school girls also lent their time, they were Joni Beck and Kristi Evans.

The three structures were placed in a late summer pasture, complete with native trees and a pond with cattails. Mae Nelson remembers that Denny Neal would stop work on the project simply to gaze at it awhile, and then make suggestions on how the trees or buildings could be improved upon.

"He was the one who really put life into the trees and buildings," Mae remembers.

The life is still there for anyone who views the mural, which was finished on June 16, 1980.