

URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2025

HAPPENINGS AT THE OLMSTED-URBAN HOUSE



Saturday, October 11 found the Olmsted-Urban House decked out for the coming of Autumn. The Historical Society hosted a Fall Festival featuring a pancake breakfast, courtesy of the Urbandale Lions Club, face painting and fun activities. Lions Mike Ulm and Dick Leutzinger cooked the pancakes and sausages. It was a beautiful day to get out and enjoy visiting with friends.



Halloween night was the actual trick-or-treat night this year. Beggar's night was moved to Halloween throughout the metro area bringing an end to a long-held tradition of the little, and bigger, beggars out on the night before Halloween.

One tradition that continued was Punch on the Porch. Marisa Beal and Deb Jacobs, were on hand through the

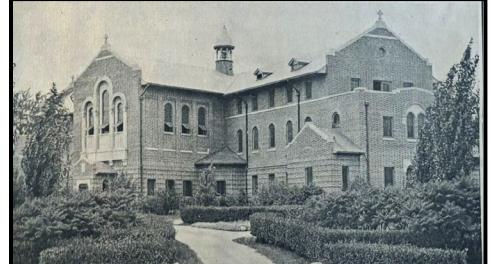
'cool' temperatures to listen to jokes and hand out punch and candy to the ghosts and goblins visiting the house. Yes, the punch was served in the glass cups.



HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMS

Our Program series started with a bang in September with a presentation celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Urbandale Library building on 86th St. It was fun to see the growth of the Library from its beginnings on 70th St. to 71st St., Aurora and eventually 86th St. We also got a sneak preview of the new changes coming to our library.

In October we learned of the history of St. Gabriel Monastery from Monsignor Beeson and



Joanne Kuster and a bit of the founding of St. Pius X church. This is the 70th anniversary for St. Pius in Urbandale, look for more on St. Pius's history in five years at their 75th Anniversary.

November 9 will feature Lee Turner speaking on the history of Mercy Hospital and Medical Center.

December is our Christmas Time. We will have our Annual Open House on Sunday, Dec. 7 and the Christmas Activities on Dec. 14. The House will be open for tours, refreshments, music and season joy both Sundays (2-4 pm).



January 11 we will be back at the Urbandale Library for an interesting look at the life and times of the Flynn's and Living History Farms

with Elizabeth Keest Sedrel.

Todd Carberry will take us on a trip through time at the Urbandale Golf and Country Club in February (8). We can enjoy stories from the warmth of the Urbandale Library and dream of hitting a hole-in-one.

In March (8) we will revisit one of the mysteries of the Lottery with Terry Rich. He will share with us the uncovering of the Eddie Tipton affair, the largest attempted lottery fraud case.

On April 12th, Liz Holland will fill us in on what happened after St. Gabriel's Monastery closed. She will tell us about the history of Merle Hay Mall



Today stands Merle Hay Mall, on the site where St. Gabriel's was built in 1922.

Pat Finnerty will take us on a nostalgic tour of old Urbandale, who lived where and whose businesses and farms made up what now call Urbandale, in May.

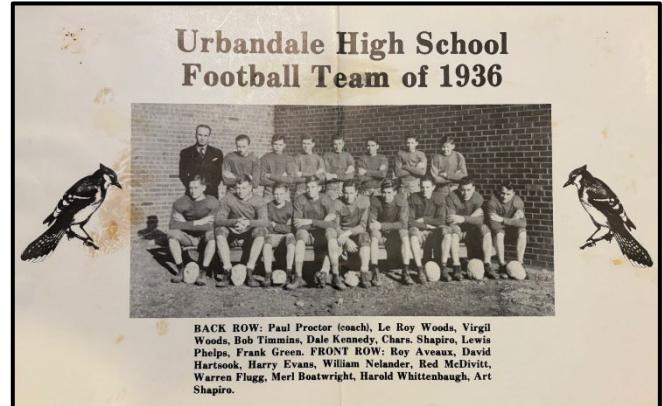


June will be our chance to celebrate the 250th birthday of our US of A. Kevin Parmenter with the Iowa Society of the Sons of the American Revolution will be sharing with us some interesting history of our country. This will be a good lead in to our Annual Ice Cream Social on June 30 and then the Great Urbandale 4th of July.

With the exception of the December Christmas Celebrations, all of our Programs are held at the Urbandale Public Library on the 2nd Sunday of the month (except May, the 3rd Sunday) from 2-4 pm. We also have an Open House on the 1st Sunday of each month, 2-4 pm at the Olmsted-Urban House.

URBANDALE ALUMNI NEWS

Several Urbandale Alums have been looking at the treasures uncovered by cleaning out the old Heritage Room. As they glean through the material they are creating new displays of memorabilia for the **Urbandale History Room**. Stop by and see the room during one of our Open Houses and events.



BACK ROW: Paul Proctor (coach), Le Roy Woods, Virgil Woods, Bob Timmins, Dale Kennedy, Chas. Shapiro, Lewis Phelps, Frank Green. FRONT ROW: Roy Aveaux, David Hartsuck, Harry Evans, William Nelander, Red McDivitt, Warren Flugg, Merl Boatwright, Harold Whittenbaugh, Art Shapiro.

The Urbandale School and Alumni Foundation is sponsoring a Tall and Small Ball in the Fall November 15 from 6:30-8:30 at the Urbandale High School. This is a chance to relive your prom memories with that special someone. More information can be found at: [A Tall and Small Ball in the Fall : URBSAF Events](#)

There is still a chance to win a new car and support the Urbandale School and Alumni Foundation. They are having a raffle for a new 2025 VW car. More information can be found at: [URBSAF Volkswagen Car Raffle](#) :



URBANDALE LIONS CLUB CELEBRATES 80TH ANNIVERSARY

Just as World War II ended and our country was returning to some degree of normality, the Urbandale Lions Club was chartered. The Urbandale Lions Club has accomplished much over these 80 years and made a real mark on Urbandale. The most visible project was the purchase and development of a piece of farm land into today's Lions Park.

After establishing the park, the Lions built the Ralph Witten Shelter House, then a wading pool. At the behest of several other groups, the Lions took on the project of creating tennis and basketball courts at Lions Park.

Having an interest in the youth of Urbandale, the Lions built the Girls softball field at Lions Park and helped build the boys baseball field. They were instrumental in developing a number of recreation athletic programs for the boys and girls.

To pay for these and other things in Urbandale, the Lions were creative in raising funds. They promoted everything from donkey baseball, musicals, "Town and County Quiz Show" (Clay Rusk, WHO), talent shows, parking cars, broom, lightbulb and even fish (to eat) sales. Their Homecoming Pancake Day, later dinner, was a fundraising event and celebration of Urbandale's Homecoming. Urbandale 4th of July celebration would not be complete without the parade, the Lions were early instigators in that, and Lions Bingo (look for a new tent this July).

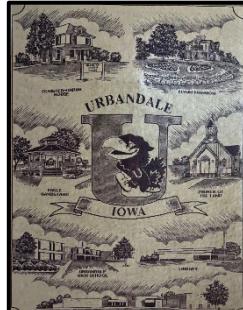
The Lions have always had a special love for the schools. Lion Goff Joyner took the lead and was the catalyst in forming the Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of Urbandale in 1962 (later Dollars for Scholars and now simply the Urbandale and Alumni Education Foundation). The Foundation was incorporated as a separate non-profit organization with funds from the Lions Club. Most of the foundation's early leaders were Lions: Newton Dunn, Lester Faber, and Floyd Sievers, plus many others. The Urbandale Lioness club, with support of the Urbandale Lions held a brunch each spring with the proceeds going to the Scholarship Fund. In 2019 the Urbandale Education Foundation took the lead with this event with the support of the Urbandale Lions Club for several more years. Total gifts to this fund run well into five figures. Now most of the proceeds of the Homecoming pancake dinner are directed to the Dollars for Scholars program.

The Lions continue contributing to the Urbandale community in so many ways. Whenever there is a need, Lions are there physically and financially. We have given back to the community in our time and services of over 700 volunteer hours and several thousand dollars per year.



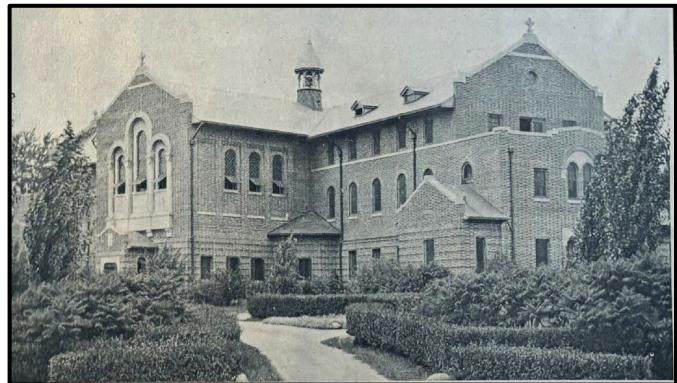
NEW ACQUISITION

Gordon and Mary Dahlby recently gifted an Urbandale throw blanket to the Historical Society. It is in excellent shape and still quite beautiful. They were available back in the 1990s I believe. We have at least one at the Olmsted-Urban House and many of us have one in our own homes. This blanket is



mounted on a frame, but can easily be removed. Look for this blanket to be available in a raffle at our upcoming Christmas event.

ST. GABRIEL'S MONASTERY



Our recent program on St. Gabriel's Monastery by Msgr. Beeson and Loanne Kuster stirred quite a bit of interest among many in Urbandale and surrounding area. Dick Leutzinger came across a feature in the 'Downtowner' newspaper from January 1982 featuring the Monastery.

From the article: *"Years ago, a chant could be heard by residents and visitors to Des Moines as they crossed the intersection of Merle Hay Road and Douglas Avenue. The sounds came from the order of Passionist Brothers who lived at St. Gabriel's Monastery in Des Moines for 36 years. The sight now is Merle Hay Mall.*

In 1958 the Monastery and grounds were purchased by Bernard Greenbaum and Associates of Chicago, for \$550,000. The sounds of chanting and bell ringing were replaced with the sounds of construction, and the then St. Gabriel's was demolished in 1956, to make room for the then \$8 million shopping center

St. Gabriel's housed about 50 brothers, students and lay brothers. The three-story brick structure was constructed in 1922 at a cost of \$120,000. The Passionist

The Monastery, on the corner of Merle Hay and Douglas, was named after St. Gabriel, who is recognized by the Catholic Church for simplicity and absence of extraordinary in his life.

St. Gabriel's housed about 25 ordained monks, 25 students and seven lay brothers. The ordained monks did not always stay in the monastery. Their duty was to go out and conduct missions in the churches in the Des Moines area. This included taking over work when a parish priest was ill or absent. Students had to study for eight years before they could take the vows of the order. Including a year in St. Louis and then the

novitiate in Louisville, Ky. The seven lay brothers were responsible for cooking, cleaning, tailoring and barbering at the Monastery."



Today stands Merle Hay Mall, on the sight where St. Gabriel's was built in 1922.

DIGITAL NEWSPAPER PROJECT

In looking at the other articles from the 'Downtowner' issue of the paper from above were pieces on "Iowa or Ioway", a history of Valentines Day, people's thoughts on the Des Moines 'new' skywalk system, solar water heaters and what it would take for a marching band to be in the Rose Bowl in 1983. Interesting ads revealed that you could get boys and girls outerwear from \$11.49 to \$62.99 at Younkers.

We mention these interesting tidbits from an old newspaper to remind you of our **Newspaper Digitization Project** as mentioned in our last Newsletter. The first batch of the Urbandale school newspapers (Blue Jay Chatter and Campus Courier) are being processed and should be available online soon. The next batch will be the editions of the Urbandale community newspapers from 1954 through the 2000s. These will be followed by a few of the very early Blue Jay Chatter (1938 -1945) as well as the Urbandale Press Citizen.

This project is being funded by community support from the Historical Society, Urbandale Public Library and Endow Urbandale. We will be requesting funds from the Urbandale City later this year as well.



UPLIFT URBANDALE

The Urbandale Chamber of Commerce and the Urbandale City organizes an Annual event each Fall to connect area businesses and various organizations with support for their fall and other maintenance projects. Again this year the Historical Society participated. Kading Properties paired with us. They raked the leaves and did some needed landscape edging. We are most grateful for their assistance.



MEMORIALS

Joe Lamb, long-time Urbandale resident and Historical Society member, has shared with us news of the death of his sister. Elizabeth Louise (Lamb) Tatge Temple, Texas passed away September 4, 2025 at the age of 88.

MEMBERSHIP

New Members

Sharrie McKinney
604 E. Hillcrest Dr. Unit 101
Indianola, IA 50125
812-987-1834 (Daughter)
slmckinney101@gmail.com

Our Membership year runs from Jan 1 through Dec 31. Please watch for our Call for renewal coming later this year. You can always go online at www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org under the Membership tab to join or renew your membership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORTERS



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