



# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

4010 70<sup>TH</sup> STREET

URBANDALE, IA 50322

(515) 270-2917

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

SPRING 2015

*Scatter Joy*

*Emerson*

## Plant Sale

Don't miss the Plant Sale this Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on the lawn of the Olmsted-Urban House.

Bring your plants in plastic bags, milk jugs or whatever you want. Please label the plants as to color and approximate growth height if you know. We would like to have your plants on Friday or before 9:00 on Saturday. You can leave them on the porch at the Olmsted-Urban House anytime.

If you have questions, call Anne Ulm, plant sale chairperson, at 276-1568. A special thanks to Anne and her plant sale volunteers!



## Save the Date

**What:** Annual Ice Cream Social

**When:** Sunday, June 28 2:00 – 4:00

**Where:** Front Lawn of the Olmsted-Urban House  
4010 70th Street

You will have a choice of pie or cake, and a beverage to accompany the serving of ice cream.

Vintage automobiles will be on display and the House and Barn will be open for tours.

This is our major community fund-raiser and we need your support. Plan to participate and invite your friends.

## Election of Officers

Election of officers was held in connection with the meeting on April 6th. Norm Huitt was elected president of the Board. Norm and Faith have been members since 2007. Norm has served a number of years on the Buildings and Grounds Committee with Wayne Robbins, and knows well the challenges of maintaining the Olmsted-Urban House and property. Faith will continue as membership Chairperson.

Cynthia Dabrieo, a long-time member, will serve as Vice President. Cynthia has served on the Restoration Committee as well as helping with many projects. She is currently in charge of publicity and will continue in that role as well as Vice President.

Kay Readinger was reelected as Secretary and Jo Henry will be Treasurer. Thanks to these individuals and other members of the Board for their service to the Historical Society and the community.

## July 4th Celebration

The Fourth of July celebration has a 60 year old tradition of community participation in Urbandale.

Virginia (Ginny) Olmsted Campbell tells how her father "Mugs" Olmsted in 1953 helped organize a street dance for young people at 70th and Douglas. A juke box was rolled out from a neighboring restaurant for music, and Mugs wired it so it could be played without adding coins.

The following year the American Legion began backing the dance. There are not specific records for how else the town celebrated, but an account in the local newspaper, "Urbandale News" in 1955 gives quite a schedule of planned activities. The American Legion was sponsoring a parade with prizes for the best floats, pet parade, best trimmed bike, horse and rider, etc. Legionnaires were to have a color guard and veterans were asked to put on any or part of their uniform. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were also invited to march in the parade in uniform. The parade started at 70th and Roseland, went up 70th to Prairie and ended at Lions Park.

Other events during the day included foot races, horseshoe pitching, pony rides, a softball game pitting Lions Club members and representatives of the volunteer fire department and the American Legion. More than 80 people gathered for a picnic potluck in the park.

In 1956 there was mention also of a rolling pin throw, three-legged race, sack race, high jump, and baseball game. A queen contest was also organized. People could vote for their favorite candidate by putting money in a jar. Linda Reynolds was selected queen and received a luggage set.

By the 1960's the celebration was expanded over several days and midway rides were scheduled. Other events in 1965 were a UHS band concert, square dance, talent show, and a teen disco dance in the all purpose room at Olmsted School.

In 1976 the July 4th celebration was tied to the Bicentennial. There was an Arts and Crafts Show, Miss Urbandale Pageant, AAU 5-mile road run, Jaycee Auction, and a patriotic musical

performed by Meredith Drive Reformed Church.

A small scale fireworks launching had been added. Originally a bucket was passed around by volunteers in Lions Park in the late afternoon for contributions, but usually less than \$500 was collected. Merchants were then asked to donate. The displays had varying success. One year fireworks damaged the roof of the school.

In 1980 commemorative buttons were created and sold, though there was not much profit. The next year the buttons were numbered and prizes donated by merchants were awarded. This tradition has continued to raise funds.

The fireworks displays became more professional and were shot off north of the high school to be viewed from Lions Park and the surrounding area. Now thousands of dollars are raised for the well publicized display which is shot from the west side of Walker Johnston Park for safety reasons.

In recent years the three-day July 4th celebration has included a large midway and carnival, food stands, Teen Street Dance, Trash to Treasure Sale at the Senior Center, several band concerts in the Lions Park gazebo, a bike ride, foot races for children, 5K run, cribbage tournaments, soccer games, and a car show. An outstanding fireworks display is great ending to a wonderful Urbandale celebration.

A variety of performances and competitions have taken place through the years. The parade is now one of the largest July 4th events in Iowa attracting thousands with family reunions and out-of-town visitors. From the humble beginnings in the 1950's celebration of July Fourth remains an important part of Urbandale community life!

## Spring Bus Tour

May 12<sup>th</sup>

7:00 a.m. Departure

Spring is finally here – a great time to travel through the Iowa countryside. Our destination for the spring bus tour is Greene County on Tuesday, May 12th.

We will head first to Paton where we will be welcomed with refreshments at the town library. Our next stop will be a visit to Bauer Bilt, a specialty farm equipment manufacturer.

Tour director Bob Simon says, "Plan to be astonished by the amenities, menu, and service when we go to lunch at the 209 Restaurant."

After lunch we will travel a few miles to Jefferson, site of the famous Mahanay Memorial Carillon Tower with bells that chime every quarter hour. A popular observation tower at the 120 foot level can be reached by a glass elevator, and allows visitors a panoramic view of the countryside for many miles. We will also visit RVP 1875, a craft furniture builder with a collection of vintage tools.

The spacious and well designed Greene County Historical Society Museum is dubbed by State Historical Society officials as one of the best historical museums in rural Iowa. The museum displays "rooms" of early-day stores and offices complete with original equipment and retail goods as well as cases full of old-time artifacts. There is even a life-size mock up of a coal mine.

We will return to Urbandale at approximately 5:30 p.m.

The tour is open to everyone, so invite your friends to come along. The bus leaves the parking lot of the Olmsted-Urban House, 4010 70th Street, promptly

at 7:00 a.m. A check for \$80 sent to the Urbandale Historical Society will hold your place and includes all charges. Please enclose an emergency contact name and phone number with your check. Mark "Bus Tour" on the envelope. Call Bob Simon at 276-2478 or Janice Winey at 276-2753 for more information.



## The House is Open

Do you have some questions about Urbandale history? The Olmsted-Urban House will be open Sunday, May 3rd and Sunday, June 7th from 2:00 – 4:00. Members will be on hand to help you look through some of the historic clippings, maps and photos that have been collected. Perhaps you have some items to share that could be copied.

Information on some specific topics can be found on the Urbandale Historical Society website

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

Go in on City History topics in past newsletters which include the history of streetcars, Public Library, Lions Park, Lions Club, Police Department, McDivitt Grove Cemetery, etc.

UCAN Urbandale site also has some history given under the Centennial listing. Some pictures may be added in the future.

## Share Photos

The Urbandale Centennial Steering Committee is collecting historic photos from the city's past to feature on the group's computer Facebook Page.

Austin Jensen of the committee says, "We want to post all kinds of photos of Urbandale through the decades. Everyone likes to see what used to be a location they're familiar with. We want people to share photos from Urbandale High School days or from their old neighborhoods, childhood activities, school events, businesses, and more from any time period."

Residents can share their photos in three ways:

1. Mail or drop off photos to the Urbandale Community Action Network (UCAN) to be scanned and posted on line. UCAN's address is 4103 72nd Street, PO Box 7615, in Urbandale. (The UCAN office is located in the Lion's Park Shelter House) Photos will be returned to their owners.
2. Email photos to [info@urbandalenetwork.org](mailto:info@urbandalenetwork.org) (The Urbandale Public Library has equipment available to scan photos)
3. Post photos directly to the Urbandale Centennial Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/Urbandale100](http://www.facebook.com/Urbandale100)

Photos will be posted throughout the year to lead up to the official celebration of Urbandale's Centennial in 2016-2017.

Jane Jensen, UCAN Administrative Assistant, is working with Virginia Gee to scan some of the pictures from the Urbandale Historical Society's collection to be posted for viewing.

## "A Celebration of Little Girls"

Our 16th Annual Tea Party will be held on June 1, 3, and 5. This event includes music, a lesson on manners, a story, a fun craft, and a sit down lunch. Girls who have completed kindergarten and not over 10 years of age are invited to attend.

The committee will begin planning soon so if you are interested in joining the committee or helping during the teas, please contact Beth Haigh at 276-9654.



## Edna Mae Jacobs

One of Urbandale's long time residents passed away on April 15, 2015. Edna Mae Jacobs and her husband Harold were "neighbors" who lived just down 70th Street from the Olmsted-Urban House. She had many stories to tell of growing up and raising a family in Urbandale. Her ancestry dates back to the original McDivitt family on Meredith, and she was proud she had lived in Urbandale all of her 91 years. She had special memories of time spent at her grandparent's large farmhouse on Merle Hay Road. At the time of her death she may have been the oldest Urbandale resident to have lived here continuously. She was the last surviving member of the old Urbandale High School class of 1941, and she enjoyed participating in school reunions. Edna Mae was also a supporter of the activities of the Urbandale Historical Society and we will miss her.