



URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2021

Ice Cream Social Cancelled

Because of changing conditions with the enduring COVID situation, the Ice Cream Social planned for September 12 was cancelled.

Carol Lee Riekenberg has prepared a beautiful booklet highlighting our Ice Cream Socials of the past. It is available at the house.

Thanks to those who had responded they were willing to provide pies and cakes and were planning to volunteer. We do hope to see you next summer.

Pancake Breakfast and Halloween Festivities

We are planning to have a Halloween celebration this Fall. Mark your calendar for **Saturday, October 30th 9AM-11AM**. Thanks to the Urbandale Lions Club we will be having a *Pancake Feed* to help support the Urbandale Historical Society. Costumes are encouraged, bring the kids as we will have special treats for them.

Donations are greatly appreciated.

Urbandale Roller Rink

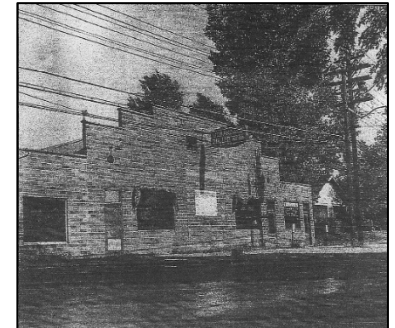
The Urbandale Roller Rink was the subject of the Historical Society program meeting, Sunday, October 10, at 2pm. Ginny Campbell and others shared memories of fun days in the 1950s.

In the 1940s Urbandale, with a population of just over a thousand, was a quiet little community with not much to do for entertainment. Most family activities centered around the school.

Eldon and Ruth Clements had moved to Urbandale in the 1930s with their son, Richard. Roller skating was a popular activity after World War II and the Clements thought it might have a place in the community. Eldon

decided to construct a brick building at 3829 70th Street. The unique arched roof came from an old rink at 6th & Holcomb in Des Moines that had burned. A solid maple floor was installed and the Urbandale Roller Rink opened June 12, 1948.

Skaters paid a 35¢ admission fee and those without skates paid an additional 25¢ to rent skates. The rink was closed on Mondays and Tuesdays except for private parties. Wednesday through Saturday nights skaters filled the rink from 7:30-10:30 pm. Matinee sessions



were also offered on Saturdays and Sundays from 2-4:30 pm. At that time, most business remained closed on Sundays so some people in the community were unhappy that the rink offered Sunday matinees.

The roller rink also offered nights such as "church nights" where Clements said many young married couples would fill the rink. But it wasn't just the rink's church nights that brought parishioners through the doors. St. Pius X Catholic Church was founded in March, 1955, but without a church building. The congregation celebrated mass at the roller rink until a chapel was completed in 1956 at 66th & Oliver Smith Drive.

Because there were so few rinks in the area, people came from Des Moines, northwest Polk County, Johnston, Grimes, and Dallas Center. Even Wayne Robbins, who went to Lincoln High School, was quoted in a newspaper article as coming out to Urbandale on several dates.

For local young people, the roller rink was 'The Place' to meet and hang out. As our population grew and attendance increased there came other problems. Fights

began to break out in the street around the roller rink. Clements became so irritated with the fighting and mischief that he closed the rink. Skaters were welcomed for the last time on New Year's Eve 1958 for the end of an era.

Clements converted the building into the local franchise for Overhead Door Company, another business he owned. The building later burned down. Auto Body and Auto Artist later occupied the former roller rink site and is still there today.

Please watch our Facebook and Website (www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) for more information of upcoming programs and activities.

Role of Board Members

Urbandale Historical Society Board members play an important role in the success of the Society and the care of the Olmsted-Urban House and property. There are currently ten members serving with various responsibilities.

President - Norm Huitt: Norm followed Wayne Robbins as president in 2015. In addition to providing leadership for the Board, he heads the Buildings and Grounds Committee working with City Officials, electricians, plumbers, lawn care companies, paid workmen, insurance representatives and the technicians for the security system. He works to apply for financial grants, and obtains historical acquisitions for the House and Barn. Norm was instrumental in working with others to get the Olmsted - Urban House named to the National Register of Historical Places.

Vice President - Cynthia Dabrieo: Cynthia's family came to Urbandale in the 1970s when her husband, Robert, was working for Parker Brothers Games. She has served on the Restoration and Acquisition Committee and worked on various fundraising activities, including the "Little Girl's Tea parties". She is currently in charge of publicity to let the public know about the society programs and events.

Treasurer - Jo Henry: Jo deposits the checks, pays bills, keeps track of membership, provides a monthly statement and works with the president to apply for grants. This year she was also responsible for much of the planning for the Ice Cream Social, which eventually had to be cancelled. Jo is also an active volunteer for U-CAN Caring Corps and the Urbandale Education Foundation.

Membership - Pat Finnerty: Pat keeps computer records of members' current addresses, phone numbers, and when given, email addresses. As the primary computer operator, he maintains the Urbandale Historical Society's website posting interesting facts and photos. He also responds to messages sent to the Society email address Urbandalehistory@gmail.com. Pat also writes some of the articles for the quarterly Society newsletter, prepares the layout, and gets copies printed and ready to mail. He also assists Norm with Building and Grounds.

Fundraising - Susan Bonnicksen: As a newer Board member Susan is working with the Fundraising Committee headed by Todd and Polly Kimm. A new brochure has been developed and several events are being planned. She provides a wealth of experience and connections from her business work and connections with the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce.

Local History - Virginia Gee: A member since the 1980s, Virginia has held many roles. She organizes information about Urbandale history from a variety of sources, and with Pat prepares articles for the quarterly newsletter. She attempts to answer questions about Urbandale for individuals, has made presentations for school groups, and writes a "history" article for Urbandale Living Magazine. Virginia also works with Restoration and Acquisitions, and prepares displays in the House and Barn.

Local History - Meribeth Haynes: Meribeth's interest in local history is particularly related to the Urbandale schools. She helped organize the Urbandale High School Alumni Association and provides contact with their projects and events. She is currently helping to organize school information and memorabilia in the Heritage Room at the Olmsted-Urban House.

Special Projects - Ginny (Virginia) Campbell: Ginny is the only local representative of the original Olmsted family. She grew up in the red brick house just north of the Olmsted-Urban house with her parents, "Mugs" and Helen Olmsted. A 1956 graduate of Urbandale High School, she has kept in touch with other class members and townspeople and has provided a lot of local information to the Historical Society for programs. She has served on a variety of committees and coordinates House Tours. With the help of volunteers, Ginny takes care of housekeeping chores to keep the House ready for visitors.

Special Projects - Carol Lee Riekenberg: Carol Lee has taken a special interest in the Children's Room at the Olmsted-Urban house organizing an interesting collection of toys, dolls, and clothing representing several decades. With items from her personal collection, she particularly enjoys preparing holiday displays. Through the years she has compiled a series of "books" of photos and personal stories related to Society events. These books are priceless and available to peruse at the House.

Programs and Tours - Bob Simon: Since the early 1980s, Bob has been an active member of the Historical Society. In the years before the purchase of the Olmsted-Urban House, Bob worked on a number of projects related to finding a permanent location where memorabilia and records could be preserved. He served on the original fundraising committee and through the years has organized raffles and other events to raise money. He is in charge of the brick Walk of History project. With his interest in history, Bob has researched information, planned programs, organized bus tours, and generally serves as a "host" when the Wayne Robbins Barn is open to visitors.

With all these activities, Board members need your help. Please volunteer for any area in which you are interested. With Kay Readinger's "retirement", we are still in need of a Board Secretary. These duties would include recording minutes, mailings and recordkeeping.

Urbandale Lions Club 75th Anniversary

On September 14, 1945 the Urbandale Lions Club was chartered. Last September, 2020 was the 75th anniversary. Being in the height of the pandemic, they were unable to celebrate this achievement, so on October 28 the Urbandale Lions Club will be celebrating their 75 + 1 Anniversary. We have been so blessed to have them as a part of our community and are thankful for their work over the many years to make Urbandale what it is.

End of the swimming Pool

Drive along Aurora near the Urbandale High School, no your eyes are not playing tricks on you - the Urbandale Swimming Pool is gone.

The City Council in March voted to permanently close the Swimming Pool. In late summer the DeCarlo Deconstruction Company demolished and hauled away

all that remained of the building, pool and aquatic area. All the space is filled in and graded over. The actual ground belongs to the School District and there has been no indication yet of what use will be made of it.



Discussion of the need for an indoor swimming pool in Urbandale first began in the 1960s, but it was not until the 1970s that a bond issue was approved, and the City of Urbandale and the School District entered into a 50-year lease agreement.

In 1976 the indoor, six-lane, 200,000-gallon pool opened becoming the only indoor public swimming pool in the Des Moines metro area. At the pool countless number of young people learned to swim as part of their school physical education program, as well, there were opportunities for adult fitness classes and very popular Senior Swim exercises programs. Summer programs and open lap swims were offered for all ages. The pool was also used by swim teams and by families as a fun place to share an afternoon or hold a special event.

According to Jan Herke, Parks and Recreation Director, the pool has had to undergo a number of repairs and improvements as it began to show its age. After 30 years trends in aquatics started to change. The popularity of outdoor aquatic centers in the area increased, affecting attendance and income for the local pool.

It was time to research the recreational needs of the community as well as evaluate the pool's current physical condition. Open Forums were held in 2007 to provide residents with an opportunity to give their opinions and learn about options for a new community center that would include greater amenities. A bond referendum held was unsuccessful. So, the decision was made to fix up the existing pool for more years of expected use. Improvements were made to include extensive plumbing repairs, electrical upgrading, pool resurfacing and adding new boilers at a cost of more than \$500,000. That would keep the pool in operation for a few more years. Unfortunately, it did not solve the deeper challenge that developed of operating the pool at a loss of over \$350,000 a year. In 2020 the pool had to be closed because of COVID with no prospects for soon

reopening for regular programming. A new problem developed with the discovery that a 6,000-gallon fuel tank installed below the pool that was leaking and would have cost \$25,000 to \$35,000 to remove. Closure was inevitable. Since the contract agreement with the School District was to end in 2026, the decision was made to end the days of the Urbandale Swimming Pool. The City is still examining options for ways to enhance the recreational activities for our community.

As a side note, the Urbandale Pool on Aurora was not the first community pool in Urbandale. In 1954 the Lions Club built a wading pool in Lions Park just east of the Shelter house. From a piece by Les Hamilton in his *Around Home, Urbandale* we find some interesting information about that wading pool which provided hours of fun for our little ones and even a few minutes of respite for their parents.

“Eldon Clements thought that a wading pool should be ready for summer use in 1954, and through his leadership, and that of Frank Gibson, Archie Towers, Joe and Norman Wood, E.L. Canine, Jim Ahern and Charley Chew, among other Lions, gathered to get the job done. Archie’s trencher was used to get the pipe laid for water into the pool. A cement finishing machine was loaned for the final work of the pool. I [Les Hamilton] remember that it got away from one operator as it was started, and bucked holes in the nearly finished surface. Charley Chew first attempted to lasso the run-away, then took a good bump in the ribs getting it stopped. Clement’s plan, \$1.00 from every fellow present at a Lions meeting then, and a completed pool within three weeks was done. Later the park board put a fence around it to keep the toddlers out when it was unsupervised, and the dogs, always.”

This past summer, the wading pool was removed as well.

Acquisitions

We have received several items of note in the past few months. Dick Cory has donated a variety of items relating to the Girls softball teams including jackets, autographed softballs and a couple of mugs commemorating the State Championship team of 1976.



Norm Huit has acquired for the Society an Edison Roll phonograph and an early Howe sewing machine (predates Singer). These are currently on display at the Olmsted House.



Urbandale Schools Update

The new and improved Olmsted elementary school is



open and full of young energetic kids. The Olmsted School opened this Fall.

work being done to prepare for the new Valerius building. The kids from Valerius are now attending the old Jensen building.



Valerius Elementary is now a large open field with much

Bricks from the Valerius Elementary building are available for community members wishing to have a brick as a keepsake. Bricks are available at Urbandale High School until October 31, 2021. Turn into the UHS parking lot near the football stadium (east side of the building) and go toward the loading dock area. Bricks are stacked on a pallet next to the building. Please limit the number of bricks to 4 per household; bricks are free. We encourage you to pick up your brick(s) between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to help reduce traffic congestion at the high school. Please be extra cautious driving into this area as there may be students and staff in the vicinity (from the Urbandale Schools Website).

Fundraising

Over the years a variety of fundraising events have come and gone as leadership, volunteers and needs changed. Over this past pandemic year, several of our mainstay events have had to be cancelled.

A sound financial basis is needed not only for the current Historical Society budget and unexpected maintenance costs, but for long-range preservation of the historic Olmsted-Urban House. A Fundraising Committee has been formed to address these needs by contacting individuals and representatives of the business community.

One of their first goals was to prepare an updated brochure to use for these contacts. One of these brochures is enclosed with your newsletter. Please share this information with someone you know or a business who might become a Historical Society member to provide continued support. Thank you for your help.

Newsletter

A benefit of your membership with the Urbandale Historical Society is the receipt of the quarterly newsletter. This provides timely information about current projects and events and feature articles based on research telling the stories of people, places, and events in Urbandale's history. You can always access past newsletters and these stories by checking the Historical Society website www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org.

A print copy of the newsletter is mailed to your address, but costs of printing and mailing have been going up and up. If you have an e-mail address, and would be willing to receive your copy in an electronic format sent to you, please respond to Pat Finnerty at the Historical Society e-mail account urbandalehistory@gmail.com. If you still want the printed copy mailed to you, we will continue with that form.

The next issue will be published Winter 2022.

George Long

George Long, former Urbandale High School Activities Director from 1968-1998, passed-away October 2 after a prolonged illness. George established an Urbandale Athletes Hall of Fame and led many fundraising activities to fund the athletic facilities in Urbandale.

In 1982 he was named Urbandale Citizen of the Year.

George and his wife Marie have been supporters of the Historical Society for many years. Marie served as Membership Chairman for several years in the 1990s. George was involved in so many Urbandale activities and a longtime member of the Urbandale Lions Club.

One of the Historical Society's most enjoyable meetings was in September 2000 when George joined Wayne Robbins and Dennis Peppmeier in discussing past sports activities at Urbandale High School.

New Members

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|--|---|
| Dave & Amy Osborn 4412 163 rd St. Urbandale, IA 50323 | Bill & Faith Sherman 3928 Twana Dr. Des Moines, IA 50310 515-2782242 |
| Brad & Dede Zaun 7032 Holcomb Ave. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-276-2025 bjzaun@gmail.com | Todd Readinger & Susan Schultze 32 Dunlap St. S. St. Paul, MN 55105 651-276-6902 startfarms@aol.com |
| Larry & Sondra McMahon 10524 Meredith Dr. Unit #4 Urbandale, IA 50322 515-276-1009 | Montine Guthrie 5834 S. Glenstonr Ct. Johnston, IA 50131 515-250-4227 mjguthrie68@yahoo.com |

Acknowledgement of Supporters



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