



URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
December 3 & 10, 2023



'T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

***and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse!***

THE STOCKINGS WERE HUNG

***by the chimney with care,
In hopes that Saint Nicholas
soon would be there.***

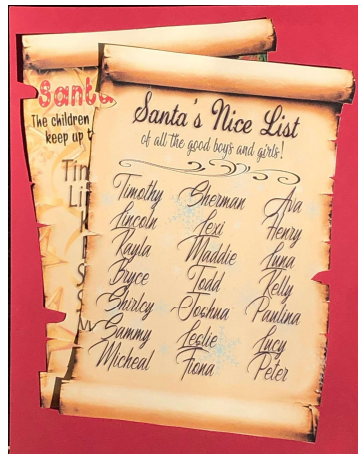
And so it goes, the first few lines of Clement Clarke Moore's delightful poem which, according to holiday lore, he wrote in 1822 as a Christmas gift for his two young daughters Margaret and Charity.

The poem was on my mind when I came downstairs after greeting visitors in the Children's Room, during our Historical Society Holiday Open House on the first Sunday of December. Yet, despite whispering those verses quietly to myself just then, that familiar figure by the parlor Christmas tree, still took me by surprise when I saw him standing there!

However, he more so resembled a tall Father Christmas rather than Moore's beloved chubby gift-giver known worldwide in poetry, prose and song. But there he was nonetheless, our Santa, with his red suit and great curly beard which was as white as the snow we were hoping to see on Christmas Eve.

He shared a winsome smile behind those impressive whiskers, a smile that would warm the heart of any child, and when he saw me he asked this "little girl of 82 who had never quite grown up" what I would like for Christmas. Being so surprised to suddenly see Santa standing there as big as life, the only answer that came to mind was "I had been good this year!"

I really don't know whether or not he actually believed me, but then, probably having elf spies 'round and about these many months, I'm sure by now Santa had already added me to one of his Lists! (Guess I'll find out "which List" on Christmas morning!)



And so began another season of special memories made at "Grandma's House", and the first year ever having a Holiday Open House on both the first and the second Sundays in December!

On the 3rd of the month, along with tours of the house itself, the big red barn at the back of the property, was also open for the children. They were greeted with a wonderland of familiar holiday



**Crafts and cookies
in the barn for the
creative with holiday
appetites.**

**Whimsical inflatables,
made for a jolly and
colorful Christmas party,
welcomed big and little
folks alike!**



*figures, inflated and more than life-size, along with interesting crafts,
cups of sweet hot cocoa and tasty Christmas cookies, all of which*

*were the cause of numerous giggles and
grins. And where those crafts were con-
cerned, perhaps there were even a few
enthusiastic young artists in-the-making!*

*Of course, dear old St. Nicholas
was there keeping the little ones company
that afternoon, also on the porch while
everyone dreamed of Christmas morning.*



Like me, they too wondered on which of Santa's Lists their name might appear! Magical moments in a "magical month, and if the truth be told, it is the many elves at "Grandma's House" who make that magic happen!

**Moms and Dads,
Grandmas and
Grandparents too,
came to enjoy the
treats and take a
walk back in time.**



**Even furry family
members enjoyed the
afternoon. This little
fellow is most likely
waiting for a nibble of
a tasty crumb or two!**



Olmsted – Urban House
“Grandma’s House”

Green wreaths, with bright red bows, hung in the windows of the big white house on 70th Street. Along with the beautifully decorated farm wagon out on the lawn, those lovely wreaths were the first “ambassadors of good will” welcoming the Christmas season and all the many guests who came for a visit.

Once over the threshold and surrounded by early Twentieth Century furnishings and décor, visitors entered another world. Here little ones could almost imagine the friendly voice of “The Cinnamon Bear” coming to them over the airwaves through that old Atwater Kent Radio in the corner of the parlor (bottom photo facing page.)



They might also be charmed by the adventures of “Little Orphan Annie” while Mom and Dad would possibly find themselves chuckling over the unique brand of humor in “Fibber McGee and Molly’s” Christmas broadcast.



Geri Walker and her two daughters look over memory booklets of past Historical Society Christmas events.

With the lights soft and low in the parlor, and a lovely evergreen glowing in the alcove by the window, it was easy to go back in time as those multi-colored bulbs, between sparkling vintage glass ornaments, cast friendly shadows from wall to wall.



At the base of this beautiful tree was an array of charming toys that drew us into another era. A delightful wicker doll buggy for a little girl to dream over, stood beside the stairway, along with automotive power in the form of various antique sets-of-wheels in miniature, which was displayed on a nearby table. But who could ever resist that delightful train which happily chugged 'round and 'round on a little track beneath the branches of that tall evergreen.



I'm told that one little boy, so taken with this marvelous scene, sat himself down across from those lower branches. For the longest time he was totally mesmerized by all those wonderful cars that followed the engine on its journey to and from a magical land beneath the Christmas tree. No doubt it was a "magical land" and perhaps the dolls and trucks and even the windmill were "magical" too! For as we all know, a little boy's imagination can make anything possible!



But toys of the past and the tale of an amazing sleighride among the stars on one particular night of the year, were not only for the children. "Grandma's House" and all its wonders of the season, are also for the young-at-heart, the dreamers, and for those of us who welcome the charm of stepping back in time.



Miss Sarah Bui's beautiful carols take Warren Riekenberg back to Christmas of long ago.

The old upright piano in the parlor came alive once again in the hands of a talented young miss and her delightful carols of Christmas. Jolly melodies told of an elusive though generous elf who rewarded good little boys and girls with their hearts desires on Christmas morning. Other sweet melodies told of another generous and long awaited Gift-Giver who inspired many with an awesome promise and a heart full of love - One who celebrated His first birthday over 2,000 years ago, a birthday we still joyfully celebrate today!



18 students from the Urbandale High School shared their holiday spirit and beautiful voices with us that afternoon.

Carolers too, outside on the wide wrap-around front porch, proclaimed in song, the joys of the season, their sweet voices reaching far and wide, even up to the Children's Room where I was happily greeting our visitors.



Jeff Couch, our wonderful Santa, was also there to welcome these delightful young people!

The Children's Room



And it was there in what we now call the "Children's Play Room" where our guests found more memories of yesterday in toy ice skates, a charming dollhouse, pull-toys and a wind-up victrola, even a baby doll still longing for her own sleighride over the backyard drifts. It was a room in which little folk dreamed once-upon-a-time. Perhaps some still do!



***The joy of children
waiting for Santa***



Gerri Walker and her daughters – three little ladies who keep Christmas in their hearts all the year long!





More lovely smiles shared and sweet memories of Santa's visit.





FOR XMAS

PRACTICAL GIFT SUGGESTIONS

T. G. O'DONNELL HARDWARE CO.



GIFTS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Bicycles | Air Rifles |
| Velocipedes | Pop Guns |
| Coaster Wagons | Doll Buggies |
| Scooters | Aeroplanes |
| Pedal Cars | Trains |
| Kiddie Kars | Drums |
| Ice Skates | Busses |
| Roller Skates | Automobiles |
| Sleds | Aeroplane Swing |
| Boxing Gloves | Doll Houses |
| Footballs | Tractors |
| Basketballs | Trucks |
| Backgammon Boards | Pool Tables |
| | Game Boards |

PRACTICAL GIFTS

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Electrical
GIFTS | Casseroles | Bird Cages & Stands |
| Waffle Irons | Baking Dishes | Decorated Heat-Proof China |
| Toasters | Teapots | Auto Robes and Shawls |
| Percolators | Waffle Batter Jugs | Auto Tools |
| Heaters | Pyrex Glass Ovenware | Coleman Lamps & Lanterns |
| Irons | Aluminum and Enamel Roasters | Flashlights |
| Sandwich Toasters | Wagner Cast Aluminum Ware | Safety Razors |
| Boudoir Lamps | Decorated Cake Covers | Cutlery |
| | Decorated Bread Boards | Pocket Knives |
| | French Drip Coffee Pots | Guns & Rifles |
| | Scissors and Shears | Tool Sets |
| | Carving Sets | Carpenter Tools |
| | | Hunting & Fishing Supplies |

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T. G. O'Donnell Hardware Company

Ellsworth, Kansas



Sewing Room



In the Sewing Room filmy frocks were still waiting to brighten a holiday party, lovely women's hats decorated the wood frame around a long wall mirror and a beautiful wide brim beaver bonnet took center stage as a new addition to our vintage collection. Artfully worked beaded purses, so detailed that each looked like a painting, were also on display, finery from another age, so very much enjoyed by all who came to step into an earlier era, even for just a little while.





Master Bedroom

And in the Master Bedroom – once two rooms long ago – our guests were greeted with a little Christmas tree beautifully decorated with delicate crocheted ornaments on every branch. It was a room of fine hand-stitched quilts and vintage furniture, and where ornate old trunks and a lovely hope chest held dreams and mementos of another time and place. There was even a horsehair sleigh blanket, bidden but present, with deep pockets for warming frosty fingers. Hearing the stories and surrounded by these wonderful things of the past, it is easy for all of us to dream of a simpler time!





*Baked
with
Love*

In Grandma's day and in ours, it just wouldn't be Christmas without sweet little treats of the season. And so, gingerbread boys skipped from kitchen to cookie plate and into the hands of eager youngsters while butter cream cut-outs brought sparkly snowmen and frosted candlelight right to the dining room table.



There were big and little cookie rounds too, some with bright colored M & Ms nestled on top, and chocolate-over-Rice Krispie treats cut in tempting little squares. A cup of steaming coffee eased a nip in the air and sweet flavorful punch, the color of holly, inspired smiles and perhaps even another trip to the table! Such wonderful delights from Grandma's kitchen and from the kitchens of our many "volunteer elves" who added their own touch of love to each treat!



However, despite the welcomed refreshments, the beautiful decorations, even the warm aura of yesteryear that comes with a visit to this wonderful old four-square on 70th Street, it is really the people themselves who make a Holiday Open House so very special. The behind the scenes "elves" like Cynthia Dabrieo (in white, above photo) and Gloria Anderson (in red at table) plus all those including Norm Huitt who helped Santa add childhood treasures from the past and generate warm memories of Christmas long ago.



It is those busy "worker elves" who are also Grandma's helpers, (like Beth Haigh who provided the beautiful table centerpiece and buffet decorations.) With greens and berries and holiday spirit, they set the scene to welcome friends and family to these extra special get-togethers. Too many to name but we thank them all!



How curious it is that those visitors who just happen to stop by for a bit of Christmas cheer, leave with so much more. They may have come out of curiosity but even the little ones leave with a greater appreciation of the days that used to be.

They learned about people from another generation who lived and loved and dreamed just as we do today. Our visitors may even have taken a peek into their own Grandparents' lives and came to realize that we are all one



family who share the happy times together, and are also there for one another in less happier times, just as it was for some of those who once walked these halls during the darkest days of the Depression.



To brighten our spirits we will always need someone (like Norm Huitt) who has Christmas in his heart all the year 'round ...



along with youngsters and the young-at-heart (like Kathryn Brush and her good friend from Deerfield) who still believe in the magic of Christmas too!



Hopefully Santa will be here again, and maybe next year I will answer him when he asks me what I would like for Christmas.

A gift of kindness, understanding, maybe tolerance and hope, perhaps even the gifts of love and peace the world 'round. A tall order I know!

But looking back on these two weekends, hopefully we have added just a little more kindness to our own world. in our own way, and perhaps it all began at "Grandma's House" on the first Sunday in December ... maybe even on the 2nd Sunday too!

*Warm Christmas wishes to one and all
May the sweetest blessings come your way
in the New Year!*

Carol Lee Riekenberg