

Olmsted-Urban House History

by Virginia Gee and Edward Finnerty
November 10, 2019

OLMSTED FAMILY FARMHOUSE

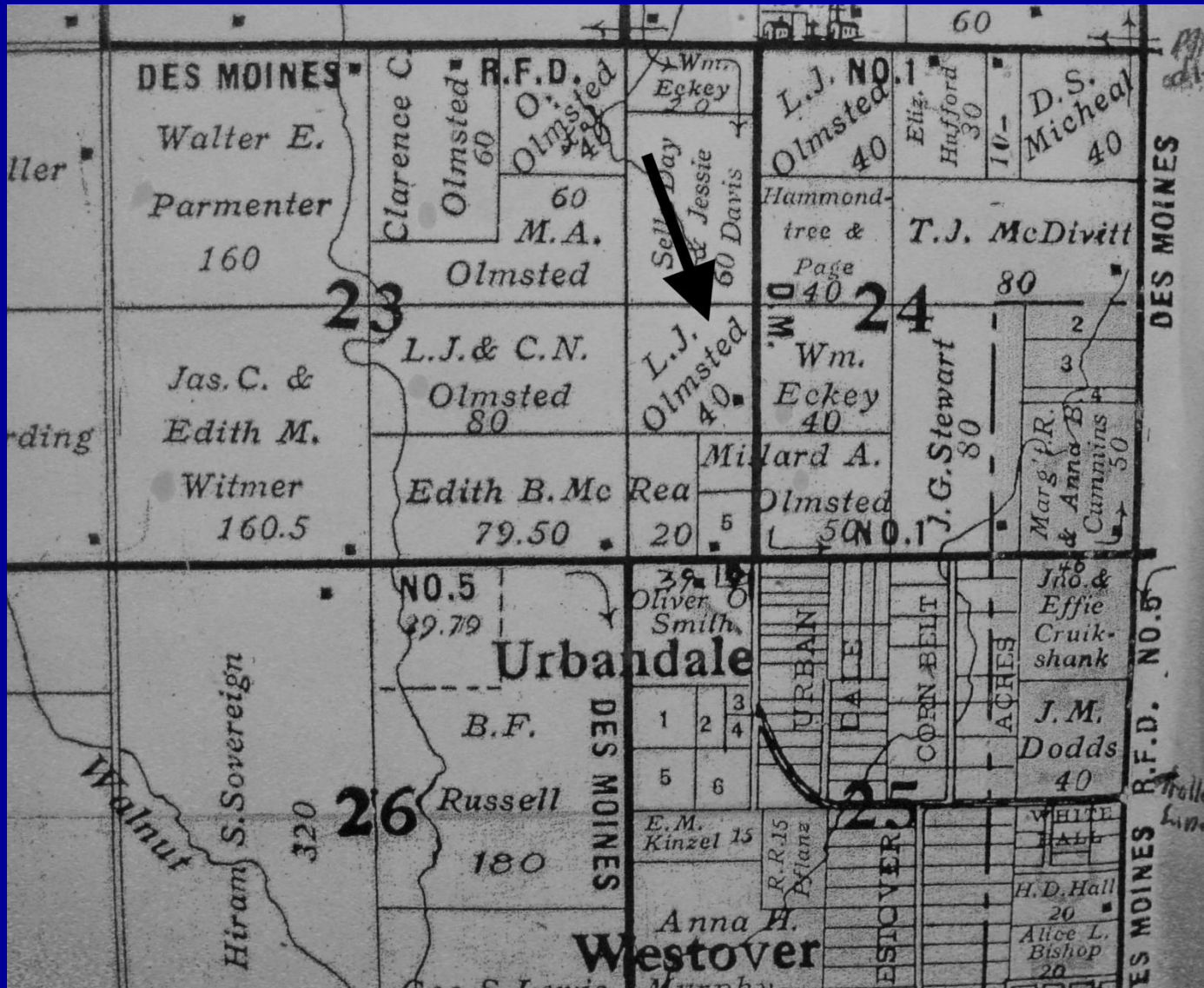
Urbandale, Iowa



Prepared for

Urbandale Historical Society

WEBSTER TOWNSHIP

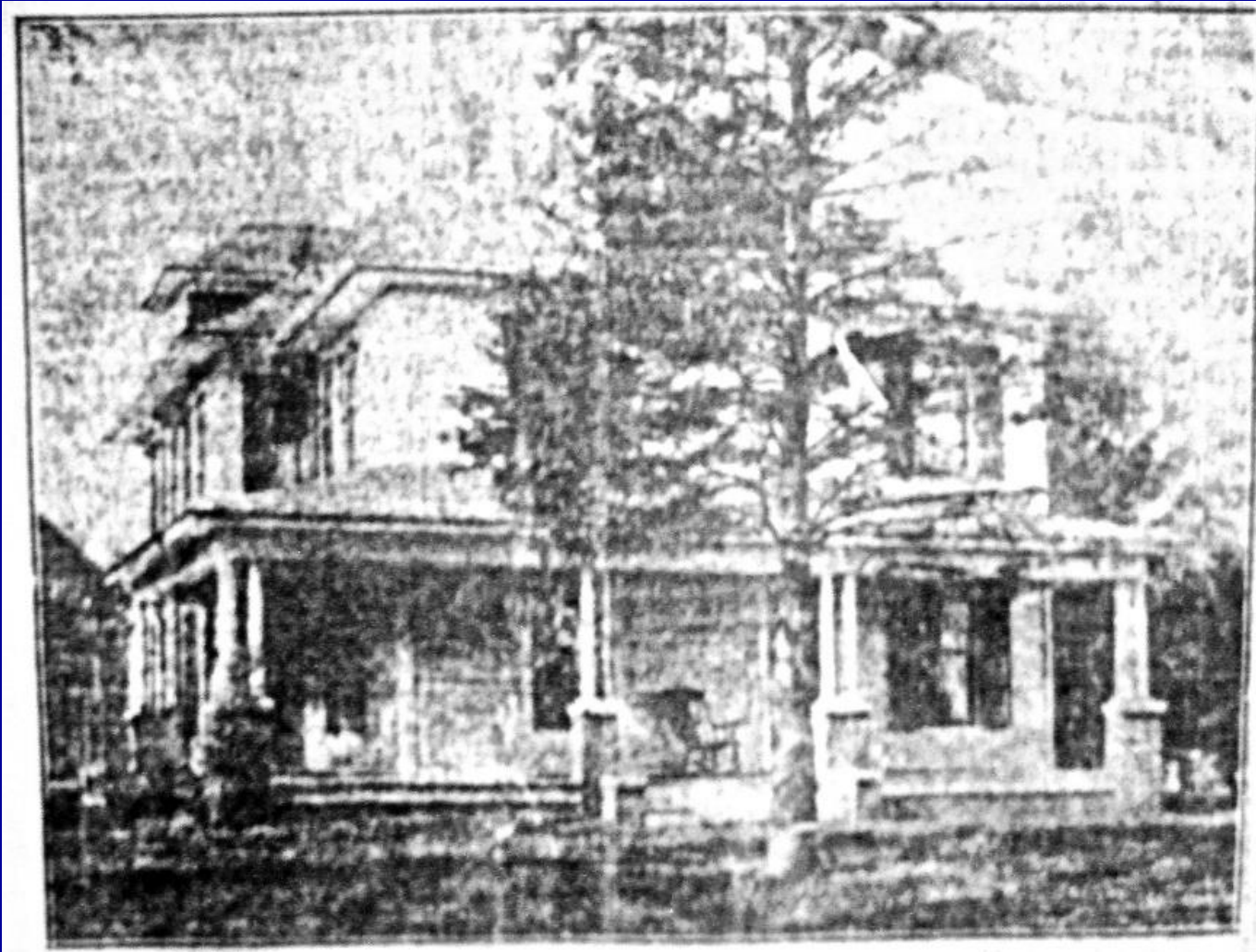


In 1867 Leander and Charlotte Olmsted came from New York to farm in Webster Township, Iowa. As his land holding increased Leander was recognized as a leading farmer in the area.



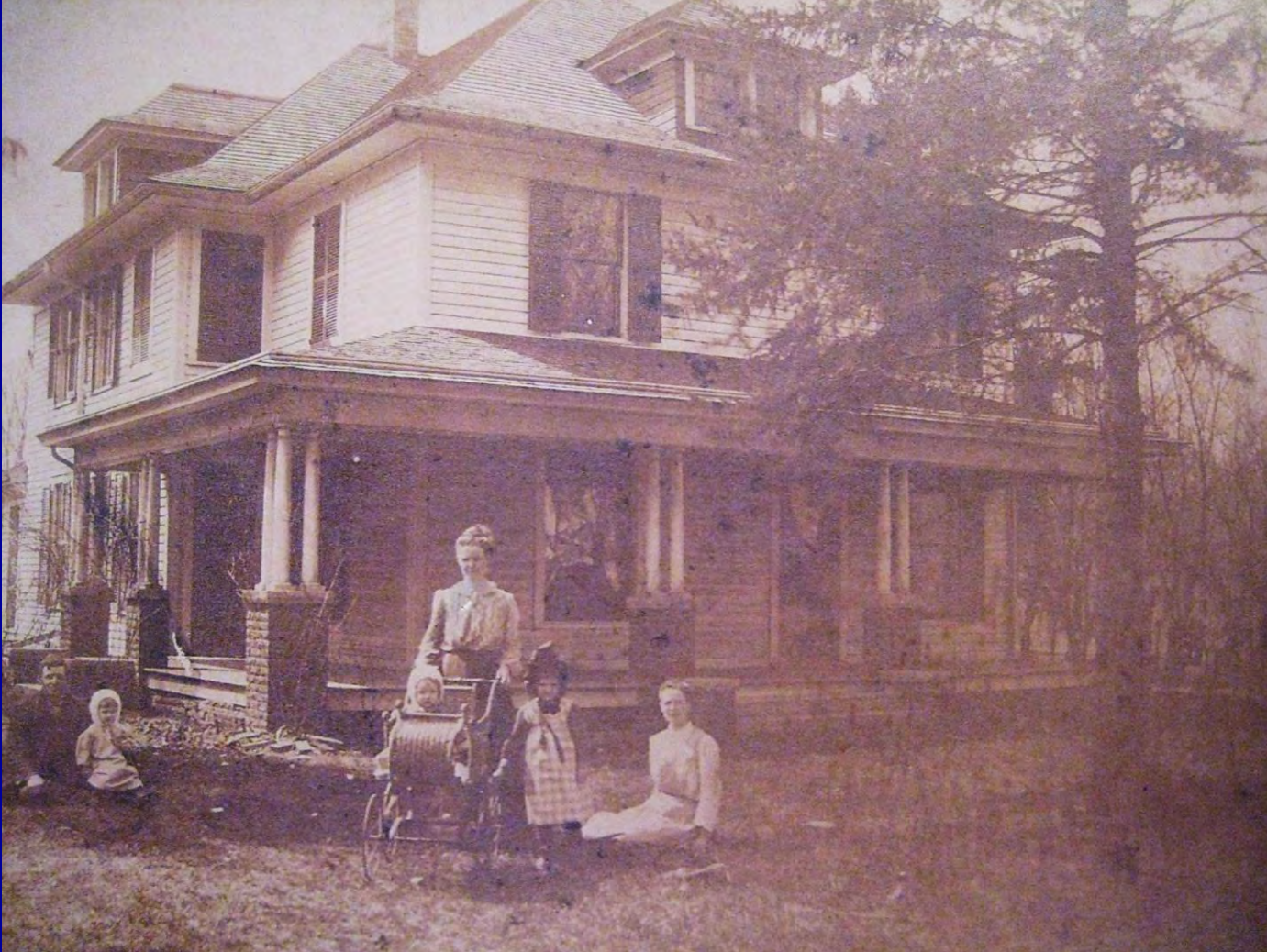
Leander and Charlotte Olmsted with Laura Stuart (Olive Stuart Olmsted's Sister)

Typical American Four-Square



In the early 1900s Leander and son, Millard, chose to build a new family home on the SE corner of the Olmsted farm. The home was based on the American Foursquare with Colonial Revival styling, typical of the era.

OLMSTED FAMILY FARMHOUSE C. 1909



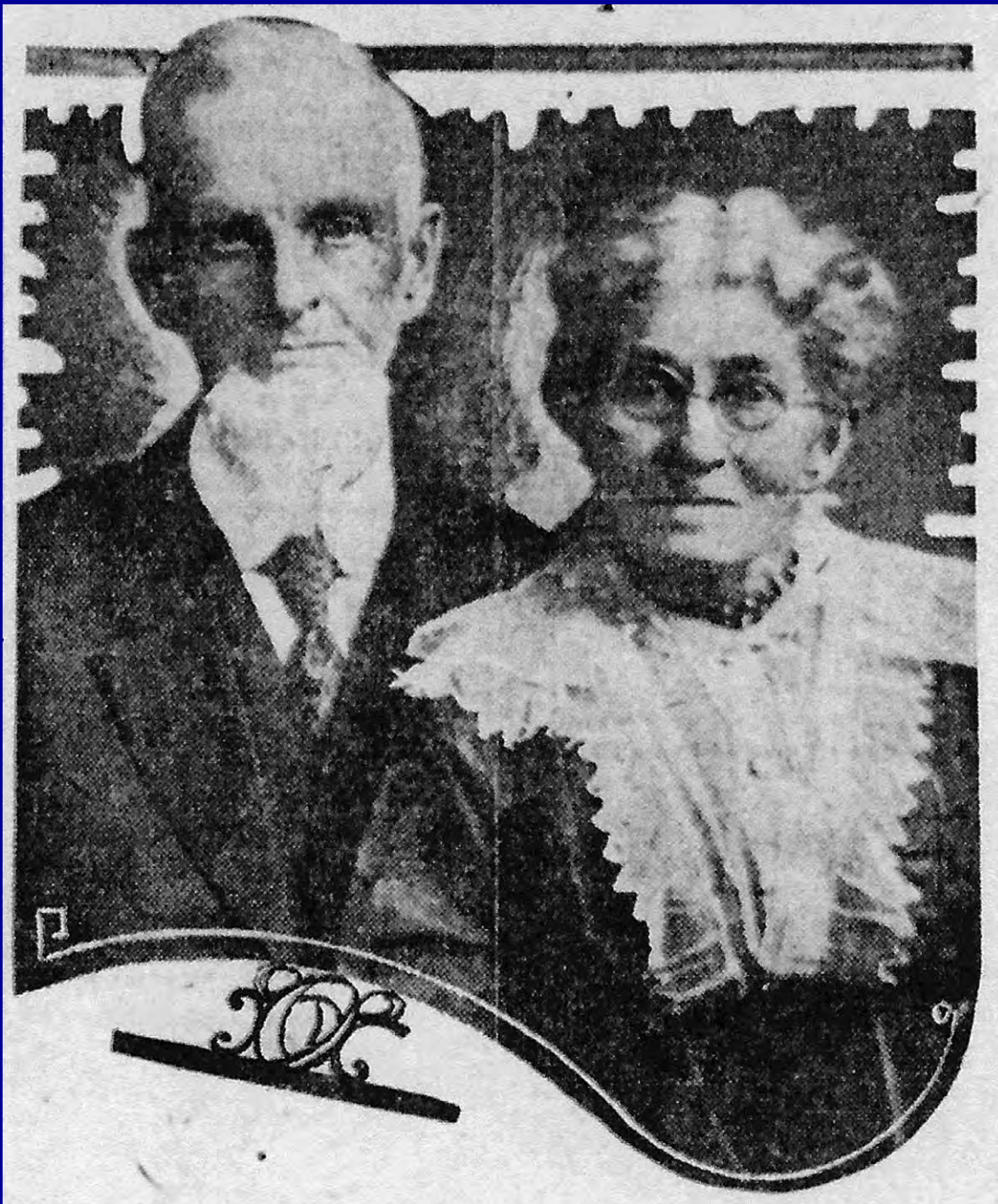
This, the earliest known view of the Olmsted Family Farmhouse, pictures it several years after construction. It shows the Millard A. and Olive Stuart Olmsted family and Olive's sister. From left to right: Millard, Blanche, Olive (standing), Martha (in baby carriage), Laura, and Olive's sister, Laura Stuart. Martha was born in 1908, helping to date the picture.

Source: Archives Urbandale Historical Society.

Millard Olmsted Family



The growing family of Millard and Olive Olmsted. Laura, Blanche, Martha, son Lea and Ruth. A daughter Verna would be born in 1915.



Leander and Charlotte Olmsted 50th Wedding Anniversary Nov. 20, 1916

Leander and Charlotte continued to live in the family home. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1916. Leander died Dec. 20, 1917.

Grandma Charlotte and the Girls in 1927.

Blanche and Ruth (back row).
Martha, Verna and Laura (front row).

Charlotte died in 1933



Millard and Olive Olmsted



Millard Olmsted



Olive (Stuart) Olmsted

Millard and Olive were community leaders. They were instrumental in developing the Urbandale School District and City. They were among the founders of the Urbandale Community Church. Millard was the President of the first Urbandale School Board and continued to serve for another 17 years. The new elementary school (70th and Prairie) was dedicated as the Millard A. Olmsted Elementary school, April 1954. Olive was active in Urbandale with the Daughters of Ceres, schools and church.



Clarence Charles Olmsted
October 10, 1873 - March 23, 1938

The name Olmsted has been associated with Urbandale since the late 1800s. Leander and Charlotte Olmsted lived in the area for many years and built their home (now the historic Olmsted-Urban House at 4919 70th Street, in 1904, when much of the surrounding area was still farmland.

Leander and Charlotte's son, Clarence Olmsted (pictured above), inherited the family homestead. In 1909 Clarence purchased property at the northwest corner of what is now 70th and Douglas. Initially a livery stable operated here, replaced later by a gas station, with city offices and the town fire station located nearby. Clarence also developed many homes on Madison Avenue between 70th and 71st Streets.

Clarence attended McDivitt School and Drake University. He served on the first city council in 1917, when the newly incorporated community had a population of 200 residents. His leadership role in Urbandale's early history helped establish a sturdy foundation on which to build a stable, prosperous community.

DEDICATED 2002

Clarence Olmsted, Millard's brother, was a leader in the formation and development of the city of Urbandale. He served on the first City Council and original Greater Urbandale Booster Club.

His son, Milford (Mugs) Olmsted was a lifelong resident of Urbandale and worked tirelessly, as his Father, Uncle and Grandfather, in promoting and developing Urbandale. Mugs was a member of the Urbandale Lions Club, Fire Department, and American Legion Post. He was a leader in organizing Urbandale's first 4th of July parade. His daughter Virginia is active in the Urbandale community, especially with the Urbandale Historical Society.



Milford "Mugs" Horton Olmsted
January 14, 1913 - December 28, 1996

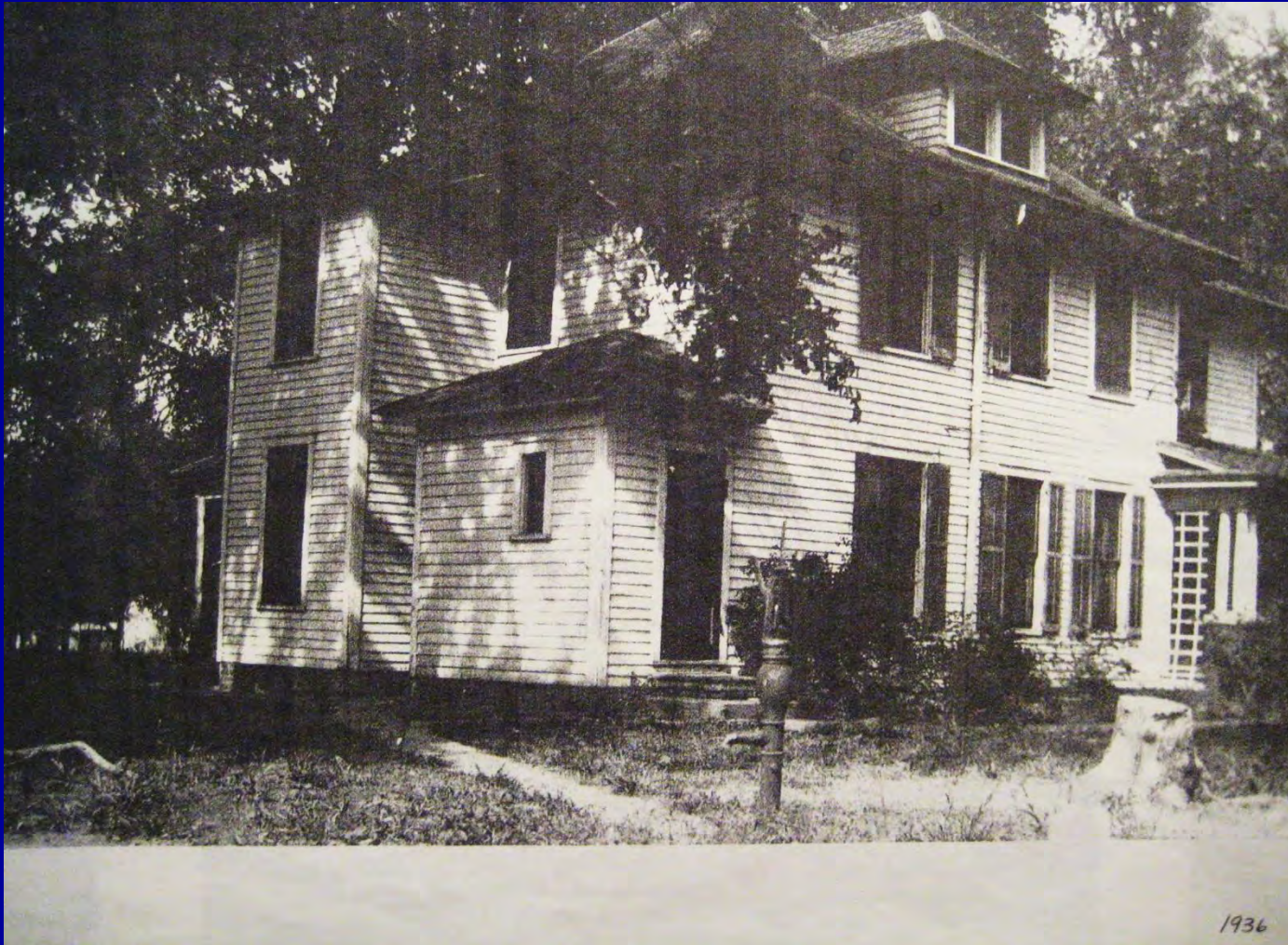
Milford "Mugs" Olmsted was the son of Clarence and Ida Jane (Horton) Olmsted and grandson of Leander and Charlotte Olmsted. Mugs, a nickname acquired from his older brothers, was a life-long Urbandale resident. He married Helen Fisher of Urbandale after they met when Mugs repaired the plumbing in a house on Madison Avenue her parents rented from Clarence.

Mugs was instrumental in organizing Urbandale's first Fourth of July parade. He was a member of the Urbandale Fire Department, served on numerous city boards and commissions, and was a Commander of the Urbandale American Legion Post #663. His children, Virginia and Charles, graduated from Urbandale High School.

Continuing the long-standing Olmsted family tradition of service to the community, Mugs contributed to the civic well-being of Urbandale through his tireless donations of time and leadership.

DEDICATED 2002

OLMSTED FAMILY FARMHOUSE 1936



The House had undergone few changes through the years (see the pump near the back door). NW of the house was a root cellar, referred to as the 'cave', and vegetable and flower gardens. Millard and Olive moved to a smaller home at 3900 70th Street.



The Gutfreunds

Mrs. Gutfreund and Children



Mrs. Harold Gutfreund, with her children, James Mark and Marjorie. Both children attended the Urbandale schools.

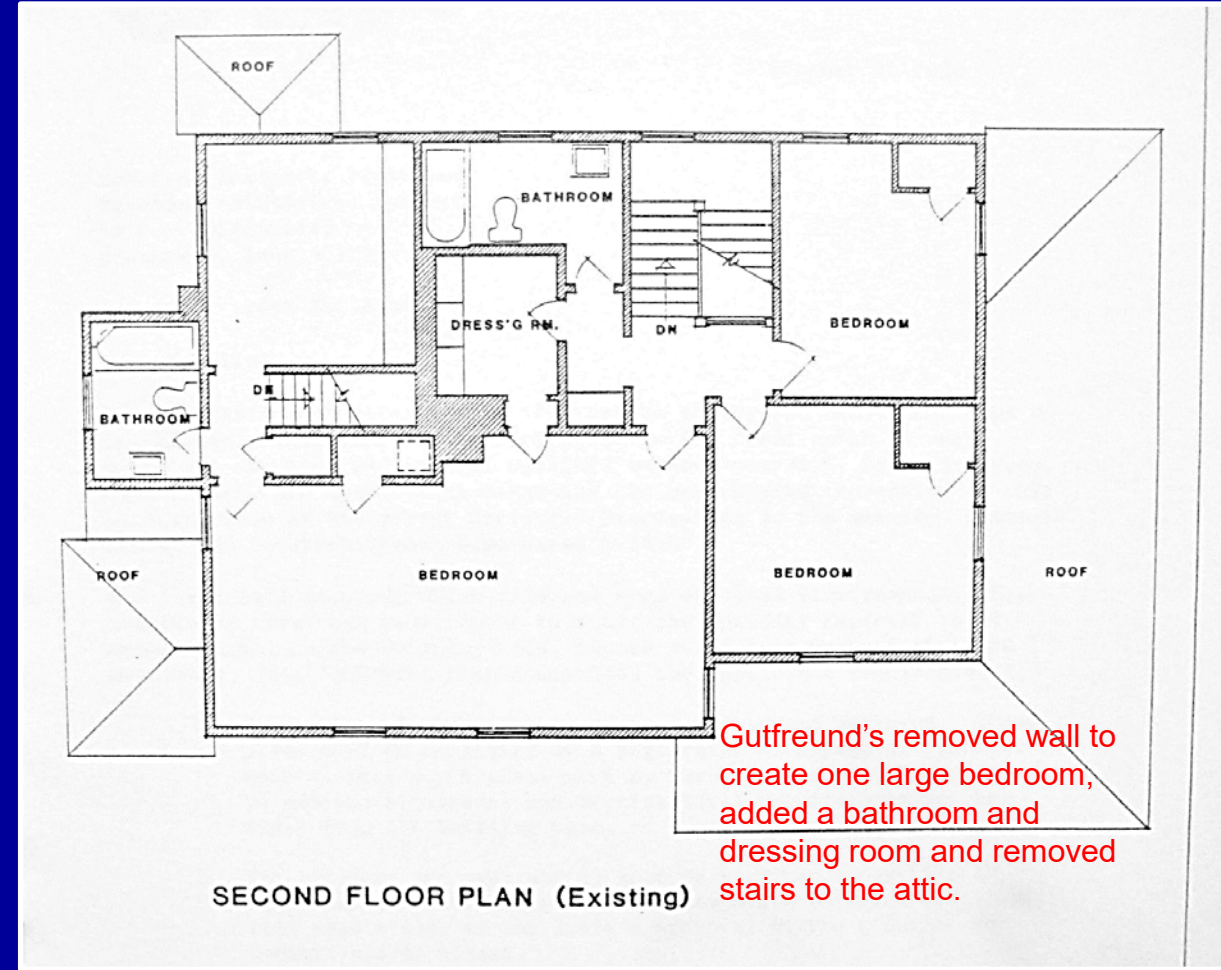
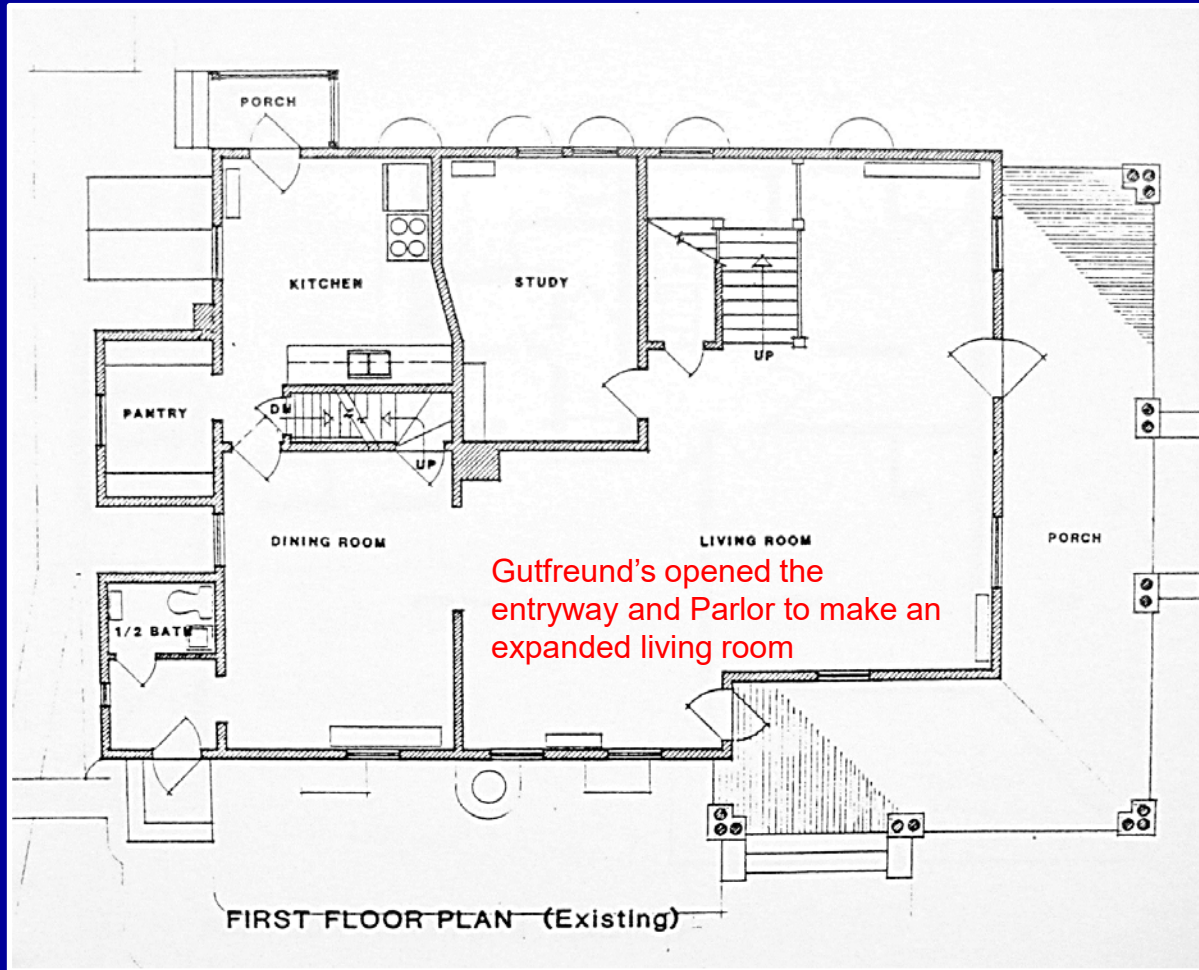
Harold Gutfreund purchased the property in 1937. An important reason for moving from Des Moines to Urbandale was for Marjorie to have a pony. They made major revisions to the House.

Harold served on the Urbandale School Board in the 1940s and worked in raising funds for the building of the gymnasium at 70th and Douglas.



Des Moines Bottling Works
G. Gutfreund Prop.
Des Moines, IA

Olmsted Family Farmhouse Floor Plan



Dining Room Entryway

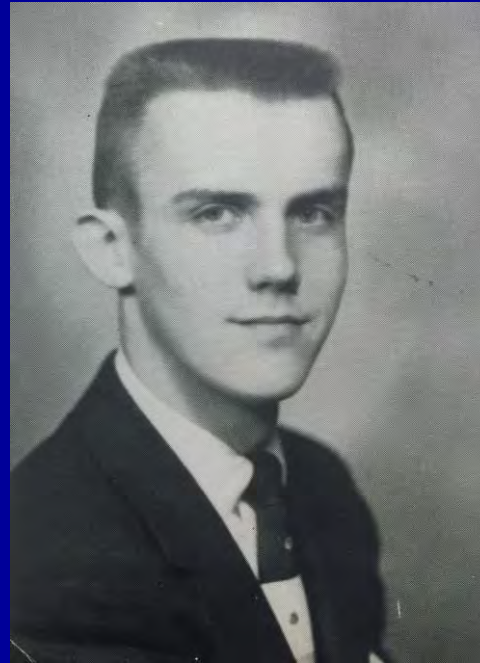
The original squared entry to the Dining Room was altered to a curved archway by the Gutfreunds. This was later remodeled by the Historical Society to better match the original design.



Stairway in the living room and woodwork as it was during the Gutfreunds era.

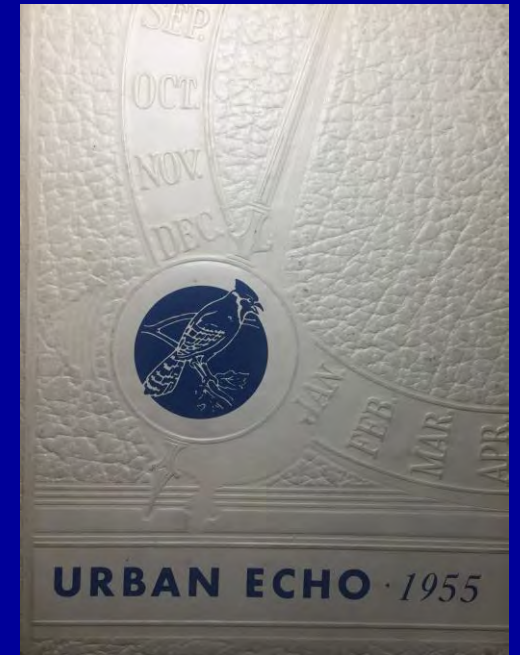


Karl and Matie Urban from Des Moines purchased the property in 1947. Their son John was a 1955 Urbandale High School graduate.



JOHN URBAN
"J.C."

Track 3, 4
Band 1, 2, 3, 4
Vocal Music 1, 2, 4
Student Council Representative 3
Speech Contest 3, 4
Class Play 4





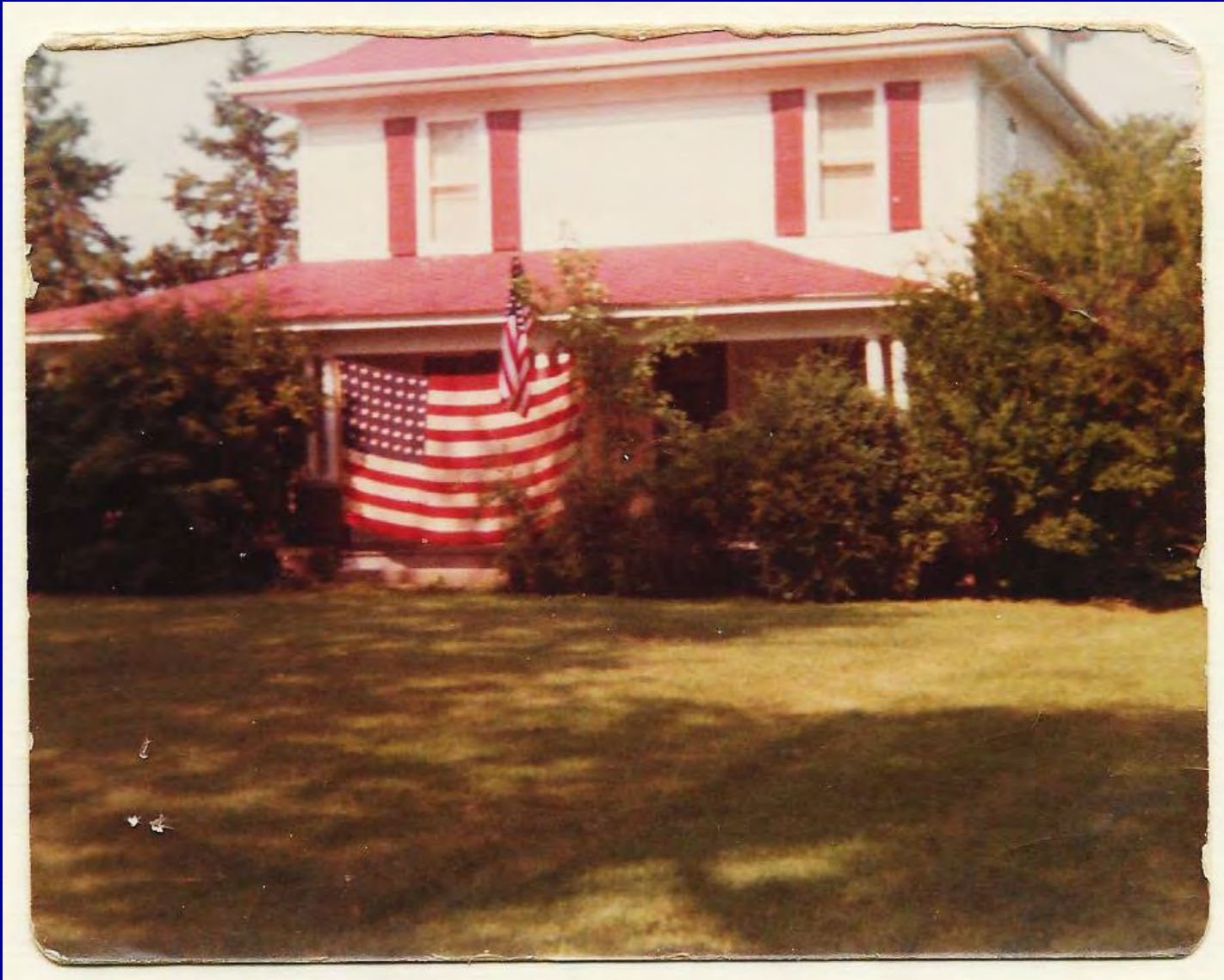
House during the Urban's era. Note the driveway on the SE corner of the property.

House During the Urban era

The Urbans were active in the community. Karl served for 10 years on the first Urbandale Library Board and was Lions Club President when the Lions Park shelter was built. He took pride in the upkeep of the property. Many community events including July 4th picnics were held on the spacious lawn.



Mrs. Urban's Flags -July 4, 1978



Matie loved to celebrate holidays with the neighbors.

Karl died in 1978. Matie continued to live in the House for many years. She died in 1986 at her son John's home in New Mexico.



John Urban, Madeline Kaloides President,
Dorothy Milligan and Dave Hartsook

1987 the Urbandale Historical Society
purchased the Urban property from
John and Mary Nell Urban



John Urban and Mary Nell



The House and property as it was in 1987 needed some work. Howard Nelson and Barry Lynch working to clear brush around the House.



Changes had to be made to meet city requirements. The Drive was removed and a parking lot added. The landscaping was improved and in memory of Dave Hartsook, a flag pole was added.



To make the House handicap accessible, the steps to the front porch were removed and the sidewalk altered. As well, a new restroom on the ground floor by the southwest entrance was added.



Dorothy Milligan showing the remodeled entryway to the Dining room in anticipation of the Christmas Open House.



The woodwork, stairway and doors downstairs were refinished.



The furnishing and decor of the House reflected those typical of the 1920s and 1930s.



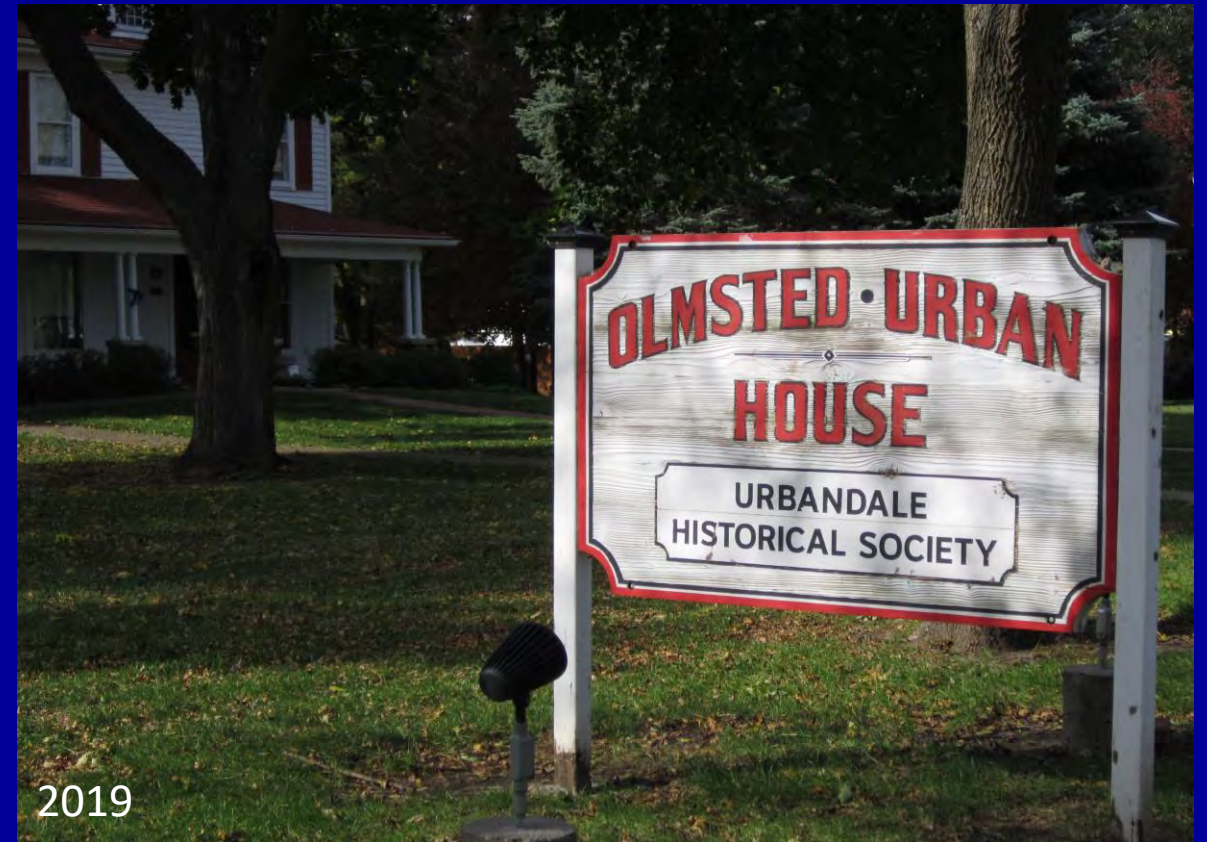
Questers groups helped with the restoration and displays in the children's and clothing rooms.



In the Main Bedroom some items original to the Olmsted's are displayed.



The Olmsted-Urban House has been the home to the Urbandale Historical Society since 1987.



A Brick Memory Walk has been established. Bricks can be purchased to honor individuals or groups.



As a symbol of farming in the history of Urbandale, a Barn was constructed on the property. The Barn was dedicated in 2015 for Wayne Robbins, a long-time Society President.

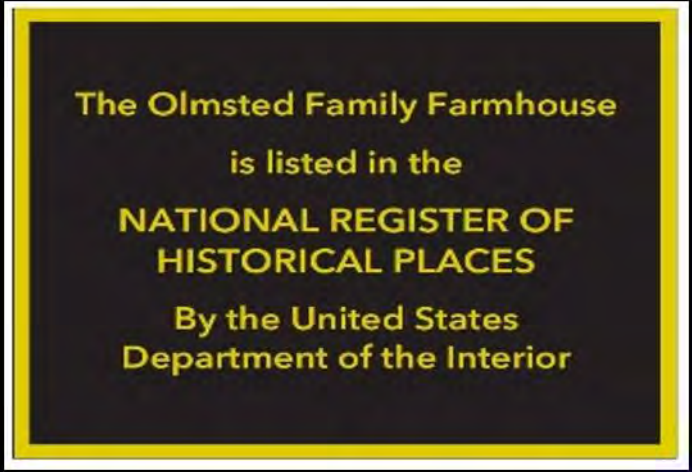


In recent years a Pollinator Garden, courtesy of the Urbandale Garden Club, was established. The Pergola was added in memory of Del and Janice Winey



Many volunteer hours have been involved in the care and maintenance of the Olmsted Family Farmhouse. Built over 100 years ago, the House deserves recognition as one of the few original structures existing in Urbandale





PROCLAMATION
Urbandale History Day 2019
City of Urbandale, Iowa

WHEREAS, the Urbandale Historical Society has worked since 1977 to preserve the history of Urbandale and document the community's rich heritage; and

WHEREAS, in 1904 Leander Olmsted built a four-square two-story farmhouse for his family on the southeast corner of his farm property, along what is now 70th Street in Urbandale; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Olmsted's farmhouse is now recognized as the Olmsted-Urban House and it has been the home of the Urbandale Historical Society since 1987; and

WHEREAS, the Urbandale Historical Society nominated the Olmsted Family Farmhouse for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places due to its prominence in Urbandale's history. And the Olmsted Family Farmhouse was officially recognized on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of Interior in 2019.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bob Andeweg, Mayor of the City of Urbandale, on behalf of the City Council, proclaim November 10, 2019 as:

URBANDALE HISTORY DAY

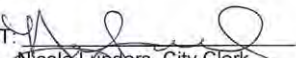
in the City of Urbandale, and encourage all residents to learn about the history of the City, including the Olmsted family; and to visit the Olmsted Family Farmhouse, which is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

SIGNED AND SEALED this 22nd day of October, 2019.





Robert D. Andeweg, Mayor

ATTEST: 

Nicole Lunders, City Clerk



Olmsted-Urban Home
Urbandale, Iowa