

URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2023

Ice Cream Social



It would not be summer without the Annual Urbandale Historical Society Ice Cream Social. This event marks the unofficial beginning of the Urbandale 4th of July celebrations. This year, like so many in the past, was a wonderful time of

gathering, seeing friends and enjoying the delicious ice cream and other goodies.

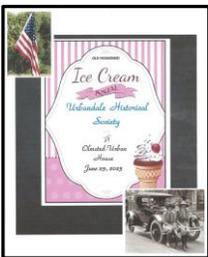
We had a visit from *Annabelle*, Hiland Dairy's 'Ambassador of Good Will'. The house and barn were open for informal tours that were enjoyed by a number of visitors. While we were not able to have our live banjo



players, we did have some good music wafting over the yard. The LaSalle Cadillac Club again graced us with their presence along with several of their well-preserved vintage cars. Once again Carol Lee Riekenberg has produced a beautiful booklet capturing the event. We will post her booklet on

the website (www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) under the Urbandale History (Interviews and Stories) tab.

As a fundraiser for the Historical Society, it was a success with a revenue of over \$1700. Mark your calendars for next year.



Programs

The 2022-23 Historical Society Program series is in the books. In May, Pat Finnerty presented a talk about Urbandale's own hero – Glenn McDole. Then in June, Mindy Williamson shared with us the history of the Iowa State Fair. Did you know that in 1909 Amelia Earhart first saw an airplane at the Iowa State Fair? She was "unimpressed". We have had a few hiccups this past

season with a couple of illnesses but all in all we felt it was a success.

Our May program was held at the Urbandale Library and it was very well attended. So, to build on that, we will be having our 2023-24 Historical Society programs at the Urbandale Library. They will be on the second Sunday of each month from 2-4 pm. Note that the May 2024 session will be held on the third Sunday because of Mother's Day.

We have quite a lineup of presentations for this coming series.

- Sep. 10, Carl Johnson and Judy Blessington will be telling us of the history of the Urbandale Community Theater.
- Oct. 8 will feature a spooky presentation of "Spirits in Urbandale." Dane Anderson will tell us about his investigations of spirits in the Olmsted-Urban house and around the area.
- Nov. 12 we will have Jan Herke for her presentation on the Parks and Recreation in Urbandale.
- Dec. will feature our Annual Christmas Open House on both the first (12/3) and second (12/10) Sundays of December.
- Jan. 14, Dr. Angela Franklin, President of Des Moines University, sharing the history of Des Moines' medical school (DMU).
- Feb. 11 has not been confirmed as yet.
- Mar. 10, Retired Fire Chief Jerry Holt will be with us for his history of the Urbandale Fire Department.
- Apr. 14, Mr. Will Page will offer us a chance to learn about our homes with a presentation on 'What Style is My House?' Bring a photo of your home and he will share information of the architectural style and period of your home.
- May or June will feature Staci Stanton and others from the Urbandale Library telling us about the history of the Library in Urbandale.

The Urbandale American Legion will have a program on one of the open dates (Feb, May or June) on their history in Urbandale. Not to worry, we will have a program for the other open date for a full series September through June. That will take us up to the Annual Ice Cream Social and 4th of July.

Except for the December Christmas Open Houses, all of our programs will be held this season at the Urbandale Library, 2-4 pm. As well, do not forget that we are having our usual Open House times the first Sunday of each month from 2-4 pm at the Olmsted-Urban house. Stop by for a visit and enjoy the house.

Urbandale American Legion and VFW

The Urbandale American Legion is active and provides many useful resources for our community. Look for them as the Honor Guard at the Urbandale home football games this Fall.

Last winter the American Legion Post and the VFW sponsored Urbandale's part in the National Wreathes Across America project. They will again be sponsoring this event at McDivitt Cemetery in December. If you would like to be sure to honor a friend or loved one, either here in Urbandale or somewhere else, please visit their website (www.Urbandaleamericanlegion.org) and click on the Community tab for more information.

Upcoming Events

This October the Fundraising committee is planning a pancake breakfast as we have had the past couple of years. This seems like it is becoming an annual event each fall. Yes, the Urbandale Lions, the pancake cookers extraordinaire, will be flipping the pancakes. The date has not been finalized, so watch our Facebook page and website, www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org, for more details.

Last May we tried to have a 'May Market' vendor fair at the Olmsted-Urban house. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate. We are intending to try again next May, so keep checking our sites for more information.

Rolling Green (Rams)

This past July saw the end of an era with the closing of Rolling Green elementary school. Rolling Green's closing coincides with the opening of the newly built Valerius elementary this August.



Rolling Green was the last of the 'boom period' elementary schools to be built in Urbandale. The 'boom period' is considered the baby boom era of 1952-75 for Urbandale. During this time the population in Urbandale went from 1,777 (1950) to 14,343 (1970). In response the school district built and opened all of the schools we now recognize as Urbandale schools (except for Webster – built in 2006).

Rolling Green was constructed in 1968 and opened that Fall. This school was special at the time as it sported an 'open classroom' arrangement, then a very modern approach to education. This pioneering educational strategy had the extra advantage of being less costly (walls cost money). It is worth noting that when Rolling Green opened, there was no road or parking lot on the east side of the school. The front door of the school faced Airline which was not paved at that time.



Over the many years it has gone from a neighborhood school with a cutting-edge approach, to a traditional school, to one with combined classes, back to traditional, then to Rescheduling, back to traditional and finally a year-round school. In its time it has seen a many children and staff go through its doors and it has molded many fine men and women of today.



A special feature of Rolling Green are the mosaic tiles in the work room. These were created by students over the decades and represent almost every class from the 70s through the 80s and beyond.



The 5th grade students in 1993 were inspired by a video shown by teacher Bev Ellis about Iowa's lands to create a quilt depicting various environmental issues. This project grew to include over two dozen students (pictured: Amanda Jagim, Amy Gustafson,



Alejandro Oyarzabel, Jodi Kopp, D.J. Grisvold, Lindsey Thomas, Phaedra Gay, Anne Hummel, David Burrell, Grace Kaing, Katie Quail, Mandy Nichol, Kenny Layton, Josh Ingram, Travis Brown, Rachel Sandler, Jody McCann, Danny Hays, Tim Jones, Jason Ness, Sarah Stevens, Rachel Falvo, Ryan Paige, Kathleen Finnerty and Lindsey Crowley), teachers Jan Gunder, Tim Long, Mary Ann Rosonke, Ellis and even High School Principal Bob Stouffer as well as Nancy Pelley (a gifted quilter in the community and wife of School Board member Frank Pelley). Nancy Pelley also created the quilt at the High School Media Center.

Despite the building undergoing remodeling, expansion and curricular changes over its lifetime its character has

not changed. The students and staff will all say that Rolling Green has always been a family of families.

Shortly after opening in 1968, Rolling Green suffered a tragedy in the loss of one of its own to a senseless murder of Pamela Powers. Her family and the Rolling Green PTA donated a painting of an ocean scene in her



memory which graced the hallway of the school with the saying "May the education offered at this school be as vast as the ocean", I believe that this wish has been fulfilled.



So many great memories held by students, staff and parents: visit

by Japanese dignitaries from our Sister City, UGRA softball at the Rolling Green field, putting in a new playground, Christmas bazaars (still have several priceless mementos), musicals and on and on



The year-round school hosted at Rolling Green has moved to Karen Acres. Rolling Green will be used this Fall as a facility for the Metro West program while their building undergoes remodeling. After that, who knows what the next iteration of Rolling Green will hold.

News of the Urbandale Alumni Association

Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation and the Urbandale Alumni Association, finished one of their biggest fundraisers for student scholarships and teacher grants by holding their annual Golf Tournament at the Hyperion Golf and Country Club. Their Annual U-Fest, a family friendly event with a band, food, and drinks originally scheduled for July 1 was postponed because of weather but will be held August 19 at the Urbandale Senior Center at 4:30 pm.



A big upcoming event for the Urbandale Alumni Association will be the dinner celebrating the 2023 UHS Distinguished Alumnus Award taking place at the

Stoney Creek Hotel in Johnston on **Saturday, September 23, 2023**. This year's Distinguished Alumnus is **Michelle Wright** (UHS '75).

After graduation, Michelle went to the Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln completing a B.A. in Journalism & Political Science and a master's degree in Mass Communication from USC. She interned with Henry Winkler and was a production coordinator with Warner Brothers. Michelle then moved to London, spending 15 years as Head of Production for Working Title Films, overseeing 50 feature films. While she may live in London, she keeps close to her Urbandale roots with her family here.



More information about Michelle and the award celebration go to the Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation website: www.urbaf.org

Restoration of the Olmsted-Urban House

In November 2019 the Olmsted-Urban House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the four-square architecture popular in the early 1900s. But what of the interior?

When the Historical Society had the opportunity to purchase the property from John Urban in 1987, the House had been vacant. The Urban family had moved to Urbandale in 1947 and played an important role in the community. Matie Urban continued to live in the House after her husband Karl died in 1978. Only in her later years did she go to live with her son John in New Mexico, before her death in 1986. Matie had made few changes in the House and the decor reflected earlier days. After the sale to the Society, John left some of the larger furniture items such as the piano, dining room set and buffet, and living room chairs that could be reupholstered. Many other items that had accumulated had to be discarded.



Under the leadership of Society President Madeline Kaloides committees were formed to make plans for restoration of the house. First a decision had to be made regarding the use of the House. It was determined that it would be a place where the historic memorabilia that had already been collected could be displayed without being set up as a formal museum. Second, it could serve as a meeting place with space for tables and chairs and a usable kitchen. Third, the first floor could be furnished as if a family was living there, not when the House was built in 1904, but as "Grandma's House" in the period of the 1920s and

1930s. One room was to be used as an office and to store printed materials.

Under the leadership of Wayne Robbins, Don Avaux and other volunteers work ensued involving removal of the white paint and revarnishing the staircase and woodwork. Changes in the interior had to meet city regulations and be made handicapped accessible. A bathroom near the back entrance was added. Knowledgeable business people were consulted in selecting new carpet, and wallpaper for the living room and dining room areas. Several framed pictures common to the period were used. Members of the community donated card tables and chairs so meetings could be held.

Marilyn Kollmorgan led a committee working on the kitchen and pantry. A Hoosier cabinet and old-style refrigerator were purchased.



Ellen Valerius (of Valerius farm and school) donated the kitchen stove and Don and Katherine Brush provided the sink. Through the years various people

have donated vintage dishes, kitchen utensils and pantry items for display and use. Plans were eventually made to serve luncheons as a money-making venture using the collection of green FireKing dishes. Joanne Hansen prepared the food assisted by Mary Looney, Deloris Van Horn, Mary Osborn, Virginia Gee and others as servers.

On the second floor there was no need to restore all the original five bedrooms but to develop the space with a variety of uses. What had been John's bedroom is now a toy room with an interesting collection of games, dolls, clothing and child-sized furnishings. Some of the more valuable items are arranged in a display case against the west wall. Carol Lee Riekenberg has done much to develop the displays in this room.

Beth Haigh and Questers groups furnished another room with period clothing (some on dress forms) and accessories reflecting both women's and men's wear over the decades. A highlight in this room is the collection of framed pictures of the five Olmsted girls and their Grandmother Charlotte Olmsted.



The master bedroom, which had originally been two rooms with a stairway to the attic, now has some clothing items and furnishings that had belonged to the original Olmsted family. Chests of drawers, the bed, cedar chest and trunks, lamps, pictures and a historical loomed coverlet have all been donated.

The room in the northwest corner of the House has been designated as the Heritage Room. Included are items from the schools and the community representing all periods of Urbandale's history. Meribeth Haynes and other Urbandale High School Alumni are making plans to collect and display items related to the schools. Donations of photos and memorabilia are appreciated. The complete collection of UHS yearbooks and copies of the early newspaper 'BluJay Chatter' are of special interest.

How can you view these interesting items? The House is open to visitors the first Sunday of each month from 2-4 p.m. These times are planned as an Open House so you or family can visit at your own pace. A volunteer will be available to answer questions. You do not need an appointment. These informal Open House visits do not replace the Holiday Open House in December when the entire House is decorated for Christmas and music and refreshments are available.

You can find out more about the Olmsted-Urban House by visiting the Society website www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org. If you would like a fast-paced tour, go to We are Iowa (weareiowa.com) and search for Olmsted-Urban House for a digital tour. This will take you to a site with the option of Digital Tour which was taken August 26, 2019. This is a fast-moving view that takes you to all of the rooms. It's amazing to see how many items have been acquired since the House first purchased in 1987.

New Acquisitions

Over the past year we have acquired several pieces that we need to share with everyone. This will be a feature in an upcoming Newsletter, so keep watching for it. In the meantime, we have found a new home for the Wayne Robbins **Buddy L memorial train**. Gail Huitt, brother of Norm Huitt, was visiting from California. Together, they installed a large shelf in the office to display the train. They also installed another shelf in the barn to hold various items of interest. Also, Joe Lamb is working on the Lamb Dairy display in the Barn.

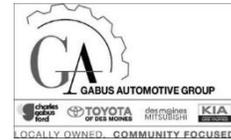
Memorials

Joanne Robbins passed away July 30 at Bishop Drumm Care Center in Johnston. She and husband Wayne, who died in 2016 were longtime Urbandale residents with their home on 70th Street. They both played important roles in the growth of the Urbandale Historical Society with Wayne on the Board as head of the Building and Grounds Committee and 14 years as President. Joanne was treasurer for the Society for a number of years. From the 1980s Wayne was instrumental in all phases of the work related to the

acquisition, restoration and maintenance of the Olmsted-Urban House. Through his leadership the Barn was built. Joanne helped with many of the projects and activities of the Society, especially the Ice Cream Social. She was assisted in later years by daughters Jeri Pilmer and Linda Coop. The Historical Society owes much to the work of the Robbins Family.

Longtime Society member **Carroll Edwards** passed away June 4. He and wife Maxine have helped the Society in a variety of ways through the years. He enjoyed participating in the program meetings and even shared his experiences and donated a pair of roller skates in a case for the program that was held about the Roller Rink in Urbandale. He helped Maxine and the Garden Club with the work in establishing the Pollinator Garden and donated several items for the Barn. Maxine continues to live in their home on Airline.

Acknowledgement of Supporters



News of the Urbandale Historical Society

We have had a change in duties among the Board. Jo Henry has requested to 'retire' as the Society Treasurer, though she will still be an active member of the Board and Society. She will be replaced as Treasurer by Marissa Beal who in turn will relinquish her role as Board Secretary. If anyone would like to become more active in the Historical Society and serve on the Board as Secretary, please contact any Board member. We do need new people to get involved.

New Members

Janet Buck 2729 82nd Place, Unit 328 Urbandale, IA 50322	Gene & Betty Hamilton 4850 72nd St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-979-273601 bpete103@aol.com
Erik & Paul Cook 14330 Greenbelt Dr. Urbandale, IA 50323	Howard Smith 7012 Prairie Ave. Urbandale, IA 50322
Mary Miller 3401 Mary Lynn Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-276-8317 iowaquiltblock@yahoo.com	



Our loyal volunteers and President Norm Huitt already looking forward to making more grand Ice Cream Social memories next year!

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