

# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

4010 70<sup>TH</sup> STREET

URBANDALE, IA 50322

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## Summer 2022

### Ice Cream Social

Good News! The traditional Ice Cream Social will be held Sunday, June 26. This is not only an important fundraiser for the Historical Society, but for more than 20 years a favorite community event.



What you can do:

1. Tell others a date has been set so they can get it on their calendar.
2. Invite your friends and family to attend.
3. Agree to donate pie(s) or other baked goods, (Callers will be trying to obtain 60 donations).
4. Volunteer to help on one of the serving shifts. (Several of our regular helpers are no longer available. Jo Henry is the over-all chairman of the event).
5. Come to the lawn of the Olmsted-Urban House, 4010 70<sup>th</sup> St. between 2-4 p.m. for an afternoon of fun and fellowship.

After you give your donation, file along to select your choice of pie or other baked item, get your serving of ice cream and choice of beverage. Then sit down at a picnic table and stay as long as you like to visit with your friends or meet someone new.

Take time to come out to the Wayne Robbins Barn. See items important to the farm wife with her canning, washing, raising chickens and gardening. Assorted farm tools are on display. What do you recognize? In the south section are items related to the streetcar line, Lamb's Dairy and the Valerius farm. Take a look at the Pollinator Garden developed by the Urbandale Garden Club.

Hope you can attend this unique fundraising event this year.

For additional information and updates check the Urbandale Historical Society Facebook page and/or our web page ([www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org)).

### Urbandale Parks: Past and Future

After days of rain and snow, strong winds and hail, tornado warnings and fog, freezing temperatures and bright sunlight, more predictable days are finally here. Time to get out and enjoy the Urbandale parks.

Jan Herke, Urbandale Parks and Recreation Director, reports that Urbandale now manages 57 parks of various sizes, more than 50 miles of paved trails and a number of programs at the Senior Recreation Center.



This is an exciting time for Urbandale residents as progress is being made on the Master Plan for parks first prepared in 2017. In the forefront are plans for a proposed Community Recreation Complex at Walnut Creek Regional Park 152<sup>nd</sup> street and Meredith Drive.

An initial survey has been held and community forums will be held to obtain public input. Some ideas for the complex so far include gymnasiums, pickleball courts, indoor walking track, indoor playground, community rooms and rental space and general space for programs and classes. (The facility will not include a swimming pool.)

Any proposal would have to pass a future bond issue. With the building of a new Recreation Complex, there are no plans to close the current Senior Recreation Center on Aurora Avenue with its popular schedule of classes, programs and activities. Any new facility being considered would provide programming that would complement what is already being offered.

The history of the parks system begins more than 75 years ago when Urbandale Lions Club members purchased 10 acres of farmland along 72<sup>nd</sup> Street to develop a park for the community. Lions Club volunteers graded the land and planted trees and grass. As the park developed, a variety of community activities took place particularly the first July 4th celebrations.

In 1954 a fenced-in wading pool was added by the Lions. Several groups led by the P.T.A. and Lions Club raised funds to establish tennis courts in the southeast corner in 1959.

The shelter house in the park was another Lions Club project. Donations were received from the American Legion, 'Ridin Hi' Saddle Club, Garden Club and P.T.A. Funds were raised and supplies purchased. Lions Club members and volunteers worked a number of week-ends to construct the concrete block building.

The building, first served as the site for Lions and Lioness Club meetings. Now known as the Ralph Whitten Shelter House it has been the site of hundreds of community activities, receptions and celebrations.

Through the years the original Lions Park has remained the center of community activities. A variety of trees were planted, picnic tables added and playground equipment installed. A girls softball field, named for Coach Gary Page, is located in the northeast corner of the original park land. The Lions Gazebo, an Eagle Scout project at 72<sup>nd</sup> and Aurora, is a gathering place which can also be rented.

A Master Plan study of Lions Park is slated to be conducted this year to evaluate potential new amenities and developments at the historic Park and Shelter House.

For more information about the location and special features of the other parks throughout the city, check the website [www.urbandale.org/parks&recreation](http://www.urbandale.org/parks&recreation).

## URBANDALE LIONS CLUB

Most vital and progressive communities owe their success to many different organizations which, over the years, have worked hard to ensure that success. The Urbandale Lions Club, while not around at the city's founding in 1917 certainly has contributed greatly to making Urbandale what she is.

Just as World War II ended and our country was returning to some degree of normality, the Urbandale Lions Club was chartered. For over 75 years that club has led the way in seeing that Urbandale and its citizens could enjoy a better life in a fine community. Just after its founding in September 1945, the Urbandale Lions noted the need for a park in Urbandale. They solved

the problem by purchasing on contract ten acres, which



is now Lions Park, from one of the club's charter members, Millard and Olive Olmsted, for \$4,000. The Lions seeded and planted trees over the entire ten acres.

To make the payments on their park, the Lions were having a fund raiser almost every month. Car washes, pancake breakfasts and suppers, movie parties, musical shows, horse shows and donkey ball games, to name a few.

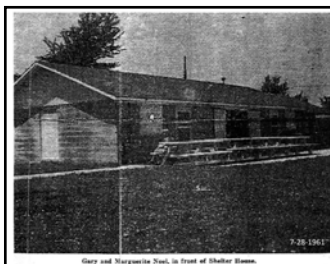


On March 17, 1952, the city accepted the deed for Lions Park from the Urbandale Lions. Some six years later, in August, 1958, the Urbandale City Council recognized the work of the Lions Club by officially naming the park "Lions Park".



In the spring of 1952, Laird Jones, Karl Urban, Ralph Whitten and others began pushing the shelter house

project and by June the Lions agreed to provide workers and an initial payment of \$300. In September, 1953, work began. For five consecutive Saturdays that



fall 15 to 20 Lions turned out to work on the shelter house. By November, 1953, the shelter house was closed in. Spring of 1954 saw the finishing work, including the laying of a cement floor. Work on improving the shelter

house went on for several more years, but the completed building became doubly important to the community as it was used from 1957 to 1964 by the Urbandale school system as a kindergarten classroom. In later years the shelter house served as the home of the Urbandale Senior Center and more recently has been home to a daycare as well as the UCAN offices not to mention a facility for community use.

In 1979, a further addition was made to the shelter house with the Lions club doing much of the work and contributing \$12,000 of the cost. In 1994, the Urbandale City Council further honored the Lions Club and Ralph Whitten by naming the shelter house for Whitten. Whitten modestly accepted the honor "as a representative of the many Lions who worked on and contributed to the shelter house".

In 1954, Eldon Clements, Charles Chew, Doc Reynolds and a crew of Lions completed work on a children's wading pool for the park which was removed a few years ago.



The Urbandale Lions Club has long supported the Urbandale schools. In the early days, the club members dragged the ball diamonds

and helped prepare football fields and the track. Hundreds of dollars have gone to assist individual students, booster clubs, funds for athletic equipment, music, play groups, cheerleaders, etc. An all-purpose cement court to be used for tennis, basketball, square dances, summer programs, etc. was built in 1959 with the Lions providing both money and workers when the PTA requested help with the project. The effort was funded partially by the Park Board and the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce as well as community contributions.

One of the biggest school projects by the Lions occurred in the summer of 1975 when the club worked to erect a building at the football field to house ticket sellers, rest rooms and storage space. Almost all of the work was done by Lions Club members, and the result was a serviceable building. That building has been replaced by the beautiful facilities of today at Frerichs Field. For many years and to this day, the members of the club have furnished ticket sellers at various school sponsored events.



The longest running Lions project has been participation in various phases of the Urbandale 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration. The Club has participated in the parade and with a float for many of those years, has operated various concessions on the midway, and lent a helping hand wherever needed.

They have been instrumental in the selling of the Urbandale 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks buttons each year. Bingo had been their most lucrative fund-raiser since the game became legal in 1973 except for 1995, when torrential rain washed them out and in 2020 when COVID closed everyone. The Lions Club has continued the Bingo operation and hopes to see everyone this July (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>).



Another long-time project of the Club is the Annual Homecoming Pancake Day. This event has been ongoing every year since 1954. The Pancake event with Homecoming has been and continues to be a very profitable fundraising activity. In recent years the Lions has added a raffle to the Pancake dinner, with half the proceeds going to the raffle winner and the other half going to a local organization.

**URBANDALE HOMECOMING CELEBRATION and PANCAKE DAY**  
URBANDALE, IOWA FRI., OCT. 17 1958

**Pancake Stand**  
In HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM AT 7th and DOUGLAS  
11:00 A. M. to 6:30 P. M.

Pancakes, Sausages (or eggs), Coffee... Adults 75¢... School Children 50¢  
(Includes a FREE Package of Country Pancake Mix... Adults Only!  
Soft Drinks Also Available)

**FIVE LARGE GRILLS FOR FAST SERVICE - NO WAITING**

**HOMECOMING PARADE - Commencing at 2:30 P.M.**  
The kids do a wonderful job on their floats and costumes, so plan to see the fun. Prizes will be awarded winning participants between halves of the game.

**HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME - Urbandale vs. Altoona**  
At 7:30 P. M. on field just north of Olmsted Elementary School at 72nd and Prairie  
This is a big one for both teams so give the boys your support.

The Homecoming Queen and her attendants will be honored between the halves of the game.

BUY YOUR PANCAKE DAY TICKETS FROM THE CHILDREN!  
The top salesmen will receive prizes for their efforts.

Many other fine projects have come and gone. The Lions' spring musical was a big affair. It was originally a musical show in the 1940's and 1950's that gave way to a local amateur hour. In the 1960's and 1970's the popular Bill Riley Talent Search supplanted the local amateur hour. Some would suggest that this was the origin of the Bill Riley Talent Search so beloved as a part of the Iowa State Fair today. When Riley retired, the musicals ended. Laird Jones usually headed up this project.



The Lions Club was the catalyst in helping form the Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of Urbandale in 1962. The Foundation was incorporated as a separate non-profit organization with funds from the Lions Club. Most of the foundation's early leaders were Lions. In recent years, the Lions, in conjunction with the Lioness, have held a brunch each spring with the proceeds going to the Scholarship Fund. Since 2019 the Urbandale Education Foundation has taken the lead with this event and with the support of the Urbandale Lions Club has continued with the Annual Spring Pancake brunch. Total gifts to this fund now run well into five figures. Pancakes are a strength of the club. They provide pancakes for a number of groups throughout the year, including UCAN volunteers, Rolling Green PTO, and various community groups, as well they rent out grills for other groups to use.

The Lions may seem like they spend a lot of energy and time raising money, but it all goes back to the community. Over the many years, the Lions have donated thousands of dollars back to Urbandale. Just since 2000 it is estimated they have donated over \$200,000. In addition to money, the Lions have contributed in many other ways, such as the KidsSight Program which involves photographing the eyes of 2- to 5-year-olds so they can be interpreted by staff at KidsSight in Iowa City to detect vision problems early;

Iowa Lions Tissue Transport Relay to ensure that donated corneas arrive at the Iowa Lions Eye Bank in a timely fashion; collection and distribution of eye glasses and hearing aids plus providing free of charge glasses and hearing aids to many children and adults in the community who would otherwise do without; Christmas Luminary and Tree Lighting event; stuffing school supplies and backpacks for Urbandale school children, filling food sacks for Urbandale school children and needy in Urbandale. These are only a small listing of the activities of the Urbandale Lions Club. They meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Lions Park Shelter house for a fun dinner and program. Come join them. For more information see their website, <https://www.urbandalelionsclub.org/> .

## Stuart Family History

Among Urbandale's historic families were the Stuarts. Joseph Guerney Stuart and his wife Martha (Hoskins) originally lived in North Carolina and came to Polk County in 1882. He initially acquired 80 acres of farm land in the east part of Webster Township and settled in a house on the north side of the road that would later be named Douglas. The family had six children Rufus, Warren, Mark, Raymond, Olive and Laura, who all attended McDivitt Grove country school on Meredith.

In 1902 Olive married a young farmer in the area, Millard Olmsted and they raised their five children in the Olmsted farm home on 70<sup>th</sup> Street.

When a group of citizens wanted to get the community incorporated, Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Stuart put up the bond money needed to have the election in 1917. Mr. Stuart died in 1922 and is buried in McDivitt Cemetery.

Mark Stuart was elected to the first City Council. As part of his "civic duty" long before streets were surfaced, Mark would drive a team of mules to pull a grader over the road to smooth out the ruts. He also at one time served on the School Board. He and his wife Nellie had a son Harold who would be the father of Beverly Stuart Samuelson, a long-time Historical Society member who passed recently (see below).

Raymond Stuart built his farm home across Douglas from the early Stuart farm. In addition to his farm work, he had a milk route to deliver bottled milk for 10¢ a quart with his Model A Ford. In 1936 he sold his business to Bob Lamb for what would become the popular Lamb's Dairy.

Raymond farmed the Stuart land from Merle Hay Road on west to 66<sup>th</sup> St. and from Douglas north to Aurora, including the monastery grounds.

Warren lived in the original farm home for 85 years.

The elderly bearded farmer was a common sight as he worked outside. The house and barn were removed to make room for Merle Hay Mall.



Warren D. Stuart, one of the original settlers of Urbandale and a homesite builder, died December 21 at Calvin Manor at the age of 98. Mr. Stuart, son of Joseph and Martha Stuart, was born near Woolson in Jefferson County, Iowa, on August 26, 1874. His death was attributed to complications due to his extremely old age.

Warren Stuart was 5 years old when his parents first moved to Polk County in 1882. His parents rented a vacant home near Clive for one month and then went into Dallas County for a year. In 1883 they bought and moved into their homestead at 6301 Douglas that still stands, although plans are underway to expand Merle Hay Plaza into the area. Mr. Stuart lived at this home until three years ago when he was forced, because of illness, to move into Calvin Manor. Prior

to this he was in the hospital for a few weeks at Northwest Hospital, and to my knowledge this was the only serious illness he ever encountered except for a broken arm.

As a boy and a man he was an exceptionally strong individual and as a West Branch playmate of Herbert Hoover sometimes had to be told to take it easy on Herbert because of his great strength. It is also remembered that as a man he broke his arm but could still toss a bale of hay with a pitchfork with one arm to the top of a wagon.

A nurse who used to work at Calvin Manor told a friend of mine that when she was at Calvin Manor, Warren was the strongest and healthiest patient they had in the infirmary.

He is survived by his brother, Ray Stuart, formerly of 6202 Douglas, but now of Surgeon Manor, Dallas Center. Also by 3 nephews, 6 nieces and a host of relatives and friends. Burial was at the McDivitt Cemetery.

By Anna Dunn

## Memorials

### Dick Carey

Richard "Dick" Carey, a long-time member of the Historical Society, died April 3, 2022. He and his wife Ruth first joined as friends of President Wayne Robbins and participated in many programs and activities through the years. In his obituary it mentioned he enjoyed "dishing homemade ice cream at the Olmsted House in Urbandale". A celebration of life service will be held August 11, 2022 at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

### Beverly Stuart Samuelson

Word has been received of the passing March 8, 2022 of Beverly Stuart Samuelson, part of the history of the Stuart family in Urbandale and a long-time supporter of

the Urbandale Historical Society (see above). Beverly had made several visits to the Olmsted-Urban House and donated a number of family items and photos to the Society collection.

Her grandparents were Mark and Nellie Stuart and Mrs. Millard Olmsted was a great-aunt. She went to school in Urbandale and in 1944 was named the Polk County Spelling Champion. She attended Augustana College and worked as a legal secretary including 20 years with the Iowa State Legislature. She later moved with her husband Eugene to Charlottesville, Virginia where she was known for many aspects of volunteer work.

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### Volunteers

The Historical Society property at 70<sup>th</sup> and Airline was always a popular site for community events, but requires upkeep. Have you noticed some bright flowers in the northwest corner of the property? This is the site of the Pollinator Garden being maintained by the Urbandale Garden Club. The traditional garden on the south side of the Olmsted-Urban House has been cared for by Faith Huitt since the loss of Marilyn Finnerty. Volunteers for the care of other plantings and lawn upkeep would be most appreciated. Contact president Norm Huitt if you can help.

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### Historical Society Secretary

The Urbandale Historical Society is pleased to welcome our new Secretary, Marisa Beal. She is an Urbandale High School graduate, Marisa Sweeney, Class of 1988 and a member of the Urbandale Alumni Association. She is replacing Kay Readinger who retired after serving as secretary for over 20 years.

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### Website

Our website: [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) has been slowly evolving over the past several years. Please visit our website for information of events and news of the Society. We are hoping to renew our monthly programs in September. Watch our Facebook and website for more information. Also, try your hand at our Question of the Month.

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### Newsletter

With this Newsletter we are sending it both by paper as well as electronically to those for whom we have e-mail addresses and indicated they are willing to receive the Newsletter in this format. If you do not receive it and would be willing to receive the newsletter via e-mail, please let us know. In the future for those not able to receive the Newsletter electronically, we will continue to

mail the paper copy. If you have not sent us your e-mail address and would like to receive the newsletter electronically, please send us your e-mail address ([urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com)). We are doing this because of the increased cost of mailing. We are going through our membership lists to prepare for a new Directory. If you have not renewed your membership please do. We have a number of members who have not renewed in several years yet we have continued to send the Newsletter. We are trying to clean things up and watch our expenses.

New Members	
Marisa Beal 13521 Oak Brook Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-577-7125 <a href="mailto:mbeal13521@gmail.com">mbeal13521@gmail.com</a>	
Address Changes	
Dennis & Regina Linn 9405 Wilson St. West Des Moines, IA 50266 641-780-8475	Bob & Verda Simon 4210 Hickman Rd., Apt. #152 Des Moines, IA 50310 515-313-5478
James & Karen Pittman 6901 Peckham St., Unit 314 Johnston, IA 50131 515-350-7758; (c) 515-249-1930	Urbandale Alumni Association Shawn & Shari Stevenson 6768 Cardiss Ct. Johnston, IA 50131 804-855-8306 <a href="mailto:shawnsteve@aol.com">shawnsteve@aol.com</a>

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### Acknowledgement of Supporters



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