

# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

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## Winter 2025

### Christmas at the Olmsted-Urban House

Once again, the Olmsted-Urban House was decked out in her holiday finery looking forward to a visit from the Jolly Old Elf himself. We entertained folks on December 1 and 8 this year. Our Annual traditional Open House was held on Dec. 1 then the following Sunday (Dec. 8) we held what has become our Annual Christmas festival. We had lots



of goodies, music and decorations at both events and of course Santa. Something new this year was a 'Cookie Walk', a chance to buy homemade cookies that would help relieve some of your baking needs for the holidays (or

maybe fuel your energy while you are baking). We were graced by the Urbandale Choir who serenaded us with some beautiful selections fit for the holidays. The Barn was open and featured, among the other interesting items, a full layout of the Lamb Dairy. A good time was had by all and it certainly helped set the mood for the holidays. Though we are looking towards Spring, Christmas is only 45 weeks away.



The Urbandale Alumni Association finished their brick fundraising project in December by selling 284 small and large bricks to go around the original school flagpole that was dedicated in the backyard of the Olmsted-Urban House last year at the Ice Cream Social. The Alumni Association hopes to have the bricks installed by this year's Ice Cream Social to unveil the new plaza that the bricks will form around the flagpole. We have asked two alumni to serve as the Host and Hostess of this event. The Host will be **Kolson O'Donnell** from the Class of 2024 and the Hostess will be **Nona Wilson Warden** from the Class of 1954. Nona and Kolson have graciously agreed to do this as they both attended last year's dedication, purchased bricks, and represent for us a 70-year span in graduating from Urbandale HS. We have asked them to share what school was like for each of them during their time at Urbandale Schools. We will be sharing that as part of the Ice Cream Social celebration.



In addition, at the Ice Cream Social this year the Alumni Association will be announcing their Alumnus of the Year and their Retired Teacher of the Year. If you would like to nominate someone for either of those honors, please go to [www.urbsaf.org](http://www.urbsaf.org) and look for the nomination forms on the website. Nominations will be open until April 4, 2025.

Last but not least, the Alumni Association would like to thank **Scott Cierzan** from the Class of 1978 and **Steve Mall** from the Class of 1983 for spearheading the remodeling of the upstairs room at the Olmsted-Urban House. New cabinets and bookcases are being built and installed to showcase school and city memorabilia. Every yearbook plus individual class pictures will be displayed in the new bookcases and flipchart that have been designed, built, and installed by Scott and Steve.



Also helping with the project by sorting and going through all of the memorabilia to display in the newly designed room are **Ginny Olmsted Campbell** from the Class of 1956 and **Meribeth Haynes** from the Class of 1976. This project received a grant from Endow Urbandale to help remodel the room along with a donation from the Urbandale Alumni Association.

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## Endow Urbandale

Once again Urbandale Historical Society was named a recipient of a grant from Endow Urbandale Community Fund. The grant this year of \$3,000 is for the renovation and shelving of the Historical Society's 'Heritage Room' at the Olmsted-Urban House. The renovated room will better display the old class pictures from the Urbandale Schools and memorabilia from the City of Urbandale. Visitors to the Olmsted-Urban House have looked in the Heritage Room upstairs at the class pictures, complete collection of yearbooks, copies of Blue Jay Chatter early school newspapers and memorabilia related to athletic teams. The new shelving and flip charts will help in the organizing and display of the many items to be preserved.

Endow Urbandale has been most gracious to the Historical Society over the years with past grants. We are most grateful for their continued support.

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## Upcoming Events

### Historical Society Programs

- **Jan 12, 2025:** Pat Finnerty presented on the Streetcars of Urbandale. Much of the material for this presentation was based information collected by Earl Short (see Memorial).
- **Feb 9, 2025:** **McDivitt Cemetery** with Mary Polson & Ann Ulm. Take a warm tour of the Cemetery from the comfort of the Urbandale Library and enjoy a trip through time in Urbandale via the residents of McDivitt Grove Cemetery.
- **Mar 9, 2025:** **Urbandale High School Athletics and Activities** with Tim Carver. Relive the glory of Urbandale High School athletics from someone who was a part of the glory days.
- **Apr 13, 2025:** **Starting Your Garden** with Megan Bannister. With Spring around the corner and the weather close to ready for our plants she will share gardening tips for creating a vibrant and beautiful Garden
- **May 18, 2025:** **Take a Tour of Urbandale**. Pat Finnerty will take us on a tour of Urbandale showcasing the old historical sites with their modern counterparts.

- **Jun 8, 2025:** **Urbandale Schools** with Dr. Daca & Dean Hatch. They will share with us Urbandale's history through her schools from founding to today.

Come and learn about our history and offer your experiences. These programs will be at the Urbandale Library from 2-4 pm.

### Open House

We have the House open the first Sunday of each month form 2-4 pm for tours.

### May Event

Plans are in the works for a Spring Celebration at the Olmsted-Urban House. See the website [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) and Facebook for more details.

### Ice Cream Social

This year Annual Ice Cream Social will be even bigger and better than ever. In addition to the delicious ice cream, pies and cakes, and other traditional activities we will be unveiling of the plaza at the new flag pole and a chance to see the newly remodeled 'Heritage' room in the House. Not to mention the Alumnus and Retired Teacher of the Year and Awards. Lots to do. The Ice Cream Social will be Sunday, June 29.

Watch our website: [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) and Facebook page for updates and more information.

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## Urbandale Garden Club

An important part of Urbandale history is coming to a close. The Urbandale Garden Club, first organized in 1931, is preparing to disband.

Mrs. John Eby and six other women with mutual interests decided to organize as the Urbandale Community Garden Club. Meetings were held in members' homes with information shared and programs presented on flowers and vegetable gardening. By 1935 membership had grown to 25 and a variety of event were planned including potlucks, May breakfasts, deserts, luncheons, picnics in the park and community rose shows.

In the 1940s, wartime years, Victory Gardens were encouraged. Many of the programs for the community were devoted to vegetable growing and modern methods of canning and storage of homegrown fruits and vegetables. Other service projects over the years included planting of an evergreen on the school grounds at 70<sup>th</sup> and Douglas to honor the men and women in the Armed Forces. A serviceberry tree was planted at the new Lakeview Park. Two flowering pear trees were planted at the Urbandale Library (Senior Center) on Aurora to honor young men who were killed in Iraq. Through the years some planting was done in the flower beds at Lions Park and the front of the Karen Acres Care



Center. Books on gardening were donated to the Urbandale Public Library. Fundraising was achieved by the popular May flower sale held at the Olmsted-Urban House for many years.



In the years after 2000 the public became more aware of the importance of the Monarch Butterfly and pollinator insects. As a community service project, the club approached the Urbandale Historical Society with the idea of developing a space on the grounds of the Olmsted-Urban House for a pollinator garden with plants designed to attract butterflies and other pollinating insects. The garden club spent time in planning, soil preparation, obtaining plants from members' gardens and purchasing special perennials and of course the necessary weeding and watering. In the effort to attract the Monarchs, the Garden Club even qualified as a Monarch Waystation.

In recent years the club has experiences declining membership with some of the members moving out of the area and others with health concerns. There were no longer enough members to care for the Garden. The group has regretfully decided to disband. Responsibility for the continued care of the Pollinator Garden with now go back to the Historical Society and volunteer will be needed for it upkeep. The Garden Club has donated \$1,000 to the Historical Society for its continued upkeep and future plantings. A concrete garden bench will be placed at the east entrance of the garden as a memorial.

The Pollinator Garden and Gazebo make a beautiful attraction for the developing area on the grounds recognizing the Urbandale Schools with the 'old' flag pole and soon brick plaza. Stop by and see the garden and plaza, especially at the Ice Cream Social this June.

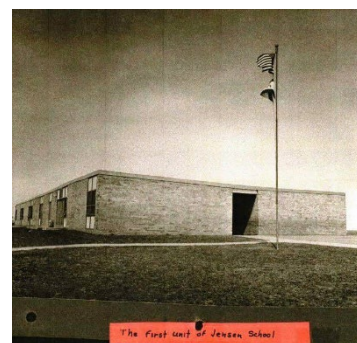
## Jensen Elementary School



In the 1960's as the Urbandale population increased, there was a definite need for classroom space to accommodate a growing student population. In May 1960, 4.8 acres were purchased on the NE corner of 64<sup>th</sup> and Aurora from Chapel Hill Memorial Garden Assoc. for \$12,000. In

October of 1962 the Urbandale School Board announced their intent for a bond referendum in late February of 1963 for an elementary school at 64<sup>th</sup> and Aurora, the proposed Jensen Elementary school (the naming of the school for Isabelle Jensen was referenced in the Nov and Dec School Board minutes, see below). The Bond Referendum of Feb. 18, 1963 calling for \$115,000 for the construction of elementary school at 64<sup>th</sup> and Aurora was passed with the results 206 Yes and 33 No votes. Bonds were issued in March 1963 at 2.899% for 20 years (\$39,935)

The building was planned to have seven basic classrooms, a principal's office and an activity/lunchroom. When school opened on October 4, 1963 students moved into the new building. These students had been using the Open Bible Church, Blackhurst, Olmsted and various other sites in the district. The landscaping of the grounds was not yet completed and there were no sidewalks. Classes were cancelled for several days because heavy rains had made the schoolyard muddy and the children could not get through the mud to get to the school. Later, in addition to sidewalk, an asphalt surfaced parking lot and playground were completed.



A West Wing was added to the building in 1967, a multipurpose room in 1975 and in 1991 in addition to some remodeling work, a new media center was added.

Miss Eula Flagler, the Principal at Olmsted Elementary, also served at Jensen. Jensen parents met with Olmsted parents as a Parent Teacher Organization to provide assistance to the school staff, plan fundraisers, etc. Later the Jensen group organized independently and worked on a variety of projects within and outside the school building.

In recent years School District planners recognized again a growing need for expanded school facilities. A 2018 bond issue gave plans for new larger school buildings to be located at existing Olmsted and Valerius school sites to replace the existing smaller buildings.

Despite dedicated efforts the Jensen Elementary Building had been in decline for a number of years. Due to projected costs of renovation, the current state of the facility (i.e., an active roof leak and a failing mechanical system) it was determined to be cost effective to demolish the building. School attendance boundaries had already been restructured and the Jensen pupils began attending the new Olmsted Elementary in the Fall of 2021. Actual demolition of the Jensen building began in the Fall of 2024 with final cleanup in December.

An event, the “Jensen Jubilee”, to share the school's history, was held November 7 with former students, staff and community members invited. It provided an opportunity to view photos, scrapbooks and memorabilia and share memories of their years at Jensen Elementary.

A dedication ceremony honoring Miss Isabell Jensen also took place in the area of the Olmsted Building known as the Jensen Commons. Miss Isabelle Jensen was long-time 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics teacher for the district. Miss Jensen had resigned in Jan 1962 citing illness for her resignation and was replaced by Marian Chase (3602 68<sup>th</sup> St.). Isabelle died on Nov 22, 1962 of cancer. She had resided in the area for 16 years. Miss Jensen had taught at IA Falls, Charles City, Perry and Boulder CO. Served at Marengo, IA as Deputy County Superintendent of Schools. A native of Corning, IA. She attended State University of Iowa (Univ. of Iowa), Colorado St. Teachers College (Greeley, CO) and Drake University. Isabelle was a member of the First Methodist Church.

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### **A Timeline of the Urbandale Historical Society (1995-2000)**

The following was prepared by Virginia Gee and it gives us a sense of the activities of the Historical Society over the years. In previous issue we have highlighted 1975-1994, today we 1995-2000.

#### **1995**

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Discussions regarding parking lot and sidewalks
- Antique classes: 69 registered
- Parking lot paved
- Plant sale: \$1056
- Spring trip to Newton, IA
- Trees trimmed and removed
- Applebee restaurant paid to use the house and grounds for pictures
- Urbandale is Open: Flea Market (\$234)
- Ice Cream Social: \$257
- July 4<sup>th</sup> Lemonade stand
- Calendar used pictures of the House and grounds
- Fall trip to Nevada and Ames, IA
- Holiday Tour of Homes (\$1800)

#### **1996**

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Discussed funding – long range budget
- Plant sale
- Spring trip: Stanhope, Harcourt and Boone, IA
- Flea market (\$596)
- Ice Cream Social (\$676)
- July 4<sup>th</sup> Lemonade stand (\$63)
- Olmsted family reunion held

- Paving brick installed around parking lot
- Memorial oak trees planted
- Period light poles installed around parking lot
- Fall trip: Mason City, Clear Lake, IA
- Outdoor maintenance
- Work on upstairs bathroom
- Christmas Open House with Urbandale Chamber and Santa

#### **1997**

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Set goals for the Society, how to fund?
- Cleanup of basement and yard
- Plant & bake sale (\$758)
- Spring trip to IA City
- Yard sale
- Ice Cream Social
- July 4<sup>th</sup>, lemonade stand
- Mortgage burning party: August 13
- Fall trip: Elkhorn, IA
- Antique classes
- Worked with Urbandale Women's Club on renovation of Children's room
- Christmas Tour of Homes ((\$1410)

#### **1998**

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Maintenance projects in the house
- Work on upstairs storage room
- Antique classes
- Spring trip to Albia
- Plant sale (\$845)
- Urbandale is Open: Yard sale (\$738)
- Ice Cream Social: (\$525)
- July 4<sup>th</sup>: lemonade stand
- Provided information for the development of the Trolley Park
- Arbor bench placed in the flower garden
- Brick sidewalk installed
- Fall trip to Fort Dodge, IA
- Antique classes
- Punch on the Porch
- Christmas Tours of Homes (\$787)
- Children's room completed

#### **1999**

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Upstairs bathroom completed
- Storage room completed
- Chamber of Commerce luncheon at house
- Plant/Bake sale (\$1100)
- Sprig trip to Marshalltown
- Yard sale (Sperry items) (\$970)
- Ice Cream Social (\$600)
- Children's Tea Party

- Discussion of publicity, websites and the like
- Fall trip to Kalona, IA
- Antique classes
- Worked with the city on plans for the barn
- Outside wiring for the trees and flagpole
- Christmas Open House

## 2000

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Need to compile more Urbandale information
- Discussion of plans for sign
- Antique classes
- Spring trip to Wayne County, IA
- Plant/bake sale (\$1286)
- Medical group luncheon at the house
- Yard sale (\$418)
- Ice Cream Social (\$658)
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July lemonade stand (\$29)
- Tea Party for 6-8-year-olds (\$672)
- Foundation and roof inspected
- Barn plans approved, footing and cement floor installed
- Fall trip: Manning and Dennison, IA
- Antique classes
- Christmas Open House

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## In Memoriam

We have lost several good friends of the Society this past year.

### Earl Short

Earl Short, a long-time member and friend of the Urbandale Historical Society, passed away this past September 11. He and his wife Becky lived in Waukee and gave great support to the preservation of history.



Earl was born September 9, 1938, to Nancy and Imon Short. Earl was the beloved husband to Rebecca "Becky" for 53 years having married the love of his life on September 19, 1970. Earl was born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa. He was a 1956 graduate of North High School. Earl worked at the Des Moines Register & Tribune for over 20 years, served in the Army Reserves for 6 years, and served countless home buyers and sellers as a realtor for over 20 years in the Des Moines metro area until his retirement in 2002.

Earl founded the Des Moines Streetcar Friends, a group of individuals interested in collecting photos, memorabilia and preserving information about the streetcars operated by the Des Moines Railway Company. Wayne Robbins, Bob Simon, Norm Huitt and

Virginia Gee shared information about the role the streetcars that came out to the turnaround at 70<sup>th</sup> and Roseland played in Urbandale history. It is known that Fred and Frank Beach opened a small general store in the area. There was a machine repair place nearby and a blacksmith shop. A shelter big enough for a team of horses was available for people who wanted to ride the trolley into Des Moines. In 1911 Fred Hays built a grocery store north of the Beach store. Freight and supplies came out once a week on a streetcar. Each day local people could take the streetcar into Des Moines to work and brought mine workers came out to work in one of the coal mines in the area.

Power for the trolley came from an electric line above the track. A motorman and conductor rode on the car each way. Earl was particularly interested in researching the Urbandale line because his father had served as a motorman on this route.

Over the years as photos and information was collected from retired streetcar employees Earl was able to put together a number of programs he presented throughout the area about the streetcars of Des Moines and surrounding locales. Our recent program on the Urbandale Streetcars was based on much of his information.

Earl donated a painting showing the trolley coming out to Urbandale across the trestle over Merle Hay Road. The painting is located above in the office at the Olmsted-Urban House.

In recent years Earl worked with others interested in streetcar history and Des Moines City Officials to develop the Waveland Trolley Park located near Waveland Golf Course at 49<sup>th</sup> and University. Ideas for the metal sculpture depicting a streetcar, riders and informative panels came from observing the Lawson Trolley Park in Urbandale. With benches and landscaping the park was dedicated in August 2023 and has been designated a local historic landmark.

### Warren Glenn Riekenberg

We lost a treasured member of the Historical Society this past October. Warren Glen Riekenberg, age 88, passed on October 21, 2024. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Carol Lee.



Warren was born to Vergie Weese Ingraham and Lorenz Johan Riekenberg in Topeka, Kansas, on August 3, 1936. Together with his younger sister, Sibyl Marie, he spent his formative years in Chillicothe, Illinois. The family moved back to Kansas in the 1950s where he attended Topeka High School and later University of Kansas (KU). Following in his father's footsteps, Warren graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and



eventually became a licensed Engineer in Kansas, Illinois and Iowa.

Warren's experience in R.O.T.C. at KU, lead him to a career in the military, where he proudly served in Korea and Vietnam. He returned to this country in 1968 and prior to completing his military in 1970, he was assigned to the Army Corps of Engineers District Office in downtown Chicago where he held the rank of Major. It was there he met his lifelong soulmate, Carol Lee Alberts, whom he married in 1971, and was blessed with two wonderful children, Eric Karl and Lee Ann Marie.

They lived in Batavia, Illinois, for 15 years before moving to Urbandale, Iowa, in 1986, where he continued his Civil Engineering career until he retired.

Warren and Carol Lee have been long-time members and supporters of the Historical Society. Carol Lee had taken responsibility for displaying items in the Children's Room upstairs at the Olmsted-Urban House. She often brought holiday items from her own collections which Warren carried up and helped arrange. He spent many hours in the Living Room visiting others during Open House events, easily identified by his KU cap, while Carol Lee served as the friendly hostess telling families about the children's toys, dolls, games and furnishings.

Warren loved drives in the country, strolling the woods and walking the paths in nearby parks with Carol Lee. Just "being one with nature" was a beautiful part of their life. He was a man of few words but whenever he spoke, you knew he was also a man of wisdom, with a special kind of humor that will long be remembered! Warren will be greatly missed by all who loved him.

### Membership

Welcome to Deb Jacobs as a new Board member.

#### New members

Patricia Boddy 7932 Rocklyn Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-669-1099 <a href="mailto:patriciaboddy@gmail.com">patriciaboddy@gmail.com</a>	Sharleen Newton 2705 Carole Cir. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-250-8085 <a href="mailto:twinbabya@mchsi.com">twinbabya@mchsi.com</a>
Mark Crum 3521 82nd St Urbandale, IA 50322 515-782-7414 <a href="mailto:jwanelfman@msn.com">jwanelfman@msn.com</a>	Kolson O'Donnell 3901 68th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-771-2804 <a href="mailto:kolson@gmail.com">kolson@gmail.com</a>
David & Deb Hanson 16009 Walnut Hills Dr. Urbandale, IA 50323 515-249-4573 <a href="mailto:hansendavid5@outlook.com">hansendavid5@outlook.com</a>	Janelle Rynearson 9101 Beechwood Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-991-7966 <a href="mailto:jnicki1@aol.com">jnicki1@aol.com</a>
Margaret Mullen 7041 Brookview Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-205-6853 <a href="mailto:rpun20@gmail.com">rpun20@gmail.com</a>	

### Address Changes

Virginia Gee has moved to a new address. She would appreciate cards and news from her friends.

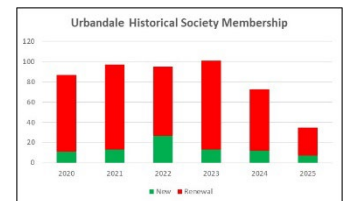
Virginia Gee  
3300 GW Carver Ave. Apt. 147  
Ames, IA 50010  
515-292-2209  
[vpgee@mediacombb.net](mailto:vpgee@mediacombb.net)

### Membership Report

With our fiscal year running from Jan through Dec now is the time to renew your membership. You can send us a check or go online at:

[www.Urbandalehistoricalsociety.org/membership](http://www.Urbandalehistoricalsociety.org/membership).

Our membership numbers for the past 5 years by 'New' and 'Renewal' are shown below. We typically carry people on our Membership Roster for 3 years without renewal before we drop them from the roster. We provide the Newsletter and other communications to those on our Roster and consider them Members.



With rising costs, we need to look closely at our

	New	Renewal	Total	Roster
<b>2020</b>	11	76	87	123
<b>2021</b>	13	84	97	136
<b>2022</b>	27	68	95	157
<b>2023</b>	13	88	101	166
<b>2024</b>	12	61	73	162
<b>2025</b>	7	28	35	142

expenses. While we have been quite fortunate in securing Grants and other funds, we are still primarily membership based. We appreciate your continued support and ask your help by encouraging your friends and neighbors to join and support the Urbandale Historical Society not only with membership but becoming engaged with our program and activities.

For all who have renewed for 2025, Thank You.

### Acknowledgement of Supporters



## URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION

Membership is on a calendar year: Jan. 1 to Dec. 31

Donations are tax deductible.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting: \$25	<input type="checkbox"/>	Patron: \$100	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name on permanent plaque: \$1,000 and up
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sustaining: \$50	<input type="checkbox"/>	Benefactor: \$500 and up	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Special Gifts – Memorials are appreciated

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Would be willing to receive the newsletter electronically (need e-mail address)

Please indicate your interests below:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Collecting & preserving Urbandale's history	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gardening /Yard work
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tour Guides for School Groups & others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs and Trips
<input type="checkbox"/>	Building/Grounds/House Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Publicity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Special Events and Projects (Ice Cream Social Christmas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housekeeping
<input type="checkbox"/>	Office work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refreshments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have Urbandale information, photographs or memorabilia to donate or lend for copying.		

Website: [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org)

e-mail: [urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com)

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