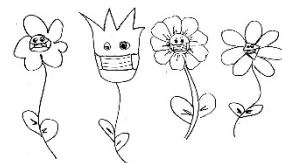


URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Spring 2021

News of the Urbandale Historical Society

Preserving Yesterday and Today for Tomorrow

That has continued to be the mission of the Urbandale Historical Society despite the closings resulting from the COVID19 virus. Board members, masked and distanced, continued to have monthly meetings to keep things going.

President Norm Huitt checks the mail and deals with any House maintenance problems. Bids are still being sought to reroof the Barn following last Fall's wind damage.

Treasurer Jo Henry pays the bills - electricity, water, telephone and maintenance. She prepared a detailed year-end profit and loss report of all items for 2019 and 2020 which of course showed a loss since we had no fund-raising events.

New to the Board is Susan Bonnicksen, a long-time Urbandale resident who has agreed to help organize a committee to develop a fund-raising campaign. Meribeth Haynes and Jo Henry are working with her and Polly Carver Kimm and Todd Kimm have agreed to chair the fund-raising effort.

Pat Finnerty continues to work with the computer (e-mail and website), membership lists and e-mails. He is responsible for the printing of the newsletter. After an absence with health issues and his wife's passing, he is back and the website has been updated. We have recently digitized a number of VHS tapes of the Olmsted family tour of the house and early programs.

Virginia Gee keeps track of any pertinent newspaper clippings and printed materials to be put in the topic-related notebooks shelved in the office. Since 2018 when she was first asked to submit an article on Urbandale history for *Urbandale Living*, the monthly magazine, she has collected information for each month's issue. She continues to research current topics such as the role of the Valerius family.

Virginia Campbell, with cancellations of activities, has

had no special events to prepare for, but keeps track of any simple House maintenance needs.

Carol Lee Riekenberg prepared another of her popular "books" of photos and narration about Society events. Though we did not have a Holiday Open House in December, Carol Lee used some photos from past years and her own memories to tell the story of a Christmas past. This book has been digitized as well.

If you have a question for a Board member, send an e-mail (Urbandalehistory@gmail.com) or call the Historical Society number 270-2917 and leave a message. (No one is regularly in the office.)

Please watch our website (www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Urbandale-Historical-Society) for updates and more information.

Holidays at the Olmsted-Urban House

For the first time in many years there was no Christmas Open House at the Olmsted-Urban House. To keep in the spirit Norm Huitt, with some help, continued with decorating outside. Large artificial wreaths were placed on the Barn and House. The farm wagon was brought out of the barn and parked near the large evergreens in the yard with lights draped over it. Lights were also hung around the edge of the porch roof. A large decorated artificial tree was located on the front porch. As a reminder of past year's traditional decorations, the old-style red wreaths were hung in all the windows inside. This was our way of sending a holiday greeting to the community.



If you did not get to drive by you can see a picture of the scene at night taken by Roger Ruggieri and posted on Facebook at the Urbandale Historical Society page.

Valerius Elementary School



The current Valerius Elementary School was dedicated in 1964, is due to be closed at the end of the current school year. A celebration honoring the school's proud history is anticipated.

A school bond issue passed in 2018 determined the aging Olmsted and Valerius buildings should be closed and replaced. Work at the Olmsted site began in 2019 and is progressing well. At the October 12, 2020 meeting the School Board Voted to proceed with an earlier construction date than first planned for the new school at the Valerius location.

The original section of building from 1964 is one of the oldest now in the school district. Since its opening more than 50 years ago, Valerius has undergone many changes in the structure and use. In 1975 the multi-purpose room was added to serve several functions - physical education, instruction, lunchroom, music performances, and community rooms during evenings and week-ends.

As years went by and enrollment in the school district declined, fewer elementary classrooms were needed, and in 1985 Valerius was actually closed. The classroom portion of the building was leased to Iowa State University Extension Service for District Office space. Classes through ISU were offered to adults. The Iowa State Master Gardeners program established a demonstration garden of perennials, vegetables and fruit trees on property to the west. Adult education programs on planting, care and harvesting were presented.

Then, in the late 1980's, as homebuilding in the west part of Urbandale increased, school enrollment again grew. It was decided to cancel the agreement with Iowa State University and reopen Valerius as an elementary school. New construction was planned to provide for additional sections of 1st through 5th grades. A successful 1989 bond referendum provided for an updated media center and other needed remodeling with its reopening in 1991.

Now the current school will be taken down so new construction can begin in the summer. Design and construction of the 2-story 4-section building will be similar to that of the new Olmsted Elementary, while taking into consideration the constraints and needs of the Valerius site. It is expected the work will be completed for school opening in the Fall of 2023.

Valerius Family

What is the story of the Valerius family for whom the Elementary School is named?

It all began nearly 100 years ago. Scott Ladd, the noted Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court for a number of years lived in Des Moines, but decided to purchase farmland in Webster Township. There were 160 acres between what is now Douglas Avenue (Rural Route 5) and Clive Road, where Hy Vee now is located. Another 235 acres was located to the south, now the site of city property and the elementary school.

Ladd's daughter Litta and his son-in-law, John Valerius, wanted to work with him to establish a dairy farm which would be named Laddvale Dairy, a combination of the Ladd and Valerius names.

The existing farm house was remodeled and a second house for farm hands was also built. A cow barn, milk house and silos were made of brick. Through the years the herd of dairy cows expanded to 30 milked by hand. The milk was bottled on the farm and then delivered in a Ford Model A truck all over Des Moines.



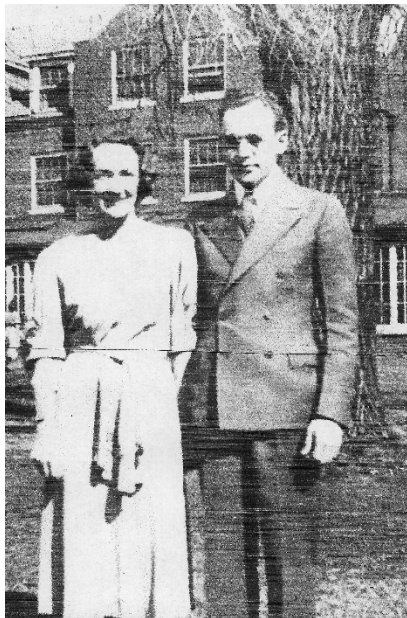
Litta, an early Grinnell College graduate who had worked in her father's law office proved to be not only a proficient farm wife but took an active interest in the Urbandale Community, in Farm Bureau, Western Study Group and the newly organized Garden Club.

Litta and John had a son, John Ladd Valerius, who attended school in the two-room wooden frame building at the corner of 70th and Douglas in Urbandale. Since Urbandale then had no high school, after completing 8th grade he had to go in to Des Moines to graduate from Roosevelt High School.

During these years Litta became very concerned about the education of Urbandale children and in 1928 was one of the first women to be elected to serve on the Urbandale School Board. In these challenging times, a three-story brick building was being constructed at the 70th Street location to better serve students of all ages. Litta served two terms when crucial decisions about curriculum, staff and equipment had to be made. The first class to graduate from the new brick Urbandale school was in 1937.

John Ladd Valerius went on to study agriculture at Iowa State College and through a friend met a girl from Colorado, Ellen Williams, who was attending Grinnell College. They were married in 1941 and came back to the Valerius farm to continue in the dairy business. The Valerius' were proud that their Dairy always received a Grade A designation from the State health inspectors. In later years, they sold their milk to Anderson Erickson Dairy.

John and Ellen had three daughters, Jean, Ann and Kay, who all attended Urbandale schools. Like her mother-in-law, Ellen took an avid interest in her children's education. After serving as PTA President, she was elected to the Urbandale School Board for what would be three terms, serving most as President during challenging times for the School District.



In 1950 Urbandale's population was 419 but by 1957 had more than tripled to 1779. This meant many more children needing to be educated. The school administration had not been taking advantage of all the state and federal funds that were available. Ellen went door-to-door to get the information needed to qualify. In addition, through her research and form filing, a government grant of \$80,000 was received based on the number of Federal employees in the community. She also spent numerous hours at the State House in Des Moines working to secure state monies for education.

During this time, more classrooms were urgently needed, even though Olmsted School had just opened in 1952. Children attended classes at Lions Park Shelter House, the American Legion Hall, several churches and a converted building once used by coal miners in the Karen Acres area.

The School Board led by Ellen Valerius initiated voter-campaigns to support bond issues. She was actively involved in every aspect of the successful bond referendums, building the new schools, helping with the planning, purchasing the land, obtaining construction bids and overseeing the completion of building at the various neighborhood sites.

Blackhurst was built at 3305 70th in 1961 and Jensen at 64th and Aurora in 1963. Karen Acres was planned to be opened at 74th and Oliver Smith in 1964. Another basic classroom building would finally be located on the west side of town at 92nd and Dewey Gibbs Road on 11 acres of what had once been farm land.

To honor the family and particularly Litta and Ellen for their years of service on the Urbandale School Boards, 1964 the new school at 92nd and Dewey Gibbs Road was named Valerius.

The Valerius family continued to be active in the community. Some of the farm land was sold for the Urbandale Country Club and additional acres were donated for the Urbandale Little League Baseball teams to play their games.

John Valerius implemented modern land conservation practices he learned from Iowa State University. He continued to farm until the Valerius farm was sold in 1997 to the Hy Vee Company, ending over 60 years of Urbandale history.

Urbandale Lioness Club

December 2020 marked the final meeting of the Urbandale Lioness Club, the-long-time women's service

group organized in 1976. Surviving charter members are Velma Caldbeck, who still lives in Urbandale, and Delores Van Horn, who now lives in Clive. Another charter member, Hazel Demirjean, recently passed away.



Madeline Kaloides, was the first Lioness Club President in the years she was also the Urbandale Historical Society President. Others who had also served as a Lioness Club president were: Mickey Couch, Joanne Hanson, Deloris Lewis,

Dorothy Milligan, Ruth Rasmussen and Joan Sievers.

The idea for a women's service group was first proposed by some men in the Urbandale Lions group, which itself was organized 75 years ago. Interest grew and by the charter meeting, October 2, 1976, 49 women became members of the Urbandale Lioness Club. Their service projects the first year, following the Lions lead, were setting up informational booths to encourage the public to become cornea donors, helping with glaucoma screening, and collecting used eye glasses.

Through the years, projects became more diversified as needs in Urbandale and the metro area were expanded. Speakers at the Club's meetings told of their organization's needs and Lioness members responded with donations.

A major continuing project was the Dollars for Scholars Scholarship Brunch first established in the 1960's. Working with the Lions Club and the Urbandale Education Foundation, thousands of dollars were raised for scholarships for Urbandale High School students. **(The Lions will be having a Pancake Breakfast for Dollars for Scholars on March 27 at Lions Park).**

Club members also assisted in selling 4th of July buttons and working at the Lions Bingo tent as well as at the Homecoming Pancake Super. They also continued to collect eye glasses and hearing aids, helped conduct Kindsight Screening and contributed to the Iowa Eye Bank and Iowa Lions Foundation.

Over the years Urbandale Lioness Club regularly donated to a number of Urbandale groups: Urbandale Caring Corps, Urban Harvest Garden, Fire Department, Food Pantry, High School Performing Arts, Urbandale Historical Society, Police Department, Public Library, Senior Center and Youth in the Park Program.

In recent years opportunities for fund-raising events were limited. Membership declined due to deaths, health concerns, and members moving away. It was determined that it was not feasible for the Club to continue and final funds were distributed including a donation to the Urbandale Historical Society.

It was symbolic that the final Lioness Club meeting was held at the Olmsted-Urban House as many Lioness have also been Historical Society members and helped with projects of both groups. There were many memories of past years when the December meeting was held with Christmas carols, gift exchange, decorated cookies and the telling of stories in the homey environment of the Olmsted living room. Those days will be missed.

So, after 44 years, Urbandale Lioness Club becomes a part of Urbandale history. The Urbandale community owes the Club a debt of gratitude for the members' many years of service.

Urbandale Lions Club Dollars for Schools Breakfast

For more than 50 years, Urbandale citizens have supported a scholarship fund to benefit Urbandale High School students. Originally a major project of Urbandale Lions and Lioness Clubs, in recent years it has been under the co-ordination of the Urbandale Education Foundation. The Urbandale Dollars for Scholars Scholarship Brunch, an event usually held in early March will not be held this year, a victim of COVID 19 precautions. However, the Urbandale Lions Club is seeing that we still have an opportunity to support our students.

URBANDALE LIONS CLUB PANCAKE BREAKFAST Boxed to Go

***Saturday, March 27, 8-10a.m.
Lions Park***

Urbandale Lions will be offering a Grab and Go breakfast of pancakes, sausage and orange juice at Lions Park.

FREE-WILL donations will be accepted and the proceeds will be given to the Urbandale Education Scholarship Fund. Your generous support is appreciated.

Historical Society Members We Have Lost

The Urbandale community has lost a number of individuals in recent months. Five, particularly contributed much to the Urbandale Historical Society and will be greatly missed.

Marilyn Finnerty passed away October 8, 2020. She and Pat have been active members of the Historical Society for many years. Marilyn always volunteered to help in the kitchen when events were held, especially the Ice Cream Social. In recent years she assumed the responsibility for the care of the flower garden along the south side of the Olmsted-Urban House, adding colorful perennials and providing seasonal maintenance. She also spent time caring for the daylilies, hostas, ferns, shrubs and other plantings around the grounds. A special memorial for the garden is planned.

Wayne Anderson passed away November 26, 2020. He and Gloria were long-time Urbandale residents before moving to Johnston. They supported the Society in a number of ways especially at the Ice Cream Social. They also helped with the preparation and serving of the soup at the popular soup supper held for many years in January.

Sandi Vandermulen-Porter was a 1962 graduate of Urbandale High School and was particularly interested in many of the programs and projects related to those days. With her cheerful enthusiasm she volunteered to help the Society in many ways before she passed away November 29, 2020.

Bob Timmins died January 9, 2021 just short of what would have been his 100th birthday in May. He had been educated all his years in Urbandale attending the new brick school building at the corner of 70th and Douglas. He was honored as the oldest living graduate of UHS having graduated in 1939. He enjoyed attending events at the Olmsted-Urban House with his daughter Sydney Coder.

Hazel Demirjean was the last surviving Charter member of the Historical Society. A long-time cataloger at the Urbandale Public Library, she and Mae Nelson were part of a small group who met starting in 1976 to work to preserve Urbandale history. She was particularly interested in the collection and organization of printed materials, photos and newspaper clippings and started the file at the Library. Hazel had graduated from Urbandale High School in 1945 and was active in the community most of her life. She was the daughter of Harry Hull, one of the first city employees with many jobs of maintenance and "police" work. Hazel had

moved to Conrad to be near her daughter, but maintained her support of the Historical Society. She was 92 when she passed away January 18, 2021.

New Members

We are happy to welcome the following new members to the Urbandale Historical Society.

Debra Jacobs 3602 70th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-778-1351 debjake105@aol.com	Harold Jacobs 4044 70th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-276-0595 debjake105@aol.com
Kellie Radzik 43 Herbst Rd. Coraopilis, PA 15108	Madeline & Alexander Tarkanov 13933 Cardinal Ln. Fayetteville, AR 72704 479-443-4505
Susan & Monte Bonnicksen 7335 Plum Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-975-1284 sbonnicksen@yahoo.com	Jill & Mark Adams 15612 Edna Cir. Omaha, NE 68136 402-980-9645 markandjilladams@yahoo.com

Membership and Financial

We appreciate all of you who have renewed your memberships and all the extra donations you have made. Those funds have been a tremendous asset to keep the Society operating. While we continue to seek other revenue sources, we are and will continue to be dependent on our membership. If you have renewed your membership, **Thank You**. For those who have not, please do so. Also, please share with your family, friends and neighbors to encourage them to join us in helping to preserve the history and legacy of Urbandale.

Acknowledgement of Supporters



URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership is on a calendar year: Jan. 1 to Dec. 31
Contributions are tax deductible.

Supporting: \$25
 Sustaining: \$50

Patron: \$100
 Benefactor: \$500 and up

Special Gifts – Memorials are appreciated

Name: _____ Spouse: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____
e-mail: _____

Please indicate your interests below:

Buildings/Grounds/House Maintenance
 House-keeping
 Ice Cream Social
 Publicity
 Refreshments
 Special Projects / Events
 Tour Guides
 History (Collecting, Preserving)

Finance
 Gardening
 Membership
 Programs
 Records/Office work
 Restoration / Acquisitions
 Trips
 Other talents (please specify on back))

Have Urbandale information, photographs or memorabilia to donate or lend for copying.

Send Completed form to: URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
4010 70th Street Urbandale, IA 50322-2616

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Urbandale, IA 50322