

# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2020



## Maintenance and Repair Scheduled for the Fall

Like all "homeowners" the Historical Society has faced a number of challenges at the Olmsted-Urban property. The August wind storm resulted in a number of large branches falling down around the yard and on the barn roof. Norm Huitt and several volunteers with chain saws were able to cut up the larger branches and drag them out to the parking lot and street edges for city pick-up. Other volunteers over several weeks have filled the brown cart with the small branches scattered all over the yard. The insurance adjuster has visited to assess the damage and Norm is obtaining an estimate to have the entire barn roof resingled. The fact that tree work "maintenance" has been done earlier this year probably helped that there were no dead or loose limbs that fell directly on the House itself.

Other work planned this Fall is to repair and paint the four porch posts. A workman has also been contracted to glaze and putty around the 29 windows of the House, a job that has not been done for years.

Some of the expense of these projects will be covered by a grant the Society received from Endow Urbandale.

This is especially important this year since we were unable to have any money-making events and our only other basic source of income comes from memberships. Keep this in mind as you send in your membership dues for 2021. Any extra donation would be greatly appreciated.

### Events Cancelled

Fall is finally here. Ordinarily we would have enjoyed getting together for the soup supper/potluck an interesting program on some historical topic and planning for a bus trip. Under current conditions regular group meetings, even limiting the size of the group and wearing masks, do not seem like a safe plan for an audience of a "mature age", some of whom may have pre-existing conditions.

We have also cancelled the Fall Open House and Punch On the Porch and will miss welcoming the public for a Christmas Open House.

## Women Worked For Equal Rights in the Community

April 2020 marked the 100th year since the passage of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing the right of women to vote. How did this affect our women in rural Webster Township? Most were farm wives who had come with their husbands to settle with their family in the area. Little has been documented about the role they played in the community.

One group which has received recognition is the Daughters of Ceres, one of the oldest women's organizations in Polk County. The Walnut Chapter was organized by Mrs. Martin Flynn in 1898 with help from Mrs. Henry Wallace. The object of the club was to promote the best interests of the home and community along social, educational, philanthropic and economic lines. Any woman interested in rural work could become a member. (Original dues were 35 cents.)

The group originally planned to meet the first and third Thursday of the month with members traveling many miles over country dirt roads in all kinds of weather to attend. Members took turns serving as hostess, though many of the meetings were held at the Flynn Mansion. Many mothers brought their small children along.

Miss Olive Stuart, who married Millard Olmsted in 1902, and Mrs. Leander Olmsted (Charlotte) were early members of the group. Records indicate that some meetings were held at the Olmsted home.

Minutes of early meetings provide an interesting record of the serious topics these women were concerned with more than a century ago---proper education of girls, food preparation and favorite recipes, basket weaving as an occupation, rural mail delivery, women as wage earners, Red Cross overseas, keeping young men on the farm and Women's Suffrage. There were also transportation concerns with the proposed township schools for rural students. They expressed concern about conditions at the Girls Industrial School in Mitchelville and sent "proper reading materials". The group also arranged to provide a flock of chickens to the Home for the Aged so residents could have fresh eggs.

But women in addition to the Daughters of Ceres had concerns about the community. A group of local men were meeting monthly as the Greater Urbandale Booster Club to work to solve local problems. Millard and Clarence Olmsted were both actively involved.

At a meeting April 3, 1916 the secretary announced a request from the ladies in the local Women's Suffrage Association that the Booster Club could not take such action as a club "as we are a non-profit club organized for the purpose of boosting Urbandale and nothing else, but we as individuals would be glad to give them a hearing." Motion carried.

Also in 1916 the two-room school built by volunteers was opened and Urbandale was declared an independent school district. The first Urbandale P.T.A. was organized with Mrs. Laverenz (Alice) elected president.

Through the efforts of the Booster Club a legal election was held to make Urbandale an incorporated community in 1917. There were 49 votes cast in favor. Women were in support, but as yet did not have the legal right to cast a vote.

Women continued to take an active interest in their new school. The minutes of the Booster Club show that in November 1917 the men were asked to raise \$10 to help pay for wiring of the schoolhouse.

In January 1918 it shows women were invited to attend meetings of the Booster Club paying dues of 10¢ per quarter. They were later listed as serving light refreshments and serving on committees. (Mrs. Millard Olmsted and Mrs. Clarence Olmsted both listed as members.)

So women in Urbandale actively expressed their opinions and supported their community long before nationally they had the RIGHT TO VOTE in 1920.

**URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY      MEMBERSHIP      RENEWAL**

Membership is on a calendar year: Jan. 1 to Dec. 31      **FOR 2021**

Contributions are tax deductible.

Supporting .....\$25.       Patron .....\$100.       Name on permanent plaque.....\$1,000. and up  
 Sustaining .....\$50.       Benefactor .....\$500. and up       Other

*SPECIAL GIFTS - Bequests and Memorials are appreciated.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your interests on the reverse side.

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

MAIL YOUR CHECK TO

URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 4010 70th St.      Urbandale IA 50322

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## Something To Do This Fall

Need an excuse to get out?

Stop and enjoy the Historical Society property. Have you really stopped to admire the architecture of the Olmsted-Urban House which was named to the National Register of Historic Places last fall? Look at the names on the Walk of History. (You can still order a brick for \$35.00) Go back and look at the variety of colorful blossoms in the Pollinator Garden in the northwest corner of the yard, a project of the Urbandale Garden Club.

Though the Olmsted-Urban House is closed to group meetings, your group is always welcome to bring your lawn chairs and set up on the porch or lawn for an informal meeting or get-together of your own.

