



URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2022

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Ice Cream Social was a success and enjoyable time for all. Carol Lee Riekenberg once again prepared a beautiful booklet to cover the festivities. Now, Fall is here ... COVID lock-down appears to be past us and the Urbandale Historical Society is anxious to welcome the community. With the roll out of more vaccine boosters and adaptations of the COVID virus we are ready to open back up and become a part of the living again. We have a lot of events and activities planned for Fall and Winter. Come and enjoy some time with us.

Sunday, October 2
Fall Open House

2-4 p.m.

It has been several years since the Olmsted-Urban House was open to visitors. Several interesting historical items have been added. In the main bedroom on the second floor, items belonging to the Olmsted family including a spinning wheel, platform rocker and wedding clothes are displayed.

For many new Society members this will be the first opportunity to tour the House. Come any time between 2 and 4 p.m.

Sunday, October 9
Program Meeting

2-4 p m

Come for an informative program about the history of the Urbandale Police Department presented by Terry Nielsen, retired Urbandale Police Officer. It has been more than 10 years since a similar program was presented and there have been many changes in the rapidly expanding department. People do not have to be members of the Historical Society to attend. Please invite your friends and other.

Saturday, October 22
Pancake Breakfast
9-11:30 a.m.

The Lions Club will prepare their popular pancakes for a repeat of last year's Fall event. Free will donations will be appreciated, with the proceeds going to support the Urbandale Historical Society and the upkeep of the Olmsted-Urban House. Serving is at the Barn with plenty of seating at tables on



the House lawn.

If children want to use this as a pre-Halloween event there will be a treat. It's always fun to see costumes and hear a few jokes. (Where do crows go to have a beer?)

Yes, we are returning our traditional monthly Program presentations beginning this October with Terry Nielsen telling us about the History of the Urbandale Police Department. Upcoming programs are:

- **October 9, 2000: Urbandale Police Dept. with Terry Nielsen** 
- **November 13, 2022: Art in Urbandale with the Urbandale Public Arts Committee**
- **December 11, 2022: Night Before Christmas with Norm Huitt**
- **January 8, 2023: Urbandale Parks and Recreation with Jan Herke**
- **February 12, 2023: History of the Urbandale Fire Dept. with Jerry Holt** 

All of our programs will be held at the Olmsted-Urban house, 4010 70th St., from 2-4 pm. On the second Sunday of each month with exceptions for Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day. Programs for March through June are being planned and will be announced later, watch our website: www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org and Facebook page for updates. Mark your calendars and plan to attend, don't forget to bring a friend.

Finally, to prepare for the Christmas Holidays, plans are being made for the return of the traditional **Holiday Open House** to be held **Sunday, December 4** between **2 and 4 p.m.** Come and tour the House that will have festive decoration in each of the rooms. There will be a new



display of toys to view and as always, a treat of special Christmas cookies to enjoy. Invite your friends.

HISTORY OF THE OLMSTED-URBAN HOUSE: THE GUTFREUNDS COME TO URBANDALE

In the early 1930s Millard and Olive Olmsted had moved from the family farm house built at 4010 70th Street in 1904. Grandmother Charlotte had died at age 91 and the six Olmsted girls and son Lea had moved on to other aspects of their lives. The house was vacant and a portion of the farm acres had been divided into parcels available for developers.

Harold and Ruth Gutfreund, with children James and Marjorie, were living in a hotel in Des Moines following a house fire. They were anxious to move to a new location where Marjorie could have a pony.



They bought the Urbandale property from the Olmsted's and began to make many changes. A number of trees were removed with about 30 remaining. Two acres on the west side became a fenced-in pasture for horses. A horse stable, garage and chicken coop were built. The existing below ground cave was cleaned out and refurbished so that it could be used as a tornado shelter and to store canned fruits and vegetables.

The turn of the century house underwent extensive remodeling as well as adding new plumbing, heating and electrical systems. What had been a bedroom on the first floor was converted into a pine-paneled family sitting room. On the second floor of the house were four bedrooms. Two were converted to create a master bedroom with a powder room and a bathroom added.

The renovations took several months before the family could move in. In the fall of 1938, the Gutfreund children enrolled in the brick school building at 70th and Douglas, which now housed kindergarten through twelfth grades. There was an enrollment of about 200 students with approximately 10-15 in each grade.

Mr. Gutfreund was appointed to the School Board in 1939 and was instrumental in securing financing for a large gymnasium to be built west of the main school building. The gym had an arched roof that extended from the ground up at a 45-degree angle, a unique design in the 1930s.

A bond issue was passed to raise money for construction and equipment so the building could be

used as an auditorium and for gym classes. The project would qualify for Federal labor and materials as a WPA project at a cost of \$20,000.

Through the years the Gutfreunds had several horses on the property, and Marjorie became a proficient rider. James enjoyed friendships with Don and Bob Avaux, Dick Albright, Leonard Bishar, Wilma Kersay, Harriet and Beverly Stuart, Millard Hoskins and Dave Mccann. Neighbors in the area were the Augenta, Johnson, Avaux, Botsford and Burnstead families. Through the years the Gutfreunds enjoyed entertaining family and friends at their home and outside on the south lawn.

In 1947 they sold the property to Karl and Matie Urban who were living in Des Moines. The Urbans looked to move to Urbandale so their 8-year-old son, John Charles, "could have clean air to breath and a good school to attend." They took an active role in the community and John graduated from Urbandale High School with the Class of 1955.

Karl died in 1978 and John had gone to work in Clovis, New Mexico. Matie continued to live in her home for many years as a long-time friend to others in the neighborhood. After she died in 1986, John sold the property to the Urbandale Historical Society. The House was officially to be known from then on as the Olmsted-Urban House.

We have posted to the Historical Society website (www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) the presentation of the history of the Olmsted-Urban House we used for the Recognition of attaining National Register status. This presentation includes information regarding the Gutfreunds and their renovations to the house.

WARTIME IN URBANDALE

November brings thoughts of Veterans and the wartime years. What was it like for the Urbandale families at home during World War II?

News about the community appears in copies of the *Blue Jay Chatter*, the Urbandale school paper that was a yearly project of the Junior Class. (There was no commercial newspaper printed in Urbandale at that time).

It was reported that in November 1940 Glenn McDole, who would have graduated with the Class of 1941 was the first young man to leave Urbandale High School to join the service. He was a popular three-year letterman in football and basketball and a special assembly was held to honor him before he left.

Through the years many of the young men joining different branches of the service wrote letters back to the school and community to share their experiences.

Their military addresses were published in the school paper and townspeople were encouraged to write the young men to show their support. The American Legion Post agreed to pay the postage to send issues of the paper to the servicemen to keep in touch.

The original Selective Service Act required all men from 18-64 to register and men 20-44 to be available for conscription. In November 1942 the draft age was lowered to 18. Most Urbandale families were affected. Mayor James Ahern resigned to go to the Navy, serving three years. The local dentist Dr. Harold Reynolds left to serve three years as an Army dentist.

Meanwhile, in May 1942 all heads of families were to come to the High School to register for the new sugar rationing program mandated by an Act of Congress. No person could purchase sugar for home consumption without first being registered. It was estimated there were 400 families in Urbandale eligible to be registered.

Other items rationed ranged from shoes to tires. Gasoline was limited by the use of ration stamps and the speed limit was set at 35 miles an hour. The Office of Price Management banned the sale of new trucks and cars. The entire nation adopted day-light saving time (though appropriately called war-time).

School children had an opportunity to work for the War Effort. Superintendent Roseman told the 7th and 8th graders that "Uncle Sam talked about a scrap drive to salvage waste metal." They were given school time to canvass the town and bring back what they could find, many using their coaster wagons. Other items to be collected were keys, tinware, rubber, fat (for gun powder), paper and glass all to be used by the war industry. Milkweed pods were also harvested for the downy seeds inside.

Historical records of the Urbandale Garden Club describe how Victory Gardens were encouraged in an effort to reduce the strain on the nation's food supply. Gardeners expanded their family gardens for larger crops of conventional vegetables and some tried new plants such as celery, lettuce, peanuts and soybeans. Many programs were devoted to vegetable growing and new methods of canning and storage of the home-grown fruits and vegetables. Many recipes were exchanged trying to use sugar substitutes as cooks tried to "make-do."

While families waited anxiously for their servicemen to return, in 1944 plans were made to prepare a wooden honor roll board to be placed on the north side of the school building. There were already 100 names of servicemen to be included with more to be added. At least three servicemen had been prisoners of war and Richard Smith, Class of 1941, was a paratrooper reported killed or missing in action somewhere in France.

As the War ended in 1945, Glenn McDole returned from harrowing years as a survivor of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines. He and other returning veterans were welcomed with a potluck supper and program at the American Legion Hall. There were many stories to be told as a grateful community welcomed their family members home.

HISTORY OF THE LAWSON TROLLEY PARK

Drivers along 70th Street near Roseland Drive are aware of the Lawson Trolley Park. With the passing of



long-time resident Bill Lawson, a leader in community betterment, you are encouraged to stop and read about the Urbandale history depicted in the park that bears his name. Lawson, named Citizen of the Year in 1992, was president of the Downtown Neighborhood Association and worked to establish the Trolley Park in its design, fundraising, and construction.

The importance of ridership on the streetcars is shown at this historical site which includes a metal skeletal replica of a trolley car and riders. Of special interest are informative plaques about the history of the trolley, the City's founding, coal mines, schools, Olmsted-Urban House and other aspects of local history.

The trolley line played an important role in the history of Urbandale. First developed by Des Moines City Railway in 1905, streetcars operated on rails for public transportation on certain streets in and around Des Moines and out to Fort Des Moines, Valley Junction, Highland Park and the Fairgrounds.



Urbandale Line #7 came north to the area of Veterans Hospital and generally followed the median of Urbandale Avenue past Westover until it made the turnaround at 'Walker Station' at what was to be 70th and Roseland. (Urbandale did not become an official community until 1917). F. L. Hayes built a two-story building at the NE corner with a blacksmith shop, general store and drive-in shed where farmers could tie their horses when the family came to take the streetcar to Des Moines.

In the early years the streetcar came out about every hour and a half but by the 1930s a car came about

every 15 minutes during the day or every 5-7 minutes during rush hour.

This was an important form of transportation for many people working or shopping in Des Moines. Coal miners used the trolley to come out to work in the mines in the Urbandale area. In the early years, in addition to passengers, hardware, feed and grocery items were hauled. Before the Urbandale School was built at 70th and Douglas in 1925, Urbandale students would ride the streetcar to attend high school at North or Roosevelt.

Originally the cars had both a conductor and a motorman. Five cent fares were collected or passes punched. By 1930 the streetcars became a one-man operation. Eventually streetcars were replaced by gas shuttle buses and curbliner operations that did not require rails. The last trolley cars ran in Des Moines in 1951. The rails west of 49th Street and the 36-foot-long trestle bridge over Merle Hay Road at Urbandale Avenue were removed. The end of an era.

URBANDALE CHAMBER HALL OF FAME

The latest Urbandale citizens to be named by the Urbandale Chamber to the Hall of Fame were Miriam Cline and Iyleen Lemon. Both have served time as early City Council members.

Miriam Cline and her husband and their four children had lived in Urbandale beginning in 1949. She became City Hostess for the Urbandale Women's Club and called on newcomers in the community. She worked as Director of Christian Education for 20 years first at the Urbandale United Church of Christ and then at Plymouth Congregational Church.

She got involved in city programs by serving on the Recreation Committee and the Park Board. She had special concerns for opportunities for senior citizens and the less affluent. She served on the City Council for 12 years supporting the idea for a Senior Center. She was honored as Citizen of the Year in 1985. She passed away in 2015 at the age of 94.

Iyleen Lemon has been a resident of Urbandale for 61 years. For more than 40 years she has actively volunteered her time to make Urbandale a better place to live. She helped organize the original City Hostess program and personally greeted 100s of newcomers to Urbandale.

In 1959 Iyleen became the first woman to be elected to the Urbandale City Council. She also worked with a committee to plan the first Urbandale Public Library and spent 12 years on the first Library Board. In 1971 she was the first woman to receive the Citizen of the Year Award. Iyleen has continued her interest in Urbandale

through the years and was able to receive her recognition at the Chamber event and ride in the July 4th parade.

IN MEMORIAM

MARILYN KOLLMORGEN was known for her many years of dedicated service to the Urbandale community, Marilyn left us on June 17, 2022. She had served on the School Board, City Council, Parks and Recreation Board, J-Hawk Booster Club and helped establish the Urbandale Caring Corps and Endow Urbandale. She was recognized as Citizen of the Year in 1979 and named to the Chamber Hall of Fame in 2003.

Marilyn and her husband Robert were long-time supporters of the Historical Society. She was the original chairman of the Fundraising Committee when the Society purchased what was to become the Olmsted-Urban house. She provided leadership for a number of fund-raising activities, particularly related to antiques and special classes. She also helped make many of the early decisions related to the restoration of the House and acquisition of appropriate furnishings.

Millard Morgan of Fairfield, IA died June 12, 2022 at the age 81. His parents were Clayton B. and Martha Olmsted Morgan. Martha was one of the daughters of Millard and Olive Olmsted and grew up on the farm in Urbandale.

Millard was a long-time member of the Historical Society and made a number of visits, particularly when the Wayne Robbins Barn was built. With his interest in farming and carpentry he donated a number of items for the Barn. He was also responsible for bringing the spinning wheel that had belonged to the Olmsted family to be displayed at the Olmsted-Urban House.

Bill Lawson died June 5, 2022 at the age of 91. He and his wife Janet moved to Urbandale in 1956 and he soon became active in the community. He served on the Urbandale Water Board for many years and was co-founder of the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DUNA). He worked to establish the historic designation for the intersection of 70th and Douglas and to gain support for the development of the Veterans Plaza at the Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park. He was honored in 1992 as Citizen of the Year and named to the Chamber Hall of Fame in 2012. More than 25 years ago Bill led planning and fund-raising efforts for the development of a commemorative park at 70th and Roseland. In 2017 the city honored Bill for his work by officially naming the site Bill Lawson Trolley Park.

He and Janet were active supporters of the Historical Society through the years. Bill particularly enjoyed helping at the Ice Cream Social.

CORRECTIONS

Fred Hird, son of Blanche Olmsted Hird sent us a nice note regarding our Summer 2022 newsletter. In his note he pointed out that Millard and Olive had six children, not as five was we reported. Those children were: Laura, Blanche (Fred's Mother), Martha, Ruth Verna and Lea. While we strive for accuracy, we are only human. We appreciate your letting us know if we make any mistakes or if you have any questions about our reporting.

URBANDALE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Welcome to the new Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation. The Urbandale Alumni Association has teamed up with the Urbandale Education Foundation to enhance the educational experience of students in the Urbandale Community School District. With so many of



the members involved in both groups seemed

a natural connection.

They have a website: www.urbsaf.org. An upcoming event is the UHS Distinguished Alumnus Award Celebration scheduled for September 17 at the Urbandale Golf and Country Club. See their website (www.urbsaf.org) for more information.

THANKS TO FAMILIES FOR DONATIONS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society has been named the recipient of two major family donations. In the obituary notice of Millard Morgan, it was mentioned that memorials could be made for the Olmsted-Urban House to the Urbandale Historical Society. Millard was Martha Olmsted Morgan's son (Millard Olmsted's grandson). A portion of the funds donated will be used to pay for the preservation of wooden yard sign at the Olmsted-Urban House.

Word has also been received that the Historical Society will be the recipient of funds from the estate of Beverly Stuart Samuelson. Olive Stuart Olmsted was Beverly's Aunt and Beverly recalled days spent at the Olmsted home. Though it has been years since Beverly was in Urbandale, she has been a supporter of the Historical Society with its connection to the Stuart family for many years.

The Historical Society appreciates these forms of support for the future care of the Olmsted-Urban House. In the past we have received other memorials designated by members of the community.

THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

You are one of currently nearly 100 members of the Urbandale Historical Society. We appreciate your financial support, and you can also be of help in getting additional new members. Tell others about the Historical Society and encourage them to come to Society events.

There are just a few times that the House is scheduled to be open, but special visits can be arranged. If your family or a special group would like to come call and Ginny Campbell will work out a time.

Recent visitors were James Gutfreund and some family members from out of town. The Gutfreund family lived in the House in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He shared many memories as he toured the House. Joe Lamb and some members of his Urbandale Class of 1961 visited the House and Barn in August. A group from Brio Retirement in Johnston is scheduled for an afternoon in September.

We need you to volunteer with activities, upkeep of the House and grounds and preservation of materials as well as with events and activities. There are currently 10 Board members and we would like to see some turnover of the Board with new and younger people. We are all volunteers and there is no specified time that someone is at the Olmsted-Urban House. If you need to get in touch, call 515 270-2917 and leave a message on the answering machine or send us a note at via e-mail at Urbandalehistory@gmail.com. For information about upcoming events and other interesting things see our website: www.UrbandaleHistoricalSociety.org and our Facebook page.



Olmsted-Urbian Home

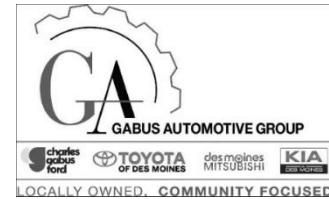
NEW MEMBERS

Matthew Blake 2312 Horton Ave. Urbandale, IA 50323 605-222-7454 matt.blake07@gmail.com	Jim & Linda Fisher 4400 74th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-360-0397 ifshr0687@gmail.com
Margaret Boatright 3305 S. E. Glenstone Dr. #124 Grimes, IA 50111 515-326-0434 maboat437@gmail.com	James M. Gutfreund 3822 Park Ave. Des Moines, IA 50321
Mari Caligiuri 4129 82nd St. Urbandale, IA 50322	Camille Johnson 7210 Roseland Dr. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-447-5154 ccj332012#@tgmail.com
Bridget Carberry Montgomery 15911 Tanglewood Dr. Urbandale, IA 50323 515-778-0159 bacmontgomery@gmail.com	Mary Jane Muehlhausen 10623 Oakwood Dr. Urbandale, IA 5032
Lois Chandler 131 McKenzie Cir. Council Bluffs, IA 51503 402-659-0378	Lisa Nelson 1444 Gray Stone Ct. Charlottesville, VA 22902 434-825-5941 / 434-979-2905
Dan DeCarlo 260 NE 44th Ave. Des Moines, IA 50313 515-953-8412 dandecarlo@aol.com	

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership year follows the calendar year, January to December. We will be sending out notes for renewal and new members later this fall, but since this will be the last newsletter for 2022, we thought you might a paper reminder, we have enclosed a membership renewal form with this newsletter. If you would like, you can clip it and send in your renewal closed to December.

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.

Supporting: \$25
 Sustaining: \$50

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

Name on permanent plaque: \$1,000 and up
 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:

Collecting & preserving Urbandale's history
Tour Guides for School Groups & others.
Building/Grounds/House Maintenance
Special Events and Projects (Ice Cream Social Christmas
Office work
Have Urbandale information, photographs or memorabilia to donate or lend for copying.

Gardening /Yard work
Programs and Trips
Publicity
Housekeeping
Refreshments

Website: www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org

e-mail: urbandalehistory@gmail.com

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