

URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

4010 70TH STREET

URBANDALE, IA 50322

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www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org



Spring 2018

Spring Bus Trip

Kossuth County in northern Iowa is the destination for the Spring Bus Trip, Tuesday, May 8.

During World War II a large camp housing up to 10,000 German and Italian Prisoners of War from 1944-1946 was located in Algona. Now, in



the Camp Algona POW Museum, displays tell the story of the camp and its effect on the military and civilians in Algona. There is a weapons exhibit, World War II uniforms and artifacts and displays of poetry, painting and wood carving.

With plenty of time on their hands, some of the prisoners decided to put it to good use. A group began building a nativity scene in the fall of 1944. The men paid for the cement and plaster with their own funds and erected the 60-character half-sized depiction near the prison fence so that local folks could peer through the barbed wire at the peaceful scene. When the Germans were released in 1946 the town asked if they could keep the nativity. The prisoners agreed on the condition that it never be sold. The Methodist Men's Club of First United Methodist Church assumed responsibility and care for it through the years. A permanent display hall was eventually built which is open to visitors.

Lunch will be served at the Chrome Country Inn.

You can then choose to visit the Kossuth County Historical Museum housed in a three-level school built before 1900. Or you can visit the shops and a specialty candy business in downtown Algona.



Spring Plant Sale

Spring planting time is finally here! A plant sale co-sponsored by the Urbandale Garden Club and the Urbandale Historical Society will be held Saturday, May 12 beginning at 9 a.m. on the lawn of the Olmsted-Urban House.

Much of the proceeds will go toward the development of the planned Pollinator Garden in the northwest area of the grounds. A variety of shrubs and colorful annuals and perennials are being selected to appeal to Monarch butterflies and support honey bees and other pollinators.

Please bring any plants you can divide and donate to the sale to the porch of the Olmsted-Urban House on Friday. Be sure they are labeled as to variety and possible future height.

Then come to the sale Saturday to find items to add to your own garden or perhaps share with a neighbor. Though the sale primarily features perennials, there may be a few bulbs and house plants available.

Garage Sale

The Historical Society participated in the Urbandale Sale of the Century community garage sale, April 21.



A majority of the items we sold from our porch were generously donated by Society members. Of interest to collectors were old wooden folding chairs and some duplicates from the kitchen and pantry housewares collection. None of the basic items from the House were put out for sale. More than \$400 was raised from the sale.

It is again planned to participate in this community event next year. Think through the year if you have any items you could donate that would be of interest to collectors. They do not have to be "antiques". There are always early sale customers hoping to find a bargain.

Ice Cream Social



Do you have Sunday, June 24 marked on your calendar? That is the date of the traditional Ice Cream Social from 2-4 p.m.

Ice cream frozen on site using a home-made recipe, a wide variety of pies and cakes and a beverage will be available for purchase.

Again, enjoy the fellowship of visiting at the table with friends and neighbors, listen to the music and view the old cars on display. Make a quick visit to the Olmsted-Urban House and the Wayne Robbins Barn.

To help publicize this community event the Historical Society will participate in the Summer Rocks in Urbandale event to be held at the Urbandale Public Library, Saturday, June 2. A variety of activities for kids and adults will be offered to showcase what is going on in Urbandale this summer.

Changes to the Board

There are some changes in the Historical Society Board for 2018.

Faith Huitt has decided to step down as Membership Chairman after serving for many years. She will be continuing to assist her husband Norm as he continues as Society President. Faith has been particularly helpful with the Ice Cream Social.

Beth Haigh also announced her resignation. She has been on the Board for more than 20 years in a variety of capacities. As Restoration and Acquisition chairman she has worked with committees and Questers groups to restore the upstairs rooms of the Olmsted-Urban House and furnish them with appropriate items. She has also conducted tours of the House for various groups and organized the hosts for Open House events.

Beth was also instrumental in organizing the Little Girls Tea Parties held for a number of years. She and her husband Gene also did the computer work for the Society's newsletters and the directory. Beth assured the Board she will continue to help with Society activities but not as an official Board member.

We thank Faith and Beth for all they have done in the past and appreciate that they will continue to help with our many events.

We need members who would be willing to take their turn in these roles.

Current Board Members are:

President	Norm Huitt
Vice President	Cynthia Dabrio
Secretary	Kay Readinger
Treasurer	Jo Henry
Programs/ Trips	Bob Simon, Pat Finnerty
Local History	Virginia Gee, Meribeth Haynes
Buildings & Grounds	Norm Huitt, Pat Finnerty
Publicity	Cynthia Dabrio
Special Projects	Ginny Campbell, Carol Lee Riekenberg
Society newsletters	Pat Finnerty and Virginia Gee

Urbandale's Mayors

Nearly a year ago we began our observance of Urbandale's Centennial. This focus on history gave a greater appreciation of the changes in Urbandale since the incorporation in 1917. In these 100 years, 20 men have served as mayor representing an interesting variety of occupations and community leadership roles. It is fitting that we give recognition to these working men who gave their time to help meet the challenges of establishing our community.

Otto Laverrenz, the first mayor was elected May 3, 1917. Council meetings were held in the two-room wooden school house built at 70th and Douglas. The mayor was to receive one dollar for each meeting and the other officials were to get 25¢. By 1920 Urbandale's official population was 298. Laverrenz was an employee of L. C. Smith Typewriter Co. repairing typewriters and phonographs.



Earl Rice succeeded him in 1922. He worked for the Kalamazoo Stove Company. **George Rowan** was elected in 1924 on the program "We're going to have as good roads as possible, a clean little city to live in, and if we all pitch in we can put Urbandale on the map as the best suburb in Iowa". He was also a school board member and a charter member of Urbandale Community Church. He was foreman of the printing department of Wallaces-Homestead publications in Des Moines.

J.O. Munn served three terms starting in 1928. During these years all streets in town were graveled, street lights added and the brick school building at 70th and Douglas was completed. Ending his term at age 88, he was said to be the oldest mayor in Iowa. He was a printer by trade.

Robert Dixon was elected in 1934. Amid controversy, a \$15,000 bond issue also passed so a water line could be extended from Des Moines. Dixon worked as a conductor for the Des Moines Railway Co. streetcar line. He and his wife also opened Dixie's Inn on Douglas. (It was later called Dixieland when Donald "Stormy" Robinson took over in 1940).

New valuations on Urbandale properties were made in 1937 causing considerable concern for local residents. Then Mayor **Harry Stotts** presided at a protest

meeting and some adjustments were made. He resigned as mayor later that year and **William Graul** was appointed in his place.

Land north of Douglas on 70th was purchased for a town hall. Graul, a brick mason, led volunteers who helped build the new city hall with cement blocks and bricks. There was office space and room for Council meetings and storage for city equipment which now included a road grader and a truck. The north part was the "fire station" and housed a 300-gallon Diamond T pumper truck.

The first Council meeting held in the new city hall was on Feb. 7, 1944 under the leadership of new mayor **James Ahern** before he left to serve in the U.S. Navy. Urbandale's population after 25 years had now grown to 1,083.

Charles Chew followed Ahern and was elected to serve two more terms. His business was construction and he was one of the leading construction men in the Ankeny Ordinance Plant which later became John Deere Des Moines Works. Chew was also in charge of the construction of the educational wing of the Urbandale Community Church. He was a charter member of the Urbandale Lions Club.

James Ahern returned from his Navy service to again serve as mayor from 1947-1950. As an active businessman he was part owner of the Ahern-Pershing Office Supply and Equipment Co. and also started the Red E Mix plant. He also served as school board president and an American Legion Commander.

As Urbandale's population increased so did the role of the mayor. There was no full-time marshal in these days, and in addition to regular business the mayor might receive telephone calls about a dog barking, cats disturbing the quiet or a neighbor who had gone away and left the radio on. Larger issues were keeping streets in order and maintaining equipment. A significant move during Ahern's time of office was the laying of ground work for the establishment of the Urbandale- -Windsor Heights sewer system. Looking to the future he also appointed a committee whose job it would be to attract a good type of industry to locate here. He did not favor annexation with Des Moines.

Walker Johnston, a farm equipment salesman for Montgomery Ward first served as mayor in 1951. He had been a councilman and was the first police judge. During his years the new City Hall / Library building

was constructed, on the east side of 70th St. near what had been the streetcar turn-around at Roseland. Leaving after two terms, he later served five years on the Planning and Zoning Board. Johnston was active in the Chamber of Commerce and recognizing his many years of service to the community he was named Citizen of the Year in 1967. He was later honored by having the city park on Douglas given his name.

Attorney **John Stone** served as mayor in 1954-55. It was in this period that the first rapid growth of the town took place. Stone advised the developers of Patricia Park, Rolling Green and Stone Ridge. He also advised the businessmen who built the sewer system for the portion of Urbandale west of 72nd St. He later continued to advise the city on annexation motions and served the school board in a legal capacity

B.J. Jamison was elected in 1956. He worked as an administration manager for Mobil Oil Company and resigned as mayor when he was transferred to Kansas City. **Robert DeVries**, an insurance agent was appointed to fill out the term. He was very much in favor of Urbandale's continued independence and strongly worked for civic improvements in the town.

Homer "Pat" Bible, assistant Product Control Supervisor at Solar Aircraft in Des Moines, was candidate for mayor in 1957. The job during these years was increasingly demanding. Bible promised a wide agenda of working on the proposed street program, a review of ordinances offering protection to business property owners, review of the City Safety Department, continued work on the necessary sidewalk recommendation by Planning and Zoning, and review with State Highway Commission on the condition of highways coming into Urbandale. He and the council members actively opposed a possible public annexation. There was a certain amount of controversy and Bible submitted his resignation in April 1960. More than 100 citizens signed a petition asking the council to reject his resignation but he left. **Walker Johnston** was named to finish out the term.

The population of the rapidly growing community in 1960 was 5,821.

Ned Kissinger worked for the tractor division of Ford Motors. He served on the council from 1958 through 1961 and then was elected to serve as mayor from 1962 through 1965. The council voted to change the form of government and Kissinger was then appointed the first City Manager. He held that position until

November 1972. He saw Urbandale grow from a small community with mostly gravel roads to a thriving city. During these years the industrial parks were developed and streets were paved.

Councilman **Lee Reinig** was elected mayor in 1966. He was the technical service director at Western Tool and Stamp Co. He had earlier been a partner in a poultry and feed business in Urbandale. This was a period for a housing boom and Urbandale's population topped 15,000. Reinig later served on the Urbandale-Windsor Heights Sanitary Sewer District Board and president of the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce.

Joseph Brick became mayor in 1970. He was a partner in a Des Moines law firm.

Joe Freeman was another councilman who became a mayor. He was elected in 1974. He was manager of Farm Bureau Printing. He resigned, in June 1977.

E.J. Giovanneti served on the Planning and Zoning Commission for four and a half years. He was appointed to finish the mayor's term in 1977 and went on to be elected for a record 20 years during a major growth period. He was an attorney for the law firm of Hopkin and Hueber.

As Urbandale's longest serving mayor he saw the population grow to 27,000 with an operating budget of 1.4 million dollars. Expansion of parks and recreation facilities included a soccer and softball complex, metro ice facility, expanded neighborhood trails and park facilities, and a comprehensive park plan for the city.

In 1990 Giovanneti was named Urbandale Citizen of the Year. He was past president of the League of Iowa Municipalities and received the Iowa League of Cities Hall of Fame Award in 1995. He ran for Polk County Supervisor in 2002 and served in that capacity until he chose to retire in 2012. The Giovannetti Community Shelter at Walker Johnston Park is named in his honor.

Brad Zaun, local hardware store owner and former councilmember won the election for mayor in 1998. He served until 2004 when he resigned to run for the Iowa State Senate for this district. **Donald Brush**, long-term council member and Citizen of the Year in 1987 was appointed to serve the rest of the term.

At the regular election for 2006, **Robert Andeweg** began his current long-time tenure as Urbandale

mayor. He had been a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission since 1995 and named to the City Council in 2000. The Urbandale Chamber of Commerce has already recognized Andeweg for his years of service and commitment to Urbandale and the surrounding communities by inducting him into their Hall of Fame in 2016. In addition to his Urbandale responsibilities he has been a Board Member of BRAVO Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau. He is an attorney at Nyemaster Good P.C. practicing primarily in real estate.

Now beginning his sixth term of office, Andeweg serves a community of over 43,000. He has the assistance of City Manager A.J. Johnson, a number of department heads and city staff. The current Council Members are Mike Carver, Creighton Cox, Tom Gayman, David B. Russell and Ron Pogge.

Happy Birthday

Hazel Demirjean is the last surviving charter member of the Urbandale Historical Society which first met in 1977.

She was a long-time staff member of the Urbandale Public Library and known for her interest in history and genealogy. After her retirement she remained in the home where she and husband Ken raised their family at 7119 Maryland Drive.

In recent years Hazel moved to Conrad to be near her daughter. Darla called recently to suggest a card shower for her Mother's 90th birthday on May 13. Hazel would enjoy hearing from her old friends in Urbandale. Her address is P.O.Box 808, Conrad, Iowa, 50621 .

Pringnitz organ

Harry Pringnitz of Waukee passed away April 3. He and his wife June had lived in Urbandale since 1968. Although they were not currently members of the Historical Society they were interested in the history of the community. Last year Harry and June donated a beautifully finished pump organ for the Olmsted-Urban House. Harry was an accomplished woodcarver. With his interest in woodworking he was instrumental in the repair and refurbishing of the organ. The Society appreciated their gift. Be sure to look at the organ the next time you visit the House.

New Members

Tyler Steinke
9601 Madison Ave
Urbandale, IA 50323

Patrick Benoit & Danette Keene
7017 Beechwood Dr.
Urbandale, IA 50322
515-205-3173

Clip and Save - (Upcoming Events)

May 21	Board Meeting	7:00 pm
June 24	Ice Cream Social	2 - 4:00 pm

Acknowledgement of Supporters

We would like to acknowledge the following groups for their generous contributions and support for the programs and operations of the Urbandale Historical Society.



Urbandale Historical Society
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