

# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

4010 70<sup>TH</sup> STREET

URBANDALE, IA 50322

(515) 270-2917

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

[urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com)



Olmsted-Urban House

### Ice Cream Social

Once again, the Urbandale Historical Society kicked off another spectacular 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration with their Annual Ice Cream Social.

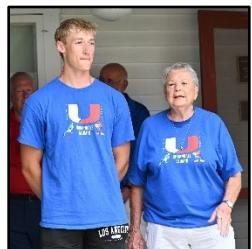
This year featured music by the Urbandale Community Adult band, classic cars, some games/activities and, of course, ice cream, pie and goodies, not to mention the Hiland Dairy cow.



In addition to our usual fun, this year featured the unveiling of the newly renovated '**Urbandale History Room**', the *brick plaza* at the 'old' Urbandale school flag pole, and honoring of the Urbandale Alumnus and Retired Teacher of the Year awards by the Urbandale Alumni Association.



The Urbandale Alumni Association contributed to the excitement of the day with their activities. Hosting the Alumni section of the events were Nona (Wilson) Warden, class of 1954 and Kolson O'Donnell, class of 2024, a mere difference of 70 years. By chance this also represents the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Urbandale 4<sup>th</sup> of July



celebrations. Nona and Kolson emceed the Alumni events which included proclamations by Mayor Bob Andeweg for the renovated Urbandale History Room and the Brick Plaza by the school flagpole (memorial for Eddie and Audrey DeCarlo). The Urbandale Alumnus of the Year Award was presented to the family of Audrey DeCarlo. The Retired Teacher of the Year award was presented to two retired Urbandale teacher couples: Denny and Jackie Frerichs and Wade and Sherry Winters.



Thank you to Jo Henry and Meribeth Haynes for heading this event.

### Urbandale History Room

The 'original' **Urbandale Heritage Room** has been renovated thanks to the Urbandale Alumni Association. Through generous donations from the Alumni Association, Historical Society and a grant from Endow Urbandale, Scott Cierzan ('78) and Steve Mall ('83) completely renovated the room in the Olmsted-Urban House. The 'new' **Urbandale History Room** will make the displays of memorabilia from Urbandale and the Urbandale schools more accessible and visible. The before and after photos dramatically demonstrate the improvements.

Before



After



You will notice that the composite class photos are now encased in hanging displays making them easy to view. We also have on display letter sweaters/jackets from the 1940s through more recent times. Of course, we still have on display, though better preserved, the Urbandale baseball uniform.

Note along the top of the cabinetry are helmets from football and the fire department. The yearbooks are easy to reach and a slanted shelf is built in for easy perusal of a book or document.

There is space to better display the memorabilia capturing different activities and eras of Urbandale's history. When you are at the house next, please stop by the room and see what is new. We have an Open House the first Sunday of each month from 2-4 pm.

## Programs

The 2024-25 Urbandale Historical Society program series came to a close in June with Dr. Rosalie Daca and Dean Hatch taking us on a walk through the history of the Urbandale schools.

This presentation began with the formation of the city to create the Community School District through the present day with the new Olmsted and Valerius buildings and possible future for the older school facilities and properties. They have created a very nice and informative booklet encapsulating much of what they shared.

The 2024-25 series included: Murder and Mayhem in Urbandale, Iowa Oddities, Collecting and Preserving Family History, Christmas Open House, Streetcars in Urbandale, McDivitt Cemetery, Urbandale High School

## Athletics and Activities, Starting Your Garden and Urbandale Schools.

Next year's (2025-26) program series will commence on **September 14** with a presentation celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Urbandale Library building on 86<sup>th</sup> St. On **October (12)** we will be learning of the history of St. Gabriel Monastery and St. Pius X church. This is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary for St. Pius in Urbandale. November through June are still pending. Potential topics include: KCCI, Mercy Hospital, Methodist Hospital, Drake University, Grandview University, Simpson, Merle Hay Mall, Living History Farms, Historic Tour of Old Urbandale, History Through Art: Stained Glass Windows, Urbandale's Rocket Boy – Dale Cruikshank and Kitchen and Handicraft skills from the 20s-30s including: baking breads, canning jams/jellies, candle making, crochet, knitting and needlepoint.

We are still working on the schedule. The Urbandale Historical Society Program series runs **September through June at the Urbandale Public Library the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month** (except for May and December) from 2-4 pm. The May program is held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday and the December program is the Christmas celebration at the Olmsted Urban House. Watch our website ([www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org)) and Facebook page for more information and details.

## News of the Urbandale Historical Society

The Urbandale Historical Society works to preserve, share and inform our community of Urbandale's Heritage. With that in mind we have undertaken a Digital Newspaper project.

We are working with *Advantage Archives* ([www.advantagearchives.com](http://www.advantagearchives.com)) of Cedar Rapids that is dedicated to preserving the past. Their approach is to digitize historical documents and make them easily accessible to anyone. They will digitize and host, on their computer servers, a webpage dedicated to Urbandale for documents that we collect that would be freely available to all. These digitized documents would be searchable and easy to access. They have worked with a number of communities in Iowa and throughout the country. Closest is the Johnston Library where they have a number of the Johnston newspapers available.

We currently have the Blue Jay Chatter and a few other Urbandale School newspapers that will be digitized later this summer. Our goal is to digitize and post the *Urbandale News and Press Citizen* and its various iterations.

We will be working with the Urbandale Library and City on this project. The Historical Society has committed some funds and we will be soliciting grant funding to

cover most of the expenses. This program could expand beyond newspapers to include other documents we have in our collection. Watch for more information.

Another developing project involves the Bell from McDivitt Grove church. The Bell currently resides in the bell tower of the Urbandale United Church of Christ. The church was the recipient of the 'McDivitt Bell' when the McDivitt Grove church was razed. Mary Polson and a group are working with the City on plans to create a monument to house the 'McDivitt Bell' at the McDivitt Grove Cemetery. This would involve replacing the bell at the United Church of Christ and building the monument for the 'McDivitt Grove' bell. Watch for more information on this project.

### Kollmorgen Legacy Society

Endow Urbandale has announced the creation of the Kollmorgen Legacy Society to honor Marilyn Kollmorgen who passed in 2022. Marilyn, beyond being a supportive member of the Historical Society, City Council, School Board and so much more, was the founding force for the establishment of an Urbandale-specific community foundation. With her vision and leadership, Endow Urbandale was founded in 2001 to provide for a permanent and ever-growing fund to support existing and future charitable and civic needs throughout Urbandale.

The Legacy Society is a way to grow and sustain these funds. The Legacy Society involves making a pledge for a planned estate gift to the Endow Urbandale Community Fund. For more information contact: Steve Lytle (515-864-6734) or Wayne Van Heuvelen (515-423-139).

The Urbandale Historical Society has been the benefactor of generous gifts from Endow Urbandale over the years including most recently funding for the renovation of the Urbandale History Room.

### Urbandale, Iowa Golden 1967 Year "50 YEARS" 1917 - - - - 1967

[This was compiled and written in 1966 Mrs. James R. Grimm for Urbandale's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.]

"The town of Urbandale, Iowa was incorporated in 1917, with Forty- five residents signing the petition of incorporation, and the following men acting as Commissioners, filed petition:

C. C. Olmsted	J. C. Witmer
Otto Laverrenz	M. A. Olmsted, Surety
L. L. Talbott	Wm. Eckey

(List of 45 portioners on attached list)

The first election held in Urbandale, Iowa was on May 3, 1917, and the following city officials were elected.

Mayor - O. L. Laverrenz	Councilman:
Treasurer - Walter Parmenter	C. C. Olmsted
Assessor - M. A. Olmsted	E. F. Botsford
	Mark Stuart
	G. W. Mead
	J. C. Witmer

These people of the community worked to incorporate the town of Urbandale, in order that they might have a school located in their own community, rather than transport their children long distances over bad roads.

The first school in Urbandale was a frame building located on the corner of 70<sup>th</sup> and Douglas, with grades one through fourth in one room and five through eighth in the other. This building was used until the brick building (now the Junior High) was built in 1925. The first P.T.A. was organized in 1917. Mrs. A. R. Hartsook and Mrs. By were very active in the early P.T.A. work. Mrs. John Valerius, Sr. and Mrs Lamb were first women on the local school board. In 1925, the first school band was organized by Mr. Verstag.

The schools were named for local people connected with education:

**Olmsted School:** Millard Olmsted (Worked in establishing town so a school could be located here)

**Jensen School:** Miss Isabelle Jensen (Teacher for several years in Junior High School)

**Blackhurst School:** Prof. Blackhurst. (Sold land to school board and worked in field of education as a professor at Drake U.)

**Valerius School:** Named for Valerius family. Mrs. John Valerius, Sr. and Jr., both very active on school boards for many years.

First high school class graduated from Urbandale High School in 1937 with four students: Merle Boatwright, Leroy Wood, Geneva McDivitt and \_\_\_\_\_. Until 1952 the building at 70<sup>th</sup> and Douglas housed all Urbandale's school children in both elementary and high school. School enrollment has increased from 419 in 1960 to 2,600 in 1966. This has resulted in many new school buildings. (Olmsted, 1952-54; Blackhurst, 1960; Valerius and Jensen; 1962 and Karen Acres elementary school in 1964).

Approximately at the time of incorporation there were a few small business places in operation. There was a feed store, (Wickersham), a general store, Beach Brothers grocery store, and a blacksmith shop, and by 1921 there were three dairies, Lamb, Valerius and Walkers. People came many miles to these little stores to shop and have repairs made.

The Des Moines Railway Street Car Company's line ended at the edge of Urbandale. They were electric trolley cars which ran on tracks, and heated by a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the streetcar. Located at the end of the line was a small building for people to wait for the street car, (known then as Walker's Station), and there was also a stable where people could leave their horses when they came in from their farms to ride the streetcar into the Capitol city of Des Moines, Iowa.

The basement of the United Church of Christ (then known as Community Church) located at 70<sup>th</sup> & Oliver Smith, was the first church in Urbandale, built in 1921 with the upper floor was added in 1950. The present Open Bible Church was built in 1948. By 1965 seven new churches have been established: St. Pius Catholic, St. Stephan Lutheran, Aldersgate Methodist, Patricia Park United Brethren, Glorie Dei Lutheran, Urbandale Regular Baptist and Covenant Christian.

The first town Council Meetings were held in the school house until 1943 when the building at 3816 70<sup>th</sup> street was built (C. Chew and Mr. Wm. Graul) which also housed the fire equipment. The new city hall and library building came into being in 1961 located at 78<sup>th</sup> and Roseland. The bond issue passed by just one vote in August, 1959.

The City Library Board was established in July 1961 and the Library opened in December. Use of the library has expanded, with 6,225 library cards issued in 1965 with a circulation of 63,016 books

The original fire equipment in Urbandale was a horse drawn water wagon and some buckets. After world War II, the town purchased one truck and 700 feet of hose from Government surplus.

The Town of Urbandale's work crew consisted of one man for years, Jack Parker, and later Mr. Harry Hull.

**Coal Mine:** Des Moines Ice and Fuel Company, located where Karen Acres school is now operated in Urbandale from 1929 to 1947, and employed approximately 200 employees.

Population in 1940 was approximately 1200, in 1967 the population was approximately 11,000. Urbandale officially became a city in 1960, prior to then it was classified as a town till the census reached 5,000.

The Urbandale Business Men organized as the Chamber of Commerce in May 1957. This group promotes the interests of the city of Urbandale in many ways.

The Lions Club has been very active in the development of recreation and park facilities in Urbandale. The Lions club was organized in September of 1945, with Clay Rusk, President, and

Ralph A. Whitten, and Sec. Treasurer. One of their first projects as a club, was to purchase the park land from the Olmsteds, and many days and hours were spent by Lions members in leveling off ground, seeding, tree planting and building of the shelter house. There were 34 Charter members of the Club.

Boy scouts have been active in Urbandale since the 1920s. There are four Cub Packs and three Boy Scout troops. Girl Scouts were organized in Urbandale in 1938. Camp Fire Girls were started in 1953.

The American Legion Post No. 663 was formed in the early 1940s and the Legion Building at 68<sup>th</sup> & Douglas was erected in 1944.

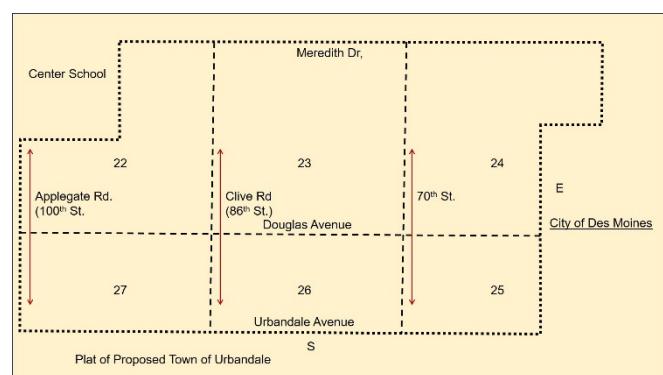
The business buildings at 70<sup>th</sup> & Douglas were built from 1938-40.

The Urbandale Post Office located at 3817 71<sup>st</sup> Street, was completed in 1962. This is a substation of the Des Moines Post Office.

The first large development of new homes in Urbandale began in 1956 with the area known as Karen Acres.

Urbandale has had many changes over the past fifty years since those first fifty or so people worked so hard to start a town. It has now grown to a large thriving community, with many businesses and industries.

Take pride in your town, and do your part to make and keep Urbandale, Iowa a good place to live in the next 'fifty years'."



Plat of Proposed Town of Urbandale  
All in Township 79, North, Range 25, West of 5<sup>th</sup> P. M., Iowa

1. C. C. Olmsted	24. Fread Beach
2. W.J. Summers	25. W. K. Waddell
3. Wm. Eckey	26. Charles O. Parmele
4. Rudolph Ecket	27. Wm. Ed. Hall
5. Otto L. Leverrenz	28. James Hufford
6. L. L. Talbot	29. Mark Stuart
7. M.A. Olmsted	30. W. T. Palmer
8. Frank Beach	31. Geo. E. Palmer

9.	H. B. Allen	32.	John Van Nodstrand
10.	J. N. Thomas	33.	Jesse Talley
11.	F. E. Chamberlin	34.	Chas. Lewis
12.	Vernon Avaux	35.	J. F. Bean
13.	Thomas Dixon	36.	J. E. Carmer
14.	J. O. Munn	37.	H. Cracraft
15.	Raymond Pflanz	38.	Ernest F. Hall
16.	G. W. Mead	39.	J. N. Waddell
17.	E. F. Botsford	40.	Chas. Waddell
18.	C. R. Williams	41.	F. C. Waddell
19.	M. A. King	42.	J. R. Wadell
20.	C. M. Edwards	43.	F. O. Nelson
21.	B. A. Hufford	44.	J. C. Witmer
22.	J. M. Williamson	45.	C. B. Harding
23.	H. A. Tremble	46.	I. J. McDivitt
		47.	J. C. Vankirk

That was written 58 years ago. Imagine what she would say today.

## In Memoriam

**Maxine Edwards**, a long-time member of the Historical Society passed away April 11, 2025 after a series of health problems related to a previous COVID episode. Through these challenges she continued her interests and work with the Urbandale Garden Club. Having been a member since 1999, she provided leadership for a variety of projects including the Pollinator Garden at the Olmsted-Urban House. She spent many hours planning, planting and, with other members of the Club maintaining the Garden space. She even contributed special pollinator plants from her own garden. With help from her husband, Carroll, she also maintained the flower garden along the south side of the Olmsted-Urban House for many years.

Maxine and Carroll, long-time members of the Historical Society, enjoyed attending program meetings and supporting the other activities such as the Ice Cream Social.

Carroll passed away in June 2023 and Maxine continued to live with their son Douglas in their home on Airline.

Urbandale lost a fixture of our community with **Mike Carver** on May 27, 2025. Mike was born in Rochester, MN, on April 28, 1942 to Laurence and Ariel Carver. He grew up in Waverly, IA where he proudly worked in construction for his father, who owned Carver Lumber.



Mike graduated from the University of Iowa. Then he served as a reservist with the United States Army. He moved to Des Moines in 1965 to begin his career as a

banker and later a commercial real estate broker. He moved to Urbandale in 1973 and became actively engaged in many community organizations, commissions, and boards, including 12 years on the Urbandale City Council. He was most proud of his work with the YMCA's Fatherhood Initiative. He was recognized as **Urbandale Citizen of the Year in 1980**.

Mike married the love of his life, Carmela Brown, on July 21, 1984, with whom he enjoyed almost 40 years of marriage.

He and Carmella and their family were active members of St. Pius X Catholic Church. Mike was preceded in death by his wife, Carmela.

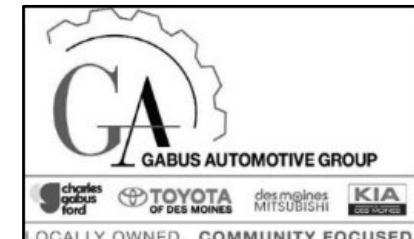
Mike is survived by his children: Melinda (Jonathan) Hansen, Matt Carver, Tim (Darci) Carver, and Liz (Chris) Nelson; step-son, John (Nancy) Brown III, step-daughter, Kathie (Rod) Reis; sister, Joie (Dick) Cole; and many grandchildren.

He and Carmella were long-time members of the Urbandale Historical Society.

## New Members and Address Changes

Tim & Darci Carver 9906 Hammontree Urbandale, IA 50322 515-313-1648 <a href="mailto:tim.darci@mac.com">tim.darci@mac.com</a>	Carrie Dostal 4723 95th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-493-9851 <a href="mailto:carrie.dostal.tm@msn.com">carrie.dostal.tm@msn.com</a>
Dick Tinder 587 Erbe St. Pleasantville, IA 50225 515-240-2209 <a href="mailto:dick.tinder@yahoo.com">dick.tinder@yahoo.com</a>	New e-mail address: Virginia Gee <a href="mailto:virbaxgee@icloud.com">virbaxgee@icloud.com</a>

## Acknowledgement of Supporters



---

**Urbandale Historical Society  
4010 70<sup>th</sup> Street  
Urbandale, IA 50322**