

# 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)



## Fall 2024

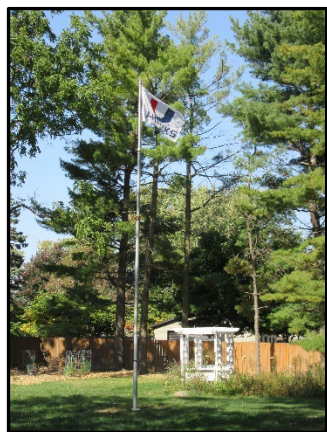
### ICE CREAM SOCIAL 2024

To kick off the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in Urbandale, the Historical



Society held their annual Ice Cream Social this past June. We had a tremendous turnout this year and a fun time was had by all. Making the Social special this year was the dedication of the Urbandale High

School Flag pole. Thanks to Audrey DeCarlo and the Alumni Association we are been privileged to house the flag pole by the pergola and butterfly garden on the grounds of the Olmsted-Urban house, (see more under Alumni News),



things are going to change. On October 24<sup>th</sup> we will again be a part of the Urbandale Uplift project. We have several projects planned for around the house and grounds to spruce things up and get ready for Winter.

Come join us October 26<sup>th</sup> for our annual Lions Club Pancake Feed (9-11 am)! This has become an annual event to celebrate the Fall and enjoy the foliage around the house. The Urbandale



Lions Club will be providing their world-famous pancakes to start the day. Beyond the pancakes, we will be having a spooktacular time with games and prizes for the kids. This is our Fall fundraising event, so a suggested donation of \$5 for the pancakes is requested.

Bring your best Halloween trick-or-treat joke and enjoy the day.

Mark your calendars for December, we will be having our Annual Christmas Open House celebration on Sunday, Dec. 1 from 2-4 pm. The house will be decorated for the holidays and we will have a variety of activities and refreshments to help get in the spirit of the season for young and old. On Sunday, Dec. 8 (2-4 pm) we will have the House open again for tours and refreshments. Watch our Facebook page and website for more information.

### HAPPENINGS AT THE OLMSTED-URBAN HOUSE

The first Sunday of each month, we host an Open House for tours and visits to the Olmsted-Urban House from 2-4 pm. We have members here to conduct tours of the house and share information about Urbandale and its rich heritage. Please feel free to stop by and visit the house. Tell your friends as well. If you would like to learn more about the House and Urbandale and be a part of our Tour Guide group, please contact Ginny Campbell (515-276-4168) or Jo Henry (515-278-7043).

This Fall has been somewhat quiet of late, though

### HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMS

The second Sunday of each month from Sept through June we sponsor an informative program at the **Urbandale Public Library from 2-4 pm**. In Sept. Terry Nielson shared stories of his time with the Urbandale Police Department with a program entitled: *Murder and Mayhem in Urbandale*. Future scheduled programs:

#### Oct 13, 2024

*Iowa Oddities* with author Megan Bannister. A tour of the weird, wonderful and obscure in Iowa

**Nov 10, 2024**

*Collecting and Preserving Family History* with Archie Cook (IA Genealogy Soc.). Tips and wisdom researching, collecting, and preserving family history and genealogy.

**Dec 8, 2024 (Christmas)**

**Christmas Open House at the Olmsted-Urban House**

**Jan 12, 2025, TBD**

**Feb 9, 2025**

*McDivitt Cemetery* with Mary Polson & Ann Ulm. A trip through time in Urbandale via the residents of McDivitt Grove Cemetery.

**Mar 9, 2025**

*Urbandale High School Athletics and Activities* with Tim Carver. Relive the glory of Urbandale High School athletics

**Apr 13, 2025, TBD**

**May 18, 2025, TBD**

**Jun 8, 2025**

*Urbandale Schools* with Dr. Daca & Dean Hatch. A look at Urbandale's history through her schools from founding to today.

Come and learn about our history and offer your experiences.

## URBANDALE ALUMNI NEWS



On July 6 at the U-Fest, the Historical Society was honored with the Friends of Urbandale Alumni Association award. The Alumni Association chose to recognize the Historical Society for our support and collaboration over

the years.

They are working on a renovation of the 'Heritage Room' at the Olmsted-Urban house. This room on the second floor has housed memorabilia from the Urbandale High School as well as early Urbandale. There is a collection of the yearbooks, Urbandale Blue Jay Chatter, a football helmet, baseball uniform and a whole lot of other items, including statements from the Urbandale Water Utility (why these?). They are going to work on the room and build new cabinets to better showcase the items.

The Urbandale Alumni Association is continuing to take brick orders until Dec. 1, 2024. These are the bricks that will form a plaza around the original school flagpole from the K-12 building at 70<sup>th</sup> and Douglas (now at the Olmsted-Urban house).



There are 2 sizes of bricks that people may order. You can have it engraved with your name, the year you graduated, family names, your connection to the Urbandale community, or whatever you would like on it. Online orders can be made at: [www.urbsaf.org](http://www.urbsaf.org). The brick order form and payment may be done there. Questions may be directed to Meribeth Haynes at: [mbhaynes18@gmail.com](mailto:mbhaynes18@gmail.com)

The Class of 1974 held their 50th Reunion with several activities including a visit to the Historical House. We are encouraging classes that are having a reunion to book a tour of the Historical House where we have a room upstairs with every yearbook done for Urbandale Schools and school memorabilia.

The Alumni Association is currently planning activities for next year. Please check back to this newsletter for continuing and new activities from the Alumni Association.

## URBANDALE'S FLAG

In June, just in time for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, Mayor Bob Andeweg, during his State of the City report, unveiled the new Urbandale City Flag. This flag was the culmination of a community-wide process to design and define what we as the Urbandale community represent. The new flag honors our heritage and looks to the future.



This flag features six bold U's in light blue and white, intertwined to form a star on a dark blue field. These colors, symbolizing stability and peace, are legacy colors for Urbandale. The two colors of the U's represent the two counties where Urbandale is expanding. The U's coming together unite the elements of people, natural resources, businesses, schools, transportation, and local government into a stronger, more beautiful whole. The endless pattern symbolizes the community's ongoing journey forward together. The bright star against the dark blue sky represents a firework from Urbandale's Independence Day celebration and is a bold statement about a positive future for the community.

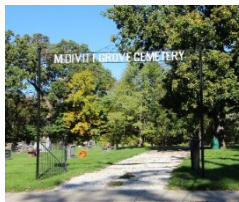
For more information regarding our new flag, please go to the city website: [Flag of Urbandale | Urbandale, IA - Official Website](#).

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## William McDivitt

### History of McDivitt Grove

One of the heritage family names in Webster Township is McDivitt. William McDivitt and his wife Sarah came to the area in 1853. He initially acquired 400 acres of prairie land of which he retained 12 acres already plowed along a rural road that led west to the railroad and Ryder Corner. The rest of the land was located south along what would later be called Merle Hay Road to where the St. Gabriel Monastery would be established.



In 1865 William's 17-year-old son died. Being the custom of the time for family members to be buried on family property, William set aside a corner acre as a burial spot. His wife Sarah later died in 1868 and was buried

there also. In 1870 William officially designated the one acre of land to Webster township as the McDivitt Cemetery. Today the Cemetery with its iron entrance sign is located at the intersection of 70<sup>th</sup> St. and Meredith Dr. in Urbandale.

In 1874 the McDivitt's second son, Francis, died at the age of 23. A tall memorial marks the family burial spot.



As more families settled in the area they wanted a school for their children. William donated land just west of the Cemetery and with other volunteers, hauled lumber from a nearby sawmill to construct a one-room country school building. Opening in 1876 as Grove School, the school was to serve the children of all ages. The teacher might have as many as 40 pupils during the winter months when the farm boys were not needed as much for the farm work at home. At this time, the US flag bore 37 stars and U.S. Grant was our President.

The people in the area now felt the need for a local church to serve as the community gathering spot. By 1878 the McDivitt Grove Methodist Church was built just west of the cemetery. Besides church services there were weddings, christenings, funerals and church parties. During the summer, picnics were held on the grounds.

A post office had been designated on the McDivitt

property from 1879-1881 with Willima's second wife, Nancy, acting as the postmaster, to serve the farm families in the area.

McDivitt Grove had grown some during the years but not enough to be designated as a Community. Around 1930 church attendance was getting smaller and the church was only used for special occasions. In 1950 the building was torn down, though the original bell has been moved to the Urbandale United Church of Christ on 70<sup>th</sup> St. where it resides today.

William had to retire and the land was either sold or passed to family members. A 1914 map shows the names of L.J. Hammond, Wm. Eckey, D.S. Michael, J.G. Stewart, J.L. Olmsted and T.J. McDivitt as owning most of the property. The Chapel Hill Gardens Cemetery off Merle Hay Rd. would eventually be located in the area.

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## A Timeline of the Urbandale Historical Society (1986-1985)

The following was prepared by Virginia Gee and it gives us a sense of the activities of the Historical Society over the years. Last time we ran the timeline from 1975-1985. With this issue, we will have 1986-1994. We will run other years in later newsletters.

### 1986

Dave Hartsook: President

- Letters sent to 75 residents inviting them to meeting Jan. 6 and 13.
- Progress plans and brainstorming sessions
- Coloring contest – elementary students, winners honored
- Some school groups visit room
- July 4<sup>th</sup> parade and booth
- Planned to tape interviews
- Sent letters to organizations to get information
- Moved to a different room
- More discussion of a permanent site, need an endowment fund

### 1987

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Building fund, \$10,000
- Urban designer suggests 17 possible sites
  - City officials suggest Society try to purchase the Urban home
  - City council appropriates additional funds
- 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, April 26
  - Mayor, band, refreshments
- Purchase of the Urban property, May.
  - Initial payment - \$10,000
  - Purchase price - \$75,000

- New by-laws, expanded organization, many decisions
- July 4<sup>th</sup> float, lemonade stand during parade
- Meeting to define goals and uses of the house. Steering committee formed.
  - Selected 1920-30 as period for the house
- Some trimming of the shrubs
- First newsletter
- 130 members

### 1988

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Donor plaque engraved
- Work days outside
- Plant and bake sale, \$168
- Auction items, consignment, food stand (\$525)
- Olmsted family reunion
- July 4<sup>th</sup>, flags sold, lemonade stand (\$340)
- Reunion of UHS graduates, 1937-1946, 75 attended
- Larry Erickson selected as architect
- Dunbar-Debord developed site plan
  - Use of house determines changes required
- Porch renovations, volunteers
- Christmas potluck, Open house (Dec. 11)

### 1989

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Continue plans for fund drive/endowment
- Discussions on uses of the house
- Events scheduled each month
- Meetings with city boards
- Installed telephone
- Brochure prepared
- Weitz Company donated beam
- Plant / Cookie sale (\$346)
- Garden part fundraiser (\$3000 donations)
- July 4<sup>th</sup> float, \$50 prize
- Punch on the Porch tradition
- Community Betterment grant - \$50
- Electrical work (\$8,500 expenditure)
- House decorated for Christmas

### 1990

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Letters sent to businesses
- Ideas for membership
- April 1 – Open House, older residents
- Plant/Bake sale (\$304)
- Flag pole in memory of Dave Hartsook
- Wooden fence installed
- Breakfast served (\$132)
- Crazy Dinner (\$304)
- July 4<sup>th</sup> flags (\$170), Lemonade stand (\$133)

- Kitchen painted cream/green; sink, wainscoting, Fireking dishes
- Punch on the Porch (\$50)
- Back entrance and bathroom dismantled, many volunteer hours
- Christmas Open House

### 1991

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Wayne Robbins and Don Avaux worked to make the downstairs bathroom handicapped accessible
- Deever roofing work on the roof - \$6,000+
- Site plan developed by Tom Dunbar so parking lot can be developed
- Wallpaper stripped in the dining room
- Fundraiser – Breakfast on the Porch
- Plant sale - \$685
- July 4<sup>th</sup>: Lemonade stand, Bicycle in parade, open house
- Jim Bauer presents antique classes
- PerMar security service started
- Peonies planted on the North side of the house
- Iowa Antiques Club decorated the bathroom
- Punch on the Porch
- Memorial brick project initiated

### 1992

Madeline Kaloides: President

- More plans for fundraising
- Some tress trimmed or removed
- Larry Ericsson & Beth Black gave restoration committee ideas for the house interior
- Antique classes held, 97 attended
- School and youth group tours, Dorothy Milligan conducting
- Potluck meeting – Urbandale 75 years
- Plant sale: \$800
- Urbandale is Open – Ice Cream Social theme
- More trees have been planted
- Upholstered chairs, purchased curtains
- Garage torn down
- July 4<sup>th</sup> parade: “Trolley Car” awarded 1<sup>st</sup> prize
- Open house – 100 guests, Urbandale Class of 1962
- Fall programs
- Woodwork stripped
- Christmas walk fundraiser, 366 tickets sold

### 1993

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Membership: 169
- Driveway removed, sidewalk to street (70<sup>th</sup>) put in
- Antique lighting fixtures installed in the dining room and kitchen (used Memorial funds)
- Plant sale: \$373

- Held auction and operated food stand. Sold some items, generated over \$1,000
- House painted
- Wallpaper selected and hung
- Added metal storage shed
- Trip to Walnut, IA
- Punch on the Porch
- Chimney repaired and recapped
- Tour of Homes fundraiser - \$1300

**1994**

Madeline Kaloides: President

- Den wallpapered
- Shelves and cupboards installed in the pantry
- Shelves in the Den
- Antique class: 50 attended
- Spring trip to Kalona, IA
- Plant sale: \$646
- Flea market: \$541
- Shelving installed in the basement
- Ice Cream Social: \$519
- Fall trip to Allerton and Lamoni, IA
- Punch on the Porch: 30 guests
- Window shades hung
- Carpet selected and installed
- Christmas Tours of Homes: \$1150

**MEMORIALS**

**Verda Simon** passed away at Calvin Manor on April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 94 years of age. She and Bob were long-time Urbandale residents raising their family at 7107 Oliver Smith Dr. In the early 1960s they were one of the couples instrumental in the founding of Aldersgate United Methodist Church at 3600 75<sup>th</sup> St. Susan (Guthrie) Bonnicksen remembers having Bob and Verda as Sunday School teachers. Verda was child’s librarian at the Urbandale Public library for 17 years.

As long-time members of the Urbandale Historical Society they both contributed in a variety of ways. Bob was listed as a Board member but Verda was also actively engaged. On programs related to the schools, Verda shared her experiences with rural schools in Shelby County. They both so enjoyed pot luck suppers that preceded the many programs Bob planned. The couple took many trips throughout the state as Bob planned the destinations for the over 30 bus trips sponsored by the Historical Society.

Verda and Bob were married for 72 years and once they moved to Calvin Manor were unable to attend as many of the Historical Society events. They did enjoy, however, welcoming visitors to the Barn at Open House events and the Ice Cream Social with a friendly smile. Verda will indeed be missed.

**Mary “Susan” Leutzinger**, 80, passed away on Wednesday, September 18, 2024. Mary was born on September 10, 1944 in Des Moines to Stewart and Bonita Neswold. Mary graduated high school from St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines and retired from Farm Bureau Financial Group. She and her husband Dick were long-time members of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Urbandale, IA. Together with her husband of fifty-five years, Richard, they raised a daughter, Jennifer. They have been long time members of the Urbandale Historical Society.

**MEMBERSHIP**

You should have received by mail the 2024 Urbandale Historical Society membership directory. We periodically share our membership directory with you so you can keep in contact with your fellow members.

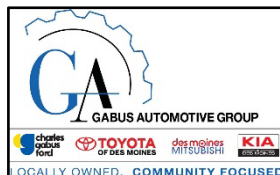
**New Members**

Shawn Sabin & Paul Barnds P.O Box 697 Waukee, IA 50263 515-914-7799 <a href="mailto:shawn.sab66@sbcglobal.net">shawn.sab66@sbcglobal.net</a>	Lee Noel 1706 E. 27th St. Des Moines, IA 50317 515-771-0416 <a href="mailto:leelosara@hotmail.com">leelosara@hotmail.com</a>
Scott & Carol Cierzan 7091 Coburn Ln. Johnston, IA 50313 515-202-5790 <a href="mailto:scott@cierzan.com">scott@cierzan.com</a>	Janna Rutledge 2018 Maple Cir. West Des Moines, IA 50265 515-402-2416 <a href="mailto:rutlegde5@hotmail.com">rutlegde5@hotmail.com</a>
Jeff & Tracy Hendrickson 4212 68th St. Urbandale, IA 50322 515-559-7037 <a href="mailto:Hendricksonjeff033@gmail.com">Hendricksonjeff033@gmail.com</a>	

**MEMBERSHIP**

Our Membership year runs from Jan 1 through Dec 31. Please watch for our Call for renewal coming later this year. You can always go online at [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) under the Membership tab to join or renew your membership.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORTERS**



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