

Brandon MINNESOTA

great today, greater tomorrow

The Brandon Auditorium



A special feature in the Brandon Auditorium is the mural painted by Elsa Jemne. Ms. Jemne was born in 1887 in St. Paul, Minnesota. She achieved recognition throughout Minnesota for her many murals commissioned by the New Deal art projects. Three of her artworks are found in the Smithsonian American Art Museum.



*Clement Haupers,
Manager of the WPA
program for artists
in Minnesota and the
artist, Elsa Jemne*

An Explanation of the Mural by Bud Greenquist

When the government road to Fort Abercrombie on the Red River was built in the late 1850's, a stage coach way station was established about three miles north of Brandon atop a high hill overlooking Little Chippewa Lake. Although this was Sioux territory, the Ojibwa or Chippewa made many raids into the territory, hence Chippewa Lake. On the mural you see the way station, the stage coach, the Indians in the canoes in the upper right. It was a true representation of the origins of Brandon.

Chippewa Station became Fort Chippewa during the Sioux uprising, then Chippewa Lake City, then Brandon. The name was changed to Brandon in 1867 because there were other towns named Chippewa to the southwest and the mail invariably went to the wrong address. It was named Brandon in honor of Stephen Douglas who was born in Brandon, Vermont and who had been helpful bringing statehood to Minnesota. Douglas County, of course, was named after the same man. Brandon moved from its original town site to its present location in 1879, the year the railroad reached the area.



1941



Brandon Auditorium & Fire Hall 2006

105 Holmes Avenue • Brandon, Minnesota 56315
320-524-2260 • 320-834-4567



The Brandon Auditorium and City Hall is architecturally and historically significant as a building whose unusual design represents some of the most creative W.P.A. era architecture in Minnesota. Furthermore, the building illustrated the success of programs like the W.P.A. which provided both useful employment for the country's jobless and innovative new buildings for public use.

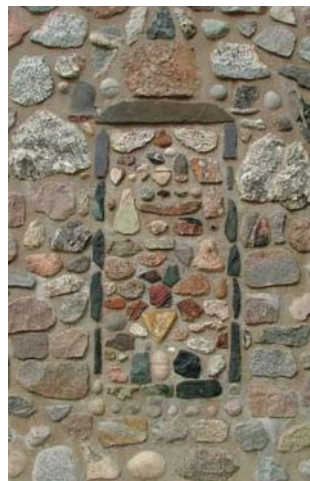
The auditorium was designed by Minneapolis architect, F. B. Pfeifer and constructed in 1935-36 by local workers hired under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.). The building cost an estimated \$50,000 to construct.

The auditorium is faced entirely in fieldstone and concrete. The two story, 44' by 143' building has a reinforced concrete structural system to which local fieldstone was applied in an uncoursed pattern. It is obvious that workers carefully chose whole and cut stones for their varying colors, textures and sizes before mortaring them in place and small areas of even more decorative patterning are visible on the south and main facades. Many farmers of the community brought in large loads of rocks to be used in the construction of the Brandon Auditorium. Some residents brought in just one stone to be included in the building project. These single stones were put in the decorative design.

The Brandon Auditorium was dedicated on October 22, 1936 at a ceremony where a crowd of 5,000 people gathered to hear the comments of the architect, city and county officials and W.P.A. representatives.



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, November 1985



The interior is decorated with fixtures and art work produced by artists employed by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. These works include Art Deco inspired square brass ceiling lamps, two large wooden relief carvings flanking the stage, three small wooden relief carvings in the council room and a large mural which originally hung in the council room and is now on display in the auditorium.

Some alterations to the interior of the Auditorium have included installing new doors, windows, ceiling, lights and a new council room.



Carvings done by Joseph Bergman in 1936

