

The Center Piece

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Brandon History Center

History Center Annual Meeting – Oct. 7

The Brandon History Center will hold its first annual meeting on Wednesday, October 7, 2009. The meeting will be held at the historic Brandon Auditorium and will be called to order at 7 p.m.

Some of the items of business are election of board members, financial report, project reports, and fundraising plans.

Anyone interested in our

local history is invited to attend the meeting.

Since its organizational meeting of August 6, 2008, the History Center Board has been very busy collecting artifacts, memorabilia, and pictures for displays.

Lots of work remains to be done to categorize information and create displays.

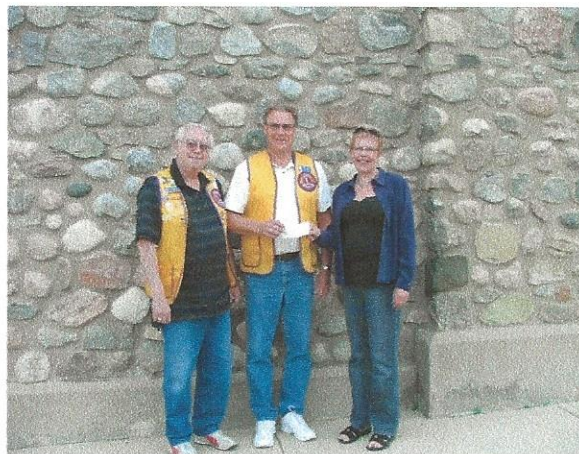
Reports will be given on various projects, including

the restoration project for the auditorium, Millerville history project, and volunteering.

A light lunch will be served after adjournment.

We are always looking for volunteers interested in the history of our area. The History Center Board meets the first Monday of every month at 4 p.m. at the History Center.

Auditorium Fundraising News

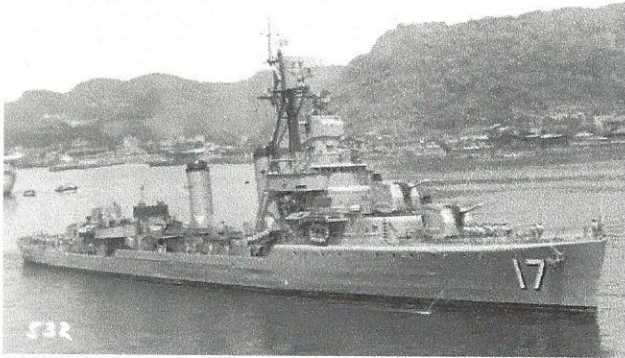


Pictured are Bob Piotrowski and Jim Augdahl of the Lions Club and Shelley Plessner, Brandon Councilmember.

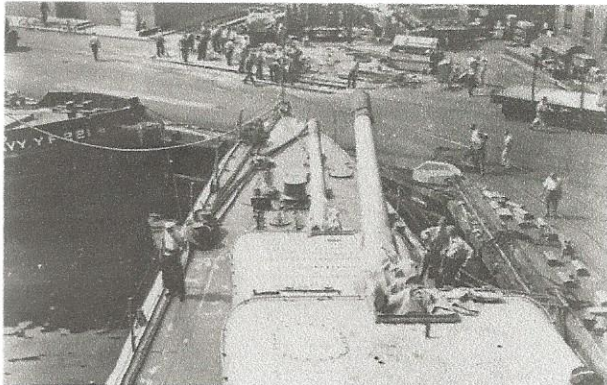
On July 13, the Brandon Lions presented a check in the amount of \$1,654.50 to the City of Brandon to be used for the purchase of new tables for the auditorium. This amount was raised as the result of their waffle feed on June 6, in addition to matching funds from their organization.

Thanks, Brandon Lions! A job well done.

Veterans Corner (Vernon D. Smedstad)



1st Class Vernon Smedstad served during World War II. Picture copied from NavSource Naval History website.



Overhead view of the USS Plunkett. Picture copied from NavSource Naval History website.

In this issue, we will feature the third memorial at the Earl C. Sletto Park dedicated May 26, 1997, honoring one of our own, Vernon D. Smedstad.

Seaman Smedstad, son of Leo and Blanche Smedstad, was born in Lowry, MN, on October 31, 1923. He moved to Brandon with his parents as a young child. His father Leo and his uncle Oscar Pladson owned a meat market located on the present bank parking lot. He graduated from Brandon High School in 1942 and was a member of Grace Lutheran church.

Immediately upon graduation, he joined the U.S. Navy, taking boot training at the Great Lakes Naval Station and advanced studies in New York. He was assigned to the destroyer, USS Plunkett, in September, 1941.

The USS Plunkett and its crew were on duty for a period of time in the north Atlantic, after which they took part in the Allied

invasion of North Africa. Later in a solo surprise attack, the USS Plunkett liberated the small island of Ustica in the Mediterranean, followed by the Allied invasion of Sicily and the Battle of Salerno.

Seaman Smedstad became ill after Salerno. Cold, rainy weather plagued the battle-worn seamen who went without sleep for 10 days. He and several others were reported to have eaten poisoned food. He was hospitalized in several hospitals overseas, finally ending up at the VA Hospital in Minneapolis, where he died on April 13, 1944.

He was returned to Brandon where a full military service was held at the Brandon Auditorium.

He was survived by his parents, two sisters, and a nephew.

Long live the memory of Seaman Vernon D. Smedstad.

Argonne Forest Post 278 News

Clifford Haabala, one of Post 278's members for the past 60 years, died on June 26, 2009, at the age of 91 years.

He was born November 7, 1917, at the family farm in Moe Township, the son of John and Ada (Carlstrom)

Haabala. He was baptized and confirmed at the Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church, where he was a lifetime member and served as treasurer for 38 years.

Clifford served in the U.S. Army during World War II

under General George Patton in Germany.

Clifford was a man of few words and spoke very little about his experiences during the war.

He is survived by his brother Clarence and many cousins.

New Veterans' Display --Nootnagel

Former Brandon area resident and 1959 graduate of Brandon High School Fred Nootnagel recently donated to the History Center the shadow box on the right. This beautiful piece of history contains the U.S. Flag, many of his medals, a bronze plaque with his dates of entry into the Navy, each position he held and the date, and the date of his retirement.

He served in the U.S. Navy from June of 1959 until June of 1985.

His tours of duty included such far-away places as Antarctica and Japan.

Fred and his family lived approximately two miles northwest of Brandon just off County Road 16.

He currently lives in the State of Virginia and recently attended his 50th Class reunion here in the Brandon area.

Many thanks go out to Fred for entrusting us with this very personal and historical item memorializing his military career.

Our Veterans' Corner at the Brandon History Center now includes displays of several area citizens and their military history.

Again, thank you, Fred, and others who have served their country and who have shared their history with the community!



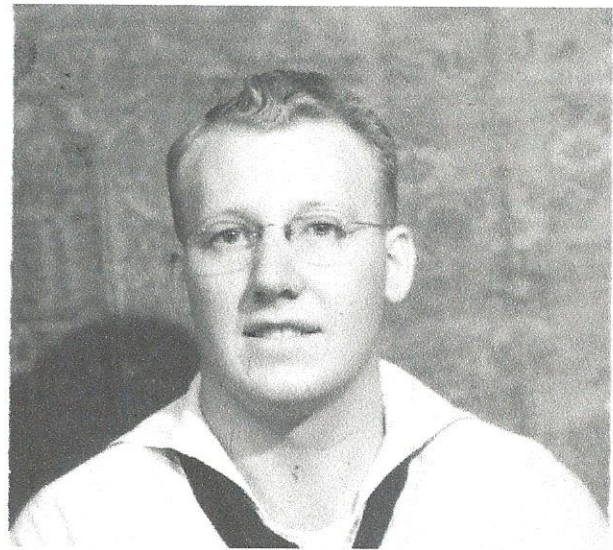
Now on display: Shadow box containing naval service memorabilia donated by Fred Nootnagel, former resident of Brandon and graduate of Brandon High School

Delphin Engel – WWI—his story

From October 15, 1942 - Dec. 31, 1945, I served my country in the Atlantic European Theater at Bizerte, Tunisia, and the Asiatic Pacific Theater at Okinawa. I saw lots of combat at Okinawa, always on the lookout for Kamikaze planes and suicide boats, while on radar picket stations and making smoke for coverage to the larger ships while in port. When Okinawa was pretty well secured, our Flotilla of ships went to Leyte for R. & R. to get the ship ready for the next invasion of Kyushu, Japan. President Truman gave orders for the atomic bomb and the

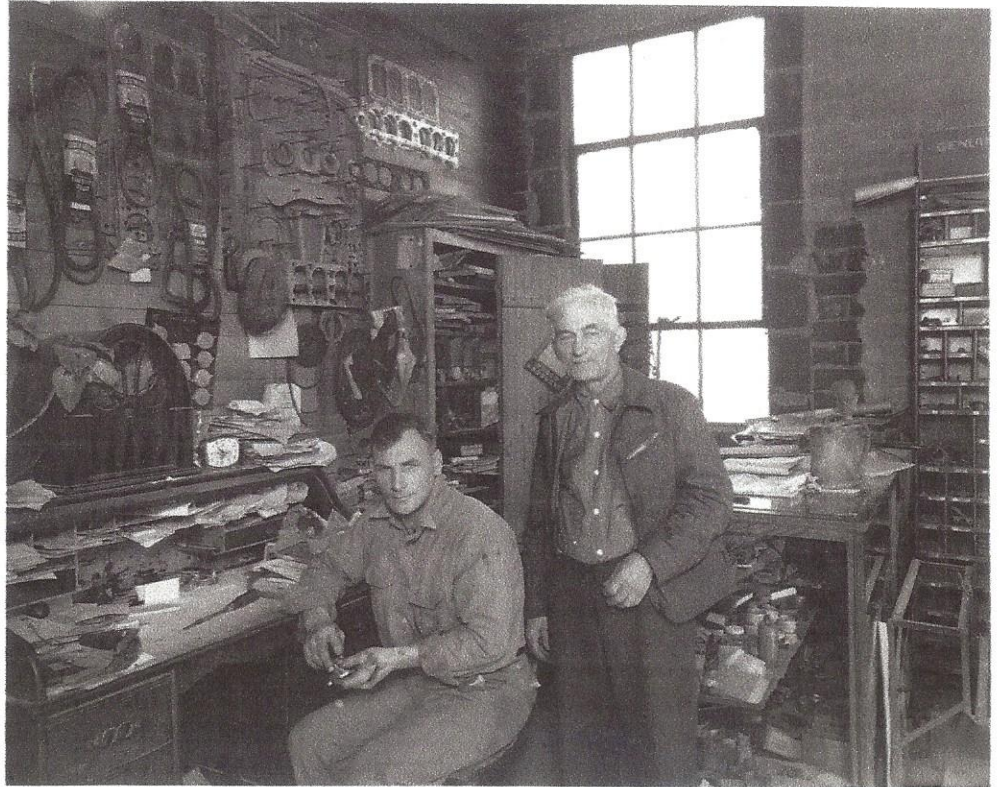
Japanese surrendered. Then our Flotilla of ships went to Tokyo. I was on the L.C.S.(L) 121, a gun boat with 65 men and 5 officers. We had some liberty at Tokyo, but with a scary feeling. It was here that I had enough points in the Navy to be discharged. I rode home on the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Fanshaw Bay, and was honorably discharged on Dec. 31, 1945, in Minneapolis, MN. Base pay for seaman 2nd class was \$45.00 a month and \$96.00 for Boatsun mate 2nd class.

Thanks to Delphin for his service!



Remember Handke's Garage?

*Photo provided by
Kay Larson, daughter
of Henry Handke.*



History of Handke's Garage – The Bus Barn

The information for this article has been passed down from generation to generation (a form of historical preservation).

Past history tells us that what is now the "Bus Barn" was originally built in the 1920s as a Ford dealership, later purchased by Henry Handke.

The building is 54 x 120 feet and is built as free-span, meaning no supporting posts were needed in the middle to support the roof. The upper part was built railroad-bridge-truss-style on 16-foot centers with 7 x 14 purlins supporting 2 x

10 rafters.

The office was located in the northeast corner of the main building and a car wash was located in the northwest corner. The rest of the building was to be a showroom. No ceiling was installed in that area.

The area in the back (west end) housed the repair shop; and the gas pumps were located on the main street in front of the building.

The building was used to house livestock during 4-H Achievement Days.

Thank you to Kay Larson for the photographs, Dean Plaster for displaying the radio at the History Center, and Bruce Nelson (as told to him by Clarence Anderson) for the information on the building.

This historic building is still in use today.

Thank You's!!

Wall Plaque donations:

C. Leroy & Kay Larson
Alexa Mark Brooks

Ellery & Sandra Schulte

Argonne Forest American Legion Post 278

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 278

In Memory of:

Joyce Lehn

Harvey & Mildred Bolin

Edwin & Irene Larson

Leonard & Alpha Schulte

Henry & Norma Handke

Robert & Mary Handke

Bob & Hilda Thompson

Reuben & Della Anderson

Cliff & Viola Strom

Thank you to the Church of Seven Dolors in Millerville for donating the blank slate chalk board from the old St. Mary's School.

Thanks to Ron and Babe Jacobson who have donated a rock from the foundation of the old Brandon School which was demolished in September of 1969. They have been saving this rock for 40 years (preserving history!).

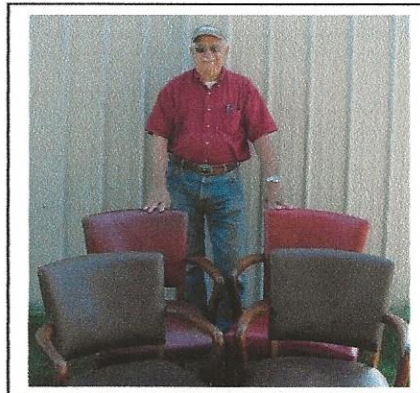
A huge thank you also to Al Retka, who donated his time, talent, materials, and labor to repair the old

council room chairs. They were purchased for the Brandon City Council Chambers in the early 1940s.

Over the years these chairs have served the council members well, but were showing signs of wear and use. These wonderful antique chairs can now be seen at the Brandon History Center. Thank You, All!!



Henry Handke with gas truck. Photo courtesy of Kay Larson.



Brandon Graduate Displays

The class of 1960 is now on display at the History Center, thanks to Diann Guenther, who had saved her individual classmates' pictures over the years (preserving history again!).

Thanks to those of you that brought in yearbooks for the years 1960 through 1963.

Also, if you have individual pictures of classmates for the years 1961 through 1964, they can be copied, mounted, touched up (yes, even the rips), and photo-

graphed and framed. It is amazing what Chris Korkowski can do with her camera and PhotoShop! Thanks, Chris, for your preservation work!

Do you know?

Does anyone know who tore down the old Brandon School Building or if some of the materials were re-used?

If anyone has information about this, let any of the Board members know.

Check out your attics, basements, and closets for historical items and information.

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Janet Nelson
Ruth Plaster
Karen Thoennes

Blog:

<http://brandonmnhistorycenter.blogspot.com>

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.brandonmn.com

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Mission Statement

To collect, preserve and display articles, pictures and memorabilia from Brandon, Millerville, and the surrounding area for future generations.

To assist in the preservation of the Historic Brandon Auditorium and other local historic sites.

Volunteers

Thank you to those who volunteer on a regular basis: Leila Hanson, Mae Eichelberger, Joan Haak, and Joanie Piotrowski.

We are always looking for additional volunteers.

About Our Organization...

The Brandon History Center changed from a dream to a reality on August 28, 2007, when it received its 501(c)(3) non-profit status.

Because we are a non-

profit organization, contributions are tax-deductible.

Consider making a contribution of \$100 or more. Your gift will be recognized by name on our

contributor plaques.

Also make use of our three membership options: Individual or family one-year memberships or single life membership.

Open by Appointment

If anyone would happen to need to visit the History Center when we are not open, contact any of the Board members. People visiting the area may have a special interest in what we have on display.

At this time, we do not have scheduled hours, so please call.

