

THE CENTER PIECE



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Local Sportsmen’s Groups-- Vital to Preserving Historic Resources

Local sportsmen’s clubs are not necessarily given credit for their historical value to the communities they represent. This issue of The Center Piece will feature the Brandon Fin and Feather Club and the Millerville Sportsmen’s Club. Do you ever wonder why we are able to catch walleye in our area lakes? Have those pheasants we see along the roadsides migrated here from South Dakota? Who sponsors gun safety training courses for our kids? Well, you are about to find out!

Brandon Fin & Feather Club

The Brandon Fin and Feather Club was one of the first sportsmen’s clubs in the country. It was organized by Peter Handke and Walter Wilken.

Projects adopted through the years have included: Carp control, raising pheasants and ducks, planting shelterbelts and trees, creating wildlife acres with corn plots, gun safety training courses, and game fish rearing ponds.

The club’s first project was a crow hunt held annually in April and May, the goal of which was to control the large crow population. Teams earned two points for each crow and one point for each crow egg. This event continued for many years.

Rabbit hunts were organized to control the rabbit population. Pelts were sold to raise money for the club.

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During the 1930s, members worked with the DNR to save lakes from drying up and to minimize damage to plants and wildlife due to lack of oxygen. They also helped restock the lakes.

Carp invaded many area lakes which led to decline in waterfowl and native fish species. The club installed and maintained carp traps in several local lakes to help maintain a balance of fish species. Members assisted with cleaning out carp in Whiskey Lake and restocked the lake.

The club has placed docks at public landings on Moon, Whiskey, Big Chippewa, Devils, and Little Chippewa Lakes which are now maintained by the DNR.

The Moon Lake access has been sold to the DNR, who is now doing the maintenance and upkeep.

A goal of the group is to provide for wildlife in areas with ever-decreasing natural habitat. The club sponsors food plots for wildlife habitat. Deer, pheasants, turkeys, and other animals rely on these areas for survival. The club has purchased a pheasant Surrogator for raising and releasing baby pheasants. They have also built and distributed many wood duck house over the years.

Brandon Fin & Feather – continued

The club is also involved in working with area lake associations, using matching funds to assist with stocking projects.

The club used to have an annual picnic, which has now evolved into a fundraiser banquet.

With proceeds from fundraisers, the club has contributed to many community projects and organizations, including junior prom, area baseball and softball programs, cub scouts, boy scouts, the Brandon Auditorium Restoration, and other area projects.

Millerville Sportsmen's Club

The Millerville Sportsmen's Club all started with a fish fry. Bob Lorsung talked to several men in his saloon one afternoon in 1936 or 1937 about it. Some of the men went fishing and cleaned some for frying and smoked the rest. About 40 men showed up for the fish fry at Bob's lot on the south side of Lake Aaron. They had so much fun that they decided to do it again the next year.

Due to the small size of Bob's lake lot, they moved the event to Albert Bitzan's lakeshore, where they continued to have it until Bob Bitzan sold the farm in the 1980s. Their actual club meetings were being held at the old school house, which later became the Legion Hall. Conrad Abel took on the job of recorder for the club.

Some of their earlier projects included an annual crow hunt with two teams and fox hunts due to the damage done to the pheasant population.

By 1954, membership in the club had grown to 60, with members joining from Millerville, Garfield, Evansville, and Parkers Prairie at a fee of \$1.50 per year. The Millerville Sportsmen actually incorporated on April 29, 1997.

They used their annual fish fry and raffles to raise money for local projects. Over the years they have contributed to the MN Deer Hunters' Association, Ducks Unlimited (Men and Women), gun safety classes, pheasant releases, stocking of walleye fingerlings in Lakes Moses and Aaron, other area sportsmen's clubs, a foundation for disabled archers, Douglas County trail system, Smokey Timbers, wild life food plots, Pioneer Public TV, payment of bounties, the Elk Foundation, Leaf Valley Turkey Club, prairie coyote hunters, Millerville Township accesses and portable toilet facilities on Lakes Aaron and Moses, spawning rocks, duck houses, a night light at the Lake Aaron access, and snowplowing to fish houses on Lake Aaron.

Recently, they worked with the Viking Sportsmen to stock 3,000 walleye fingerlings in Lakes Aaron and Moses.

The fish fry has now changed to a pork chop feed. In 2010, over 130 members attended their picnic.

Photos of both clubs can be found on page 3.





Brandon Fin & Feather Sportsmen's Club - April 2012
Front: Devin Rusch, Mike Cleary, Dana Barfnecht, Jim Augdahl
Back: Mike Korkowski, Merlin King, Jed Burkey, Derek Fiala, Scott Pohlmann, Michael Bruns, Craig Pohlmann, Josh Meissner



Millerville Sportsmen's Club - April 2012
Back: Dennis Hilmer, Dennis Hintzen, Bob Harberts, Norb Korkowski, Norm Lenarz, Dave Schmidt, Darrell Roers
Middle: Willy Woida, Jerry Richardson, Clarence Otto, Gerald Suchy, Bill Suchy
Front: George Davis, Chuck Carlson, Bernie Suchy, Norb Lenarz, Dave Otto, Father LeRoy Scheierl

Veterans' Corner



Walter Thoennes

Walter Thoennes was born October 19, 1930, in Effington Township, the son of Stephen and Agnes Thoennes. He graduated from Brandon High School and began farming with his father.

In 1953, Walter joined the U.S. Army and served in Germany. In 1955 he was honorably discharged and returned to the family dairy farm, from which he retired in 1982. Aviation was one of his interests. He earned his pilot's license and flew his own Cessna for many years. At age 49, Walter began skydiving. He also enjoyed riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle. Spending time with his grandchildren was very special to him.

Walter died on February 13, 2013; he is survived by his wife, Alice, and daughter, Lisa Wussow; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; one brother and one sister.

The Millerville American Legion presented military honors.



Clare Kangas

Clare Kangas was born June 27, 1935, in Brandon, the son of Henry and Stella Kangas. He attended School at District 45 in Moe Township and graduated from Kensington High School.

Clare served in the military from 1953 to 1958. After his discharge, he moved back to Urness Township where he farmed. He enjoyed driving truck, hunting, fishing, and visiting with family and friends.

He died February 3, 2013, and is survived by his son, Casey Kangas; three brothers; and two sisters. He was preceded in death by his son, Cory.

Robert Haabala

Robert Haabala, 75, Villard, passed away January 16, 2013. He had been a long-time resident of the Brandon area before moving to Villard after his marriage.

Robert was born February 5, 1937, the son of Alex and Emily Haabala. He attended Country School District #5 and graduated from Brandon High School in 1955. He joined the Air Force as an aviation cadet in 1959 and ended his military career as an Air Force Reservist in 1965.

He worked as a carpenter, and large equipment operator and mechanic. Later, he concentrated on his love of carpentry until his retirement in 1999. Robert is survived by his three children; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Robert was preceded in death by his loving wife, Alberta. Military honors were presented by the Villard American Legion.



Peter R. Daas

Peter R. Daas was born February 15, 1914, in Urbank to Anton and Caroline Rose (Freske) Daas. He grew up on the family farm in Leaf Mountain Township and attended Sacred Heart parochial school in Urbank.

Peter joined the United States Army on January 28, 1942. He was a part of the 365 Fighter Squadron stationed in England during World War II. He served his country from 1942 to 1945 and was honorably discharged on November 15, 1945.

Peter and his wife farmed in the Millerville area until 1983 when they retired and moved to Brandon.

Peter was a member of American Legion Post 527 for 67 years and a member of the Knights of Columbus Council #1995 for 58 years.

Peter died Saturday, January 26, 2013, at Evansville Care Center. He is survived by one sister-in-law and many nieces and nephews. Interment was at St. Ann's Catholic Church, Brandon, with military honors by Millerville Inspiration Peak Post #527 and the Minnesota National Guard.

In Memory . . .

Peter R. Daas – Thank you to the family of Peter Daas for donating his World War II Army uniform to the History Center. Peter's uniform adds to our diversified military branch collection.



This patch is found on Peter Daas's uniform. It is the official World war II 1944-1945 patch for his squadron.



The medal at the left, which is called a caduceus, is located on Peter's uniform collar. This signifies that he was in the medical corps.

Thank You to Our Veterans . . .

"Posterity: you will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it."

John Quincy Adams

We thank all veterans who have paid the price and served our country to preserve OUR freedom!



Mervyn Olson

Mervyn Olson passed away at the age of 88 years on Monday, February 11, 2013. He was a former resident of the Brandon area prior to moving to the Twin Cities.

Mervyn was a World War II veteran and a lifetime member of the New Brighton VFW Post 724; he was also a member of the Brandon American Legion Post.

He was preceded in death by his parents and 11 siblings; he is survived by his wife, two children, grandchildren, and many family and friends.

History Center Open . . .

The Brandon History Center is open on Thursday afternoons from 1 - 3 p.m., or by special appointment. We thank those who have stopped by to check out the 1000+ historical pictures and displays.

Please use the Auditorium main doors to enter the building. For those not familiar with the building, after coming into the main entryway, take the hallway to the right; the History Center will be on the right at the end of the hallway.



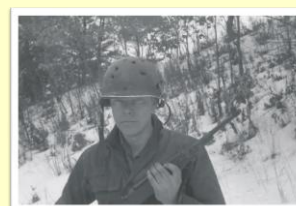
John Norman Esala

John Norman Esala was drafted into the service in 1951 and entered at Minneapolis MN. He received his basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington, and was transferred to the Signal Corps. He received further training at Camp Gordon, Georgia.

He served in Korea and reached the rank of Corporal. John Norman's unit was the R&M Co. 4th Signal Bn Corps Division, 10th Corps. He maintained and operated a radio relay station between the front lines and the rear command.

He was awarded the Korean Service Medal with 2 bronze service stars, United Nations Service Medal, and Meritorious Unity Commendation, and was honorably discharged in January of 1953.

John Norman lived in the Brandon area for many years; he passed away on March 5, 2013. He is survived by three brothers and one sister and many nieces and nephews.





In Memory of Orvin Schjei

Thank you to the family of Orv Schjei who donated this cabinet to the Brandon History Center. As you can see, it is already in use displaying many of the historical items of the Brandon area. Also many thanks to Doug Schjei and Shawn Wagner who moved the cabinet up the stairs, which was no small feat!

Thank You

Thank you to REA's Operation Roundup donation in the amount of \$100.

Also thank you to Marlene Lund for her recent generous donation to the History Center.

Thank you to Suzanne Arndt and Leila Hanson for their single life memberships! We now have a total of nine life memberships!

We appreciate so much that Delphin Engel designated that his memorials be given to the History Center.

We rely on memberships and grants to fund our operations and projects. Annual memberships are \$10 for individuals; \$15 for family. Single life memberships are \$150.

Besides renewing your membership, you might want to consider making a charitable contribution of \$100 or more. Because we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, contributions are tax-deductible. Your gift will be recognized by name on our contributor plaques.

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BOARD MEMBERS:

Hilda Bettermann
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Christella Korkowski
Janet Nelson
Ruth Plaster
Karen Thoennes

We're on the Web! Visit us at:

www.brandonmn.com

Our 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.

Challenge to Our Readers!

Can anyone remember such a late spring as 2013 has been? If anyone has pictures of snowstorms from the past, let us know (include year and any information of interest); we could write some "cool" articles for our "dog days of summer" edition of the Center Piece!