

The Center Piece

Winter 2020 - 2021



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Remember when Brandon was introduced to electric lighting?

This era was certainly a radical change from kerosene lamps and lanterns.

The plant was located in a garage and it was not a very large building, as it was the first body shop here for a few years, there was some changes made, some more space was added on to the rear, a cement floor replaced the wooded one.

When it was remodeled there was a large cement base in the center of the floor which has held the diesel engine the motive power used for the operation of the generator. Removing this base was needed before we could pour the floor, which by no means was an easy task.

When we were kids it was quite an adventure to visit this plant, stand in open mouth wonder as the engine banged and wheezed away turning the humming generator. The engine has two tremendous fly wheels (the secret of its power) for every exhaust the wheels would increase in speed until the maximum power was reached. There was a governor that controlled the speed so that when it slowed down it would automatically fire more often to carry the load.

When its top speed was reached it would coast along on its momentum until more power was needed, so at times when it became overloaded it became overheated and had to be stopped so that it could cool off, in the cooling process no lights of course, so it was back to the old kerosene lamp until power was restored.

In the early evenings when more lights were in use, it had all it could do to keep up, so there was a continuous exhaust of the engine which was heard all over town and on a still night quite a ways into the country.

The lights would dim and then grow bright in variation with the speed of the engine, and if you were in the plant when it was running at its full capacity the entire building would vibrate and shake, in fact it seemed it could blow apart in any second.

From the Times To Remember by Robert Thompson.

The light company operated in Brandon in the early 1920's. Building was located at Lot 9 Block 6 Holmes Avenue, Brandon and was demolished in 2012.



A Look Back in Time

- 1849 Minnesota Territory Was Organized
- 1858 Douglas County organized by the Territorial Legislature
- 1858 Minnesota Became the 32nd U.S. State
- 1858 Stagecoach Line Established from St Cloud to Fort Abercrombie Near Breckenridge
- 1861 Chippewa Stage Station Established & Settlement Began
- 1862 U.S. Soldiers Arrived During The Sioux Uprising
- Sep 1867 Chippewa Township Established
- Nov 1867 Millerville Township Established
- 1867 Settlement Was Platted and Renamed Brandon
- 1869 Post Office in Brandon and Millerville
- 1879 Edgefield Cemetery Platted
- 1879 [St Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad](#) Arrived South of Brandon
- 1879 Brandon Relocated South to Railroad Line
- 1881 Chippewa Township Renamed Brandon Township
- 1881 Village of Brandon Incorporated
- 1903 Village of Millerville incorporated
- 1935 County Road 82 Built Through Brandon
- 1936 Historic Brandon Auditorium & City Hall Built
- 1986 Chippewa Park Established

Thank You....

The Brandon History Center would like to give a huge Thank You to Clement Bitzan and Cletus Bitzan for their generous donations of \$5000 each.

Other donations received include

- Mary Rossum – clippings and St. Ann's plates. Centennial plate by H. Rossum
- Greg Slack – letter found in former Handke house that was moved to Evansville
- Shelley Suckow – numerous Brandon News, including 8 that the BHC did not have previously
- Bremer Bank – big pictures; plat map ca 1970, aerial photo ca 1987, poem by A.C. Lawrence of *Brandon Sentinel*, Milbank Mutual Insurance Co advertising on flannel cleaning cloth, Douglas County Trivia Game.
- Geraldine Crane – Two *Brandon Forum* newspapers and other Alexandria newspapers
- Evansville Historical Foundation – 1920s Christmas card booklet that teachers gave to students; 1966 Class reunion booklet; 1939 BHS commencement program.
- Brandon School – whole school composite photos for years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19.
- Charles Bitzan – Argonne Forest #278 poster from the Edward Bitzan collection.
- Florian Ledermann – Book of memoirs, *Spilling Over* by Florian Ledermann
- Jeffrey S. Olson – 3 copies of *The Scandinavian Pioneers* by Jeffrey S. Olson. Family histories focused on Brandon.
- Many various requests for information were handled.

Brandon History Center Holds Annual Meeting

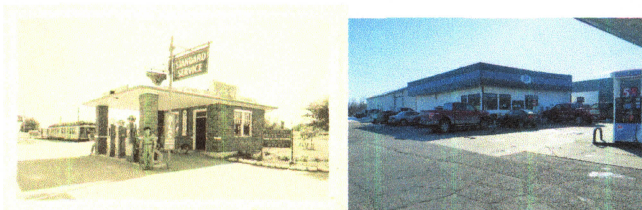
The Brandon History Center held its 12th annual meeting at 4:00 pm on Monday, October 26, 2020 at the Brandon Township garage on Mallard Ln.

Even though the History Center offices in the Auditorium have been closed since the beginning of the pandemic shutdown, the Board and volunteers have been busy behind closed doors on receiving and cataloging many items of historical interest and working to make its computer files easier to research.

The Board is also working on a new layout for the office which will enable it to display more historical items. A website is being developed which will contain much history of Brandon and Millerville and the surrounding area.

Long-time member Marcia Bolin retired from the Board and Carol Ramler was elected to fill her position. Marcia has been involved in the History Center since its beginning and has been very involved in raising donations for its various projects to include the Auditorium remodeling. Carol has taken on the job of publishing the Center Piece newsletter.

Business Spotlight



Servicing the area motor needs since the 1920's, a gas station has been located at the intersection of Co Rd 82 and Co Rd 7. Frank Goering started managing it in 1931 and later bought from his brother and named it Frank's Standard Station. In 1978, it was purchased by Bob Thoennes and LeRoy Shea; and renamed Bob's. It is currently owned by Joe Roers and is called Joe's Gas and Deli.



Brandon History Center Board Members 2020

Back Row L-R: Ruth Plaster, Janet Nelson, Mike Cleary Pres., Karen Thoennes Sec. Treas.

Front Row L-R: Florence Bitzan Vice Pres., Deb Shea, Carol Ramler

History Center Closed until Further Notice

Due to the pandemic, the History Center closed until further notice. It is available for research and, is still taking donations and items of historical value such as family pictures and stories. Call Janet Nelson (320-834-4401) or Mike Cleary (320-290-4490) or email brandonhistory@gctel.net. to arrange a time to drop off your items.

Membership Information

Annual Memberships are \$10 for individuals, \$15 for family. Life time memberships are \$150 for individuals and \$200 for family.

In addition to renewing you membership, you may want to consider a tax deductible charitable contribution of \$100 more to the History Center. The Brandon History center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

With a \$100 donation, the donation is remembered on the wall plaque with either your own name or in memory of a family member or friend.

Brandon History Center
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Postage

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<http://brandonhistorycenter.blogspot.com>

BOARD MEMBERS:

Florence Bitzan
Carol Ramler
Mike Cleary
Janet Nelson
Ruth Plaster
Deb Shea
Karen Thoennes

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.



View of Brandon, 1890