

The Center Piece

Winter 2024



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Brandon Township

Brandon Township was established as a township by the Douglas County Commissioners on September 3, 1867, and was then called Chippewa for its lakes and river of that name used as a “road of war” by the Ojibway into their forays to the Sioux country. Previously it had a station named Chippewa on the Burbank stage route from St. Cloud to the Red River at the home and hotel of Ole Brandon on a low hill about two miles north of the present railway village which received his name, whence also the township was renamed on March 11, 1881. The Village of

Brandon was later incorporated at its present site on November 22, 1881.

Township government, carried over from Europe and established in Providence, Rhode Island in 1636, is the oldest existing unit of government continuing to serve on the North American continent and was in existence for 140 years prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The wording of the Declaration of Independence reflects the fact that 38 of its 56 signers had experienced the benefits of township government.

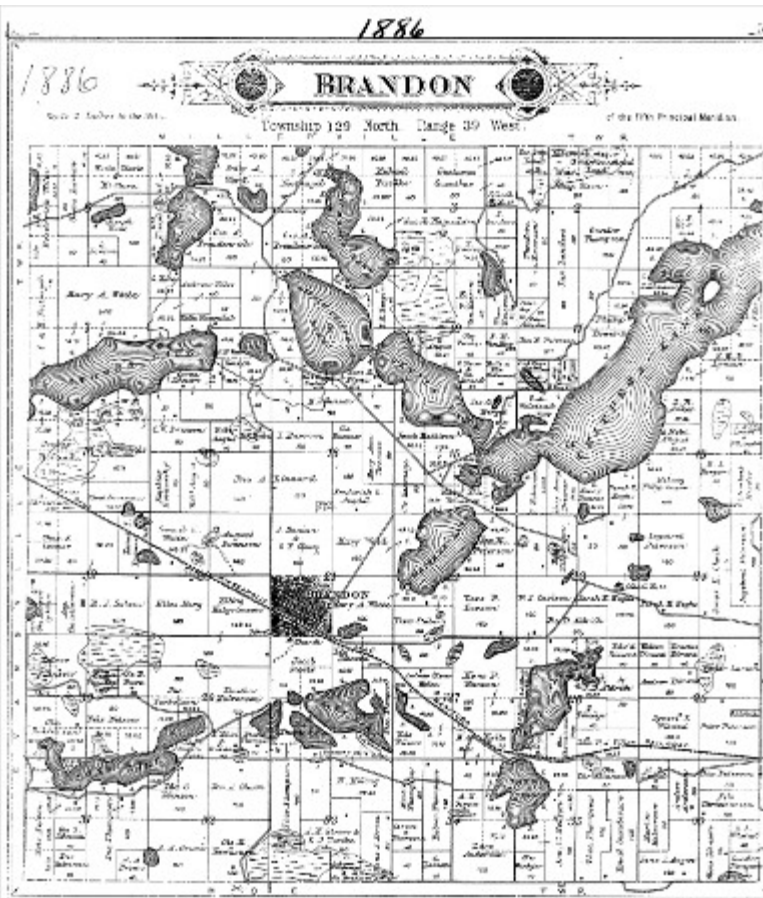
Townships are the original form of local government in Minnesota, established as part of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which created the State of Minnesota. The township form of government served as a familiar building block to develop the state by dividing land areas into 36 square mile units known as congressional townships. Today, the term township generally refers to organized but unincorporated communities governed by a local board of supervisors and created to provide services to their residents. There are currently 1,790 townships across the state of Minnesota. And, in Minnesota, Townships are also called “Towns”, not to be confused with Villages and Cities that are often also called “Towns”.

Brandon Township is governed by an elected board of three Supervisors each of who serve four year terms. They are assisted by three appointed officers consisting of a Clerk, Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer.

The number of township officials varied during the early years of the township. Early positions included the officers mentioned above plus an Assessor, 2 Justices of the Peace, 2 Constables and 1 Overseer of Highways for each Road District (up to 12) in the Township, all of whom were elected.

During the period from 1872 to the present (township records prior to 1872 could not be located by this writer), the township has had 59 different supervisors (always 3 at a time), 13 clerks and 11 treasurers. Prior to the year 2000, township government was exclusively male.

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Brandon Township

(Continued from page 1)

However, since then, five women have served in Brandon Township

The activities of the township during the early years consisted primarily of laying out and building a local system of roads needed for the settler farmers to purchase needed supplies and equipment and to get their products to market. During the period from 1867 to 1871, a total of 16 miles of township roads were constructed using horse drawn equipment. Today, the township maintains 37.6 miles of gravel surfaced roads and 9.3 miles of paved roads using modern equipment.

Road construction and maintenance were financed by assessing a "Poll Tax" of a number of days work (varied from one to two days per year) per able body male between the ages of 21 and 50 and a "Road Tax" of a nominal amount (varied from 10 to 75 cents) per \$100 of assessed personal property (including farm buildings and equipment, crops and livestock). Road Districts were established in the township and Overseers assigned to each. Thousands of feet of oak planking were purchased during the early road building years for building a base over soft ground and for building bridges over streams.

Other activities of early township government included assessing property, ensuring public health and safety and providing general assistance for the sick and indigent. While crime has never been a major problem, there were many cases of illness in the early 1900's to include consumption and smallpox. The township provided assistance in caring for quarantined families and providing burial services where warranted. Most of these services are now provided by Douglas County.

While the township does not own any cemeteries, it is responsible for the maintenance of abandoned cemeteries such as Edgefield Cemetery located approximately three miles north of the City of Brandon on County Road 16.

Much of the early history of the people of Brandon Township and the Village of Brandon was reported by the Brandon Echo newspaper during its existence from 1898 to 1908. One hundred years later, portions of the history were reprinted by the West Douglas County Record during the years 1998 through 2006 in a weekly column titled "A History of The Edgefield Pioneer Cemetery Area" by Myron (Bud) Greenquist (1930-2009). Copies of Bud's columns make for informative and entertaining reading and can be found at the Brandon, Evansville and Douglas County Historical Societies.

Millerville Blacksmiths

Blacksmiths played a vital role in early village life and Millerville was no exception. In 1876, Mathias Baden started a blacksmith shop. In 1898, Jacob Thoennes ran a blacksmith shop. It was run for a short time by son Valentine who died in 1933. And then owned and run by son William Thoennes as a blacksmith and then welding shop until he retired in 1963.



Millerville Blacksmith Shop, 1898



William Thoennes, 1937

In Memory of Carole Severson

September 2, 1940 – June 21, 2020



In 2007, as president of the Brandon Community Club, Carole Severson completed the paperwork application necessary to obtain a Minnesota Certificate of Incorporation for the Brandon History Center. Next she applied for 501(c)(3) non-profit status. She recruited board members for the new Brandon History Center. Carole and others, had a passion for history and had collected many boxes full of Brandon history items. Carole contacted the Brandon City Council and was granted permission for use of the old up-stairs City Council Room as the Brandon History Center. We owe a huge **Thank You** to Carole for her fore-sight in creating this organization.

Annual Meeting

The 2024 Brandon History Center Meeting was held Oct 21, 2024. Florence Bitzan, Mike Cleary, Ruth Plaster and Carol Ramler were re-elected to the board. Officers were re-elected: Mike Cleary-President, Carol Ramler—Vice President and Karen Thoennes—Secretary/Treasurer.

Thank you!

To everyone who requested research on family members, other Brandon/Millerville research, or other, items, we are glad to help. Thank you to all who have donated money, items for our history collections, and information about people of the area for our family files.

- LuWanna Hintermeister—photos
- Dean Plaster — Dahl Store Tomahawk Crate Hammer
- Muriel Keil—book “Diary of Star-Crossed Lovers”
- Cindy Haffner—Korkowski and Pischke family history books
- Dave & Joan Lehn—Happy Knoll 4-H scrapbook
- Dianne Auel—Ted Olson Trivet
- Brandon School—1921 Brandon School picture
- T.J. Jungroth—1867 Carl Jungroth letters
- New lifetime member Thomas Erickson family
- New lifetime member Brad & Doris Weinrich
- Donation in memory of Marlin Toft

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 your membership, you may want to consider a tax deductible charitable contribution of \$100 or 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.

History Center Hours

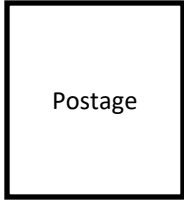
The History Center is usually open on Friday from 9-12, please e-mail to verify, or by appointment. It is open for research or to donate items of historical value such as family pictures and stories. Email brandonhistory@gctel.net to arrange a time for a visit.

Our Mission Statement

To collect and preserve the history of Brandon, Millerville, and the surrounding area for future generations.

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

Brandon History Center
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P. O Box 514
Brandon, MN 56315



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Email: brandonhistory@gctel.net
Website: www.BrandonHistoryCenter.org
Blog: <http://brandonhistorycenter.blogspot.com>
Facebook: Brandon History Center

BOARD MEMBERS:

- Florence Bitzan
- Carol Ramler
- Mike Cleary
- Ruth Plaster
- Cheryl Johnson
- Karen Thoennes
- Dennis Korkowski

Brandon and Brandon-Evansville YearBooks Needed

The Brandon History Center does not have a copy of the Brandon and Brandon-Evansville YearBooks for the following years: 1950, 1951, 1953, 1989, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2015, and 2018. If you are willing to donate, please contact the History Center.

Trivia

From the Douglas Country Trivia game published by the Douglas County Historical Society 1986

1. What township was original called Red Rock Township>
2. How many elevators did Brandon have at one time?
3. What is the length of the term of office of town clerk?
4. How was the number given to a school district determined?

1. Umess Township, 2. Four, 3 Two years, 4.They were numbered chronologically as they were organized