

The Center Piece

Winter 2025

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Chippewa Park, Over a hundred years of history

With Douglas County making improvements to Chippewa County Park, we thought it would be interesting to look back at the history of the park. The land that is currently Chippewa County Park was privately owned until Hillard and Delores Nelson sold it to the county in Dec 1988. Half of the money was from a MN state grant, with the rest of the funds raised from donations and fundraisers.

However, the 30 acre area located north of Brandon between Little Chippewa and Devils Lakes has been used as a park and gathering spot long before it became a county park. The Ojibwe Indians are said to have had a main camp at the site. Archeological finds have been dated from 500 BC to 1200 AD and include bison bone, pottery, and human remains.

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New Bridge at Chippewa Park,
Courtesy of The Record



Pageant crowd in 1924

Chippewa Park

(Continued from page 1)

The Evansville Enterprise has an article on the Douglas County Community fair which was held Sept. 19-20, 1923 at the park. Activities included baseball, Merry-go-round, Ferris Wheel, a pageant "The Striking of America's Hour", a prayer service, picnic dinner, livestock show and sale. Another Community Fair was held in 1924 which after that the county fair moved permanently to Alexandria. Another pageant "The Search for the Light" was held in the "natural amphitheater" in July of 1924 and was attended by an estimated 3000 people. St. Ann's Church held its annual picnic there in 1930s. Many local residents have memories of picnics, social gatherings, and swimming at the site even before it was a public park.

In 2019, approximately 7 more acres on the northeast side of the park were purchased and added to the park.

Today the park has both tent and RV campsites, restrooms, and a shelter. Activities include walking & cross country ski trails, fishing pier, and swimming beaches. As of 2025 the county is continuing to improve the park by upgrading the bridge and has a 30-year plan for the park, ensuring that it will be enjoyed for years to come.



Fourth of July, undated photo

New Historic Site Signs



Two new signs were recently put up by the Brandon History Center with the assistance of the Douglas County Public Works Department. They are located on Country Road 16 approximately 2-1/2 miles north of Brandon marking the original site of the Town of Brandon and Fort Chippewa. Brandon was officially relocated in 1881 to present site on the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad (now the Central Lakes State Trail). No official record exists on the closing of Fort Chippewa but records indicate it may have been occupied through the Dakota war of 1862.

Annual Meeting

The Brandon History Center held its Annual Meeting Oct 24, 2025. Minutes and Treasurers reports were approved. Board of directors with a 4-year term were up for election. Dennis Korkowski and Karen Thoennes were re-elected to 4-year terms. Maynard Peterson was elected to a 4-year term and replaces Cheryl Johnson. Officers are elected on an annual basis and are as follows: Carol Ramler as President, Maynard Peterson as Vice-President and Karen Thoennes continues as Secretary/Treasurer. The board would like to thank Mike Cleary for all his work as President these past 6 years and Cheryl Johnson for all she does for the History Center.

Veteran's Corner



Mary & Bob Hefti

Robert Hefti United States Air Force Vietnam Conflict

Robert joined the United States Air Force in 1970 at Lackland Air Force Base at San Antonio, Texas. He received his pilot training in Arizona at William Air Force Base. Robert flew the T-39 to train navigators in California at Mather Air Force Base. Robert was also trained in computers in Nevada at Offet Air Force Base. He served during the Vietnam Conflict. Robert achieved the rank of Captain. He retired from the United States Air Force in 1976.

Robert passed away August 2, 2025



James Korkowski United States Army Cold War Era

James was inducted into the U.S. Army on November 6, 1962 at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He then went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where he worked in transportation. He would drive a busload of

officers to Chicago in the morning and return them to Ft. Sheridan in the afternoon. Next he was sent to Heidelberg, Germany where he was also in transportation. He would drive officers throughout the bases in Germany. James was discharged in November of 1964.

James died July 11, 2025, and is buried in St. Ann's Cemetery.

Thank you!

To everyone who requested research on family members, 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.

- Bremer Bank—various historical items
- John "Jack" Anderson—Army Uniform – 1951-53
- Kay Larson—various Brandon advertising items
- Ruth Plaster—Chippewa Park and Summerfest T-shirts
- Dorothy Anderson—Brandon High School papers
- Lois Backlund—Doug Backlund Army Uniform
- Curt Peterson—Richard Dahl WWI items
- Curt Brethorst—Brandon & B-E homecoming buttons
- John & Karen Lund—life time membership
- Cash donation—In Memory of Frank Goering

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

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Postage

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BOARD MEMBERS:

Florence Bitzan
Carol Ramler
Mike Cleary
Ruth Plaster
Maynard Peterson
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.

Auditorium Roof

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Auditorium Roof Repair fund. Because of your generosity, we raised over \$58,000 towards the repair of the roof. The roof repair was completed this fall.

The city will also be repainting the main doors and the metal signs in the Spring of 2026.