

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 23 1985

date entered AUG 29 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Brandon Auditorium and Fire Hall

and/or common Brandon Auditorium and City Hall

**2. Location**

street & number Holmes Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Brandon

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota

code 22

county Douglas

code 041

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: auditorium

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Brandon

street & number Holmes Avenue

city, town Brandon

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota 56315

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Douglas County Courthouse

street & number 320 7th Ave. W.

city, town Alexandria

state Minnesota 56308

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Minnesota Statewide Historic  
title Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983-84

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Brandon Auditorium and City Hall is located on the west side of Holmes Avenue one block east of the main commercial street in Brandon, a small community west of Alexandria in Douglas County. The building is surrounded by commercial and residential structures including the new Brandon Fire Hall, which was constructed immediately north of the building in the late 1970's. The Brandon Auditorium was designed by Minneapolis architect F. Boes Pfeifer and constructed in 1935-36 by local workers hired under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.). The building cost an estimated \$50,000 to construct.

The Brandon Auditorium, which is faced entirely in fieldstone and concrete, has an unusual asymmetrical design which is typical of some of the most creative W.P.A.-era architecture in Minnesota. The two story, 44' by 143' building has a reinforced concrete structural system to which local fieldstone was applied in an uncoursed pattern. It is obvious that workers carefully chose whole and cut stones for their varying colors, textures, and sizes before mortaring them in place, and small areas of even more decorative patterning are visible on the south and main facades. The main facade of the building is comprised of a two bay fire hall to the north and a recessed auditorium entrance to the south. The fire hall portion of the building has two engine doors topped by a wide, smooth concrete band which originally supported metal lettering reading "Brandon Fire Hall". Above this band are two rectangular 6/6 sash windows. A rectangular smokestack and fire siren tower faced with fluted concrete rises above the hall. The southern half of the main facade, which is recessed about 20 feet, has a one story projecting, canted entrance with a smooth concrete surround, double leaf wooden doors with a multi-paned transom, and a concrete lintel with metal lettering reading "Auditorium". Small metal lamps are affixed to the concrete flanking the doors. Rising above the entrance is a cast concrete relief sculpture of a male athlete and musician flanking a stylized tree.

The north and south walls of the building, ten and seven bays wide, have rectangular window openings separated by massive, projecting stone piers topped by fluted concrete caps. Above the window opening in each bay is a geometrically patterned cast concrete panel. There are two doors leading to the auditorium and stage area at the rear of the south facade. The fieldstone surface of the building is further broken by small multi-paned double hung windows and concrete ornamentation in the form of simulated quoins and smooth and fluted bands outlining bays and window and door openings. The rear (west) facade of the building consists of a simple, unadorned fieldstone wall with no window or door openings. The exterior of the building is basically intact. Minor alterations have included covering some of the 9/9 sash windows on the north and south facades with wood panels and removing the lettering from the front of the fire hall. The building is in good condition, although the roof has minor leaks and there are some cracks in the exterior masonry.

The Brandon Auditorium was designed as a combined auditorium, fire hall, and village office. The building originally housed a large gymnasium/auditorium with a 27 foot stage opening, a balcony with movie projection booth, a ticket booth, dressing rooms, a cloak room, a village council meeting room and clerk's office (located above the fire hall), shower rooms, a kitchen, rest rooms, a boiler room, and a two stall fire hall. This arrangement of rooms has changed very little, although the fire engine garage has been used for storage since the late 1970's and the cloak room has been converted into a community library. The interior of the building is basically intact. Walls are surfaced with acoustic "Firtex" board tiles and some of the poured concrete floors are covered with maple flooring. The interior is decorated with fixtures and art work produced by artists

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1935-36

**Builder/Architect**

F. Boes Pfeifer , architect

Works Progress Administration, builder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Brandon Auditorium and City Hall, completed in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), is architecturally and historically significant as a building whose unusual design represents some of the most creative W.P.A.-era architecture found in Minnesota. Furthermore, the building illustrates the success of programs like the W.P.A. which provided both useful employment for the country's jobless and innovative new buildings for public use.

The Brandon Auditorium and City Hall was built to replace a woodframe village hall constructed on the same site circa 1890. Plans for the construction of the new building began in 1934 with an agreement between the Brandon Village Council and the Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.), a federal public works program established by Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of his first round of New Deal legislation in 1933. Under the agreement, the Village Council would provide a site and building materials for the project, and the C.W.A. would fund and hire local unemployed workers to construct the building. In the spring of 1934, after the Village Council had already issued \$5,000 in bonds to finance the materials, the Civil Works Administration was dissolved after one year of operation. The Brandon project then began receiving funds provided by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (F.E.R.A.), the agency which assumed responsibility for the C.W.A.'s uncompleted work.

By September of 1934 the old village hall had been demolished and the Village Council accepted building plans drafted by Twin Cities architect F. Boes Pfeifer . Actual construction of the new building had just begun in March of 1935 when Congress passed the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act and allocated funds for the establishment of the W.P.A., one of Roosevelt's most well known New Deal programs. The F.E.R.A. was dismantled and responsibility for the Brandon project was shifted again, this time to the W.P.A. Construction of the building was then placed under the supervision of W.P.A. District Director Harry Phinney of Morris, who worked closely with Brandon Village Clerk Clarence Newhouse, local administrator, and Brandon Building Superintendent Gust Anderson. In May of 1935 the Village issued a second series of bonds totalling \$5,000 for materials. Unskilled and semi-skilled laborers from the Brandon area worked on the W.P.A. payroll throughout the next year to finish the building. In addition, Minnesota artists, hired under the auspices of the W.P.A.'s Federal Art Project and supervised by Director Clement Haupers, created brass light fixtures, four wooden relief panels, and a large mural which were installed in the building.

The Brandon Auditorium was dedicated on October 22, 1936 at a ceremony where a crowd of 5,000 people gathered to hear the comments of the architect, city and county officials, and W.P.A. representatives. Since that time, the building has been used by the public as a civic auditorium for plays, concerts, dances, and other events, and as a high school gymnasium, a meeting hall for civic and fraternal groups, and an election polling site. In addition, it has housed the village council chambers, the village clerk's office, and the fire department. A community library was recently installed in the building, and it continues to serve as Brandon's primary civic center.

The Brandon Auditorium is one of the most unusual W.P.A.-constructed buildings standing in Minnesota. Unfortunately, little is known about the building's architect, F. Boes

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brandon Village Council, Council Meeting Minutes, 1934-1936.  
Leuchtenburg, William E. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Brandon Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

### UTM References

A 

1	5	2	9	8	7	4	0	5	0	9	3	1	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 14, Block 2, Original Townsite of Brandon.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant

State Historic Preservation Office

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date July 1984

street & number Fort Snelling History Center

telephone (612) 726-1171

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Russell W. Fridley

State Historic Preservation Officer

date

7/1/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

8/29/81

Keeper of the National Register

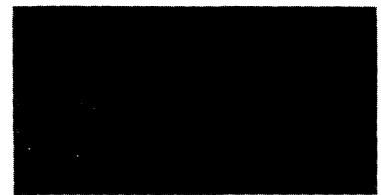
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation sheet Brandon Auditorium

Item number 7, 8, 9

Page 1

Item #7 (Description) Continued:

employed by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. These works include Art Deco-inspired square brass ceiling lamps, two large wooden relief carvings flanking the stage, two small wooden relief carvings in the council room, and a large mural which originally hung in the council room and is now on display in the auditorium. Federal Art Project artists probably also designed the concrete relief sculpture above the exterior entrance to the auditorium. Minor alterations to the interior have included installing new wood panelling in the council room and new lights and panelling in the auditorium.

Item #8 (Significance) Continued:

Pfeifer. According to a 1943 federal report on the W.P.A., the agency encouraged architects involved in its projects to create simple, uncomplicated plans suitable for execution by unskilled labor and favored the use of reinforced concrete and locally available materials to keep construction costs low.\* Pfeifer's plan, though drafted before the establishment of the W.P.A., was probably created with similar requirements in mind. The architect's creative solution to this challenge, the quality of craftsmanship exhibited in the construction, and the handsome art work contributed by the Federal Art Project were all combined in the Brandon Auditorium to produce one of the state's finest W.P.A.-era buildings.

\*U.S. Federal Works Agency, Final Report on the W.P.A. Program, 1935-1943 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943).

Item #9 (Bibliographical References) Continued:

Park Region Echo, Feb. 27, 1936, April 23, 1936, and Oct. 29, 1936.

U.S. Federal Works Agency. Final Report on the W.P.A. Program, 1935-43. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1943.