



Brandon Materials Moves

While Brandon Materials increases production threefold at its new location, the plant's old home on Aspen Boulevard is being reclaimed to its natural state.

The last load went out from the old plant in July, and the company's founder, Cliff Cronkhite, was along for the ride. The driver was long-time employee Bob Swenson, and that last load is now a basement wall in Sioux Falls. Cronkhite, 84, said the ride felt good. "Well, there's so many pluses, and so many good memories, you know, that it couldn't feel too bad."

He and Roger Anderson started the company in 1962. Cronkhite bought the first equipment from Canton with two paychecks, a boat and a motor. "I came home broke," he said. He got a break when a Brandon man let him locate on his land rent free, to keep away hunters that often sighted their rifles there.

Elwood Halverson worked at Brandon Ready Mix in the early days. He remembers the sand at the site. "That was the most beautiful sand down there," he said. "It was so clean and crisp. It went down 30 feet probably." Halverson also remembers Cronkhite as a good boss. "If you did something wrong, he'd talk to you privately and then make some kind of quip at the end to make you laugh," he said.

Anderson sold his share to Cronkhite within a couple of years, and the company later bought the land. By 1966, the plant had five trucks at its location on the edge of Brandon and over the years, although the location didn't change, the town did. In 1970, the population of Brandon was 1,837, but people continued to make their home in Brandon and in 1985, the population was 3,099. "The city grew up around the plant," Cronkhite said.



Left to Right: **Larry Peterson** (managed plant until 1979), **Clifton Cronkhite** (original founder), **Jerry Sweetman** (current owner), and **Bobby Swenson** (employee for 20+ years)

He retired and sold the company to Dick Lundin of Mankato, MN, in 1983. It was in 1984 that Mark Thompson, who had worked at the plant since he was a high school boy in 1974, became manager. Lundin renamed the business Brandon-Tea Ready Mix and continued its production until selling to Sweetman Construction Company of Sioux Falls in 1992.

As Brandon continued to grow, complaints about dust forced the company, now called Brandon Materials Company, to build a concrete wall along Aspen Boulevard. The wall kept dust at bay but also blocked view of the plant and the 12.5-acre pond that formed over the years as sand was excavated from the site.

Article continued on page 5...



Left to Right: **Mark Thompson** (current company manager), **Clifton Cronkhite** (original founder), and **Bobby Swenson** (employee for 20+ years)

Continued from pg 1— Brandon Materials Moves...



On June 28th, Telkamp Housemoving of Brookings moved the Brandon Materials 50'X60' shop building from the Aspen Boulevard site to their new site North of Corson. The maintenance shop was fully operational within two weeks.

That sand served the company well for the four decades the plant was on Aspen Boulevard. But the town continued to grow, with a population of 5,693 in 2000 and an estimated 7,245 people today. “There were children all over the streets, and it became an unsafe place to do business,” Thompson said.

Sweetman Const. Co. acquired a site just north of Corson on Highway 11 and plans were made to move the company. Brandon Materials started doing business out of the Highway 11 site in May and on June 29, Telkamp House Moving of Brookings moved the shop building to the new location. The rest of the Aspen Boulevard plant,

including the concrete wall, was demolished by Soukup Construction of Sioux Falls, on Aug. 9. The material will be ground and reused as base material. The site will be reused as well. “It’s in reclamation,” Thompson said. “We’re getting it ready for development.” No specific plans have been made for the future of the site, however.

At the new site, the plant can produce three times as much concrete than it did before – about 300 cubic yards an hour. The company buys all its sand and rock now, some of it from Concrete Materials, which is located just east of the new Brandon Materials location.

Thompson, Swenson, Halverson and many others who worked at Brandon Materials over the years will remember its original site fondly. “It served its purposes, you know,” Cronkhite said. “It did well.”