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Beloved Sandstone Landmark Renamed The Bookmatch

Historic School to Reopen as Workforce Rental Housing in 2026

Sandstone, MN — A building known locally as “The Rock” is entering a new chapter under a new name. The former Sandstone school will officially be known as The Bookmatch, reflecting both the building’s history and its future as much-needed rental housing for the community. The project is scheduled to open in June, with rental applications beginning in February.

“The name The Bookmatch comes directly from the building itself,” said Meghan Elliott, founder and principal of Jillpine, the Minneapolis-based historic redevelopment firm leading the project. “In stoneworking, bookmatching means splitting material and opening it like a book so the two sides mirror each other. Look at the school’s exterior and you’ll see exactly that—a bookmatched design.”

Originally built in 1900, the Sandstone school was destroyed by fire after a lightning strike in 1909. When the community rebuilt it, local leaders chose not just to replace the structure, but to expand it—adding a new wing that precisely mirrored the original. The result was a rare example of architectural symmetry created through craftsmanship and foresight.

“This wasn’t an abstract branding exercise,” Elliott said. “The building is literally bookmatched. The name honors the stonework, the school’s academic roots, and the people who believed Sandstone was growing and worth investing in.”

Old structure, new purpose

While the name change leads the story, the project’s broader purpose is housing—specifically, housing that serves the local workforce. When complete, The Bookmatch will provide 32 rental apartments, primarily two-

bedroom units designed to accommodate individuals, couples, and families. The development is aimed at residents with steady, mid-range incomes, including teachers, healthcare workers, city employees, tradespeople, and others who work in and around Pine County.

Like many small communities across Minnesota, Sandstone faces a shortage of modern, market-rate rental housing. New construction can be costly and slow to deliver. Adaptive reuse—bringing new life to existing buildings—offers another path.

“Communities like Sandstone don’t just need more housing units; they need housing that fits the scale, character, and economics of the place,” Elliott said. “Reusing this building allows us to deliver quality homes while preserving something the community already cares about.”

Historic character with modern living

The renovation will retain the school’s historic sandstone exterior and defining architectural features, while the interiors will be entirely new. Apartments will include modern kitchens, new appliances, contemporary finishes, and efficient building systems. Utilities will be included in the rent, and onsite parking will be available.

The Bookmatch builds on Elliott’s experience with complex historic reuse projects. Most recently, the developer and her team completed Leijona, a conversion of the former St. Louis County Jail in Duluth into 33 affordable apartment units.

“These projects are about stewardship,” Elliott said. “Old buildings still have a lot to give. With the right approach, they can serve communities for another generation.”

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