

The City of Scandia is the site of the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota. In October, 1850, three young men from Vastergotland, Sweden - Carl Fernstrom, August Sandahl, and Oscar Roos - settled on the shores of Hay Lake in what is now the City of Scandia. They built a substantial log cabin and stayed over that winter. These men were not farmers. They wanted to seek adventure so in 1851 they sold their homestead to Daniel Nilson and set out on other journeys. Sandahl returned to Sweden, Fernstrom traveled to California in search of gold, and Roos settled in Taylors Falls. Carl Fernstrom's adventures became the basis for the character of Robert in Vilhelm Moberg's books about the Swedish immigrants who settled in this area. A monument now stands near the site of this first log house.

Many immigrants from Sweden arrived in the early 1850s, among them Nels Johan Johnson, who was instrumental in the founding of this community. According to Anna Engquist's book, *Scandia Then and Now*, another early settler was Olof Olin who came from the province of Medelpad. Olin bought land comprising the town of Scandia. It was Olin who donated land for Elim Church and cemetery in 1860. He also owned the land where the building that houses the grocery store, veterinary clinic, and cafe now stands. The present City of Scandia includes a number of communities such as Vasa/Copas, and Otisville, now marked only by a cluster of homes or the memories of older citizens. For nearly a century, the Scandia area existed in near isolation from the social and cultural influences of the State of Minnesota. During the 1930s the Swedish language gradually gave way to the exclusive use of English in the local church services. Elim Lutheran Church, founded May 19, 1854, was the most significant force in the community. Outsiders found it difficult to see where the church ended and the community began.

The change from strictly rural to semi-rural living was brought about by many factors. Banking moved out of Scandia with the depression, and school consolidation saw the departure of the country schoolhouse. Mechanization of farming reduced the need for man-power and increased the size of farms. Better roads and state highways eliminated the need for the railroad station in Copas. The roads and the automobile brought Scandia's citizens to metro jobs and metro residents to Scandia for country living.

Note: This History section is based on the history section of the 1998 New Scandia Township Comprehensive Plan with updates.



*Girl Scouts at Camp Lakamaga, Big Marine Lake, 1931
From MN Historical Society Photograph Collection*

The history of Scandia's government begins in 1893 when New Scandia Township was organized from a part of Marine Township. A town board of three supervisors was elected to direct its affairs. Three members were appointed to the first Planning Commission in 1968. This was later increased to five members. The town clerk and the treasurer were elective offices until 1989 when, by a vote of the citizens, these positions became appointive. Local planning and development was controlled by town ordinances and a part-time building inspector until 1972, when Scandia adopted the Washington County zoning code by reference. All building permits were administered by the county until 1998 when the County required townships to provide their own building inspections. The County retained final authority in zoning and subdivision matters after review by the Township Planning Commission and Board.

The Town of New Scandia has prepared comprehensive land use plans since 1979, when the first plan was prepared for the area. The most recent plan was adopted on October 20, 1998. As a Township, the plan was required to be consistent with Washington County's land use plan, as well as the Systems Plans of the Metropolitan Council.

Incorporation as a City

As a Township, Scandia was vulnerable to annexation by surrounding cities and could not control land use to the extent desired. New Scandia Township began investigating the concept of incorporating as a city in 2005. A public meeting was held in 2005 to solicit public input, and the township submitted an application with the State Department of Administration to begin the incorporation process. The application was approved, and, as of January 1, 2007, New Scandia Township became the City of Scandia. The first meeting of the new City Council was held on January 2, 2007. This comprehensive land use plan is the first adopted by the City of Scandia.



Scandia Creamery, September 14th, 1894
From MN Historical Society Photograph Collection