







Steamboat bell brought to Marine from St. Louis in 1857, Marine General Store in background, photographer Bill Neuman

## 1 Marine on St. Croix

**MP35.4** (N45° 11.906', W092° 46.244')

Marine (as it is known locally) is a New England inspired village founded by entrepreneurial eastern lumbermen in the 1830s. In fact, 21st century Marine looks very much as it did in the 19th century and many of the Greek revival structures built by the area's lumbermen are still standing today, a testament to the New Englanders and Southerners who built them a century and a half ago. Marine was a major ferry crossing location on the St. Croix River for over a century. Without exaggeration, Marine's claims as birthplace of the State of Minnesota are shared only with Stillwater. A substantial portion of Marine is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and some is also designated a historic site by the State of Minnesota. In the late 1840s other settlers arrived in the Marine area from Ireland, Germany, England, and mainly Sweden. The first Swedish immigrants to this area were loggers, laborers, and farmers. During winters, many Swedes worked in the pine forests or sawmills to supplement their small farming incomes.

One Swedish immigrant, Sven Anderson, built a log cabin in 1852 about two miles from Marine. That cabin was moved to Judd Street in Marine for the 1938 centennial celebration and now sits along side the old Mill Pond that provided waterpower for the first commercial sawmill in Minnesota. That first Mill Site, located across the

street from the log cabin, has been declared a national historical site and is owned and managed by the Minnesota Historical Society. The restored log cabin reminds us of a bygone way of life and graphically illustrates some of the challenges faced by early immigrants, and is an inspiring example of the log building craft. Sven and his wife Stava raised three children in this cabin and it was their home until 1869. Their first son, Charles, was born May 12, 1858 — one day after Minnesota became a state. Sven is credited with bringing the first cattle to this area and as being one of the first wheat farmers. The Village Hall on Judd Street also contributes to the authentic historic feel of Marine, and is the oldest village hall in the state still being used for governmental purposes. The 1847 General Store is still in operation and the only store of its type in Marine. Just up the hill from city center, a tenth-of-a-mile west on Broadway Street, a small jog north on 5th Street will take you to the Stone House Museum (Marine's former meeting house and jail) which features crafts, photographs and articles of daily life, including a Swedish kitchen. The 1872 Stone House was built by Gustaf Carlson, a mason from Småland who came to Marine in 1854. The house, built of local sandstone, is an example of stone architecture used by early Swedish pioneers, and is a testament to the craft of Swedish stone masonry. Part of a block farther west on Broadway Street brings you to the stunning Christ Lutheran Church. Built in 1872, the Swedish church was dedicated on July 18, 1875 by the Reverend Eric Norelius, president of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North America. You will notice the fine bell tower that may be worth a wait to hear the carillon sound in mid-day.

*Ring Driving Directions to Hay Lake School Site: From MN Hwy 95 in Marine continue west one-half mile on Broadway Street then turn north on Co Hwy 4 (Ostrum Trail) for one mile as it winds through a corner of William O'Brien State Park and passes through a railroad crossing tunnel to Old Marine Trail. Take Old Marine Trail north for 2.5 miles (1.4 miles dirt, 1.1 miles asphalt) to the Hay Lake School and Erickson Log House Museum site.*



Plaque at Gammelgården, photographer Bill Neuman



Top photo: Lucia service, first Lutheran church in Minnesota 1856, Gammelgården  
Bottom photo: Hay Lake School, both photos by Bill Neuman

## 2 Hay Lake School and Erickson Log House Museum

(45° 13.890', W092° 49.198')

Hay Lake School, when it was first organized as part of rural school district #2 in 1855, held classes for several years in local homes. School classes were soon moved into the old Elim Lutheran Church building, then located at this Hay Lake site, and now part of the Gammelgården complex 1.5 miles north. The school continued to use the old church building until this brick school building was built in 1896. This brick building remained in use as a school until 1963 and became a National Register of Historic Places property in 1970.

The log house that is presently located on this site was originally constructed 1.5 miles from here in 1868 by Johannes Erickson and his thirteen-year old son Alfred. In 1904, Alfred Erickson constructed a new home and the old log home became at various times a granary, garage and playhouse. After more than a century in its original location, the Washington County Historical Society purchased the house and moved it to this present site in 1974. The Erickson Log House became a National Register of Historic Places property in 1976. The Hay Lake School, Log House, and the historic site itself, is only one-tenth mile south of the site of the first Swedish log home built in Minnesota. As such, the Hay Lake School served a central role in developing the community of Swedish immigrant families that located here starting in 1850.



Hay Lake Historic Corner, photographer Bill Neuman

## 3 Hay Lake Historic Corner

(N45° 14.040', W092° 49.233')

Located 0.1 mile north of the Hay Lake School and Erickson Log House, this Swedish Settler's Monument, a granite obelisk with inscribed names of early settlers, marks the site of the first Swedish log home built in Minnesota. The Monument is located at the intersection of Old Marine Trail and Olinda Trail (Co Rd 3) and the settlement dates from 1850, when three young men from Sweden—Carl A. Fernström, Oscar Roos, and August Sandahl—established a farm near Hay Lake. The trio stayed only a year, selling the farm in 1851 to another Swedish immigrant, Daniel Nilson. Other Swedes, many from Skåne and Värmland provinces, arrived during the early 1850s and settled in the area around Hay Lake and farther north into the present City of Scandia.

*Ring Driving Directions to Gammelgården Museum and Scandia: Continue north 1.2 miles on Olinda Trail (Co Rd 3) to the entrance to Gammelgården Museum. Scandia's city center and the Elim Church and old cemetery are less than a quarter mile farther north on Olinda Trail.*



## 4 Gammelgården Museum

(N45° 15.108', W092° 48.414')

Located just south of downtown Scandia on Co Rd 3 (Olinda Trail), this open-air museum is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the Swedish immigrant experience. Five historic buildings are located on this fully restored 11-acre Swedish homestead site. Included, is the 1856 Elim Church building (Gammelkyrkan), which is the oldest Lutheran church building in Minnesota. It was originally constructed at the Hay Lake site where it was used as both church and school. By 1861 the congregation had outgrown its capacity and built a new church in New Scandia Township (present Scandia). The Präst Hus was built on the Gammelgården site in 1868 and is the oldest existing parsonage in Minnesota. The museum, which is open seasonally, hosts tours, events, and Swedish heritage classes. If your interests turn to shopping, wonderful choices in Scandinavian craft items are available in the Butik.



Top photo: Präst Hus, oldest existing parsonage in Minnesota, Gammelgården  
Bottom photo: Welcome House and Butik, Gammelgården, both photos by Bill Neuman

## 5 Scandia

*Sister City: Lessebo Kommun, Sweden*

(N45° 15.197', W092° 48.380')

Scandia is best known as the home of the first Swedish settlers in Minnesota. After many years as New Scandia Township, Scandia became a city on January 1, 2007. Scandia retains a rural character and continues to pay homage to its Swedish heritage, including the placement of Dala Horses throughout the older parts of the City. At the city center, the current 1930 Elim Lutheran Church is the fourth church (first was built in 1861) that has stood across the street from the 1861 Elim Cemetery—its three predecessors succumbed to fires and a tornado over a 60-year period.

*Ring Driving Directions to Karl Oskar House (Nya Duvemåla): From the intersection of MN Hwy 97 and Olinda Trail in Scandia, continue north on Olinda Trail (Co Rd 3) 2.9 miles to the Chisago/Washington County line where the road becomes Chisago Co Hwy 25, continue 5.5 miles on Co Hwy 25, then east on Glader Blvd 0.8 miles to the entrance to Ki Chi Saga Park where the Karl Oskar House is located. Glader Cemetery is located on the shore of South Center Lake about a tenth of a mile farther east on Glader Blvd.*



Karl Oskar House, Lindström, photographer Bill Neuman

## 6 Karl Oskar House and 7 Glader Cemetery

(N45° 22.139', W092° 49.464')

(N45° 22.248', W092° 49.270')

The Karl Oskar House, originally constructed about a mile from the present site by the Carl and Lena Kajsa Linn family in the 1860s, was moved to Ki Chi Saga Park in 1995 through efforts of the Lindström Historical Society. King Carl Gustaf XVI and Queen Silvia of Sweden visited the site with much fanfare in 1996. Swedish author Vilhelm Moberg used this house as a fictional model in his popular novels about Swedish pioneers in the Chisago Lakes area after he visited the area for research and inspiration. This is the house he envisioned his characters Karl Oskar Nilsson and Kristina building for their final years. Glader Cemetery sits below the Karl Oskar House on a knoll overlooking South Center Lake and is the oldest Lutheran cemetery in Minnesota (est. 1855). Glader Cemetery is the cemetery chosen by Moberg as the final resting place for his fictional characters Karl Oskar and Kristina Nilsson.

*Ring Driving Directions to Moody Round Barn (side trip): From Glader Cemetery retrace your route 0.9 miles west on Glader Blvd, then south 1.5 miles on Co Hwy 25 (Olinda Trail) to Co Hwy 23, proceed west 3.1 miles on Co Hwy 23 to Co Hwy 24, then continue south 0.8 miles still on Co Hwy 23 to Lofton Ave (Co Hwy 91), then proceed 2.4 miles, slightly east and south, on Lofton Ave to Moody Round Barn.*





Moody Round Barn, photographer Bill Neuman

### 8 Moody Round Barn

(N45° 18.066', W92° 52.239')

The National Register-listed Moody barn is the last remaining round barn in Chisago County. It was constructed in 1915 by Charles Moody. His parents, Swedish immigrants Elof and Eva Modig homesteaded the farm in 1871. The barn and its associated 1920 house were saved from demolition and are now part of a 25-acre park. Tours of the barn can be arranged through the Chisago County Historical Society.

*Ring Driving Directions to Chisago City and Vilhelm Moberg Park:* From Moody Round Barn, drive north 2.4 miles on Lofton Ave (Co Hwy 91), north 0.8 miles on Co Hwy 23 which flows into Co Hwy 24 - continue north 1.9 miles to Chisago City, then west one block on Railroad Ave, north on Isabel St and park immediately at Vilhelm Moberg Park.



Glader Cemetery, see number 7, photographer Bill Neuman



Vilhelm Moberg Sculpture, Chisago City, photographer Bill Neuman

### 9 Chisago City

*Sister City: Algutsboda, Sweden*  
(N45° 22.346', W092° 53.471')

The original Old Towne portion of Chisago City was located on an isthmus between Green and Chisago lakes. However, when the railroad was constructed in 1880 its route went to the north of the lakes and so the community formed New Village closer to the railroad (now US Hwy 8). The Swedish Ring Historic Backway travels the Old Towne Rd (Co Hwy 24) past some of the early homes of the community and the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Zion). During the summer of 1948, author Vilhelm Moberg stayed in Chisago City and used a bicycle to travel throughout the Chisago Lakes area gathering information for his series The Emigrants. A statue of Moberg with his bicycle is located on the south side of US Hwy 8 in the city's Vilhelm Moberg Park. The park also contains a wooden caboose that pays tribute to the era when the railroad brought visitors and tourists on holiday from the Twin Cities to this lakeside community.

*Ring Driving Directions to Lindström and the Karl Oskar and Kristina Nilsson Statue:* From the Moberg Statue at the intersection of Isabel St and US Hwy 8, proceed easterly 2.6 miles on US Hwy 8 to Lindström where you will arrive at the Karl Oskar and Kristina Nilsson statue, the Moberg desk in the Chisago County Press building, full-size bronze statues commemorating three 19th century Swedish immigrants, and the Lindström Information Center—all on the same corner. If interested in taking a side trip to Allemansrätt Park, proceed east on US Hwy 8 from this sculpture corner 0.4 miles to Olinda Trail, then follow Olinda Trail North 0.9 miles to the entrance to Allemansrätt wilderness park.



### 10 Lindström

*Sister City: Tingsryd, Sweden*  
(N45° 23.397', W092° 51.015')

Dala horse, Lindström, photographer Bill Neuman

Settled in 1853 by Swedish immigrant Daniel Lindström, the City of Lindström embraces its heritage from its iconic Swedish coffee pot water tower to its annual Karl Oskar Days celebration. Karl Oskar and Kristina Nilsson, the main characters of Vilhelm Moberg's *The Emigrants* series, are further memorialized in a statue at the west end of town, where the desk Moberg used to write the saga is also located in the nearby *Chisago County Press* building. Across the street from the Karl and Kristina statue, fictional characters give way to actual 19th century Swedish immigrants, depicted in three life-size bronze statues commemorating Eric Norelius, Joris-Pelle Per Anderson and Daniel Lindström—each of whom arrived in the Chisago Lakes area between 1851 and 1853 and went on to make significant contributions to the future city of Lindström and the State of Minnesota. Another bronze installation at the County Library 1.2 miles west on US Hwy 8 is by the same sculptor who created these and the Moberg statue in Chisago City, and celebrates Swedish mid-wife Nelly Gustafson.

The heritage of "America's Little Sweden" is presented at the Gustaf Anderson House (13045 Lake Blvd/Hwy 8), which is managed by the Chisago County Historical Society. The Society's History Center is also located in a Queen Anne-style home in Lindström (13112 3rd Ave N). An impressive and important part of the Swedish immigrant story includes descriptions of the physical features of the new land they first settled, but better than describing the new land is a chance to see what it was like for your self. For an opportunity to walk or picnic in a landscape unchanged since 19th century Swedish immigrants first encountered it, and to physically experience for an hour or two what an authentic immigrant 'arrival' experience might have been like, set aside time for a side trip to Lindström's Allemansrätt Park, a Wilderness and Swedish Heritage Park. As one might expect development surrounds the park, but once inside the park it consists of several miles of trails on more than 90 acres of an original Swedish immigrant homestead site, an old cabin, and a private lake. With over a mile of shoreline around Bull Lake, the park includes lake overlooks, stands of alder, birch and oak, glacial eskers, fens and over 100 species of birds—this Park preserves a piece of never plowed wilderness that greeted the earliest Swedish immigrants, a landscape virtually unchanged since the middle of the 19th century.

*Ring Driving Directions to Center City and Summit Avenue National Historic District (1882-1910 homes) and Chisago Lakes Lutheran Church (artifacts and tapestry):* From the Swedish immigrant statues and the Karl Oskar and Kristina Nilsson statue continue east 1.6 miles on US Hwy 8, then north on Co Hwy 9 (Summit Ave) through the heart of the Center City Historic District to the Church, a distance of 0.4 miles.



Chisago Lake Evangelical Lutheran Church, Center City in 1894, Minnesota Historical Society

### 11 Center City

*Sister City: Hassela, Sweden*  
(N45° 23.421', W092° 49.095')

The narrows between North Center and South Center lakes is the picturesque setting for Center City, the county seat of Chisago County. Along Center City's Summit Ave and overlooking North Center Lake, a concentration of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century homes and the Chisago Lake Evangelical Lutheran Church form a National Register Historic District. The first congregation was organized in 1854 and the church's archives may be viewed in the church's Green Room along with a Memorial Tapestry woven from Swedish yarns that illustrates the history of the church and community, beginning with the earliest Swedish immigrants. Tours can be arranged through the church office. The city's lakes have always drawn vacationers and outdoor enthusiasts. Winter months find the bays filled with icehouses. While the railroad that once brought visitors to this lakeside community is now gone, the town's former depot, now a restaurant, still stands on the north side of US Hwy 8.

*Ring Driving Directions to Almeland:* From the church continue north on Co Hwy 9 (around the immediate sharp turn east) approximately a quarter mile to where Co Hwy 9 turns sharply north, continue 0.5 miles on Co Hwy 9 to Co Hwy 12 (Park Trail), follow Co Hwy 12 through the agricultural countryside 6.7 miles to Almeland. You have arrived when you reach the first and only street intersection on Park Trail in Almeland, one block north of MN Hwy 95 at Maple Lane.



### 12 Almeland

(N45° 29.928', W092° 46.936')

Antique threshing machine in operation, Almeland Threshing Show, Almeland, photographer Bill Neuman

Meaning "elm grove" in Swedish, Almeland is an unincorporated village in Amador Township. When Swedish immigrants first arrived all of Amador Township was still a wilderness. By 1900, Almeland and the surrounding area in Amador Township had been transformed into a productive agricultural community that came to be known as another southern Swedish Province with almost 100% of the residents being directly from Swedish stock. Everyone spoke Swedish, albeit with a variety of dialects. In the early 1900s Pastor Larson preached strictly in Swedish. The walls inside the church were decorated with Swedish sayings and Swedish was taught in schools with Swedish textbooks until 1916.

After 1916 Swedish was not allowed inside the schools but was for many years spoken in the schoolyard. The Almeland "Swede School" was sponsored by the church and operated from the 1890s to about 1935. At least as late as the mid-1970s Swedish was spoken or at least understood by most residents in Almeland and Amador Township. While the old language survives today in the community, it is spoken with less frequency and by an ever-aging population.

As you approach Almeland along the Swedish Ring from the south, the Park Trail and Maple Lane intersection places you near the heart of the old village—the Country Corner Store to the west, the 1887 Immanuel Lutheran Church and cemetery to the east. In order to provide assistance in ancestry research, Immanuel Church and the Chisago County Historical Society have photographed names and dates on cemetery headstones and monuments, many written in Swedish, and compared inscriptions with church records, printed memorials and obituaries to help families trace ancestors.

The community's interest in its Swedish heritage is also evidenced in the Amador Heritage Center, housed in a former two-room brick schoolhouse built in 1910. The museum is located one-tenth mile east of Park Trail on Maple Lane. Several Swedish log farmstead structures are reconstructed on the site, including the 1869 Shoberg dwelling, an 1850 era log cabin from the Ringstrom farm, a Johnson family log granary, and another 1880 vintage log cabin. The Amador Heritage Center is open seasonally and by appointment (inquire in advance).

The fertile soils of Amador Township are well known now but in some cases 19th century emigrants, new to the area, were first sold virtually worthless farmland. One such place was the Pine Barrens across the St. Croix River from Amador. Many Swedish families tried farming the sugar sand but found it extremely unproductive. Even the hard working Swedes could not make a go of it and one by one they deserted their homesteads, many for the more fertile soils of Amador Township. Apart from the great difficulties faced by Swedish immigrants who had already crossed the Atlantic and made their way across America by steamboat, wagon and train—this additional challenge of pulling up stakes again and starting over proves something about the mettle and determination it took for these Swedish families to succeed as farmers.

To celebrate the agricultural heritage of Amador, the Almeland Threshing Show is a multi-day tribute to the agricultural history and pioneer heritage of the region held the second weekend of August each year. The 100-acre site for the Threshing Show is located 2.6 miles southeast of Almeland on MN Hwy 95. Numerous historic structures on the grounds, including the 1876 Chisago County Courthouse, are open during the annual pilgrimage, which draws thousands of people who are interested in old tractors and farm equipment, steam engines, folk arts, spinning, weaving, carving, the on-site mercantile store, blacksmith shop, log barn and largest flea market in the area.

*Ring Driving Directions to Taylors Falls:* From the Park Trail and Maple Lane intersection in Almeland head northeasterly 0.5 miles on Co Hwy 12 to Co Hwy 16 (Wild Mountain Road), at which point the Swedish Ring Historic Backway rejoins the St. Croix Scenic Byway at MP 64.2 - follow Wild Mountain Road (Co Hwy 16) southerly for 11 miles until you reach Taylors Falls.



Top photo: Almeland Threshing Show, Almeland, photographer Bill Neuman  
Bottom photo: Threshing Crew, Minnesota Historical Society







### 13 Taylors Falls, Minnesota

**MP 53.0** (N45° 24.086', W092° 39.135')

The first Swedish settler to come to the small frontier community of Taylors Falls arrived in 1850 but did not stay. Erik Nordberg, instead, explored the unsettled, heavily wooded area to the west, hoping to find a site suitable for a Swedish colony. Impressed with the land around Chisago Lakes, he wrote Per Anderson, leader of a Swedish immigrant group in Moline, Illinois recommending the area and enclosing a crude map and directions on how to get there. In response, as soon as the Mississippi was free of ice in the spring of 1851, Anderson, Per Berg, and Peter Wicklund, with their families and several hired men, began the steamboat journey up river. The Anders Swenson family, a Swedish family from New Orleans, joined them during the journey. The steamboat took the four families as far as Stillwater where they built two flatboats, which they poled into Taylors Falls on June 24, 1851. While the women and children stayed in the small settlement, the men hacked a trail west to what is now the Center City area.

This pattern of Swedish immigrant families arriving at Taylors Falls and moving inland away from the river, and away from the town, would repeat through the 1850s and in successive waves of Swedish immigration. In his "History of the Swedish-Lutheran Churches in America" Eric Norelius, who came to Chisago Lake in 1854, commented that in Taylors Falls there were at the time very few horses and no Swedish families—but a short distance from the city there were numerous Swedish families carving homesteads out of the forest. Eventually a road to the Chisago Lakes area was blazed. The road was a very difficult one and could not be described as a normal transportation corridor in any respect.

In fact, the road seemed to wander through the woods, turning left, then right, more in response to obstacles presented by the terrain than setting a straight line of travel. Early immigrants who did venture to the city for supplies were forced to make their way across the rough road and carry the burden on their backs or in their hands. The nine or ten miles that separated Taylors Falls from Swedish homesteads in the Chisago Lakes area could not have made for an easy shopping trip.

Eric Nordberg, who had led the first Swedish immigrant families to the Chisago Lakes area in early summer of 1851, went on to direct a stream of Swedish immigrants to Minnesota. In his letters from America and in newspaper correspondence he called the attention of his countrymen to the fertile soil that was awaiting willing hands to cultivate it and reap the abundant rewards for their labor. It is said that he received fifty dollars from the people of Taylors Falls for his efforts to bring Swedish settlers to Chisago County, and he certainly made good his promise.

There were many others who encouraged Swedish immigration to the wilderness communities of the St. Croix River valley, but however great the promises and how ever great the hope, the journey itself took many lives. Crossing the Atlantic could take nearly three months, sometimes with up to four or five hundred immigrants packed into the vessel—landing in New York they might have faced sailing across the Great Lakes to Chicago, boarding a train to reach the railhead on the Mississippi at Rock Island, Illinois, boarding a steamer bound for Stillwater, and boarding (or building) another boat to bring them upriver to Taylors Falls. And then there was cholera, which nearly brought immigration to a standstill for a time—Gustaf Hultquist, who made his way to Chicago in 1853 and then to the Chisago Lakes area in 1855, had a terrible ocean voyage—of 219 passengers 64 died from cholera.

Once immigrant families had made it to the St. Croix River valley, the first winter or two were the hardest—building a log shelter, clearing the land of trees, living on what they could produce by planting wheat, rye or potatoes between the huge stumps of trees, and finding any work they could to generate cash. Yet a continuous stream of Swedish immigrant families came to the St. Croix River valley and to communities throughout Minnesota—they heard about the place by word of mouth, by letter, and by newspaper articles. The result? In 1870 twenty thousand people spoke Swedish in Minnesota. In 1900, one hundred twenty thousand, one hundred sixty-four thousand in 1940 and, as the old generation began to die, seventy thousand in 1948. The arrival stories of Swedish immigrant families are stories of valor and hardship. Whether they disembarked at Marine, Franconia or Taylors Falls, their stories speak to a steadfast and unwavering optimism that a new life in America would be worth the risk.

The rewards of 19th century risk taking for modern communities along the Swedish Ring Historic Backway are many—an unspoken Swedish work and craft ethic and Swedish heritage, customs and traditions that have an appeal to people of all ethnic backgrounds.

**Ring Driving Directions to Franconia:** As you leave Taylors Falls, continue 3.2 miles west on US Hwy 8 to MN Hwy 95, then south 0.5 miles to Franconia Trail, then east on Franconia Trail 0.5 miles to the stop sign, turn east across the small bridge at Lawrence Creek 0.1 miles to the Franconia pioneer monument on your left (Placed in 1947 by the Franconia Old Settlers Association "In memory of the rugged pioneers, who by hard work and privations of frontier life, hewed from the wilderness this land of plenty. . ."), from the pioneer monument follow Summer Street east a quarter mile to reach the location of the historic steamboat landing on the St. Croix National Scenic River.



Top photo: The St. Croix Dalles adjoining Wisconsin and Minnesota Interstate State Parks and the cities of Taylors Falls and St. Croix Falls, photographer Bill Neuman

Bottom photo: Bateaux, boat used by lumberjacks, on the St. Croix River near Taylors Falls, circa 1899, photographer John Runk, Minnesota Historical Society

### 14 Franconia

(N45° 22.533', W092° 42.243')

In 1852, Ansel Smith made a claim near the St. Croix River and platted the village of Franconia, clearing away the worst of the timber with his own hands. He was the first settler in the village, raised the first crops, operated the first store, and was the first postmaster (1854). On February 24, 1858, he recorded his plat for Franconia Township, became one of the first supervisors, and, more than 150 years later, his plat development is still the largest on record in the township. With a partner he built the first sawmill in the village in 1854 and helped logging and lumber to become the main business of the town. Smith also went on to represent his district in the fifth, sixth, and seventh legislatures following Minnesota statehood in 1858.

Smith had gotten Franconia off to an energetic start and the village soon developed into a thriving community. Farmers worked the soil of the highlands while industry boomed along the river. In this time Franconia drew settlers of Scottish, English, Irish, German and Swedish descent. A flourmill was started and a steamboat building business established. A hotel, saloon and various stores and shops were built to serve the needs of the townspeople and area farmers. One important need filled by business enterprises was to provide winter work for Swedish farmers who needed a cash income to purchase needed supplies. Many Swedes found work logging the great pine forests or hiring on in the sawmills.

A land boom in 1854 had resulted in the sale of much of the land in Chisago County. Migrants from throughout eastern America made most of the original land purchases, hoping to profit by reselling the land to immigrant settlers. A majority of Swedish immigrants, who would eventually dominate the county, arrived too late to take advantage of the public land sales. Only in the early settlement area around Chisago Lake does one find land that was pre-empted by Swedes.

Another form of speculation was town platting. Town sites were enthusiastically surveyed and promoted all over the county, although many of them never got beyond the planning stage. Anticipation of a railroad line connecting St. Paul and Duluth spurred many such projects—some only to be dashed when the railroad located elsewhere. Other projected towns were victims of the panic of 1857 that ruined many of the Chisago speculators. Following the panic, confidence was restored and property began to be sold at more realistic prices. During the period from 1858 through 1867, settlers moved into the county in a more or less steady stream of about 100 new arrivals a year. During this period settlement spread westward from Taylors Falls and Franconia village and eastward from the Chisago Lake area, bridging the gap between the lakes and the river landings.

The flow of settlers into the county swelled greatly from 1868 to 1872, due largely to a considerable upsurge in Swedish immigration resulting from agricultural failures in Sweden during 1868 and 1869. Any remaining land west of Franconia and east of Chisago Lake was quickly taken up. Overflow spilled across the frontier fringes into Amador and Sunrise Townships in the northern part of the county. Even more instrumental in opening up the sparsely settled northern portion of the county was construction of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad along the west side of the county at the end of the 1860s. During this period railroad lands were sold to Swedish immigrants, and the easy transportation to remote areas around newly formed market towns, made possible by the railroad, attracted an increasing share

of Swedish immigrants. The great influx of 1868-72 was followed by six years of relative stability. Then, from 1880 until about 1883, the county was inundated by a second great surge of newly arrived Swedish immigrants which was equal to, if not greater than, its predecessor. The phenomenon was once again related to an agricultural crisis in Sweden, this time during 1881 and 1882.

These conditions made Franconia important as a place of first arrival for hundreds of Swedish immigrant families. For a period of time Franconia had even become the major town site north of Marine on the river. During its most prosperous years in the 1870s, Franconia's population reached five hundred. However, in 1878 the rail-road company, which had spurred growth in the remote northern part of the county, laid tracks and built a station a mile west of Franconia on top of the river bluff. This changed the river transportation patterns and seriously affected the economy of Franconia. Many businesses and private residences were taken down and moved to towns closer to the rail lines. The sawmill continued to operate, however, until the end of the century when all the timber had been cut. After 1900 the population of Franconia dropped significantly, and many of the houses were either moved out of the village or abandoned as year round residences.

Throughout the Washington and Chisago County regions that were accessible by boat, Swedish immigrants had not really preferred to settle in the towns. In 1880 only 13.5 per cent of the Swedish population lived in urban places. Swedes preferred a rural agricultural landscape and way of life. In contrast, 49 per cent of the British and Irish population dwelt in the towns. They were the dominant population in all of the major Chisago County towns except Rush City, where Germans were dominant. The Norwegians were also strongly inclined toward urban living. Another striking aspect of the immigrant ethnic pattern in Chisago County was the very marked segregation that existed between ethnic groups—not just between one or two ethnic groups, but between all of the groups. For Swedish communities in

late 19th century there is good reason to believe they were organized around the local Swedish-American church. The church was the only spot in the county that could truly be called an exclusively Swedish place of social interaction. Other central places, such as the town hall or the local market town, did not serve an exclusively Swedish population—they were places of cross-cultural contact. In a trend immigrants may have found different from what they experienced in their native Sweden, Swedish-American churches were in fact 'meeting houses,' and the phrase 'go to meeting' took on special relevance and meaning for Swedish immigrants, apart from attending services or becoming members of a congregation.

#### Ring Driving Directions return to Scandia:

From the Franconia landing return to MN Hwy 95 the same way you entered the village, a distance of 0.8 miles, then take MN Hwy 95 south 9.8 miles to MN Hwy 97, finally, continue 1.6 miles west on MN Hwy 97 to Scandia, site of the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota. This completes your drive around the Swedish Ring Historic Backway.

Photo below: St. Croix River bluffs in autumn, photographer Bill Neuman



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To the best of our knowledge every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this *Historical Travel Guide* and any errors or omissions are not intentional.

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