



WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA

Explore | Gather | Play



RAISE OUR HISTORIC
WATER TOWER BARN!

Honor the past. Shape the future.

Water once connected Scandia to the wider world. First via the river, then steam engines and steamboats with water tanks stocked by a network of windmill-powered pumps. In the heart of Scandia, another wind-powered pump helped the community thrive, delivering clean water to businesses, homes, and farms without wells.

Scandia's iconic Water Tower Barn — reimagined today as a place to explore, gather, and play — can again help Scandia flourish, drawing locals and visitors to the center of town. Partner with us to rebuild the historic Water Tower Barn Tankhouse Museum, amphitheater, wetland trails, and a children's Water Garden. Let's bring this vision to life.

Embrace the Tales

WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA will provide a place to celebrate and share Scandia's rich history, recognizing its unique position as home of the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota. Museum displays will tell stories of Native American settlements, immigrant agrarian farming, and Scandia's successful transition to a small center of commerce.

The restored Water Tower Barn will showcase 19th Century craftsmanship, including hand-hewn logs in a post-and-beam structure and an operational tankhouse. An elevated wooden water tank will occupy the tower, and a windmill will sit atop the barn's distinctive cupola. Stepping back in time, visitors will enjoy fresh, cold water from a historic hand pump.



Re-Energize the American Dream

Scandia has tales to tell—from its first Dakota and Ojibwe people to stories of inspired immigrants looking for better lives. How can their rich sagas educate Minnesotans about our Native and immigrant roots and the similar experiences our ancestors share with today's new Americans? We believe our common backgrounds can help create cohesive community in divided times – and simultaneously inspire and bring hope to new immigrants seeking the American dream.

Originally part of Marine Mills, Scandia is one of several communities in the St. Croix River Valley that formed as new settlers – primarily Swedish – made their way to communities like Marine Mills, Lindstrom, Taylors Falls, and Chisago Lakes. Drawn to the area's abundant lumber, river traffic, and farmland, they populated the area up and down the St. Croix River. The Water Tower Barn represents the success of the next generations as they opened businesses like the Scandia Mercantile, a cooperative creamery, banks, a feed mill, and a ladies' hat shop in the township of New Scandia. SHA aims to collaborate with nearby communities to develop regional tourism around the story of Swedish immigration – while simultaneously welcoming new immigrants to share their stories.



Celebrate the Arts

In the St. Croix River Valley, we are surrounded by an amazing arts community. An outdoor amphitheater will bring residents and visitors together for local and regional theater productions, music, film, and school concerts. The amphitheater will also be a perfect summer venue for youth theater classes; for local elementary teachers to conduct outdoor classroom activities; and for school band, jazz, and choir concerts. The Water Tower Barn will feature an indoor stage, hosting up to 80 people, while the amphitheater will seat up to 260.

Nurture and Explore Our Rural Beauty

WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA is perfectly situated on Olinda Trail just south of City Hall and across from the world-class Gammelgården Museum. The site is surrounded by three healthy wetlands and has a beautifully forested backdrop. We are collaborating with the City of Scandia to secure grant funds for a wetland trail, overlook, and rain gardens.

The water focus will provide an opportunity to educate visitors via interpretive displays on the importance of our wetlands, lakes, streams, aquifers, and the St. Croix River – all vital features of our beautiful city. Programming plans include summer day camps focused on arts and environment.



The above images are representative and not the final design.

Come Out to Play

A children's water garden will be a favorite gathering spot for families. We anticipate that campers at William O'Brien State Park will bike to the Water Garden along the future Gateway Trail extension connecting the park to Scandia's Village Center. An outdoor summer café alongside the Water Garden and wetland overlook will feature coffee, snacks, and casual Swedish fare.



The Center will feature a summer Water Garden for kids. (Image is representative and not the actual design.)

Relish Collaborative Engagements

Scandia is blessed with a wonderful cultural gem – the acclaimed Gammelgården Museum. **WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA** will neighbor the museum, and the two venues plan to hold joint events and create synergistic attractions. Partnership has already begun with the Scandia History Series and our Progressive Dinner event. Additionally, we are focused on building partnerships to bring theater, art classes, and music performances to Scandia from surrounding communities.



Why Now?

You might be asking yourself, "Why is this important now? What is the urgency?" For many reasons, now is the time.

Project Momentum

WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA has gained community, city, and state support, and project success hinges on continued enthusiasm. Local residents have strongly indicated their desire to maintain Scandia's rural character, enhance small-town charm, and preserve history – all of which are elements of our project. We received a unanimous City Council vote to partner on the project, as well as support from the Park & Recreation Committee. The City agreed to lease the land to SHA for \$1/year for 100 years. **WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA** is clearly aligned with the City's long-range plans, and continued momentum is critical to meet our fundraising deadline with the City and State.

Viable Barn Materials

We have an opportunity to save an iconic structure – the Water Tower Barn. The historic barn was painstakingly dismantled in 2014 to allow for future restoration. With a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society, SHA researched the "history, engineering, and distinctive design" of the tank, pump, and windmill in order to accurately recreate a working tankhouse. We must act soon while the stored original barn materials remain viable.

Attracting and Serving Young Families

WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA will attract new families to Scandia by offering family-friendly programming that serves the community's needs. Scandia Elementary School is increasingly serving students from expanded boundaries rather than Scandia itself. Attracting young families will help ensure the future viability of our treasured school.

Telling the Native American Story

Interest has been growing locally in gaining a fuller understanding of our region's history. Prior to the arrival of the first Swedish immigrants, Scandia was home to Dakota and Ojibwe Nations. Guided by a Native American research consultant, SHA aims to celebrate and raise awareness of the culture of Indigenous Peoples from the St. Croix River Valley.

Shared Immigrant Experiences

Telling Scandia's immigrant story and demonstrating the value that immigrants bring to society is more relevant and compelling than ever before. All immigrants come to America with their own version of a similar tale. We hope to encourage immigrants from all nations to visit and share experiences. Exploring our shared stories will emphasize our similarities and re-energize the American Dream.

WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA is a project of Scandia Heritage Alliance, a 501c3 charitable organization, in coordination with the City of Scandia. Join us in our mission to preserve and celebrate Scandia's rich history, culture, arts and rural character.



The Challenge Is On!

The Minnesota Legislature dedicated \$2.2 million in 2023 for **WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA** – a Challenge Grant that covers roughly half of project costs. Scandia Heritage Alliance must raise the remaining funds needed to build the project before the state will award its grant – and we have limited time to do so.

We invite you to partner in rebuilding the iconic Water Tower Barn and create a special space in Scandia to explore, gather, and play. Your significant contribution will leave a legacy for our children and grandchildren to enjoy for decades to come.

We are well on our way in fundraising. In addition to the \$2.2 million from the State Legislature, we have secured nearly a million dollars in grant funds, pledges, donated barn material, land, and pro-bono project work. Call Susan at 651-233-0267 if you would like a current progress report.

Thank you for supporting this important project!



Our Mission:

To preserve and celebrate Scandia's rich history, culture, arts, and rural character.

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Wind and Water: Reconstructing the History of Scandia's Tower Barn

When Frank Lake built a barn just behind his Farmers Store in Scandia, it was not simply to stable his delivery horses. He added a windmill to pull water from deep underground and an elevated water tankhouse. Wooden pipes supplied his business, home and neighbors with fresh water. A horse-drawn wagon delivered water to outlying homes and farms. Scandia businesses flourished.

Lake also sold the famous Aermotor windmill, which had taken the 1893 Chicago World's Fair by storm, soon dotting the Midwest landscape and transforming life on small family farms. While crucial, the age of the windmill was relatively brief. By the 1930s, rural electrification offered a modern alternative for pumping water. But windmills are more than just a symbol of a bygone era. They represent a spark of human ingenuity that employed wind and water to make an entire way of life possible. Such is the deeper story of Scandia's Water Tower Barn, the last structure of its kind in Minnesota.

Lake's windmill was gone by 1940, but water still flows from the barn's well to local customers. When it appeared that the barn itself might be demolished, Scandia citizens disassembled and stored it in hopes of rebuilding it with a new purpose and home.



QUESTIONS?
Call Susan Rodsjo
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