

The Swedish Community at Eriksdale, Manitoba (Nord School 1909-1965)



The Swedes who moved to the central Interlake in the early 1900s came primarily from northern Sweden, often from the Province of Jamtland. The early settlers walked from Oak Point, the last train stop, until the rails reached Eriksdale in 1910. The hamlet of Eriksdale was named after Jonas Erikson, believed to be the first white settler in the area. However, without plan, a group of Swedes, some related, some not, settled in the same area north of the town and built Nord School, where most of the early students spoke Swedish, with anglophone teachers. The School served as a community centre, hosting dances, whist drives, Christmas concerts, Halloween parties, and the June closing picnic.

Many of the settlers had not been farmers in Sweden, and much of the land was not suitable for growing crops. As a result, mixed farming or dairy/beef herds dominated; money to acquire livestock was earned through trapping, ice fishing, logging, surveying and construction. Some decided farming was not for them, and left for city life or other more promising locations

The Vasa Lodge was established in 1918, and rotated between Nord School, and neighbouring Nyland School, which also served a significant Swedish community on the east side of Highway 6. At its most robust, the Lodge had 150 members; when it ended, there were 3.

For a thorough record, please see George J Houser's "The Swedish Community at Eriksdale, Manitoba," published in 1976 by the National Museum of Canada, also available at https://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3Amanitobia_books by entering the title in the grey search box.