



Sciota Township is situated in the southern part of Dakota County, containing fifteen sections of land. It is one of the smallest townships in the County, bounded on the north by Castle Rock Township, on the east by the Randolph Township and Goodhue County, on the south by Rice County and on the west by Waterford Township.

At a meeting of the County Commissioners April 6, 1858, Sciota Township was established, including thirty sections of land along the southern border of Dakota County. Apparently, residents of both halves of the township were unhappy with the action taken by the commissioners on April 6. Thus, at another meeting April 20, 1858, the western half of the previously designated township was separated from Sciota and named Waterford, leaving the two townships with fifteen sections each.

Charles Lewis, Sr. was interested in establishing a village, selecting a town site in 1854 with ground surveyed and a town laid out in 1855. The town was named Lewiston, after its founder. In 1856, a bridge was built across the Cannon River and a small mill was built by S.N. Casey. In the town, a hotel was constructed by C.T. Collins, with shops and private residences added. In 1856 Jacob Hawkins started a blacksmith shop. Also, Henry Stone put up a blacksmith shop, but Hawkins later bought this and it continued until 1865 when he sold out.

A "three-month's" school was started in a carriage shop in 1857, with thirty pupils. The teacher of the first school in Lewiston was Mrs. Thomas Wilson. Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Wilson were married in the summer of 1856 in New York, and purchased a claim in Sciota Township in the fall of 1857. In 1860, a school was built, 18 by 30 feet in size. It was moved across the river in 1879, where it is still in use as the Sciota Town Hall. A post office was opened on June 26, 1856, with Stephen N. Casey as the postmaster. The post office was discontinued January 3, 1871, when mail for Lewiston was routed through Hastings. It appeared that the town was destined to grow and prosper. However, those who owned lots of property in the village asked too high prices, thus discouraging further expansion. There was a combination of circumstances that prevented the village from continuing to grow. Gradually, buildings and shops were moved away or torn down, so that in a few years there was little or nothing to show that a village had ever existed.

The Cannon River flows through the township in a northeasterly direction. Chub Creek also flows through the Township. The only timber when the Township was registered was on a small island in the Cannon River. The bridge was later washed away by a spring flood.

Charles Lewis, Sr. had two sons Zach and Charles, Jr. They both had claims for a while, but sold and moved to other parts of the country. Edward Hone made a claim in 1854. Those people coming later, previous to 1856, were George Daniels, J.C. and J.H. Couper, A.J. Kibbe, Alexander and James McCullouch, E.B. and Ebenezer Slocum, C.B. Bullock, James Law, Mr. Woodworth and sons Hamilton and Nelson, C.T. Collins, John Hoople and son David, G.C. and Mark Chamberlain, Deacon Roland Weeks, Walter Hunter and Frederick Kleeberger. Information on what these people did can be found in the Dakota County Historical Museum.

John M. Scott was Township Clerk for 13 years. The first child born in the township was a son of J.C. Cooper. He was born Oct. 6, 1855 and died the next day. The second birth in the township was that of a daughter to A.J. Kibbe and wife. She was born April 26, 1856. On account of the death of its mother shortly after, the child was sent to its grandmother near Pecatonica, Illinois, where it died in the following October. Mrs. Kibbe was the first grown person that died in the township. She was buried in the cemetery on the farm, which Mr. Kibbe set apart for that purpose. The first marriage in the township was that of Zach Lewis and Miss Simons, date unknown.

The first town meeting was held on May 11, 1858 at the Lewiston Hotel. The people at the first township meeting were the following: E.B. Higgins, Henry Hoople, M.A. Chamberlain, Alex McCullouch, C.B. Bullock, W.C. Marshall, J.B. Hawkins, Joseph Sidell, B.M. Knight, E.B. Wilson and Zach Lewis. Historical records identify who served the different offices of the township from 1859 to the present time. The first religious services in the township were held for the funeral of a child in 1855. This was conducted by Rev. Charles Curran of Randolph. He also had the funeral for an adult in 1856. In the spring of 1856, a Congregational Society was formed by the direction of Rev. J.R. Barnes at Lewiston. There were about twelve people in attendance. The meetings were held in a store, until the schoolhouse was built in 1860. A circuit was started by Rev. Iliscock, a Methodist. Each denomination met every other week until 1866, when the Congregationalist moved to Granville Mills in Goodhue County.

A union Sabbath-school was organized by both churches. At first, about thirty scholars attended, but later increased to about fifty. The Methodist branch of the school became attached to Haven Chapel. This chapel was built in the summer of 1874, at a cost of about \$1,500. There was seating for about 150 people. In the summer of 1857, Rev Iliscock held services in the home of Joseph Sidwell. They were there about one year, then were held in the schoolhouse built near Castle Rock. Services continued to be held in different places after 1867.

The Free Will Baptist's began holding services with Rev. J.D. Batson, alternately with the Methodists. A regular organization was effected in 1878, after which they held their services in Haven Chapel. There were two lodges that held meetings: one was Crystal Spray and the other Oriental Grange.

If any residents are interested in the history of early families living in Sciota Township, more detailed information is at the historical society.

These are the names of people living in Sciota about 1915: E.B. Bowe, L.R. Bowe, Mrs. Mary Carpenter, William Errington, Iver Falkenburg, S.A. Freeborg, H.O. Holvorson, Albert Hughes, J.J. Hunter, James Jack, Peter Johnson, J.A. Kidd, John Legler, C.M. Lewis, Mrs. Jane Lorimer, J.S. Neil, Mrs. C. Nelson, Isaac Ruff, E.E. Taylor, A.J. Thye, F.O. Wells, (these all had Northfield post office) The following had Randolph post office addresses: August Abenroth, George Frame, Frank Grove, A.M. Hamann, Frank Harkness, William Harkness, Lawrence Hunter, John Jamison, Louis King, Johanna Klahr, R.L. Kleeberger, W.A. Kleeberger, J.C. Markmann, Henry Miller, O.S. Ryas, Fred Sievers, B.C. Slocum, J.A. Spillman, F.J. Tumacliff, Tracy Weatherby, and S.Wert. The following had Stanton post offices: M.J. Bresnahan, George Hellam, and G.N.Knapp.

From the time of the first settlers in the early 1850's, Sciota Township has been an agricultural community. The township grew fairly rapidly from the early 1850's to a population of 328 in 1870. The labor-intensive farming practices of the late 1800's contributed to the rapid population growth and larger population number. Around the turn of the century, farm mechanization and the western expansion brought about a decline in the population of Sciota. In 1920, the Township recorded a population of 246, a 25% decline from 1870. The major reason for this was that the Lewiston and Cascade grain mills were flooded and ultimately went broke. The township continued to lose population, at a much slower rate, until 1960. In 1950, the population of Sciota Township 217, and in 1960 the populations was 213. The population of the Township had remained at that level until the 1980's.

This historical information was collected and prepared by Helen Larsen, a member of the Sciota Township Planning Commission in 1980, when the previous Comprehensive Plan was written. We as a Township consider it vital to continue sharing our history and the history of our settlers, to give the names of the people who founded and took great care of the land here in Sciota Township.