

# Old Salem Shrine News

1874-1910

June 2017

Vol. 4



## ***Annual Founders' Day Service***

***Sunday, June 4***

***Open House 1:00 p.m.***

***Service 3:00 p.m.***

***Old Salem Shrine***

***Upper 55<sup>th</sup> Street (Salem Church Rd)***

***Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota***

## **Remembering August 18, 1862**

The headline in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on April 15, 1926 was stark, "Warning Unheeded, Children See Parents Die." The article recounted the history of the Sioux massacre which had occurred sixty-four years earlier in what was then the Lower Agency near the present site of Redwood Falls. The historical account, however, was personal, written by John Kochendorfer and his sister, Rose Keller. John was 11 and Rose was 9 when they witnessed the murder of both parents when Indians attacked their home.

"Our three horses, a wagon, a cow and household goods were unloaded on the Minnesota river bank from a steamboat.



We set up our coal stove: mother cooked dinner, set the table and we had a hearty meal. Then we loaded our belongings and drove eight miles to our new home. Father pitched a large tent in which we lived while he broke up some land, planted a garden and also oats and corn, felled trees and built a log house into which we had partly moved at the time of the massacre. The land in front of our house was prairie and back of it was forest."

**The Johann Kochendorfer Family  
(Circa 1858)**

“Our life during the spring and early part of the summer was peaceful and uneventful. Most of the families in our settlement were Germans, honest, industrious, God-fearing people. The Indians came across the Minnesota river to visit us nearly every day and were always friendly. We learned a little Sioux language . . . enough so that we could understand them.”

“On Sunday, the day before the massacre, nearly 100 adults and about 30 children were present at a religious service at the home of a Mr. Lettau, a throng so large that most of the men and boys sat outside the open door to listen to the sermon. Of all within 24 hours, not more than 30 were living. The others, including the minister, Rev. Mr. Mierentz of the Evangelical association, had been murdered by the Indians.”



“Father had been asked permission by a band of Sioux the day before to store some of their belongings in our house. They said that they were going to fight the Chippewa’s and were afraid their goods would be stolen by the enemy. So they were allowed to conceal beneath our beds their tomahawks and other articles of warfare.”

“On Monday, an Indian wearing a belt of cartridges and carrying a gun came to the house. Before this we had seen red men armed only with bows and arrows.”



*Catherine holding Margaret and John  
Johann holding Kate and Rose*

“Soon we children saw a band of Indians in our field and reported to father. He came from the house and stood beside me with his hands on my shoulders. Then the Indian who had accepted our hospitality shot father. He fell to the ground carrying me down with him. John, running toward the woods, saw the Indian turn and shoot toward mother. . . who was still at her washing.”

“We girls afraid the Indians would find us under the bed, where we had taken refuge, ran outdoors. . . all but Sarah, who would not follow us, and who soon after was slain. Father, still lying on his back, was unable to speak, but he groaned and motioned to us to run into the woods.”

“We met John in the forest. He said that we should go to a neighbor’s home in the river bottoms, so we went a little way through the heavy timber, then crossed a small strip of breaking that father had recently done, and reached the bluff overlooking our neighbor’s place. Our gaze rested on Indians in the act of killing our friends there.”

The children walked 11 miles, carrying the smaller children at times and then traveled with neighbors driving ox teams to Fort Ridgely where they remained through the memorable siege that ended with the arrival of General Sibley’s relief expedition.

The Kochendorfer children were taken into the homes of friends in St. Paul. John and Margaret became members of the household of Gottfried Schmidt on a farm in the district now the site of South St. Paul.

When John Kochendorfer was 30, he received a letter from a Mr. Timm, who had homesteaded on the land where John's parents had been killed and which had reverted back to the government. Mr. Timm wrote that while he was digging post holes for a garden fence he had found graves of Johann and Catherine Kochendorfer and Sarah. They were finally laid to rest in Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul, the final incident of the family's tragedy.

Gottfried Schmidt was born in 1815 in Germany and was orphaned at age 12. In 1849, he came to America and, after living two years in St. Louis, he moved to St. Paul. In 1852, he married Mary Dickhudt. They had no children but adopted three, the first was an Indian boy. In 1854, an Indian came to the Schmidt home with his little son, asking Mr. Schmidt to adopt the one and one-half-year-old boy. The family adopted him, naming him Charles Schmidt.

In 1862, the Schmidt's adopted two orphans of the Indian massacre, John and Maggie Kochendorfer, who retained their parents' names.

In his will Gottfried Schmidt named John Kochendorfer sole executor of his will and bequeathed the sum of one thousand dollars in trust to Charles Schmidt.



*John Kochendorfer and Charles Schmidt  
(Circa 1870)*



#### **Weddings at Old Salem Shrine**

Fee: \$200. Contact Jill Lewis at 651-552-8586.

#### **Donations to Old Salem Shrine**

Contributions to Old Salem Shrine are welcome! Your gift will help maintain this beautiful and historic treasure for future generations. Donations may be made at [www.oldsalemshrine.org](http://www.oldsalemshrine.org)

or make check payable to Old Salem Shrine and mail to:

Old Salem Shrine  
6775 Cahill  
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076  
c/o Bart Zehnder

Visit our website [www.oldsalemshrine.org](http://www.oldsalemshrine.org)

**Volunteer by calling Jill Lewis 651-552-8586**

**Thank you for your generous support!**

#### **Old Salem Shrine Board of Trustees**

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## DVD of Old Salem Church History

A DVD of Old Salem's history is available for sale which includes a more extensive history, biographical information, photos and obituaries of the church's founders and early ministers, notes and letters penned by church members, and photos of both early weddings and those held more recently in the church. To order a \$25 DVD contact Jill Lewis at [jillewis6@comcast.net](mailto:jillewis6@comcast.net)



[www.oldsalemshrine.org](http://www.oldsalemshrine.org)

