

Old Salem Shrine News

1874-1910

June 2020

Vol. 7



***Founders' Day Service
June 2020 Canceled
May be rescheduled later this year
Watch our Facebook Page
for updates***

<https://www.facebook.com/oldsalemshrine/>

“My hope for the church is that it remains a continuing legacy for future generations.”

An interview with Jill Zehnder Lewis, Past President of Old Salem Shrine Board of Directors, and granddaughter of C.J. Zehnder, one of the founding members of the church.

I remember my grandfather (C.J. Zehnder) talking about how the American Indians would use the grounds at Old Salem for their tents, etc. Occasionally Old Salem would hold a revival meeting over the weekend that would include those Indian families. After the uprising and the hanging of many Indians, families within the church adopted the orphan Indian children as their own.

For me, my earliest memory was that the Founders' Day Service in June was a “big deal.”



This was the service held for the original families and their descendants to celebrate the heritage we had all been given. My Grandfather Christian J Zehnder (nicknamed C.J.) spent a lot of time cutting grass, planting flowers, trimming, etc. to have everything in shape for that service. My father, Cyrus Zehnder, would work with the Conference to have a speaker available, the building in tip-top shape, and bulletins prepared. My mother, Edith Woods Zehnder, would provide the organ music for the service.

Salem Church and the Zehnder Family



Frederick Zehnder Family (circa 1903)

Much of Old Salem's preservation as a community treasure can be attributed to four generations of the Zehnder family.

At age 28, Frederick Zehnder left Germany and arrived in the United States in 1852. He settled on 160 acres of prime farmland overlooking Horseshoe Lake just south of Salem Church Road. He was one of the founding members of Salem Evangelical Church.



Frederick's son, Christian, was born in 1871 in the family's log cabin. Active in civic affairs and business, he assumed responsibility for maintaining Salem's property and records.

Christian's son, Cyrus, was born in 1900 and assumed the caretaking function when his father gradually retired. Cyrus continued the family trust until 1986 when his daughter, Laurie, and her husband Donald Dinger, assumed the watch, serving as Secretary and Treasurer for many years.

Both my father and grandfather were dedicated to the caretaking of the property. Both Grandpa and Dad would spend countless hours there planting and watering flowers, cutting grass, cleaning up brush and freshening up the church building. I remember that every summer my father would dedicate a week to paint the fence along the street. Occasionally he would find helpers, but he felt that wrought iron fence needed an annual paint job!

I was not very involved at Old Salem until the late 80s as Dad declined with Alzheimer's. My role in the church grew over the years from attending services, to playing the organ for the services, and then to becoming an active participant on the committee.

I believe that Old Salem is a beacon for the community to show the historical significance as well as a continuing place of quiet rest for neighbors to reflect, meditate, and appreciate the surroundings. Neighbors, I am told, say "we love our church" and several take an active role in keeping an eye on it.

The original name of Upper 55th St. was Salem Church Road – a great reference to the fact that there are two "Salem" churches on the road. Years ago, the neighborhood was primarily farms and has grown with development, both commercial and residential. The appreciation shown by the neighborhood when help is needed for Old Salem is very heartwarming.

I remember when both the fence and the aluminum siding were installed to assist in the ongoing maintenance. The original wood siding, as well as the fence, needed to be painted every year or two and the volunteers that had done it for many years had died. So, with contributions and volunteers, the aluminum siding was installed. In hindsight, that has proven to be a mistake in applying for historic status and associated grants.

One of my fondest memories is of my son, Mark, who was working at Old Salem when his wife went into labor with my first grandchild. She had been “pushing” the lawn mower while Mark was trimming in preparation for the Founders’ Day Service. It felt like a blessing connecting the generations.

Growing up, there were two services held at Old Salem each year: Founders’ Day on the first Sunday in June, and the Father/Son service on Father’s Day. My best memories would be watching the care my grandfather and father had for the church. Going to a service when I was a kid was somewhat mandatory but always heartwarming watching my mother playing the organ and my father greeting everyone who entered there.

Our challenges always seem to have been financial with continuous expenses to maintain the property, yet we have little connection to descendants of most of the families buried there.

My greatest joy has been watching as new visitors are in awe of the way which the building has been preserved in its original state.

I believe that my greatest contribution has been in involving more community members. Historically, the President of the Old Salem Committee of Trustees was the District Superintendent of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and after the merger in 1968, the United Methodist Church.



The District Superintendents, though great leaders, were not familiar with the neighborhood and those who showed an interest in Old Salem.

Old Salem Shrine Board of Trustees

Rev. Gail Alexander, Judy Alich, Rev. Laurie Boche, Thelma Boeder (UMC historian), Joe Brotzler, Steve Brotzler, Rev. Amy Jo Bur, Neil Danner, Christian Dinger, Laurie Dinger, George Fell, Rev. Margaret Fell, Rev. Dan Johnson, Dawn Kinnunen (Vice Pres.), Kathy Lang, Jill Lewis (Past Pres.), Barb Luken, Gerald Manthei, Rev. Paul Marzahn, Dan Miller, Amy (Lewis) Nugent, Rev. John Praetorius, Kathy Spence-Johnson, Krista Stiffler-Hutchinson (Pres.), Maggie Stiffler-Hobbs (Treas.), Brian Taurinskas, Bartley Zehnder, Holly Zschokke.



“Old Salem is a signal to the modern generation of a “grounding” to the past—so much that our ancestors gave up to have a place of worship and a church family.”

*Jill Zehnder Lewis
June 2020*



Weddings at Old Salem Shrine

Fee: \$200
Contact Margaret Fell – 651- 457-7809.

Contributions to Old Salem Shrine are needed to maintain this beautiful and historic treasure.

Please donate today!

Online: Old Salem Shrine website
<https://oldsalemshrine.org>

Mail checks payable to Old Salem Shrine to:

Old Salem Shrine
PO Box 2191
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076

Handwritten text in cursive script, possibly a signature or note, partially obscured by the printed text.

Old Salem Shrine Services

Epiphany Service – January 3, 2021 at 4:30 pm
Founders' Day - June 6, 2021 - Open House 1:00-3:00 p.m. - Service 3:00 p.m.

DVD of Old Salem Church History

A DVD of Old Salem's history entitled People & Annals of Salem EV Kirche 1857-2011 is available for \$25. It includes an extensive history, biographies, 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 the DVD, visit OldSalemShrine.org or email OldSalemShrine@gmail.com.

Thank you for your generous support of Old Salem Shrine!

