

Germantown Historical Society **Newsletter**



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From the GHS President

The summer of 2023 has been hot and memorable in several ways with record heat waves and dense smoke from Canadian wildfires. Yet here at the Germantown Historical Society we continue with our mission of preserving our local history and helping people learn about their ancestor's heritage.

In June we finally witnessed the completion of the Christ Church exterior stained glass window restoration and protection project. It's a relief to know that this work was completed without any damage to the stained glass. It has given a fresh look to the appearance of the church building. Check out the "Window Restoration" article following.

Across the street by the Wolf Haus a new Dheinsville Settlement welcome sign was installed which shows the many historic buildings which make up the Dheinsville settlement. Inside the Bast Bell Museum a new display was created highlighting the Sila Bast family. Inside the Christ Church Museum of Local History a new display was added showcasing a restored 1890 potbelly stove and cooking utensils.

We have given several group tours of our three museums which enlightened and pleased all who participated. It is fun to see the reaction of the people when they see all the various artifacts we have on display, and how they enjoy learning about the history of Germantown's people.

Lately, the Germantown Historical Society has been highlighted in several articles in local magazines and newspapers. The Germantown Library is holding children's story time events at Historic Dheinsville Park, and we coordinate a tour and talk inside one of our museums to demonstrate how life was in the 1800's. It seems the community is reawakening to what we have to offer them.

Of course, we are in the final stages of preparation for our 29th annual Oktoberfest event which will happen September 23 and 24. There is authentic entertainment, food, and beverages for all ages. We hope you will join us for some family fun inside the new Festhalle and around the 10-acre park. Our three museums will be open free of charge. The silent auction will be held on Saturday only, so be sure to not miss it. On Saturday at 3, the infamous Dachshund Dog races will begin. On Sunday we offer a car show including a special appearance by the Mercedes Benz Club.

Germantown history and genealogy.....
By Mary Herrick, Volunteer Genealogist

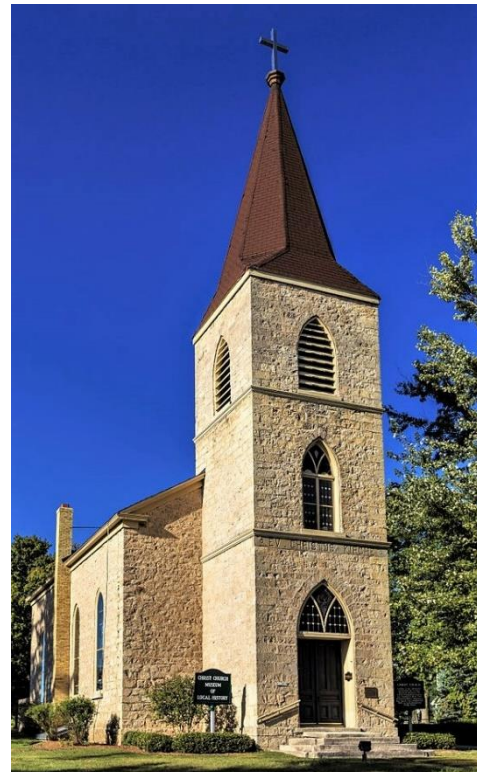
For Whom the Bell Tolls
The Bells of Christ Evangelical Church
Dheinsville Settlement, Germantown, Wisconsin

Christ Evangelical Church was established 1842. The first services were held in a log cabin. In 1862 the present church was built of rough faced limestone blocks from nearby Rockfield quarry. In 1888, more than 25 years after the church was built, the three-story bell tower was added by the congregation and the bells installed in 1890.



Christ Evangelical Church 1888
Without bell tower and
cupola on roof.
Horse hitching posts and
front entrance gate.

Christ Evangelical Church Present
Front entrance bell tower
Currently used as Museum of
Germantown local history



The History of the Bells



The three bells in Christ Church Bell Tower

**The inscription molded on the largest bell is:
Centennial Bell Foundry
Campbell & Sons Milwaukee**

**The inscription molded on the heavy cast iron
bell hanger is:
Centennial Bell Foundry Milwaukee**

There are three bells that are not electronic. They are hand rung using three individual heavy ropes. The bells were manufactured by the Gardiner Campbell & Sons Company located on Oregon Street in Milwaukee.

Gardiner Campbell was born in Dunfermline, Scotland in 1834. In 1850 he completed an apprenticeship in a bell and iron foundry then immigrated to America with his parents and three siblings.

He settled in Milwaukee where he worked for a variety of iron foundries and started a family. At age 18, his oldest son, George started his own foundry with his father as his partner. Later his brother Henry joined them and it became a family business.

Following his father's death in 1892, the sons retained the company. The company went on to cast the mammoth bell that still rings from the tower of Milwaukee City Hall. The Milwaukee City Hall bell is the 11th largest bell (by weight) in the United States and it is the third largest bell in the country made by a United States Bell Foundry.

In 1898 his partner and brother George died. The business was unable to continue and ceased operations in 1904. It has been the only American firm operating both a bell foundry and an iron foundry in America.

Tradition of the bells at Christ Church

In addition to the regular services the bells were rung at five PM Saturday evening to welcome the Sabbath. A young boy working in the fields, Elmore Kraemer recalled the welcome sound of these beautiful bells as the end of work and the beginning of his day of rest and worship. When the church was re-opened as a museum, Mr. Kraemer set up a permanent fund for the ringing of the bells every Saturday evening May 1st to October 1st. His enthusiastic and generous support of our preservation efforts is warmly remembered since his death October 17, 1976.

The Bell Tower was dedicated to Elmore Andrew Kraemer on May 6, 1978.

Ringling the bells at Christ Church started many years ago. The earliest bell ringer was Edwin Schowalter who was the church janitor, the father of Oliver Schowalter. The tradition of ringing of the bells at 5:00 PM on Saturday was continued by his son, Oliver Schowalter. Today this tradition is continuing by Oliver's son, Scott Schowalter, the third generation ringing the bells along with Scott's children and grandchildren, as the fourth and fifth generations.

To honor Oliver Schowalter a single bell was rung at his grave side service on May 23, 2023.

*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore **never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.***

John Donne (1572-1631) Donne's "Devotions", because we are all part of mankind, any person's death is a loss to all of us: "

In Memory of those who contributed their time to the Germantown Historical Society and recently passed:

Oliver Schowalter 2023

Benn Melius 2022

Bob Kohls 2022

Louise Kohls 2022

Mary Brownell 2022



In spring of 2023 we lost a longtime member of the Germantown Historical Society and Board member. On May 12th Oliver “Ollie” Schowalter passed away. He will be remembered for his pleasant personality reflected in his constant smile. He loved to show his “Oliver tractors” and his miniature toy farm equipment display. This year’s Oktoberfest volunteer shirts will be dedicated to his memory in the Oliver Tractor green and red colors. May he rest in peace.



In July we contracted with SIGNworks to reproduce a new sign that welcomes the public to the Dheinsville settlement.

The old sign had become badly weathered and was cracking and turning brown.

The new sign has an artist drawing of the 12 original buildings which still exist by the Dheinsville crossroads. Each is numbered and listed in their existing location. In 1842 the first people to settle here immigrated from the Hunsruck region of Germany, and after a three-month journey they

walked from the “port” of Milwaukee on a Native American trail all the way to what would become Germantown.

They liked what they saw, and the next day they walked back to the Milwaukee land office to claim their homestead property. After clearing the trees, they built crude log cabins to shelter their families. They wrote back home to encourage their relatives and neighbors to join them. They explained that life here was hard but was still better than in Germany because they could own their own land, and they were free to think and worship as they pleased.

Soon others did join them and by the mid 1800’s Dheinsville was a thriving hamlet. Three of those original buildings are currently used for our museums.

Window Restoration Completed



June marked the final completion of the stained-glass exterior window restoration and preservation project. Last year the eight side windows were restored, and this summer the two front windows were completed. It required one window to be moved about six inches to allow for the installation of a protective glass window to be installed in front of it. Also, a brand-new protective window was placed in front of the second front window. During the process additional restoration work was done on the stone tuck pointing and wood trims around the front windows and front door.

The church building was constructed in 1862, and the Ladies Aid had the stained-glass windows installed in 1914. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The total cost of this restoration project was about \$35,000. The cost was covered with the very generous

donations of Jerry and Betty Fuller, the memorial funds of Shirley Schowalter and Eileen Densow, the Grollman Fund, and the Germantown Tourism Commission. The project was contracted with Essmann's Cabinetry and Millwork and Tim McGuire Decorative Painting.

The project took a long time to get completed, but the work was professionally done and looks great. Everyone involved can have a sense of satisfaction that these historic and beautiful windows will be preserved for several more generations yet to come. Thank you very much.

PS: I snapped this picture of the scaffolding in June, but when I recently looked at it in detail, I noticed a black mark near the cross on the steeple. After zooming in on it I believe it to be a bald eagle who just happened to be soaring past at that very instant. Such an occurrence some believe is a sign of Divine protection and a new beginning. I hope that is so.

Saturday & Sunday
September 23 & 24
2023

Germantown Oktoberfest

Held at Dheinsville Historic Park
N128W18780 Holy Hill Road
Germantown, WI 53022

**FREE
ADMISSION**

**FREE
PARKING**



Great family fun!

Including
locally
made
beer from
Old Germantown



Hosted by the
**Germantown Historical
Society**

Sponsored by
Window World

Supported by
**Village of Germantown
Tourism Funds**



Don't miss the **Dachshund Dash**
at 3:00 pm, Saturday.



Authentic
food and
drink!



CHECK WEBSITE OR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

Dates to Remember:

June 1 - Wolf Haus Opens for the Season

June 1 - Bast Bell and Church Museums Open by Appointment; or dates to be determined

September 23 & 24—2023 Oktoberfest

September 30 — Wolf Haus, Bast Bell and Church Museums Close for the Season

The Wolf Haus & Genealogy Research Center will be open on Wednesdays from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm from June 1st thru September 30th

The Bast Bell Museum and Christ Church Museum of Local History can be toured during Wolf Haus Museum hours, inquire there. Also, groups are welcome to tour all three museums by appointment.

We Hope to See You
