

Where it started



A strong faith in God sustained the Swedish immigrants who brought from Sweden their Lutheran background and heritage. Religion was a deeply felt aspect of life among the immigrants. In Sweden the State directed clergy to teach their congregant's children to read well enough to memorize Luther's Small Catechism. So one of the first concerns after settling was to organize a congregation. In 1868 the Scandinavian Lutheran Church was organized in Whitehall, gathering together Swedes, Norwegians, and a few Danes. Family records show that Anders Johansson (Ryd) was confirmed in Whitehall in 1870.

Johnson's Corners and Swedentown

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n 1872 the congregation's Swedish members formed "The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Lebanon Church of Whitehall." This Gothic-style building was built in 1877 using lumber cut from the surrounding woods and milled in a local sawmill (most likely Covell's). There is a story that the main beam of the building is a purloined boom log from the mill, probably more than a bit embellished. The minutes of Feb 1874 contain a resolution establishing a parsonage building committee, instructed to "borrow lumber from the Lumber Men in Whitehall and to erect the parsonage While the parsonage has long since disappeared, the church beam, if indeed borrowed, has yet to be returned. Relations with the Norwegians in the combined congregation must have been a bit tense. In the August 13, 1874 minutes we read: "The Norwegians cannot admit that the Swedes had acted according to lawful rules from the beginning, but still it is now acknowledged that from this date on they be legally separated from the Norwegian congregation."

It is possible this had to do with alcohol. Norwegians were more pietistic; Swedes more "urban" and lenient approach. There is a story of Carl Johnson, who donated

land for the church but was reportedly barred from joining the congregation due to his drinking habits (to what degree we do not know). There also an unspecified accusation "of having drunkards in our congregation" in the Annual meeting minutes of Jan 1, 1875. The Women's Christian Temperance Movement was founded 1873. Worship was conducted in Swedish until the 1930s. Today the neighborhood around the church is still known as Swedentown, and the immediate neighborhood was known as Johnson's Corners. A toast therefore to Mr. Carl.

Significance of the Name "Lebanon"

The name "Lebanon" reflects both Biblical inspiration and local geography. In the late 1800s, many churches adopted Old Testament names, inspired by a renewed interest in those scriptures. Lebanon's name references the cedar trees that once adorned the church's lot, tying its identity to both faith and nature.

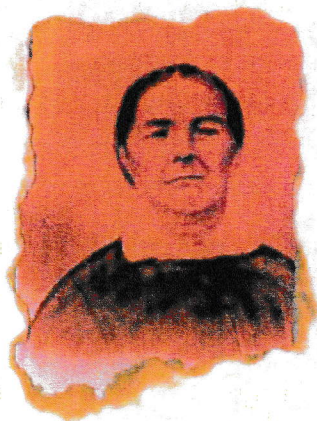
Tuve Hasselquist and the Augustana Synod

Tuve Hasselquist (1816-1891), a prominent Swedish Lutheran leader, played an indirect but significant role in the church's history. Born in Hasslarod, Skane County, Sweden, Hasselquist became the founding president of the Augustana Synod in 1860 and served as editor of a Swedish-language newspaper. He also presided over Augustana College, first in Paxton, Illinois, and later in Rock Island, Illinois. Though he passed away in 1891, portraits of Hasselquist were distributed to Augustana congregations in 1901. Lebanon Church's copy, discovered water-damaged, was recently restored by Klinefelters. The only other copy we know of resides in the Augustana College Library.

In 1962 the Augustana Synod joined the Lutheran Church in America, which like the Augustana was East-coast-based. In 1988, the Midwest primarily German American Lutheran Church joined with the LCA, along with a break-away group from the Lutheran Church Missouri synod to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "Evangelical" means for us "grace" rather than "have to".



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Carl and Johanna Johnson
"Swegen Town" pioneers
and donors of the land
Lebanon is built on.



Swedish Folk Painting, often referred to as "dalmålning" actually consists of several different painting styles based on region, subject, and artist.

Dalmalning, Swedish folk painting, is a tradition dating back to the 1700s and uses traditional Swedish Dala motifs: draped floral garlands and borders, a central vase of flowers accented with animals or people.. Some of the appeal of Dala painting comes from the personal elements introduced into a painting; thus, students will be encouraged to adapt the design to their tastes through flower, border and palette choices. Historically, artists are often identified by their use of colors and stroke work, each artist painting just a bit differently







The Women of the ELCA Windows were given in memory of Russell and Dorothy Johnson. Created by local artist Sharon Brown of Montague, the windows honor all the women who have served, or will serve sometime in the future, the needs of this congregation at the community.



artist Jonas Olof Olstrom (1855-1933)









SWEDISH FESTIVAL

WHITEHALL AVENUE

F-225



The history of a congregation is often told as “Who was Pastor” and “What got built.” This tells you next to nothing of the history, or the significance, of what matters. A better question is “Why another church?” This church’s history is not just about its buildings or leaders—it is a story of resilience, inclusivity, and shared purpose that remains relevant today.

Lutherans exist because we have a faith in a power that is not in a trust human efforts nor human good will: “princes of men” to quote the psalms, will be fallible and sometimes self-serving. We see the Bible as a great conversation partner, but not as a book of rules. We do not expect a god to jump out and punish you for making mistakes, but rather trust that grace is

real, and stepping out in faith relying on grace gets things done. We believe in science, in public education, in economic responsibility, environmental care, and especially community service and leadership. We believe in human rights, minority rights, and that dignity is to be given to every man, woman, child, and animal. We are not expecting the end of the world at a god’s hand, but we do worry about it from human hands.

We see Christ on the cross in many places in our world, and envision what new life would be like when grace, hope, love are shown. We have an arms-wide-open approach to the word, but an eyes-wide open one as well. We have no need to criticize anyone else’s experience, but this is ours, and so we plan on sticking around a while to tell you about it, whenever grace, hope and love are in short supply.

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