

Old Swedes: Past, Present and Future

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About the Design

The inspiration for my design was from my exploration of Wilmington's history, and how different types of architecture and landscaping can impact the visual style and how people interact with a site. It was very important to me to preserve the integrity of the site, but also to bring in some modern elements in order to make the space more accessible to people today. To do this, I chose to focus on the materials used in the site and how they can be used to make different spaces. My ultimate goal for my design was to create a more modern and inviting space, that is also faithful to the vast history of the city of Wilmington and the Old Swedes Historic Site.



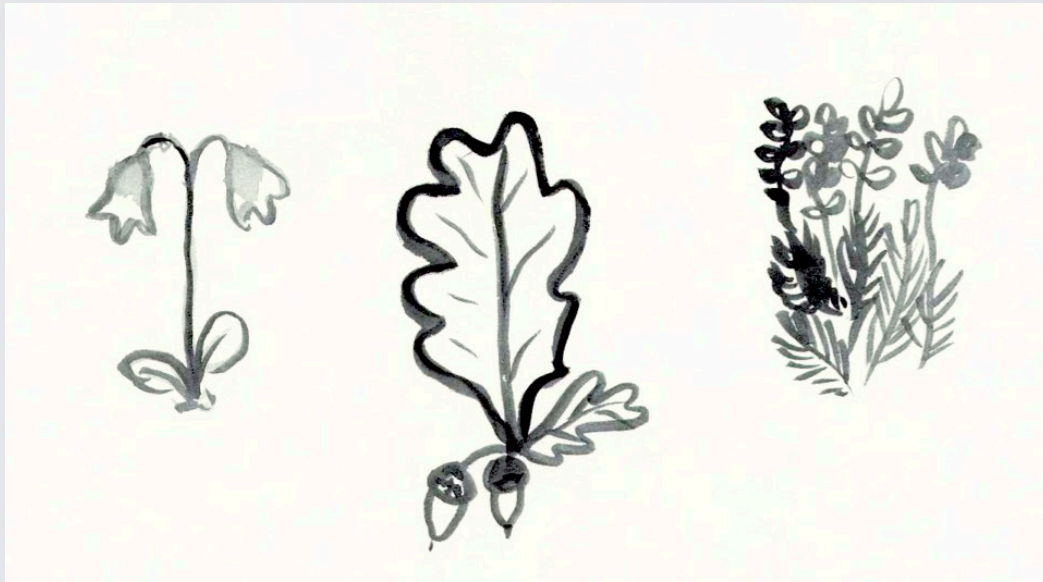
Inspirational Spaces in Wilmington

From left to right: Brandywine Park, view of Wilmington from the DuPont Environmental Education Center, Lower Market Street, DuPont Environmental Education Center view with boardwalk walkway



← Swedish Homestead Garden

- in front of the Hendrickson House
- fosters a stronger connection to the Swedish history of the site
- planted with common Swedish landscape plants
- used to visually tie the site to Sweden
- educational tool for the museum

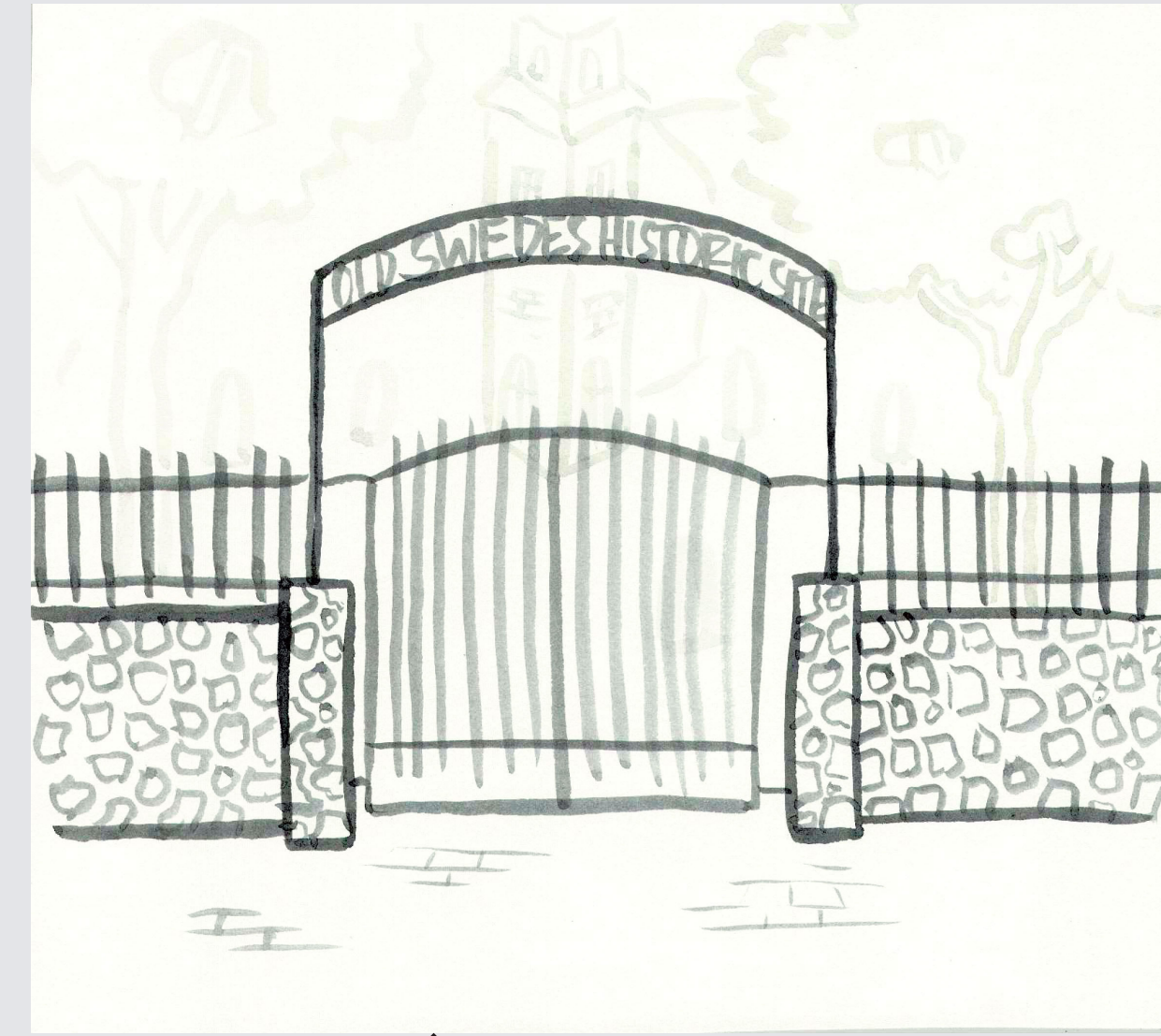


← Sample Plants for Swedish Homestead Garden

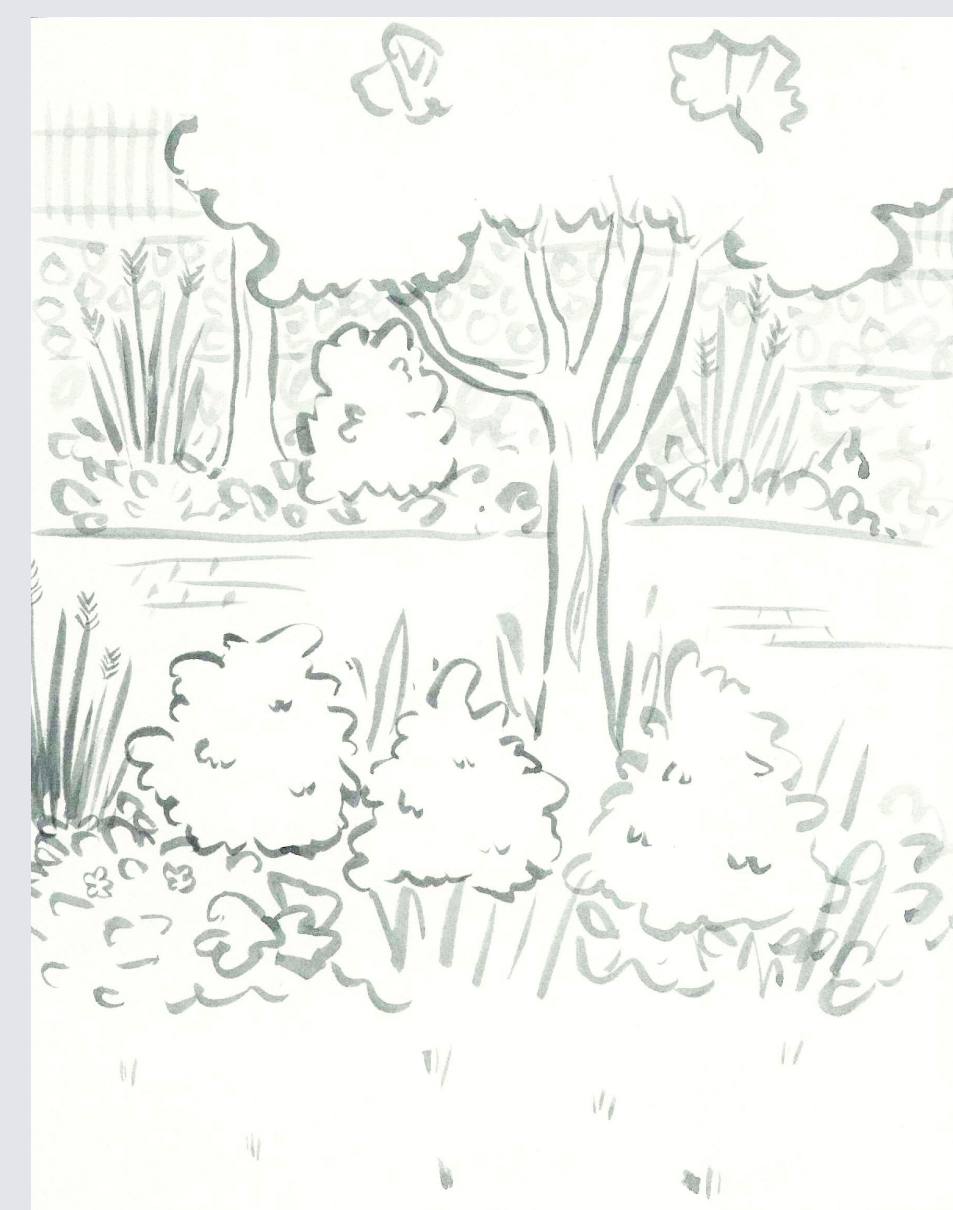
- Linnea borealis (Twinflower)
- Quercus robur (Pedunculate Oak)
- Calluna vulgaris (heather)

Creating a More Usable Space

Currently, the public spaces on Old Swedes Historic Site are limited to the paved area- the outer courtyard and amphitheater. Because it is all hardscaped, it is not a very inviting space. In my design, I proposed that we instead remove much of the Belgian block paving and replace it with a grassy park-like space. This will provide more space where neighbors could enjoy nature, exercise, play and hold meetings.



↑ Grand Entryway with wide entryway, broad pathway and sign



↑ Curved Pathway and Planting increases biodiversity of the area, provides an ambling pathway and increases connectivity to the inner churchyard

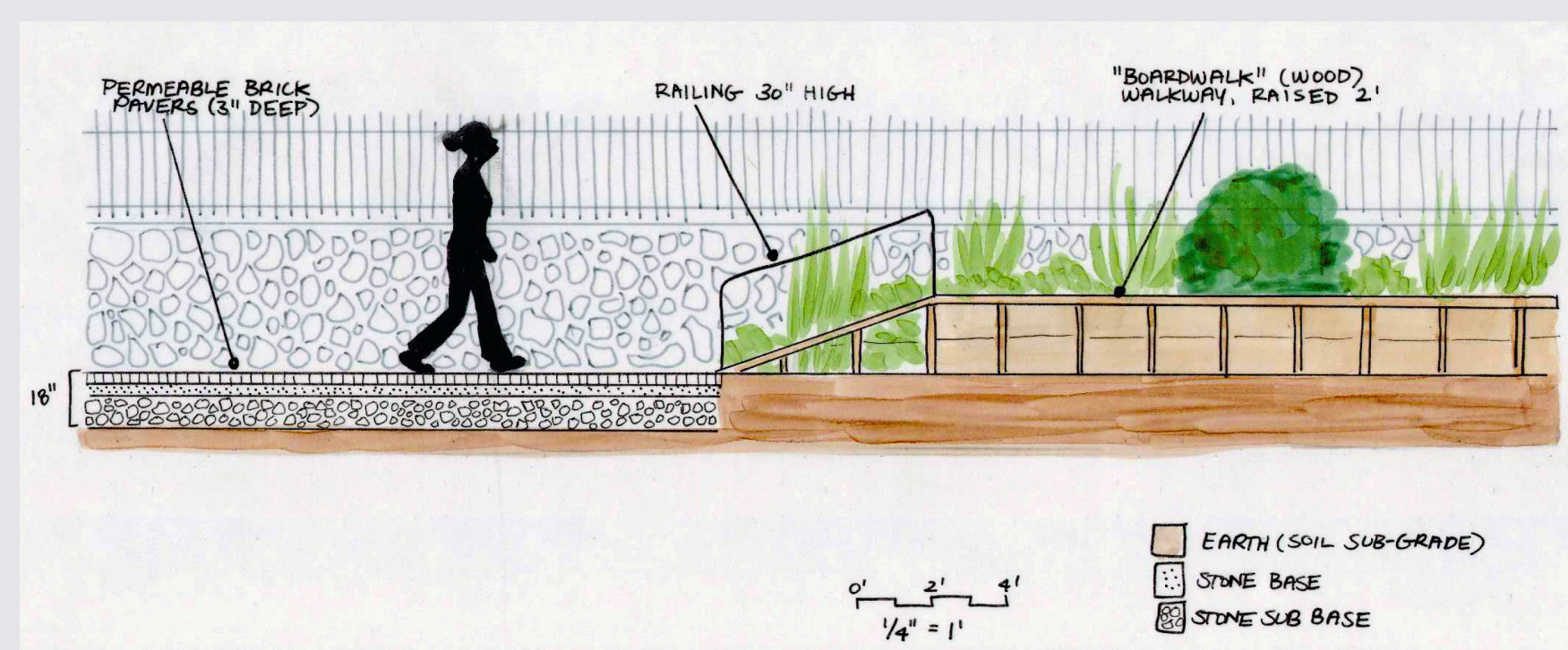


↑ Park Space including raised deck seating "stage," and grassy shaded lawn for gathering space and childrens play area

Solving Physical Site Issues

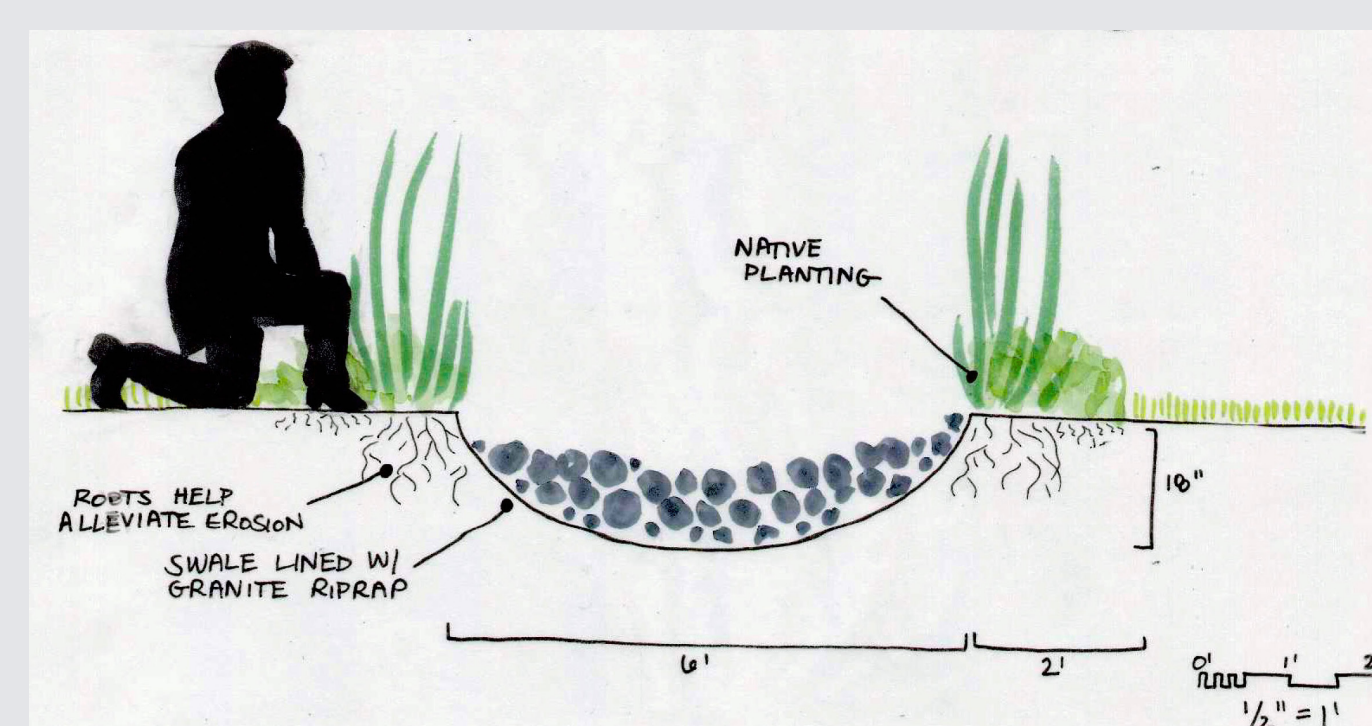
The Old Swedes Historic Site is currently experiencing several water-related issues, due largely to its location, a mere 250 yards from the Christina River. The land slopes toward the river, which causes water to run over the land surface toward the south and southeast corners. This causes water damage to the various structures on the site, including path washout, subsidence affecting the graves, and even damage to the church itself. I addressed these issues in my design with different pathways and other structures. In addition to the water issues, we also need to be aware of the numerous graves on the site. These prevent deep excavation and obstruct creation of new structures. I chose to keep many pathways in the same location because of this and simply changed the materials instead.

conceptual base plan for Old Swedes Historic Site →
conceptual base map with an underlay of contour lines and graves ↓



← Permeable Paving and "Boardwalk" Raised Walkway

- permeable pavers allow for infiltration and won't wash out as existing gravel pathways do
- pavers are designed to look like brick, and will flow well visually with the existing brick
- "boardwalk" pathway emulates the visual style of the DuPont Environmental Education Center and also causes less compaction
- "boardwalk" walkway also provides an interesting view of the site because of its height



← Drainage Swales with Native Plantings

- helps to direct the water down toward the south and southeast corners of the site, where there are larger and more dense plantings
- the addition of native plantings surrounding the swale would help to soften the visual effect and to help alleviate erosion