

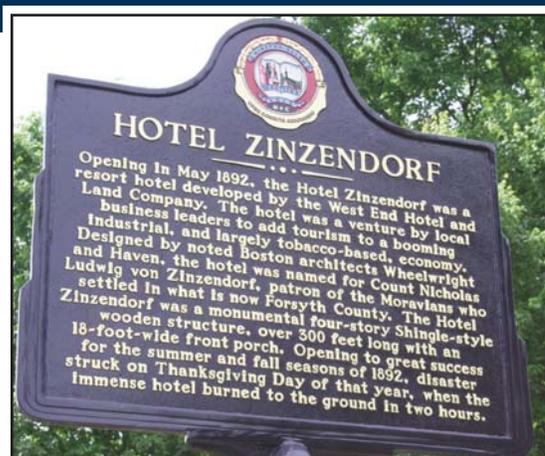
# HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

## Hotel Zinzendorf

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the town of Winston experienced an unequalled period of growth and prosperity, largely due to the influx of the tobacco industry into the burgeoning town. The 1890s were years of even further growth and development in Winston. By 1890, the population reached 14,000, which was an over 100% increase in ten years. During the 1890s, at least seven development companies were formed to capitalize on the great building boom. One of these was the West End Hotel and Land Company.

On May 29, 1890, the company held its organizational meeting; its purpose was to plan the construction of a hotel, *first class in all its appointments and with every modern improvement — one of the institutions we most need*. The company elected William A. Whitaker, a tobacco manufacturer, as president, and the directors included some of Winston's, Salem's, and North Carolina's greatest industrialists, such as R.J. Reynolds, P.H. Hanes, James A. Gray, and J.W. Fries. The company had capital funds of \$300,000, and on July 2, 1890, it purchased approximately 180 acres northwest of Winston from Henry W. Fries for \$134,142.40. The land had belonged to Johann Christian Wilhelm Fries, Henry's father and J.W. Fries' grandfather. This group of leading citizens stated the organization's goal was the promotion of Winston as a healthy and beautiful resort city. The focal point would be a lavish hotel built on top of the knoll of W. Fourth Street.



By August 1890, Jacob Lott Ludlow, Winston's first city engineer, had laid out the streets of the West End Hotel and Land Company's resort and residential development. Ludlow designed the overall development using the picturesque concept of suburban planning promoted by Frederick Law Olmstead. Ludlow sited the Hotel Zinzendorf to take advantage of one of the highest elevations in the city, and he also laid out residential lots on the surrounding hills along curvilinear streets and boulevards, which suited the topography and created a visually idyllic setting interspersed with parks.

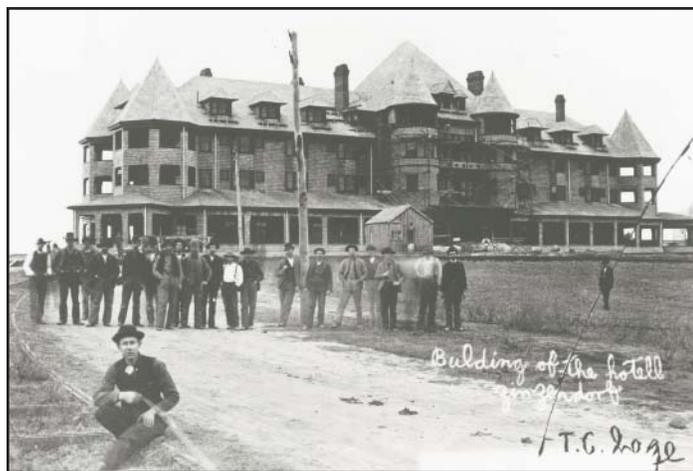
The ground breaking for the Hotel Zinzendorf took place in April 1891, and the hotel opened for business on May 9, 1892. Named for Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, patron of the Moravians, the resort hotel was designed by noted Boston architects Wheelwright and Haven, and was a monumental four-story Shingle-style structure, over 300 feet long and featuring an 18-foot-wide front porch. The Richmond and Danville Railroad began selling summer resort excursion tickets to Winston, and by May 26th, the streetcar line had been extended to the hotel. The local *Union Republican* newspaper extolled the Zinzendorf in a May 26th front-page article, which read:

*It is situated 1100 feet above sea level — on a hill from which the land seems to flow down to the valleys which lie around it...on the warmest days it is fanned by whatever breeze may move the leaves. It is surrounded by porches 18 feet wide keeping always a most grateful shade...It has elevators, electric lights, hot and cold public and private baths on every floor. Electric bells, most approved fire escapes and apparatus...The waters, the air, and charming scenes are all at Winston-Salem. The delightful creature comforts are at THE ZINZENDORF.*

1892 was a successful summer at the Zinzendorf, but Thanksgiving Day of that year brought disaster. Headlines in the *Salem People's Press* on December 1, 1892 read:

*FIRE! FIRE! The Beautiful Hotel Zinzendorf Utterly Destroyed.*

The fire began on the western side of the building in the boiler and laundry rooms and quickly spread to the dining hall; it was fanned by a northerly wind. Everyone escaped injury, but the large crowd which had gathered to watch the flames was driven back to Summit Street because of the intense heat generated by the wood-shingled structure. Fire engines from Winston and Salem sped to the site only to discover that there was no water with which to combat the flames. Within an hour, the hotel was a smoldering ruin and Winston's dream of becoming a resort community went with it.



*Hotel Zinzendorf under Construction, circa 1891*  
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection

As a result of the disaster, the City banned the construction of any future wooden hotels. Investor families, unable to recoup their losses, instead slowly settled in the area, making, by 1913, West End the most prominent residential area in the newly merged City of Winston-Salem.



*Hotel Zinzendorf Interior*  
Courtesy of Old Salem Museums and Gardens



*At the Great Fire*  
Courtesy of Old Salem Museums and Gardens

**WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

<http://ncpedia.org/history/cw-1900/zinzendorf>

<http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=259035>

Published News Articles



This information is also available  
at the Forsyth County  
Historic Resources Commission's web site:  
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>