

This Month in Moravian History

A monthly newsletter published by the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, commemorating events from Moravian History

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Early Moravian Printing in America

Coinciding with the Archives' new exhibit, *Early Moravian Printing in America*, this month's newsletter describes the earliest printing in America done on a Moravian press. 245 years ago this spring, Johann Brandmüller, minister at Friedenstal (a subsidiary of Nazareth) turned out the first round of printing - not in German or English, but in Delaware - owing to Moravian mission work with Native Americans in the region.

Prior to 1763 Moravians turned to established Colonial printers to print their religious texts, namely Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia and Christoph Saur of Germantown. In 1742 Saur printed a Moravian hymnal, and Franklin printed a catechism and the proceedings of several ecumenical synods led by Zinzendorf. Contact with these printers was made by the eccentric Moravian printer, Heinrich Müller, who accompanied Zinzendorf to Pennsylvania in 1741 and intermittently worked for these printers and others as a journeyman.

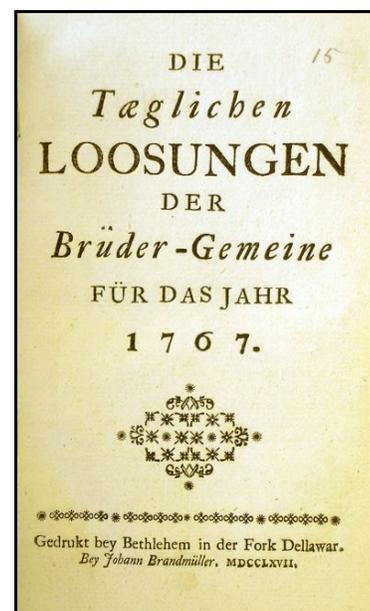


Other known works on this press include a New Year's Ode 1764, a Christmas Ode 1766, an Ode for Great Sabbath 1767, and the Moravian *Daily Texts* for 1767 (cover page shown).

Upon Brandmüller's retirement to Bethlehem in 1767 printing was discontinued and the press was moved to Nazareth Hall. Consequently, printing was again done by contract elsewhere until the 19th century.

During the 1750s Moravians considered getting their own press in America, and Müller was the intended printer. When this plan fell through, a disgruntled Müller stated: "I wish I had never seen Count Zinzendorf in my life!" Moravians then looked to Johann Brandmüller, a printer serving as an itinerant minister, to organize the press. Brandmüller investigated buying used presses and alternately contracting with the Ephrata Cloister for printing, but none of this came to pass.

The plan for a Moravian press in America was not realized until the fall of 1761, when the press from Lindsey House, the Moravian headquarters in London, was transported across the Atlantic to Bethlehem. It was a standard wooden printing press called a *common press*, complete with English (not German) type. The press was soon moved to Friedenstal, where Brandmüller served as minister. On February 9, 1762, Brandmüller brought a half-ton of type to Friedenstal. A little over a year later on March 23, 1763, printing began. The first run included 150 half-sheets of the *Harmonies of the Four Gospels* in the language of the Delaware Indians. A month later on April 13 Brandmüller printed 200 half-sheets of a Delaware hymnal, the *Dellawærisches Gesang-Büchlein*. Both these works were translated by the missionary at Wechquetank, Bernhard Adam Grube, and Anton, a native Delaware.



To learn more about Moravian printing and book trades in America, view the exhibit at the Archives during regular opening hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00-4:30, through October 31st, 2008.

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