

# Voices from the Vault

Issue 1

October 2004

## After Six Months

It was on the first day of March 2004 that I started my new job as the archivist of the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem. Since then, I have met many of you and I am looking forward to getting to know many more of the Archives' Friends in the near future. Let me explain a bit about myself. My name is Paul Peucker (which is in fact a German name, pronounced *poiker*). I was born and raised in the Moravian community of Zeist in the Netherlands. While studying history at the University of Utrecht I chose to write my thesis on Heerendijk, the first European Moravian settlement outside of Herrnhut. This experience



was my introduction to archival research. After studying the relevant records in the Zeist archives I traveled to Herrnhut, Germany, where I learned about the wealth of information kept there in the Unity Archives. That was still before the Berlin

## An Epistle from Paul

Wall fell and little did I know that only a few years later I would be working there! After completing my Ph.D. I trained to become an archivist at the State Archives School in The Hague. At that time I was asked to come to Herrnhut to become archivist at the Unity Archives. Living in a country where people grew up under such different circumstances and seeing the challenges of the post-communist era were very interesting experiences. I learned a lot at the Unity Archives and I hope to be able to take advantage of my experience here in Bethlehem. The first step is to improve the 'infra-

(Continued on page 2)

## Special points of interest:

- New title for newsletter.
- Archives' oldest book was written by an opponent of the Hussite movement.
- Jablonski Papers are inventoried.
- New archival software in use in Bethlehem archives.
- Volunteers help empty vault.

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## "Voices from the Vault..."

The vault is the center of our facility. Here we store the unique and irreplaceable manuscripts and books that document the history of the Moravians in North America. The vault is climate controlled, has a fire suppression system and has two impenetrable doors

that can only be opened by the archives' staff. Opening these doors and sharing the contents of this vault is one of the things I would like to accomplish. This desire is the inspiration for the new title of our newsletter: 'Voices from the Vault'.

## After Six Months (cont.)

structure' of the archives. After the recent renovation of the gallery, it is now time to install a computer network, to upgrade the telephone system, to replace the photocopier, to maximize storage space in the vaults, to renew the environmental control system in the vaults that has already out-lived its initial life-expectancy by many years and to find sophisticated computer software for records management and library

cataloguing. This is all necessary to initially protect our irreplaceable holdings and then to begin to catalogue these holdings. The next step will be the cataloguing phase. We will have to create inventories of the individual collections and to catalogue our library holdings. Eventually the archives' finding aids will be accessible over the internet. During this process we will be able to identify items that need to be restored in order to

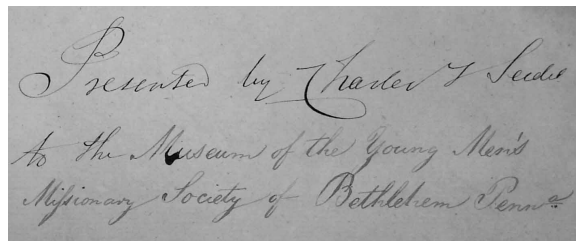
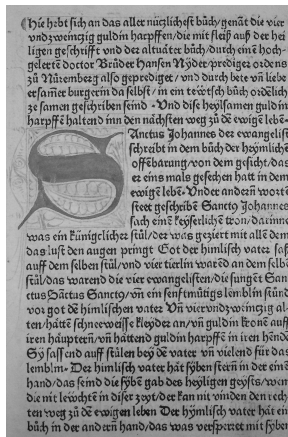
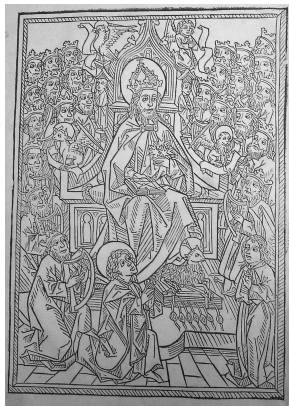
prevent further damage. Making our collections accessible is of course very time-consuming. Therefore, an assistant archivist has to be hired and the assistance of many volunteers and interns will be needed. As a Friend of the Archives you will understand that only with your continuing support will the Moravian Archives be able to meet the challenges that await us. I look forward to working with you!

## Spotlight: the oldest book

Probably the oldest holding within the Moravian Archives is an *incunable* printed in 1472 by Johannes Bämle in Augsburg, Germany. Books printed before the year 1500, when book printing was in its earliest period, are referred to as incunables or 'cradle books' and are extremely valuable. This book is a collection of German language sermons by the Dominican friar Johannes Nider (ca. 1380-1438) with the title: 'Die 24 goldenen Harfen'. Nider, who must have held these sermons in Nuremberg between 1425 and 1429, is mostly known for his works on witchcraft. He was also an opponent of the Hussite movement. The earliest known owner of this copy was George Kloss, medical doctor and book collector from Frankfurt/Main (1787-1854). The next owner was Johan Allan of New York,

who somehow acquired it from Germany; in October 1835 he gave it to his friend, Charles F. Seidel (1778-1861). Seidel, a Moravian minister, later donated the incunable to the Museum of the Young Men's Missionary Society of Bethlehem in October 1843. At some point thereafter, the book was placed in the Moravian Archives.

**"Nider is mostly known for his works on witchcraft"**



Bethlehem Moravian minister Charles Seidel donated the incunable to the Young Men's Missionary Society in 1843.

## The Jablonski Papers

The Moravian Archives holds a collection of papers relating to Daniel Ernst Jablonski (1660-1741), grandson of Jan Amos Comenius. Jablonski was a reformed minister at the court of the King of Prussia while he was also bishop of the Polish branch of the Unitas Fratrum. When he ordained David Nitschmann to be the first bishop of the Renewed Moravian Church he passed on the episcopate from the Ancient Unity to the Renewed Unity. In this collection we find a letterbook in which Jablonski kept drafts of letters he sent to theologians through-

out Europe. It also contains a draft of a letter he sent to Zinzendorf in 1730. A few of the papers relate to other family members, like his son Paul Ernst Jablonski and his granddaughter Amalia Dorothee Jablonski. Although this is a valuable collection for the Moravian Archives, its origin is connected with the shady activities of a 19th century German manuscript dealer. The papers were originally part of the Francke Archives in Halle. In the 1850's M.A. Pribil from Berlin took thousands of letters from these collections and sold them on the free market. The

Moravian book collector William Gunn Malin, ignorant of the criminal source of the papers, bought the Jablonski papers and had them sent to America. When the Malin library was placed in the Moravian Archives, the Jablonski papers came with it. According to the present archivist in Halle, Dr. Jürgen Groeschl, his archives still holds nine of Jablonski's letterbooks, dating from 1692-1712; 146 letters from Paul Ernst Jablonski to his father are also still preserved there. A new inventory of the Bethlehem Jablonski papers is now available.



*Portrait of Daniel Ernst Jablonski, attributed to John Valentine Haidt. (Unity Archives in Herrnhut)*

## Augias: cleaning up the stables

Sometimes archivists feel as if they are confronted with a mess comparable to the stables of the mythological King Augias. These stables, containing an immense herd of cattle, had not been cleaned in 30 years. It was Heracles who was called upon to do this job within one day. The makers of an archival software package named their product after King Augias. In Germany this is the standard

computer program used in archives facilities. The Herrnhut Unity Archives has been using Augias since 1996. The Moravian Archives decided it made sense to use the same software as the Herrnhut archives, so that catalogue entries can easily be exchanged between the two institutions. We are the first American users of the English version of Augias. Thanks to this archival soft-

ware it will be possible to catalogue the holdings of the Bethlehem archives according to modern, international archival standards. In the near future a computer will be placed in the reading room so that researchers themselves can make use of all the search possibilities the automated catalogue offers.

***"It will be possible to catalogue the Bethlehem archives according to modern, international archival standards"***

## Work in Progress

Because processing and describing the archives' holdings is our most urgent project, we will continue to keep you informed about ongoing cataloguing work:

\* Painting collection (almost complete)

\* Church registers (in progress)

\* Records of the Moravian Church in the Eastern West Indies, previously catalogued by Lothar Madeheim (information on index cards being transferred into the computer system)

\* Daniel Ernst Jablonski Papers (1692-1809) (complete)



## Newsletter from the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem PA

41 W. Locust St.  
Bethlehem, PA 18018-2757

Hours: Monday through Friday,  
8:00 am–4:30 pm

Phone: 610-866-3255  
Fax: 610-866-9210  
Email: mabethlehem@entermail.net

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[www.moravianchurcharchives.org](http://www.moravianchurcharchives.org)

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Support the archives by  
becoming a Friend of the  
Moravian Archives. Send your  
check to the address above.

## Upcoming Events at the Archives

**‘Origins and Use of Brass Music in the 18th Century Moravian Church’,** a  
lecture by Paul Peucker on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the  
Bethlehem Area Trombone Choir

November 16, 2004, 7:30 pm  
(in the gallery of the archives)

*Please call (610) 866-3255 to reserve your seat*

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2005 Friends’ Day—March 13, 2005

German Script Course—June 6–17, 2005

## Moveable Shelving

When our present facility at 41 West Locust Street was completed in 1977 the two vaults were only partially filled. Over the years the shelves have steadily filled until a point was reached where free vault space was no longer available. Thanks to a generous donation from former board member Carter Litchfield (1980-1990) it is now possible to completely renovate the smaller of the two vaults, almost doubling the storage space by installing moveable shelving. With this compact method of shelving no aisle space is left between the shelves. When a specific shelf has to be accessed the shelves are moved apart by turning a wheel so that a corridor opens up. In order to install this new shelving system, the second vault must be completely emp-

tied. Beginning in October everything will be packed in boxes and temporarily stored in the reading area of the archives. The holdings will be replaced in the vault upon completion in December.

Between October and December the reading room will not be accessible to researchers and the time archives staff can commit to visitors and to answering requests will be quite limited. The renovated vault will be designated as the book vault; all books now stored in the larger vault will be transferred into the second vault. This procedure will create needed space in the main vault for the immediate future. Eventually moveable shelving will also be necessary for the main vault.



*Contents of the smaller vault are placed in 600 boxes and temporarily stored in the reading room.*