

Voices from the Vault

Issue 34 July 2021

Newly Discovered Painting by Haidt

Surprise discoveries can still be made, as we found out last fall. We receive regular updates about auctions. One such email showed a painting that looked very much like a Moravian painting: the colors, the style, and the posture of the sitters strongly reminded us of other Moravian artwork. The painting was not described as a Moravian painting but the description contained a keyword that was on our search list: "Bethlehem." The painting showed the Nativity of Jesus with Mary and Joseph in the manger with the shepherds in the background.

The question was if this painting, brought to our attention by pure coincidence, was actually a Moravian painting. If it was, then the Moravian Archives should try to acquire it.

First of all, we shared the image with several colleagues in the United States and in Europe. They all agreed that the facial expressions, postures of the sitters, and the composition of the painting looked similar to Moravian paintings from the 1740s and 1750s. In order to justify a purchase, we had to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the painting and compare this Nativity painting with known Moravian artwork.

The most prolific Moravian painter of the eighteenth century was German artist Johann Valentin Haidt (1700-1780) who



joined the Moravians in London in 1738 and died in Bethlehem. Known Nativity paintings by Haidt show remarkable similarities with the one that was up for auction: the postures of both Mary and Joseph, the clothing of Mary, the way the infant Jesus was depicted, the placement of the animals in the stable, and even the way the hay was depicted. A known painting of the *Announcement to the Shepherds* by Haidt in the collection of the Wachovia Historical Society shows remarkable similarities with the scene in the upper-right corner.

Based on the numerous similarities with other works by Haidt, we concluded that Haidt was very likely the artist of this painting. Haidt probably painted the Nativity during his years with

the Moravians in Germany (1740-1754). Most of his surviving works from this period are portraits; biblical paintings are rare. With the financial help from Moravian Archives board member David Parker in New York City, we were able to purchase the painting. In late January of 2021 our painting arrived on a flight from Frankfurt, Germany.

Although the painting is in fair condition, the canvas is weak and paint is flaking off in places. The painting is in definite need of conservation. If you would like to help preserve this painting, please send your donation to the Moravian Archives.

Watch the detailed presentation about this painting in the Events section of our website: www.moravianchurcharchives.org/events

Special points of interest:

- Rose Nehring: 22 years of service
- Donation of a painting by John Little
- More digital content available through our Online Finding Aid



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Celebrating Board Emerita Rose Nehring



We happily recognize Board emerita Rose C. Eifert Nehring for her 20+ years of exemplary volunteer service as a member of the Board of Directors of the Moravian Archives. Although her board service began in 1999, Rose's connection to the Archives began much earlier. Seventy-five years ago, in 1946, Rose's German teacher Muriel L. Wilson took her Liberty High School (Bethlehem) German class to the Archives Building in Colonial Hall, the former site of the Moravian Archives. Rose recalls being deeply moved by Christian Schussele's massive *Power of the Gospel* painting, a focal point for visitors to the Archives building.

Although impressed by the Archives' visit, Rose recalls, "When I was younger, I wasn't particularly interested in history; then it was all about memorizing dates. But that all changed," she said with a chuckle, "when I married a seminarian [Rev. Arthur Nehring]." A stark contrast to

her teaching mathematics at the Junior High, Rose began to read the many volumes of *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* and books such as Edmund de Schweinitz's *Life and Times of David Zeisberger* and J. Mortimer Levering's *History of Bethlehem*.

Rose's husband Art, a Moravian pastor and later an educator like Rose, lived and breathed history, and this interest was realized in his longtime volunteer service to the Moravian Historical Society (Nazareth), where he ultimately served as president. Rose and Art would take long drives around the Mid-Atlantic region, visiting Moravian historical sites with the assistance of Bernie Michel's trusty *Moravian Travel Guide*. Others would join them on these trips, and Rose subsequently became immersed in the Moravian history community. In the 1990s, Rose became a board member of the Moravian Historical Society. Given the Nehrings' close friendship with former Moravian archivist, Rev. Vernon Nelson, researchers from around the world would lodge at their residence when conducting extended research visits. Rose recalls what a joy it was to host visitors from near and far; in fact, at least one of those research visitors would later become an Archives'

board member herself!

Rose officially became an Archives' board member upon her appointment by Bethlehem Area Moravians (BAM) in February of 1999. Some of her fondest memories as a board member include the hiring of Dr. Paul Peucker as archivist, attending countless Archives lectures and other events, and seeing the staff and services of the Archives continually grow over the years. But above all, the congeniality of the Archives' board is what stands out to her most during her long tenure.

"All of the board members have been A1 [i.e., top notch] over the years," she observed, citing a particularly sweet example in the chocolate Wilbur Buds regularly brought to meetings by current board member Marian L. Shatto from Lititz. Rose continues as an emerita board member, following her departure from the board in September of 2020, and we are grateful for the continued leadership she provides on behalf of the Archives.

Thank you, Rose!



New Online Programs

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted the Moravian Archives to increase its online programming over the past year and a half. In October of 2020, we had a virtual opening of the "Zinzendorf in America" exhibit, joined by Consul General of Germany David Gill and Yasemin Pamuk. Since then, we have hosted virtual lectures by Marita Gruner, Tom McCullough, Paul Peucker, Christina Petterson, Richard

Pointer, and Mark Turner. Several lectures have drawn over one hundred participants, and we are excited about the opportunity to connect with those interested in Moravian history topics near and far. In addition to virtual lectures, we have begun to offer workshops to online participants.

Tom McCullough led a three-part workshop series titled "Genealogy at the Moravian Archives." Meeting

on Tuesday evenings, twelve participants learned about various records genres preserved in the Moravian Archives, how to access them for family history research, and how to build upon research using non-Moravian sources.

In addition to the genealogy workshops, Paul Peucker and Tom McCullough also hosted a three-hour online refresher workshop for German script handwriting. Sixteen

German script readers took part in the first workshop, held on May 13, 2021, which focused on writings by Moravian women. Subsequent virtual workshops, scheduled for July 13 and September 9, will focus, respectively, on writings by Black Moravians and on common abbreviations in German script.

Register now to reserve your spot!

Moravian Preparatory School Records Processed

In 1971 Moravian Preparatory School merged with the Moravian Seminary for Girls to become Moravian Academy.

Moravian Preparatory School (MPS) was a co-educational day school from Kindergarten through 12th grade, overseen by the Moravian Congregation of Bethlehem. As an entity of the church, the records

of MPS are the responsibility of the Moravian Archives. In 1975 large filing cabinets were transferred from the newly formed Moravian Academy to the old Archives' building on Elizabeth Avenue. These filing cabinets containing administrative and student records, were emptied into boxes and have been stored in the vault of the Moravian

Archives with little processing for the last forty-five years.

Today, the collection is rehoused and fully processed. Processing archivist Kaitlin Trainor began this project in January of 2020. The processed collection of 136 archival boxes or 77 linear feet includes records of the school from 1834 until 1971, such as administrative

records, course catalogs, year-books, school publications, and the student files.

This collection does have restrictions in place due to the nature of some of the materials but the Archives is very pleased to be able to provide access to this unique collection.

An Alaskan-Caribbean Connection

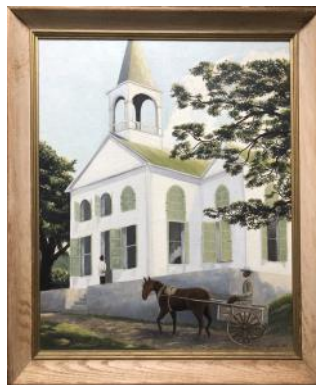


John Little had just planted an apricot orchard outside his home in Oregon when he received a letter from Br. Edwin Kortz in Bethle-

hem. Kortz, director of the Moravian Board of Foreign Missions, asked Little if he would like to serve the Moravian Church as treasurer in Alaska. Although the letter came as a complete surprise, Little and his family accepted the call and moved to Alaska in the summer of 1967.

The Littles knew the Moravian Church from St. Croix, where John had worked as chief electrician for the Virgin Islands Power Corporation in the early 1960s. During those years they attended Friedensfeld Moravian Church (Midlands), where John's wife Nell served as organist. In 1965 the Littles returned stateside expecting to live on eighty acres of forest

land in southern Oregon. But the Littles were not forgotten among the Moravians in St. Croix, and when Br. Kortz came to visit the island in April of 1967, their name came up in conversation. Kortz was looking for a treasurer and business manager for the church in Alaska



and immediately thought John Little was the right man for this job.

John Little served the Moravian Church in Alaska as treasurer and builder until 1972; he died in 2005. Little was not only an energetic worker for the church who oversaw many construction projects, but he was also a talented artist who painted beautiful oil paintings. He painted this view of the Friedensfeld church in St. Croix while living in Alaska. In April of this year his widow Nell and his oldest son John donated the painting to the Moravian Archives. We gladly accepted it as a testimony to the service of John Little for the Moravian Church and as a tangible sign of Moravian connections between Alaska and St. Croix.

Spring Cleanup Day

Every spring we reserve a day to focus on projects that are in need of attention. This year with the help of several local board members, we were able to work on our sale inventory in Vault II and on the grounds of the Moravian Archives.

Board members Diane Shaw, Alice Mosebach, her husband Craig, and our circulation/office assistant Emma Horning were able to re-organize our for-sale publications in Vault II, allowing for more space and easier access. While work was

going on inside the building, the remainder of the Archives' staff together with board members Tom Bross and Mike Long worked to provide a much needed facelift to our exterior grounds. The group removed weeds, spread mulch (a total of five truck loads!), and sowed grass seed in places where trees and bushes had been removed the previous year.

We are very pleased with the end result and are happy to report that our grass is already sprouting!



From left to right: Thomas Bross, Jonathan Ennis, Kelly Givens, Emma Horning, Kaitlin Trainor, Thomas McCullough, Paul Peucker, Michael Long, Alice Mosebach, and Craig Mosebach

Newsletter from the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem PA

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Upcoming Events

German Script Refresher Workshop: Black Writing

July 13, 2021, 4:00 PM—7:00 PM
Online Workshop \$35.00

Register online www.moravianchurcharchives.org/event

Archives Summer Soiree

August 24, 2021
More details to follow

German-English Advent Singstunde

December 7, 2021, 7:00 pm
Bilingual worship service at the Old Chapel, Bethlehem

Moravian Archives Closed

Monday, July 5, 2021
July 26 2021– August 6, 2021
September 6, 2021

For the most accurate and up to date listing of archives lectures, events and closures, please visit our website www.moravianchurcharchives.org/event



New in stock in the Moravian History Store are rectangular and round slates - perfect for entertaining! Each slate is etched and comes complete with accessories, including a cheese knife, bamboo tongs, and a white chalk marker.

Another new item is a decorative dish towel featuring a 1942 Bi-Centennial map of the city of Bethlehem. This unique towel is the perfect way to show your Bethlehem pride or to gift to those who call the city home!

News and Announcements

NEW CARPET

New carpet was installed in the gallery of the Moravian Archives. After twenty years the old carpet was beginning to lift in various places causing a safety hazard for our visitors. Thanks to Meticulous and the Moravian College Facilities Department our gallery space is like new and ready to welcome visitors to our Zinzendorf in America exhibit once again.

NEWLY DIGITIZED COLLECTIONS

- *Kampf und Sieg* (periodical)
- *Moravian Missions* (periodical)
- Records of Labrador Mission Stations (MissLabr)
- Greenland photographs

- Printed Inuktitut language materials
- Photograph Albums 10-20, 26-32 and 36-37
- Memoir collections from Emmaus, Lancaster, Lititz, Nazareth, Schoeneck, Bethlehem, and York
- Various 18th and 19th-century church registers

GHI GERMAN SCRIPT COURSE

Meeting daily by Zoom from January 25 until February 5, Paul Peucker and Tom McCullough led a syndicated course in German script handwriting with fourteen staff members of the German Historical Institute (GHI) based in Washington, DC. The Archives was excited

to work with leading research fellows, developers, librarians, editors, and other scholars from this distinguished "center for advanced historical research." GHI promotes research in German/European and Jewish history, history of the Americas and transatlantic history, and global and transregional history.

UPDATE: UNCOMMON BONDS PROJECT

Supported by a Digitizing Hidden Special Collections & Archives grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), the Archives has successfully digitized and made accessible online the documents preserved in its Labrador Mission Stations record group.

Currently, those interested may access 57,578 reproduction images created during the project on our Online Finding Aid at <https://www.moravianchurcharchives.findbuch.net/php/main.php#4d6973734c616272>. Later, these digital images will be made accessible in a second place of discovery: the Digital Archives Initiative (DAI) of Memorial University of Newfoundland's Queen Elizabeth II Library (QEII). Eventually, the Archives' team will visit Labrador and discuss the project with residents in Northern Labrador.

For ongoing project news, please see the *Uncommon Bonds* website at <https://uncommonbonds.org/>.