

# Voices from the Vault

Issue 39

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## ARCHIVISTS VISIT LABRADOR



Earlier this year, staff of the Moravian Archives (MAB) visited Labrador, Canada, as a capstone to the *Uncommon Bonds: Labrador Inuit and Moravian Missions* grant project that we started in 2020, in partnership with Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), the Nunatsiavut Government, National Heritage Digitization Strategy (Canada), and the Moravian Church in Newfoundland and Labrador. This project involved digitizing nearly 58,000 pages of materials preserved at the MAB from the Moravian Church's missionary stations in Labrador from 1764 to 1944.

In an effort to introduce people to the *Uncommon Bonds* project and to learn ways it could be enhanced, our team took part in a series of open houses in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Nain, Hopedale, and Makkovik. A bonus feature of each open house was a book talk by Tom Gordon, who presented his new book *Called Upstairs: Moravian Inuit Music in Labrador*. Inclement

weather conditions prompted adjustments to our itinerary, and we split up into smaller groups to ensure that open houses would be held in each community as planned. Participating in the short presentations and informal discussions were Mark David Turner (OKâlaKatiget Society), Paul Peucker (MAB), Tom Gordon (MUN), Michaela Doucette

(MUN), Kayla Cavanaugh (MAB), Jonathan Ennis (MAB), and Tom McCullough (MAB). Paul Peucker and Mark David Turner were also interviewed at CBC Radio One in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and at the OKâlaKatiget Society in Nain.

We are grateful to our hosts at *Them Days*, CBC Radio One, the OKâlaKatiget Society, the Il-lusuak Cultural Centre, Hopedale Moravian Church, Makkovik Moravian Church, J.C. Erhardt Memorial School, and the Nunatsiavut Government Education Division. Visiting Labrador was a unique opportunity to form lasting connections with people there, as well as enhance our understanding of Labrador records preserved at the MAB.



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## MEET OUR INTERN: DALLAN REIMELS

Dallan Reimels, a high school student at the George School in Newtown, PA, kindly volunteered time during summer vacation describing over 150 images.

Dallan writes: "While interning at the Moravian Archives I cataloged the scrapbook of Augustus H. Leibert. Using the AUGIAS archival software, I cataloged each drawing or print and made it available to researchers and the

broader community. Growing up and looking at the Gemeinhaus and the truly unique culture around me, I knew I wanted to be a part of its preservation. I am most proud of creating something that other people will be able to use. Not many times at my age are we given the opportunity to learn amongst experts and dive deep into work like I was able to do. The most valuable thing I

learned at the Archives was that history matters and that we can all do things on the local level to preserve it. We all think that history is a finite object that cannot be changed or lost, when in reality history is fragile and needs to be protected and preserved. The internship impacted me by giving me an in-depth look into what real work in history is like. I was able to see

what it's like to be hands-on with real historical documents and learned skills to correctly archive them. My advice for students looking for an internship is: if you have a passion, find somewhere you can use it for the better of your community." Thank you, Dallan, for your hard work; you have made a difference and improved access here at the Archives!

## BETHLEHEM CONFERENCE ON MORAVIAN HISTORY & MUSIC

The Moravian Archives does not only collect and preserve historical records, it also shares this history with the public. One opportunity to do so is the bi-annual Bethlehem Conference on Moravian History & Music. The Archives organizes this conference together with Moravian University, Moravian Theological Seminary, the Moravian Music Foundation, and the Moravian Histori-

cal Society. Additional funding was received from Bethlehem Area Moravians and Penn State University Press.

This year the conference took place August 17-19. In light of the nomination of various Moravian settlements for UNESCO World Heritage status, this year's theme was World – Heritage – Site. Presenters from Germany, Tanzania, the United Kingdom,

Austria, Sweden, South Africa, Lithuania, Denmark, Australia, Switzerland and the United States gave lectures on various aspects of Moravian history. Thanks to a grant from the Bethlehem Area Moravians, we were able to livestream the lectures. Highlights were the keynote lectures by Dr. Christina Pettersson and Dr. Winelle Kirton-Roberts, as well as the concert

by the Lititz Moravian Collegium Musicum. During the conference the Archives played a central role. The registration desk was located at the Archives and the opening reception, the lunchtime lectures and discussions, and the soirée were all held at the Archives. Many conference participants expressed great appreciation for the hospitality provided by the Archives.

## "BOTH ENSLAVED AND FREE" WALKING TOURS

From its beginnings, Moravian Bethlehem has been a diverse place, including people from various parts of Europe, Native Americans, and people of African descent. In order to uncover the lives of people of African descent, much research has been done in recent years. An in-depth study into the lives of people of African

descent living in the Moravian communities in the Lehigh Valley by Archives' Board member and professor at Lehigh University, Dr. Scott Gordon, can be found in issue 23/2 of the *Journal of Moravian History*. Recently, a working group was formed at Central Moravian Church in Bethlehem, PA, to develop a

walking tour about the topic of enslavement in Bethlehem. In addition to members of Central's Racial Justice Team and History Committee, the working group includes two of our board members, Diane Shaw and Scott Gordon, as well as archivist Paul Peucker. This collaboration resulted in a script for a walking

tour, written by Scott Gordon, which takes participants to the places where enslaved Moravians lived and worked. The working group consulted with the members of Home Church in Winston-Salem, NC, where a similar tour, Salem Walk, already exists. Soon the walking tour will be offered to the general public.

## MORAVIAN HISTORY STORE

The Moravian History Store is ready for the holidays and our shop is filled with gifts celebrating Moravian history and culture! We are excited to offer several new items in the shop this season in addition to old favorites. Looking to send a message to friends and family this holiday season? Greeting cards celebrating the newly restored

painting "Nativity of Christ" by Johann Valentin Haidt are available in packs of ten or as single cards. Just in time for the return of chillier weather and warm, cozy drinks, we have stainless steel travel mugs (in four colors!) etched with a Moravian star.

Our Herrnhuter stars are fully stocked and ready to shine a

bright light on your holiday season with paper and plastic stars in a variety of sizes and colors. We are also excited to continue our tradition of carrying a selection of limited edition items such as a Herrnhut 5-inch red glitter star (2023's "Special Edition" star) and an Advent calendar featuring an orange and white star.

Community support of the Moravian History Store has continued to be tremendous, and we are so thankful to each of our customers! All sales from the shop directly support our mission and have allowed us to further collect and preserve the records and materials of the Moravians: [www.moravianhistorystore.org](http://www.moravianhistorystore.org)

## COLLECTIONS REVISITED

Archival processing is not a linear process, especially with a living collection. Although we as archivists try to process collections in a way that allows for growth both in the collection and in our practices, it is difficult to plan for emerging technologies or change in practices within our field 10, 20, or even 50 years from now. As a part of various long-term goals of the archives, processing archivist Kaitlin Trainor has been reprocessing or rearranging, re-describing, and/or rehousing previously processed archival collections to improve physical or intellectual control of some of the collections housed within

our vault.

During this long-term project, Trainor first focused her efforts, with the help of archives volunteers, interns, and other staff, on identifying duplicate materials within the collection. Identifying duplicates allows the archives to continue to ensure there is space for the expected growth of our collection. This process also allows the archives to make informed decisions about materials already in the vault as well as new accessions to the collection.

Secondly, a priority has been the safe long-term storage of various materials. Rehousing materials within the vault into

archival enclosures, folders, and boxes ensures the long-term use of the materials for future generations while also consolidating collections into more appropriately sized housing for long-term preservation. We have also prioritized the digitization of collection items whose continued physical use presents a threat to their continued access. Most notably, MAB interns have reboxed and digitized the significant collection of glass plate photographs.

Lastly, Trainor and other staff have focused efforts on improving and applying a locally controlled vocabulary to MAB collections. Some collections at

MAB have been cataloged and accessible for many years; however, the language one archivist may have used to describe something in 1800 is different than one may describe in 1950 or how we search for things in 2023. Controlling the language to describe various collection materials helps to aid in the discovery of materials for researchers and ourselves.

This is a slow but necessary process. Over time, we hope to gain a better sense of when we may reach vault capacity, improve the access to our collections, and continue to decrease the backlog of unprocessed collections in our care.

## BYLAWS AND BOOK OF ORDER



The work of the Moravian Archives is regulated by two directive documents: our bylaws and the *Book of Order of the Moravian Church in America, Northern Province*.

During the past years, the Archives' Board has reviewed the bylaws and decided to make some revisions, specifically to the way the board is composed.

This summer, the revised bylaws were approved and took effect. The revised bylaws give more flexibility to Bethlehem Area Moravians (BAM), one of our parent organizations, when it comes to appointing members to

our board. The revised bylaws also allow for a larger board so that more people can be involved with the governance of our institution.

At the same time, paragraph 605 of the *Book of Order* regarding the Moravian Archives was thoroughly updated and revised. The new paragraph provides a better framework for the work of the Archives, its

responsibility for the records of the church, and the function of the Board. At the same time, the wait period for public access was reduced from 75 years to 50 years.

Both documents can be found on our website under about/general info.

## NEWLY DIGITIZED COLLECTIONS

As a follow up to our previous issue, the glass plate magic lantern slides digitized by interns from Moravian University and additions to the Drawings and Prints collection from the Deborah Rinderknecht bequest have been made available through our online finding aid.

We have also recently digitized a series of fifty-one diaries that were kept by Moravian mission stations in Nicaragua between the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, and these can also be found through our online finding aid. These documents, some written in German and others in English, provide fascinating and invaluable insight into the activities of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua.

Recently we received a submission of church records from Grace Moravian Church in Westland, Michigan, that included four Church Registers. These have already been digitized and

while they cannot be made available online due to the date range they cover, this will allow them to be more easily accessed by archives staff for research questions while the registers themselves can remain safely stored in the vault.

Another ongoing project is the preservation of audiovisual materials held in our collection. As part of this, we recently tested a selection of film reels and microfilms, including several newspa-

pers, using A-D Strips. This is a product that can detect gasses produced by film with a cellulose acetate base as it ages and breaks down and helps gauge an item's condition. This has given us valuable insight into the condition of these materials and what should be prioritized for conservation and digitization moving forward.

## Newsletter from the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem PA

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## Upcoming Events

**Lecture: Discovering the Nativity**  
Steven Erisoty, Heather Reinert, & Paul Peucker  
4:00 pm, Wednesday, November 29, 2023

**German-English Advent Singstunde**  
7:00 pm, Tuesday, December 5, 2023  
Old Chapel, Bethlehem

**Moravian History Store Open Saturdays in December!**  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
December 2, 9, 16

**Moravian Archives Closed**  
Thursday, November 23rd, 2023 & Friday, November 24th, 2023  
December 19, 2023– January 1, 2024

For the most accurate and up-to-date listing of archives lectures, events, and closures, please visit our website: [www.moravianchurcharchives.org/event](http://www.moravianchurcharchives.org/event)



## News and Announcements

### ARCHIVIST MEETING

Moravian Archivists gathered in Bethlehem ahead of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bethlehem Conference of Moravian History & Music. Representatives from the Unity Archives, Moravian Church Archives Southern Province, Moravian University, Moravian Archives British Province, Moravian Historical Society, Moravian Archives Northern Province, Canadian Moravian Historical Society, Moravian Archives Czech Province, and Moravian Gracehill Trust all met in Bethlehem for a productive meeting.

This meeting of archivists followed just nine months after the Unity Conference of Archivists in Herrnhut, Germany, in October of

last year. This conference brought together representatives of various Provincial archives from across the globe and provided a space to share successes, to discuss the challenges that each province is facing, to find ways to help each other, and to set common goals.

This year's meeting allowed us all to catch up with our counterparts across the globe and discuss each Province's respective progress since our last meeting.

### NATIVITY PAINTING

At an auction in Germany in 2020 the Moravian Archives acquired a painting depicting the Nativity of Christ. Attributed to Johann Valentin Haidt (1700–1780), it is the only

known surviving biblical painting by the artist that was made before he came to North America in 1754.

When the Archives acquired this painting it was in poor condition, exhibiting damage to the canvas, flaking paint, and discoloration. It has since been conserved by Steven Erisoty, a professional conservator who has worked with the Moravian Archives on several projects. Now, the original beauty can be appreciated not only in our current exhibit about *The Archival Process*, but also for many generations to come.

Steven Erisoty will speak at the Moravian Archives on November 29 about the conservation process.

### MARIAN COUCH

On April 3, 2023, Marian Couch passed away in Winston-Salem, NC. She was born in the same town 98 years earlier. The years in between, however, she, and her husband Paul, served the Moravian Church in many different places: New York City; Indianapolis, IN; Allentown, Philadelphia, Bethlehem, PA; New Philadelphia, Dublin, OH; and Winston-Salem, NC. When Marian died, she left a substantial bequest to the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem. We greatly appreciate her generosity and her thoughtfulness and we will use her gift to preserve the history of the Moravian community for future generations.