Earlier this year, staff of the Moravian Archives (MAB) visited Labrador, Canada, as a capstone to the Uncommon Bonds: Labrador Inuit and Moravian Missionaries 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 Cavenaugh (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 Ilisuwat 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.
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 AUGHAS 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 Historical 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 chiller 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
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, rehousing, 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 rehoused 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.

BILAWS AND BOOK OF ORDER

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 20th 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. Part of this, we recently tested a selection of film reels and microfilms, including several newspapers, 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.
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

News and Announcements

ARCHIVIST MEETING
Moravian Archivists gathered in Bethlehem ahead of the 8th 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.