

The Moravians

in the

Southeast

North Carolina and the U.S. Virgin Islands



Preservation Issues

Moravian Preservation Issues

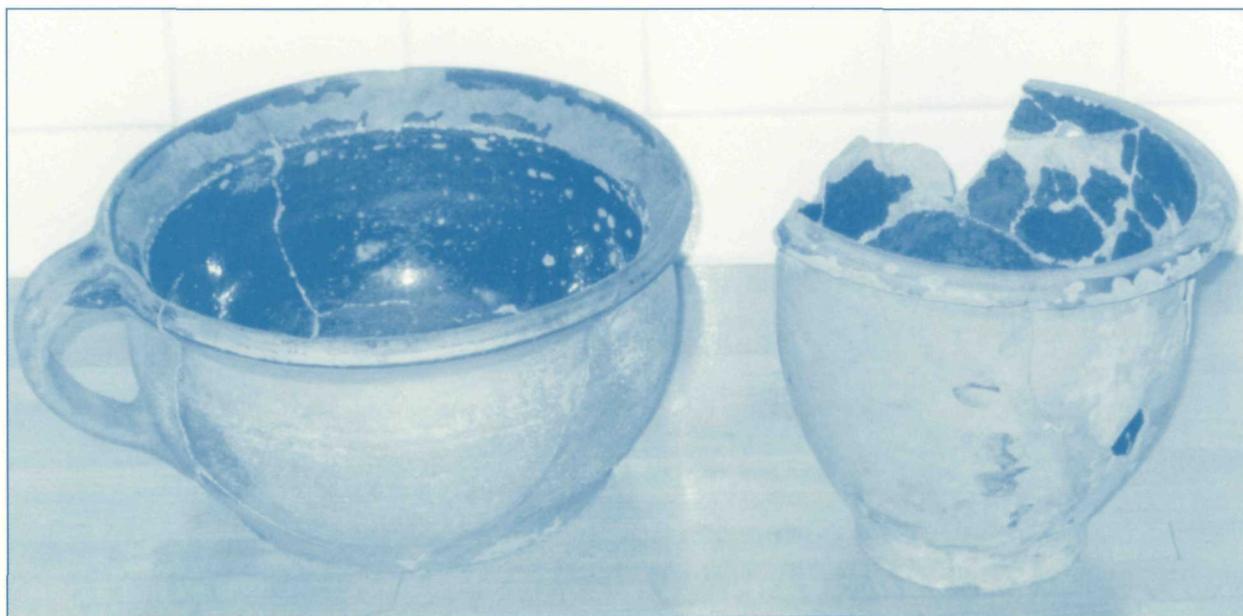
Introduction

On January 20, 1999 and April 19, 2001, the Secretary of the Interior formally designated the site of Bethabara and the community of Bethania, North Carolina, as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), respectively. These designations brought to a close an effort by the National Register Programs Division (NRPD), in the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service (NPS), and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, to provide national recognition of two colonial-period Moravian-settlement properties in that state. These properties were originally identified, evaluated, and determined to be potentially nationally significant as part of a Southeastern Historic Sites Theme Study developed by the NRPD and its Southeastern preservation partners in the early 1990s.

Earlier, between 1964 and 1975, the National Park Service recognized the national significance of four other Moravian properties (Old Salem Historic District, Single Brothers' House, and Salem Tavern, in North Carolina; and Gemeinhaus-De Schweintz Residence, in Pennsylvania) as NHLs, primarily for their colonial architecture. In addition, numerous individual Moravian associated properties have been listed to the National Register from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, in the 1970s. Although formal recognition by NHL designation and National Register listing of several Moravian-related properties has been accomplished, neither the NPS nor its preservation partners have ever undertaken a comprehensive study of the preservation issues for this particular group of historically and culturally related properties.

The restricted geographical grouping of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Moravian properties in these three areas of the United States noted above is no accident. The establishment of Moravian communities, missions, estates, farmsteads, cemeteries, and landscapes was the result of a church sponsored program of planned development by the European and American Moravian church elders, who envisioned using the collective efforts of the Moravian church members to establish and fund missions for the betterment of Native Americans and enslaved African-Americans in the New World.

The story of the Moravian church, its members, and its unique place in American history is not well known and sometimes unevenly presented in the areas in which it exists. Following the designation of Bethania as an NHL, the NRPD decided to



Many of the cultural resources associated with the Moravians are archeological in nature. The ceramic vessels above, and other items unearthed in Old Salem, North Carolina, tell the story of how Moravian culture evolved in the American setting and how cultural cross-fertilization occurred between the Moravians and the "Strangers," or their non-Moravian neighbors.

undertake a study of Moravian historic properties in the Southern Province of the United States—which once included North Carolina and the U.S. Virgin Islands—in order to develop a coherent plan for the preservation of Moravian properties by identifying the preservation issues facing these historic properties. To this end, the NRPD obtained an NPS Challenge Cost-Share Grant to visit these two areas of the Southern Province in order to conduct interviews with people both inside and outside the Moravian church who are responsible for the stewardship of the physical remains of the Moravian legacy.

The intent of this publication is to acquaint the reader with a general history of the Moravian movement in the United States, to outline the previous efforts to preserve the physical remains of the Moravian past, and, from the interviews conducted by the NRPD, to catalog the preservation issues currently associated with these properties and to emphasize which issues need to be addressed in order to preserve for the future this important part of the nation's past.



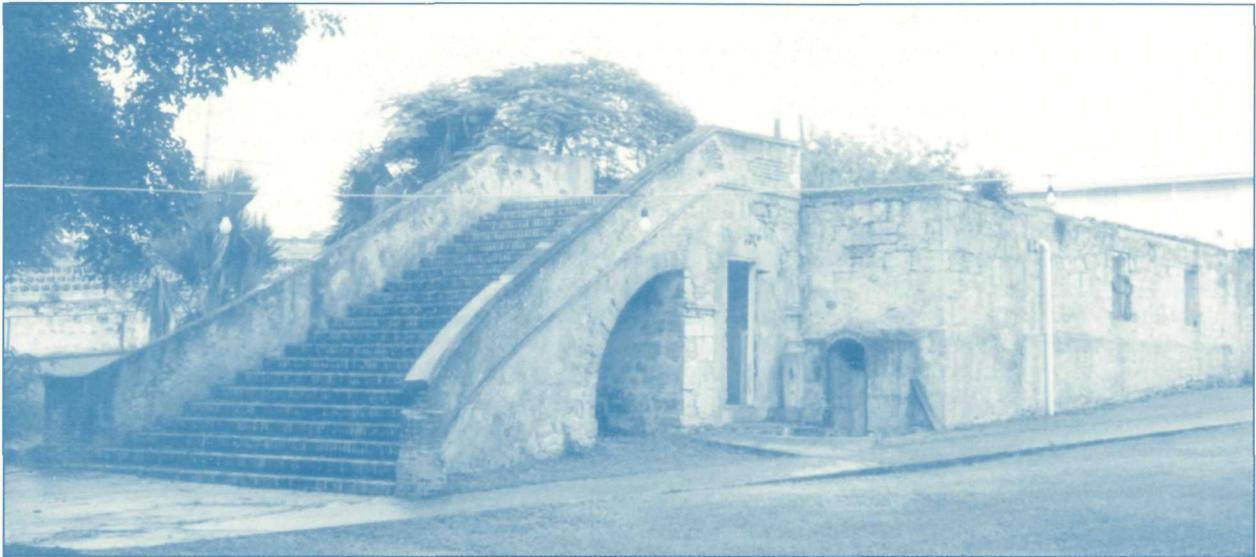
An excellent place to study Moravian decorative arts, as well as those of the early American South, is at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), located in the Frank L. Horton Museum Center in Old Salem, North Carolina. For those interested in conducting original research into the Moravian past, the Moravian Archives is located a short distance from the museum in the Archie K. Davis Center. The Archives is the repository of the records of the Moravian Church, Southern Province, and its members. The records extend back to 1753, the beginning of the Moravian Church in North Carolina.

Moravian History

The Moravian church traces its origins to central Europe, in the areas of Bohemia and Moravia, of the early fifteenth century. At that time, religious controversies between the peoples of these areas and the Church of Rome emerged over many issues, both secular and religious, including communion participation, church ownership of land, submission to foreign clergy, use of Latin in the service, and the sale of indulgences. John Huss, a Roman Catholic priest, Rector of the University of Prague, and a native Bohemian, spoke out from his church's pulpit for reform in the church. In 1415, he was ordered to appear before the Council of Constance to recant his teachings. Huss refused to recant his preachings and was burned at the stake for being a heretic.

Huss' martyrdom inspired some groups to oppose the Church of Rome, by force of arms, although a large number of people, first called Moderates, simply formed their own church, in Kunwald, in Bohemia. Later called The Brethren of the Law of Christ, this ancestor group of the present Moravian Church—presently referred to as The Ancient Unity—is recognized as the oldest Protestant denomination in existence, and predates Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation by almost fifty years.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, some 200 Ancient Unity congregations, containing hundreds of thousands of people were living in Moravia, Bohemian, and Poland. However, during the Counter Reformation of 1620-1628, the Holy Roman Empire of the Hapsburgs destroyed most of the Moravian churches and villages as part of an effort to exterminate Protestantism in central Europe. During this period of persecution, Bishop John Amos Comenius urged the members of the Ancient Unity to cherish their accustomed ways and pass them on in secret until better times.



Other archeological resources consist of building ruins, such as that of the "manse," or parsonage, at Friedensberg Moravian Church in Frederiksted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The "welcoming arms" configuration of the staircase is a common feature of Caribbean architecture.

For the next 100 years the Moravian church continued to function, but underground. It was not until May of 1722 that Christian David, a Moravian convert, met Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf and convinced him to allow Moravians to reside on his estate in southern Germany and re-establish their church in the open for the first time. The community they established in 1722 was called Herrnhut, meaning "*in the care of the Lord.*" The first group of church members David led to the counts' estate came from Moravia, hence giving the present members of the church the name, "Moravians."

The people living at Herrnhut were a mixed lot, consisting of Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Ancient Unity, making religious disputes inevitable. By 1727, Zinzendorf called them together to approve the so-called Brotherly Agreement, or Covenant for Christian Living, based on the writings of Bishop Comenius, which set forth the principles of day to day Christian living, and upon which the modern Moravian church is based.

A major element of this church doctrine, called the *oeconomy*, became the economic basis for Herrnhut. The Elders of the church watched over every phase of secular and religious life in the community. The community operated on a communal basis in which all members contributed according to their abilities and shared according to their needs. The Moravian church owned and controlled all the resources upon which the community depended, whether it was land to farm or timber and clay for bricks to build houses. The community's labor went toward an endeavor of establishing missions to spread the gospel among the Native American and enslaved peoples of the New World. Five years after the Brotherly Covenant was approved, the first Moravian missionaries were sent to the Danish West Indies island of St. Thomas (now one of the U.S. Virgin Islands) in 1732, and the first mission established there in 1737 was called New Herrnhut.

The decision to introduce Moravian missionaries into the Danish West Indies grew out of a chance meeting between Count Zinzendorf and Anton Ulrich, an enslaved black man from St. Thomas he met during the coronation of King Christian VI in Copenhagen. Ulrich convinced the count that the Danish Islands were a fertile ground for missionary work among the enslaved Africans. In 1732, David Nitschmann and Leonard Dober went to St. Thomas to preach to the enslaved people on the estates on that island. After five years, they were able to purchase an estate (New Herrnhut) on the eastern end of St. Thomas, along with 30 to 40 enslaved Africans. This location enabled them to be close to other enslaved peoples on nearby estates. Between 1737 and 1843, eight additional Moravian missions would be founded on the three Danish West Indies islands, garnering more than 13,000 converts among the enslaved peoples, prior to emancipation in 1848.

The success of the church's efforts in the West Indies encouraged the Moravians to seek approval from the British Parliament to create other Moravian missions in the British North American colonies. Parliament declared the Moravian church to be "*An Ancient Protestant Episcopal Church, most similar in doctrine to our own,*" opening the way for founding congregations and missions in North America. A short-lived attempt to found a Moravian community in Georgia (1735-40) was successfully re-established the next year (1741) with the founding of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

In 1753, a group of Moravian settlers traveled south along the Great Wagon Road from Pennsylvania to the Piedmont of North Carolina where they established Bethabara, or "*House of Passage*," on the Wachovia Tract purchased from the Proprietors of North Carolina. In 1759, settlers from Bethabara established a permanent farming community at Bethany, meaning "*House of Dates*," today called Bethania, and in 1766 Salem, meaning "*Peace*." Salem became the headquarters of the Moravian church in that colony.

With the increase in the numbers of members in the Moravian church, the elders in Europe proposed the establishment of a Northern Province, which included Pennsylvania and missions to Native peoples in the Northeast, Laborador, and Greenland, and a Southern Province, which included the settlements in North Carolina and missions in the Danish West Indies. Missionaries to serve in the West Indies came from Europe, and the Southern and Northern Provinces, well into the late nineteenth century.

One of the primary efforts to assist enslaved peoples in the Southern Province was a concerted effort to provide training in useful trades—carpentry, masonry, basketry, smithing, nursing, and teaching—by which they could achieve, if not their freedom, at least a better livelihood for themselves and their families. The labor and skills of Moravian-owned enslaved Africans and that of enslaved black Moravian church members greatly helped to build the Moravian establishments in both North Carolina and the Danish West Indies. Colonial Moravian communities and plantations must have presented a unique picture where whites and blacks worshiped, lived, and worked together, and were buried in the same consecrated ground, even though one group was unfree.

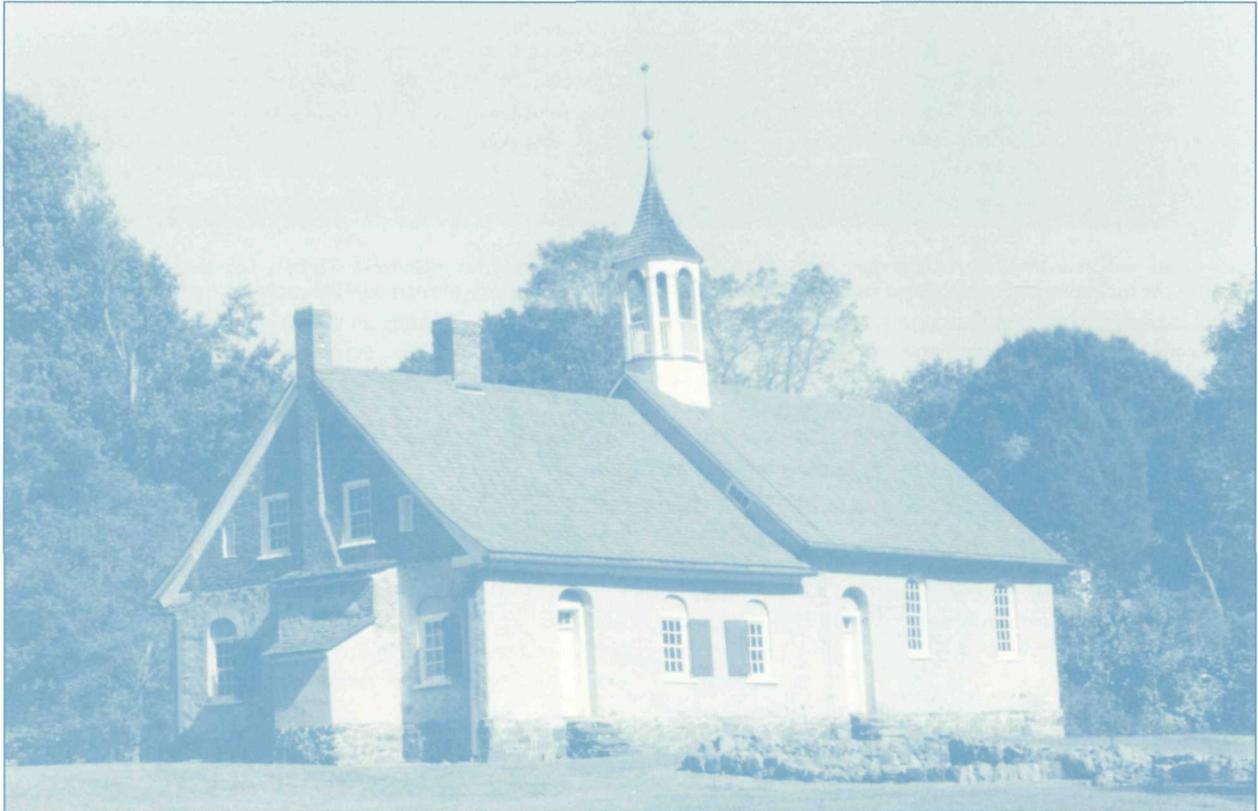
During the nineteenth century, the white North Carolina Moravians became more and more submerged into the cultural views of the majority white population in that state. As a result, by 1816, the church elders no longer permitted white and black Moravians to be buried in the same cemetery, or God's Acre. By 1822, Black Moravians no longer attended church with their white brethren, but were meeting in their own church. St. Philips church, in Salem, completed in 1861, is considered to be one of the oldest all-black Moravian church buildings in the Southeastern United States.



The majority of Moravian resources extant consist of active and viable building stock. Above is the New Herrnhut Moravian Church, situated on the site of the first permanent Moravian mission in the Caribbean. The first missionaries arrived in 1732. Five years later, an estate on the eastern end of the island was purchased and given the name "New Herrnhut." The plantation was a commercial and educational success, but after an 1867 hurricane, most of the buildings were abandoned and allowed to fall into disrepair. Today, only the church building, the bell tower, cistern, and the foundation of the original manse remain.

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hile the Moravian congregations in North Carolina were moving physically and socially apart, in the Danish West Indies, the white Moravian missionaries, by their enlightened but paternalistic efforts to improve the lot of enslaved blacks, had gained the respect not only of thousands of black converts, but also the Danish colonial administration. Here, white missionaries, their families, and their black congregations worshiped in the same churches and were all buried in the same God's Acres. By the 1830s, far sighted administrators like Governor General Baron Pieter Von Scholten realized that emancipation in the Danish West Indies was imminent and wanted to prepare the enslaved peoples for this eventuality. To this end, he recruited the Moravians to be teachers at a series of schools built at government expense, because of their history of providing compulsory religious and secular education for the enslaved Africans on the islands. Many buildings on some of the Moravian properties in the U.S. Virgin Islands continue as church schools to the present day.



The Gemeinhaus (or church) at Bethabara. Constructed in 1788, the fieldstone and scored stucco building replaced the original log building that was built in 1755-1756. The building is composed of two distinct sections under roofs of different height and joined at the gable ends; the taller section contains a hall and a large room with a gallery under a vaulted ceiling that housed the Moravian sanctuary; the second section, which has a gable roof with splayed eaves, shelters four rooms about a central chimney and originally served as a parsonage.

Preservation of Moravian Historic Properties

One of the most significant aspects discerned from the interviews conducted by the authors of this brochure was the *"sense of place"* Moravians continually expressed for their historic properties, both in deed and word. Years after the Moravians had virtually abandoned downtown Salem, and Bethabara was no longer extant, their concern for the history of their church made them leaders in efforts to acquire, preserve, and interpret the history of these places. In the Virgin Islands, where the linkage between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century church missions and the resident population is particularly strong, one woman from St. John noted, *"I feel like the church is my back yard."*

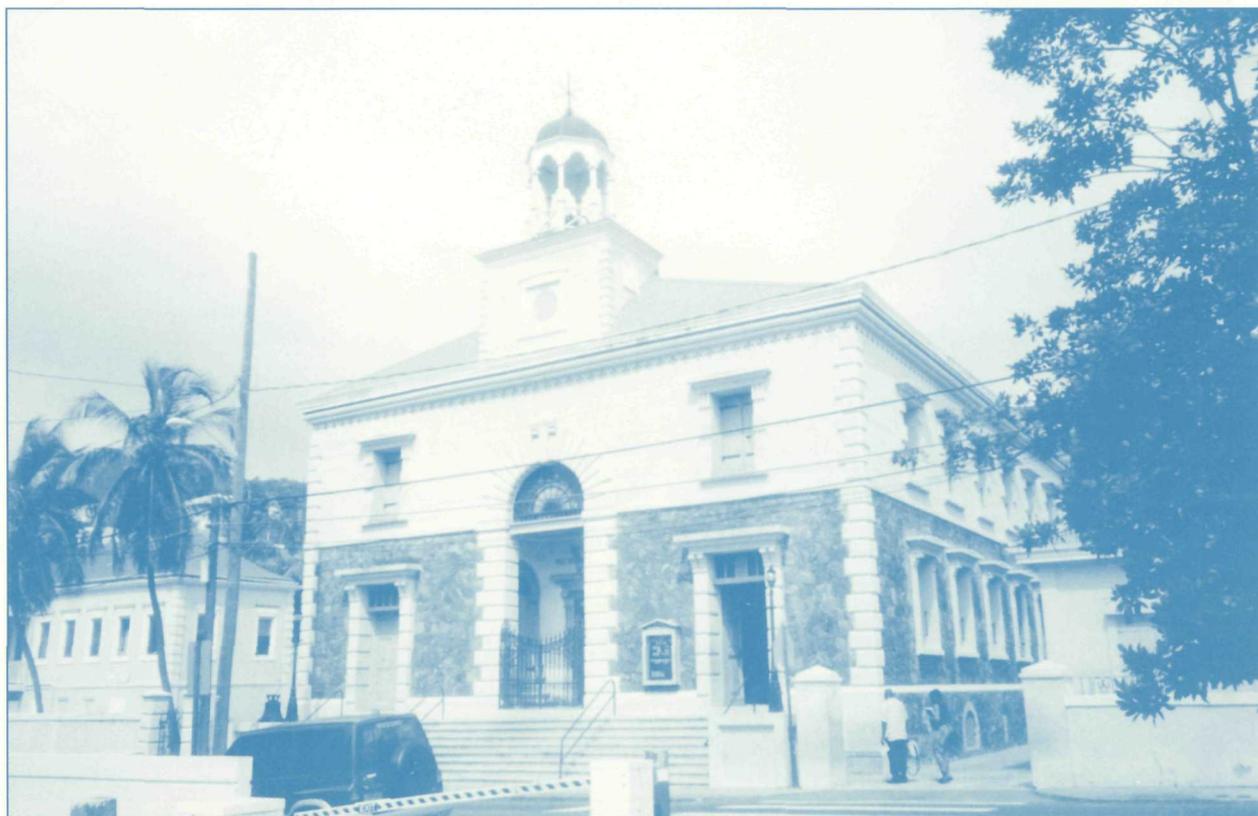
In the 1950s, North Carolina Moravian members, in conjunction with local preservationists, began an effort to acquire, restore, and interpret Old Salem under the aegis of a non-profit group (Old Salem, Incorporated). At the beginning, the effort was directed toward creating a "Williamsburg" setting, where the pre-Revolutionary War Moravian settlement and some of its industries were showcased for visitors. Over time, Old Salem has realized that it could not sustain itself solely from tourist

revenue and still preserve the historic Moravian resources. Today, the non-profit group relies on a number of preservation partners—Moravians, private citizens, city and state governments—to work together on an expanded vision of the history of the Moravian town of Old Salem.

Likewise, in the 1950s, the endeavor to preserve Bethabara involved a long-term effort headed by local Moravians to acquire and conduct large-scale archeological and historical investigations, under the direction of Dr. Stanley South, of the first Moravian town site to prepare it for public interpretation. Today, Bethabara Park is a property owned and operated by the City of Winston-Salem. Like Old Salem, the direction of interpretation of this property has evolved to include an interpretation of the natural environment first encountered by the Moravian settlers and the communal way in which they utilized natural resources in the development of Wachovia.

Bethania, the first Wachovia farming settlement (1759), contains not only original Moravian buildings but also the pre-Revolutionary War period landscape imposed by the Moravian elders to sustain the settlers of this community. Since designation as a NHL, the town's citizenry are taking an active role, in conjunction with governmental agencies, to identify threats to this nationally significant property, and use historic preservation legislation action to ensure the preservation of this rural community and its singular historic landscape.

In the Virgin Islands, the Moravian elders purposely established their first missions at the far opposite ends of the three main islands, in mainly rural areas, in order to be closer to their converts on neighboring estates. New Herrnhut (1737) on the East End of St. Thomas was followed by the establishment of a mission at Nisky estate on the West End in 1755. On St. John, Bethany mission was established in 1750 on the West End of the island, followed by Emmaus on the East End by in 1782. On St. Croix, Friedenstal mission (*Valley of Peace*) was create outside of Christiansted in 1752, on the East End, followed shortly thereafter on the West End in Frederiksted of Friedensberg (*Hill of Peace*). By striving to bring the church to these dispossessed people, they created deep bonds of concern for the Moravian mission grounds, churches, schools, cemeteries, and manses (or

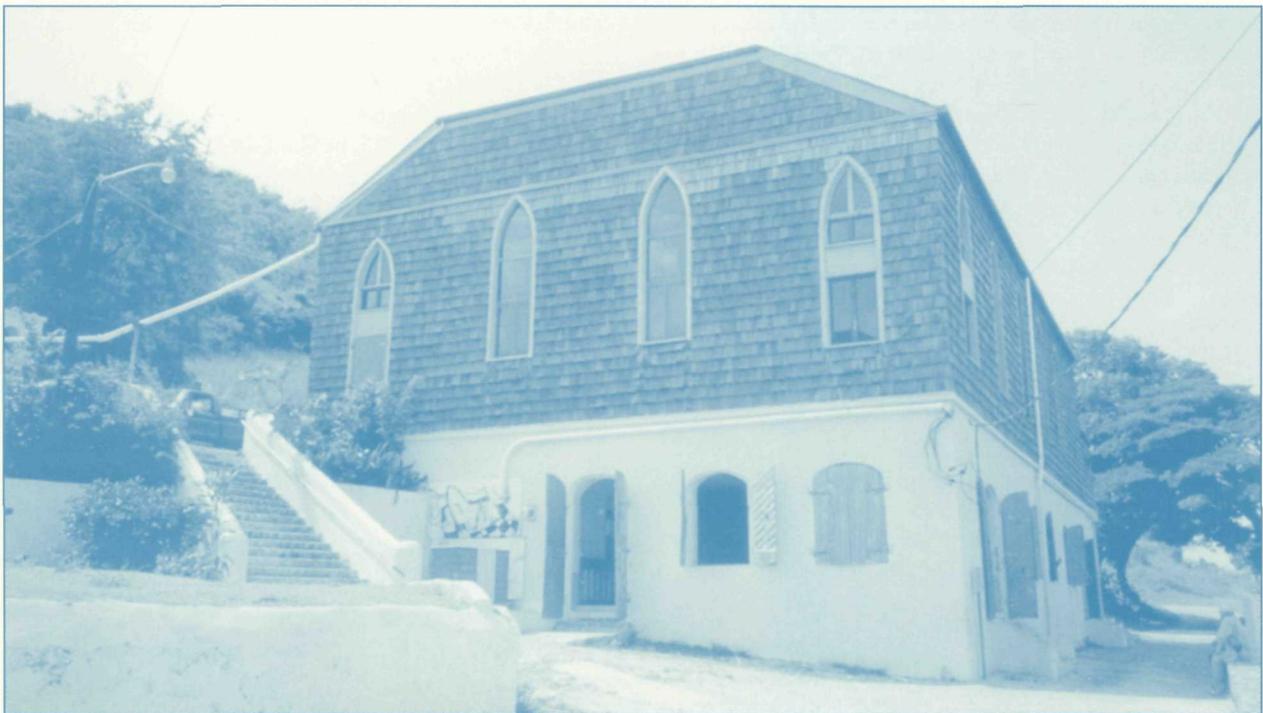


Located in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.V.I., Memorial Moravian Church is home to the youngest—and the largest—Moravian congregation in the Virgin Islands. The congregation developed in the 1830s, built a church on Wimmelskaft Gade (or Back Street) in the 1840s, and moved to its present site in 1884. The walls of the Baroque Revival church, which are three feet thick for most of the height of the building, are made of local blue bit stones and segmented lime plaster. The Church Manse, Fellowship Hall, and school buildings were damaged severely by Hurricane Marilyn in 1995. The buildings were repaired and were rededicated during anniversary activities in 1998.

pastor's houses). Later, in the early nineteenth century, the rural black population of the Danish West Indies and other Caribbean islands increasingly moved into Charlotte Amalie, on St. Thomas, or worked in the Midlands area of St. Croix. The Moravians established mission churches in both areas (Memorial Moravian, 1843, and Friedensfeld [*Field of Peace*], 1804) to again be close to those church members.

The strong sense of place that church members feel for their eight Moravian establishments in the Virgin Islands is expressed by the continuing efforts of the church members to preserve their buildings or to rebuild them on the old foundations of earlier buildings. On these church grounds and in these buildings, the local church members, for several generations, have been baptized, educated, married, and buried. Several times in the past, devastating hurricanes have struck these Moravian properties and the church members have always banded together, sometimes with assistance from other Moravian congregations, such as those in North Carolina, to rebuild, because of their personal connections with these places.

In the great Hurricane of 1916, the Emmaus church and mission house on Coral Bay, on the East End of St. John, lost their upper wooden stories, but all was reconstructed within just a few years on the original stone foundations. More recently, after Hurricanes Hugo and Marilyn, the Moravian church members again banded together, with outside assistance (viz., Federal and local governments and other congregations), to restore or rebuild on the same spot because of the strong sense of place.



The Moravian Mission at Nisky was founded in 1755 on the West End of St. Thomas, about 18 years after New Herrnhut. Periodic hurricanes resulted in the church being rebuilt, on the same foundation, a number of times. The most recent reconstruction occurred in the early 1970s, after a great fire. Recently, the church's interior underwent an extensive rehabilitation, which included the refitting of the organ and the installation of new wooden structural beams.

Preservation Issues

The interviews conducted by the NRPD in North Carolina and the U.S.V.I. showed that the preservation of a historic Moravian property is based on that property's usage and value to a community. The greater the use, the more value, both financially and spiritually, the property will have for a community. However, it should be noted that the greater the use, the greater the wear and tear there is on a fragile historic resource.

The historic Moravian properties of Old Salem and Bethabara, in North Carolina, are primarily preserved for tourist venues, and in the case of the former, for over half a century, their public interpretive value has helped to bring tourist income to Forsyth County. As a result, past efforts have been directed mainly toward restoration and preservation of selected buildings and sites to explain the history of Moravians, from a particular time period, which could be appreciated by tourists and the local community.

In order to achieve this goal, both Old Salem and Bethabara needed the cooperation, not just of the Moravian church, which helped with initial acquisition, historical research in their archives, and the operation of selected properties, but also funding and cooperation from numerous agencies. In the 1950s, a key element to the preservation of Old Salem was an effort to reroute traffic from the eighteenth-century Main Street that ran through the historic area to a bypass a block to the west. However, within just a few years, Old Salem, Inc., realized heavy traffic use on this bypass cut off the historic area from significant historic Moravian landscapes and industrial archeological sites further west. In the mid-1960s, a new bypass—Highway 52—was constructed to the east; now, Old Salem must attempt to deal with the impact of the first bypass.

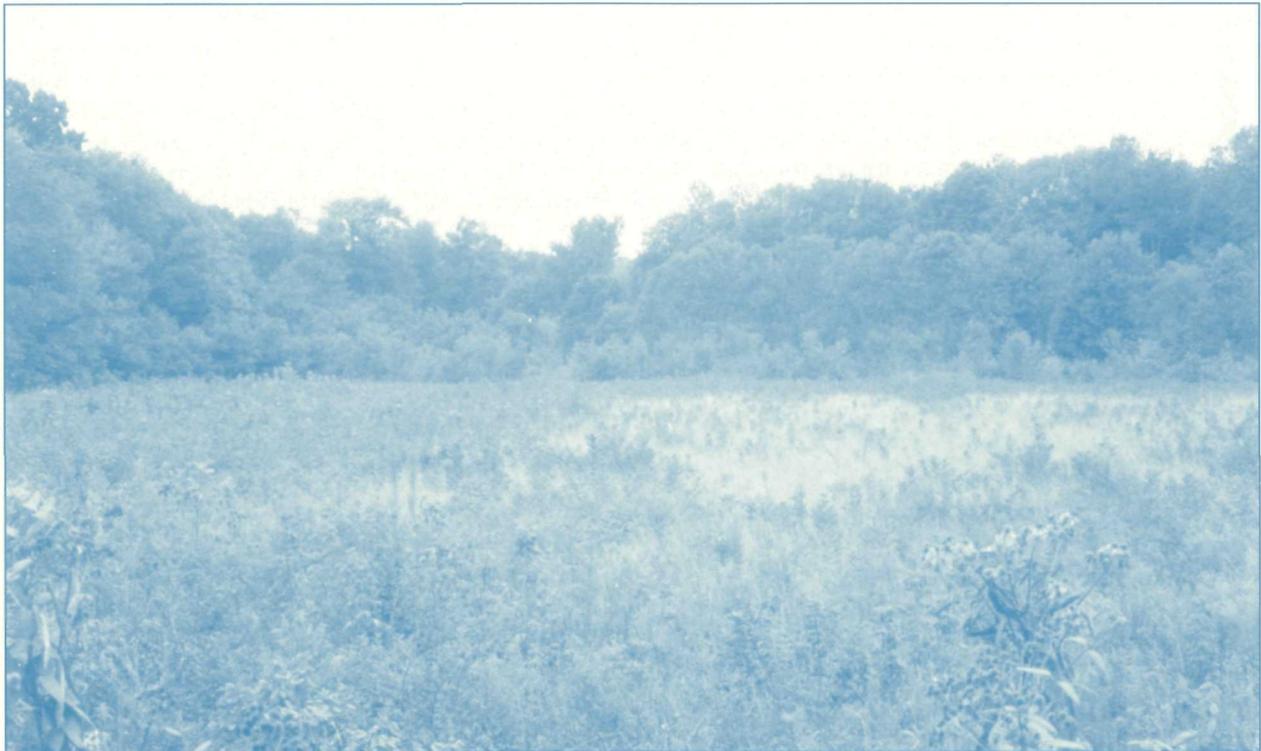
An important element to the interpretation of Old Salem and Bethabara is the vision that on-going research efforts by archeologists, herbalists, historians, architectural historians, decorative arts, and landscape specialists contribute to this interpretation. To support this research, Old Salem has established research facilities in a 1920s Coke-a-Cola factory nearby, and is presently constructing a new visitors' center on the edge of the historic district. Plans call for the old visitor center to be removed and the area turned into a horticultural plot for the Single Brother's House following appropriate on-site research.

The commitment to a vision of interpretation based on research is also changing the traditional perception of the Moravian presence in the Wachovia Tract. Previously, the view was that by the 1830s, Moravians had by-in-large merged into the general population. While the Moravian *oeconomy* in Salem ended in the 1830s, the church continued to be a largest landowner until the post-Civil War period. The craftsmen and capital of the Moravians helped to build the industrial base of Winston-Salem in the post war years, making it appear that traditional Moravian practices and lifestyles had vanished in the early nineteenth century.

However, new archeological research is beginning to present a view of the Moravians that is different than that previously believed. Excavations are showing that Moravian households, while bringing in material culture of the outside world to their homes, continued to utilize traditional Moravian crafted items, such as ceramic vessels for the production of traditional central European foods. *In the privacy of their homes, the Moravians continued to be Moravians.* Such a discovery is causing Old Salem to reassess the end date of the interpretation period presented as part of a proposed revision of the NHL boundaries and significance of Old Salem.



In order to interpret the black Moravian experience, Old Salem, Inc., is in the process of reconstructing, on the foundation of the original 1823, hand-hewn log building, the first black Moravian church in North Carolina. A newer black Moravian church sits in close proximity to the site. Known as the "Brick Church," it was formally named St. Philips Moravian in 1913. Dating to 1861, it is believed to be one of the oldest standing African-American churches in the state of North Carolina. Plans are underway and funding is in place to fully restore this consecrated Moravian place of worship.



Moravian preservation planners are discovering that they must focus not only on cultural resources but on natural resources as well, such as this field and stand of trees in Bethania. Agricultural pursuits were an integral part of Moravian life and culture, and no interpretation of the Moravian past is complete without alluding to this fact. Bethania's preservationists came to grips with this when they met with road planners in 2001 to discuss a bypass around the town's fragile cultural resources. Initial plans called for a road that would have cut directly through the natural area, but the route was reconsidered when it was pointed out that this area was a key element in the case for national significance in the nomination of Bethania as a National Historic Landmark.

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hat makes Old Salem "work" has been its aggressive approach to the establishment of the first historic zoning ordinances in North Carolina and its commitment to partnering with the city of Winston-Salem to enforce the ordinances. Over the years, Old Salem has acquired key areas in the downtown area for preservation and/or resale with preservation covenants. This partnering aspect has led to some 60 properties within the historic district being owned by private citizens under preservation covenants. Such a "back to the city" program has reduced the financial burden of Old Salem, Incorporated, to maintain all the buildings in the historic district. At the same time, acquisition of historic open space has enhanced the downtown area and allowed Old Salem to institute historical horticultural programs as part of its interpretation efforts. This program will expand when and if Old Salem is able to have the 1950s bypass removed.

Deciding the appropriate end date of the "Moravian presence" in Old Salem is key to the interpretation of the historic district. Recent efforts have resulted in the reconstruction of the 1822 Black Moravian log church and research for the restoration of the 1861 St. Philips Black Moravian church. The latter, although outside the present period of interpretation, was considered simply too significant not to be considered a part of the story of Moravian Old Salem.

Likewise, Bethabara—while a city operated park—involves partnerships with the Moravian Trustees, the City of Winston-Salem, the State of North Carolina, and Old Salem. On some 200 acres is related the story of the first Moravian settlement in North Carolina and the struggle to clear farm land and construct shelters for the arrival of other colonists from Pennsylvania. Bethabara, *the House of Passage*, ensured the success of the Moravian settlement of the Wachovia Tract by supplying the food, finished lumber, and goods for the building of Bethania and Old Salem.

Since the establishment of Bethabara Park, a new vision for the area has taken hold. This involves the interpretation of the natural history of the Bethabara area, and how on the frontier, the pooling of resources was key to ensuring the surviving of the House of Passage. This involved not just the Moravians, but the local non-Moravians, or *Strangers*, who settled nearby for security during the French and Indian War period.

Bethabara, as the core settlement for Wachovia, was the location from which all roads radiated to connect the different Moravian communities. As a result, a major concern for Bethabara park was the large number of vehicles using the road through the park. To control traffic flow and allow safe visitor access from the visitors' center to the Bethabara site across the road, a "traffic calming device" was installed (for a short distance, the two-lane road is narrowed down to a single lane) which permits vehicle access, but at a slower and safer rate for visitors.

Bethania, as the newest NHL in the old Wachovia Tract, has yet to develop a comprehensive vision for the future of the community. Ongoing discussions continue between the citizens and public agencies to address preservation issues, such as traffic flow, tourism access, and preservation partnering. Like Old Salem and Bethabara, the main street of Bethania was laid out in the eighteenth century as a wagon road, with residences close to that road for easy access. A few years ago, the main street of Bethania became a truck route linking two interstates. The city government and its constituents are currently in discussions with the U.S. Department of Transportation and North Carolina Highway Department about designing a bypass for the community. In the meantime, stop signs and weight limitations are being tried as stop-gap measures.

Unlike Salem and Bethabara, Bethania is not under the control of a single or small group of entities, but rather is owned by over 150 individual families. Decision-making for the community will therefore require consensus building which inspires the many landowners to seek solutions which benefit their own and the community's needs. Fortunately, the citizenry of Bethania have demonstrated this by banding together to support NHL designation for the community as the basis for developing a vision to resolve issues, such as traffic congestion.

Recently, Bethania, under the leadership of its mayor, has realized that it is likely—because of its NHL status—to experience increased tourist visitation. In order to direct visitors around the town in the most efficient and safe manner, the community has acquired a Federal grant to move an abandoned building into the southern end of the district to be refurbished as a visitors' center. From there, the casual visitor will be able to park and obtain brochures that will direct them to the historic sites within



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Vibrations emanating from vehicles speeding through a cultural heritage area can have a devastating effect on adjacent resources. Moreover, visitors run the risk of incurring serious injury from this same traffic. To address this situation, a "traffic calming device" was installed within Bethabara Park. Based on a British prototype, the device consists of narrowing the road down to a single lane and placing stop signs at either end of the channel. Motorists must then proceed with caution through the channel in anticipation of oncoming traffic (*photograph by Mark R. Barnes*).

the community. In addition, some individuals within the community are taking it upon themselves to purchase open space in order to protect the historic landscapes surrounding Bethania.

Preliminary discussions between all three areas have begun to consider National Heritage Area designation. Such a designation, of three nationally significant tracts of land within the old Wachovia area, would provide additional Federal assistance in terms of technical assistance and funding to achieve preservation goals and objectives jointly identified by the people and organizations committed to the preservation of these three nationally significant Moravian areas.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, while the concern for the preservation of historic Moravian properties existed within the church membership, it was only in the 1970s that the State Historic Preservation Office began its efforts to survey and inventory church properties. Between 1976 and 1978, nearly all of the Moravian missions were listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Since then, the State Office has continued to provide technical assistance upon request and, when possible, funding to restore these historic properties.

On-site discussions with the State Office, Moravian pastors, and church members demonstrate that there is a commitment to rehabilitate extant buildings in order to serve the needs of the church and its members. For example, an old estate kitchen was recently rehabilitated as the pastor's office at Nisky, on the west end of St. Thomas, and the manse at Friedensberg, on the west end of St. Croix, has just undergone an extensive renovation. However, at each interview, it was repeatedly noted that a drop in the active membership of the church means less funding for the upkeep of these properties, and the weathering effects of the tropical climate of the Caribbean means these buildings are in constant need of repair.

The earliest Moravian churches in the Virgin Islands were constructed of rubble masonry with steep, hipped, timber framed roofs, but even these could not always withstand the forces of tropical hurricanes. In 1793, the mission at Bethany, on St. John was struck by a major hurricane. A contemporary described its destruction by saying, "*the whole church fell, with a dreadful cracking noise, being broken into a thousand pieces, the ruins flying about in the air.*"



Although Moravian properties in the U.S.V.I. predate those in North Carolina, the former have not had the advantages of the latter, where a concerted effort by Moravians, working with preservationists and governmental agencies, have preserved a number of historic properties for their value as tourist venues. In the Virgin Islands, the people cherish their Moravian properties for their religious, educational, and spiritual values. Unfortunately, as active religious properties, many sources of governmental funding are not available to assist the church with the preservation of these resources.

During the oral interviews in the Virgin Islands, certain preservation issues continually arose. First, there was a feeling that the history of the church was not well known or appreciated and therefore was not being transmitted to the next generation to inspire it to become active in the church. Active membership seems to be a prerequisite to any preservation effort for these properties. Second, past preservation efforts, while very important, have not followed any coherent, long-range plan, either to identify the individual preservation needs of buildings at each of the eight Moravian churches, or to develop a program of cyclic maintenance. Third, there was a sense that any efforts by church members to preserve these properties might, perhaps stemming from their recent experiences with Hurricanes Hugo and Marilyn, be swept away in an instant. Last, a concern was expressed by the church members about what will happen to God's Acres (the Moravian Cemeteries) and the memorials (headstones) in some of the cemeteries which are overgrown, deteriorating, and threatened by vandals.

As a first step, it would appear that an effort should be made to develop a detailed history of the Moravian church and its membership in the Virgin Islands. Some of the churches have individually published short historical summaries of their properties, but there is not one publication which can be used which chronicles the history of the church and provides a good background history of the extant buildings. A publication of this nature, directed at the general public, would be well received by tourists and the church membership. Funding for such research and publication might come from outside sources jointly identified by the NPS and the U.S. Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office.

Building on a good background history of the Moravian church in the islands and the history of the individual properties, the National Park Service could use its computerized Historic Structure Report software to identify the physical needs of individual



In addition to the weathering effects of the tropical climate and perennial threats from hurricanes and vermin, a major concern for the curators of Moravian resources in the Virgin Islands is soil subsidence, especially near the coastal areas. The soft, sandy loam is constantly in flux, wreaking havoc on the area's building stock, as evidenced by the cracked and warped front staircase of the Friedensfeld Midlands Moravian Church on St. Croix.



A major source of concern for the curators of Moravian resources is the care, maintenance, and preservation of the "God's Acres," or cemeteries, under their purview. Vegetative overgrowth, loss or deterioration of grave markers, vandalism, and erosion due to periodic flooding rains, especially in the Virgin Islands, have all taken their toll on the integrity of the Moravian cemeteries. At New Herrnhut's God's Acre on St. Thomas (above), for example, wooden cemetery memorials used on the graves of black church members have long since vanished.

buildings at each of the eight Moravian sites. Preservation students, under the guidance of the NPS and the Preservation Office, could provide the training to conduct the work required to produce such reports. The reports would provide the cost estimates for immediate repairs and for cyclic maintenance, and they could help the churches better budget their funds for preservation and give them the time to work with the U.S. V.I. State Historic Preservation Office to identify appropriate funding sources.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently gathering information on historic properties and districts in the path of known repeated natural disasters. If FEMA is apprised of the existence of historic properties and their characteristics, it will be better able to serve these properties and their owners after a natural disaster. It is recommended that the U.S. Virgin Island Preservation Office approach the regional FEMA office about developing a plan to deal with the stabilization and preservation of these properties after such a natural disaster. FEMA might also be able to assist in reviewing the Historic Structure Reports and making recommendations for work which might serve to minimize damage to these buildings during a hurricane.

The Moravian church membership interviewed in the Virgin Islands expressed great concern for the lack of care and maintenance of their cemeteries. In viewing them, it was noted that often the marble or granite memorials for the European pastors, their wives, and minor children, from the mid-eighteenth to the late-nineteenth century, are the only above ground evidence of past burials. The cemetery memorials for the black membership, apparently of loose stone rubble, conch shells, and wooden crosses and posts, have long since vanished. The current church members are concerned that unless these burials, or at least the general areas are not located, marked, and cared for, they might be inadvertently destroyed.

Due to the rocky nature of the islands, with little soil cover, it is likely that most burials were shallow and therefore at risk from any disturbance. However, these conditions would likely make them good candidates for study and identification through remote sensing. This technique could identify the location of now unmarked graves and could be plotted to assist church members in providing appropriate long term care. Many government agencies have remote sensing equipment and personnel who might be willing to undertake studies of these cemeteries as a means of perfecting their skills.

Conclusion

The original vision of the Moravian church of the Southern Province was to help disadvantaged peoples in the New World. This vision created a significant physical legacy of historic buildings, structures, sites, and landscapes in North Carolina and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In the early 1950s, the first effort to preserve these resources was initiated. During the interviews conducted with the curators of Moravian resources in 2001 by the National Park Service, it became clear that a new coordinated vision to ensure the preservation of this legacy is needed. This brochure, which identifies the preservation issues facing the physical remains of the Moravian past and makes recommendations for their implementation, can serve as the basis for a future preservation partnership between the National Park Service and the many stewards of this Moravian legacy.



The Single Brothers House, Old Salem, North Carolina. Many of the Salem craftsmen were single brethren so, early in the settlement, the Single Brothers House was built. The right-hand section, done in half-timbered construction, was raised in 1769. Later, when expansion was needed, an all-brick section came along in 1786. Today, the building serves as administrative offices for Old Salem, Inc.

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Photography: Computer enhanced front cover photo of Bethania Moravian Church by **Mark R. Barnes**. Unless otherwise credited, all other photographs by **Frank J.J. Miele**. Outside back cover: part of the cultural landscape of Bethania, consisting of a path and a line of trees leading from the Moravian Church to the God's Acre.



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