

In Penn's Woods: Intersections between the Moravians, Indigenous Americans, and Nature,
1741-1760

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ABSTRACT

The Moravian presence among Native American communities during the early colonial period (1741-1760) provides a valuable glimpse into the intermingling of European and indigenous cultures along with an environmental epistemology. Cross-cultural and knowledge exchanges were not uni-directional by any means. Moravians negotiated with indigenous Americans and their natural landscapes to construct syncretic space not only in their missionary efforts, but also the establishment of settlements. Integral in this shared space was the role of Moravian women, who played a crucial role in fostering intimate bonds with their indigenous Sisters. In this study, I examine Moravian hymns, architectural plans, and diaries to portray a more complex, richer “middle ground” (based on Richard White’s classic work) that moves away from the dichotomous relationship of colonizer and colonized.

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Introduction

Prior to Europeans' arrival to the New World, the landscapes of Pennsylvania had been traversed, named, and worshipped by Native Americans for thousands of years. For example, indigenous peoples endowed their environment with special names such as Ahkokwesink ("The Place of Mushrooms") and Chekhonesink ("The Place Where There is a Gentle Sound").¹ This familiar landscape would become a place of contention among the French, Great Britain, and indigenous people during the eighteenth century; it would be renamed Penn's Woods, or muni khikhakan eheluwensink Pennsylvania (This State Which Is Called Pennsylvania).² Complex, and often contradictory, relationships developed between Native Americans and European settlers as they occupied mutual spaces and learned how to maneuver in these spaces: "Indians and whites became interdependent, but they also competed for material resources. Whether cooperating or competing, both groups needed to reach some kind of understanding about the boundaries of their relationships."³ This also applied with regards to each group's understanding of nature. Europeans saw the "wilderness" as unknown and dangerous yet also as an attractive new resource base, but Native Americans revered and honored the natural landscape.

William Penn and his emphasis on religious freedom vis-à-vis his "Holy Experiment" is a familiar and enduring narrative for colonial America. Indeed, the colony of Pennsylvania offered numerous religious groups such as the Quakers, French Huguenots, and Catholics safe haven. This project, however, focuses on a group of German-speaking immigrants called the Moravians (also referred to as the Reformed Unitas Fratrum). The roots of the Moravians

¹ Sarah Justina Eyerly, *Moravian Soundscapes: A Sonic History of the Moravian Missions in Early Pennsylvania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 62.

² Ibid.

³ Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians & Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 50.

trace back to 1457 with Jan Hus and the Hussite movement in Bohemia. The Moravians almost disappeared by the end of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) due to harsh persecution. They made a reemergence in the 1720s under the leadership of Nicholas Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), who hailed from Saxony, and traveled to the West Indies in 1735 as part of General Oglethorpe's venture in Georgia. This experiment ultimately failed, but the Moravians were able to settle in Pennsylvania in 1741 and established the community of Bethlehem.⁴ Through the Lord Granville tract (1744), the Moravians obtained a tract of 100,000 acres in North Carolina and founded several other settlements including Bethabara, Bethania, and Salem [Winston-Salem]. An important aspect of Moravian culture to note is their emphasis on a sustainable engagement with nature. In planning out the construction of their communities, they took extensive steps to survey the land, reviewing and making detailed descriptions of existing natural resources. Evidence reveals "how important the sustainable management of resources was and included a forest-planning record dating from 1772, containing very specific rules for the usage of forests and the recommendation to appoint foresters to control it."⁵ The Moravians went the extra mile to map out the terrain of their communities, undergoing a lengthy process of planning.

Of primary interest to this thesis is the Moravians' success in establishing several communities called Ortsgemeinen in the colonial America and the Caribbean. Here, Moravians joined alongside African slaves and indigenous Americans to create an interracial community despite external tensions. Unfortunately, just as in Europe, the Moravians continued to maintain a precarious relationship with the other Protestant groups in the American colonies due to their radical faith and social norms, especially when it came to

⁴ "A Brief History of the Moravian Church," *The Moravian Church*, last accessed 16 January 2022, <https://www.moravian.org/2018/07/a-brief-history-of-the-moravian-church/>.

⁵ Uwe E. Schmidt, "German Impact and Influences on American Forestry until World War II," *Journal of Forestry*, 2009: 140.

gender. Lutheran and Reformed church leaders felt threatened by their “female Trinity, communal lifestyle, strange marriage and sex beliefs and practices, and women preaching, as well as their ecumenism and emphasis on irrational, enthusiastic spirituality.”⁶ Moreover, what differentiated the Moravians as a religious group were their deviation from the political arena, namely that they were not “agents of empire.”⁷ In contrast, France and Spain over the span of three centuries had sent Catholic missionaries from Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan orders to the Americas for the two-fold reasons: they too sought to convert indigenous people into Christians, but at the same time, they wanted to establish colonial structures for settlement and exploitation. These Spanish missionary towns were “frontier institutions that pioneered European colonial claims and sovereignty in North America.”⁸ For the British, historians Timothy Keegan and Andrew Porter have pointed out that there were fundamental differences between British and German missionaries. The former often mirrored contemporary discourses of imperialism in issues such as race whereas the latter distanced themselves from it.⁹

The different religious sects not only had to coexist with Native Americans, but they also had to negotiate their own religious and cultural identity. Especially in light of the Moravians’ success among indigenous people in Pennsylvania and North Carolina,

⁶ Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 137.

⁷ Megan Trent McGee, “Schmick’s Frontier: Native American and Moravian Community Building in Colonial Pennsylvania,” (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2018), 2.

⁸ Joseph P. Sánchez, “The Significance of Spanish Colonial Missions in our National Story and our Common Heritage with Spain, Mexico and Latin,” *National Park Service*, last modified 15 April 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/significance-of-missions.htm>.

⁹ Felicity Jensz, “Imperial Critics: Moravian Missionaries in the British Colonial World,” in *Evangelists of Empire? Missionaries in Colonial History*, edited by Amanda Barry, et al. (Melbourne: University of Melbourne eScholarship Research Centre, 2008): 188. See also Timothy Keegan, ed., *Moravians in the Eastern Cape, 1828-1928: Four Accounts of Moravian Mission Work on the Eastern Cape Frontier* (Paarl: Paarl Print, 2004); Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

evangelists used religion as a mechanism for preserving social order and racial boundaries.¹⁰ Even the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy also grew wary and envious of the success of converted Native Americans and their independent alliance with the Moravians to the extent that the Confederacy tried to pressure them back into their sphere of influence.¹¹ Often times, indigenous people who had converted had to leave their villages and faced ridicule and resentment from tribe members. Despite attempts by both Iroquois and European authorities to keep Native Americans and white settlers separate, visions for a space demarcated by a racially defined “other” did not come to fruition. Ultimately, Native America did become “Penn’s Woods,” but this was a construct shaped by the complicated interactions of Pennsylvanians and Native Americans. This also extended outside Pennsylvania to the colonies such as North Carolina. These complex spaces (natural and constructed) are the focus of this project; as such, I closely examine the relationships between Moravians and indigenous Americans in the early colonial period (1741-1760) to contribute an environmental history of the Moravians.

Historiography

Until recently, historians have largely overlooked indigenous people, seeing them as passive actor/victims or a foil for the problematic story of the “triumph of ‘white man’s civilization.’”¹² On the contrary, Native Americans played an active role in encounters with European missionaries. Edited works such as Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas’ *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (2010) and Lee M. Panich and Tsim D. Schneider’s *Indigenous Landscapes and Spanish Missions* (2014)

¹⁰ Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 5.

¹¹ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 7.

¹² Nicholas Griffiths, *Sacred Dialogues: Christianity and Native Religions in the Colonial Americas, 1492-1700* (London: Lulu Enterprises, 2006), 3.

counter earlier rather one-dimensional studies of Christian missionaries and Native Americans. As we have painted a more vivid portrait of contact with indigenous people, it is unfeasible to structure crossroads between Native Americans and Europeans as a two-way meeting, where former had only two choices: accept Euroamerican traditions and views or resist futilely. Modern scholarship tends to emphasize a narrative of conflict and discord with the relationship between Euroamericans and indigenous people. However, a new set of inquiries have emerged that explore the complex interactions and relationships between indigenous and white settler cultures to correct earlier narratives of a triumphant Christianity converting the “backward” nature of indigenous societies. Richard White’s classic work *The Middle Ground* (1991) is a useful starting point for moving away from the dichotomous relationships (e.g., colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed). White describes the middle ground as the “place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages...It is the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation and the background of Indian defeat and retreat.”¹³ Although White’s case study is on the French and Algonquian-speaking people, his idea of the middle ground is important in understanding how people forged a mutual understanding based on misunderstandings and accommodation; middle grounds as a coherent space were also difficult to produce and only possible when there “was a rough balance of power and a mutual need between the parties involved.”¹⁴ Indeed, he did not intend for the framework to be applied in the colonial American context, but scholars have nonetheless engaged with White’s book. There is more to the story to be told, especially from the perspective of the Native Americans. In the Pennsylvania frontier, one can see the existence of a limited middle

¹³ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xxvi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

ground—maybe not necessarily as encompassing as that of Richard White’s study, but nonetheless helpful in expanding on interactions between Europeans and Native Americans.¹⁵

The world of the Moravians in early America invites a variety of interesting questions about religion, race, the economy, and most importantly, the environment. The Moravian Church primarily dedicated a great deal of financial support and personnel to missionary activities. Peter Vogt argues that the Moravians were an important player in the “transatlantic arena of eighteenth-century religious renewal.”¹⁶ The Moravian presence was not limited to North America and Europe; it extended across the globe to Greenland, Algeria, the Gold Coast, Latin America and the Caribbean. It was clear, however, that the Atlantic constituted the center of the Moravian network. Several works have made the connection between the Moravians in colonial America and those in Europe (that is, Herrnhut, Germany).¹⁷ Older histories of the Moravian Church do not reflect the current historical methodologies and questions revolving around “political and economic structures, the interactions between different cultures and ethnic groups, the social construction of meaning and identity, or the analysis of communication and organization.”¹⁸ How did the Moravians religious beliefs shape their perception of the Atlantic world, and how did they translate when it came to interactions with indigenous populations? As the Swedish botanist Peter Kalm observed during his travels on the continent, “the French, English, Germans, Dutch, and other

¹⁵ Daniel P. Barr, “Did Pennsylvania Have a Middle Ground? Examining Indian-White Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania Frontier,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 136, no. 4 (2012): 362-63.

¹⁶ Peter Vogt, “‘Everywhere at Home’: The Eighteenth-Century Moravian Movement as a Transatlantic Religious Community,” *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 1 (2006): 7.

¹⁷ See Aaron S. Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Jon F. Sensback, *Rebecca’s Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Michele Gillespie and Robert Beachy, *Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Heikki Lempa and Paul Peuker, *Self, Community, World: Moravian Education in a Transatlantic World* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010).

¹⁸ Vogt, “‘Everywhere at Home,’ 9.

Europeans, who have lived for several years together in distant provinces, near and among the Indians, grow so like them, in their behavior and thoughts, that they can only be distinguished by the difference of their colour.”¹⁹ Thus, early America was a cacophony of traditions, cultures, and people. This did not always entail a “clash of cultures” model used by historians such as James H. Merrell and Colin G. Calloway.²⁰

The role of religion in Native American history makes approaching the topic tricky; Christianity has often been interpreted as a colonizing force. However, a new generation of scholars have sought to develop new methodologies to explore how Native American communities have engaged Christianity “in a dialogue with native traditions as a means of preserving native identity and securing new spiritual resources with which to confront the challenges of colonialism.”²¹ Fortunately, the Moravians left a significant amount of documentation from the colonial period, much more so than most American settlers. Over 14,000 memoirs are available in the Moravian Archives at Winston-Salem, NC, and there are still some 500 memoirs from the eighteenth century in need of translating.

Katherine Faull is one of the leading Moravian historians who has worked extensively with Moravian women’s memoirs, or Lebenslauf (literally “life course”), in her *Moravian Women’s Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750-1820* (1997). Similarly, Scott Paul Gordon gives a glimpse into the social and spiritual life of one specific woman, Mary Penry, in *The Letters of Mary Penry: A Single Moravian Woman in Early America* (2018). The Lebenslauf

¹⁹ Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America: Containing its Natural History, and a Circumstantial Account of its Plantations and Agriculture in General, with the Civil, Ecclesiastical and Commercial State of the Country*, vol. 2 (London: T. Lowndes, 1771), 32.

²⁰ See James H. Merrell, *The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) and Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

²¹ Wheeler, *To Live upon Hope*, 10. Jane T. Merritt has an excellent article showcasing how the Delaware people created a religious middle ground; see Jane T. Merritt, “Dreaming of the Savior’s Blood: Moravians and the Indians’ Great Awakening in Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 723-46 and Merritt, *At the Crossroads*.

is a valuable source of information for scholars as it offers a more vivid portrayal of eighteenth-century America. Moreover, the Moravians fervently sought to eliminate illiteracy regardless of gender or race: “they taught everyone to read...achieving nearly universal literacy.”²² Native American and African Moravians worshiped and worked alongside their white Brethren and Sisters. These Lebenslauf are essential in reconstructing the lives of both indigenous and black Moravians—though most are written in a third-person perspective from their white Brethren or Sisters. Daniel B. Thorp has an article about a Lebenslauf written firsthand by a black Moravian. Seth Moglan briefly discusses the circumstances of an enslaved woman, Magdalena Beulah Brockden (her Christian given names).²³ The fact that so few publications focus on black-written sources is telling of the scholarship. That is not to say that scholars are ignoring these silenced voices, but their stories are still hidden at archives. At the same time, the archive “withholds too much” as the constraints of the Lebenslauf prevented them from describing the full extent of what they endured and resisted.²⁴

Although my project does not focus explicitly on black Moravians, the problem of fragmentary vignettes also relates to the lives of indigenous Moravians. In that way, my project encounters similar issues that historians of the Atlantic slave trade face in bringing the story of a silenced minority to light. Another (albeit more controversial) way that historians have approached these neglected individuals is through a non-traditional, fictional recreation of their life, that is, writing a pseudo-autobiography. That is what Rachel Wheeler does in an

²² Seth Moglen, “Enslaved in the City on a Hill: The Archive of Moravian Slavery and the Practical Past,” *History of the Present* 6, no. 2 (2016): 159-60.

²³ See Daniel B. Thorp, “Chattel with a Soul: The Autobiography of a Moravian Slave,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112, no. 3 (1988): 433-51. In Moglan’s case, he briefly outlines Magdalena’s life. See Moglen, “Enslaved in the City on a Hill,” 174-77.

²⁴ Moglen, “Enslaved in the City on a Hill,” 177.

article for a Mohican man named Joshua who lived from 1720-1775.²⁵ In light of the problematic nature of this style of writing, Wheeler does point out the various issues associated in writing in the voice of an indigenous man as a “perpetuation of colonial violence,”²⁶ she also argues that she writes Joshua’s narrative based on her years of work in Moravian sources. While I do not intend to take my thesis in the same direction as Wheeler’s, it is still worth noting and appreciating non-traditional academic writing.

The connections that the Moravians and Native Americans shared were based on kinship and religion. There had to be compromise in their interactions. The Moravians were aware that the indigenous converts may not have been fully earnest in their conversion as they maintained some crucial aspects of their own culture including hunting, gathering, and the active role of women in society.²⁷ Native Americans thus took a syncretic approach and interpreted Christianity in alignment with their cultural beliefs. Nonetheless, the Moravians (reluctantly or not) accepted this hybrid religious culture—it also helped that the prominent role of women in Moravian society aligned closely with Native American cultures including the Delaware and Mohican, where women held influential power.²⁸

The Moravian presence in Native American communities present us with a unique lens into the confluence of European and indigenous cultures and an environmental epistemology.²⁹ In her work with Moravian diaries written in the 1740s, Faull points out how

²⁵ Rachel Wheeler, “An Imagined Mohican-Moravian *Lebenslauf*: Joshua Sr., d. 1775 (*Journal of Moravian History*, no. 11 (2011): 29-44. The anthropologist Charles M. Hudson has labelled this type of work “fictionalized ethnography.” See Charles M. Hudson, *Conversation with the High Priest of Coosa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), xviii.

²⁶ Wheeler, “An Imagined Mohican-Moravian *Lebenslauf*,” 31.

²⁷ McGee, “Schimick’s Frontier,” 6.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Katherine Faull, “Moravians and Native Americans at the Confluence,” *The Shamokin Diaries 1745-1755*, last accessed 31 Jan 2022, <https://shamokindiary.blogs.bucknell.edu/contextual-materials/moravians-and-native-americans-at-the-confluence/>.

the Moravians carefully observed and took note of the climate of the New World, namely natural events such as earthquakes, floods, famine, planting, and harvesting. By the time Christian Heinrich Rauch arrived in New York in 1740 to venture on a mission with the people of Shekomeko, the landscape had already experienced a century of devastation due to the vigorous fur trade and extraction of natural resources. In addition to devastating disease and the introduction of alcohol, Native Americans looked on European missionaries with hostility. Once they allowed interactions with missionaries, indigenous tribes established firm treaties that delineated Moravian activity. In Shikellamy, the Moravians were only allowed to plant the Three Sisters (corn, squash, and beans) and potato; most seeds and plants from Europe were forbidden for fear of sapping essential soil nutrients and the emergence of plantations.³⁰

As emphasized previously, the cross-cultural and knowledge exchanges were not one-directional and flowed both ways. For Moravians, arriving on the North American continent meant confronting an unknown land, breaking the land to create a new home for themselves, and setting out to proselytize the local people. To indigenous Americans, the arrival of Europeans created drastic transformations not only in the environment, but also in their way of life. Animal populations were disrupted, but indigenous communities were able to adapt by changing hunting and subsistence strategies and participating in a market economy along with their European neighbors. The arrival of Europeans to the New World completely altered the world of both indigenous Americans and European settlers alike. The making of early (or remaking, one could also say) America came into being as a result of sustained contact between Native Americans and Europeans. However, contact between the two did not necessitate the survival of only one force. In *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), anthropologist James Clifford argues that “stores of cultural contact and change have been

³⁰ Ibid.

structured by a pervasive dichotomy: absorption by the other or resistance to the other.”³¹

More often than not, we come across narratives that showcase the negative impact of Europeans on indigenous culture. Scholars such as Beatrix Arendt and George Faithful highlight the imperialistic tendencies that the Moravians forced on their converts.³² Rather than evaluating whether Moravian influence was “positive” or “negative” for indigenous communities they came in contact with, my work skews more towards the direction that Benjamin F. Tiller and Amy C. Schutt take, which underscores the development of ethnic identity that combines Moravian and indigenous traditions.³³

Entrenched in the Land: An Environmental Take on Moravian-Native American Intersections

Unlike previous studies done on the topic, my work adds an environmental dimension to research on Moravian-indigenous encounters through a study of cross-cultural spaces inhabited by Moravians and Native Americans in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. The Moravians were a peculiar case in that they negotiated with Native Americans in reference to their spiritual (and sometimes natural) landscapes and constructed a territory that tried to make sense with each other in the eighteenth century. The Moravians were always a religious

³¹ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 344.

³² Beatrix Arendt argues that Inuit relationships with the local environment and ecology were permanently altered as a result of Moravian intervention: “missionaries required converts to become sedentary and focus on the development to build the mission and its economy.” See Beatrix Arendt, “Caribou to Cod: Moravian Missionary Influence on Inuit Subsistence Strategies,” *Historical Archaeology* 44, no. 3 (2010): 81-101. George Faithful has written a paper outlining Presbyterian and Moravian missionaries in Alaska that counters the normative narrative that the Moravians had a positive impact on the indigenous communities. See George Faithful, “Uprooting Where Others Sowed? Presbyterian and Moravian Missionaries in Russian orthodox Alaska,” *Collected Faculty and Staff Scholarship* (2013), 1-11.

³³ See Benjamin F. Tiller, *Imprints on Native Land: The Miskito-Moravian Settlement Landscape in Honduras* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Amy C. Schutt, “Forging identities: Native Americans and Moravian missionaries in Pennsylvania and Ohio, 1765-1768,” PhD diss., (Indiana University, 1995).

minority in America and consisted of members of diverse national origins, social status, and occupations. This diversity translated into a mission program quite different from other denominations of Christianity. The Moravians were also known for receding into the isolated, neglected areas of America, regions that other Christian missionaries intentionally avoided. Emese Balint contends that the Moravians were a “strong sect that managed to survive exile through a radical social experiment and by building resource-providing solidarity and trust.”³⁴ They also took their natural environment into consideration when building a settlement in America: “the question of land, landscape, and usage played an important role in the construction of Moravian ‘place,’ especially during the periods of first contact.”³⁵ I delve into this question further by integrating Native Americans into the narrative, which have often been overlooked in scholarship.

My first chapter examines the Moravians’ arrival to the New World and their meticulous survey of the landscape and plans for settlement during the first half of the eighteenth century. While there is a literature on the development of the early Moravian settlements in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, it is relatively scant and dated (mainly published in the late 1980s and 90s).³⁶ William J. Murtaugh has a very insightful book on Moravian urban history with his *Moravian Architecture and Town Planning* (1997). The Moravians’ separation in the Pennsylvania and North Carolina frontier away from mainstream Protestants did not prevent them from engaging in entrepreneurial activity; this

³⁴ Emese Balint, “Anabaptist Migration to Moravia and the Hutterite Bretheren,” in *Religious Diaspora in Early Modern Europe: Strategies of Exile*, edited by Timothy G. Fehler, et al., (London: Routledge, 2016), 151.

³⁵ Faull, “18th-Century Moravian Mapping.”

³⁶ On Moravian planning and construction of their settlements, see Daniel B. Thorp, “The City That Never Was: Count von Zinzendorf’s Original Plan for Salem,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1984): 36-58; Christopher E. Hendricks, ““And Will You There a City Build’: The Moravian Congregation Town and the Creation of Salem, North Carolina,” *Buildings & Landscapes* 20, no. 2 (2013): 77-101. Katherine Faull, “18th-Century Moravian Mapping,” *The Shamokin Diaries 1745-1755*, last accessed 31 Jan 2022, <https://shamokindiary.blogs.bucknell.edu/maps/>.

may seem surprising considering the tension between religious and economic [material] life. However, commercial success and religious endeavors went hand in hand with each other and was a significant aspect in their daily lives. According to Katherine Carté Engel, the Moravians achieved a “facile and simultaneous engagement in the lumber trade and international commerce.”³⁷ They participated in a wider economic network spanning the Atlantic. Nor was their role in the Atlantic world relegated to only commerce. In order to better mediate a relationship with Native Americans, the Moravians considered botany and, generally speaking, the natural sciences essential.

My project is not a history of Native Americans nor is it simply a narrative of Indian-white relations. Rather, it goes further and surveys the cross-sectional world inhabited by the Moravians and the indigenous communities they interacted with, i.e., the Mahican and the Delaware. As mentioned above, it is important to emphasize that Moravians exhibited different motivations and methods in interacting with indigenous Americans. They were not colonists: they “readily entered kinship connections with native Americans, forming new economic relations based on native precepts.”³⁸ In the New England area, Mohican communities welcomed the Moravians because they did not “discredit Mohican spirituality and culture, covet Mohican land, or seek to dominate Mohicans politically.”³⁹ Moravian women proved to play an essential role in missionary endeavors as they found common ground with their indigenous Sisters and developed strong kinship bonds with each other. They shared and listened to the hardships that indigenous women faced as their culture continued to come into flux. The Mahican people lived in a “horticultural, matrilineal, clan-based society,” which tended to be less hierarchical than coastal Algonquian peoples;

³⁷ Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 9.

³⁸ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 51.

³⁹ Neal Salisbury, “The Atlantic Northeast,” in *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*, edited by Frederick E. Hoxie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 348.

Mahican women wielded a significant amount of power over the tribe's affairs in the midst of adapting to "the colonial realities of disease, the trade, and European encroachment."⁴⁰ As such, the second chapter addresses the intimate connections forged between Moravian and indigenous Sisters. Not only did these lend an ear to each others' problems, but they also assisted in each other with respect to botanical and medical knowledge. Both Moravian and indigenous women traditionally worked in the fields and gardens, and the latter were impressed at the former's "special connection to the plant world."⁴¹ This project refers to a number of sources including Moravian hymnals (which place a great deal on grains and the not) and architectural maps. More broadly speaking, the bulk of this research will depend on the extensive number of diaries and memoirs left behind by the Moravians.

⁴⁰ Rachel Wheeler, "Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village," *Religion and American Culture* 13, no. 1 (2003): 32.

⁴¹ Anna Smith, "Unlikely Sisters: Cherokee and Moravian Women in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World*, edited by Michele Gillespie and Robert Beachie (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 195.

Chapter 1

Early Environmentalists: Moravian Pioneers and Settlers in the 1740s

The Moravians' success among the indigenous peoples makes for a fascinating study. The Moravians did not fit the typical mold of the Protestant missionary. Rachel Wheeler puts it aptly: "Perhaps the safest generalization to be made about Moravian missionaries is that they confound all generalizations about colonial missionaries."⁴² Refusing to participate in the colonial political affairs and taking up the pacifist mantle, they approached their missionary endeavors less aggressively than their Protestant and Catholic counterparts. Other European settlers viewed the Moravians' pacifist stance with hostility and suspicion, especially during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). In Pennsylvania and North Carolina, they took the time to culturally integrate themselves into the indigenous communities by speaking the local languages. Witnessing and hearing about Native American treatment from other Europeans elicited sympathy from the Moravians. In one missionary account, a Moravian laments that he "saw how they [the Native Americans] stood among the white people and how the whites deal with them. They do not treat them differently from a [illegible]...and as people without brains with whom they can do as they like. And they [the whites] cheat them at all corners."⁴³ The tensions that the Moravians endured with from their European neighbors allowed them to identify with the plight of the indigenous Americans. This chapter will delve into the geography of the first Moravian towns built in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. The foundation of this chapter uses Daniel B. Thorp's analysis of the Moravians' "partial assimilation" to the American environment.⁴⁴ Although Thorp's analysis is rather dated, his argument is still valuable in opening up

⁴² Wheeler, "Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village," 30.

⁴³ Quoted in Karl-Wilhelm Westmeier, "Becoming All Things to All People: Early Moravian Missions to Native North Americans," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (1997): 173.

⁴⁴ See Daniel B. Thorp, "Assimilation in North Carolina's Moravian Community," *The Journal of Southern History* 52, no. 1 (1986): 19-42.

complex questions about Moravian identity and engagement with the American social, economic, religious, and environmental spheres. Of course, no singular group (within and between religious denominations) can be representative of the whole; however, examining the cases of Moravian experience in specific locales can prove to be illuminating with respect to their evangelical culture. Thus, I expand on Thorp's premise regarding Moravian development in early America through extensive planning of their mission towns and subsequent interaction with the surrounding lands—and its inhabitants.

Arriving in the New World, the Moravians confronted an unknown and hostile environment. Nevertheless, they had no qualms about settling in the backcountry and venturing into the wilderness to meet potential converts among the Native American tribes. Though the formation of isolated settlements was not a pattern followed exclusively by Moravians (other groups including the Anabaptists and Amish did the same), the Moravians sought to create a local community based around personal piety, equality among adherents, education, and industry.⁴⁵ On top of separation from the outside world, the Moravian Church dictated strict economic regulations that prompted a sustainable and sufficient way of living. In a rapidly changing world, Moravian settlers had to wrest with changes in social, cultural, and economic conventions in order to survive the frontier. A Moravian missionary notes that “it has been the effort of Moravian missionaries in all parts of the world to instruct their converts how to utilize and develop the natural resources of their land, and to introduce them trades and occupations as well as to provide a market for their products.”⁴⁶ While the tone here is notably geared towards an imperialistic mindset (considering its temporal and regional context), the message does reveal an awareness of the Moravians to their natural settings.

⁴⁵ Roger W. Stump, *The Geography of Religion: Faith, Place, and Space* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 233.

⁴⁶ J. Taylor Hamilton, *Twenty Years of Pioneer Missions in Nyasaland* (Bethlehem, PA: Bethlehem Printing Company, 1912), 200.

Returning back to the American context, the Moravians set out to build in the wilderness a “City of Peace”⁴⁷ (Friedenstadt) that was not alien to but in correlation with indigenous culture. Historical questions about Moravian assimilation to the American environment have elicited several studies on whether they “lost their Germanness and religious distinctiveness after encountering American individualism in the countryside.”⁴⁸ However, according to S. Scott Rohrer, this is a simplified narrative that requires reconsideration. He argues that the transformation of the first generation of Brethren and Sisters occurred right from the onset, i.e., their arrival to the New World: “the Moravians were not a traditional ‘German’ immigrant community that traveled en masse from the Old World to the New. They were an ecumenical group, consisting of congregations scattered throughout the Western Hemisphere.”⁴⁹ Between 1725 and 1740, the Moravians arrived in Pennsylvania along with other German religious groups including the German Reforms, Lutherans, Catholics, and Schwenkfelders.⁵⁰

Moravian Theology

Before delving into the crossroads of the Moravians and Native Americans, it is important to briefly describe the theology of eighteenth-century Moravian theology in order to better understand why indigenous communities embraced it. Zinzendorf’s devotion to Jesus Christ’s blood and wounds was a controversial and radical concept to Christians in the 1700s as expressed in the complex Litany of the Wounds (c. 1743-49), which the Moravians recited devotedly: Christ’s wounds are referred to as “juicy” and “succulent,” and the

⁴⁷ Paul A.W. Wallace, “They Knew The Indian: The Men Who Wrote the Moravian Records,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 95, no.3 (1951): 292.

⁴⁸ S. Scott Rohrer, *Hope’s Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), xxxi.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ M.S. Henry, *History of the Lehigh Valley* (Easton, PA: Bixler & Corwin, 1860), 21.

Moravian is eager to “lick” and “taste” it.⁵¹ As shocking as this imagery may be to modern readers, we must heed that the concepts of “salvation, sanctification, community life, and divine protection”⁵² were brought together through the symbol of the side wound pouring blood; this theology combined with their radical social and gender order make the Moravians a distinct case to study. The Moravians’ emphasis on the blood of Christ resonated well with Native American rituals and culture. Through the “redemptive power of suffering,” indigenous women in particular found solace and power in Jesus’s blood to relieve suffering.⁵³ Moreover, the Moravians differed from their various Protestant counterparts, who “saw the poverty of native languages for terms expressing theological ideas,”⁵⁴ in welcoming and learning the language of their potential converts. What mattered above all was one’s intimate relationship with Christ through a focus on his wounds. The side hole offered “a place of refuge” and “source of nurture.”⁵⁵ The positive corporeal nature (evident through Zinzendorf’s valorization of the body) of Moravian faith elicited fierce criticism from other Christian groups as its “radical body dialectic”⁵⁶ threatened contemporary tenets of reason and religion.

One of the primary things that attracted the ire of other Protestant denominations towards the Moravians was their feminization of the Holy Trinity, a central tenet to Moravian

⁵¹ For an English translation of the *Litany*, see Craig D. Atwood, “Zinzendorf’s Litany of the Wounds,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 9 (1997): 187-214.

⁵² Craig D. Atwood, “Understanding Zinzendorf’s Blood and Wounds Theology,” *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 1 (2006): 40. My italics. Atwood goes into great detail on the concrete theology developed by Zinzendorf.

⁵³ Rachel Wheeler, “‘Der Schönste Schmuck’: Mahican Appropriations of Moravian Blood and Wounds Theology,” *Covenant Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2005): 25-7. Wheeler argues how Mahican women were able to combine their ritualistic elements associated with the torture of captives and the Christian dogma of redemptive suffering together to create a new understanding of the world.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁵ Beverly Prior Smaby, “Female Piety Among Eighteenth Century Moravians,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 65, (1997): 152.

⁵⁶ Katherine Faull, “Girl Talk: The Role of the ‘Speakings’ in the Pastoral Care of the Older Girls’ Choir,” *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 6 (2009): 77.

theology. By completing reorganizing the Trinity, where the Holy Spirit is the “mother,” Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf violated basic gender order not only in religion, but also society.⁵⁷ His theological thoughts developed within the context of the Enlightenment, a period that underscored a rationale understanding of religion; however, in contrast to the “natural theory” of the Enlightenment, Zinzendorf shifted towards a religion based on emotion—more specifically the heart (Herzensreligion).⁵⁸ Under his guidance, Zinzendorf accorded Moravian women in the mid-eighteenth century the power and responsibility over spiritual matters. Regardless of social class and race, women could hold leading position within the Church up until 1760. Already in 1739, we see an instance where Zinzendorf appoints seven female missionaries (Arbeiter) to the Caribbean; four of those women were black.⁵⁹ Moreover, women also played a crucial role in leading missionary activities to the Native Americans during the colonial period. Before proceeding, I do want to point out one caveat in Zinzendorf’s thoughts on gender equality. Other scholars reiterate that labeling Zinzendorf as a feminist is inaccurate.⁶⁰ By no means did he believe that women were on equal grounds as men, and he fervently believed that women were to remain subservient to men. In his “Address to Women” given in Philadelphia in 1742, he explains that women were responsible for the Fall and were “unworthy of respect or honor.”⁶¹ Yet at the same time, a woman brought Jesus Christ into the world and thus deserve to be respected albeit limitedly.

⁵⁷ While Aaron Spencer Fogleman additionally argues that Jesus himself was female as used in provocatively titled book *Jesus is Female*, his argument is slightly weak as he cursorily asserts that the maternal Holy Spirit exerted a “motherly, nurturing role to Jesus Christ.” See Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 75-7.

⁵⁸ Katherine M. Faull, Introduction to *Moravian Women’s Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750-1820* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), xxi.

⁵⁹ Winelle J. Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image: Evangelical Protestantism in Antigua and Barbados, 1834-1914* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2015).

⁶⁰ Smaby, “Female Piety Among Eighteenth Century Moravians,” 153. See also Julian E. Pace IV, “Pietism and Female Spiritual Leadership,” Paper presented at *Doctoral Symposium at Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2021*.

⁶¹ Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 96.

Women then should be encouraged to preach, but ultimately the highest positions (e.g., Bishops) in the church belonged to men.⁶² This gender aspect will be covered upon in the following chapter.

A Natural Attraction to the Land

Building the Ideal Town

The dominant presence of German-speaking settlers in the colony of Pennsylvania in the early half of the 1700s garnered the notable attention of nearby neighbors including Founding Father Benjamin Rush (1746-1813), who dedicated a book titled *An Account of the Manners of the German Inhabitants of Pennsylvania* (1789) to them. While he does differentiate the different religious groups that lived in the colony, he also makes it a point to mention at the beginning of his work that the Germans as a collective body “are not only industrious and frugal, but skilful [sic] cultivators of the earth.”⁶³ In a similar vein, the social reformer François-Alexandre-Frédéric, du de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (1747-1827) also commended the “zeal of the Moravians to propagate the gospel among the Indians” and recommended the establishment of a school of agriculture under the direction of English Moravian farmers.⁶⁴ When the Moravians arrived in America, they had a tradition of building a particular settlement shaped by their social system and theological beliefs: the *Gemein Ort* (“congregational town”). More importantly, the planning of each settlement was carefully

⁶² Positions ordained to women included Acolytes, Deaconesses, Eldresses, and ministers.

⁶³ Benjamin Rush, *An Account of the Manners of the German Inhabitants of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Samuel P. Town, 1874), 11.

⁶⁴ “I spoke to him [Mr. Cunow] of the benefit it would be to propagate in America a good method of culture, which would be easy to them in the establishment of their farms. They might employ some English Moravian farmers, and form in their farms of school of agriculture, where a number of young American farmers might be instructed at once.” Duke De La Rochefoucault Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America, The Country of the Iroquois and Upper Canada*, vol. 2 (London: T. Davidson, 1799), 414.

planned out by Zinzendorf, who first arrived in the North American colonies in the winter of 1741 and remained until early 1743, when he went back to Europe.

Working alongside him, Philip Christian Gottlieb Reuter (1717-1777) served as the congregation's physician, forester, surveyor, and map maker. Praised for "practically the only one who is acquainted with the land and forest affairs of Wachovia," Reuter kept a detailed list of the flora and fauna in his surroundings, and he also designated land for the "Hortus Medicus," or the medicinal garden (see Figure 1) in Salem—though it was town physician Hans Martin Kalberlahn who planted and allowed the garden flourish.⁶⁵ Reuter's survey notes and lists can be found in the second volume of the *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina* (1925). The list takes into account the medicinal use of certain herbs as dictated by indigenous knowledge. For instance, "wild cress" is helpful in alleviating fever; the "Indian Physic" lets the herb mull in "Child Rum" and then makes the patient drink it, letting him sweat until "the sweat has something of the odor of the herb."⁶⁶ Biologists have even utilized Reuter's records to trace the transformation of the landscape to the present day. Despite "massive anthropogenic community disruption," scientists have found that there has been no loss of tree diversity following European settlement, and tree species diversity is most likely greater now than what it was in 1764.⁶⁷ Thanks to Reuter, the Moravians built a public water system consisting of wooden "pipes" to provide running water for the entire town based on the first water works in Bethlehem, PA in 1754. Closely surveying the landscape was intended to preserve the wild game around the vast forests and allowing domesticated

⁶⁵ "Minutes of Salem Boards. 1776," in *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, edited by Adelaide L. Fries, vol. 3 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1926): 1082.

⁶⁶ Christian Gottlieb Reuter, "1764. Wachau or Dobbs Parish," in *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, edited by Adelaide L. Fries, vol. 2 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1925): 568.

⁶⁷ Robert A. Browne, and Jeffrey LaVoie, "Arboreal Species Richness in Piedmont North Carolina 1764-1996," *Castanea* 69, no. 1 (2004): 206-7. By "tree diversity," the scientists measured this by the absence or presence of a species.

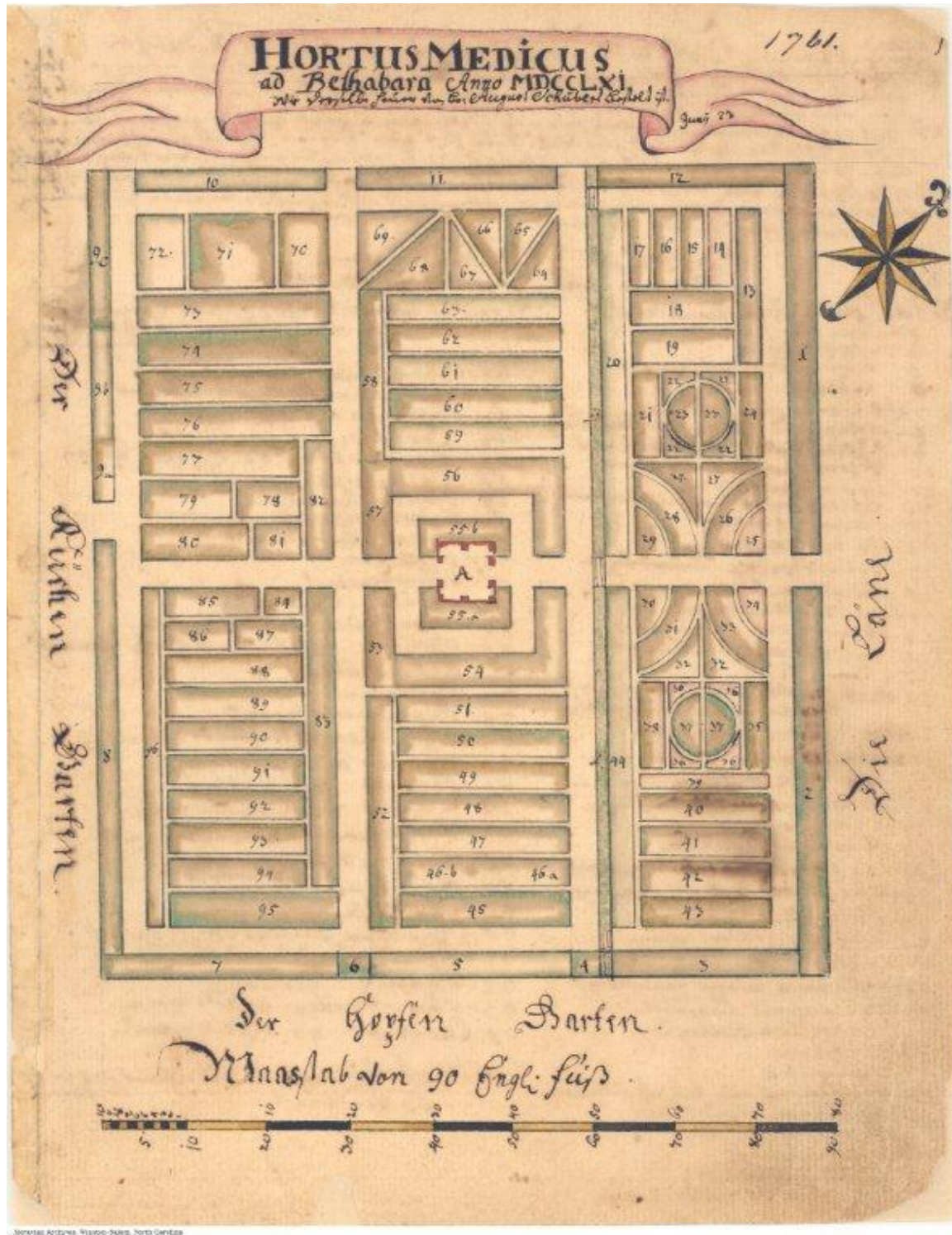


Figure 1: Christian Gottlieb Reuter, *Hortus Medicus*, 1761. Each number corresponded to a plot with a specific plant. A version of medical garden exists today and continues to be maintained in Winston-Salem mainly as a living historical relic rather than for medicinal purposes.

⁶⁸ Image from John Henry Clewell, *History of Wachovia in North Carolina: The Unitas Fratrum or Moravian Church in North Carolina During a Century and a Half...1752-1902* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1902), 93.

animals to graze under the trees as unfenced cattle and pigs constituted important food sources for the Moravians.⁶⁹ Moreover a significant part of Moravian life revolved around wood products where maple trees were used to make vinegar and sugar for Lovefeast, and much of the town's infrastructure were constructed with wood. Records indicate that the Moravians were constantly concerned about managing and the forests: though bits and pieces of a sustainable forestry plan seem to come into appearance, it is clear that forest management was a priority for the beginnings and development of the Moravian communities. Notes about how "the forest could be much improved with care, for it has been ruined by the Indians, who are accustomed to set fire to large tracts to drive the deer to a given spot, and that keeps the young trees from growing." A conference about forest fires took place in order to "make every effort to preserve several pieces of fine young woodland for Bethabara and Bethania."⁷⁰ They noted the types of trees best suited for a variety of purposes: a post oak for "good wagon wood," hickory for the "best nuts and best fire-wood," chestnuts for fences and rails, and so on and so forth.⁷¹

The Moravians were astute observers of the landscape during the building process of their settlements. Following the creation of Bethabara in 1753, the Moravians took great care to take note of any recurring natural disasters and vicinity to the wilderness. August Gottlieb Spangenberg (1704-1792), successor to Zinzendorf, attributed blame earlier Moravian failures in Georgia on the "Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia, who understood almost nothing about this land."⁷² Before starting construction on Salem, they took extra caution before finalizing the actual site of the town. Several spots were chosen, and the

⁶⁹ Coleman A. Doggett, et al. "The Moravian Foresters [with Commentary]," *Journal of Forest History* 31, no. 1 (1997): 21.

⁷⁰ *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, edited by Adelaide L. Fries, vol. 1 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1912): 63, 237.

⁷¹ *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, edited by Adelaide L. Fries, vol. 2 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1926): 559-60.

⁷² Thorp, "The City That Never Was," 52.

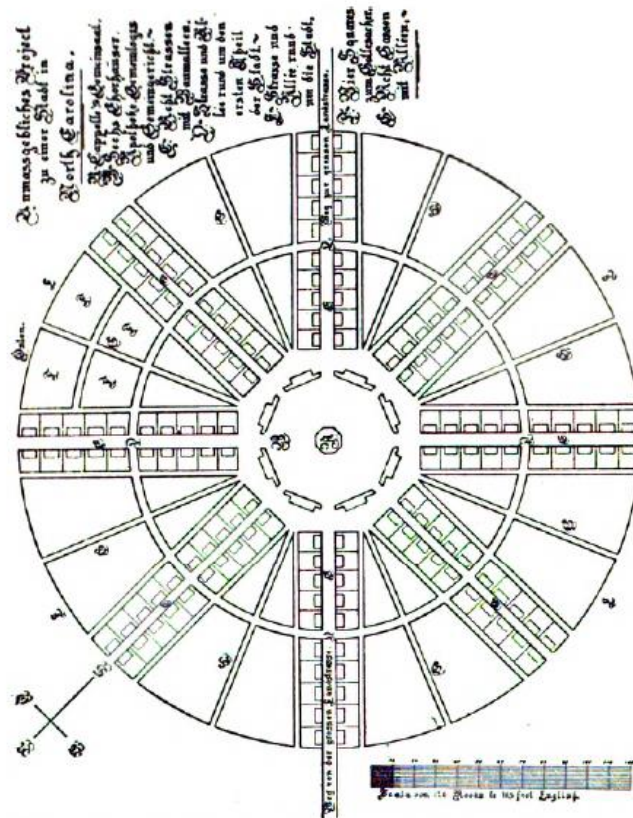
Moravians chose a “hill above the Middle Fork, or ‘Wach,’ high enough to be safe in times of flood, and to avoid the attacks of malaria which so often afflicted Bethabara. It had a small brook and several good springs which insured an immediate water supply; and its was low enough on the hill to make possible a larger supply of water brought by gravity from springs to the northwest.”⁷³ Zinzendorf initially planned the town to be built in a radial form with the church in the center, divided octagonally based off of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio’s *De Architectura* (see Figure 2). Although Zinzendorf’s reason for choosing octagonal design is not known, Daniel B. Thorp suggests that a Vitruvian plan “symbolized and promoted the degree of isolation that [Zinzendorf] sought for the Unity’s new colony.”⁷⁴ Zinzendorf’s desired this isolation because the Brethren would “not only have an opportunity to be of spiritual benefit to such persons as in process of time might settle in their neighborhood, as well as to gain access to various tribes of Indians, such as the Cherokees, the Catawbas, the Creeks, and the Chickasaws, [thus] his main object was to acquire the possession of a larger tract of land where the Moravians might live undisturbed, having the liberty of excluding all strangers from their settlements.”⁷⁵

Both Zinzendorf and Spangenberg took the great pains to carefully plan and organize plans for the Bethlehem and Nazareth communities, which was founded as a Pilgergemeinde. Between 1741 and 1754, the Pilgergemeinde underwent a transformation.

⁷³ Adelaide L. Fries and J. Kenneth Pfohl, *The Moravian Church: Yesterday and Today* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1926), 43.

⁷⁴ Thorp, “The City That Never Was,” 43-5. He also discusses how Vitruvius’ design of an ideal city should first and foremost promote good health in accordance with the then-accepted belief that wind was the main cause of disease. With Vitruvius’ designs, the impact of the eight winds would be minimized resulting in the optimal environment.

⁷⁵ Levin T. Reichel, *The Moravians in North Carolina: An Authentic History* (Salem, NC: O.A. Keehn, 1857), 15.



Plan for Salem made about 1750, or a little later, in Germany. The church forms the centre; the hotel, congregation houses, etc., around the church; the streets, with the dwelling houses, radiate from the central group. The ground was unsuited, hence this unique plan was not carried out.

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Figure 2: Zinzendorf's 1750 Plan for Salem.

⁷⁶ Image obtained from "Botanical garden," *National Gallery of Art*, last modified 8 March 2021, https://heald.nga.gov/mediawiki/index.php/Botanic_garden#Notes.

At the onset, it served as the base for religious outreach, “dedicated to spreading the Gospel and organizing Christians along Zinzendorf’s ecumenical principles.”⁷⁷ However, the need to sustain the town’s spiritual work via food, water, and funding, shifted the Pilgergemeinde towards the communal economic system, or the Oeconomy. According to Katherine Engel, the pragmatic nature of the Oeconomy in Bethlehem was an anomaly in the grand scheme of things, and she separates the town from its European settlements, or the Ortsgemeinen (e.g., Herrnhut and Herrnhag): “the Pilgergemeinen inhabited a different plane of Moravian existence.”⁷⁸ Nearly all of the Moravians in America were called Pilgern, but there was also the Hausgemeinde, which consisted of the group who remained behind in the Moravian settlement and provided food and clothing. In order to provide for their communities, the Moravians embraced an artisan economy. Therefore, the labors of the Pilgergemeinde and Hausgemeinde were important in keeping the town going. They were “intimately tied together and always fluid.”⁷⁹ As we will see in the next chapter, women shared the occupational postings of their husbands in the Oeconomy as a result of the Streiter-Ehe, or militant marriage. Due to a shortage of labor, women were able to operate outside of the household economy and participate in the artisan exchange of goods and services within Moravian towns as well as indigenous communities. The communal economic culture of the Moravians was hardly commonplace in colonial American societies, but “they were in good company when it came to embracing an economy based on private property and social hierarchy.”⁸⁰ However, the differences between status were muted (though not eliminated). The Aufseher Collegium, one of the governing bodies in Salem, held control over economic affairs and

⁷⁷ Katherine Carté Engel, “The Evolution of the Bethlehem *Pilgergemeinde*,” in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820*, edited by Jonathan Strom, et al. (London: Routledge, 2009), 168.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁰ 56-7.

land distribution, allotting certain acres of land for lease to individuals and families up until 1856.⁸¹

⁸¹ Michael Shirley, "The Market and Community Culture in Antebellum Salem, North Carolina," *Journal of the Early Republic* 11, no. 2 (1991): 219-20.

Chapter 2

Female Kinship in Midst of Imbroglio: Finding Solace Through Music and Nature

In analyzing the Moravian relationship with nature, this chapter takes into consideration the “acoustic ecologies” of the natural environment as Sarah Justina Eyerly does in her book.⁸² Her focus on “soundscapes” is a concept that this paper uses to broaden our horizons on environmental perspectives. The historical culture of sounds is particularly apt as they can help us better understand concepts of social and religious identity for Moravian and Native Americans. The Moravians placed special emphasis on hymnal singing during the colonial period as it was one of the more appropriate and vigorous ways of expressing the emotional aspect of their religion. Zinzendorf himself wrote some hymns as well. Nor was this a phenomenon limited to the Moravians as the Pietists and Lutherans also maintained a strong musical tradition. But for the Moravians, singing hymns was one of the more significant ways of relaying spiritual truth to the congregation. One of the distinguishing features of a Moravian worship service was the Singstunde (“singing hour”), which consisted almost entirely of hymns. “There was no spoken sermon; the message was in the words of the hymns sung by the gathered congregation.”⁸³

The Moravians utilized hymns to communicate with local Americans through themes of nature such as grain, harvests, and the like. Songs played a significant role in Native American life, expressing almost all aspects of life including hunting, planting, harvesting, sickness, healing, gaming, diplomacy, war making.⁸⁴ Often overlooked in historical analyses, music and sounds in general can be important tools to understanding the nature of European

⁸² Eyerly, *Moravian Soundscapes*, 26.

⁸³ Nola Reed Knouse, ed., Introduction to *The Music of the Moravian Church in America* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 17.

⁸⁴ Walter W. Woodward, “Incline Your Second Ear This Way: Song as a Cultural Mediator in Moravian Mission Towns,” in *Ethnographies and Exchanges: Native Americans, Moravians, and Catholics in Early North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press), 127.

and indigenous communities. Earlier scholarship has tended to present indigenous Christianity as a form of resistance against European colonization and conquest, but scholars such as David Stowe argue otherwise: “The story of sacred music...is one of cross-pollination and syncretism taking place amid encounters marked by conquest and exploitation. Out of these social collisions, cultural boundaries have been challenged, redefined, reinforced, and sometimes dissolved.”⁸⁵ As music and songs can “illuminate nature- and place-related concerns...experienced by marginalized racial and gendered groups,”⁸⁶ they helped facilitate linguistic and spiritual barriers between the two groups. Moreover, the intercultural bridge created via hymnals and music was not necessarily unidirectional; as shown below, we see that Moravian songs were adapted to uses that indigenous music had, e.g. in medicine. Thus, we should not see music as yet another means of European colonization, but instead ask “in what ways were Native Americans able to express themselves through Moravian hymnals?” The “blood and wounds” theology, which emphasized a deeply emotional and personal spiritual experience, served as an excellent counterpart to music with “its emotional and affective potential to subvert the mind and appeal directly to the senses.”⁸⁷ Moreover, Sarah Eyerly and Rachel Wheeler have recently found hymnals in Mohican in the Moravian Archives but determined that the stanzas were new compositions rather than translations.⁸⁸ Therefore, Moravian interactions with the indigenous population reveal a different form of contact in lieu of assimilation. Through

⁸⁵ David Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 7.

⁸⁶ Denise von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁸⁷ Rachel Wheeler, and Sarah Eyerly, “Songs of the Spirit: Hymnody in the Moravian Mohican Missions,” *Journal of Moravian History* 17, no. 1 (2017): 6.

⁸⁸ Dave Heller, “FSU researcher wins fellowship to resurrect Native American hymns,” *Tallahassee Democrat*, last modified 16 June 2017, <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/life/faith/2017/06/16/fsu-researcher-wins-fellowship-resurrect-native-american-hymns/404375001/>.

music, Native Americans could create a new identity while preserving or even revitalizing indigenous traditions.

The second part of this chapter shifts to a gendered analysis and explores the interactions and relationships that Moravian women had with indigenous women. The specific gender practices of Moravian society as embodied in the choir system (described further below) opened avenues for women when it came to leadership roles in society aside from motherhood. In the Pennsylvania backcountry, where the Moravians operated relatively isolated from other European settlements, women also participated in the artisan economy. While women did maintain responsibilities for taking care of the children, growing crops, and producing food and clothing, they also engaged in the exchange of goods and services whether it be sewing, spinning, or blacksmithing, outside of the Moravian community. While scholarship has focused primarily on the cultural differences of European missionaries and indigenous people, Moravian and indigenous women found a “comfortable familiarity in the pattern of their lives” and formed a strong sisterhood that has otherwise been obscured.

Music as a Medium for Intercultural Cohesion

Moravian missionaries harnessed the power of hymnals and music to shape a spiritual and communal bond with Native American communities. Ironically, a barrier to conversion for indigenous Americans was dancing, which was a prevalent practice in Delaware culture. David Zeisberger recalls in his diary when a group of Native Americans visited Salem, seeking provisions and a place to stay: “They wanted to remain over night here and have a dance, but we told them we did not allow dancing here; in other towns they might dance, but not here, and so they went away.”⁸⁹ Zeisberger made efforts to make song a source accessible

⁸⁹ Eugene F. Bliss, ed. and trans. *Diary of David Zeisberger: A Moravian Missionary Among the Indians of Ohio*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co, 1885), 424.

for the Delawares, with whom he mainly worked with. He translated a number of “hymn-books, liturgies, and sermons”⁹⁰ into the Delaware language. This practice of translating Moravian hymns into indigenous languages was not uncommon in multiethnic communities. Moravian investment in Native-language hymnody demonstrates the missionaries’ understanding on some level of the significance of song and ceremony to Native communities and the powerful impression made when Europeans invested in learning Native ways.”⁹¹ Translation efforts were a way of building a spiritual and cultural bridge between the Moravians and Native Americans; Patrick M. Erben argues that Moravian missionaries “pursued a utopian program of linguistic and religious community building with and among Indian groups.”⁹² In other instances, however, Moravian missionaries allowed and spectated indigenous dances, who saw it as a “social diversion and innocent amusement.”⁹³ Considering how integral dancing was to indigenous practice, Moravians acknowledged that rigid standards were not effective in entreating Native Americans and responded accordingly. In his essay on the role of song in Moravian mission towns, Walter W. Woodward explains that Moravian hymns could serve as “an alternative to traditional Indian song and dance rituals.”⁹⁴ But Moravians also wrote and even modified hymnals to appeal emotionally and spiritually to their native converts. For “lovefeast,” a gathering among the congregation for eating and singing hymns, Moravians were able to celebrate with Native Americans in honor of a robust harvest:

July 11th 1757. To-day we had the reaper’s lovefest. We celebrated it with reading the harvest-songs, which have been made for this purpose. Then 14

⁹⁰ Ibid., xxi.

⁹¹ Rachel Wheeler and Sarah Eyerly, “Singing Box 331: Re-sounding Eighteenth-Century Mohican Hymns from the Moravian Archives,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2019): 675.

⁹² Patrick M. Erben, *A Harmony of the Spirits: Translation and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 1.

⁹³ *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, vol. 1 (Nazareth: Whitefield House, 1876), 279.

⁹⁴ Woodward, ““Incline Your Second Ear This Way,”” 136.

brethren by the sound of trumpets went to the field, to cut the grains... When we retruend to Nazareth, we found the brethren Gottlieb, Ettwein, Hoeger from Bethlehem there, and 20 single brethren and 7 Indians from Bethlehem were there to help to cut the grains and also to watch.⁹⁵

The singing of hymns built a “natural language” that celebrated “the simultaneous joining of different languages in a mystical moment of Pentecostal unity of word and spirit.”⁹⁶

Following the traditions of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, the Moravians believed that music rather than a spoken language should be “the principal means of conveying and guiding the understanding of theological truths,” the perfect supplement to Zinzendorf’s “heart religion.”⁹⁷ The Moravians valued songs as a way of communicating spiritual truth to Native Americans, who then could transform them to accommodate their own cultural traditions, i.e., as inspiration or celebration for a successful hunt. For instance, the singing of hymnals served as an alternative to the traditional song and dancing rituals: in 1777, Zeisberger describes an occasion where the Indian Brothers returned from a fourteen-day hunt and partook in celebratory song and preaching.⁹⁸ In more hymns published in the early 1700s, multiple verses continue with this central theme of harvest and grain:

1. Doch Jesus betrachtet uns unkraut als weizen,
weil ihm das künftige bekant, deßwegen
so häuft er sein dringen und reizen, bis wir uns endlich umgewandt.

Though Jesus considers us weeds as wheat, because he knows what is to come, so he accumulates his pleas and appeals until we finally come around.

2. Weizen-körner, unkrauts-dörner hier beysammen müssen stehen,
dort wird scheiden Gott die beyden, wenn die erndte wird angehen.

⁹⁵ *Translations of selected entries from the Nazareth Diary*, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA, <http://www.moravianchurcharchives.org/eLibrary/Nazareth%20Diary%201750-1759.pdf>.

⁹⁶ Patrick M. Ebre, *A Harmony of the Spirits: Translation and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2012), 228-30.

⁹⁷ Wheeler and Eyerly, “Songs of the Spirit,” 6.

⁹⁸ Woodward, ““Incline Your Second Ear This Way,”” 136.

Wheat grains, weeds' thorns must stand together here, there will God divide the two when the harvest comes.⁹⁹

As Native Americans succumbed to disease, famine, and alcoholism during this period, the Moravians tried to depict a familiar concept in an encouraging light. The repetition of such themes also allowed for Native Americans to obtain a different form of spiritual enlightenment. The complex role of alcohol is one such example. In the Southeast, the indigenous peoples of the Woodlands celebrated the annual Green Corn ceremony as a “rite of thanksgiving” and “means of purifying the whole social order.”¹⁰⁰ The Moravians noted in their diaries how the local people celebrated by partaking in alcohol: “This festival takes place every year at the time of corn harvest...To this, a large quantity of whisky is added. Then they begin to eat and drink, and dance day and night.”¹⁰¹ Alcohol was a very divisive substance that affected relations between the Moravians and Native Americans. For one, it was “both an impediment to Moravian accomplishments and a threat to the survival of the Indian communities.”¹⁰² Both historians and scientists have dedicated significant attention to devastating effects of alcohol but less so on the cultural importance of alcohol.¹⁰³ Instead of stressing the destructive features of alcohol, it is fruitful to explore how it served a role in indigenous communal practices in medicine, mourning, and celebration. Indigenous women were particularly impacted as they were implicated as both perpetrators and as victims of

⁹⁹ Vickie L. Ziegler, “Harvest Home: Grain Imagery in Moravian Hymns and the Mission to the Native Americans,” *Medieval Technology and American History*, last accessed 14 November 2021, https://www.engr.psu.edu/mtah/articles/harvest_home.htm#appl. The two excerpts here are translated by me and are accessible in the Erich Beyreuther, et al., *Herrnhuter Gesangbuch: Christliches Gesang-Buch der Evangelischen Brüder -Gemeinen von 1735* (New York: G. Olms, 1981).

¹⁰⁰ Martin Trenk, “Religious Uses of Alcohol among the Woodland Indians of North America,” *Anthropos* 96 (2001): 78.

¹⁰¹ Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The Moravian Indian Mission on White River*, translated by Harry E. Stocker, et al. (Indianapolis: Indian Historical Bureau, 1938), 190.

¹⁰² 92. “Believers do not drink.” Wellenreuther and Wessel, eds. *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger*, 353.

¹⁰³ John W. Frank, et al. “Historical and Cultural Roots of Drinking Problems Among American Indians,” *American Journal of Public Health* 90, no. 3 (2000): 344-51.

alcohol abuse. Native women maintained some control of the distribution of alcohol (mainly for preparing rituals), but they also faced male aggression and sexual abuse as a result of alcoholism.¹⁰⁴ In his diary, Zeisberger recounts a troubling interaction with the Seneca women regarding alcohol and mourning: “Our hostess with other women became very drunk and disturbed us the whole night. They excused themselves, asking us not to remember it against them, because they were obliged to drink for the dead. For this reason, they were not able to offer us any of their liquor, a cause for thankfulness on our part.”¹⁰⁵ The steadfast determination to drink in order to fulfill their obligation to the dead superseded that to Zeisberger and his party. Peter C. Mancall argues that the women’s violation of two social norms, disturbing the visitors and failing to share alcohol with the Moravian visitors, suggests that local religious principles dictated the contours of these Native Americans’ lives. Alcohol then was an integral part of maintaining religious identity.

Just as Moravians made concessions to allowing dancing (and sometimes drinking) as an accompaniment to music, music went beyond having a sacred function and further cemented intercultural ways through healing practices as well.¹⁰⁶ Jeanette Rau Mack and her husband were missionaries “held in high esteem” for their medical acumen.¹⁰⁷ Considering the centrality of Christ’s blood, the Moravians believed that bloodletting was an effective

¹⁰⁴ 102-3.

¹⁰⁵ Archer Butler Hulbert, and William Nathaniel Schwarze, “The Moravian Records: Volume Two: The Diaries of Zeisberger Relating to the First Missions in the Ohio Basin,” *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 21 (1912), 85.

¹⁰⁶ The consumption of alcohol was a divisive issue between the Moravians and Native Americans, as “drinking, dancing, and fighting were integral to the latter, whereas the former emphasized temperance in their religious messages to shield indigenous communities from alcohol’s lethal effects. Colin G. Calloway, et al., eds., *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 91-3. For more on the drinking culture in early modern Central Europe, see B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

¹⁰⁷ *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 29 (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1905), 172-3.

medical procedure. Moreover, they believed that the physical act of singing “produced sensations and vibrations that cleansed the body.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, the human body transformed into a spiritual space. “Therapeutic bleedings” would be used alongside prayers and religious songs, which would be welcomed by indigenous communities.¹⁰⁹ In the Native American context, blood was a mysterious yet powerful force. For native men, the imagery of a bleeding Christ evoked “certain connotations to the powers of warriors who stoically withstood torture and the curing properties of the sweat lodge” whereas for women, there was a more physical implication associate with bleeding, namely menstruation. In the period when their bodies bled every month, women became powerful beings: menstruating women were not allowed to participate in community ceremonies or prepare food, and men did their best to avoid contact with them for “fear the women’s potent energy might damage their own power.”¹¹⁰ So many Native Americans came to the Moravians for bloodletting that the Church determined in 1742 that “blood letting to the Indians should be performed rarely and only in the case of urgent need.”¹¹¹ Faced with the horrors and devastation of smallpox and other new diseases, indigenous Americans referred to the healing techniques of the Moravians, finding solace in the similarities shared between the two groups. Even in one’s dying moments, the Moravians comforted the afflicted with songs and prayers. In his November 16th entry in his diary, Zeisberger recounts the death of Brother Timotheus (a converted Native American) in 1780, where he was surrounded by his Brothers and Sisters

¹⁰⁸ Eyerly, *Moravian Soundscape*, 181.

¹⁰⁹ Susan H. Brandt, *Women Healers: Gender, Authority, and Medicine in Early Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 78. In Native American culture, pow wows used music to sometimes treat illness. See Woodward, “Incline Your Second Ear This Way,” 140.

¹¹⁰ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 112-3.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 120.

who “sang verses for him.”¹¹² For all Moravians, indigenous or European, singing was a healing ritual that eased the passage from one world to the next.

The most gruesome example of the fusion of Christian song and indigenous tradition is the Gnadenhütten massacre of 1782, where 96 indigenous Moravians were executed by the U.S. militia for the false premise that they were spies for the British (when in actuality, they took no sides because of their pacifist stance). It is well recorded that the native captives, “preparing for Death...fell on their Knees praying and singing Hymns.”¹¹³ An account of the massacre by Hugh Henry Brackenridge recalls that the Indians “died defiantly singing war songs.”¹¹⁴ However, we must consider two things: first, Brackenridge was an influential newspaper publisher in Pittsburgh who viewed the Native Americans as a perpetual enemy of the white settlers.¹¹⁵ Second, one can possibly interpret the Native Americans’ last act of singing as a death song, a tradition hearkening to native roots. It was a decision “to die as an Indian.”¹¹⁶ The communal experience of song was a definitive moment for these Moravians to demonstrate their commitment to their faith melded by local and Moravian traditions.

Music was significant for indigenous Americans by offering an alternative in understanding unfamiliar theological or spiritual concepts. Founding Father Benjamin Rush notes in his *Medical Inquiries and Observations* (1812) that “singing aids the memory in acquiring a knowledge of words and the ideas connected with them. A song is always learned

¹¹² Herman Wellenreuther, and Carola Wessel, eds. *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger, 1772-1781*, translated by Julie Tomberlin Weber (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 544.

¹¹³ *The Travels of John Heckewelder in Frontier America*, edited by Paul A.W. Wallace (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 194.

¹¹⁴ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Narratives of a Late Expedition Against the Indians* (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1783), 31.

¹¹⁵ For more on Brackenridge, see Patrick Spero, *Frontier Country: The Politics of War in Early Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 255-6.

¹¹⁶ Woodward, “Incline Your Second Ear This Way,” 142.

sooner than the same number of words set to music.”¹¹⁷ As music was an essential part of Moravian religious life, missionaries dedicated early efforts in building a community centered around hymn singing and translation. While indigenous people were negotiating this new evangelical life introduced by the Moravians, the missionaries not only exhibited a high degree of tolerance for indigenous cultural traditions, but also learned the language and set up schools for learning local languages—a trait that distinguished them from their Protestant and Catholic counterparts (most likely due to the Moravians’ status as an outsider in the colonies). In the village of Pachgatgoch, the missionary Carl Gottfried Rundt spent an hour daily with Brethren Joshua, a baptized native from Shekomeko, to “impress upon himself the Indians’ way of pronunciation and their accent, for he has to sing them aloud during the regular occasions.”¹¹⁸ Johann Christoph Pyrlaus (1713-1785) and his musical skills are worth mentioning as he is a lesser known (but nonetheless important) Moravian in the historiography. He numbered among the few with a university education and was selected by Spangenberg to serve as a missionary. Pyrlaus was atypical in the way that he actually spent “comparatively little time among native Americans,” but he headed “the school of Indian languages” in Bethlehem; to Pyrlaus, multilingualism and music were the key facets in unifying people within the Church—“to create a single spiritual language among the polyglot constituents of the Moravian Church.”¹¹⁹ He worked alongside Joshua to translate hymns and fix earlier translation errors.¹²⁰ Zeisberger himself knew several Native American languages fluently and published grammar books and dictionaries on these in both English and German.

¹¹⁷ Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, upon the Diseases of the Mind* (Philadelphia: Kimber & Richardson, 1812), 289.

¹¹⁸ Corinna Dally-Starna and William A. Starna, eds. *Gideon’s People: Being a Chronicle of an American Indian Community In Colonial Connecticut and the Moravian Missionaries Who Served There*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 318.

¹¹⁹ Erben, *A Harmony of the Spirits*, 308-9. On the school led by Pyrlaus, see Joseph Mortimer Levering, *A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 1741-1892* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1903), 204-5.

¹²⁰ Wheeler and Eyerly, “Singing Box 331,” fn 47.

The Moravians encouraged their indigenous converts to express Christian dogma using native vocabulary and imagery. For example, one native man named Nicodemus compared resurrection to corn seeds planted in the soil, which represented the deceased and would rise once again.¹²¹ The incorporation of Native American concepts in Moravian hymns elicited critical responses by non-Moravians exemplified in a letter written by John Watson, an Anglican clergyman: “the Moravian Hymns...contain such nonsensible, shocking, and blasphemous stuff, as is scarce to be equalled in any language.”¹²² Though the archival records are silent on the nature of indigenous musical adaptation of Moravian musical culture, we cannot assume that the Mohicans were passive actors subsumed into the Christian agenda. On the contrary, we see that indigenous communities developed and adapted a new tradition to suit the needs of the community.

Overlapping Worlds: The Gender Frontier

Moravian Structures of Gender

The hallmark of Moravian life revolved around the “choir” system (Chor), first established for single men in 1728 in Herrnhut and for single women in 1730. Through this system, the congregation was divided into different groups: children, male youths, female youths, single brethren, single sisters, married person, widowers, and widows.¹²³ Each pastoral unit (determined by sex, age, and marital state) lived and worked amongst each other. Moravian women then were able to foster a special female piety that went beyond the Puritans, Quakers, and Lutherans. Although the gender division of the choirs may seem counterintuitive to empowering women, there were positions of influence available within

¹²¹ Wheeler and Eyerly, “Songs of the Spirit,” 7.

¹²² *The Monthly Review, or Literary Journal*, vol. 16 (London: R. Griffiths, 1757), 355.

¹²³ Katherine M. Faull, ed. Introduction to *Speaking to Body and Soul: Instructions for the Moravian Choir Helpers, 1785-1786* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 4.

each choir. For example, there was the choir helper (Chorhelfer/Chorhelferin) who was responsible for holding monthly Sprechen (speaking) sessions with choir members; for larger choirs, there may also be a choir warden (Chordiener/Chordienerin), who took care of the more practical and economic concerns of the choir. One of the important tasks of the choir helper was to be familiar with the Herzenszustand (“heart’s condition”) of the sisters and confirm the spiritual and physical well-being of the sisters. They were also responsible for accepting single sisters into the congregation.¹²⁴ In the early stages of the Moravian Church in Germany, Zinzendorf served as the choir helper for the male choirs, and his second wife Anna Nitschmann counselled the female choirs. As the Moravian Church grew, however, the office of choir helper emerged to accommodate multiple choir units.

Moravian society in colonial America was structured to grant considerable “spiritual and supervisory responsibility to women.”¹²⁵ Enemies of the Moravians claimed that the violation of gender boundaries shattered the basic tenet and religious order of Christianity. German Lutherans criticized the Moravians’ deeply erotic and sensual mysticism as unrestrained sexual perversion; outsiders were eager to exaggerate accounts about the supposed sexual perversions and reversal of gender roles—most being written by former members of the Church. The most well-known example is the “blue cabinet” (das blaue Cabinet), a room dedicated specifically for intercourse.¹²⁶ While an in-depth sexual history of

¹²⁴ Ibid., 5, 27. Faull’s book shows how each choir (i.e., single sisters, single brethren, married persons, and widows) had very specific rules. There were even directions for helping girls reaching puberty, or the *bedenkliche Jahre* (“difficult years”), and how to explain and even embrace menstruation—again, this goes back to the Moravians’ emphasis on Christ’s suffering and blood.

¹²⁵ Smaby, “Female Piety Among Eighteenth Century Moravians,” 151.

¹²⁶ Paul Peucker, “In the Blue Cabinet: Moravians, Marriage, and Sex,” *Journal of Moravian History* 10, (2011): 19-24. Though Peucker argues that the “blue cabinet” was anti-Moravian propaganda, marital chambers did indeed exist across Moravian settlements. He also addresses the infamous stories of couples being watched during sexual intercourse, noting that these claims are inconclusive for the same reason describes above. Moravian elders were also present in the room prior to sex (but not during) to help change clothes.

the Moravians extends past the purview of this paper, I do echo similar concerns raised by Ann-Catherine Wilkening in the need to better understand Moravian women's mystical piety; only Katherine Faull has produced works that refer to lay sources written by women.¹²⁷ She shows how marriage and sexual intercourse were viewed positively by the Moravians as a holy act. Zinzendorf's perspectives on sexuality demonstrated a reformulation of "the place of the body and sexuality in relation to the holy, by purifying marriage of sin and creating a morally perfect relationship."¹²⁸ Regardless of the Church's unorthodox sexual practices, I underscore that the status of Moravian women found positive reception from the indigenous communities they interacted with.

The Moravians' gender structure could be traced back to early Moravians in Herrnhut, where both men and women could be spiritual leaders and priests. More specifically, the progressive seeds of female piety can be rooted back to Zinzendorf being surrounded by efficient and capable women, including his maternal grandmother Henrietta Catherine, the Baroness von Gersdorf (1648-1726), who primarily raised him. His first and second wives, Erdmuther Dorothea von Zinzendorf and Anna Nitschmann respectively, were also influential figures in the community. Zinzendorf proved to be a pivotal figure in encouraging female leadership in his lifetime as female piety was the strongest in the 1750s, and women enthusiastically assumed such roles. Following his death in 1760, Moravian leaders sought to

¹²⁷ Ann-Catherine Wilkening, "I didn't Know that I was Starving 'Til I Tasted You: 18th Century Moravian Women's Ecstatic Experience of Bridal Mysticism in Communion and Marital Sexuality," *Lumen et Vita* 8, no. 2 (2018): 40-51. Michael Taylor has an interesting article that examines sexuality in Moravian society through queer theory; see Michael Taylor, "Queer Moravians? Sexual Heterodoxy and the Historiography of Zinzendorf's Ehereligion," in *Gender im Pietismus: Netzwerke und Geschlechterkonstruktionen*, edited by Pia Schmid (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2015): 93-115. Katherine Faull has spearheaded research on Moravian sources written by women (e.g., diaries and memoirs). Most scholars on gender in Moravian society in colonial America tend to study Zinzendorf and his writings.

¹²⁸ Faull, *Speaking to the Body and Soul*, 99.

dismantle the system in efforts to make the Moravian Church more orthodox in order to appear more acceptable to the outside world.

Paving the Road to Success: Mother of the Church

The ascension of Anna Nitschmann (1715-1760) to the position as Mutter (“mother”) in 1746 marked a crucial point in Moravian history, enhancing the visibility of female piety in the community. A remarkable woman, Nitschmann obtained the title of Eldress of the Church only at 15 years old. She served in the highest ranking positions in the Moravian Church. As the role model for Moravian women, Nitschmann traveled to the Americas with her father in 1740 (a year prior to Zinzendorf’s arrival) and helped establish the Bethlehem settlement and continued her evangelical activities amongst Native Americans. One can strongly argue that she was essential to the success of Moravian missions. Her first interactions with the indigenous Americans in Pennsylvania solidified her reputation as an important female religious leaders: in just three months since her arrival, she was well received and often visited by the Native Americans while working outdoors.¹²⁹ In 1742, she accompanied Zinzendorf’s party to venture into the backcountry to meet with the leaders of the prominent tribes in the region, that is, the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee), Mohican, and the Shawnee.¹³⁰ Nitschmann conducted missionary outreach methodologically. She was close friends with other important female figures such as Jeannette Rau and Madame Montour; both were valuable individuals well-versed in the language of the Mohicans and Iroquois respectively.¹³¹ In their trek into the American wilderness, Nitschmann sometimes took the

¹²⁹ Katherine Faull, “Anna Nitschmann: the Mother of the Church,” *On Translation, Spatial Thinking, Data Visualization*, last modified 9 March 2018, <https://katiefaull.com/2018/03/09/anna-nitschmann-the-mother-of-the-church/>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Horace Edwin Hayden, ed. *Proceedings and Collections of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society* (Wilkes-Barré: Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, 1902), 129. Madame Montour was an interpreter and mediatory between the Iroquois and the American

lead through the harsh environment. In one instance, she had to aid Zinzendorf in climbing the Shamokin mountain as recalled by Zinzendorf himself:

We traveled on and soon struck the lovely Susquehanna. Riding along its bank we came to the boundary of Shamokin, a precipitous hill, such as I scarce ever saw. I was reminded by it of Wenzel Neisser's experience in Italy. Anna Nitschman, who is the most courageous of our number, and a heroine, led in the descent, I took the train of her riding habit in my hand to steady me in the saddle. Conrad held to the skirt of my overcoat, and Bohler to Conrad's. In this way we mutually supported each other, and the Savior assisted us in descending the hill in safety.¹³²

Aside from the comical imagery, the precarious environmental conditions only accounted for one of numerous other hazards in their missionary expeditions. Despite the dangers to her life, Anna Nitschmann left a long-lasting legacy in Pennsylvania including her amicable relations with the natives in Pennsylvania and the establishment of the Girls School in Philadelphia (now Moravian University), one of the first schools open to indigenous women. Nitschmann was an inspirational figure for Moravian women. Because of her contributions in Pennsylvania, Moravian women were able to navigate through a landscape characterized by a multiplicity and intersection of cultures. Jane T. Merritt asserts that the Moravians accounted for one of the most successful Protestant groups with respect to missionaries; she attributes this success to the strong presence of women working in indigenous communities. She estimates that between 10-20% of the Delaware and Mahican population were baptized by Moravians.

In his ideal utopia, William Penn advocated for a policy of tolerance in encounters between European settlers and the local people of Pennsylvania. Over the course of the eighteenth century, however, Europeans slowly encroached on the lands of indigenous tribes,

colonial government. See Jon Parmenter, "Isabel Montour: Cultural Broker on the Frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania," in *The Human Tradition in Colonial America*, edited by Ian K. Steele and Nancy L. Rhoden (Wilmington: Scholarly Resource Inc., 1999), 153.

¹³² Quoted in Edwin MacMinn, *On the Frontier with Colonel Antes* (Camden: S. Chew and Sons, 1900), 290.

pushing them out to the periphery. As violence and disease wreaked havoc on Native American communities, their problems were further compounded with another layer of uncertainty brought on by desire of Christian missionaries wanting to “help.” Most Protestant missionaries introduced a set of new religious, social, and economic practices that potentially undermined customary patterns of indigenous Americans. On the contrary, the divergent beliefs and social norms of the Moravians provided them, and in particular women, flexibility in adopting certain white habits without entirely giving up or letting go of local traditions. Older scholarship posits that Native Americans turned to Christianity as a “desperate reaction to a world in crisis.”¹³³ The tremendous changes resulting from European settlement and expansion in the New World did indeed alter the social dynamics of these indigenous groups. Instead of resisting or accepting these profound cultural changes during this volatile period, however, Native American women “bridged gaps between cultures, became facilitators for these encounters while still putting the needs of their children and families first and foremost.”¹³⁴ The experiences of Moravian and indigenous women hold a special appeal for historians because the two groups of women found commonality in various aspects of their lives including the division of labor and leadership roles. There was a distinct separation of the sexes in both indigenous and Moravian societies though we have to disregard current definitions of separate spheres, which has a more negative and misogynistic connotation. To elaborate, female Native Americans from the Cherokee and Mahicans had the responsibility of cooking at home, taking care of the children, and harvesting crops from the fields and wild. But they held autonomy outside the home as well, extending to the political and

¹³³ Jane T. Merritt, “Cultural Encounters along a Gender Frontier: Mahican, Delaware, and German Women in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History* 67, no. 4 (2000): 507.

¹³⁴ Jane T. Merritt, “The Gender Frontier Revisited: Native American Women in the Age of Revolution,” in *Ethnographies and Exchanges: Native Americans, Moravians, and Catholics in Early North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press), 165.

economic realms. In addition to trading, Native American women were “intricately involved in and essential to the creation of diplomatic, economic, and social alliances between Native Americans and newly arrived Europeans in North America.”¹³⁵ So too did Moravian women’s lives revolve around similar duties: cooking, cultivating gardens, and teaching children.

Initial contact with indigenous women were not always received amicably, however. As David Zeisberger (1721-1808) observed in his missions to the Delawares in the Ohio Valley during 1740s and 1750s, he found that “We have many enemies here, more than we had thought, particularly among the women.”¹³⁶ The old native women in town were poised to discourage people from attending Moravian meetings. Contrary to Zinzendorf’s push for female piety and leadership, Zeisberger criticized the influence indigenous women had in their society: “I have not found elsewhere among the Indians that the women are such instruments of Satan and influential among the people.”¹³⁷ Even with male indigenous preachers, Ziesberger looked down at the hybrid form of Christianity that did not “have so much to do with the whites but cherish their own customs and not imitate the manners of the whites.”¹³⁸ As we see further below, Moravian women built close kinships with Native American women in ways men did not in light of the responsibilities that they both shared. Despite the introduction of a Christian-based patriarchal system in their society, Native Americans were able to work around this at the household and family level; white women strengthened bonds with their indigenous counterparts by sharing personal circumstances and emotional bonds. In doing so, they were able to “break down old bonds of kinship to create a new cultural category based on a common Christian faith.”¹³⁹ For example, Moravian women

¹³⁵ Jane T. Merritt, “Cultural Encounters along a Gender Frontier,” 502-3.

¹³⁶ Hulbert and Schwarze, “The Moravian Records: Volume Two,” 58.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³⁹ Merritt, “Cultural Encounters along a Gender Frontier,” 515-7.

participated in rites of birth and death alongside indigenous women. Indigenous women were prone to attending services when the female missionaries talked with them: “we had many visitors all day long in our hut. Anton and Abraham preached to them constantly. The women in our company spoke to the female visitors.”¹⁴⁰ The presence of women in these missionaries were essential in eliciting positive responses from Native American women. Consequently, this opened avenues for cultural exchange including medicinal and herbal knowledge.

The Exchange of Artisanal and Botanical Knowledge

The Cherokee discerned the important connection Moravian women had with the botanical world. The Moravian Anna Rosina Gambold devoted a significant amount of time not only towards missionary work, but also botany. On his tour in Cherokee County, Elias Cornelius observed in 1817 that “the land was cleared, and in the highest state of cultivation” and praised Gambold for being “quite a botanist, [having] a very good garden of plants, both ornamental and medicinal.”¹⁴¹ Gambold published a paper in the *American Journal of Science and Arts* in 1819 titled “A list of plants found in the neighborhood of Connasarga River, (Cherokee Country) where Springplace is situated; made by Mrs. Gambold, at the request of the Rev. Elias Cornelius.” Around 264 different genera of plants are mentioned and ends with an alphabetical list of 38 “useful plants.” A number of these plants were knowledge obtained by the Cherokees as sources for medicines, foods, dyes and fibers.¹⁴² Gambold was extremely active in sending a massive collection of plant and seeds to the Rev. Henry Steinhauer and expanding the growth of the herbarium in Muhlenberg. Yet the

¹⁴⁰ Hulbert and Schwarze, “The Moravian Records: Volume Two,” 55. My italics.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Daniel L. McKinley, “Anna Rosina (Kliest) Gambold (1762-1821), Moravian Missionary to the Cherokees, with Special Reference to her Botanical Interests,” *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 28, (1994): 59.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 60.

botanical gardens, as we may think of them today, had different connotations from the more imperial-based gardens, where plants were grown for “botanical or ornamental purposes—often under institutional sponsorship.”¹⁴³ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, “botanical gardens” were used as spaces for cultivating necessities such as foodstuffs and medicine.

One of the keys to successful missions was the ability to grow and maintain a garden. Michael T. Bravo’s concept of “mission gardens” is useful for the purposes of this study. According to Bravo, there are four reasons that helps elucidate how these gardens were “place-responsive”:

First, mission gardens were places where missionary and indigenous botanical traditions intersected, as though they were a practical space where the incommensurability between cultures could be overcome. Second, the range of possible botanical practices was contingent on local political, physical, and climatic conditions. Third, becoming economically self-sufficient at mission stations required missionaries to make local links to landscapes and peoples. Fourth, where inadequate colonial botanical practice made self-sufficiency impossible, the missionaries were forced to reconsider the social organization of the colony.¹⁴⁴

Missionary botany can be fruitful in analyzing the relationships of the Moravians with indigenous Americans as there were a number of Moravian botanists interested in studying the native flora and fauna in the new country. Despite Moravian emphasis on practical skills including planting, cultivating, and transforming botanicals, scant attention has been devoted to the contribution of missionaries (with the exception of the Jesuits) in early modern [imperial] natural history.¹⁴⁵ However, the case of Moravian naturalists highlights a crucial characteristic differentiating them from Catholic Franciscans or English Protestant botanists,

¹⁴³ Ibid., 64.

¹⁴⁴ Michael T. Bravo, “Mission Gardens: Natural History and Global Expansion, 1720-1820,” in *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World*, edited by Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005): 62.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

who operated under a large-scale colonial framework and network (think Joseph Banks and the expansion of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew under his jurisdiction). Bravo primarily looks at missionaries within the context of broader global networks; he underscores the export of botanical knowledge as a “two-way process between missions and European botanical gardens and collections.”¹⁴⁶ While very helpful for studying connections between the Old and New Worlds, I suggest honing in closely—a microscopic lens, if you will—to where European missionaries and local indigenous neighbors worked closely together.

As an interesting foil, Anna Rosina’s attitude and eagerness to collaborate with the indigenous people over botany differs markedly from that of her husband, John Gambold. Unlike his wife, he did not react positively to the thirteen years of missionary endeavors among the Cherokees: “Thirteen years have we laboured, prayed, and wept, having no other prospect before us, than that our scholars would relapse into heathenism.” He continues on, saying that “unless the Cherokee Indians adopt our Language, our Laws & our holy Religion, they will at no very distant Period either become extinct, or else degenerate into a kind of Gypsies.”¹⁴⁷ This strikingly contrast in attitudes towards the Native Americans between Anna Rosina and John highlight the different experiences and spheres that missionary men and women had in the field. Anna Rosina was distinct from early American botanists not only for her contributions towards the budding field of the science, but also for her gender.¹⁴⁸ I do want to emphasize that her epistemological approach was not practiced solely by her. Other Moravian women, who may not be as well credited as Anna Rosina, also participated in this cross-cultural exchange of knowledge regarding the natural world.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Ibid., 83-4.

¹⁴⁸ In an article touching on early American Moravian botanists along the Atlantic coast, Anna Rosina Gambold is the only woman mentioned. See James R. Troyer, “Early American Botanists in North Carolina and Elsewhere,” *Journal of the North Carolina Academy of Science* 125, no. 1 (2009): 1-6.

In addition to imparting local knowledge about plants, Moravian Native Americans learned from their white Sisters. Considering how much emphasis the Moravians placed on artisan skills, one of the primary activities of Moravian women consisted of sewing and weaving clothing. Katherine Faull argues that alongside producing vital goods and income for the Gemeine and choir, spinning and weaving were “traditional tropes of women’s wisdom...imbued with spiritual worth.”¹⁴⁹ These trades brought the Moravians into an economy of mutual exchange, whether knowledge or physical goods. During times of duress for Moravians treading through the rough terrain, where at times food had run out, Moravian women were able to collect herbs around their natural settings and prepare them for sustenance. Zeisberger recounts a day through the Ohio Valley where “provisions were used up,” and the women in the group gathered herbs and boiled them in water for food. He notes that the herb mixture “tasted very good.”¹⁵⁰ Although the use of herbs was not uncommon for European medical practice, instructions on what kind of plants (and even when) to collect were more than likely obtained from Native American knowledge. Despite European physicians’ [public] dismissal of indigenous medicine, they nonetheless included Native American plant treatment in their own repertoires.¹⁵¹ Colin Calloway also agrees with this, highlighting that “the transmission of medical knowledge in the contact period passed more frequently from Native American to European than vice versa.”¹⁵²

The use of herbal cures in Native American medicine number among many in their healing practices that aligned with that of the Moravians. Whereas Western medicine often

¹⁴⁹ Katherine Faull, “The Hidden Work of Moravian Wives,” *On Translation, Spatial Thinking, Data Visualization*, last modified 9 March 2018, <https://katiefaull.com/2018/03/09/the-hidden-work-of-moravian-wives/>.

¹⁵⁰ Hulbert and Schwarze, “The Moravian Records: Volume Two,” 46.

¹⁵¹ Katherine M. Faull, “The Experience of the World as the Experience of the Self: Smooth Rocks in a River Archipelago,” in *Re-Imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecossemiotics* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 2014), 208.

¹⁵² Ibid.

tended to see illness as “physical and individualistic,” indigenous cultures in contrast saw (and still do) it as a “sign of imbalance of the spirit world, occurring when a person’s spiritual being was out of harmony with other spirits, other people, the earth”—though it is worth noting that illness did have emotional and spiritual components as well in the European tradition, particularly in the eighteenth century.¹⁵³ The Moravians also studied the body as a system centered around flows of energy based on the Hippocrates’ humoral system, and the best manual referred to by Moravians was Christian Richter’s *Höchst-nöthige Erkenntnis vom Leibe*. The Moravians’ holistic view of medicine, which took a patient’s spiritual and physical health into consideration in a diagnosis, corresponded well with indigenous medicine described above. Here, we also see the hybridization of medicine. The medical system in colonial America differed from more hierarchical-based system firmly entrenched in Germany, France, and England, and Moravian physicians practiced different forms of healthcare “according to their preference and in response to the expectations of their patients.”¹⁵⁴ Likewise, Native Americans heeded European medical knowledge, but it was ultimately up to them whether or not to incorporate it into their knowledge systems.¹⁵⁵

Broadening Kinship Ties: Question of Race in Moravian Communities

The close relationships that Moravian and indigenous made transferred persisted long afterwards, sometimes even after death. Once Native Americans joined the Moravian communities, they also communicated their religious message to slaves of African descent.

¹⁵³ Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds from All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 31-2.

¹⁵⁴ Wilson, “Moravian Physicians and Their Medicine in Colonial North America,” 75.

¹⁵⁵ For an example of Moravian medicine in an indigenous context, see Thea Olsthoorn, “Healing Body and Soul in Labrador: The Practice of Medicine by Early Moravian Missionaries,” *Journal of Moravian History* 19, no. 2 (2019): 156-81. Olsthoorn’s findings show that the Inuit in eighteenth-century Labrador judged and incorporated missionaries’ practice with their own beliefs and acknowledged the Brethren’s medical treatments. However, Inuit shamans (*angakkuit*) only resorted to Moravian healing techniques in life-threatening situations.

While surviving written sources by these subaltern groups are quite rare, there are cases of black slaves also occupying a space in this ever evolving cultural sphere. Though an examination of racial dynamics in Moravian missionary communities would make for an excellent research project, it would make this project too big. Nonetheless, I want to quickly touch upon how black slaves came into the Moravian picture. As I pointed out in the introduction, however, white Moravians did not stray away from questions of race, but they were also not free from the biases of their time as they accepted slavery and even owned some slaves themselves. The Moravians kept detailed records on information on slaves within their community, which includes their names, baptisms, deaths, and in some instances, their African names and place of origin.¹⁵⁶ Coming back to Anna Rosina, following her death, another Sister, Margaret Ann “Peggy” Vann sent her slave Betsy to the Springplace mission (where Anna Rosina worked) to offer assistance. On the indigenous side, Native Americans felt personally connected with their black slaves. Blacks owned by Native Americans often adopted many of the values, customs, clothing, food, and language of the tribe.¹⁵⁷ Black Moravians in the Caribbean made a conscientious effort to return the correspondences of their indigenous Brethren and Sisters in the North America. This overarching Moravian Atlantic network speaks to a distinct community that distanced themselves from their white co-religionists and fostering a unity between all people of color.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Nicole Radzievich, “Moravian record books hold little-known history of slaves,” *The Morning Call*, last modified 16 May 2015, <https://www.mcall.com/news/local/mc-bethlehem-moravian-slave-archives-20150516-story.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Tiya Miles, et al., eds. *African American History at the Chief Vann House* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006): 18.

¹⁵⁸ For more on the Atlantic reach of the Moravian network and question of race, see John Catron, “Early Black-Atlantic Christianity in the Middle Colonies: Social Mobility and Race in Moravian Bethlehem,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 76, no. 3 (2009): 301-45.

Conclusion

Fortunately for historians, the Moravians left behind an extraordinary archival record that may seem mundane because they kept a detailed account of daily life and activities. Their legacy was not limited only to documents though; the Brethren and Sisters were also keenly aware of their natural landscapes and served as cultural intermediaries with the local Amerindians. While it is mindful to heed that our perspectives of the indigenous side of the narrative is distorted through the voices of the European Moravian in the sources. This project has unearthed a deeper understanding the complex and multidirectional relationships shared between the Moravians and indigenous communities in colonial America. In the first chapter, I explore the arrival of the Moravians to the New World and map out the extensive planning of the major Moravian towns of Salem and Bethabara. Moravian figures such as Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, August Gottlieb Spangenberg, and Philip Christian Gottlieb Reuter were pivotal in the laying out the foundations for the American Moravian community. Women missionaries also wielded a significant amount of power exemplified through the choir system, where both females and males were able to assume leadership roles (though the latter still occupied the highest roles in the Church). Indigenous women respected and positively received the prominent presence of Moravian women in missionary villages, highlighting common ground between the two groups. Not only did the Moravian's gender structure appeal to the indigenous communities such as the Delaware (also called the Lenape) and Mohicans, but they found a certain air of familiarity with the Church's "blood and wounds" theology and its emphasis on a deeply emotional experience; in a world characterized by ever growing conflict, religious syncretism had "purposes beyond the revival of native spiritual expression."¹⁵⁹ Indeed, Native Americans reinterpreted or appropriated bits of Christianity that fit seemingly well within the local context and

¹⁵⁹ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 127.

ultimately were able to maneuver themselves in a new frontier dotted by Europeans. Indigenous women in particular forged strong kinship ties and shared knowledge and intimate moments such as childbirth and death with their white Moravian sisters. As I covered in Chapter 2, this extended to the realm of music, an important aspect of Native American life in the eighteenth century. A new scholarly effort headed by historians Rachel Wheeler and Sarah Eyerly are collaborating to piece together a web of relationships characterized by cultural adaptations by studying Mohican/Moravian hymns. Indigenous people were able to celebrate their heritage, language, and history through this medium, allowing us to better appreciate the silences looming over the Moravian documents. While this project has unearthed only one part of environmental history regarding the Moravians and Native Americans, it opens up further questions on the transatlantic connections including scientific networks (as in the case of botanical knowledge) and comparisons of land ownership between Central Europe and the American colonies.

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