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*Sustainable Foundations: Examining the Moravian Settlement of Bethlehem and the UN's 17 Goals for Sustainable Communities*

This paper explores how Bethlehem's 18th-century Moravian community, founded in 1741 by members of the renewed Moravian Church, embodied principles that resonate strikingly with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Long before modern sustainability discourse, Bethlehem's planners conceived of a settlement built on equitable access to education, communal welfare, ecological stewardship, and innovative infrastructure. Their first municipal waterworks (1754), powered by hydropower and designed to distribute clean water from a protected spring, exemplifies early commitments to clean water and sanitation. Forestry records, meticulously kept since the 1760s, reflect intentional resource management and responsible production. Water-powered industries along the Monocacy Creek demonstrate early forms of renewable energy use and sustainable economic growth.

At the same time, the Moravian emphasis on universal education, rooted in the philosophies of Bishop John Amos Comenius, the "Father of Modern Education," aligns directly with SDG 4 (Quality Education). The community's social structure, including the influential leadership of women, such as Anna Nitschmann, gestures toward SDG 5 (Gender Equality), while their polyglot singing, international membership, and partnerships with Native American communities illustrate early forms of global partnership and inclusive institutions (SDGs 10, 16, and 17). Bethlehem's planned urban layout, blending communal life with industrial self-sufficiency, offers an early model of sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11).

Yet the Moravian story also reveals contradictions, most notably their entanglement with slavery, which complicates this narrative and reminds us that historical communities, like modern ones, fall short of sustainability in uneven ways. By examining Bethlehem through the lens of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, this presentation invites audiences to consider how historical models of planning, education, and communal responsibility can inform contemporary approaches to sustainable development, heritage stewardship, and global cooperation.

*Poster: Moravian Seminary and College for Women's Newspaper Digitization Project*

Moravian University, located in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, proudly traces its origins back to 1742 and the first boarding school for girls in the colonies. Today, it is the 6th oldest university in the United States, and since its founding over 280 years ago, has played a pivotal role in educating tens of thousands of young women, from all races, ethnicities, and creeds. Among its alumnae are women from notable families, including the nieces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Hawaiian Queen Lili'uokalani, as well as many others whose names are less known, but who went on to make important contributions in the areas of the arts, sciences, medicine, and community leadership.

Between 1878 and 1952, students of this early school for girls published a newspaper, which played a significant role in documenting the lives of women and provided them with a platform for expression. This newspaper, which changed names over the years (The Speculum

(1887-1892), *The Mirror* (1893-1949), *The Belfry* (1936-1952)), was produced in very limited quantities and distributed to students and alumni of the school, and reveals valuable information to researchers about the education of women in Bethlehem, their daily lives during this time period, events at this historic institution and surrounding area, as well as personal announcements about the achievements of its students and alumni. However, due to the brittle nature of these three newspaper titles, this collection has largely been inaccessible to the public until now. In 2025, the Moravian University Archives of Reeves Library received a Pennsylvania Historical & Archival Records Care Grant to digitize these papers with the help of Backstage Library Works, and upload them to the library's CONTENTdm repository.

By contracting with Backstage Library Works to digitize the 438 issues (approximately 7,754 pages) of these newspapers, Reeves Library has been able to make them freely accessible online so that historians, genealogists, students, and other researchers have the opportunity to rediscover and celebrate the hidden stories of women contained within. We expect that this will undoubtedly contribute to a better understanding of the educational landscape, social progress, and the contributions of women during the 19th and early 20th centuries. By publicly showcasing this collection of previously hidden archival materials at The Institute for Moravian History and World Heritage's inaugural conference, we aim to open new avenues of academic research, and inspire further exploration among students, while highlighting Moravian University's legacy of educating women in the process.