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*Sister Shawkirk: Our First World Heritage Guide – A Transatlantic Moravian Life*

This poster proposes an exploration of the extraordinary life of Sister Shawkirk, an 18th-century Moravian whose movements across continents uniquely connect several communities now recognised within the transnational Moravian Church Settlements World Heritage Site. Educated in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—one of the most significant early Moravian settlements—Sister Shawkirk's childhood reflected the strong pedagogical and communal traditions that defined Moravian identity. Her later work in the Caribbean placed her at the intersection of missionary endeavour, cross-cultural exchange, and the complex social dynamics of colonial plantation societies, offering valuable insight into the global reach of Moravian networks.

During the American War of Independence, she served with her husband in New York, where Moravian communities navigated political tensions, shifting allegiances, and practical challenges to their religious principles. After the conflict, Sister Shawkirk moved to Europe, travelling via Christiansfeld in Denmark—then a thriving centre of Moravian craft, discipline, and education—before ultimately returning to Herrnhut, the spiritual heartland of the Moravian Church.

Her final call brought her to Gracehill in Ireland, where she spent the rest of her life. In this context, Sister Shawkirk becomes a remarkable conduit through which the interconnectedness of Moravian communities can be studied. Her experiences across Bethlehem, the Caribbean, New York, Christiansfeld, Herrnhut, and Gracehill create a rare narrative encompassing the internationalism, resilience, and spiritual commitment characteristic of the Moravian tradition.

By reconstructing her biography through archival sources, congregational memoirs, records, and correspondence, this presentation will demonstrate how Sister Shawkirk's life provides an early example of what might now be considered a “world heritage guide”—a figure whose lived experience traversed and linked multiple sites of global cultural significance. Her story not only enriches our understanding of Gracehill's heritage, but also highlights the far-reaching human networks that underpin its designation as part of a World Heritage Site.