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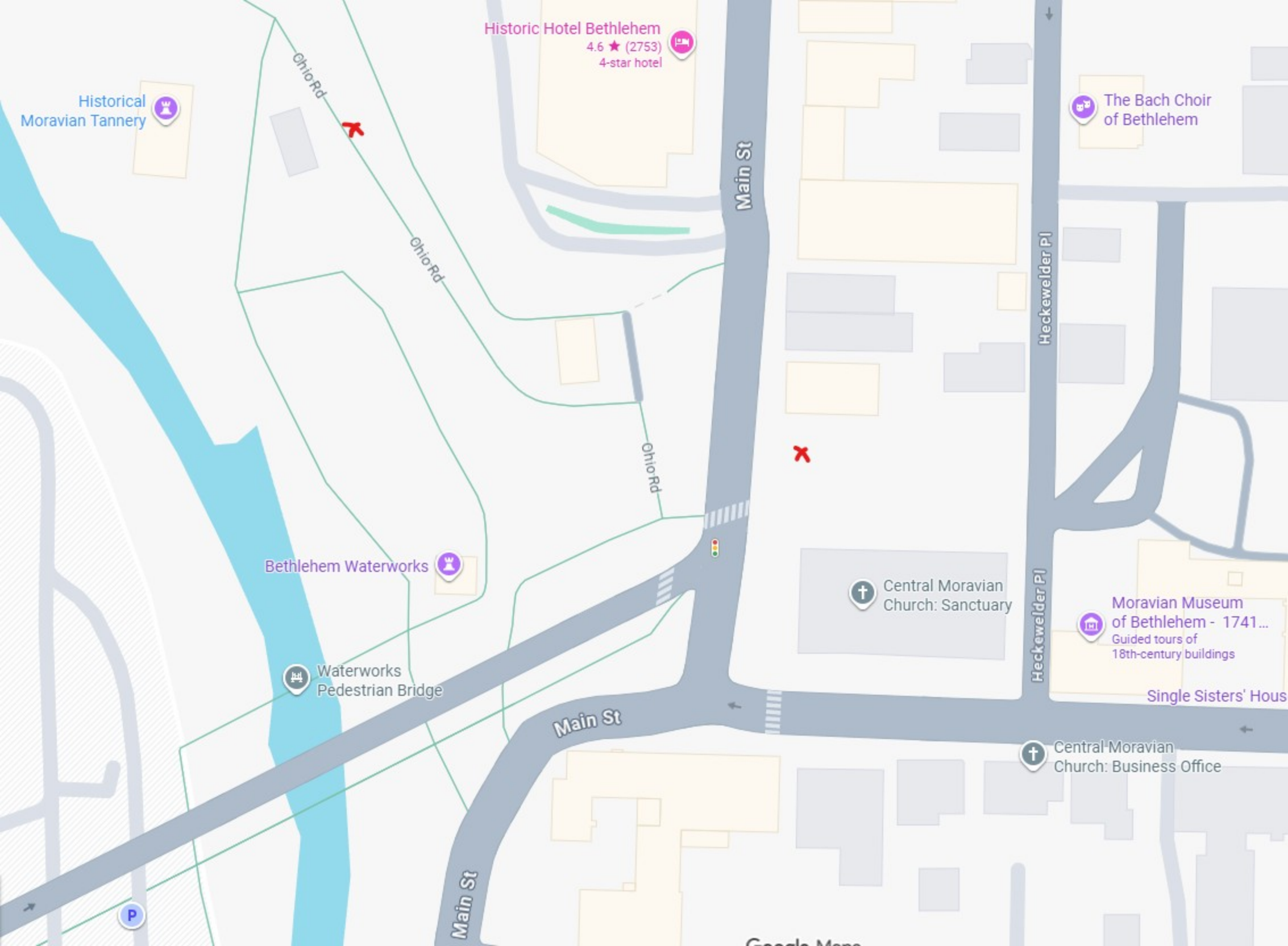
435

Historical Moravian Tannery

al Quarter
Moravian park

use





Historic Hotel Bethlehem
4.6 ★ (2753)
4-star hotel

Historical Moravian Tannery

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem

Bethlehem Waterworks

Waterworks Pedestrian Bridge

Central Moravian Church: Sanctuary

Moravian Museum of Bethlehem - 1741...
Guided tours of 18th-century buildings

Single Sisters' House

Central Moravian Church: Business Office

Moravian Church Settlements

WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Welcome, everyone!

Moravian Church Settlements is a transnational UNESCO World Heritage Site that includes four settlements of the Moravian Church: Bethlehem in Pennsylvania (USA), Christiansfeld in Denmark, Gracehill in Northern Ireland (UK) and Herrnhut in Saxony (Germany). Together they exemplify the global network of religious planned towns built by the Moravian Church between 1722 and 1808.

Each settlement shows the same characteristic architecture of the highest quality craftsmanship, which is surprisingly uniform despite the geographical distances. Together, the four settlements exemplify the ideal of an organised Christian life in community, which is expressed in the individual settlements and their global network.

The inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site took place on July, 26, 2024 at the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi (India).



What does it mean to be a World Heritage site?

Places all over the world, such as Yellowstone National Park in the United States, Aachen Cathedral in Germany, the Taj Mahal in India, and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, make up the world's heritage.

Being a World Heritage site means that a place has cultural and/or natural significance that is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.

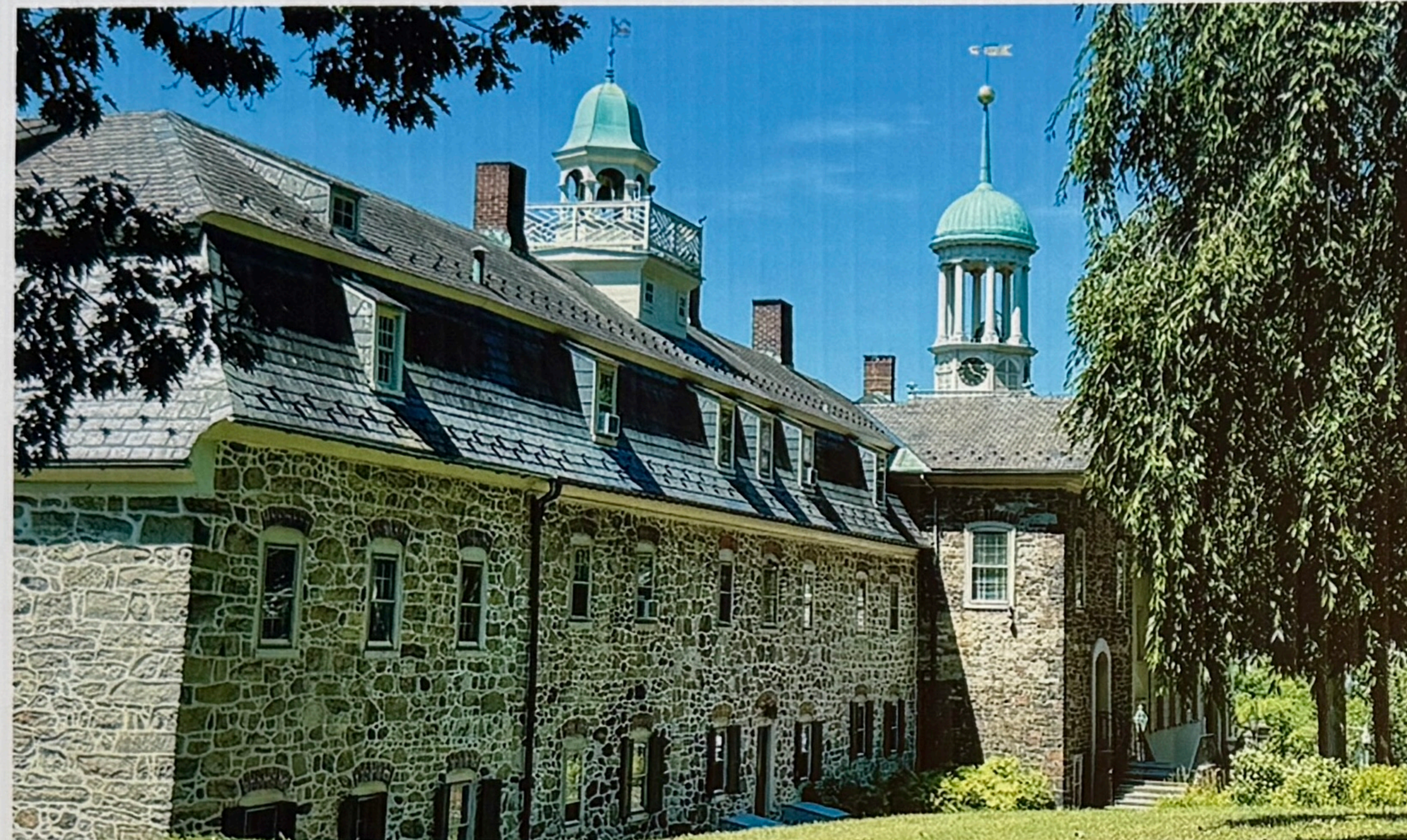
The selection is based on 10 criteria, at least one of which must be met. These criteria include being a masterpiece of human creativity, being an exceptional example of a traditional settlement, or containing important natural habitats.

The goal of the World Heritage List is to represent the most important cultural and natural sites from around the world.



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Moravian Church Settlements
World Heritage since 2024



BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA, USA

Bethlehem was founded in 1741 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and exemplifies the early transatlantic expansion of the Moravian Church into North America. The original ensemble of 18th-century buildings has been preserved remarkably intact and includes the oldest surviving Gemeinhaus among all Moravian settlements, along with the substantial choir houses — communal residences for unmarried brothers, unmarried sisters, and widows. Additional structures in the Colonial Industrial Quarter demonstrate the community's pioneering economic enterprises and industrial innovation. Bethlehem served as the strategic center for Moravian missionary endeavors throughout North America. Simultaneously, the community established educational institutions that evolved into today's Moravian University and Moravian Academy. The Central Moravian Church Sanctuary, distinguished by its elegant belfry, remains an enduring architectural landmark of the Moravian presence in Bethlehem to this day.



HERRNHUT, GERMANY

Herrnhut was founded in 1722 as a refuge for religious exiles fleeing persecution in Bohemia and Moravia. Under the visionary guidance of Count Zinzendorf, a distinctive religious community emerged, rooted in the traditions of the Church of the Bohemian Brethren and achieving far-reaching influence through its groundbreaking missionary endeavors. Herrnhut is therefore regarded as the 'mother settlement' from which all other Moravian communities worldwide would spring. The social organization and spatial principles developed in Herrnhut established the foundation for Moravian urban planning: the characteristic "Herrnhut Baroque" architectural style, the central rectangular square as the community's heart, and the innovative design concepts of the church hall and God's Acre cemetery. The Zinzendorf manor house in neighboring Berthelsdorf served as the seat of church leadership from 1789 to 1913. As home to educational and social welfare institutions, several church enterprises, and the Unity Archives, Herrnhut continues to serve as a vital center in the life of the Moravian Church.



CHRISTIANSFELD, DENMARK

Christiansfeld was founded in 1773 on agricultural land in South Jutland, Denmark, and stands as the best-preserved historic settlement of the Moravian Church in the world. The site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2015. Christiansfeld exemplifies the rigorous application of an ideal urban plan, with a rectangular central square surrounded by carefully positioned communal buildings. The town's rational layout reflects certain Enlightenment principles of ordered civic design. Simultaneously, it serves as a profound testament to the distinctive ideals and values of Moravian religious life, which harmoniously integrated personal spirituality, skilled craftsmanship, and intentional communal living. Numerous buildings remain under Moravian Church ownership today and continue to fulfill their original functions or serve other ecclesiastical purposes within the living community.



GRACEHILL, NORTHERN IRELAND, UK

Gracehill was founded in 1759 in rural Northern Ireland to serve the local community and stands as the best-preserved Moravian settlement with a central square among the British congregations of the Moravian Church. The village's architectural design embodies the Moravian ideal of a planned religious community. Its fundamental organizing principle is an invisible gender axis — a spatial division separating the settlement into Sisters' and Brothers' sides — manifested in the segregated seating of the church hall, the deliberate placement of the choir houses, and the partitioned layout of the cemetery. With its elegantly proportioned central square, Gracehill demonstrates the integral role that gardens and landscaped green spaces play in defining the character and visual harmony of Moravian settlements. The Moravian Church remains active in Gracehill today, while a municipal primary school continues the village's longstanding educational heritage rooted in Moravian tradition.



Moravian Church Settlements

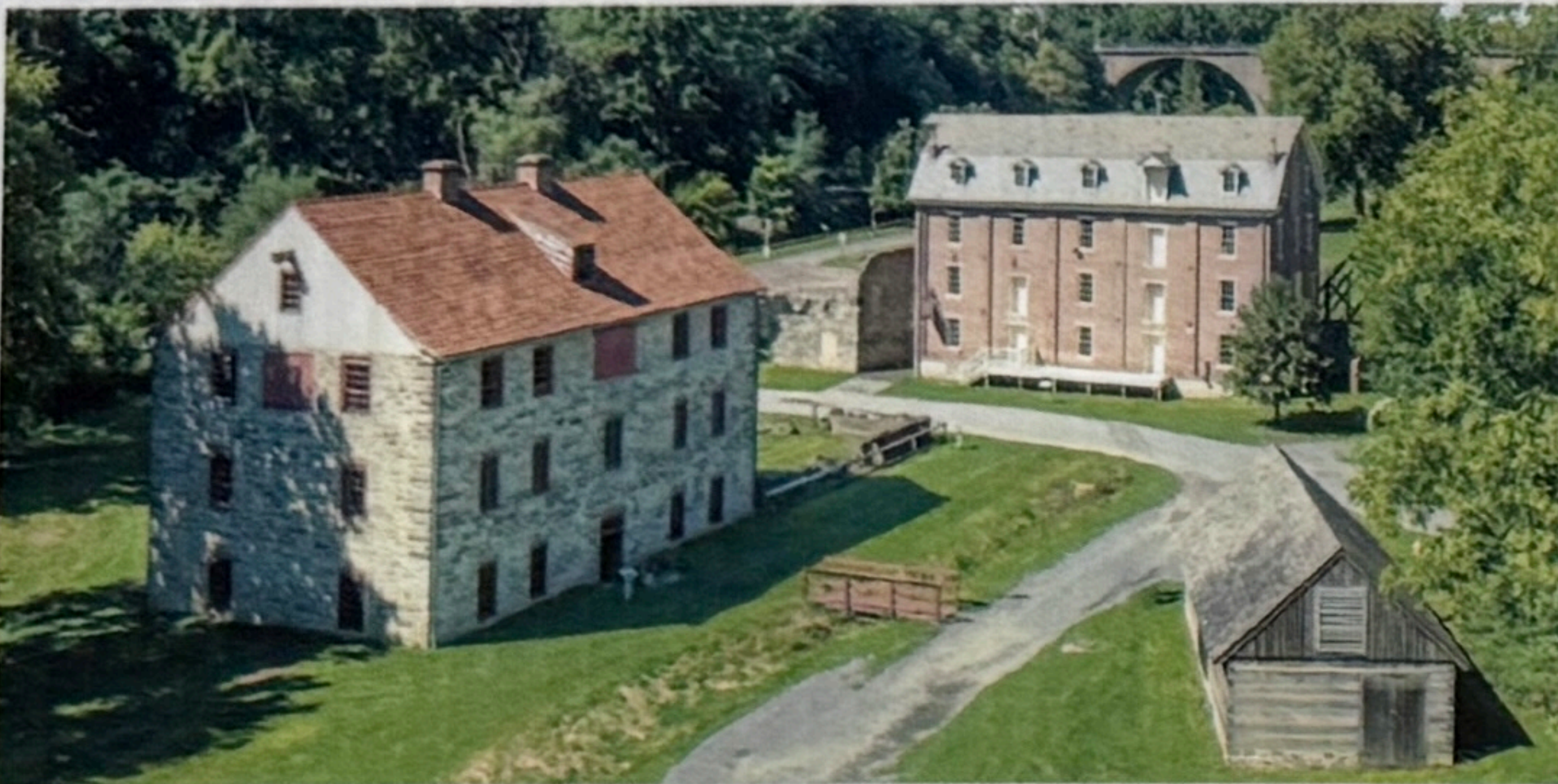
BETHLEHEM

A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

COLONIAL INDUSTRIAL QUARTER

145 Ohio Road

The Colonial Industrial Quarter, part of the Historic Moravian Bethlehem National Historic Landmark District, is considered America's earliest industrial park. Located along Monocacy Creek, the Moravians drew potable water from a spring and harnessed the creek's power to drive waterwheels for their mills. By 1747, the area had become a bustling hub of 35 crafts, trades, and industries.



OLD CHAPEL

64 West Church Street

Ten years after the town's founding, the community outgrew the Saal in the Gemeinhaus, prompting the construction of a second worship space, the Old Chapel, in 1751. It has hosted notable colonial figures, including George and Martha Washington, as well as Benjamin Franklin. Today, this building is still used for Sunday worship and various other services and events by Central Moravian Church.



GOD'S ACRE

13 West Market Street

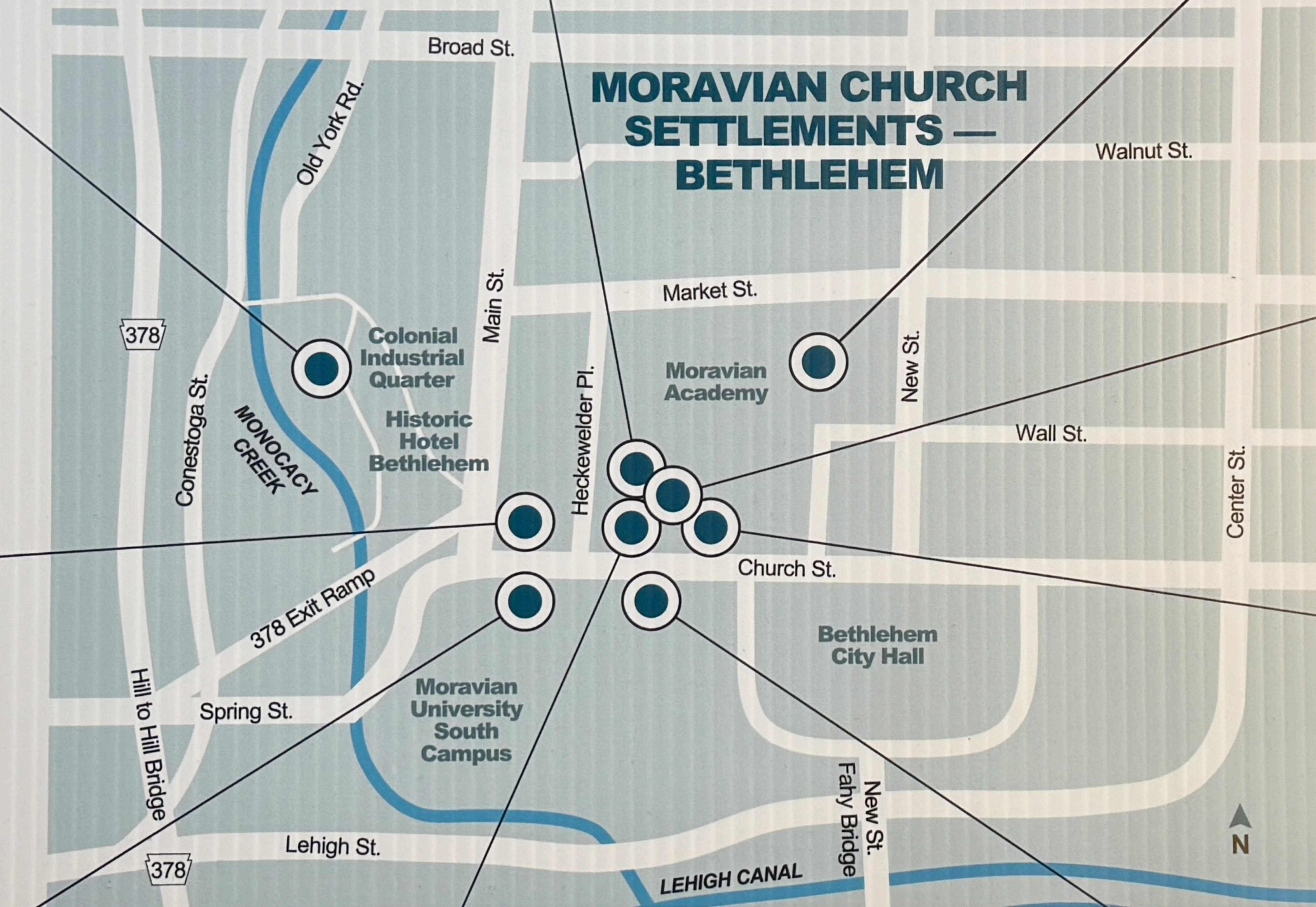
When the first Moravian died in Bethlehem in June 1742, a hilltop location was chosen for burial, establishing the God's Acre cemetery. All graves feature flat headstones, symbolizing equality before God. Moravians are buried according to the choir system, with separate sections for boys, girls, single brothers, single sisters, married men, and married women, rather than in family plots. The cemetery reflects a diverse community, including Native Americans and both enslaved and free people of African descent. "Strangers' Row," along Market Street, contains the graves of non-Moravians who died while visiting. The last burial in God's Acre took place in 1912.



SANCTUARY

406 Main Street

By 1800, Bethlehem's population of 580 prompted the community to construct a larger third worship space. Consecrated in 1806, the Moravian Church Sanctuary was designed to accommodate 1,000 people and remains one of the city's most significant buildings. Designated a Landmark of American Music, the church was built in the popular Federal architectural style of the early 1800s. The congregation and community use this space for Sunday worship, concerts, lectures, and other programs.



BELL HOUSE

56 West Church Street

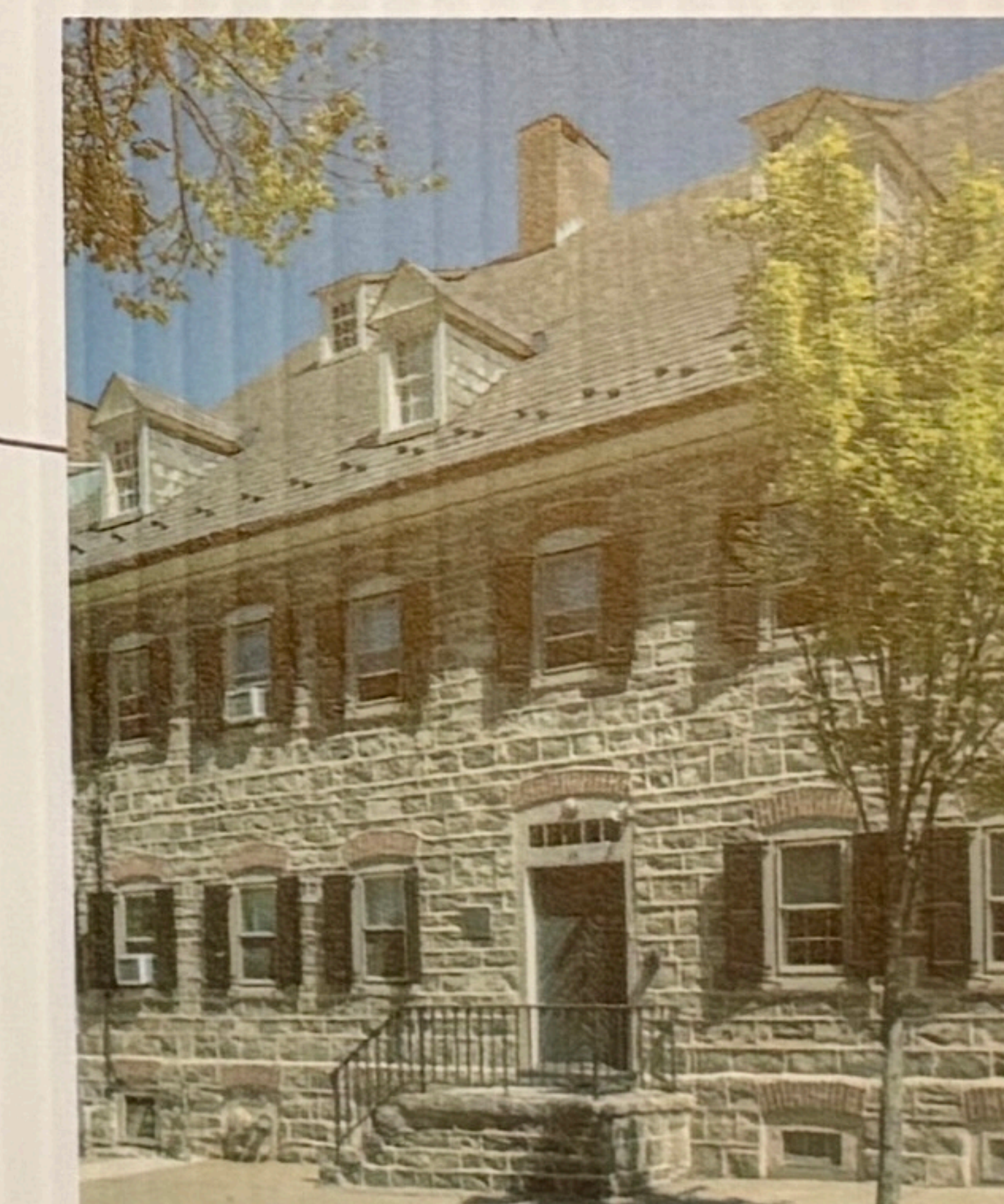
The Bell House, constructed in 1746 and expanded twice, originally served as living quarters for married couples. It later accommodated a boarding school for girls until the school was relocated to the Brethren's House in 1815. A distinctive feature of the building is its cupola, which originally held the town clock, now located in the belfry of the Sanctuary. The bell was cast in Bethlehem. The weather vane features the Lamb of God, a symbol associated with the Moravian Church.



SINGLE SISTERS' HOUSE

44-50 West Church Street

Constructed in 1744 for the Single Brethren, this building became the residence of the Single Sisters in 1748 after the men relocated to a larger house. The Sisters, who had been living in Nazareth, used the third floor for dormitories, the second floor for worship, and the first floor for workshops, offices, and dining. The Sisters' House was expanded in 1752 and 1772, with massive buttresses added in 1753 to support the heavy red clay tile roof. Today, apartments in the Sisters' House remain exclusively for women.



SECOND SINGLE BROTHERS' HOUSE

89 West Church Street

Completed in Nov. 1748, in just five months, this impressive stone structure was originally built for the single men. It features a basement and three main stories: craft shops on the first floor, a worship space on the second, and dormitories in the two attics. The building also served as a hospital during the American Revolutionary War. After the single brothers left in 1814, it became home to the Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies and is now part of Moravian University's music department.



GEMEINHAUS

66 West Church Street

Built in 1741, the Gemeinhaus (community house) is the oldest building in Bethlehem. It is a National Historic Landmark, the only remaining Gemeinhaus in the world, and home to the Moravian Museum. This multifunctional space housed worship in the Saal, classrooms, workshops, offices, and facilities for dining, cooking, and sleeping for the entire community. Its first residents included Count Zinzendorf, who occupied two rooms at the west end of the second floor.



WIDOWS' HOUSE

53 West Church Street

The first Widows' House was located in the Gray Cottage in nearby Nazareth. In 1768, the widows relocated to Bethlehem when a new building was constructed on the south side of Church Street. This structure followed the community's established pattern and included spaces for living, worship, and dining. Widows lived there until the early 21st century. Today, its rooms are used as community apartments and housing for Moravian University students and faculty.



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