

Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*

Experience Early Moravian Settlement's Rich History

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BETHLEHEM (Lehigh Co.) — "All these fabulous pieces — I'd love to have them in my home," said Linda Miller, one of the persons who participated in the women's tour of Historic Bethlehem.

She was referring to the furnishings in the oldest building in Bethlehem — the 1741 Gemeinhaus.

But the pieces are not for sale. Neither are guests able to photograph the interior nor the many fascinating furnishings within its walls.

When Miller and other visitors entered the building now known as the Moravian Museum of Bethlehem, it was like a step back in time. The 12 rooms of the former Gemeinhaus still contain many of the original pieces that the Moravian missionaries used in their daily lives.

The Moravians came to the new world to evangelize the na-

tive Indians. The Moravians also excelled in education and musical training. They are said to have written more hymns than all other Protestants groups combined in the whole world. The Moravians were the first to translate the Bible in the language of the people.

The early Moravian settlement built the five-level house now used as the museum to house up to 80 people at one time. The kitchen area was in the basement level. The second floor or the street level held offices and living space, the third floor was where church services were conducted, the fourth floor housed the dormitories, and the attic was the fifth floor.

Later the Moravians built more houses to meet the demands of their growing settlement.

A tour of the museum offers a glimpse of the fascinating history of Pennsylvania's Bethlehem, considered a closed community to anyone outside the Moravian faith until 1845.

Unlike the majority of people during that era, the Moravians believed in the equality of men and women. They established the first girl's school in America in 1742.

Their artisans employed advanced technologies from their native Europe. About half of the settlement worked to enable the others to pursue missionary goals.

As the group multiplied, houses were erected for single brothers, single sisters, and married people. Most of these buildings are part of the historic town and available for tour. Seven acres of the original farm are being developed as a living history museum to interpret farming between 1748-1848, a time of great change in agriculture methods. The colonial industrial quarter shows the ingenious inventions of the Moravians as they developed industry to support the community.

For more information about Historic Bethlehem, call (610) 882-0450 or visit the Website, www.historicbethlehem.org.



The Pilgrim Room, where temporary guests stayed, is one the 12 rooms that shows how the Moravian mission was furnished in the 18th Century.



Although Linda Miller, Harrisburg, prefers the furnishings found in the Gemeinhaus, this rocker discovered in a nearby Bethlehem antiques shop is much more affordable.



Items used in the everyday preparation of food takes visitors back in time.



The 1741 Gemeinhaus, Moravian Museum of Bethlehem, is one of the largest 18th century log structures in the U.S. Twelve exhibit rooms depict the life of Bethlehem's early Moravian settlers.



Early settlements were thought to be sparse and primitive. But the Moravians appreciated intricate decorations and had some fine collections of silver and china that they brought to the new world.