

Summary of a Report Sent to Bethlehem ^[1]

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The Moravian Church, or United Brethren, has origins dating back to the early 1400s. Although pacifism is a central tenant of their protestant beliefs, they experienced repeated religious persecution in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1741, a Moravian community known as Bethlehem was settled in Pennsylvania. Nine years later, as hostility toward Moravians increased in Germany, John Carteret -- one of the eight Lords Proprietors and the second Earl of Granville -- invited the Moravian Church to purchase land in the piedmont region and encouraged their religious refugees to emigrate to this previously unsettled area.

In October of 1753, 15 men left Bethlehem and traveled to present day Winston Salem, where they founded the community of Bethabara. One of these settlers -- the minister, Bernard Grube -- kept a highly detailed diary of their progress at Bethabara. This diary and other records were abstracted and transcribed into Records of the Moravians in North Carolina and offer much insight into the experiences of these settlers in North Carolina.

Within the diary kept by Brother Grube was a report sent to Bethlehem in 1754 by Brother Jacob Loesch who served as the town manager. That report is transcribed below; much of the report is a summary of information found in Grube's diary, but other information is unique to this report.

Their garden has given them good service; from May 8th to July 5th they had salad every day for dinner, and nearly every evening also. When the salad came to an end they had cucumbers for three weeks, with three or four meals of sugar peas, beans several times, occasionally cabbage, and squashes twice. Everything grows rapidly here.

Their usual and best food is milk and mush, and whatever can be made from cornmeal. During these three months [since Br. Grube left] they have shot only three deer and two small bears. (Mr. Altem gave them one deer). That is all the meat they have had during this period. They have not tried to do much hunting, partly because their task is to make a farm and cultivate the ground, and partly because game is scarce. The deer and bears are generally smaller than in Pennsylvania; one deer makes them three meals, and two young bears give less meat than one small deer.

They now have 12 cows and 12 calves, one bull and one steer. The cattle here are very wild, as it is usual to feed them little and let them run in the woods, so they are generally of little use. The Brethren, however, are trying hard to tame them, and to take better care of them, and have more good of them, and it is succeeding well. Once they herded them for four days in the woods, to accustom them to staying together. They keep the calves and the cows apart, and have a separate pen for each group. At night they tie the cows to their feed troughs; and so it is gradually coming to pass that each evening at the proper time the cattle come home.

The Brethren have some good, helpful, pleasant neighbors, and are well thought of by other settlers. During the past three months they have entertained 103 persons, of whom 52 spent the night. Some of these came to trade with the Brethren, others were on journeys and stopped to call, others came for medicine. Br. Kalberlahn has a large practice. People have come more than a hundred miles to get medicine and advice from him. He has also gone far and wide to visit patients. It is generally said and believed that Carolina is unhealthy, having many kinds of disease. There is however a great difference between the eastern and western parts. The low land near the sea is unhealthy, owing to the absence of good springs, and to the sluggish streams, whose outlets to the sea are choked by sand-banks, so that there is much foul, stagnant water, especially in summer. But no one should say that the land toward the mountains is unhealthy, for it has fresh air and fresh water, and when one studies the matter it appears that the illnesses of the people there result from their irregular living, now with an abundance of food, now in want, and doing little of the work to which they were previously accustomed.

Br. Jacob Loesch made a trip to the Cape Fear, on which there is a [Storehouse, 140 miles from the Brethren's settlement](#). From there he went 140 miles further to Wilmington, to look into the opportunities for trade and shipping, so that he might bring an intelligent report to Bethlehem. He left for the Cape Fear July 24th, returning to Wachovia Aug. 8th; he left for Bethlehem Aug. 14th, reaching there Aug. 28th well and happy. He says the harbor is good, that ships go from the sea up to Wilmington, a town which lies five miles from the ocean in a direct line but thirty miles by water. Goods are taken up the Cape Fear, — which is a large river, — in large boats to the Storehouse already mentioned, where they can be bought at a reasonable price. From the Storehouse one travels a good road for one hundred miles, then it is forty miles more through the forest to our settlement.

Our Brethren have lived happily together, conscious of the presence of the Saviour; and their religious services have been helpful and blessed. Each day they have morning prayers, a liturgy at noon (except when work in the fields interferes, when it is postponed to evening), and in the evening they have singstunde, during which they read reports from other congregations, or a chapter from the Bible. Saturday evening they usually have Lovefeast; and they hold the Sunday

services and observe the Church festivals carefully. The material they have used for their reading services has been the Diaries of Christiansbrunn and Bethlehem, the Onondaga Diaries of [David Zeisberger](#) and Heinrich Frey, Minutes of the Synods at Heidelberg and Donnegatter in 1753 and 1754, and especially the "[Diarium der Hütten](#)," of which by Aug. 14th they had read the first 13 numbers of 1753. Of printed Unity books they have read with particular profit the Discourses on the Passion Litany and sermons preached at Berlin, Zeist, etc.

No one has yet come on purpose to attend their services, though some who were there over night have been present at their evening meetings; and two or three have welcomed conversation on religious matters.

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