

Jacobson, John Christian ^[1]

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by Charlotte Bennett, 1988

8 Apr. 1795–24 Nov. 1870

John Christian Jacobson, educator and *Moravian* ^[2] bishop, was born in Burkhall, Denmark. His parents, both missionaries in the Diaspora service of the Moravian church in Denmark, moved to Skjerne, Denmark, soon after his birth. In 1801, at age six, Jacobson was placed in the church boarding school at Christiansfeld. He was transferred to the Niesky Institute in 1809; there he studied classical languages and theology. In 1816, having completed his studies in theology, he was called by the church to America and appointed teacher at Nazareth Hall, a boys' boarding school in Nazareth, Pa. Four years later he was made professor at the theological seminary in Bethlehem, Pa. In October 1826 Jacobson married Lisetta Schnall of Bethlehem; her parents were also missionaries of the church.

In December 1826, having accepted a call to the pastorate of Bethania, the Jacobsons arrived in North Carolina. Jacobson remained in Bethania until 1834, when he was called to nearby *Salem* ^[3] as inspector of the girls' boarding school and assistant pastor. His improvements and skillful administration of the academy were noted by the church when in 1844 he was called back to Nazareth Hall as principal. Here he continued to demonstrate his abilities as an educator.

The dividing line between his earlier and later careers was marked by his election as a delegate to the General Synod in Herrnhut, Saxony, in 1848. He was subsequently called to Bethlehem in 1849 to serve as a member of the Provincial Elders Conference of the northern province. Jacobson presided over the synod for eighteen years. During this time several important changes were made within the Moravian church, including the adoption of constitutional policies granting the church in America greater independence. On 15 Sept. 1854 Jacobson was ordained bishop. While serving as bishop and president of the Provincial Synod, he continued to demonstrate his concern for education. He was instrumental in establishing the theological seminary at Nazareth, where he gave occasional lectures on the history of the church. *The Moravian Church Miscellany* ^[4] for 1852–53 records Bishop Jacobson's recollections of his journey through the northern provinces, in which he comments on the progress of the church.

In 1867 Jacobson retired after serving the church nearly fifty-one years. He died at age seventy-five, survived by his wife and four of his children.

References:

John Clewell, *History of Wachovia in North Carolina* ^[5] (1902).

Adelaide Fries, ed., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, vol. 8 (1922).

The Moravian (1 Dec. 1870).

W. N. Schwarze, "History of the Moravian College and Theological Seminary," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, vol. 8 (1909).

Additional Resources:

Ann Lisetta Papers, with letters from John Christian Jacobson, Lehigh University:
<http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/hidden/finding.php?id=95> ^[6]

Moravian Archives: <http://www.moravianchurcharchives.org/> ^[7]

John Christian Jacobson in WorldCat: <https://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-nr94-4246> ^[8]

Nazareth Hall: An Historical Sketch and Roster of Principals, Teachers, and Pupils (Google eBook), Hogan Hacker, 1910:
http://books.google.com/books?id=s8xAQAAMAAJ&dq=Nazareth+Hall:+An+Historical+Sketch+and+Roster+of++archive&source=gbs_navlinks_s ^[9]

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