

Cherokees to the rescue

Two join together to save a long-time Archives project

Just as the economic decline has put the bite on everyone, the Moravian Archives has received pledges of two major grants for publication of our longest running project.

At the beginning of the 1800s the Moravians of Salem, North Carolina, saw opportunity to open a mission to the Cherokees. It was truly a major undertaking for such a small church, but despite start-up difficulties and some misunderstandings (see page 2), the Springplace mission to the Cherokee Nation began on July 13, 1801. It survived the Trail of Tears and the Civil War but could not survive government parceling tribal lands to individuals, omitting missions. The mission finally closed in May 1899.

During the mission's almost 100 years of existence its workers in true Moravian fashion compiled a remarkable body of records — diaries, correspondence, reports, committee minutes — truly a gold mine of material for historical, theological, socio-ethnological, linguistic research, or just plain fun reading and learning a large slice of American history that has been very little explored. As one scholar put it, these records are the “only account of daily life in the Cherokee Nation.” Period.

Trouble is, the first one-third of the records were in the language the mission workers knew best, German, and in the handwriting few German scholars know today, the “deutsche Schrift.” As late as 1989 the Archives had to turn away Cherokees who wanted to read of their ancestors, because the documents were still locked in the original German language.

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Archivist C. Daniel Crews receives the first grant of \$25,000 from Jack D. Baker, Treasurer of the Cherokee Nation.

Correction, please — 206 years late

After 206 years, it's about time we correct a misconception in our Moravian history.

Even our most recent history, *With Courage for the Future*, carefully researched as it was, in 2002 followed all previous histories and known documents by stating that when the Springplace mission began, "the Cherokee in June 1803 issued an ultimatum: a school must open by the beginning of 1804 or the Moravians must leave the Cherokee nation."

But that is wrong.

The misconception began June 10, 1803, when missionary Jacob Wohlfahrt received a letter from Chiefs Chuleoa and Sour Mush. They said that a council held June 5 had considered that the Moravians' "good intentions" of

beginning a school "have fallen through." Chiefs Chuleoa and Sour Mush concluded:

We have therefore thought it necessary to acquaint you thro' our Agent, that you continue in your present Situation till the first Day of January next, as by that Time you may know from your people, whether their friendly Intentions towards us will be put in Execution.

Here Br. Wohlfahrt thought his assignment was to preach the Gospel, and the Cherokee council was saying: you have till the end of the year to get the school started.

At least that is what Br. Wohlfahrt read.

"We can't describe how we felt upon receiving this letter," Br. Wohlfahrt wrote in the mission diary. "Everyone in the Nation seems to be raised up against us, and we sense that

the people around us would like to have us gone."

Even speaking with Chief Chuleoa — Br. Wohlfahrt called him by his other name, Gentleman Tom — did no good, for Chuleoa declared that just preaching the Gospel "was not sufficient reason for us to stay in this country."

Hastily Br. Wohlfahrt journeyed to North Carolina to lay this mission crisis before the church leaders in Salem, and from that point on Moravian historians have taken it as

gospel that the Cherokee council had issued an "ultimatum": start a school or get out.

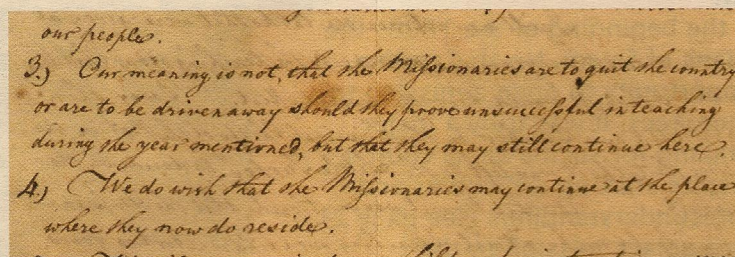
Tucked in a gray archival box at the Moravian Archives, ten archival

boxes and more from the main documents of the Cherokee mission, is an acid-free folder innocently labeled "Talk of Chuleoa and Sour Mush . . . with explanations given by the said chiefs. . . ."

We began editing the solitary one-page document in the folder to include it in our Springplace project of *Records of the Moravians among the Cherokees*.

It was dated August 27, 1803, and it began similar to the letter Br. Wohlfahrt had received on June 10. Chiefs Chuleoa and Sour Mush reviewed council decisions that "the Missionaries should make a trial of teaching our children for two years, and if they were

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From Chiefs Chuleoa and Sour Mush's "explanation" of Cherokee council decisions — not an "ultimatum."

Cherokees join in support of Archives project

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And so in 1992 Moravian Archives embarked on the "Springplace project" of translating the records, not only the mission diary but also the correspondence. Reports, meeting minutes, and travel diaries were also translated. While translating proceeded on the first 37 years of German records, transcribing was begun on the 60-odd years of English language records.

Our goal had become the complete (except for repetition) translation and transcription of the Cherokee mission records until transfer of mission supervision to the Northern Province in 1893. And when that was done, we would see to publishing what we had nicknamed *Records of the Moravians in the Cherokee Nation*.

But then last fall the bottom dropped out of America's economy. What seemed like sufficient income and assets dried up. Moravian Archives was facing the painful possibility of staff cutbacks. That meant shelving the Springplace project for we didn't know how long.

That is when the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band of Cherokees stepped in. The Cherokee Nation are those whose ancestors survived the Trail of Tears, the removal of the tribe in 1838 to the Indian Territory, which is now Oklahoma. The Eastern Band are those whose ancestors faded into the mountains rather than accept removal, becoming the largest band of original residents still occupying their ancestral land in North Carolina.

Shelve the Springplace project? Leave Cherokee history and heritage (even if it was written by Moravian mission workers) locked up for yet more decades? That will never do. And so the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band agreed on equal funding the Springplace project to publication, estimated by the Archives to cost \$50,000 a year over the next five years.

Declaration of this agreement was made at the Red Clay Council in Red Clay, Tennessee, on April 17. This was only the second united council held at Red Clay since the last council held in 1837 before removal.

With formal recognition that "both Tribes would benefit from the historical knowledge and information contained within these collections," and that "these documents will be prepared and presented for publication and use by the Cherokee people, historians, and interested parties to gain a better understanding of Cherokee history and culture," it was "finally resolved that the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee Nation shall insure that this joint legislation is fulfilled."

For the Archives, this resolution of support and these grants are a salvation. If we had not received them, the alternative was cutting personnel and setting aside the Springplace project for yet another generation. We express our deep gratitude to the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band for this strong support of this most worthy project.

Now on to assembling diaries and documents, proofreading, editing, indexing of volume one of *Records of the Moravians among the Cherokees* (we are still working on the title).

Happy birthday, Bethania!

This June 12 will mark the 250th anniversary of the beginning of Bethania, and to commemorate the occasion we present this map, one of the earliest of the community.

It took a while to get Bethania going. After all there was a French and Indian War going on at the time.

The Moravian Church had purchased almost 100,000 acres of wilderness land in the North Carolina colony in 1753 and had named it "Wachovia" after an ancestral Austrian estate of church leader Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. That November 17 the first Moravian settlers had arrived and simply occupied a hunter's abandoned cabin. This first settlement of the Moravian Church, Southern Province, grew to become Bethabara, whose 250th anniversary we celebrated in 2003 with publication of the Provincial history, *With Courage for the Future*.

But Bethabara was not a planned community, and Moravians' habit in building new communities was to carefully lay them out. And so in the spring of 1759, five years into a war that left Bethabara the farthest west outpost, sheltering numerous refugees at its mill, Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg arrived with orders from Europe and Pennsylvania to begin the Moravians' first planned community in Wachovia and to call it Bethania.

That June 12 Spangenberg and other church leaders traveled three miles northwest of Bethabara, and on a rise above the "Black Walnut Bottom" selected the site for the new town. The plan for the new community was adopted on June 20, and on June 29, Christian Gottlieb Reuter, the church's mapmaker and surveyor, staked out the site.

Between plan selection and staking it out, Reuter drew this map and dated it June 25, 1759. Thus it shows the earliest complete vision for the town. The church would be letter A, the heart of the community. Twenty- four building lots were planned, with an additional eight lots possible south of town toward the walnut bottom.

Almost immediately Bethania did not conform to the original plan, for the central open space was eliminated and the church was located on an adjoining building lot. And yet though there were further alterations over the next two- and- a- half centuries, we can still recognize the town that Spangenberg, Reuter, and company envisioned in the Bethania of today.



Our Friends come through, despite the economy

So the economy dove off a cliff last winter. You can't find your Wachovia Corp. dividend without a microscope under another name. And everywhere you turn is announcement of another layoff.

But heavens! You, our Friends of the Archives, came through like champions in 2008, and almost matched the Friends campaign's best year ever of 2007. Last year 235 individuals and families (some several times) contributed \$25,765.24 to the on-going work of the Moravian Archives. This compares with \$28,572.38 from 254 contributions in 2007.

We want to thank all our Friends for making 2008 such a successful year. And for those who are not yet Friends of the Archives, it is a simple matter to join us in our adventure of preserving and proclaiming Moravian history and heritage. You can even do it by credit card now through PayPal on the Internet. Just go to www.MoravianArchives.org and click the "donate" button. It will guide you through the steps.

But what about this year, 2009, when church contributions are shriveling and all looks glum? "Hit, 'em, hit 'em hard!" advises one of our most generous Friends; "tell 'em you're dying without their support."

Well, yes, as church and investment income decline we must turn elsewhere for support. The Cherokees have come though magnificently (see page 1), but that is specifically for publication of our Springplace mission records. Increasingly our Friends of the Archives must make up the difference in budget support of salary, lights, heat, air conditioning, as well as continuing conservation and preservation projects. We hope next November to have announcement of another major project. Meanwhile, it's all up to you and your generosity.

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Correction — 206 years late

Continued from page 2

unsuccessful, they were to return [here as editors we inserted a bracketed “to North Carolina”], without either party taking any umbrage in that event.”

And then we got to the “explanation,” and among the five points Chuleoa and Sour Mush made are these two:

Our meaning is not, that the Missionaries are to quit the country or are to be driven away should they prove unsuccessful in teaching during the year mentioned, but that they may still continue here.

And:

We do wish that the Missionaries may continue at the place where they now do reside.

And the light dawned: If the Moravians haven’t started a school by the first of the year they should “return” to council, to discuss the matter further.

So Chuleoa and Sour Mush, far from being against the Moravians, saw how essential white education was to the existence of the Cherokee nation. Which is why when the missionaries were finally ready to accept students in October 1804, the first to enroll his son was Chief Chuleoa.

Not hot and not sticky

And while we are in the correcting mode, Grace Robinson, our super records transcriber, declares we were wrong, wrong, wrong last *Annotations* on lovefeast buns served at Lititz when she was growing up.

They are not “hot,” at least by the time they are served. They are certainly *not* “sticky.” Whoever heard of serving sticky buns at lovefeast. Yech!

But it was fun to watch the ministers try to brush the powdered sugar that fell from the buns onto their black suits.

Our thanks go to Wayne LeFevre of Lititz for helping to set the record straight. (At least we aren’t waiting 206 years.)

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ANNOTATIONS

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