

Pottery and piety: a reassessment of the potters and pottery of Moravian Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1743-1768.

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Pottery and piety: a reassessment of the potters and pottery of Moravian Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1743-1768

Author: Heindl, Brenda

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Advisor: Rosemary Krill

Publisher: University of Delaware

Date Issued: 2010

Abstract: The Moravian community of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was organized as an artisanal community that allowed individuals to move in and out of the community as missionaries whenever necessary. Unlike the rigid agricultural schedule, Bethlehem thrived with upwards of forty different trades by the mid-eighteenth century. Among the many trades plied in Bethlehem was the pottery works, started as early as 1743. Despite the apparent isolation of this frontier town, the community's Moravian potters supported the economic and missionary functions of the church. Just as importantly, although Bethlehem was a tightly woven religious settlement, its goods – including distinctive pottery – reached a great number of local, regional, and perhaps, transoceanic consumers. Though a part of Pennsylvania's frontier, Bethlehem operated as a center of commerce and manufacturing. The community was tightly woven into a network of traders from Philadelphia, as well as Great Britain, Europe, and the West Indies. Archaeological evidence provides insight into the designs of the pottery likely made in Bethlehem. Through records and archaeological materials related to the pottery works of Moravian Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, this thesis is an attempt to explore the complexity of how trade, manufacture, community, culture, and religion interacted in eighteenth-century southeastern Pennsylvania.

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