

Bethlehem seeking World Heritage status

The Bethlehem Gadfly History, Bethlehem January 14, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on Bethlehem history* 

Federal Register Announcement: Historic Moravian Bethlehem Named on Potential Nomination to World Heritage List

Huzza to Charlene Donchez Mowers for two decades of work! Gadfly never knew. The payoff of such a designation would be significant. What say? Can you help?

selections from Christina Tatu, “Bethlehem needs your help to secure World Heritage status.” Morning Call, January 12, 2021.

Bethlehem’s historic Moravian buildings could be recognized as an icon, landing on the World Heritage List along with wonders like the Great Wall of China and the Pyramids of Giza, but the city needs the public’s help to get there.

Comments are being taken through Jan. 26 on the next potential nomination to the World Heritage List. The comment period was announced Monday via a posting in the Federal Register.

The World Heritage List was established in 1972 to “encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.”

There are 1,000 sites on the list — 24 are in the United States, including Independence Hall in Philadelphia and the Statue of Liberty in New York.

World Heritage sites don't receive funding, but city officials have said the designation would signify to tourists that Bethlehem is a must-see attraction.

Charlene Donchez Mowers, longtime president of Historic Bethlehem Museum and Sites, has been working on securing the international accolade for nearly 20 years.

Historic Moravian Bethlehem is working with the Moravian community of Herrnhut, Germany, with the goal to submit an extension to the 2015 World Heritage listing of Christiansfeld, a Moravian Church settlement in Denmark. The extension would include Herrnhut, the Moravian Bethlehem District in Bethlehem, and possibly other historic Moravian communities around the world.

Today, the Moravian story is told in the well-preserved, Germanic architecture that still stands in the heart of downtown Bethlehem.

Moravian Bethlehem includes the Colonial Industrial Quarter, God's Acre cemetery, the Sun Inn and buildings of the Central Moravian Church, the city of Bethlehem, Historic Bethlehem and Moravian College. The district includes two buildings recognized as national historic landmarks — the Waterworks pump house and the Gemeinhaus community hall.

The U.S. Department of the Interior in 2012 recognized that district's importance, naming it a National Historic Landmark District.

To comment on the nomination, a letter of support may be mailed to Jonathan Putnam, Office of International Affairs, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

Comments can also be e-mailed to jonathan_putnam@nps.gov

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