

# Saving the Colonial Industrial Quarter treasures from water damage

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [History, Bethlehem](#) August 24, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on Bethlehem History 

*from Charlene Donchez Mowers, “Bethlehem’s famed colonial buildings are in danger. We must save them – soon – from floods.” Morning Call, August 23, 2020.*

As I read through the pages of my Morning Call newspaper recently, I was dismayed to see the photograph of our Historic Bethlehem Museums and Sites’ Colonial Industrial Quarter under water, illustrating several challenges highlighted in the Town Square article written by Paul Muschick.

The area has been flooded numerous times in past years, wreaking havoc on this historic area and its structures.

The Colonial Industrial Quarter, which sits along the Monocacy Creek in downtown Bethlehem, can be considered America’s earliest industrial park, with 35 crafts, trades and industries operating there by 1747. It was the largest concentration of pre-Industrial Revolution trades in the American colonies.

In recent years, you may recognize this historic site as the backdrop for our Historic Bethlehem school tours and 5-K Turkey Trot as well as Musikfest and Celtic Classic.

There was a terrible flood of this area during Hurricane Ivan in the mid-2000s; there were two floods in 2010, one in July and one in October. There were two floods in August of 2011, not to mention more minor flooding in the years since, and then Tropical Storm Isaias hit us last week.

Historic Bethlehem Museums and Sites needs help to protect these historically important assets. This site is part of Historic Moravian Bethlehem, a national historic landmark district, one of only eight such districts in Pennsylvania.

More importantly, Historic Moravian Bethlehem has been short-listed for nomination to the World Heritage List. This is the highest recognition afforded an historic site in our nation. Of the 1,121 World Heritage sites around the globe, there are only 24 World Heritage sites in the United States; two are in Pennsylvania — Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and the Frank Lloyd Wright House, Fallingwater, near Pittsburgh.

Saving these important treasures is part of our mission of preservation and education, not only for Bethlehem, but for our region, state and nation. The Colonial Industrial Quarter is part of the fabric of our community, a place that people have come to love and enjoy. This is one of the most photographed areas in the Lehigh Valley.

Each time the Colonial Industrial Quarter floods, restoration and repairs are needed. This is achieved through modest flood insurance proceeds and the efforts of the City of Bethlehem assisting with grounds cleanup.

As a potential World Heritage site, Historic Moravian Bethlehem will need to develop a management plan to protect these valuable buildings. We are calling upon our community and elected officials, and the colleges and universities in the Lehigh Valley to reach out to gain support to institute a plan to solve these issues quickly.

We must protect these irreplaceable structures with their incredible history for today and for generations to come.

*Amen here too!*