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Date: February 1, 2022

Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites Benefits from Partnership with Bethlehem Historic District Association

BETHLEHEM, PA February 1, 2022– Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites (HBMS) is grateful to be a recipient of Bethlehem Historic District Association’s (BHDA) popular Holiday House Tour. Alan Lowcher, Mark Nebbia, and Holly Sachdev from the BHDA presented a check to Barry Pell, Charlene Donchez Mowers, and LoriAnn Wukitsch from HBMS on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at the Gemeinhaus.

The sold-out Holiday House Tour was held on December 11, 2021, welcoming 1200 visitors to the Historic District to step inside ten unique Historic District homes, as well as the Single Sisters and Gemeinhaus (the oldest building in Bethlehem), that were festively decorated for the holidays. The house tour raised $30,000 in support of HBMS and the Taking the World Stage campaign. This collaboration and show of community support was a bright spot during these uncertain pandemic times. The foundation that was laid for the city of Bethlehem on Christmas Eve in 1741, continues to grow into a bright future that takes pride in preserving the city’s rich past.

Board President Alan Lowcher commented about the partnership, “The Moravian Church Settlement is a central part of our community identity that we want to share with the world. The Bethlehem Historic District Association is honored to help HBMS protect and preserve this historic resource. History worth remembering is history worth preserving.”

For more than 20 years, the BHDA's Holiday House Tours have welcomed visitors to explore and enjoy the Commonwealth's first historic district, experience the Moravian Church community, and patronize downtown businesses. Proceeds from ticket sales and the generous support of local businesses that purchase advertisements in the tour booklet and sponsor individual homes help beautify the streetscape along the sidewalks in the Historic District. This project is possible due to the collaboration of BHDA board members, Will Carpenter, Christina Ortwein, Dayna Plocus, Bronson Plocus, Patti Rohrbach, Michele Schultz, Holly Sachdev, and Helen Smith, along with Holiday House Tour Committee members, Scott Hawk, Mark Nebbia (chair), and Danielle Gustafson.

This year, the $35 ticket not only supported the BHDA, but it helped fund a grant program for HBMS’ Shutter Restoration Program and their efforts at obtaining World Heritage Site status for Historic Moravian Bethlehem. BHDA is honored to support the Bethlehem community through this event, by attracting visitors to local shops and restaurants while running their biggest fundraiser for community grants. Since 2011, the BHDA Board of Directors has approved various grants as incentives to improve the neighborhood within the Historic District. Four Grants are available to all homeowners, who may apply for one grant in each category.
annually. The grants are available for street tree trimming and removal, street tree replacement, sidewalk repair, and exterior lighting.

“We are thrilled to be able to live in the historic district of Bethlehem and the Holiday House Tour was a wonderful day to share the special history of our home. The tour participants had great fun - and we met many people who were visiting Bethlehem for the first time. We loved supporting HBMS and the neighborhood.” said homeowner participant, Michele Schultz.

Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites and Bethlehem Historic District Association are proud to be models for Bethlehem’s unique and vibrant history and how that history has laid the foundation for the beloved city by all who live, work, and enjoy recreation here. Both organizations encourage residents of Bethlehem and beyond to invest in the community. You can join HBMS and BHDA as members or make donations to further their work to maintain and improve the district. This work of preservation is even more important as HBMS continues to work on the endeavor to have Historic Moravian Bethlehem designated a World Heritage Site. Bethlehem is excited to share its history and community with the world.

Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites is a not-for-profit institution that brings to life three centuries of American history. Historic Bethlehem tells the story of a small town of great influence, home to some of our nation’s early settlers, to the first pumped municipal water system in the American colonies, and to one of the world’s greatest industrial companies. Historic Bethlehem is located in eastern Pennsylvania, only an hour’s drive north from Philadelphia and 2 hours west of New York City. Historic Bethlehem is an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and part of a National Historic Landmark District - a designated site on the US World Heritage Tentative List. HBMS is proud to be a part of the effort to bring World Heritage Site status to Historic Moravian Bethlehem. We are pleased to share that as of Spring 2021, HBMS will be working in tandem with international Moravian Sites – Herr hut, Germany and Gracehill, Northern Ireland, UK to prepare a joint serial nomination to the World Heritage List – a first for the United States.

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