The Moravian Dead Houses of Labrador, Canada

DALE GILBERT JARVIS

The Moravian Church, also known as the Church of the Brethren, or the Unitas Fratrum, is one of two pre-Reformation Protestant churches. It takes as its spiritual founder the Czech religious reformer Jan Hus. Hus was ordained as a Catholic priest, but was excommunicated in 1412 for speaking out against the practice of selling indulgences, and for preaching in Prague in the Czech language. Hus was burned at the stake on 6 July 1415, and his death sparked the Hussite War, which continued for over sixteen years.[1]

Until the eighteenth century, the fortunes of the Church rose and fell, experiencing periods of calm, followed by periods of intense persecution. In the 1620s, intense counterreformation Catholicism forced the Church underground, with most adherents fleeing to Poland to escape the persecution in Moravia and Bohemia. The Moravians eventually found shelter in Germany in the early eighteenth century, under the patronage of Nicholas Lewis, Count and Lord of Zinzendorf and Pottendorf.[2]

The Moravian Church in Labrador grew out of missionary work in Greenland; the first Moravian missionaries were sent there in 1733. In 1747, the first permanent Moravian building was constructed. It had been prefabricated in Holland, containing a chapel and six rooms for the use of the missionaries.[3] Through their work in Greenland, the Moravian missionaries learned to speak and write Inuktitut, and started the work of translating the gospels. With knowledge of the language, it was decided in 1752 to attempt missionary work in Labrador:

> The first missionaries attempted but failed, five times, to establish permanent stations in Labrador. The first attempt in 1752 resulted in the murder of seven missionaries by the unaccepting Inuit. The sixth time they came, in 1771, the first permanent mission was established at Nain. During the 1800's, the missionaries spread out along the northern coast to convert the Inuit into Christians. From Ramah to Makkovik, Moravian missions dotted three hundred miles of Labrador's northern coast.[4]

Whether as a symbol of colonial expansion, theocratic uniformity, or of the re-establishment of indigenous control, Moravian architecture in Labrador can always be read as a symbol of power and order. One aspect of the physical heritage of the Labrador Moravians that can be examined is a series of simple buildings built in three Labrador communities by the Moravian Church between 1861 and 1994. This case study emphasizes the way in which architecture may be used as a symbol of order and authority. The buildings are what are known locally as "dead houses": small sheds built to hold the bodies of the dead before burial.

One researcher has noted that no matter what it was that the Moravians built, "they built well, for it was their belief that the work of their hands, no less than the stirrings of their consciences, was direct expression of the will of God."[5] The dead house, no less than the great mission houses and churches, was a part of this belief. Architecturally, these are very simple buildings, and are easily overlooked. As such, they give the folklorist a perfect opportunity to explore how "the textual content of architecture functions beneath the level of articulated observation."[5] As Kenneth L. Ames has written in his study of Victorian hall furnishings, "the commonplace artifacts of everyday life mirror a society's values as accurately as its great monuments."[6]

Fieldwork for this study was carried out in July and August of 1995, and was conducted as part of a larger architectural inventory of extant Moravian buildings on the northeast coast of Labrador. This research was carried out in coastal Labrador in all communities where Moravian settlements were historically located, namely Happy Valley-Goose Bay, North West River, Hopedale, Double Island, Zoar, Nain, OKaK, Hebron, and Ramah. Two communities were excluded from the survey, Port Burwell and Makkovik, because of time and financial restrictions, and due to the fact that little original architecture remains.

At the time of the research there were three communities in Labrador where dead houses could still be seen: Nain, Hopedale, and Hebron. The dead house in Nain is located close to the community's graveyard, roughly a two-minute walk from the church. The building is a small, of timber frame construction covered with pine clapboard, with one door in the narrow, gable end. The structure measures 2.80 m by 4.90 m, and sits on a foundation of horizontal logs. The gable roof is fairly steeply pitched, and is covered with wood shingles. The dead house has two interesting architectural features. The first is a flat rail or step that runs the front width of the building. The second is a small structure added to the ridge of the roof. This does not appear to serve as a vent as it is solid on all four sides. Its function is uncertain, and may be purely decorative. It is slightly evocative of the cupolas found on many Moravian buildings, a feature typical of early Moravian architecture. The

construction date of the dead house is uncertain, even in local folk histories. The building is weather-beaten, but still retains some traces of paint. The shingles were at one point painted red, and the west exterior wall shows some remnants of blue paint.

Of the three communities in Labrador with dead houses, Hopedale is unique in that it has two buildings originally constructed for that purpose. A description of buildings dated 1929 and signed by Rev. George Harp gives the older of the two Hopedale dead houses a construction date of 1861. It is described as follows: "Stone foundation. Brick walls lined inside and out with Labrador lumber, shingle roof"[7]. The building measures 2.60 m by 4.73 m, with a single door in the south gable end. Minor repairs were made to the structure as part of the local Agvituk Historical Society's preservation and stabilization work in 1994. This work was carried out under the direction of Beaton Sheppard Associates, a St. John's, Newfoundland, based architectural firm.

The new dead house is of wood 2x4 frame construction, covered with plywood sheets, and painted white. The gable roof is covered with black commercially available asphalt sheeting, and the building rests on a concrete foundation. It measures 3.75 m by 4.90 m, with a single door in the east gable end. This structure, built in 1994, replaces the older 1861 dead house, which is now used for general storage. Both structures are built on extremely swampy, poorly drained ground. They are built quite close to each other, immediately north of the current Moravian Church. The cemetery is located a short distance to the east of the church.

The third community that hosts a dead house is Hebron. The dead house in Hebron is fixed to the west exterior wall of the church by six "L"-shaped metal brackets, three on each side. The building is of timber frame construction, with exterior walls made out of vertical planks. The exterior walls are extremely weather-beaten, but appear to have been painted red at one point. The dead house is different from the other three buildings discussed here for a number of reasons. First, it is the only structure directly attached to any other. Second, it is the only dead house to have windows. Third, it is the only dead house to be widest on the gable end, though this is only slightly so (the building measuring 2.37 m by 2.34 m). There seem to have been two windows at one point. One is a rectangular window in the south elevation, and the other a triangular window in the west gable end. This window has been boarded up from the interior, and is missing at least one section of muntin.

The roof was originally of wood planks, painted red, though this was covered at some point by red asphalt shingle material, held in place with wood battens, also once painted red. The building is sitting on a very rough stone foundation. The interior is unfinished, with a plywood floor. The north wall

of the interior has two triangular pieces in set into each corner that could possibly be shelves. They most likely could not have supported the weight of a coffin, and also seem too high to be practical for this purpose.

The dating of the structure poses some interesting questions. Two pieces of graffiti, written in pencil on an interior beam, give two early dates. One shows a date of "23 Mai 1886", accompanied by other text, possibly in Inuktitut. The other gives a date of August 25 1889, and a name, Richard Lay. If these dates were written on the beam after the construction of the dead house, which seems likely, this would give a latest possible construction date of May, 1886. However, the building is clearly not in its original position. It is known that the dead house was located in its present location at least as early as 1957. A photograph dated 1960 shows dead house in this location[8], as does another undated photograph belonging to the OKalaKatiget Society, Nain, Labrador. A different photograph, also belonging to the OKalaKatiget Society, bears the note "View of Hebron 1957 when finally Aug 1st ice left bay". It clearly shows the dead house in its present location. However, an undated photograph from Collection No. 069 in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives in St. John's, Newfoundland, shows the Hebron church with no structure added to its west wall.

It seems likely the dead house was constructed sometime before 23 May 1886, but was not moved to its present location until much later. One possible reason for its move could be the metal brackets holding it to the church. The wind at Hebron can be very strong, and the dead house may have not been large enough to stand in one place on its own. For example, on 8 August 1995 a wind storm at Hebron demolished an abandoned settlers house, removed a small section of the church roofing, and blew down the chimney of the abandoned Hudson Bay Company's factor's house. Repeated windstorms of this type may have necessitated the dead house being bolted to the church.

The boarded windows in this particular structure raise other questions, their purpose and history being uncertain. The building, in its current position, was certainly used as the Hebron dead house, but its earlier use is unknown. The triangular transom window above the door is almost identical to transom windows above the covered entranceways to the church and mission house at Ramah. This window and the side window suggest that the building served an alternate purpose before being moved, possibly as some sort of garden shed.

The four dead houses in Labrador have minor differences in terms of construction techniques, but they all follow the same basic pattern. All are simple one-room structures, with a gable roof, and a door in the gable end. In terms of form, they are virtually identical to other Moravian-built sheds, including a woodshed and a storage shed in Nain. This is not to say that all small Moravian outbuildings are indistinguishable from the dead houses. The

garden shed at Hebron, for example, is roughly the same size as the Labrador dead houses, but follows a very different plan, with paired windows and a door that is not on the gable end of the structure. What distinguished dead houses are their uses, both stated and unstated, within the community.

According to Rev. Lawrence Junek, the Moravian minister in Nain, the purpose of the dead house "is to hold the body till we have a service, while they are digging the grave, or that kind of thing, although that would already be in a coffin by then, by this time."[9] Whereas the dead house may have been important in Labrador as a storage place for the dead during the winter when a grave could not be dug, this was not its primary function. Traditionally, the body was buried very shortly after death, even in Labrador during the winter. The station report from OKaK for June of 1919 refers to the use of fires in December 1918 to thaw ground for a grave [10], though this may have been an usual occurrence, due to an unnaturally high mortality related to an epidemic of Spanish influenza. In his compilation of the memoirs of Moravian James Hutton, Daniel Benham wrote in 1856, that "...in the town they made short work of burials, which then, as now, often took place within twenty-four hours after death"[11].

The best description of the use of the dead house is from a book entitled *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character: Comprising a General View of the History, Life, Character, and Religious and Educational Institutions of the Unitas Fratrum*, written by James Henry in 1859. Referring to the dead house as the "Corpse-house", he writes,

> The remains are usually placed... within the 'Corpse-house', whither the friends of the deceased repair to gaze upon the face before its final disappearance from earth. A simple rose, the tribute from the hands of affliction, is some-times added to the lifeless figure, now attired in the white habiliments of the tomb. This ornament to the garb of death is expressive of peace and joy to the soul of the departed. In this silent sanctuary the little lamp is placed, and it is the office of some quiet and fearless Sister to repair there during the night to trim the beacon that custom deems needful for the lifeless body, while still within the precincts of the living. To many, this mission of the night would seem a fearful one, but to some there is a companionship in the cold form, the well-known lineaments addressing you, as it were, "Fear not! for while my body sleeps the sleep of death, my spirit reigns over and guards you."[12]

The dead house was referred to as a corpse house in early nineteenth century Pennsylvania. One author noted "the body was taken when dressed, immediately to a small stone building called the corpse-house, and here remained until the funeral"[13]. In Labrador, the body of the deceased remained inside the dead house during the funeral service. According to Rev S. Walter

Edmunds, the Moravian minister in Happy-Valley Goose Bay,

> The customary way of burying within the Moravian church was that the body
> was never taken into the sanctuary. It was usually even prepared for burial in what
> was called the dead house which was just a small house near the edge of the
> cemetery, or near the church as the case may be, and the body would be kept there.
> The service would be conducted in the sanctuary and then as the procession
> moved to the cemetery they would stop at the dead house, and after a short prayer
> would then move on from there to the cemetery with the body.[14]

Traditionally, the dead house was a key element of the funeral ceremony.
The body of the deceased was normally not taken into the body of the church
for the funeral service. "Some elderly very respected people within the
community may have been taken to the church, but it was a mark of extreme
respect. The average burial wasn't done that way."[15]
Where the body was left in the dead house, the funeral procession from the
church following the service would stop at the dead house to pick up the body,
and further prayers would be said. Henry writes,

> After passing from the church, the whole assemblage arrange themselves
> before the "Corpse-house", where verses are again sung, chorales played on
> trombones, and then the procession moves forward with solemn pace to the
> cemetery, the trombones preceding it, and playing the thrilling and harmonious
> music of the funeral ritual.[16]

The funeral procession, the equation of the ritual with music, and the
placement of both within a planned and ordered landscape, were all part of
Moravian traditions since at least the early sixteenth century. During the
funeral for one of the Brethren during this period, "an address was delivered
and, on the way to the grave, the school children, led by the minister, sang
hymns"[17]. The use of trombones seems to have had particular funereal
connotations. During the eighteenth-century, Moravians "used instrumental
music in their rituals, most notably in the trombone announcement of a
member's death"[18]. While trombones were required at most of the major
church devotionals, "their most frequent function was to announce the death of
a member from the belfry of the church. The first and last tunes used in this
announcement were the same for all members; the middle tune indicated the
Choir to which the deceased belonged."[19] French horns were used by the
missionaries at Nain in 1776 [20], and Inuit brass bands were firmly in place in
Labrador by the late 1800s [21].
As a place of prayer for the deceased, the Moravian dead house has slight
similarities to the medieval chantry or funerary church, the English Protestant
funerary chapel [22], or even the modern crematoria [23]. But all of these structures

are much more grandiose and architecturally elaborate than the dead house. In addition, the dead house was only used as a place of prayer while it contained the body or during the funeral procession, whereas the above examples were used in much different contexts.

In terms of function, the dead house comes closest to what Gilbert Cope refers to as the "point of departure" or "place of ritual farewell"[24], though the architectural nature of this place varies from culture to culture and faith to faith. Perhaps the architectural form that comes closest to that of the Moravian dead house is a structure known as the lych gate. The lych gate, commonly associated with the Anglican Church, is "a covered wooden gateway with open sides at the entrance to a churchyard, providing a resting place for a coffin"[25]. A common feature in English churchyards, the concept of the lych gate was also transplanted to North America. Once common, the only surviving Newfoundland example is in Bonavista, though the original gabled roof has been removed.

One good surviving example can be seen at the Saints Mary and Paul Church, Lytton, British Columbia. Built at the junction of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers, the church was constructed as an Anglican mission church for the Interior Salish. The church was rebuilt in the 1930's and rededicated in 1937 to Archdeacon Richard Small who served from 1897 to 1909 as superintendent of the Indian missions in the diocese of New Westminster [26].

Close to the front of the church is the church's lych gate. "The elaborately beamed lych gate is a feature typical of Anglican churchyards. Traditionally, it was the sheltered point at which the coffin was set down at a funeral to await the clergyman's arrival"[27]. In some instances, a portion of the burial service is performed while the coffin rests inside the gate [28].

There are few similarities in terms of architectural form between the lych gate and the dead house, though there seems to be an orientation in both towards steeply gabled structures. The lych gate, by its name and nature, is a gate, and so has two open ends for the procession to actually pass through, while the dead house is a fully sided entity. The main similarity in the two is their ritual use in the funeral procession, and how the space they define is incorporated into the ritual of death. One further similarity to note is the actually name. "Lych" is a form of the Anglo-Saxon word "l_c" meaning body or corpse [29], hence "corpse gate", similar to the older Moravian phrase "corpse house".

While there is no strict architectural correlation, the practice of the wake, a meeting of family members and friends after a death, comes close in terms of spatial use. Simply put, a wake is "a gathering of family and friends who prayed for the soul and consoled the family in the presence of the body"[30].

> The custom of the wake, or watching the corpse, arose from the belief that the spirit of the dead person hovers about the corpse between death and burial, to be placated only by a rigid adherence on the part of the mourners to certain prescribed procedures. Such procedures have included the placing of salt on the breast of the corpse and the continual burning of a candle at the head of the coffin.[31]

The Moravian origins of keeping a lamp lit for the corpse inside the dead house are uncertain, and may derive from similar folk practices as the wake.

There seems to be a certain amount of ambiguousness surrounding the dead in Moravian culture, an ambiguous attitude shared in various ways by different cultures. There is some indication that in the mid eighteenth century at least, excessive mourning at burials was undesirable [32]. In Moravian society, the dead house very clearly stands as the liminal ground between the realms of the dead and the living. The deceased person is no longer given the same rights of access to the church as a living person, and is also removed from the house where he/she lived. At the same time, the deceased is very much a focal point of village activity, and specially defined spaces within the community are set aside for their sole use, the dead house being one of the best examples of this.

In many ways, the deceased continues to act as a marker of social norms. Hence, well respected dead, the ideal, are allowed into the church, while less respected dead, such as the suicides, are not allowed into the church, and are kept in the dead house. Moravian burial practices also suggest this. Moravians who have died are buried according to the Moravian choir system, which divides the community into age and sex categories. According to Gillian Gollin, the Moravian choir system "emerged as a consequence of Zinzendorf's early attempts to enrich the spiritual life of the community by encouraging the formation of so-called bands or classes whose primary function was to satisfy the spiritual needs of their members"[33]. As Reverend Junek explained it,

> ...traditionally, normally, Moravians say, OK there's a men, a women's and men's plots, and then there is a children's plots, and what you do is you bury them in that section next to each other as they die. In other words, you don't have family plots, you bury them as they die, one right after the other, and that's the normal way to do it. With children, there's a children's section where there's baptized and unbaptized sections.[34]

In the nineteenth century, the period of Moravian architectural fluorescence in Labrador, the dead house existed as part of a sign complex, which served as a visual guideline for social behavior and a marker of social

norms. As such, its introduction into Labrador can be seen as a good example of the Moravian belief in an ideal society, and as an example of how architecture was used as a symbol of social and religious control. In the twentieth century, as the balance of power shifted away from the German missionaries and into the hands of the Labrador people, the ways in which architecture were used shifted as well, as detailed in chapter five. Interestingly enough, the dead house continued to be used by the Inuit, with new dead houses being constructed well into the 1990's. Furthermore, dead houses became a tool of the growing Inuit religious power structure, and continued to by used as a symbol of social and religious control.

In the twentieth century, the dead house stood as a reminder of the battle lines drawn between respected and non-respected members of the community. And while the twentieth century dead house is very similar in terms of form and construction to the nineteenth century examples, the potential of the dead house as a symbol of power shifted as the power shifted from the missionaries to the Inuit.

Many of the changes in architectural patterning within the Moravian church in Labrador in the twentieth century can be linked to the development of Inuit-based church authority. Within the community, certain authoritarian roles could be shared among aboriginal peoples. One example was "helpers" who met regularly to discuss spiritual matters of importance to the community. One eighteenth century Moravian author wrote, "We are also glad when, from among the heathen that are converted to God, we can bring up people in our missions for the use of others, and these we call Helper"[35]. In Labrador, these are known as chapel servants. In recent times, chapel servants have assumed large portions of the responsibility for the smooth running of the church. Rev. Lawrence Junek, a Moravian minister from Texas who in 1995 had been preaching in Nain for three years, described their role:

> There are chapel servants who have been, uh, primarily, one of the things they do is help the minister, and this, they were without a minister for three years, and before that they helped too, helped hold services, assist the minister and right now they've been doing a lot of the, they've been doing primarily the Inuktitut services, especially worship, preaching, like that, and I've been doing the English. I do some of the five o'clock liturgy [the Inuktitut service]. They let me. [he laughs] But its only got singing. [he laughs again] I can sit up there and be uh.., you know, that kind of thing...[36]

In Labrador a different grouping of these helpers developed who were directly concerned with the mission buildings. Known as *elders*, their basic function is to ensure the maintenance of the missions' architecture and landscape. As Rev. Junek noted,

> Now elders are the other group. They do the physical things, in a sense. They supposedly take care of things around the church building *etc.*, digging graves, taking care of the graves, uh, the cemetery and take care of this building [the manse], church properties, as needed.[37]

Burials were always traditionally one area where native church helpers were granted some authority. In the eighteenth century it was recognized that "such helpers as have gifts are sometimes desired to deliver a discourse, keep a funeral, &c"[38]. Chapel servants in Labrador are permitted to perform burials [39], and church elders, responsible for the maintenance of the physical church, would have immediate authority over the placement of the dead house.

In addition to its surface level function as a resting house for the bodies of the deceased, the dead house in Labrador can serve as a symbol of authority, namely the authority of the Inuit church elders. In certain instances, the dead house could be used by the church elders as a deliberate reminder of the line of authority in a community, and as a marker of expected social norms. During the time of my 1995 fieldwork in Nain, I met the first white man from outside the community to marry a local Inuit woman, join the Moravian church, and to stay in the community. Previously, any white man that had married an Inuit woman had taken the woman with him back to his community. At the time of this couple's marriage in the early 1960s, the church elders moved the dead house to a spot directly behind the newly married couple's house. The husband, close to thirty-five years later, still saw this as one example of the elders' dissatisfaction with the marriage.

The dissatisfaction with the marriage probably stemmed from a number of causes, one of them being the cross-racial factor. Second, the man was American, so there were cultural differences as well. But the most damning factor was probably that the man was not originally a member of the Moravian faith. Traditionally, inter-faith marriage was strongly discouraged. In early Moravian settlements in North Carolina, for example, "no Moravian could marry a non-Moravian and remain within the fold of the community"[40].

The dead house remained behind the newly married couple's home until it became obvious to the community that the man was not leaving, and that the marriage was a stable one. At that point, the dead house was moved to another location.

In this example, the dead house again signifies an ambiguous state between worlds. The dead house, the house of a person not living, but not yet buried, is juxtaposed with the house of the man from outside the community who has married into the community but is not accepted as a full member. The juxtaposition indicates the couple's liminal state, and stands as a visual sign of their failure to fully comply with social norms. Arnold van Gennep notes that

the funeral rituals of many cultures are based on rites of transition, as well as rites of incorporation [41]. Rites of transition are liminal or threshold rites, while ceremonies of incorporation are post-liminal [42]. The conceptual meaning of the dead house is one of liminality, but its use as part of the funeral procession or as social comment is part of processes of social incorporation.

Furthermore, the physical placement of the building in the case of the mixed wedding serves to underscore the spiritual authority of the native church elders, and their right to enforce morally sanctions fellow converts. "If a brother saw his brother sin, it was his duty and privilege, in all kindness, to point out the offense"[43]. In this instance, the placement of the dead house serves not just to point out the offense, but also serves to point out the authority of the elders to judge that offense.

Elders and chapel servants were empowered with the rights to morally sanction fellow converts. "If a brother saw his brother sin, it was his duty and privilege, in all kindness, to point out the offense. In case the reproof remained without effect, the offender was cited before the elders, or the pastor, and admonished by them. Did he acknowledge his fault, he was dismissed in peace; did he continue refractory, he was suspended from the Holy Communion until he had given evidence of true repentance"[44]. As one eighteenth-century Moravian writer defined it, "this again is called discipline; but it is order, and must be so in a congregation"[45].

The traditional use of the dead house is currently changing in Labrador. In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, for example, there is no dead house, and the body is usually displayed at the local funeral home. In communities like Nain, bodies of the deceased are brought into the church for the service more often than in the past. The idea that this is still a sign of respect however, is still present. In some cases, such as a suicide, the body of the deceased is still not allowed into the church. Rev. Junek of Nain stated, "a suicide may be a little bit harder for someone to bring into the church. They may leave it out in the dead house"[46].

The physical placement of suicides, so closely linked to the use of dead houses, is another area in twentieth century Labrador where Inuit authority can be flexed, so to speak. Keeping the body of a suicide inside the dead house, and the placement of suicides in specific spatial locations along public routes acts in the same way to consolidate the religious authority of the elders. In coastal Labrador, the remoteness of the mission stations, and the almost complete lack of contact with other religious denominations, has served to ensure the cultural survival of practices and rituals that have not, to the same extent, been maintained in Moravian congregations elsewhere in North America. The physical placement of those who have committed suicide in the landscape according to Labrador tradition in recent years has done more than indicate displeasure with social deviance. In addition to this, it acts as a

political statement about lines of church authority.

In 1995, the Rev. Lawrence Junek had been ministering in Nain for three years. Originally from Texas, Junek's familiarity with the Moravian faith drew on American Moravian ideals and practices, practices that have been affected by centuries of contact with alternate religious groups and differing public systems of morality. In Nain, this has led to political tension between the Reverend and the chapel servants and church elders, who represent a much more conservative branch of the church. Rev. Junek explained,

> It should be that we work together. Mainly they think I'm, you know, as we were talking here earlier, as separate..., to be an outsider, you know, a white person, nothing racist because as I was reading someplace we are all of one race we just have different shades of colour. We are all individuals. Uh, its because of my culture, and that's the biggest difference, the culture, that I come from the States. I'm not from here. They put me off, we are supposed to be more co-operative... I try to, I ask them to show me and teach me things, and they expected me to be taught before I got here about Nain ways, about Nain Moravian ways.[47]

Nain Moravian ways value the correct spatial placement of suicides. Moravian graves traditionally face east,[48] and grave markers are paid for by the Church.[49] These are all more or less identical in terms of size and shape, with minor variations on the choice of scripture engraved on the face. All the markers are laid flat against the ground, with no marker having any more visual importance than any other. In Richard Etlin's study of the cemetery in eighteen-century Paris, he described mainstream funerary architecture as a reflection of the social "hierarchical order."[50] In their own unique way, traditional Moravian grave markers function in the same way, while at the same time reflecting a radically different concept of "hierarchical order." By keeping all the markers uniform in design, and arranging them in strict order, the spiritual equality of everyone in the community, and the importance of the choir system, is emphasized in death.

Social deviants, such as suicides, are treated differently. Traditionally, the normal pattern of burial is adapted radically to deal with suicides. Suicides were buried "the other way, outside, down, and facing the opposite direction" from other burials.[51] This meant that the suicide victim was buried face down, head to the opposite direction from normal burials, outside the cemetery. In some instances, suicides were buried in this manner actually in the path leading from the dead house to the cemetery. The graves were furthermore unmarked.

Herbert Halpert, writes that in the Anglo-American tradition, face-down burials, "according to most folk explanations... is done to stop disease or death from spreading; to break a witch's power or prevent a ghost from walking; or

to compel a dead man to catch and punish his murderer"[52]. In the Moravian tradition, however, facedown burial is done deliberately, again, as a marker of social norms. Suicide was viewed negatively, so the body of a suicide was buried in a manner that reflected its deviance from the normal pattern. Suicide was deemed the work of the flesh and was thought to be inconsistent with the life of a believer [53]. Since suicide equaled a separation of the person from Christ during their life, that separateness was further established in death.

The burial of the body of a suicide in the path to the cemetery would seem to indicate in a different way the importance of the funeral ritual, and the funeral procession from the church to the dead house to the cemetery. The path, to an outsider, is merely a path, and shows no visible signs of being anything else. To a member of the community, the very route that the funeral procession follows stands of a sign which signifies the importance of maintaining social and religious ideals, and it is architectural placement and landscape architecture in particular that defines the processional route.

As mentioned earlier, the normal pattern of burial was traditionally adapted radically to deal with suicides. In recent years this has changed due to the increase in the number of suicides, and with the involvement of missionaries with different socio-cultural backgrounds such as Rev. Junk. Disagreements over "correct" burial practices and the placement of suicides in the pathways represents a flexing of traditional political organization, and also serves to proclaim the spiritual superiority of Nain Moravian ways over American Moravian ways. Linked as it is in a ritual fashion to an entire sign complex related to death and the place of the living in society, the dead house serves, in subtle ways, to maintain group solidarity and cohesiveness, and to promote Moravian ideals of individual worth within a communitarian social network.

Architecture and landscape architecture are inextricably linked to social networks surrounding death rituals, and there are likenesses between the Moravian dead house and the death-related architecture of other groups. The differences, however, seem to be consistently greater than the similarities. In her article on North Louisiana grave houses for example, Marcy Frantom discusses the construction of shelters built over graves to serve as protection from weather or animals. But where the Moravian dead house is only a temporary resting place for the body, the North Louisiana grave houses are built over the actual grave. In addition, the North Louisiana grave house is built by the family, and may indicate special status [54], two practices that do not reflect traditional Moravian approaches to burial. Instead Moravian practices can be seen as a rejection of the widespread European attitudes towards funerary architecture as an individual monument to wealth or privilege.

In his study of funerary architecture of the Western European tradition,

J.S. Curl writes, "The architecture of death is perhaps the purest architecture of all, as it lends itself to the creation of objects in space, quite set apart from the rest of humanity, and providing strong statements that appeal to the hearts and minds of mankind."[55] While the type of architecture Curl discusses in his study is quite different from that of the Moravian dead house, this statement remains a valid one. Moravian dead houses are special because they present a focal point for studying many of the important concepts that shape how the Moravians approached life and death as a community with very central utopian ideals.

John Beattie argues that culture "prescribes definite institutionalized ways of dealing with illness, death and other misfortunes", and that these ways are "symbolic and expressive"[56]. While not architecturally complex, the dead house is complex architectonically, as it is an institutionalized form of symbolic and expressive communication. The dead house, while not the most elaborate architectural structure the Moravians ever produced, remains a vibrant example of the Brethren's attempt both in the past and in the present to mold the social and environmental structure of their community to a theological ideal, and as a powerful example of architecture as both a symbol of order and as an expression of resistance.

ENDNOTES

[1] Allen W. Schattschneider, *Through Five Hundred Years: A Popular History of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, PA: Comenius P, 1956) 22-26.

[2] James Hiller, *The Foundation and the Early Years of the Moravian Mission in Labrador, 1752-1805*, diss. Memorial U of NF, 1967, 3.

[3] Schattschneider 72.

[4] "Moravian Mission", English version, *Labradorimiut*, OKalaKatiget Society, Nain, Labrador, 30 May 1990.

[5] Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Inc., 1970) 3.

[6] Bernard L. Herman, "The Architectural and Social Topography of Early-Nineteenth-Century Portsmouth, New Hampshire," *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V, ed. Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1995) 225.

[7] Kenneth L. Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlatch (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1986) 241.

[8] *Records of the Moravian Mission in Labrador 1764-1944* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1960): microform 58695.

[9] Lawrence Junek, personal interview, 17 August 1995.

[10] "Missionary Accounts," *Them Days* 11.3 (1986): 44.

[11] Daniel Benham, *Memoirs of James Hutton; Comprising the Annals of His Life, and Connection with the United Brethren* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1856) 340.

[12] James Henry, *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character. Comprising a General View of the History, Life, Character, and Religious and Educational Institutions of the Unitas Fratrum*, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1859) 147-8.

[13] Phebe Earle Gibbons, *Pennsylvania Dutch and Other Essays*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1882) 195.

[14] S. Walter Edmunds, personal interview, 13 July 1995.

[15] Edmunds.

[16] Henry 148-149.

[17] Edmund de Schweinitz, *The History of the Church Known as the Unitas Fratrum or the Unity of the Brethren, Founded by the Followers of John Hus, the Bohemian Reformer and Martyr* (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Concern, 1901) 221.

[18] Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville, U of Tennessee P, 1989) 19.

[19] Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism Among Early American Moravians*, AMD edition (New York: Henry Holt and Company 1971) 111.

[20] Hiller 202.

[21] Ronald Rompkey, *Labrador Odyssey: The Journal and Photographs of Eliot Curwen on the Second Voyage of Wilfred Grenfell, 1893* (Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 1996) 103.

[22] Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the After-Life* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991.) 152-189, 253-270.

[23] Peter B. Bond, "Architecture for Mourning," *Dying Death and Disposal*, ed. Gilbert Cope (London: SPCK, 1970) 85-98.

[24] Gilbert Cope, "The Environment of Disposal: The Interior," *Dying Death and Disposal*, ed. Gilbert Cope (London: SPCK, 1970) 99.

[25] John Fleming, Hugh Honour, and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin, 1991) 277.

[26] John Veillette and Gary White, *Early Indian Village Churches: Wooden Frontier Architecture in British Columbia* (Vancouver: U of BC P, 1977) 95-98.

[27] Veillette 98.

[28] Fleming 277.

[29] John R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1962) 217.

[30] Charles Winick, *Dictionary of Anthropology* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1966) 562.

[31] "Mortuary Customs," *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, 1969 ed., 464.

[32] Benham 413.

[33] Gillian L. Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds* (New York: Columbia UP, 1967) 67-68.

[34] Junek.

[35] August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *An Account of the Manner in Which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, Preach the Gospel, and Carry on their Missions among the Heathen* (London: Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, 1788) 85.

[36] Junek.

[37] Junek.

[38] Spangenberg 86.

[39] Junek.

[40] W. Thomas Mainwaring, "Communal Ideals, Worldly Concerns, and the Moravians of North Carolina, 1753-1772," *Communal Societies* 6 (1986): 140.

[41] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960) 146-165.

[42] van Gennep 21.

[43] de Schweinitz 222.

[44] de Schweinitz 222.

[45] Spangenberg 95.

[46] Junek.

[47] Junek.

[48] Daniel B. Thorp, "The City That Never Was: Count von Zinzendorf's Original Plan for Salem," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61.1 (1984): 51.

[49] Edmunds.

[50] Richard A. Etlin, *The Architecture of Death: The Transformation of the Cemetery in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1984) 70.

[51] Junek.

[52] Herbert Halpert, "The World Will Turn Upside Down: An Unusual Burial Explanation in Folklore and Literature," *Folklore Today: A Festschrift for Richard M. Dorson*, ed. Linda Degh, et al. (Bloomington: Indiana U, 1976) 193.

[53] Earl P Olmstead, *Blackcoats among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1991) 202.

[54] Marcy Frantom, "Gravehouses of North Louisiana: Culture History and Typology," *Material Culture* 27.2 (1995): 22.

[55] James Stevens Curl, *A Celebration of Death: An Introduction to Some of the Buildings, Monuments, and Settings of Funerary Architecture in the Western European Tradition* (London: Constable, 1980) 366.

[56] John Beattie, *Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) 205.