



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Heritage Tourism in Historic Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Bruce Haines, Managing Partner
Hotel Bethlehem

Bruce Haines is Managing Partner of the historic Hotel Bethlehem in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. For 35 years prior to becoming a hotelier, Haines served as an Executive, Corporate Officer and Vice President of Technology and Management Services for U.S. Steel in Pittsburgh. He subsequently moved to Bethlehem to oversee the recovery of the hotel, which has flourished under its new ownership group, for which he is Founding Partner. In 2005, it became a member of the prestigious Historic Hotels of America under the auspices of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Heritage tourism in historic Bethlehem, Pennsylvania embodies the unique combination of a truly authentic colonial and industrial history experience with a USA Today-named “Top 10 Main Street” destination. Historic Bethlehem contains one square mile of unique 18th and 19th century homes and businesses in Pennsylvania’s first Nationally Registered Historic District.

The Moravians that settled Bethlehem represented the oldest Protestant religion. They were missionaries who taught the Native Americans in their native language and named Bethlehem on Christmas Eve of 1741. Moravian College remains in the center of the community and is recognized as being the sixth oldest college in the country and the first to educate women in America. The original settlement of 14.7 acres is preserved today as a National Historic Landmark District, which was recently added to the United States Tentative List for World Heritage designation. There is only one other World Heritage designated site in Pennsylvania – Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Other World Heritage sites include the Great Wall of

China and the Egyptian pyramids; among the more than 1,000 sites in the world, there are only 23 in the United States.

The town’s Colonial Industrial Quarter remains partially intact and was the site of the country’s first industrial park. The site also features America’s first municipal water pumping system. Many of the original Germanic structures that served as the living quarters for the settlers remain in use today. The Moravian Church on Main Street houses the oldest continuous town clock, the Moravian Trombone Choir is the oldest one of its kind, and the oldest Bach Choir in America was founded in Bethlehem in 1898.

Four museums and walking tours of the town help tell the story of this magnificent community. Boutiques and one-of-a-kind restaurants line Main Street and Broad Street to provide the authentic historical experience that tourists appreciate. The shopping and dining experience can be enhanced by browsing in the Moravian Bookstore, which is the oldest continuously operated bookstore in the world.



View of Bethlehem's Nationally Registered Historic District



Directly across the street from the Moravian Church and Moravian Bookstore is the elegant and historic Hotel Bethlehem. The hotel was built in 1921, replacing the Eagle Hotel, which was built by the Moravians in 1823. The Art-Deco structure, with its warmly appointed lobby and common area, has hosted four U.S. presidents, Sir Winston Churchill, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and Amelia Earhart among its hundreds of distinguished guests. It contains two magnificent ballrooms, multiple meeting facilities and two on-site restaurants.

The historic Hotel Bethlehem features 125 elegantly restored guest rooms and suites as well as modern amenities such as 24-hour room service and complimentary fiber optic Wi-Fi. Guest rooms offer expansive views of the Colonial Industrial Quarter, Historic Main Street, Moravian College, Lehigh University and the Star of Bethlehem on the hillside.

Prior to the Hotel Bethlehem and the Eagle Hotel before it, the famous “First House of Bethlehem” was also located on this site. On December 24 of 1741, the Moravian’s patron, Count Nicholas Von Zinzendorf, sang a hymn about lowly Bethlehem, after which those gathered decided to name the town Bethlehem.

So, from the roaring '20s and the blast furnaces of Charles M. Schwab’s steel empire to the 14 humble Moravian Missionaries who risked life and limb to cross the Atlantic to bring the gospel to the Native Americans of the valley at the forks of the Lehigh, there’s quite the heritage and history to be experienced in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. ▽

