

MORAVIAN MUSIC FOUNDATION

Finding Aid for Salem Sisters Collection

Date range: 1771-1839

Bulk dates: 1771-1790

Finding Aid created by Nola Reed Knouse, May 29, 2018

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Creator: Salem Congregation, Moravian Church in America, Southern Province (Salem, now Winston-Salem, NC).

Extent: 10 boxes, 4 linear feet

Abstract: The Salem Sisters Collection contains the vocal parts to sacred vocal music used in worship services in the Moravian community of Salem (now Winston-Salem), North Carolina. The majority of the pieces are by Moravian composers, but the collection also contains a significant number of works by other composers, including *contrafacta*. This collection is associated with the Salem Congregation Collection.

Call number: SS – Archie Davis Center Vault

Language: The material is in German, with some in English.

Access and Use:

Acquisition Information: These materials are in the custody of the Moravian Music Foundation from the Moravian Archives, Winston-Salem, NC.

Access Restrictions: The record group is open to research.

Copyright: Copyright is with the Moravian Music Foundation

Cite as: [item], Salem Sisters [number], Moravian Music Foundation.

History: Salem, North Carolina, was founded by Moravian settlers primarily from Germany by way of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. This was the third intentional community established by the Moravians in North Carolina. The first, Bethabara, in the northwestern part of what is now Forsyth County, was founded in 1753; the second, Bethania, farther to the northwest, was established in 1759. The building of Salem was begun in 1766, and the Moravians' central North Carolina administration was moved to Salem in 1771.

Worship services structured life in Salem, as in all other Moravian settlement congregations in the eighteenth century. Devotional meetings for small groups or the whole community occurred several times daily. In smaller assemblies hymns might be sung without accompaniment. Three services involved music in special ways. Sunday morning preaching services included liturgies according to the Lutheran liturgical year, usually along with one or two anthems and congregational hymns.

The *Singstunde* was the most characteristically-Moravian order of worship, instituted by their patron Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf within the congregation at Herrnhut, Germany; the worship leader chose from various hymns individual stanzas that combined to craft a unified message. Since the liturgist began singing each stanza without announcement or printed order of worship, the congregation's ability to participate relied upon their familiarity with hundreds of stanzas. The Moravians sang hymns daily and read and memorized hymn texts as a spiritual exercise, using printed hymnals at home for devotion but not during worship. The organist was also expected to identify the tune, and also to play in the same key in which the leader was singing, using his memory and ear. The *Singstunden* were held weekly as well as on special occasions, and could include a choir anthem. A sermon and the reading of the *Gemein Nachrichten* (congregational news from other settlements) might also be a part of the *Singstunde*.

The third type of service using music extensively was the Lovefeast (*Liebesmahl*). Modeled after the early Christian practice of expressing *agape* through sharing a simple meal, the Lovefeast includes the sharing of a beverage and bread during the worship service. Lovefeasts were held (and continue in many Moravian congregations today) to celebrate Christian feast days, Moravian festival anniversaries, and many kinds of special occasions, which could include birthdays, weddings, the arrival or departure of guests and members, funerals, anniversaries, and so on. The musical portion of the Lovefeast often took place at the end of a longer service which included preaching. Most of the sacred vocal music written by Moravian composers was written for a Lovefeast or other special celebration.

Texts and musical selections for a Lovefeast were compiled into an order of worship known variously as a *psalm*, *cantata*, or *ode*, or in German, *Dankesang* or *Lobgesang*. These odes included biblical texts, often fragments from many different locations in scripture, quoted literally or in paraphrase; hymn texts, often newly-written or adapted for the specific occasion; and solos, duets, or anthems to be sung by the choir. The well-crafted ode develops a unified theme, marked by harmony of language and thought; the music was intended to help carry the meaning of the text, not to stand on its own as an artistic creation.

The anthems, solos and duets were accompanied not only by organ, but by an instrumental ensemble consisting primarily of strings, augmented by some wind instruments (most often flute and horns). By 1788 Salem is known to have had at least three violins, two viola, three cellos, a flute, two horns, and two clarini, all of which were used in worship. However, unlike the Salem Congregation Collection, the Sisters Collection contains no organ parts and no instrumental parts – only vocal parts are found, with the appropriate numbers of measures of rest, a clear indication that these were not copied to be performed *a capella* – a performance practice unknown in 18th- and 19th-century Moravian music.

The Sisters Collection seems to have been the primary music collection used in Salem by “Choir II”, a second choir which either reinforced “Choir I” or provided spatial contrast and antiphonal effects. Psalms from the early 1770s assign chorales and ariettas to Choir II, with the two choirs sometimes singing stanzas in alternation and then uniting on the final stanza. Liturgy books from that period, as well as later liturgy music manuscripts, routinely call for such alternation between two choirs. As the complexity of the music increased toward the end of the 1770s, antiphonal anthems began gradually to appear, and during the 1780s the role of Choir II became more prominent.

Frances Cumnock, in the Introduction to the *Catalog of the Salem Congregation Music*, discusses the Sisters Collection, and notes that the “most vexing question concerning the Sisters Collection is the identity of the singers who used it.” Evidence from church minutes and diaries does not support the extensive use of boys to sing soprano and alto parts in the choir; thus Choir I was not exclusively male and Choir II female. Cumnock explores various conjectures, noting the Moravian practice of the time of keeping the single brothers and sisters separated and the consequent challenges for rehearsals, and concludes, “In the absence of better evidence and better theories, further speculation at this point achieves little.”

The Salem Sisters Collection was cataloged in 1808 in two paperback volumes, one in alphabetical and one in numerical order. Chronology in this collection is elusive, in that there appears to have been an earlier numbering system; the 1808 catalog is by page size. Until 1806 copyists seem to have added works to old convolutes (groups of parts kept together as units), or created new convolutes that would themselves collect additional pieces over the years. Thus the Salem Sisters Collection convolutes contain assortments of pieces in combinations that do not parallel any in the Salem Congregation collection. From 1806 on, however, copyists began copying enough voice parts for both the Salem Congregation and Salem Sisters collections to have a set; from then on the two collections followed roughly the same pattern of development.

Scope and Content: The collection lists some 591 entries, a number of them cataloged but noted as “missing” even as early as the 1808 catalog. All are sacred works, all in manuscript form. As in the much larger Salem Congregation Collection, some of these titles do not represent independent works, but are variant texts or *contrafacta*.

Some 50 composers are represented, with the vast majority being members of the Moravian Church; those most widely represented are Christian Gregor (1723-1801), Johann Friedrich

Peter (1746-1813), Johannes Herbst (1735-1812), and Johann Christian Geisler (1729-1815). Non-Moravian composers with several works in the collection (many as *contrafacta*) include Karl Heinrich Graun, George Frederick Handel, Johann Heinrich Rolle, Johann Abraham Peter Schulz, and Ernst Wilhelm Wolf. The composer is identified on the score for most of the pieces in the collection, and researchers have been able to identify the composer for many through other sources. However, a significant number remain without composer attribution.

None of these pieces are in full score format. Rather, these are performance parts, and their condition indicates that they were used, with some having performance notations written in.

Title:

- Salem Sisters Collection

Personal Names:

- Johann Christian Geisler, 1720-1815
- Karl Heinrich Graun, 1704-1759
- Christian Gregor, 1723-1801
- George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759
- Johannes Herbst, 1735-1812
- Johann Friedrich Peter, 1746-1813
- Johann Heinrich Rolle, 1716-1785
- J. A. P. (Johann Abraham Peter) Schulz, 1747-1800
- Ernst Wilhelm Wolf, 1735-1792

Corporate Names:

- Moravian Music Foundation
- Salem Congregation (Winston-Salem, NC)

Geographic Names:

- Salem, NC

Subjects:

- Anniversaries
- Chorales
- Choruses, Sacred (Mixed voices) with orchestra (or chamber orchestra)
- Duets
- Holy Saturday music
- Holy Week music
- Palm Sunday music
- Passion music
- Psalms (Music)
- Responses (Music)
- Sacred songs (High voice) with chamber orchestra (or orchestra)
- Sacred songs (Low voice) with chamber orchestra
- Moravian daily text: September 19, 1750 (for example)

- Single Brothers Covenant Day (Moravian Church)--Anniversaries, etc
- Single Sisters Covenant Day (Moravian Church)--Anniversaries, etc.

Related Materials:

Researchers interested in this archive may also wish to consult the following resources:

The Music of the Moravian Church in America, edited by Nola Reed Knouse. Rochester, New York, The University of Rochester Press, © 2008.

Catalog of the Salem Congregation Collection, edited by Frances Cumnock. Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, ©1980.

Finding aid for the Salem Congregation Collection, Moravian Music Foundation

Other materials in the Archives and Foundation holdings may relate to the topics in this archive. See the archivist for further research assistance.