An Admirable Draughtsman: Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Moravian Background

by Vernon H. Nelson

A great deal of information is available about the American career of the famous architect and engineer Benjamin Henry Latrobe, but less is known about his life in Europe before he came to America.[1] Latrobe's own European sources are not available. When he left for America in 1795 he shipped his library of about 1500 volumes on ahead. The shipment was lost.[2] It probably contained – besides his books – correspondence, journals, sketches, architectural and engineering drawings, etc. Moravian Church records in England and Germany which describe his early life and education have also suffered losses, mainly due to World War II. Although the Unity Archives in Herrnhut, Germany, was preserved, it became almost inaccessible to western scholars after the war, due to the Iron Curtain with its governmental restrictions.

Talbot Hamlin's biography of Latrobe was greatly limited by the above circumstances.[3] He certainly could not have visited Herrnhut in the years before 1955, when his book was published. The Latrobe Papers project, sponsored by the Maryland Historical Society, secured some information about Latrobe from Herrnhut but was not able to conduct comprehensive research in the German Democratic Republic.[4]

Benjamin Henry Latrobe was born on May 1, 1764 at Fulneck, England, a Moravian settlement near Leeds. His father, Benjamin Latrobe, was born in Dublin.[5] A descendant of Huguenot refugees, he had been well-educated and intended to become a Baptist minister. He met the Moravians and joined them instead. Soon he became the headmaster of the Fulneck

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1 I wish to thank Otto Dreydoppel, Jr., and Paul Peucker for assistance with the final draft of this article. Commonly-used abbreviations are GN for Gemein-Nachrichten and MAB for the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

2 The Engineering Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Darwin H. Stapleton, ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 7.

3 Talbot Hamlin, Benjamin Henry Latrobe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

4 The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, I-III, Edward C. Carter II, ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977-1980) contains extensive biographical information and a chronology of Latrobe's life. The Engineering Drawings also contains a biography. Additional biographical information appears in The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, John C. Van Horne et al., eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984-1986). Basic biographical information in this paper is taken from the *Papers*, the *Engineering Drawings*, the Correspondence, and Hamlin, without citation.

5 For important dates in the life of Latrobe's father, Benjamin Latrobe, see Richard Träger and Charlotte Träger-Grosse, Dienerblätter, K-L (Herrnhut: Unitätsarchiv, n.d.).

Boys' School and married Anna Margaret Antes, the headmistress of the Fulneck Girls' School. She was the daughter of Henry Antes, an important figure in the history of Pennsylvania.[6] The Latrobes had six children, one dying in infancy. The oldest, Christian Ignatius Latrobe, became a Moravian minister and administrator and was the best-known Moravian composer in England.[7]

As was customary in Moravian settlements, Latrobe lived with his parents for only a short time. At the age of three years and one month he entered the Fulneck Boys' School to begin his education.[8] Besides learning to read and write and to add and subtract, etc., he studied geography, history, music, sciences, languages, and, of course, religion.[9]

Most boys, at the end of their training in the school, entered apprenticeships in the community, but a few, particularly the children of ministers and missionaries, were sent to Germany for further education – usually to prepare them for service in the church. At the time even American students who were specially talented were sent to Germany, where the only advanced Moravian schools were located.

On September 12, 1776, when he was still only twelve years old, Benjamin Henry and three other boys left England to continue their education at Niesky, Germany. They were accompanied by the Okelys, the parents of one of the boys.[10]

Niesky, Germany, had been founded as a Moravian settlement in 1742. It had grown steadily and by 1776 its population was approximately 600.[11] A map of Niesky published in 1782, with an accompanying view, shows the layout of the town.[12]

In the center of Niesky was a large square, which still exists, with buildings around the square. In Latrobe's day the Gemeinhaus was in the center of the west side of the square, with the Single Brethren's House to the left and the Single Sisters' House to the right. Today, the old Gemein-

6 Antes appears in many sources. The most comprehensive biography is Edwin MacMinn, A German Hero of the Colonial Times of Pennsylvania; or the Life and Times of Henry Antes (Moorestown, New Jersey, 1886), which also contains a genealogy of Antes' family including his ancestors, his own family, and their descendants.

7 The *Papers* contains an extensive genealogy of the Latrobe family in Volume I, lxv-lxxii.

8 Latrobe began school in Fulneck on June 13, 1767. Engineering Drawings, xv. A year later, on August 5, 1768, his parents moved from Fulneck to London. (Nachrichten aus der Unitäts-Aeltesten-Conference, 1768, No. 31, 3, at MAB.

9 Correspondence, 4.

10 Hamlin, 12.

11 In 1783 Niesky had 631 members. GN 1784 I, IXte u. Xte Woche, at MAB.

12 G. Krauss, Grundrisse und Prospecte der drey Evangelischen Brüder-Gemein-Orte im Marggraffthum Ober-Lausitz . . . Herrnhut . . . Nisky . . . Kleinwelke (Dresden, 1782).

haus has been replaced by a 19th century church building and the Single Sisters' House is no more. It was destroyed by Soviet troops in 1945.

The school building was located on the east side of the square, directly across from the Gemeinhaus. The building still exists and now is used as a library. Other school buildings on the site were constructed after 1776.

The school building housed two separate schools.[13] One was the Boys' School, consisting of boys the same age as those at the Fulneck Boys' School. The other was the Paedagogium, which Latrobe was now entering, for older boys. The 1777 report indicates that the lower school consisted of thirty-two boys who were divided into four groups. Each group had a room for study on the lower floor of the building. There were twenty-seven boys in the Paedagogium, divided into three groups, also each with a room, on the second floor. In addition there were sleeping halls for each school and a common dining room.

During Latrobe's time at the school a second building was constructed to provide additional space. The cornerstone was laid on March 31, 1778. The building was completed and dedicated on March 22, 1779. The architect was Friedrich von Marschall, who left before the building was completed to return to America, where he had a long career which included numerous building projects such as Home Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.[14] The Boys' School was located in the new building, while the Paedagogium remained in the old building. Latrobe would have observed the erection of the new structure and may have been influenced or instructed by Marschall.

The student rooms included, besides the students, two Single Brethren, usually in their twenties, one as a type of tutor, the other as a monitor to maintain "order and cleanliness."[15] Whenever the boys left the premises, one of the Single Brethren went with them. Also, the Single Brethren helped them with their studies.

The report indicates that at noon the boys in the Paedagogium received meat four times a week, the younger boys three times. For supper they had soup and buttered bread. The noon drink was beer, the evening drink water.[16]

The names of the boys in both schools are listed in the report. Latrobe was part of a prestigious group of students who came from many

13 Details of the schools are taken from: Das Paedagogium und die Unitäts-Knäbgen-Anstalt in Niesky, GN 1777 I, LIIte Woche, II, at MAB.

14 For Marschall see: Dienerblätter, M-N. Details about the construction of the new building are found in: Vom Paedagogio und die Unitäts-Knäbgen-Anstalt in Niesky, in: GN 1777 I, LIIte Woche, II, at MAB.

15 GN 1771 I, LIIte Woche, II, at MAB.

16 Ibid.

parts of the world.[17] John Gambold, born in London in 1760, was the son of Bishop Gambold. Young John later became a teacher in Germany but died young, probably from tuberculosis. Gottfried Sebastian Oppelt was born in Görlitz in 1763, later came to America and served as a missionary to the American Indians. John Frederick Frueauff, born in Neudietendorf in 1762, became an educator and moved to America. He became the headmaster of the Young Ladies' Seminary in Bethlehem. His brother, Friedrich Renatus Frueauff, born in Neudietendorf in 1764, became a Moravian educator in Europe. Carl Bernhard Garve was born in Hannover in 1763, had a long career as a minister in Europe, and was the most prolific hymn writer in the German Moravian Church, next to Zinzendorf. Peter Treschow was born in 1760 in Drammen, Norway, and later served as a minister in Denmark and the Netherlands before participating in forming an institute to Christianize Jews. Johann Jacob Neisser was born in Ebersdorf in 1763, became a teacher, and died in Christiansfeld, Denmark, at the age of twenty-two. Johannes Nielsen was born in Kiel in 1763, served in Denmark, and died in Neusalz. Johann Christlieb Mahler was born in Copenhagen in 1764, became a teacher in Germany, and died at age thirty-two. Carl Gustav von Brinkmann was born in Stockholm in 1764, attended the Paedagogium and Seminary until 1785, later went to the University of Halle, and became a diplomat and literary figure.

As noted, many of the students were ministerial children and most of them became Moravian ministers or teachers. There were also some children of nobility among their numbers. The names of the Single Brethren assigned to the rooms are known. Some were teachers in the school.

The inspector, or headmaster, of the Paedagogium, was Theodor Christian Zembsch.[18] He was born in Thüringen in 1728, became acquainted with the Moravians in Ebersdorf, studied theology at the University of Jena, and had already had a long career as an educator in the Moravian Church. In 1776 he married a much younger woman, but the marriage was not a happy one and there were no children. He seems to have adopted the boys in the Paedagogium as his own sons, and he was beloved by all. He taught many of the courses and was adept in the sciences as well as in the arts. His career lasted fifty-five years, and in later years his former students would often come back to visit him. In addition to giving intellectual instruction, he was genuinely concerned about the spiritual condition of his students.

17 The biographical details for the students are taken from the Dienerblätter under the names of each person.

18 For Zembsch's biography see Dienerblätter, V-Z. Zembsch was highly regarded by Schleiermacher, who attended the Paedagogium several years after Latrobe. E. R. Meyer, Schleiermachers und C. G. Brinkmanns Gang durch die Brüdergemeine (Leipzig: Friedrich Jansa, 1905).

Latrobe's course of study for the year 1779 is known.[19] Zembsch was his teacher in geometry and trigonometry for four hours a week. He had nine hours of Latin under two teachers: Johann Christian Neumann, who was also one of the room tutors, and Johann Gottfried Cunow. Latrobe also had six hours of Greek under Cunow and two hours of Hebrew and of French. He also studied history under Neumann for two hours per week. He studied piano with his own brother Christian Ignatius and violin with Ludwig Freydt. He had an hour of drawing each week with Carl Gotthold Reichel. All of his teachers except Zembsch were in their twenties.

Architecture was taught at the Paedagogium during Latrobe's time there. Carl Gotthold Reichel, who taught art, was also competent in architecture and supervised the completion of construction of the new school building after Marschall left to return to America. Reichel himself left in 1780 to go to Barby. His position was filled by Johann Gottfried Schulz, whose appointment is referred to in the 1781 report: "Again a wonderful opportunity has been found for instruction in drawing and architecture."[20] Schulz, who came to Niesky from Görlitz, had studied law and mathematics for four years at Leipzig but was more interested in art and architecture.[21] In his official position in Görlitz he was involved in the construction of hospitals and houses and the laying out of gardens. He visited Herrnhut on many occasions and in April, 1780, moved into the Single Brethren's House in Niesky. From 1780 to 1782 he gave instruction in drawing and architecture to the students in Niesky. He was called to Herrnhut in 1782 and was married, but later returned to Niesky to teach architecture at the Seminary, which had moved there.

The exact nature of the method of instruction in architecture in the Moravian schools has not been studied. Presumably the instruction consisted mainly of architectural drawing, but there was a possibility of going further. Since the school was small, Latrobe could have had his own special projects and he may have consulted other experts such as Marschall, who was an excellent architect, or Baron von Schachmann, who, according to Latrobe, was "an admirable draughtsman [see below]."

The schedule allowed time for religious instruction, music practice, drawing, and exercise. A "promenade" was created for the boys to walk to a park-like area called Monplaisir. The younger boys could walk to their own area called Astracan.[22]

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19 Correspondence, 7.

20 „Vom Paedagogio und der Knäbgen-Anstalt in Niesky", in: GN 1782 V, II, 1, at MAB.

21 For Reichel and Schulz see Dienerblätter, O-Re and Rh-Sch.

22 Krauss, Grundrisse (s. Footnote 12).

Friedrich Renatus Frueauff drew many pictures of the area which are extant.[23] Probably Latrobe and others accompanied him as he went out and sketched with him. Latrobe made similar sketches in America.

An important aspect of Latrobe's education was his connection with the household of Carl Adolph Gottlob von Schachmann, a baron who lived in the nearby Schloss at Königshayn.[24] The baron was a member of the Moravian Church, had spent much time in England, was well-educated, and had sophisticated tastes. Latrobe and other students were often in his house. Latrobe wrote later of the experience:

> "His library, his Gallery of pictures, his magnificent collection of prints, his Gardens and his park, proved the refinement and cultivation of his mind which was devoted to literature and the arts. He himself was an admirable draughtsman. His Lady as beautiful as she was good, left those who had the happiness of her acquaintance in doubt which most to admire: the sweetness and elegance of her person, or the benevolence, the softness, and the fascinating loveliness of her mind. The Castle at Königshayn, situated in one of the most romantic spots in that romantic country, looked down upon a populous and beautiful village, every cottage of which breathed the incense, of the gratitude and happiness of its inhabitants to their generous and beneficent Lord. I cannot look back to the scenes of virtuous happiness, of refined and elegant pleasure, of literary and Social amusement, of chearful and active exercise, which my young unbroken mind has so often enjoyed, while its feelings were fresh and vigorous, with every mental organ keenly alive to sensation and enjoyment, without a very sensible degree of regret, that while I might, I did not resolve to remain within an accessible distance from Königshayn."[25]

Latrobe was not yet a communicant of the Moravian Church when he arrived in Niesky. He was admitted to communion on January 3, 1778, in the Niesky church.[26] Still, although he progressed well in his studies, he had various doubts about the Christian faith and there was a serious concern as to whether he would be a good minister.

After five years in Niesky, Latrobe traveled to Gnadenfrei, Silesia, now part of Poland. Gnadenfrei at the time was the largest Moravian settle-

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23 MAB has a large collection of art work by Friedrich Renatus Frueauff, including watercolors done at Niesky and at Barby. The same system for outlining the borders of a watercolor in black is used by Latrobe and Frueauff. Much of Latrobe's work has been published in: Latrobe's View of America, 1795-1820, Edward C. Carter II, et al., eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

24 For a chronology of Schachmann's life see Dienerblätter, Rh-Sch. A recent biography is also useful: Ernst-Heinz Lemper, Carl Adolph Gottlob von Schachmann (Görlitz-Zittau: Gunter Oettel, 2001). See also Horst Orphal, Karl Adolf von Schachmanns Leben und Apologie für Zinzendorf, in: Unitas Fratrum 9 (1981), 70-101.

25 Papers, II, 314, 315.

26 Bericht von Niesky von Jan. u. Febr. 1778, in: GN 1778 I, 12te Woche, 1, at MAB.

ment, with over 1500 members, and the town had many trades and occupations.[27] Possibly Latrobe was considering a profession he might enter. He also had contact with several Prussian engineers working on various projects.

While Latrobe was in Gnadenfrei, his father wrote to the Unity Elders' Conference and requested that his son be advanced to the Seminary at Barby.[28] Mainly in deference to his father, the conference allowed Latrobe to be admitted to the Seminary in Fall, 1782.

Barby was at the time the headquarters of the Moravian Church. A castle with its adjoining property had been leased for an extended period. The Seminary and later the Archives were also located there. The chairman of the Unity Elders' Conference was August G. Spangenberg, who wrote his famous *Idea Fidei Fratrum* at Barby. The Barby congregation was quite small. The statistics for 1783 show a total membership of 274. The city of Barby had a population of about 2000.[29]

The Seminary was a small institution consisting of about fifteen students.[30] As future ministers they were under close supervision by their teachers and by the church leaders who resided in Barby.

The head of the Seminary was Carl August Baumeister, who had recently arrived and never became as beloved as Br. Zembsch in Niesky. Baumeister followed Friederich Scholler, a talented botanist who produced a *Flora Barbiensis*. Besides Baumeister there were three other instructors and additional helpers.[31]

The education at Barby involved deeper exploration of the Bible through the further use of Hebrew and Greek and intensive education in other areas, including science.

The great emphasis on scholarship at Niesky and Barby had repercussions on Biblical study and private life. The world at large did not live according to the strict standards imposed on the students at the Seminary. They were of course not allowed to marry or even to have contacts with young women. Their reading habits were monitored. Brinkmann wrote in his diary that he hoped Br. Moore, one of the staff, would not catch him

27 The statistics for Gnadenfrei for 1781 show 719 members living in the town and 840 outside, in: GN 1782 I, VIIIte Woche, 3.

28 Correspondence, 8.

29 GN 1784 I, IXte u. Xte Woche, at MAB. K. Höse, Chronik der Stadt und Grafschaft Barby (Barby: Hermann Kropp, 1901), 291.

30 GN 1781, Beylage IV, II, 1.

31 For Baumeister see Dienerblätter, A-Bl. He later became pastor in Herrnhut and was consecrated a bishop. Scholler had studied at Jena. Dienerblätter, Rh-Sch. His Flora Barbiensis was published in Leipzig in 1775: in usum Seminarii Fratrum (for the use of the Brethren's Seminary).

reading Goethe's *Werther*.[32] Brinkmann later decided to leave the Seminary. Another famous person leaving the Seminary, some years later, was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who also could not be hemmed in by the narrow-mindedness of the Moravian leaders and teachers at Barby.[33] Most of the students accepted the strict discipline and had useful careers in the church all their lives.

Latrobe also left. He was asked to leave. In March, 1783, Spangenberg visited the Seminary to see how things were going, and wrote this in his report:

> "Doubt and disbelief concerning the truth of evangelical teaching is expressed by a number of students, most of whom however are at a loss as to how to deal with this and let themselves be freed from their doubt by the Savior's grace. Only one, or at most two, find pleasure in persevering in this state. This is particularly the case with Benjamin Latrobe, whose continued stay here at the seminary seems very questionable and would cause a great deal of damage."[34]

Latrobe returned to England on August 28, 1783. He may have traveled via Paris, but he could hardly have visited Italy for a period of time as well, as has been suggested. At first he lived with his parents in London, but after his father's death he lived for a time with his brother Christian Ignatius. Latrobe took a position as clerk in the Stamp Office in London and apparently remained there for nine years. In his spare time he was involved in other projects.

Almost immediately he began work on architectural drawings for a new Moravian community, to be named Fairfield, near Manchester, England, and for a school building in Fulneck. These were significant projects. In Fairfield the design of an entire community was involved. At Fulneck he was required to study how to place a new building in an open space within a row of existing buildings. Both sets of drawings for these projects are located at the Unity Archives in Herrnhut.

The Fairfield drawings, dated 1784, include Latrobe's elevations and floor plans for the Gemein-Saal (or church) in the center of the settlement and for the Single Brethren's House on the left and the Single Sisters' House on the right, as well as typical designs for one-story and two-story buildings for private residences and shops, along with a map of how the buildings are to be arranged. Latrobe was twenty-one or twenty-two years old when he completed these drawings.

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32 Meyer, 153.

33 See James Nelson, Herrnhut: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Spiritual Homeland (Chicago: University of Chicago, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1963).

34 Correspondence, 9.

Latrobe did not supervise the construction of the buildings at Fairfield, but his plans in general were followed and it is correct to consider him the designer of the Fairfield community. The Fairfield plans were published in *The Architectural Review*[35] in April, 1985. The community still exists and the buildings on the site can be compared with Latrobe's drawings.

The Fulneck drawings, which have never been published as far as this writer knows, relate to a separate building for the Boys' School. The school had outgrown its quarters in other buildings. Latrobe designed the building in 1784 and it was completed in 1785. The location is shown on a print of Fulneck.[36] Years later the building was increased in size.

Latrobe's drawings for Fulneck show great artistic talent. In addition to the plans of the three floors including a dormitory room with each bed plotted out, he includes a three-dimensional view of the building and also a see-through view of it showing interior chimneys, etc.

The Fulneck drawings also include a view of the Single Brethren's House, which already existed, and of a row of buildings at a right angle, containing shops and a barn. This plan may not have been followed. The buildings appearing there in the print seem to be of a different configuration.

In 1786 Latrobe visited Italy. He later refers to an episode involving Sir William Hamilton and Mrs. Hart which could have happened only in that year.[37] The event took place in Naples. Mrs. Hart soon became Lady Hamilton and is best known as the mistress of Admiral Nelson. Hamilton was a great classical scholar and collected Grecian vases, many of which are in the British Museum.[38]

After returning from Italy Latrobe did some work with John Smeaton, considered the most accomplished engineer in England at the time.[39]

Latrobe was also involved in literary activities. In 1788 he published a translation of an account of the life of Frederick the Great.[40] In 1789 he

35 Gillian Darley, The Moravians: Building for a Higher Purpose, The Architectural Review CLXXVII (London: The Architectural Press, April, 1985), 45-49.

36 The print shows a line of buildings on the crest of a hill, with the church in the center. Latrobe's school building is left of the center, halfway between the church and the end of the row. Fulnec, A Settlement of the United-Brethren near Leeds, C. H. Schwanfelder pinxit, Robert Havell sculpt. Published June 1st, 1814, by C. F. Hasse, Fulnec.

37 Hamlin, 16. Papers, I, 223.

38 See Sir William Hamilton in: Dictionary of National Biography VIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1949-1950), 1108-1111.

39 See John Smeaton in: Dictionary of National Biography XVIII (London, Oxford University Press, 1949-1950), 393-395.

40 Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Characteristic Anecdotes to Illustrate the Character of Frederick the Great (London, 1788). See Hamlin, 22.

published a translation of an account of the Struensee affair in Denmark.[41] The introduction to the Struensee book is superbly written in the best of English style, and the translation from the German original reads smoothly.

From 1789 to 1792 Latrobe worked with the architect Samuel P. Cockerell, one of the best architects in London.[42]

Latrobe, who supposedly was six feet two inches tall, had a dashing appearance and was becoming known in English social circles.[43] On February 17, 1790 he married Lydia Sellon, the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England. They had fallen deeply in love and had to convince her parents that he would be an acceptable husband. Her mother thought that she could attract a wealthier suitor.

In 1792 Latrobe opened his own architectural office in London. Most of his work involved renovation, but his first major building, Hammerwood Lodge, utilizes columns modeled after Greek prototypes rather than Roman.[44] In the middle of the century British scholars had discovered the difference between Greek and Roman architecture, one element being the thickness of columns. Greek columns were much thicker and, some thought, ugly. Latrobe liked them. He became a proponent of what is often called Greek Revival architecture, although neither he nor other architects abandoned all Roman features in their work. They continued to use vaults and arches and domes.

No one has pin-pointed the exact time Latrobe became enamored of Greek architecture. He knew Greek well, as did all students of the Seminary. He even included a Greek inscription above the portico at Hammerwood Lodge. His teachers in Germany, who were much involved in Greek literature, may have known about the recent discoveries concerning Greek architecture. Baron von Schachmann was familiar with the work of the famous classical scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann and also could have influenced Latrobe. Latrobe may have been inspired by his trip to Italy and his visit with Sir William Hamilton, or his enlightenment may not have come until he began working with British architects in the 1790s.[45] In any case, classical Greek elements became the distinguishing feature of his work.

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41 Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Authentic Elucidation of the History of Counts Struensee and Brandt, and of the Revolution in Denmark in the Year 1772 (London: John Stockdale, 1789).

42 See Samuel Cockerell in: Dictionary of National Biography IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1949-1950), 655.

43 Several portraits of Latrobe at various ages are extant. See *Papers*.

44 Hamlin, 45, 46.

45 Lemper states (p. 23) that Schachmann was one of the first Germans to study Winckelmann's work. Latrobe may have seen the Grecian temples at Paestum when he visited Sir William Hamilton in 1786. Before then, two British architects, James Stuart and Nicolas Revett, had visited Athens, measured the Parthenon and other buildings, and published their first volume of The Antiquities of Athens in 1762. Some British architects, such as John

Just as Latrobe was beginning to have some success in architecture and in engineering projects in England, disaster struck. In November, 1793, his beloved wife Lydia, who had already given him two children, a boy and a girl, died in childbirth. He was heartbroken. He went into a deep state of depression and soon began to have financial difficulties from which he could not recover. Finally, in desperation, he decided to go to America and start a new life. He considered himself half-American anyway, because his mother had been born in Pennsylvania. He had to leave his children behind.

Latrobe sailed for America on November 28, 1795.[46] He had a long and arduous trip, lasting until March, when he landed in Norfolk, Virginia. He did his first American house there, but soon moved to Richmond, the capital of Virginia, where he designed houses and a state penitentiary. While in Richmond he began a book addressed to a woman who may have been a romantic interest, teaching her how to draw.[47] The book is perhaps the best example of the sort of drawing taught in the Moravian schools in Germany.

In 1798 Latrobe received an important contract: he had been chosen to design the new Bank of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He moved there and set up his office. The bank building, considered the first building in America to utilize Greek features, was completed in 1801 and was influential on all bank buildings built in the next half century, at least.[48] In 1799 he began his designs for the Philadelphia waterworks. He again used Greek features. His knowledge of engineering proved immensely valuable. The system drew water from the Schuylkill River to a pump house in the center square, a mile away.[49] In 1799 Latrobe designed the first Gothic Revival building in the United States.[50]

On May 1, 1800, Latrobe married Mary Elizabeth Hazlehurst, a merchant's daughter. She was well-educated, cultured, and much like his first wife. His two children came to live with them. In addition, they had several children of their own, of whom some died in infancy.[51]

Latrobe, who already was the most famous architect in the country, was needed by the United States government for projects in Washington and elsewhere. He was appointed "Surveyor of the Public Buildings of the United States" by President Jefferson, who was an amateur architect and a lover of classical design. Latrobe had reached the top of the ladder profes-

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Soane, were using Greek Revival features in their buildings by the time Latrobe opened his office. See David Watkin, English Architecture (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 151.

46 His journal is published in: Papers, I, 3-71.

47 Papers, II, 455-531.

48 Hamlin, 152-157.

49 Engineering Drawings, 144-203.

50 Sedgeley was the name of Latrobe's Gothic house. It is no longer standing.

51 Papers, I, lxx-lxxi, lists all the children.

sionally, but the position brought problems as well. A major problem was the capitol building, which was unfinished due to the incompetence of the previous architect.

Latrobe did not move to Washington until 1807. One of the projects he undertook before leaving was the engineering design for the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal, a major project which was not finished for many years.[52]

After moving to Washington Latrobe completed work on the capitol building. He also worked on the White House. He and Dolley Madison, the new president's wife, worked together in furnishing some of the rooms. He designed furniture for the building in Grecian style.[53] Unfortunately, much of his work was lost when the British entered Washington during the War of 1812 and burned the capitol building and the White House.

During this period Latrobe was continually working on plans for the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Baltimore, Maryland. It turned out to be his masterpiece. He volunteered his time when he saw the inept designs that were proposed. His first design was Gothic and was rejected. His next design went through several stages and ultimately resulted in a finished building, which was not dedicated until 1821.[54]

After completing his work on the capitol building, Latrobe moved to Pittsburgh and became involved in steamboat transportation, but the project failed financially and he went bankrupt.

He moved back to Washington after the War of 1812 because he was again needed to work on the capitol building, which was standing in ruins. With great effort he succeeded in rebuilding the structure as well as introducing various innovations. He is responsible for the majority of the building as it now stands, except for the current dome, the two outer wings, and some additions in the center part of the building. Among his special contributions are the famous capitals at the top of columns. In some he used corncobs, in others tobacco leaves.[55]

Latrobe's son Henry became an architect and engineer like his father and had gone to New Orleans to supervise the installation of a water system for that city. Unfortunately he contracted yellow fever and died . Latrobe felt that he should complete the project. He moved to New Orleans and became fascinated with the city that was of French origin, but he too contracted yellow fever and died in 1820.

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52 His engineering plans for the canal are extant. See Engineering Drawings, 11-19, 125-129.

53 Margaret Brown Klapthor, Benjamin Latrobe and Dolley Madison Decorate the White House, 1809-1811 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1965).

54 See Hamlin for details.

55 Hamlin, plate 23. Also Compilation of Works of Art and other Objects in the United States Capitol (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 354.

Latrobe's contributions to architecture and engineering in the United States are immense. He was the first full-time architect and engineer and it was he who established the profession of architect in the country. He was influential also through his students, who adopted many of his methods, including the use of Greek motifs.[56] Greek Revival elements soon were used on almost all the official buildings, but they also filtered down to private homes in less obvious ways.

Latrobe also made a contribution through his numerous sketches, made while he traveled through the country. His sketch of Mount Vernon, showing Washington with his family on the porch, is historically important.[57] He also made many sketches of natural phenomena: insects, geological formations, etc.

To be sure, Latrobe had great natural talent, but if he had not been trained in Moravian schools his talent could not have expressed itself in so many ways. His journals are sprinkled with Greek, Latin, French, and Italian, with bars of music, with mathematical formulas, with sketches – some from memory – with stories of past experiences, with scientific descriptions, and with other learned discussions. While he was in Richmond he wrote and produced a play.[58] In many ways he was a universal man, like Goethe, and he certainly was one of the most important individuals in American history. He did not, however, have any known connection with the Moravian Church during his adult life, except through his correspondence with his brother Christian Ignatius.[59]

More work needs to be done on the architectural training Latrobe received in Moravian schools.[60] Through the years some of the other students at the Seminary also became proficient in architecture. Friedrich Renatus Frueauff, who was at the Paedagogium in Latrobe's time, later did the architectural plan for the large Königsfeld church.[61] Clearly, Latrobe did not first learn architecture after he returned to England; he learned architecture in Moravian circles in Germany.

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56 The most important of Latrobe's students were William Strickland and Robert Mills. Both were employed by Latrobe as assistants and learned the architectural profession from him.

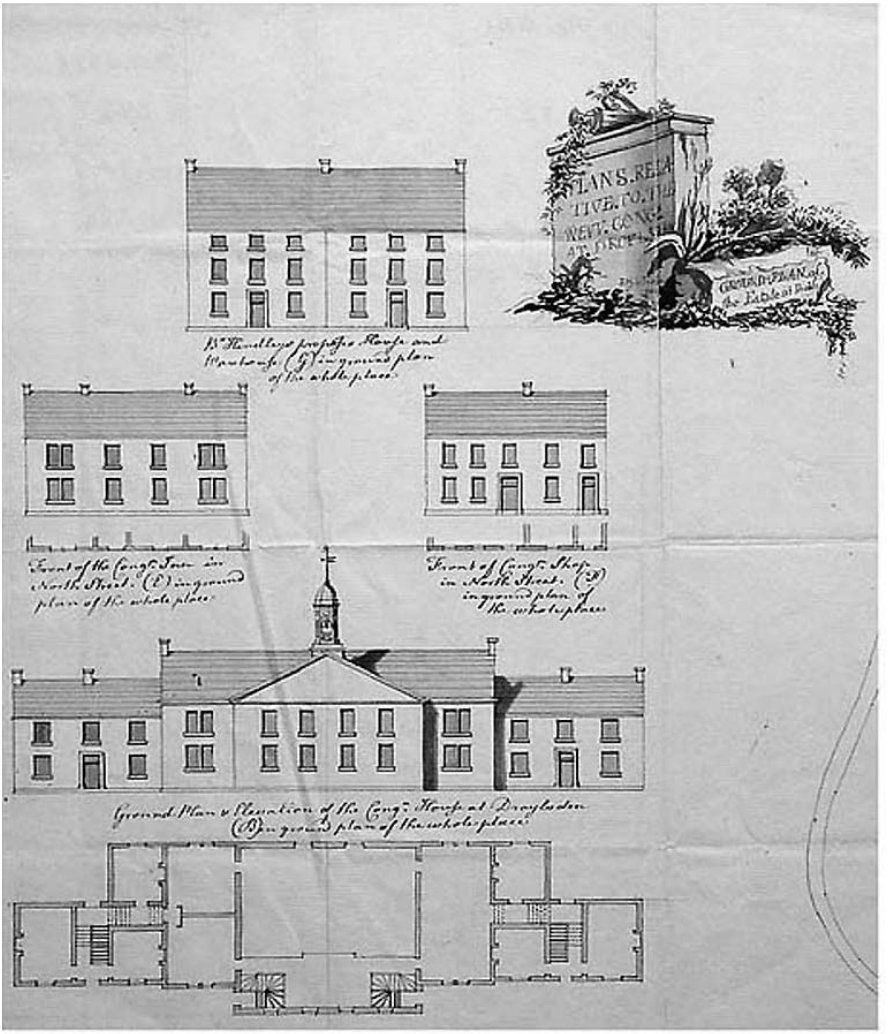
57 Hamlin, plate 6, 75-79.

58 The Apology opened in Richmond on January 20, 1798. Papers I, lxxvi.

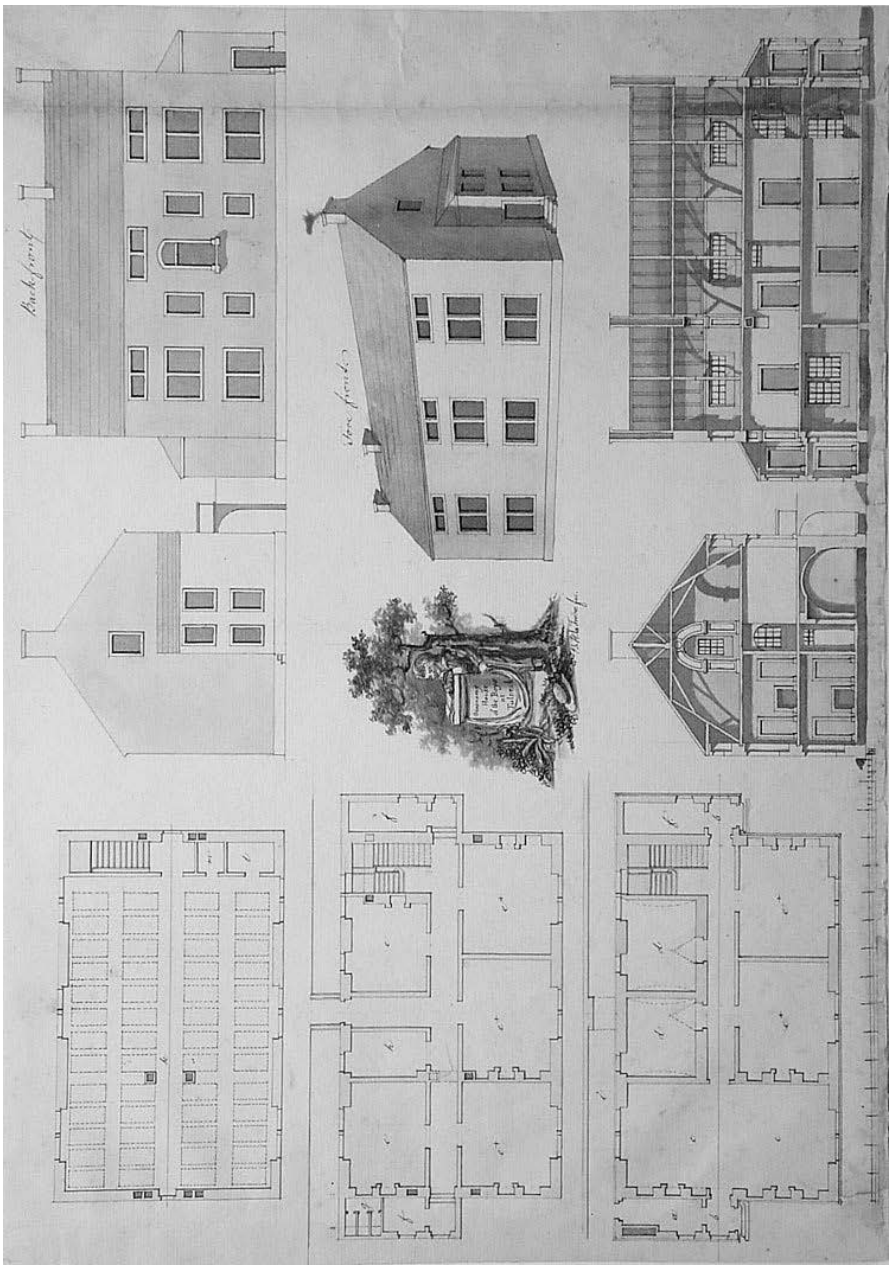
59 There was a Moravian Church in Philadelphia, but Latrobe did not become a member.

60 A reason for architectural training for ministerial candiadates is given by Hans Merian, Einführung in die Baugeschichte der Evangelischen Brüdergemeinen, in: Unitas Fratrum, ed. by Mari P. van Buijtenen et al., (Utrecht: Rijksarchief, 1975), 469. „Um dem Mangel an Kentnissen im Baufach abzuhelfen, wurden später im Lehrplan des Seminars Bauzeichnen und Mechanik aufgenommen, notwendige Kenntnisse für die künftigen Missionare."

61 The Königsfeld church was built in 1812.



Entwürfe für Gemeinlogis, Gemeinhaus mit Kirchensaal, Laden und Privathaus in Fairfield, B.H. la Trobe 1784 *(UA, TS Mp.168.1)*.



Entwurf zum Bau für die Knabenanstalt in Fulneck, B.H. la Trobe 1783 *(UA, TS Mp.168.6)*.

Vernon H. Nelson: Ein bewunderswerter Zeichner: Benjamin Heinrich Latrobes brüderischer Hintergrund

Benjamin Heinrich Latrobe gehört in Amerika zu den bedeutendsten Architekten und Ingenieuren Ende des 18., Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts. Da er aus einer brüderischen Familie stammt und über seine Herkunft und Entwicklung in Europa wenig bekannt ist, schildert der Archivar des Brüderarchivs von Bethlehem den Werdegang anhand der wenigen noch vorhandenen Quellen. Latrobe wurde am 1. Mai 1764 in Fulneck, Mittelengland geboren, wo sein Vater Rektor der brüderischen Knabenschule war. Sein Bruder Christian Ignatius wurde ein bedeutende englischer Komponist der Brüdergemeine. Mit 12 Jahren besuchte Latrobe das Pädagogium in Niesky, zusammen mit Karl Bernhard Garve, Carl Gustav von Brinkmann und den Brüdern Früauf. Der Inspector Theodor Christian Zembsch unterrichtete Geometrie und Trigonometrie. Kunst, Zeichnen und Architektur lehrten Carl Gotthold Reichel und nach dessen Weggang nach Barby 1780 Johann Gottfried Schulz. Latrobe rühmt ferner Baron Carl Adolph Gottlob von Schachmann, der in Schloß Königshayn bei Niesky lebte und zur Brüdergemeine gehörte. Er bewunderte seine Bibliothek, seinen Kunstsinn und seine Gabe des Zeichnens.

Im Herbst 1782 wurde Latrobe auf Wunsch des Vaters zum Theologischen Seminar in Barby zugelassen. Bei einer Visite des Seminars durch Spangenberg war dieser über den Zweifel und Unglauben einzelner Studenten tief erschüttert und hielt Latrobes Verbleiben am Seminar für „einen großen Schaden“. So kehrte Latrobe Ende August 1783 über Paris nach England zurück, wo er bei seinen Eltern und seinem Bruder in London lebte. Hier entwarf er einen Plan für die Gemeinde Fairfield und ein neues Schulgebäude in Fulneck (s. Abb.). 1786 besuchte er Italien, wo er Sir William Hamilton kennenlernte, der als Gelehrter und Sammler griechischer Wasen berühmt wurde. Nach Zusammenarbeit mit den englischen Architekten John Smeaton und Samuel P. Cockerell eröffnete er 1792 ein eigenes Architekturbüro in London. Er entwarf die Pläne für Hammerwood Lodge mit griechischen Säulen, was bald zu seinen stilistischen Besonderheiten gehörte. Da Baron Schachmann mit den Arbeiten von Winckelmann vertraut war, könnte Latrobe schon von ihm dazu angeregt worden sein.

Den Tod seiner Frau Lydia geb. Sellon 1793 (verh. 1790) hat er kaum überwunden. In seiner Verzweiflung entschloß er sich 1795, nach Amerika auszuwandern. Hier machte ihn der Bau der Bank von Pennsylvania in Philadelphia bekannt. 1807 zog er nach Washington, vollendete das Capitol und White House, das er nach den Zerstörungen des Kriegs von 1812 erneuern mußte. Sein schönstes Werk ist die Kathedrale von Baltimore. 1820 starb er am Gelbfieber in New Orleans. Er war ein vielseitig gebildeter Mann, versuchte sich auch literarisch, hatte aber keinen Kontakt mehr zur Brüdergemeine.