

JOHANNES JACOB LOESCH

Born: Nov. 22, 1722, Schoharie, N.Y.**Died:** Nov. 8, 1782, Nazareth, Pa.

Known for: A member of the first band of Single Brothers sent to establish the initial town in the settlement, Bethabara, and first Vorsteher (business manager), credited with much of the community's early economic success and stability.

The multi-national congregational community of Moravians in Bethlehem, Pa., gathered for their Singstunde on Sunday, Oct. 7, 1753. The usually joyful service doubled as a send-off blessing to 15 men who set out early the next morning for the 500-mile trip to the Wachovia tract.

The men, all single brethren of the church, were deliberately chosen for their skills – doctor, miller, surveyor, baker, cook, gardener, woodworker, two ministers – and all were physically strong with farming experience.

Jacob Loesch, a skilled cabinet maker and farmer, was also a respected Vorsteher (town manager, legal representative and treasurer) for another Moravian town. Church leaders in London chose him to serve the same role in the new venture.

Born to George and Anna Loesch near the Schoharie, N.Y., pine-tar work camps, Jacob and at least some of his family joined the German exodus to Pennsylvania after the camps were shut down. He and several of his siblings were active members of the Moravian church and became deeply involved in the settlement of the Wachovia lands.

The tract was isolated in the Carolina backcountry with no infrastructure and few resources. The men walked because the wagon was loaded with tools needed to clear roads and land, provisions for the journey and the coming winter, books and their minimal possessions.

Loesch spent much of the 41-day journey trying to extend their stores by bargaining for food and forage whenever they found homes or posts.

On Nov. 14, nearly to their land, Loesch went ahead of the group when the rain-swollen Dan River blocked the wagon's progress. He connected with a trader and learned of an abandoned cabin in the northern section of the tract.

When the rest were able to get the wagon across, they hacked a road to the cabin and celebrated their first Lovefeast the evening of Nov. 17 in what would become Bethabara. Their diary notes, "While we held our Lovefeast, the wolves howled loudly, but all was well with us..."

For the next 15 years, Jacob served as the community's manager and represented the larger settlement and Moravian Church across the South in trade negotiations. He so impressed the colony's government that Governor William



MORAVIAN ARCHIVES

A map dated 1766, labeled of "Wachovia or Dobbs Parish in Rowan County N. Carolina."

Tryon visited Bethabara in 1767.

"Br Jacob Loesch ... is like an old coachman who hears the crack of the whip," wrote Frederic William Marshall, Salem's manager in 1763. "He heard of the proposed changes... (and) decided to stay there a while longer and I am glad."

Loesch was recalled to Bethlehem in 1769 where he served in similar capacity until his death. Many of his children eventually returned to Salem and Bethabara.