

**THE 1894 EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION SPLIT
IN CLINTON COUNTY'S SUGAR VALLEY**

by James D. Frank¹, 1979

Editor's Note: Sugar Valley, an isolated area approximately 13 miles long and 3 miles wide across the southern edge of Clinton County, became an Evangelical Association stronghold in the 1830's when revival fires from camp meetings in neighboring Brush Valley spread across the mountain. By the time of the 1894 division, the valley boasted seven Association church buildings.

While most Central Pennsylvania congregations chose to align with Bishop Dubs' break-away denomination, Sugar Valley Evangelicals found themselves divided. Within a few years, the United Evangelicals had erected seven buildings of their own and for the next 28 years this small valley would be served by fourteen Evangelical churches from two competing denominations.

With the author's permission, the following paragraphs have been adapted from his booklet published in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the building of the Albright United Methodist Church in Loganton. The original booklet provides a complete history of each congregation.

Toward the close of the first century of the Evangelical Association, just about seventy-two years after the death of Jacob Albright, at least two factors combined to produce a division in the church. This proved to be a most unfortunate and deeply regrettable experience. What, shortly after the close of the Civil War, had begun as a theological debate between men of integrity and fine intellectual capacity, degenerated during the next generation into a personal controversy between leaders of the church.

While controversy regarding the doctrine of Christian Perfection and the practical question regarding the use of the English or German language were contributory, the real causes of the division were (1) the placing of additional limitation upon the episcopal form of church government, and (2) the keen personal rivalry among leaders of the denomination.

The General Conference of 1887 had delegated the power of naming the place for the 1891 session of the General Conference to the Board of Publication, and they in turn named the city of Indianapolis, Indiana. The minority group disputed the right of the General Conference to delegate such power and insisted that this prerogative automatically belonged to the East Pennsylvania Conference, the oldest of the annual conferences.² Accordingly, the East Pennsylvania

Conference named the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as the place for the next session of the General Conference. The result was that two groups assembled on October 1, 1891, both claiming to be the General Conference of the Evangelical Association. Bishop J.J. Esher met with the majority group in Indianapolis, and the minority group met in Philadelphia with Bishop Rudolph Dubs present.

During the next four years -- perhaps the saddest four years in the history of the denomination -- two churches existed within the Evangelical Association. When the majority group was later determined to be the Evangelical Association to whom the property belonged, Bishop Dubs' minority group organized in Naperville, Illinois, on November 30, 1894, as the United Evangelical Church. At the time of the division, the Evangelical Association maintained the allegiance of 110,095 members and 982 ministers, while the United Evangelical Church claimed 61,120 members and 415 ministers.

This division directly affected Sugar Valley. The Evangelical Association maintained ownership of all existing buildings, and individuals siding with the United Evangelicals were forced to erect new structures. For nearly three decades the two Evangelical denominations existed separately -- with separate ministers supplied by the two groups -- and divided both families and friends. The only fortunate aspect of the whole situation was that eventually the two branches of the church re-united and the sons of Jacob Albright again became one witness in Sugar Valley.

At the time of the division, there were seven Evangelical Association church buildings in Sugar Valley. While the United Evangelical denomination eventually predominated in there, as it did across the entire Central Pennsylvania Conference, six of the Association churches survived until the 1922 re-merger to form the Evangelical Church. Today, however, none of them exists as a United Methodist congregation. The following sections describe how these seven churches, discussed in the order in which they were erected, were affected by the split.

1. St. Paul's Church, Logan Mills

The first church, a log structure, was built before 1830 and stood until the present church was erected on the same site in 1877. Following the 1894 split, area members in sympathy with the minority group began meeting in homes in Greenburr, which had become the largest community in the southcentral part of the valley.

In the spring of 1897, the male members of the Greenburr Class of the United Evangelical Church met and decided to build a new church in the village of Greenburr. A lot was secured, construction was begun, and the church was dedicated debt-free on May 29, 1898. That structure was destroyed by fire January 20, 1941, and the present building was dedicated on Pearl Harbor Day -- December 7, 1941.

St. Paul's Church of the Evangelical Association, noted for having sent six ministers and eight minister's wives into Christian service, was closed in 1964 and its members transferred to the Greenburr Church. Kept in excellent repair, the building is still used for occasional weddings and funerals and for an annual homecoming service. The Greenburr United Evangelical Church exists today as a United Methodist congregation.

2. Salem Church, Loganton

The first Evangelical Association church in Loganton was built by the Fairview Cemetery at the east end of town in 1852. The church, whose original date stone may still be seen at the cemetery entrance, was constructed when St. Paul's Church was no longer large enough to meet the needs of all the valley's Evangelicals. During the split of the 1890's, Salem followed Bishop Esher and became known as the "Esher Church"; the followers of Bishop Dubs had to begin plans for a new building.

Following the court decision of 1894 that declared the followers of Bishop Esher to be the rightful Evangelical Association and the owners of the denomination's properties, the minority group purchased an old woodworking shop at the corner of Main and Hall Streets and removed the building. In 1895, a new parsonage and church -- named Albright United Evangelical Church -- were erected on the site. Twenty-three years later, on June 19, 1918, that church and parsonage burned to the ground in a disastrous fire that destroyed a large portion of the town. While the present Albright Church and parsonage were being erected following the fire, the congregation accepted Salem Church's invitation to use their facilities.

The congregation of Salem Church of the Evangelical Association was greatly reduced when the competing church was built in 1895, but both churches continued to function during the split. As the membership of Salem continued to decline, however, it became difficult for them to support a minister. The church was closed following the 1922 re-merger and the thirteen remaining members were transferred to Albright. The

building stood vacant for some time and was sold in 1927 to Samuel D. Ilgen, who dismantled the church and used the lumber to erect a storage building in Booneville. Mrs. Tama Thompson is in possession of a plant stand made of wood from the old church. Albright United Evangelical Church exists today as a United Methodist congregation.

3. Booneville Church

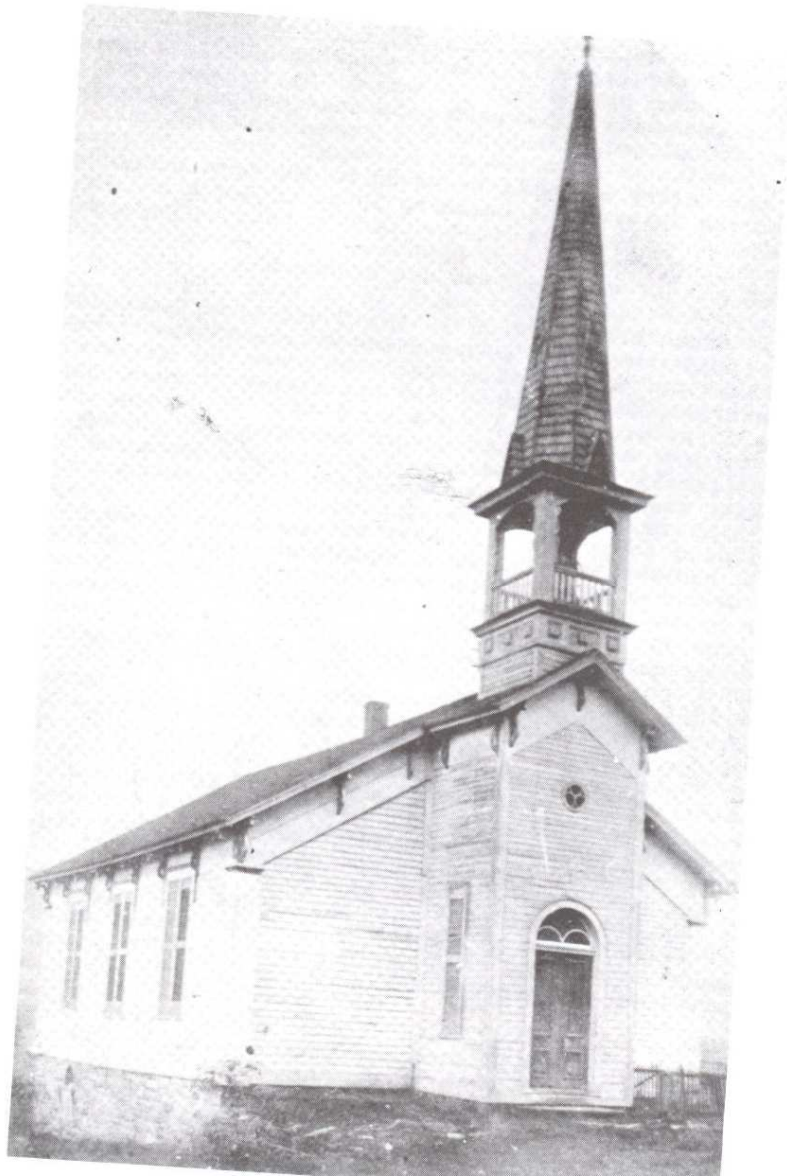
The Evangelical Association Church at Booneville, midway between the denomination's St. Paul's and Salem churches, was built in 1862 at the intersection of the Tylersville-Loganton Road (Route 880) and the road to Greenburr. Officially listed as St. Mark's, it had 73 members in 1870 but only 53 in 1880. As transportation improved each decade, the need for country churches like Booneville diminished and the church was closed in the 1920's -- perhaps as an indirect result of the 1922 re-merger that created an abundance of churches in the unified Evangelical denomination. The building was sold to the Greenburr Band in 1929, dismantled, and rebuilt without vestibule and steeple in Greenburr. The Band Hall³ is still standing in Greenburr, and the original property is cared for by the Booneville Cemetery Association.

4. Tylersville Church

The Evangelical Association church in Tylersville, at the extreme western end of Sugar Valley, was built in 1871 at the site of the old cemetery. Tylersville Evangelicals, like those in Loganton, were divided during the denominational split, and the minority group left to form their own congregation.

Trustees were elected by the followers of Bishop Dubs in 1893, and the Tylersville United Evangelical Church was built across the street from and a few lots west of the Association church in 1894. As in Loganton, the "Dubs Church" soon predominated.

The Association church survived until the 1922 re-merger made it redundant, and the remaining members transferred to the former United Evangelical congregation. The building was dismantled in 1936. The United Evangelical church continued until 1964, when it and St. Paul's were closed to merge with the Greenburr Church. The building is still standing [October 1979], but the past winter caused the walls to split and made the building unsafe. The pews were taken to the Booneville Campground⁴ and other interior items were removed. The bell,



Booneville Evangelical Association Church
circa 1900

which is from the old Association church, remains in the belfry but will be moved to the Greenburr Church when the Tylersville building is no longer standing.⁵

5. Green Grove Church

Green Grove Church of the Evangelical Association was built in 1873 on Loganton Mountain, the northern boundary of Sugar Valley, at the corner of Harbach and Romberger Roads -- about 1.5 miles west of Route 880 on the first gravel road north of I-80. While the church never had a great number of members, it served the families living in the area. During the denominational split, the area's United Evangelical sympathizers began holding services in the Mt. Union Church -- a union building about one mile east of the Green Grove Church that had been used by the Association before the erection of Green Grove. On Loganton Mountain, as elsewhere in the valley, the United Evangelicals proved the stronger of the two competing groups. Unfortunately, however, neither was able to establish an enduring ministry.

The Green Grove Evangelical Association Church was closed in 1918. Although there were less than eight members remaining at the time, there was controversy both over the closing of the church and concerning the sale of the building.

In what may have been a fitting end, however, the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground before it could be dismantled. Only the existing cemetery identifies the site today.

United Evangelical services in the Mt. Union Church were discontinued in the 1920's. The building, which now stands vacant, has been used by several other denominations over the years.

6. Price Church

Price Church of the Evangelical Association was built about midway between Loganton and Carroll in 1880. Also known as Bethel Church and the East Sugar Valley Class, the congregation numbered 30 persons when the church was built. Never a large class, it suffered from not being associated with any village. At the time of the 1922 re-merger, Price Church had only eight members and the congregation was disbanded. After being used for special services for many years, the building finally fell into disuse and was sold in 1945 to L.H. Hutzel. The lumber was used to build a home at the west end of the valley, the bell was sold to Trinity

Church of Jersey Shore, and the Price Cemetery Association was formed to care for the grounds.

There were also Evangelical Association classes meeting to the east and south of Price Church in Carroll and Eastville respectively. At the time of the 1894 split, however, neither of these classes owned a church building and their lack of property allowed them to side with the United Evangelicals without legal complications. Undoubtedly, the nearness of these two competing congregations contributed to the demise of Price Church.

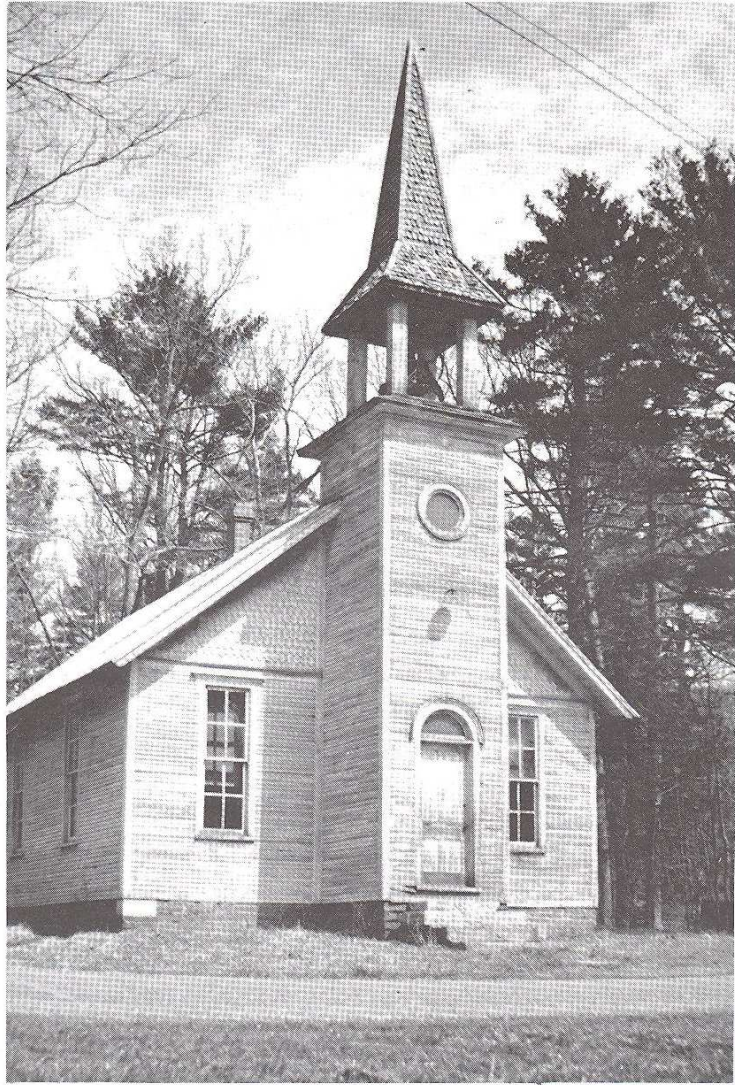
The Carroll United Evangelical Church was erected in 1896⁶ and served the eastern edge of Sugar Valley until it was closed in 1961 and its 14 remaining members merged with the Loganton Church. The building, which stood at the intersection where Route 880 turns north to go over the mountain, was sold in 1964 to Charles Klobe. The structure was dismantled and its lumber used to build the residence now occupied by Lindy Klobe.

The Eastville United Evangelicals later purchased the building in which they had been worshipping. That structure, originally erected by a short-lived United Brethren congregation and rented by the Church of the Brethren, was in use until the 1922 re-merger. At that time the former United Evangelical congregations at Mt. Union and Eastville and the former Price Church of the Evangelical Association were all consolidated into the Carroll Church. Originally converted into a hunting cabin, the Eastville building, on the north side of the road at the east end of town, is presently the home of Paul Frank.

7. Mt. Pleasant Church

The Evangelical Association began holding services on the top of Loganton Mountain in 1868 at Mt. Pleasant Chapel, an Evangelical Lutheran building which they had the privilege to use. In 1893, the Association built their own Mt. Pleasant Church in the Rosencrans area. This region, on the rim of Sugar Valley due north of Loganton, apparently harbored no United Evangelical sympathizers and was the only location at which the Association felt confident enough to erect a new building after 1891.

The Mt. Pleasant Church of the Evangelical Association survived through the 1922 re-merger to form the Evangelical Church (at which time it listed 26 members), through the 1946



Carroll United Evangelical Church
1964

union to form the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church, and to the 1968 EUB-Methodist union as one of the three (along with Loganton and Greenburr) remaining EUB churches in use in the Sugar Valley. During that year the Mt. Pleasant Church withdrew from the EUB denomination to become the Mt. Pleasant Community Church, as it remains to this day.

Summary

The following table summarizes the 1894 split in the Evangelical Association in Sugar Valley. There was also an Association class at Centerville (Schracktown) near the center of Sugar Valley that never owned its own building and that died out before the 1894 split. The dates listed as 1922 should be interpreted as "approximately 1922, and as a result of or in anticipation of the re-merger."⁷

Evangelical Association		related United Evangelical	
Church	fate	Church	fate
1. St Paul's	1964, into 1a	1a. Greenburr	Greenburr UM
2. Loganton	1922, into 2a	2a. Loganton	Loganton UM
3. Booneville	1922, into 1a		
4. Tylersville	1922, into 4a	4a. Tylersville	1964, into 1a
5. Green Grove	1918, closed	5a. Mt. Union	1922, into 6a
6. Price	1922, into 6a	6a. Carroll	1961, into 2a
		6b. Eastville	1922, into 6a
7. Mt Pleasant	Mt Pleasant Community		

FOOTNOTES

1. James D. Frank was raised in Sugar Valley and attended Albright United Methodist Church in Loganton. He graduated from Lock Haven University with a degree in history and currently teaches driver education at Susquehanna Township High School in suburban Harrisburg. In addition to being the author of a booklet on the history of the Evangelical Church in Sugar Valley, he is the founder and curator of the Susquehanna Township High School archives.

2. As the controversy within the church escalated and began to disrupt the denomination's ministry and witness, it was apparent that action could not be put off indefinitely and that the 1891 General Conference might have to deal with the issue in definitive fashion. Because the site of the Conference might give one side or the other an advantage, and because any announcement was certain to cause additional controversy, the 1887 General Conference delegated its authority to name the site. The East Pennsylvania Conference named the location based on paragraph 71 of the Discipline: "The time and place of the General Conference shall be appointed by the bishops with the consent of the majority of the conference; and if there be no bishops present the General

Conference shall do it by a majority of votes, or the oldest annual conference, who shall give the other annual conferences due notice of the time and place."

3. The band ceased to exist many years ago and the Band Hall was finally sold to satisfy tax claims against the property. Prior to the sale, the author helped remove several band- and church-related items from the structure -- one such item, the original pump organ used at the Booneville Church, is now in his possession. The building itself has fallen into disrepair.

4. The Booneville Campground, on the west side of the road connecting Booneville and Greenburr, once boasted cottages, a dining hall, and all the other appurtenances of a late nineteenth century camp meeting facility. Today the spot is marked by the remaining open-air tabernacle (still holding some pews from the Tylersville Church) and a few modern out buildings and is used as a park for community picnics, hymnsings, etc.

5. The church was razed shortly after the 1979 publication of Mr. Frank's booklet and the site is now a vacant lot. The author is in possession of several artifacts from this church, including a weathervane marked "U.E.C." To save them being destroyed with the church, some of remaining furnishings were stored with Anita Currin. While the pulpit chairs were later given to the Eastville Brethren Church, most of the other items -- including the communion set -- were mistakenly sold at Ms. Currin's sale.

6. The Carroll Class was an off-shoot of the Mt. Union Church, which apparently was a union church building of which the Evangelicals never actually enjoyed full ownership. The class actually constructed a building called Grace Chapel located in the gap north of Carroll several years prior to 1896, but the building was torn down. The 1891 Conference Journal, page 37, states:

Whereas, Grace Chapel, on Sugar Valley circuit, is built on ground for which we have no deed, and

Whereas, Said chapel is not located properly; therefore

Resolved, That this matter be referred to the quarterly conference of Sugar Valley circuit, and that they be privileged to remove said chapel to a place more suitable, or to sell it, and apply the proceeds towards the erection of a house of worship where it will be more suitably located.

7. Denominationally, the merger was consummated at the General Conference in Detroit, Michigan, in October 1922. The appointments made by the separate denominations during their spring 1922 annual conferences remained in effect until March 1923. At that time the Evangelical congregations in Sugar Valley were consolidated into a single charge of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Church and the weaker churches (all the former Association Churches except St. Paul's and Mt. Pleasant, and the United Evangelical Churches at Mt. Union and Eastville) were merged into those that were stronger and/or had more suitable facilities. The pastor assigned to the consolidated charge, perhaps as a gesture of the reconciliation, was the Rev. H.P. Maneval, of member of the Association faction and most recently (1917-23) the pastor of that group's neighboring Penn's Valley charge.