

ANATOMY OF A SPLIT

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCES AND LOCAL CONGREGATIONS 1891-1894

compiled from the Conference Archives

Although the split in the Evangelical Association did not become official until the court decisions and other legal actions of 1894, it was effective three years earlier. Even before the competing General Conferences of October 1891, the Central Pennsylvania Conference established for all practical purposes its independence from the Esher-Bowman majority at its annual session that March. In fact, the ownership of most buildings erected in the Conference during the subsequent maneuverings passed without challenge in 1894 to the newly-constituted United Evangelical Church.

The following paragraphs, which appear in the 1891 Conference Journal as "Preliminary Procedure," indicate the prevailing mood of and the stand taken by the Central Pennsylvania Conference.

With intense interest all eyes were turned in the direction of Berwick for weeks prior to the conference session, held in that place, March 5, 1891. The cause of this was the probable attempt of Thomas Bowman to preside at the conference, and if possible to disrupt it in the interest of Esherism. As the time of conference drew near it became evident that Thomas Bowman was determined to take the chair of the conference. In view of this fact the trustees of the Evangelical church, at Berwick, Pa., became apprehensive of riotous proceedings and consequently of a disgraceful spectacle before the world. After due consultation a meeting of the board of trustees was called to take appropriate action in the matter. The following action was taken by the board:

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ACTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The board of trustees of the Evangelical church of Berwick, Pa., met in said church, March 4th, 1891, present, Isa. Bower, F.W. Bower, Oliver Clewell, Dilman Varner, Sopharus Smethers. On motion of Oliver Clewell, seconded by Dilman Varner, that

WHEREAS, We are informed that Thomas Bowman intends to preside at the sessions of the Central Pennsylvania Conference, to commence in our church, March 5th, 1891, at 8:30 am, and

WHEREAS, The said Thomas Bowman has been legally suspended from the office of bishop, and has therefore no legal right to perform the functions of the office of bishop, and

WHEREAS, J.J. Esher has also been suspended by a legally constituted conference, and

WHEREAS, We are reasonably apprehensive that an attempt by either the said Thomas Bowman or the said J.J. Esher, to preside at the sessions of the said conference, to begin March 5th, 1891, at 8:30 am, will result in a riot, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we, the board of trustees of the Berwick Evangelical Church, will not permit the said Thomas Bowman or J.J. Esher to enter the premises of our said church during the days of the sessions of the said annual conference.

Unanimously adopted, March 4th, 1891.

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When the members of the Central Pennsylvania Conference gathered in Berwick, Pa., it became evident that it was necessary for the members of conference to protect themselves against a man who set himself against regularly appointed disciplinary proceedings against him on account of:

1. Slander and evil speaking
2. Falsehood
3. Employing passionate forms of expression in speaking of his brethren.

On Wednesday night before conference convened the members of the Central Pennsylvania Conference held an informal meeting for consultation and such actions as might seem necessary. A large committee was appointed to frame an appeal to the bishop to desist from his purpose to preside at the conference and to disrupt it. Almost without a dissenting voice the address given below was adopted. Early on Thursday morning a committee of three went to brother Bowman's rooms, at St. Charles Hotel, and presented to him this appeal. The committee personally pleaded with the suspended bishop not to disrupt the conference.

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ADDRESS TO THOMAS BOWMAN

WHEREAS, We have been reliably informed that it is your purpose to preside at the present session of our conference, and that if this privilege is denied you, to effect, if possible, a division of the Conference, and

WHEREAS, We have been duly informed of your suspension from office of bishop until the next General Conference by a regularly constituted trial conference, and

WHEREAS, The Discipline of our church does not place it within the prerogative of an annual conference to sit in judgment upon the work of a trial

conference in its relation to bishops, much less to declare any verdict thus rendered null and void, therefore

RESOLVED, That we, the members of the Central Pennsylvania Conference do most earnestly entreat you not to attempt to preside at this session, and thus disrupt the peace and harmony which has, and is now, prevailing within our borders, believing as we do most sincerely, that great and lasting injury to the cause of Christ will result, should you insist on carrying out your purpose.

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Notwithstanding all the above kindly efforts on the part of the conference, brother Bowman presented himself at the entrance to the conference room. From his proceedings at other places it was evident that something definite must be done to save the conference from disgrace. The trustees, and a committee from the conference met him at the gate, and quietly informed him that he could not enter the conference room, as he was suspended from his office as bishop, and only members of the conference in good standing were allowed to be present at its organization. Brother Bowman, seeing he had no alternative, returned to his rooms and a few hours after took his departure from the town and the conference was permitted to organize without any special trouble. This peaceful adjustment is due to the Christian spirit manifested by both the board of trustees and members of conference.

As the conference convened it soon became apparent that the actions described above were not supported by all, and Jacob Young was granted the privilege of entering a protest into the conference minutes "provided it be couched in moderate language." Accordingly, the following appears in the minutes of the first session of the first day.

Protest of Jacob Young¹

Inasmuch as at an informal meeting of the members of the Central Pennsylvania Conference, which meeting was called to order by the secretary of last year, it was resolved that a committee be appointed to wait on bishop Bowman and entreat him not to present himself at the place of holding this session; and whereas bishop Bowman was actually refused admission; and whereas I can retain formal relations with this conference only under protest, and it is on this condition that I do so retain formal relationship. Therefore --

I do hereby enter my solemn protest against the method of procedure in opening and organizing of the Central Pennsylvania Conference as being irregular, and that my formal relations with, and participation in the business of conference, are under this protest.

Jacob Young

With no bishop present to conduct the conference, W.E. Detwiler was elected chairman "according to the direction of the Discipline." When a letter was read from bishop Dubs, who like Esher and Bowman had been suspended from office by the denominational courts, the following resolution was adopted.

WHEREAS, We have heard with great pleasure the reading of a letter from Dr. Dubs to this conference, assuring us that the Lord is with him in this hour

of great trial with many precious blessings from our kind Heavenly Father, therefore

RESOLVED, That our conference secretary is hereby instructed to answer said letter, and to assure our dear brother of our profound sympathy, and that we will continue to remember him in our prayer at a throne of grace.

Among the items to be considered at this annual conference was not only the election of delegates to the October 1891 General Conference but also just which General Conference the delegates should attend -- the one called by the Esher-Bowman faction for Indianapolis, or the one called by the Dubs faction for Philadelphia. There was never any question as to the sentiments of the majority, and the following resolution was adopted.

WHEREAS, The bishops, with the consent of the majority of the last General Conference, did not appoint a place for the next session of the General Conference, and

WHEREAS, The Discipline of the Evangelical Association of North America makes it the duty of the oldest annual conference in such a case to appoint the place for holding General Conference, and

WHEREAS, the East Pennsylvania Conference, the oldest annual conference in our church has taken action in the matter, and has officially notified this conference that the East Pennsylvania Conference has appointed Christ Church of the Evangelical Association, 8th St., Philadelphia, Penna., as the place for the next General Conference, therefore

RESOLVED, That we hereby instruct our delegates to be elected today to present themselves at the above named place to represent this conference at the time appointed by the last General Conference.

Finally, the "Reports" section of the 1891 journal includes the following unsponsored and unsigned statement assumed to represent the sentiments of the majority of members attending the conference:

XIII. Our Attitude in the Present Crisis

In view of the firm position we have taken in refusing Bro. Thomas Bowman the presidency of the Central Pennsylvania Conference at this session, we feel it our solemn duty briefly to express our feelings and convictions with reference thereto, as also to declare our unequivocal attitude in this strife.

While law is law we hold that our excellent book of discipline is above all other authority in our church, not even excepting the General Conference, and that all should obey it from the bishop down to the humblest member.

We believe the proceedings in the trial, conviction and suspension of bishops Esher and Bowman to have been according to the provisions our Discipline, and therefore binding upon them until finally acted upon by the next session of our General Conference.

We further hold that under the Discipline these now suspended bishops have no right or authority whatever to ignore the verdicts which have

disqualified them and hence neither of them has a right to preside as chairman of any annual conference or perform any other official functions whatever.

WHEREAS, There is a growing sentiment, both among our ministry and laity, in favor of lay representation in our church, and

WHEREAS, We are convinced that the time has arrived when this sentiment should receive proper recognition, therefore

RESOLVED, That we hail with pleasure this evidence of the interest our laity are taking in the welfare of the church, and we hereby instruct our delegates to the General Conference to labor for the enactment of such legislation as will be calculated to secure for them an equitable representation in the legislative bodies of our church.

WHEREAS, At a meeting of representatives of the different Methodist bodies convened in the city of Philadelphia, on the 19th of November, 1890, for the purpose of arranging for an Ecumenical Conference² of Methodism, to be held in the city of Washington, D.C., in October next, there appeared Thomas Bowman³, a suspended bishop of our church, Rev. S.C. Breyfogel⁴, of the East Pennsylvania Conference and Rev. F. Kurtz⁵, of the Atlantic Conference of the Evangelical Association, and

WHEREAS, The said Thomas Bowman was made a vice chairman of that meeting and a member of its Executive Committee, therefore

RESOLVED, That we, the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association, composed of 108 ministers and representing a membership of 14,500, have no knowledge as to how, when, or by whom the said parties were appointed, and we most earnestly protest against having the Evangelical Association represented by a man who has been legally suspended from his office as bishop and minister of our church.

RESOLVED, That a copy of the above resolution be forwarded to the chairman of the executive committee, bishop John F. Hurst.⁶

WHEREAS, The publishing agent of the church; M. Lauer and H. Mattill, the majority of the board of publications; W. Horn and S.P. Spreng, editors of the Christliche Botschafter and Evangelical Messenger, have persisted in maladministering the trusts reposed in them by the General Conference, by using the papers and funds of the church, not for the benefit of the whole church, but for the support of the lawless and revolutionary course of the suspended bishops, J.J. Esher and Thomas Bowman, and

WHEREAS, A number of brethren, among them a member of this conference in connection with members of other conferences for themselves and others, have filed a petition for equitable relief in the civil court at Cleveland, Ohio, praying that the parties above named be restrained from using the funds and papers of the church for the interest of a party in the church, and that they be ordered to use them impartially for the welfare of the whole church, therefore

RESOLVED, That we recognize the justness of the action in invoking the protection of civil law, and give it our decided endorsement.

We believe that this plants us firmly on both the letter and spirit of our Discipline and upon this rock we propose to stand, now, henceforth and forever, and take all consequences.

We deeply deplore the dissensions and divisions now taking place within our borders, and hereby aver our unswerving allegiance and loyalty to the Evangelical Association.

It is the sense of this conference that a final disruption of our church would be, not only deplorable, but a great calamity to the cause of Christ.

In harmony with this view we are confidently looking forward to our next General Conference, appointed by the oldest annual conference at its recent session in the Ebenezer church, in Allentown, Pa., according to the provisions of our Discipline, to be held at Philadelphia, Pa., for a final settlement of our difficulties and the restoration of a reign of peace and good will among us.

We deplore the fact that the general officers of the church have not for a considerable length of time pursued such a policy as to meet with the approval of this conference.

And finally, we hereby and most humbly invoke the special guidance of our dear Heavenly Father, in this most critical hour of our history.

While the Central Pennsylvania Conference stood fairly united in 1891, other annual conferences experienced far more internal strife and sent partial delegations to each of the rival General Conferences. Such was the case with the East Pennsylvania Conference, for example, which included all the Evangelical Association work in United Methodism's present Harrisburg District.

The 1891 annual session of the East Pennsylvania Conference at Allentown's Ebenezer Church resulted in a division of the body. About two-thirds of the members remained at Ebenezer under the chairmanship of Rev. C.S. Haman, while a smaller group followed Bishop Thomas Bowman to hold competing meetings at the Association's Immanuel Church in the same city. Both factions continued to meet annually, each claiming to be the true East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association, until the 1894 court decision that forced the larger body to reorganize as the East Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church.

After 1894, the number of churches in the former Central Pennsylvania Conference choosing to remain with the Esher-Bowman group was so small that the Evangelical Association placed them in its depleted East Pennsylvania Conference. From 1894 to 1922, then, there were three Evangelical conferences operating in central Pennsylvania: the Central Pennsylvania and East Pennsylvania Conferences of the United Evangelical Church and the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association.

Immediately following the State Supreme Court decision, an informal "counsel assembly" of Central Pennsylvania Conference ministers and laypersons sympathetic to the Dubs faction met at Lewisburg on October 9, 1894. They called for a "conference convention" to gather at Williamsport on October 16, 1894, to organize as the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church. The lengthy document

produced by that body includes the following overly-dramatic paragraph that summarizes the spirit of the meeting.

One of the greatest leaders the church of Christ has ever had, once said, "It is neither safe nor desirable to act contrary to conscience." Believing that to be true, we unhesitatingly declare our independence from the ecclesiastical organization which the Supreme Court has declared to be the legal Evangelical Association, and fall in line with those who have set us such a noble example of self-sacrifice and devotion to principle. "If this council, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it." Here we stand. We cannot do otherwise. Having chosen for ourselves, we turn to our constituents. We call their attention to the arguments and conclusions in the above statement, and ask them to chose this day whom they will serve, whether the principles which our fathers adopted when they founded the Evangelical Association, or the leaders who have trampled those cherished principles under foot in these latter times. But as for us, we will serve the Lord as our fathers have shown us in the founding of the Church which has been so dear to us from the time it led us to Christ until this day.

At the first regular session of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church, at York in the spring of 1895, the report of the Committee on Church Affairs reminded the delegates of some consequences of their previous actions. Included in the report is the following:

WHEREAS, Many of our Church properties are now, by the adverse decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in possession of the Evangelical Association, greatly impeding the work of our Conference; therefore,

RESOLVED, That a committee of three be appointed to negotiate with the Evangelical Association for all the church property of our Conference we desire to purchase and that the Presiding Elders shall furnish this committee with all necessary information, thus facilitating work and avoiding much expense.

The remaining sections of this paper contain county-by-county comments on the Dubs-Esher split. Except for those covered in separate articles in this volume of THE CHRONICLE, all churches within the present Central Pennsylvania Conference boundaries known to have been significantly affected by the division are included. Unless specifically noted otherwise, the information comes from conference journals or materials in the individual church files of the Conference Archives at Lycoming College, Williamsport. Those seeking further documentation, having additional material, or wishing to suggest corrections are invited to contact the Conference Archivist.

Adams County

In East Berlin the Association lost the congregation and sold the building in March 1895 to an individual for \$150. The next day the structure was sold for the same amount to United Evangelical trustees. By 1914, however, there was only one surviving member, no services had been held for at least two years, and the building was deteriorating. The property

was sold that year to Washington Camp 159 P.O.S. of A. [Patriotic Order of the Sons of America], which owned the building until 1945.

A similar situation occurred in Bendersville. In an effort to salvage the work, the Association assigned a pastor to the Bendersville Circuit in 1895, but the journal statistics indicate no membership. On September 3, 1895, the Association transferred the property to the United Evangelicals, but one month later the new denomination sold the building to Montana Lodge 653 I.O.O.F. [International Order of Odd Fellows].

There was also a Beamer's Evangelical Church west of Arendtsville that was built in 1871, dropped from the rolls about 1895 and reported purchased by the Methodists in their 1897 journal. While the existing records are sketchy, the above accounts seem to indicate that the controversy and disenchantment associated with the split proved fatal to an already struggling Evangelical presence in most of Adams County.

The controversy apparently dealt fatal blows to Kingsdale and Mt. Pleasant, two struggling Association congregations along the county's southern boundary that were part of the Hanover Circuit. Erected in 1888 and known as the Emanuel Church, the 28x40 frame Kingsdale building was sold to an individual at a sheriff's sale in August 1894 and resold one month later for use by the Lutherans. Erected in 1878 and dedicated on Christmas day of that year, the 26x38 frame Mt. Pleasant building was sold at a sheriff's sale in 1895 and acquired by the Lutherans the following year. Today both sites are vacant lots.

The Idaville congregation is the county's only Evangelical group existing in 1894 to survive the split. The building there was also deeded from the Association to the Bendersville United Evangelical trustees on September 3, 1895. After the United Evangelical work at Bendersville failed, Idaville was served from Cumberland County.

Blair County

Altoona originally fell within the bounds of the Pittsburgh Conference of the Evangelical Association, and work was begun there by that conference in 1884. Emmanuel Church was erected in 1887 and, mainly because it was predominantly German-speaking, sided with the Association in 1894. The 1896 Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church voted "that Altoona and adjacent territory be taken up as a mission to be supplied as soon as practicable" and

established First and Grace Churches in 1898 and 1906 respectively. The competing churches had little to do with each other during the split and, despite the fact that the Central Pennsylvania Conference had established itself in the area, Emmanuel remained an isolated church of the Pittsburgh Conference following the 1922 re-merger.

In September 1951, when the Pittsburgh (EV) and Allegheny (UB) Conferences merged to form the Western Pennsylvania (EUB) Conference, First and Grace were transferred to the new body. Even though in a state of decline, Emmanuel opted not to merge with First and decided to "continue as long as they could pay their way honorably." Emmanuel was finally closed by conference action in 1956.

Centre County

The congregations in Brush Valley were divided by the controversy, and those siding with the United Evangelicals withdrew to erect buildings at Madisonburg, Rebersburg and Wolf's Store. Contrary to the usual pattern within the conference, the Association congregations in this valley remained the stronger of the two competing bodies and it was their buildings in Madisonburg and Rebersburg that continued to house the post-1922 re-merged congregations. An interesting situation occurred in Madisonburg in 1954 when the former United Evangelical building (which had been sold in 1927 and had become the K.G. Eagle Hall) was repurchased, moved and attached to the rear of the church.

In Woodward, the United Evangelical faction withdrew from the original St. John's Church and built Grace Church in 1895. The two congregations reunited on Palm Sunday 1929 to continue worshipping in the United Evangelical building. In 1957 the united congregation moved to its present structure, a former three-room school house, and was renamed Trinity.

Neither the former Association nor the former United Evangelical building is still standing, but their cornerstones and bells are preserved at the present site.

Records of the 1891-1922 Evangelical activity around Spring Mills and Centre Hall are very sketchy. Both the Association and the United Evangelicals claimed charges with those names, and they seem to list many of the same preaching appointments. As most such locations only had one church building, it is not clear which faction actually controlled which buildings. It is unlikely that facilities were shared, and the group without the building may have met in homes.

Bethesda and Locust Grove, which merged into the Spring Mills Church in the 1960's appear to have been controlled by the United Evangelicals from the beginning of the split.

There is evidence, however, that the Association did not transfer the deed to the Bethesda property to the United Evangelicals until 1906.

When the congregation split at Zion's Hill, Tusseyville, the United Evangelical sympathizers lost claim to the building and built the existing Bethany UM Church across the road from the Association building, now a private home.

Clinton County

In Swissdale, the controversy divided the congregation. The United Evangelicals erected a new building, and this tiny village had two Evangelical churches 1893-1923. As throughout the conference, the Association church was the weaker of the two and was closed when the congregations united following the 1922 re-merger. The present congregation worships in the 1895 United Evangelical building. The Association building, which was built in 1869 and stood at the cross roads and across the road from the present church, was sold and torn down in 1927.

When the controversy divided the Lock Haven congregation in the distinct favor of the Dubs faction, the Association sold the building to the United Evangelicals and turned over the proceeds to its Litigation Committee. The Association later erected its own building and replanted a congregation, but it did not endure.

Columbia County

The Waller Circuit, in the eastern end of the county, appears to have suffered serious division. While both the Association and the United Evangelical records are too vague to provide information about specific congregations or buildings, the charter of the Waller Union Church -- now a community building just west of the present Waller (former Methodist) UM Church -- may have allowed both factions continued use of that structure.

The United Evangelicals supplied Waller as a "mission" until 1905 when its Guava appointment was added to Bloomsburg and its journal listing ceased. The Association supplied Waller until the 1922 merger, but the small charge was never formally provided for by the merged denomination. At the 1928 conference it was resolved "that Guava church on the Waller charge and all other church interests on the former Waller charge be placed under the supervision of the presiding elder of the Williamsport District with power to adjucate or dispose of."

The Waller Circuit's Unityville congregation, founded in 1845 just across the line in Lycoming County, was split by the controversy. It appears that the Association kept the original building, now a tavern along route 42 at the north end of town, and worshipped there until that congregation was dissolved following the 1922 re-merger. According to the usual pattern, the United Evangelicals were forced to erect a new structure, the current Salem UM Church. Local oral tradition there still includes incidents that occurred both during and following the split.⁷

Sentiment for the faction which remained in the Evangelical Association was negligible in western Columbia County. As the Stone and Summerhill Churches had been erected in 1891 and 1893 respectively, after the split had already begun to develop, their ownership by the United Evangelicals was never challenged. The church at Evansville, however, had been built around 1849; when the congregation sought to save the structure for the new denomination by moving it from its original location to an adjoining lot, they were accused of stealing the church and compelled to pay \$50 for the building.

Cumberland County

When the Carlisle congregation sided with the United Evangelicals, they lost their church building on West Lowther Street and erected a new sanctuary, the current Christian education unit of First UM, on North Street. Having a building but no congregation, the Association sold the original structure to the Church of God, who worshipped there until it was razed when their present structure at I-81 and Walnut Bottom Road was erected in 1974. The Lowther Street site, directly across from the Union Fire Company, is now a borough parking lot.

The Mount Rock Church west of Carlisle reorganized under a pro-Dubs board of trustees in 1892. It is not known whether this action was prompted by internal strife or by the desire to "make a statement." At any rate, the congregation still had to repurchase their building from the Association for \$50.00 in 1895.

The Mount Holly Springs Evangelicals erected a new brick building at a cost of \$2500 in 1891. When the entire congregation sided with the Dubs faction, it appeared the controversy might miss the community. After the 1894 court decision, however, the local people had to pay the Association \$370 for the legal rights to their property. That congregation has since merged with their former Methodist counterparts to erect a new sanctuary, and the 1891 structure is now an apartment building.

Dauphin County

Crum's Church, one of the oldest congregations in the denomination, began under Jacob Albright in 1806 and erected a building north of Harrisburg along what is now Colonial Road in 1868. As a result of the 1894 court decision, the United Evangelical majority of the congregation lost that building to the one family that desired to remain with the Association and rebuilt as the predecessor of today's Charlton Church. Crum's Church continued to be used until 1915 and, in a mystery that the police have never solved, the building completely disappeared one night in the summer of 1933.

In Harrisburg, the German-speaking (Salem, on North Street near Elder) and English-speaking (Trinity, corner of Broad and Fulton) Evangelical Association churches united in 1886 to erect a new structure at Capital and North Streets. When the congregation sided with the United Evangelicals in 1894, however, they lost their new building. Services were held in the YMCA until a church was erected at the present Harris Street site in 1895. That same year the Association, left with a building but no congregation, sold the former structure to the Harrisburg Consistory for \$10,000.

When the 1894 court decision named the Esher-Bowman faction the legitimate Evangelical Association and the owner of all church buildings, the bulk of the Millersburg congregation found itself ejected from the house of worship they had sacrificed to erect some thirty-three years earlier. As only four members of the congregation chose to remain in the Association, they had no use for the building and it was sold at auction in 1895. The auctioneer stood in front of the church to open the bidding facing an atmosphere of bitterness. The United Evangelicals had hoped to repurchase the structure, but the Association's presiding elder participated in the bidding to run up the price. Finally the mounting ill will exploded and one of the locals kicked the presiding elder off the church steps and into the street, where he rolled in the dust. By then, however, the price the United Evangelicals had to pay to recover the building had risen to \$4200. The local who kicked the presiding elder was fined \$25 but became the hero of the day.⁸

At Uniontown [Pillow], on the county's northern fringe, it took a while for the dust to settle. Rev. G.B. Fisher, the Association preacher assigned there in 1890, believed the Dubs faction to be in the right when the trouble came to a head in 1891. His words indicate the struggle and confusion of many of the clergy:

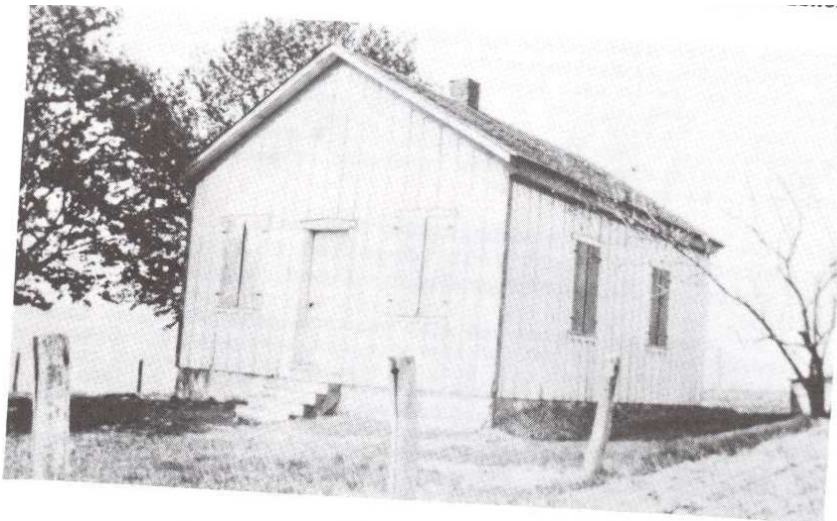
Towards the close of the year [1890-91] I was sorely afflicted with a sore throat. When I left for conference Union Town [Pillow] and Troutmans were

back on salary \$50. Out of four sermons I preached three German to one English. This was a very pleasant and profitable year upon the whole. No harm done here from the church agitation and we had no reason to fear anything serious from it...

In February, 1891, the Annual Conference held session at Allentown and as in regard to the church controversy we were coming to a fearful crisis. Bishop Bowman, who had been suspended from office, came to Allentown to hold the conference, but not being allowed, conference split and Bowman and his adherents went to Allentown 1st Ward to hold a pseudo conference. I remained with what I thought was the legal East Penn Conference and was returned a second year to Union Town.

Bishop [Bowman] sent B.F. Eggner to serve the same charge. Now there are two preachers on a charge that is too weak to pay one. As soon as Mr. Eggner arrived, there was disaffection and rebellion. Half of Bingamans Church [County Line] went with the seceders and half of Union Town Church went the same way. The Esher-Bowman [group] was a little in the majority in both congregations and as soon as they went into their new camp the whole party lost all sense of common decency, they went wild, erratic and diabolic.

I filled regular appointments in Bingamans Church until November 17th [1891] when I received the following notice. I here make a verbatim copy: "County Line, November 19, 1891. Rev. G.B. Fisher



Troutman's Church (1920), erected 1877
Pillow-to-Hebe Road, at the northwest corner with Greenhouse Road
organized by John Seybert in 1826
sided with the United Evangelicals in 1894
closed about 1925 and torn down

-- You are hereby notified by the trustees of Trinity [County Line] Church that the pulpit will not be allowed for your use after date. Signed Elias Bingaman, Charles Heckert and Emanuel Adams."⁹

In general, most of the county sided with the United Evangelicals. While the records are not clear, it appears the Association was able to keep control of only a few isolated churches [County Line, Elizabethville, Loyalton, Lykens, Oakdale] and the original buildings in towns where two competing congregations resulted [Pillow, Wiconisco, Williamstown]. In addition, the Association purchased property and replanted a competing church in Millersburg, but the congregation did not prosper.

Franklin County

The Conference Archives contain the will of Lydia Wingert, a wealthy landowner of Antrim Township, who had no surviving immediate family. The document, dated December 31, 1891, bequeaths a sizeable sum of money "to the Missionary Society of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association of North America, located at Lewisburg, Pa."

A codicil to the will dated March 11, 1893, bequeaths to the..

Trustees of the Zion Church of the Evangelical Association located in District No. 13 Washington County, in the State of Maryland, and their successors in said trust the sum of three thousand dollars in trust to be used by them in paying any debts or debts or current expenses of the said Zion Church. The same to be paid to the Trustees of the said Zion Church by my executors Henry Strock and Jacob W. Clair out of the first money belonging to my estate that comes into their hands.

As the struggle within the Evangelical Association escalated, Ms. Wingert felt compelled to modify her will once more. A second codicil dated April 19, 1894, states, it is my intention, desire and will that the money shall go to the Missionary Society of said Conference and Association, which attaches to and recognizes that body of said Association which regards and recognizes the General Conference which was held at Philadelphia in 1891 as the regular and legal General Conference of said Association for that year, and that in no wise and under no circumstances whatever shall any of said gift and bequest go to any Missionary Society which recognizes, belongs to, or is controlled by that faction or body of said Evangelical Association called the Esher or the Esher-Bowman faction or body, whether the said faction or body regard themselves as a majority or a minority of said Association.

To avoid any possibility of mistaking her intentions, she closes the second codicil as follows:

As to the bequest made in the first codicil to the will dated the 11th March, 1893, I expressly repeat and affirm that it is my will and intention that said bequest to said Trustees shall only be used for the use of said Zion Church which adheres to and recognizes the General Conference at Philadelphia in 1891, and that branch or body of the Church, to which I belong, and under no circumstances for the use or benefit of any Church or Congregation which recognizes the said Esher-Bowman faction of said Evangelical Association.

Apparently Ms. Wingert had just cause to be so precise. Not only was there a struggle for control of the church building, but the provisions of her will were challenged in the courts. When the split so weakened the work that the United Evangelicals considered supplying the work as a "mission" instead of as a regular appointment, the Ways and Means Committee Report of the 1901 journal stated:

The circumstances of the charge, because of the Lydia Wingert will, is such that we cannot change the circuit to a mission without invalidating the provision of the will.

The church in question is the present Mt. Zion UM Church in Cearfoss, Maryland, of the Baltimore-Washington Conference -- as the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical branch of United Methodism extended from southern New York into northern West Virginia. While never a large church numerically, its historic connections gave it symbolic importance. One of the denomination's oldest congregations, it was founded about 1800 by Jacob Albright himself in a barn near Mason-Dixon, PA, and gave birth to all the Evangelical work in the greater Hagerstown area. Ultimately, after considerable time and legal expense, the United Evangelicals retained both the church building and their place in Ms. Wingert's will.

Mifflin County

While the United Evangelicals appear to have gained control of the Grace Church in Lewistown without incident, they chose to ignore the struggling work in the extremely isolated northeast region of the county. The buildings at Salem in New Lancaster Valley and St. Mark's (aka Siglerville) in Havice Valley, erected in 1872 and 1893 respectively, were served throughout the split by the Association. While there are also references to Association appointments at Shrader (possibly a former Presbyterian building moved from Locke Mills) and St. Peter's, further identification of these sites has not been possible.

Following the 1922 re-merger, the predominantly United Evangelical Central Pennsylvania Conference continued to ignore Salem and St. Mark's and came close to having them discontinued. The 1923 report of the Ways and Means Committee

includes the following, which betrays a lack of enthusiasm over responsibility for former Association work:

WHEREAS, Rev. E.R. Heckman, superintendent of the Harrisburg District of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church has asked this conference to grant them the church property at Havice Valley with the view of making it a regular appointment of that denomination;

RESOLVED, That we do not deem it advisable to grant this request at present owing to the fact that we may wish to take up the work ourselves.

Northumberland County

The church in Sunbury was erected at Fourth and Vine Streets in 1891. Because the congregation sided with the United Evangelicals, they lost the building temporarily in 1894 and for eight months worshipped in the Hook and Ladder Company hall. The following year, the Association admitted they had no viable congregation and sold their claim on the property back to the congregation for \$50. By 1899 the congregation had outgrown the structure; they moved to Chestnut and Awl Streets and sold their original building (site of the present Otterbein UM Church) to the United Brethren Church. In 1929 the congregation erected their present structure at Fifth and Chestnut Streets and is now the Albright UM Church.

In Milton, the majority of the congregation sided with the United Evangelicals and kept possession of the original property to become the present St. Andrews UM Church. They were able to do so because those sympathetic to the Association, about 13 members, had already left the denomination in disgust and formed a United Brethren congregation in 1892. That group broke ground for their own building in 1893 and are the present St. Peter's UM Church.

Perry County

When the post-split Association could no longer maintain a congregation at the Ebenezer Church west of Duncannon, it sold the building September 17, 1895, to the "trustees of the Ebenezer Church of Fairview." On November 11, 1905, the building was sold to the Methodist Episcopal Church and now houses the Roseglen UM congregation. It appears that the congregation remained intact during the transitions and that the split created a church in search of a denomination.

Sullivan County

Evangelical Association work in the county, called the Cherry Circuit, dates from the 1840's. The first church building, called the Cherry Church, was erected in 1849 and discontinued when a new building was erected in Dushore in

1872. That congregation sided with the United Evangelicals and had to repurchase its own building from the Association in 1894. The other Evangelical appointments in the county did not begin to erect buildings until after the split.

Union County

While the United Evangelical Church was able to gain control of most local properties -- and of Central Pennsylvania College in New Berlin, which it had to purchase from the Evangelical Association -- several county congregations were split by the controversy. In such instances, those loyal to the Evangelical Association (typically the minority of the congregation) maintained control of the building and were serviced by the Association's East Pennsylvania Conference -- and those siding with the United Evangelicals were forced to erect new structures in which to worship. This occurred mostly at the two ends of the county, and only one of the Association congregations survived until 1922.

The split divided the Pike congregation, along the south side of route 45 near the western end of the county, where the United Evangelicals erected Emmanuel Church on the other side of the cemetery from the Association's Grace Church. By the 1922 re-merger both congregations were seriously depleted, and preaching in the united denomination alternated between the buildings. Today both structures are gone, and only the cemetery that separated them remains. In Millmont, the original Association church stood at the west end of town and burned down soon after the division; the present Millmont congregation worships in the 1896 United Evangelical building.

When the controversy divided the congregation in New Columbia, the Association remained in possession of the original building. Although they were made a gift of a new parsonage, the congregation did not flourish and sold the building in 1906 to the Lutheran congregation that now worships there. The present New Columbia congregation descends from the United Evangelicals that met in the Grange Hall until erecting a building in 1896. In White Deer, the Association maintained control of the Mill Church until it was sold in 1904; the United Evangelicals dedicated the Walter's Church at the south end of the village in 1897, which was the predecessor of the present congregation west of town. Both the Mill and Walter's Church sites are now vacant lots.

York County

York County was a United Evangelical stronghold, and very few of its many congregations were affected by the split -- although a few had to go through the paperwork of buying back their own buildings. The trustees of the Fairmount Church, for example repurchased their property and the Stony Brook property from the Association on September 3, 1895,¹⁰ and then resold the Stony Brook (predecessor of the Yorkshire Church) back to that congregation for twenty dollars on September 12, 1896.

The Association tried to maintain control of the Hanover Circuit and assigned a pastor there in 1895. While the existing records are vague, it appears that all the churches sided with the United Evangelicals except for three: Kingsdale, Mt. Pleasant and Porters Siding. The first named buildings were located in Adams County and their fate is discussed in that section of the paper.

At Porters Siding, where the building stood outside town by the existing cemetery, the congregation was split and the United Evangelicals erected a new structure in town. The 1896 Association journal lists only 6 members, and the building was lost soon afterwards. The United Evangelical work survived until most of the rural congregations were merged into the Hanover church in 1918. Today the building houses an independent congregation.

The congregation of rural Trinity Church,¹¹ which stood by the cemetery about two miles northeast of Felton, lost that 1871 building to the Association and rebuilt in town to become the present Bethany UM Church. In 1895, the Trinity building was sold to the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the words of the 1896 journal of the latter denomination,

On the Stewartstown Charge a congregation, formerly connected with a sister denomination, came to Brother Furman Adams seeking admission into our Church. They had purchased the church in which they formerly worshipped, and proposed to deed it to trustees according to our Disciplinary form. Despite discouragement from pastor and presiding elder, and after almost a year of careful consideration, they continued unchanged in purpose, and were duly incorporated into our communion.

The Methodists attached the church to the Stewartstown Charge for a few years but then abandoned the work. The property was deeded "back" to the United Evangelical congregation in Felton in 1908.

It appears that there was some dissatisfaction on the part of at least individual when the Ebenezer Church at Long Level sided with the United Evangelicals. In the words of that denomination's 1898 journal,

According to the facts before us in the case of the Ebenezer Church on the Craleyville Circuit, as stated by the Presiding Elder and Preacher in Charge, the claimant having sold the said church, all his right and title, clear of all encumbrance, to the congregation of the Evangelical Association, then worshipping there in the year 1892, and the Evangelical Association, having sold said Church to the congregation of the United Evangelical Church in the year 1895 or 1896, receiving from said Association a quit claim deed, therefore, RESOLVED, That said claimant has no claim, either moral or legal, against the congregation now worshipping there, or the property they occupy.

Only in the York Bethlehem church did the county experience a significant division, and those favoring the United Evangelicals left in 1894 to form Grace Church. Bethlehem remained with the East Pennsylvania (Association) Conference for a few years following the re-merger -- more to receive pastors proficient in German, and not because of lingering ill feelings. When it rejoined the Central Pennsylvania Conference in 1925, that body showed its appreciation by assigning it Rev. C.I. Raffensperger, a distinguished pastor serving as the Williamsport District Superintendent who was familiar with the German.

Post Script The 1922 Re-merger

Following a decade of animosity, the rival denominations joined to plan and celebrate the Centennial of the Evangelical Church (beginning of the publishing house, erection of the first church building, holding of the first General Conference) in New Berlin in 1916. This event signaled the beginning of the re-unification of the sons of Jacob Albright. After several more years of cooperation and negotiations (and "a few appropriate funerals") the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelicals re-merged in 1922 to form the Evangelical Church.

The first General Conference of the new Evangelical Church authorized the churches within the Central Pennsylvania Conference that had remained loyal to the Evangelical Association, and had therefore been served 1894-1922 by the East Pennsylvania Conference of that denomination, to be "merged, united or transferred to the conference in which they are located." This was to occur "as soon as these conferences deem it advisable and practicable." The nine charges that had survived as Association islands in Central Pennsylvania's United Evangelical sea were as follows.

<i>Jarrettsville</i>	<i>Harford County [Maryland]</i>
<i>Penns's Valley</i>	<i>Centre County</i>
<i>Port Trevorton</i>	<i>Snyder County</i>
<i>Spring Mills</i>	<i>Centre County</i>
<i>Sugar Valley</i>	<i>Clinton County</i>
<i>Swissdale</i>	<i>Clinton County</i>
<i>Waller</i>	<i>Columbia County</i>
<i>Williamsport</i>	<i>Lycoming County</i>
<i>York</i>	<i>York County</i>

All was not smooth in 1922, however. That the only church crisis more disruptive than a split is a merger proved true when the final Association and United Evangelical General Conferences met in Detroit to become the first General Conference of the Evangelical Church. The East Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church refused to forward a vote on the merger to its General Conference -- instead, its delegation came prepared with a formal **Protest of the Delegates of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church Against Certain Unlawful Actions of the General Conference of Said Church.**

The basis of the protest was whether the Constitution of the United Evangelical Church provided for a denominational merger and whether the General Conference had the authority to institute a plan of merger. The latter concern, about the power of General Conference over annual conferences and individual congregations, was one of the key issues in the split that formed the United Evangelical Church. Indicative of the bitterness that prevailed in the eastern part of the state is the fact that two separate conferences -- the East Pennsylvania and the East Pennsylvania (United) -- continued there in the Evangelical Church until 1929 and were the last of the new denomination's overlapping conferences to merge.

When the action of the General Conference was declared legal, all conference and denominational property in the East Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church [e.g., the Evangelical Press in Harrisburg and Albright College at Myerstown] became a part of the Evangelical Church. Individual congregational property and affiliation, however, remained in the hands of each local body. A majority of eastern Pennsylvania's former United Evangelical congregations chose not to participate in the merger and eventually formed the Evangelical Congregational [EC] denomination.

In that portion of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church falling within United Methodism's present Central Pennsylvania Conference, the charges existing in 1922 eventually affiliated as shown.

Evangelical Church
 Harrisburg Harris Street
 Harrisburg Park Street
 Millersburg Grace
 Penbrook Charge
 Charlton
 Crum's
 Penbrook Trinity
 Sunbury First
 Tower City Charge
 Tower City Zion
 Reiner City Grace

EC Church
 Berrysburg Charge
 Berrysburg
 Gratz
 Pillow
 Troutman's
 Dauphin Charge
 Dauphin Trinity
 Fishing Creek Trinity
 Zion
 Harrisburg Sixth Street
 Herndon Charge
 Herndon Seybert
 Mandata Emmanuel
 Zartman Salem
 Rutherford Heights Trinity
 Steelton Grace
 Sunbury Second
 Wiconisco Charge
 Dayton
 Wiconisco Grace
 Williamstown Emmanuel

In the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Evangelical Church, the total 1922 annual conference vote (clergy and lay) was an overwhelming 215-13 in favor of the union, but two resolutions of the Ways and Means Committee adopted at that session indicate that the decision was not without controversy:

(1) *WHEREAS, A petition against the adoption of the proposed Basis of Organic Union between the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church from a portion of St. Paul's congregation, York, Pa., has been received by this conference and referred to this committee, and WHEREAS, The disciplinary methods of changing our church law does not provide for congregational but specifically requires action only by the annual and General Conferences; therefore, RESOLVED, That we consider the petition unwarranted, and regard the securing of it improper, not only because of its irregularity but also because of the harmful effect which the agitation incident to its circulation has had upon the unity of the congregation.*

(2) *WHEREAS, The self-styled "Church Union Publicity League" has extensively circulated within the bounds of our conference its literature opposing the organic union of the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church, which literature misinterprets the Basis of Union and tends to disturb our people; therefore, RESOLVED, That we emphatically protest against any further circulation of said literature within our bounds, especially in view of the almost unanimous and very emphatic expression in favor of said Basis of Organic Union by the members of this conference assembled in annual session.*

In the end, only part of one congregation remained out of the merger. About 100 members left St. Paul's in York to become a church in the newly-formed Evangelical Congregational denomination.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jacob Young (1829-1894), son of a pioneer itinerant preacher and one of five siblings to followed their father into the Evangelical Association ministry, was licensed to preach by the Central Pennsylvania Conference in 1852. Elected a presiding elder in 1860 and an editor of denominational publications in 1871, he had a reputation that extended beyond the local annual conference. At the 1871 General Conference he was one of three clergy appointed -- ironically, along with Rudolph Dubs and Thomas Bowman (before either had been elected to the episcopacy) -- to represent the Evangelical Association at the Methodist Episcopal General Conference and respond to the latter denomination's overtures for merger. In 1891, as pastor of the Williamsport Market Street congregation, he sided with the Esher-Bowman faction and attended the Indianapolis General Conference as a "delegate" from the Central Pennsylvania Conference. In turn, he was appointed presiding elder by that faction of all the work in central Pennsylvania. Literally a man without a conference, he later formally transferred to the Esher-Bowman faction of the East Pennsylvania Conference.

2. This was the second such gathering of the spiritual children of John Wesley. The first Ecumenical Conference of the scattered branches of Methodism was held in London in 1881 -- and of the thirteen United States denominations invited to join with similar bodies from around the globe, only the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren Church did not bear the word "Methodist" or "Wesleyan" in their name.

3. Thomas Bowman (1836-1923), one of the principals in the division of the Evangelical Association, was licensed to preach by the East Pennsylvania Conference at age 22. Displaying unusual gifts for preaching and evangelism, he was chosen a presiding elder just a few years later. In 1875, at age 40, he was elected bishop. During the fifty-five years from 1867 to 1922, Bishop Bowman attended fifteen sessions of the General Conference. He retired from the episcopacy in 1915 and lived to see the two branches of the church reunited in 1922. Since the formation of the United Methodist Church, care should be taken not to confuse this Bishop Thomas Bowman of the Evangelical Association with Bishop Thomas Bowman of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a descendant of the Berwick area's Old Stone Church Bommans who was elected to the episcopacy in 1872.

4. Sylvanus Charles Breyfogel (1851-1934) was granted a license to preach in the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1873 and chosen a presiding elder in 1886. The 1891 General Conference in Indianapolis elected S.C. Breyfogel bishop to replace Bishop Rudolph Dubs, who was attending the rival General Conference in Philadelphia. A respected author and scholar who also possessed remarkable executive abilities, Bishop Breyfogel served the church in many capacities, including thirty-nine years as president of the Evangelical School of Theology.

5. Frederick Kurtz (1839-1906) was born in Germany and migrated to the United States to settle in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where he became a class leader in the Evangelical Association. He was called to be a missionary to Wisconsin in 1872 and became a charter member of the Atlantic Conference in 1876. Formed to encompass all the German-speaking work of the eastern seaboard metropolitan areas, this conference and all its congregations remained within the Evangelical Association during the denominational split.

6. John Fletcher Hurst (1834-1903) was born in Maryland and graduated from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1854. After studying abroad, he entered the New York Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1858. Noted author, college professor in Europe and America, and president of Drew Seminary, he was elected to the episcopacy in 1880 -- one of three Dickinson graduates to have achieved that distinction.

7. The following incidents were related by long-time Unityville resident Leona Steinruck in December 1993. (1) The wife of United Evangelical preacher G.W. Heiney attended the Association services while her husband preached at the other church. [Rev. Heiney dropped out of the itinerancy in 1904.] (2) The 1922 re-merger found the Association Church blessed with tremendous musical talent. The predominantly United Evangelical re-merged congregation, however, was very reluctant to let them perform or assume leadership roles in "their" building. (3) Both of the women's missionary groups disbanded following the merger, so that a new group could be formed "from scratch." That certain United Evangelicals seemed to be making all the decisions, however, caused hard feelings. When the new group adopted the acronym K.U.G. for "Keep Unity Guessing" during its re-organization period, in fact, some unhappy parishioners dubbed it "Kitzmiller's Ugly Gang."

8. Unfortunately, perhaps because of the animosity and unChristian behavior often involved, most congregations did not keep a written record of how they weathered the Dubs-Esher storm. As old-timers pass away and oral traditions disappear and/or lose their reliability, it becomes more and more difficult to reconstruct the events of 1894. The Millersburg material presented has been preserved in My Life and Town by R.E. Woodside.

9. The account G.B. Fisher (1836-1918) is from the *Homecoming 1980* historical booklet of Trinity United Methodist Church, County Line.

10. The September 3, 1895, date the Fairmount United Evangelical trustees repurchased the Fairmount and Stony Brook properties from the Association coincides to the day with the transfer of the Idaville and Bendersville properties to the Bendersville United Evangelical trustees. There may have been some larger agreement that day to include many properties as efficiently as possible.

11. The Evangelical Association had a second Trinity Church in rural York County, near East Prospect, that burned to the ground on Good Friday, 1988. To avoid confusion, the church northeast of Felton was called Trinity South and one near East Prospect was called Trinity North -- a named that stayed with that congregation even after Trinity South ceased to exist.