

## Wayne Circuit of the Evangelical Church

Wayne Circuit within the Evangelical tradition of United Methodism began in 1863 when “The Beach” was separated from Monroe Circuit and 45-year-old, German-speaking T. Plattenberger<sup>1</sup> was appointed to develop the area into a viable circuit. While the name of the circuit changed several times over the years, depending on the appointments involved, it always focused on Wayne County and after each variant name eventually returned to being called Wayne Circuit – and so that name will be the one used throughout this article. Very few circuits within United Methodism have been through as many transitions as the Wayne circuit as it experienced every possible scenario – denominational splits and unions, conference unions, circuit splits and unions, congregational splits and unions.



Albright Cemetery, oldest Evangelical site in Wayne County  
south end of the village on Newfoundland, on the east side of PA 191

The church building here may have been erected as early as 1854, perhaps by the Moravians, and is identified as an Evangelical Church in the 1872 county atlas. There was an Evangelical parsonage in Newfoundland 1880-87. Preaching continued here at least until 1908, and sale of the property was authorized in 1921.

Within a few years the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Association established stable appointments at Jefferson, Sterling, and Kelleytown. The Jefferson [Elmdale] and Sterling [Newfoundland] classes owned church buildings and became the appointments that held the circuit together in its early years. Despite a search of secular and ecclesiastical records, “Kelleytown” has not

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore A. Plattenberger was born in Northampton County PA on August 6, 1817, converted under Evangelical preaching, and licensed by the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1850. In 1876 he became a charter member of the Atlantic Conference – formed to serve those Eastern congregations that preferred to remain German-speaking. He retired in 1883 and died on April 7, 1884.

yet been identified. So as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative, the history of each relevant appointment connected with Wayne circuit over the years is given in the Appendix.

As an established and stable field of work, Wayne circuit was often called upon to take in nearby fledgling circuits under its wings. From the mid-1870's until the 1894 denomination split, for example, the Evangelical Association moved appointments as far east at Matamoras PA and Sparrow Bush NY on and off Wayne circuit as seemed appropriate. The circuit also briefly included what is assumed to have been a school house appointment at Middle Valley, in present Clemo PA.

The first real test and transition for Wayne circuit came in 1894 as a result of the denominational split in the Evangelical Association, when a number of congregations withdrew to form the United Evangelical Church.<sup>2</sup> The courts ruled that the withdrawing congregations had to forfeit their property. In some communities the congregation divided into two groups, resulting in both Evangelical Association and United Evangelical congregations. While this created considerable animosity in other parts of the denomination, such was not the case on the Wayne circuit. The Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church re-united in 1922 to form the Evangelical Church.

### **During the 1894-1922 Split**

Because some congregations wavered between loyalty to the original Evangelical Association and the newly-formed United Evangelical Church, and because the journals of both denominations report only charge totals and not congregational details, it is difficult to know exactly what happened on the Wayne circuit during the split. The following paragraphs present the most likely scenario based on the available evidence. Any reader with additional information or evidence to the contrary is encouraged to contact the conference archives.

At the time of the split, the Wayne circuit of the Evangelical Association had four church buildings: Elmdale, Maplewood, Newfoundland and Tresslarville. The congregation at Newfoundland sided with the United Evangelicals and was able to keep the building because the property had never been formally deeded to the denomination. The congregations at Elmdale, Maplewood and Tresslarville were divided – and those siding with the United Evangelicals had to erect new buildings. As a consequence the United Evangelicals erected competing church

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<sup>2</sup> The split had been simmering for a number of years, and in 1891 there were actually two competing General Conferences of the Evangelical Association, one in Indianapolis led by Bishop Esher and one in Philadelphia led by Bishop Dubs, each one claiming to be the true Evangelical Association. In 1894 the courts decided in favor of the Esher group and the Dubs group was forced to reorganize into a new denomination.

buildings in Maplewood and Tresslarville, and the Wimmers building south of Elmdale.

The three main congregations of the Wayne circuit of the Evangelical Association were Elmdale, Maplewood and Tresslarville. It appears that circuit continued to serve appointments in Sparrowbush NY and Pert Jervis NY, and the journal missionary reports list additional appointments at “Chapel” and “Red Oak”. Furthermore, the journals for some years report that the circuit had 4 or 5 church buildings – but their names or locations cannot be determined. At the time of the 1922 re-union, the circuit reported 3 congregations, 3 church buildings, 1 parsonage, and 77 members.

The Wayne circuit of the United Evangelical Church enjoyed better documentation. There was an eastern portion consisting of the church building at Newfoundland and school house appointments in Pike County at German Valley and Sugar Cabin. There was a western portion consisting of church buildings at Maplewood, Tresslarville, Varden and Wimmers. At the time of the 1922 re-union, the circuit reported 4 congregations, 4 church buildings<sup>3</sup>, 1 parsonage, and 89 members.

### **After 1922**

Nationally, and in the East Pennsylvania Conference in particular, the United Evangelical Church was considered the dissident break-away minority – and as such they were not always treated kindly during the re-merger process.<sup>4</sup> One could make a case for that being so on the Wayne circuit. Immediately after the 1922 re-merger, the Wayne circuits of the former Evangelical Association and United Evangelical denominations were united into a single circuit<sup>5</sup> of 4 congregations and 4 church buildings – with the Varden congregation discontinued, the two Maplewood congregations united to use the former United Evangelical building, and the two Tresslarville congregations united to use the former Evangelical Association building.

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<sup>3</sup> The circuit officially reported owning 3½ buildings, and the building at Varden is believed to have been jointly owned with the Methodist Protestants. See Appendix A in the article in this volume on the Daleville circuit of the Methodist Protestant Church – specifically, footnote 18 on page 34.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, more than half of the United Evangelical congregations in the East Pennsylvania Conference opted out of the re-merger and re-organized as the Evangelical Congregational denomination. In the Central Pennsylvania Conference the opposite was true – as essentially the entire conference had sided with the United Evangelicals, and those few congregations which had remained with the Evangelical Association were not always received back with open arms.

<sup>5</sup> That happened even though the East Pennsylvania Conferences of the former Evangelical Association and United Evangelical denominations did not unite into a single conference until 1929. The united Wayne circuit was placed in the conference containing the former Evangelical Association congregations.

In 1946 the Wayne circuit transitioned by denominational merger from the Evangelical Church into the Evangelical United Brethren [EUB] denomination. The four churches on the charge, and their memberships, were: Elmdale (67), Maplewood (56), Tresslarville (24), Wimmers (17). Despite the denominational merger, the EUB's maintained two overlapping East Pennsylvania Conferences – one for the former Evangelicals and another for the former United Brethren.

In 1957 the Wayne circuit transitioned by conference merger into the Northeastern Conference<sup>6</sup> of the EUB denomination. The four churches on the charge, and their memberships, were: Elmdale<sup>7</sup> (56), Maplewood (59), Tresslarville (22), Wimmers (28). In 1960 the Wimmers appointment was discontinued, with only 5 of the remaining 24 members transferring to another EUB congregation (Tresslarville). The sale of the Wimmers was authorized in 1961.<sup>8</sup> That same year Tresslarville reported 13 new members on profession of faith.

In 1963 the Wayne circuit again experienced transition by conference merger, this time into the Eastern Conference of the EUB denomination – formed by uniting the East Pennsylvania (UB) Conference and the Northeastern Conference to finally bring the area's former Evangelicals and United Brethren together in a single conference. The three churches on the charge, and their memberships, were: Elmdale (57), Maplewood (51), Tresslarville (33).

The 1968 EUB-Methodist denominational union meant another transition for the Wayne circuit – this time in 1969 into the Wyoming Conference of the United Methodist Church. The three churches on the charge, and their memberships, were: Elmdale (47), Maplewood (50), Tresslarville (27). The charge was re-named Maplewood, and the Maplewood congregation absorbed the 16 members of the existing former Maplewood Methodist Church giving it a total membership of 66 – and the merged Maplewood United Methodist congregation opted to sell the former EUB building and meet in former Methodist structure. In 1975, Cortez<sup>9</sup> (106) was added to the charge – giving the circuit four appointments once again.

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<sup>6</sup> This conference was formed by uniting the East Pennsylvania (EV) Conference, the New England Conference, and the Atlantic Conference. The East Pennsylvania (UB) Conference continued as a separate entity.

<sup>7</sup> Elmdale had started the year with 78 members, but apparently had a rough year – 2 members transferred out, 7 members asked for their certificates of membership, and 13 members left without asking for certificates of membership.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the Northeastern Conference 1961, page 148.

<sup>9</sup> Cortez was a former Methodist Protestant church. At the time of the EUB-Methodist union it had been on a two-point charge with the Maplewood Methodist Church. When the two Maplewood congregations were combined in 1969 and placed on the Wayne circuit, Cortez had become a station appointment.

In 1979 the Wayne circuit's final transition took place, and it could no longer be legitimately identified as an Evangelical circuit. The 1980 conference journal reported the four churches on the charge, with their beginning and ending memberships for the conference year as follows: Cortez (101,118), Elmdale (53,0), Maplewood (77,84), Tresslarville (17,0) – all the members of Elmdale and Tresslarville, except 1 who transferred to another United Methodist congregation, had been “removed by charge conference action or withdrawn.” After this the journals are silent<sup>10</sup> regarding Elmdale and Tresslarville – i.e., there is no formal statement that the congregations were discontinued, but the buildings continued to host the worship services of the “Tresslarville Bible Church” and the “Elmdale Bible Church.”

That final 1979 transition left Maplewood as the only surviving congregation with roots in the Wayne circuit of the Evangelical Church – and they were meeting in a former Methodist Episcopal church building and on a charge with a former Methodist Protestant congregation. Maplewood (108) is currently on a three-point charge with Hamlin (188) and Hollisterville (129).

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<sup>10</sup> While the journals are silent on the matter, the conference archives have the paperwork for the discussions between the congregations and the Wyoming Conference cabinet and trustees. The Elmdale and Tresslarville congregations voted 30-1 and 9-0 respectively to withdraw from the United Methodist denomination. A reversionary clause in the Elmdale deed complicated matters, but it was agreed that Elmdale would reimburse the Wyoming Conference for its portion of the pastoral support subsidies that had been paid for the charge over the years. The Tresslarville congregation was permitted to purchase their building for \$2,000. The discussions appear to have been accomplished without animosity and in good faith with mutual respect – with the Conference making it clear that there were special circumstances involved and that it was not setting a precedent for allowing congregations to withdraw from the United Methodist denomination.

### Appendix: Appointments Connected to Wayne Circuit

Cortez – a church building in Jefferson township, Lackawanna County. This former Methodist Protest congregation joined Wayne [Maplewood] circuit in 1975.

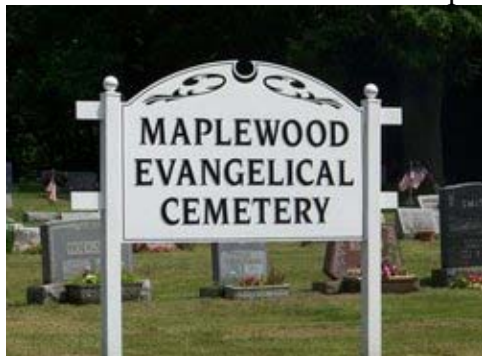
Elmdale – a church building in Jefferson township, Lackawanna County. The 1873 county atlas identifies this as the “German Church.” In 1969, following the Methodist-EUB denominational union, this congregation of 47 members entered the Wyoming Conference of the United Methodist Church. The church was discontinued in 1979 with 53 members on the rolls, and the property was relinquished to the Elmdale Bible Church.

German Valley – a school house appointment in Greene township, Pike County. It appears to have been active at least from 1896 to 1901. This was likely on German Valley Road, which runs from PA 447 to Roemerville Road.

Jefferson – see Elmdale

Kelleytown – unknown. But associated regularly with the Wayne circuit during the mid 1800’s.

Maplewood – a church building in Lake township, Wayne County. This building stood by the Maplewood Evangelical Cemetery on Lake Henry Road. This Evangelical Association [EA] congregation divided as a result of the denominational split and the dissenters formed the Grace United Evangelical [UE] Church of Maplewood and erected their own building a short distance up the road. When the two Wayne circuits came back together in 1922, there were two Maplewood buildings. The UE structure being the newer and better, the EA congregation voted to merge into Maplewood Grace and to sell their building (1924 journal, page 127) – which was then removed from the site. The church lot and adjoining cemetery were sold two years later (1926 journal, page 297). In 1969, following the EUB-Methodist denominational union, the congregation brought 50 members into the Wyoming Conference of the United Methodist Church. Those members joined with the 16 members of the Maplewood Methodist congregation to form the Maplewood United Methodist Church, meeting in the former Methodist building. The Grace building has been sold and now houses an independent congregation.



Maplewood Evangelical Association site  
west side of Lake Henry Road



Maplewood United Evangelical building  
east side of Lake Henry Road

Middle Valley – believed to be a school house appointment in Cherry Ridge township, Wayne County. The village of Clemo now occupies the site identified in the 1872 county atlas as the Middle Valley post office.

Newfoundland – a church building in Dreher township, Wayne County. This building was in the town of Newfoundland. As Dreher township was originally part of Sterling township, and was so when the Evangelical work was established here, the appointment is referred to as “Sterling” in the church records. The building was erected sometime before 1877, when Dreher township was separated off from Sterling. The Evangelical Association also owned a parsonage in Newfoundland from 1880 to 1887, at which time the circuit was authorized to build another one in a more suitable part of the circuit. The church was known to have been active as late as 1908, but preaching ceased before the 1922 denominational re-union. The church building was reportedly moved across the street in the 1940’s to become a private residence. The so-called Albright Cemetery of this congregation exists just south of Newfoundland, back off the road about 20 yards.

Shaffer Hollow – see Varden

Sterling – see Newfoundland

Sugar Cabin – a school house appointment in Greene township, Pike County. It appears to have been active at least from 1896 to 1901. This was likely on Brink Hill Road, which runs east from Greentown.

Tresslarville – a church building in Lake township, Wayne County. This congregation began sometime before 1894. There were both Association and United Evangelical buildings in Tresslarville during the 1894-1922 denominational split, and the Association building was used by the post-1922 merged congregation. Following the 1968 Methodist-EUB union, the 27 members of this congregation became part of the Wyoming Conference of the United Methodist Church. There were 16 members on the rolls when services were discontinued in 1979. Tresslarville and Elmdale had sought and were given permission to leave the United Methodist denomination. The property was sold to the Tresslarville Evangelical Bible Church for \$2000 – but not having suitable facilities, it was soon abandoned and the congregation merged into the Elmdale Evangelical Bible Church.

Varden – a church building in South Canaan township, Wayne County. This congregation in the United Evangelical Church was formed after the 1894 split and appears for the last time in their final 1922 journal. It appears that the building was jointly owned and used by the Methodist Protestant denomination and then given totally to that denomination in 1922.

Wimmers – a church building in Jefferson township, Lackawanna County. This building was erected by the United Evangelicals about 1899, and the appointment was discontinued in 1960. It now houses the Wimmers Bible Fellowship congregation.