HISTORY
of the
EAST PENNSYLVANIA
CONFERENCE
of the
CHURCH OF THE
UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST
by
PHARES BRUBAKER GIBBLE

ILLUSTRATED

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DEDICATION

TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE NAMES ARE HEREIN RECORDED AND TO THEIR ASSOCIATES WHO GAVE TIME, TOIL, AND TEARS IN SERVICE AND DEVOTION TO CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. THIS VOLUME IS HUMBLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.
Bishop Grant D. Baldorf, D.D., Ph.D., LL.D.
Bishop of the Eastern Area, 1929-45
Bishop Emeritus, since 1945

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PREFACE

A history of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ has been long overdue. It was the author himself who suggested as early as 1938 that steps be taken to prepare a volume on the work of the East Pennsylvania and the East German conferences, whose proceedings in bound copies he had already listed.

The Conference is greatly indebted to the Reverend Phares B. Gibble, D.D., Conference Historian since 1936, for his long and painstaking efforts to produce this worthy consummation of a long-felt need, a volume which was authorized by a special committee appointed by the Conference in 1942. This committee consisted of the Reverends S. C. Enck, D.D., D. E. Young, D.D., P. B. Gibble, D.D., and Messrs. O. E. Good, E. W. Coble, and M. O. Bellow. The committee met on May 2, 1943, to plan for the carrying out of the assignment, and Dr. Gibble was chosen to prepare the history; he began writing in 1943.

The author’s task has been tremendous. It has involved his efforts to promote the preservation and collection of all historical data pertaining to local churches, and quarterly and annual conferences. As far back as 1937 he had become the custodian of materials formerly in the possession of the Conference Secretary. It also involved the translation of conference proceedings from the German. It required the protracted investigation of County Court records and extensive traveling over the present and former conference areas. Three periods of research at the Otterbein Press and the Bonebrake Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, were necessitated. Numerous visits to the historic shrines of Lancaster County and many other places were made to obtain the correct geographical settings. Earlier historical accounts were reviewed and evaluated. Now, after years of research, the author has produced the first history of the East Pennsylvania Conference, as such. This former pastor of the Old Otterbein Church in Baltimore makes old events live again, and the reader will cherish anew his denominational and conference heritage. Only this successful pastor, with a ministerial service dating back to 1910, could have written this history so acceptably. Qualified by temperament, education, historical insight, and experience, including his Presidency of the Lebanon County Historical Society, 1946-1948, he has given us a volume which combines a wealth of material, discriminating selectivity, interpretive insight, accuracy of treatment, and readability—a history which will be interesting, informing and useful to minister and layman alike.

In his reconstruction of the past the author first gives us an account of the growth of the Conference in membership and area.
Then he goes on to particularize concerning individual churches, beginning with the churches and circuits of Lancaster County and then proceeding to deal with the other sections of the Conference. This “Church by Church” historical treatment will enable the reader to accentuate and vivify the origin and development of any local church in which he may be particularly interested and to see all this in relation to the expansion of the work of our Conference from humble beginnings to our present status as one of the strongest conferences of the denomination and one of the larger denominations of Protestantism.

The significance of this volume is not merely that it is the first published history of the East Pennsylvania Annual Conference; that in itself is notable. The chief significance lies in the fact that it is a history of the grace of God as mediated through our Lord Jesus Christ and communicated by Spirit-led men to multitudes of mostly humble folk of German and rural origin. It is a history of evangelism and consecration, which eventuated in the building of churches to perpetuate their message. This is illustrated in this present volume, which goes far beyond previously published accounts. The old materials have been subjected to careful scrutiny and revision; persistent errors have been corrected. Here the reader will peruse the activities of the founding fathers and their successors—activities described in terms of their relatedness to one another and evaluated with reference to their contribution to the denomination and the Conference. As the result of the merger of our Church with the Evangelical Church, conferences will also merge and old lines may become obliterated and future generations may be inclined to forget the rock from whence we are hewn. Dr. Gibble’s book will always be serviceable in keeping alive names and events which still inspire men and women to know God experimentally and to become good churchmen.

Clyde A. Lynch, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.
President of Lebanon Valley College

*Appointed in 1950, in place of O. E. Good, deceased
INTRODUCTION

This volume contains the history of two annual conferences—East Pennsylvania and East German—treated as one. The two, operating separately, covered about the same geographical area as did East Pennsylvania before division and after union. During the period of separate existence, there were many shiftings between them of ministerial membership and local church affiliation. To state, in each case, the conference involved would have required numerous repetitions. To treat each conference as a distinct unit would have meant much duplication and would have made this treatise too lengthy.

The name of the German conference was, "East German Conference," over two periods; and "Eastern Conference," also, over two periods. To avoid confusion, the designation, "East German Conference," is used throughout. Each conference changed from spring to fall in holding sessions. For East German Conference this change was made in the year 1881, for East Pennsylvania Conference, in the year 1889. This accounts for the frequent use of "Feb." and "Oct." in the listing of circuits and pastoral appointments.

The period of time covered in this narrative, with but few exceptions, ends with the conference session of the year 1946. By merger of the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ at Johnstown, Pennsylvania in November 1946, a new denomination had its beginning. To extend the treatise beyond that event would have required a new nomenclature all along the line. Among the exceptions are the inclusions of up-to-date photographs of churches and personnel, and a list of ministers as of the year 1950.

In order to conserve space, initials are used in the body of the text in recording names of ministers; full names are given in the several lists in later chapters of the volume. In checking one against the other, discrepancies, no doubt, will be evident. There will occur, also, differences in spelling of proper names. Some are due to differences in family usage, some because of variations of translation, while others may be due to mistakes by the author.

Precious few items have been admitted which did not meet the test of historic accuracy. Verbal traditions which could not be verified by authentic written records were not accepted. Years of ministerial service as appearing in local church histories—some of which were according to what people could recall to memory, others copied from incorrect lists—were corrected to agree with annual conference proceedings.

The writer has tried to produce a factual history. This aim, because of so large a body of information incorporated, did not permit literary embellishment nor philosophical deduction. Because of the
nature of the subject matter treated, particularly relative to local church narratives, there is much sameness, which, indeed, tends to monotony of expression. There was, however, no skill known to the writer by which to employ fluency of style.

Dr. Drury's excellent statement, "The two eyes of history are geography and chronology," always a guiding formula for the writer, has definitely influenced him in this particular effort. He has always held that facts which are not fastened down to time and place are meaningless and very elusive to memory. Consequently, there appear a profusion of dates and numerous descriptions relative to place.

There may seem to be a lack of emphasis upon spiritual matters. Let the reader be assured, however, that the author was constantly mindful of the work of the Holy Spirit in this drama of history. The acts of the people who participated in it speak for themselves; extended comments were thought to be unnecessary.

Comparatively few notes appear. In instances where controversial matters are discussed, where authenticity of statement might be questioned, and where editorial courtesy demanded, it did seem prudent to indicate references. A complete annotation of sources consulted, especially as pertains to Newcomer's Journal and annual and quarterly conference proceedings, would have required one or more notes to every page. In many instances sources are indicated in the body of the text.

The writer desires to express his deep appreciation to all who in any way have given assistance. He is sincerely grateful to the committee which considered him worthy of the responsibility involved. To have lived so intimately with those who had so large a share in founding and perpetuating the work of a great Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ has been an inspiration, to write so that future generations may know of their good works was a labor of love.

Phares B. Gibble, A.M., D.D.

Ephrata, Pennsylvania
August, 1950
Phares B. Gibble, A.M., D.D.
Conference Historian and Author