square miles of land fronting on the Delaware river. In 1696, "in consideration of one hundred pounds sterling," Penn purchased the entire Susquehanna Valley from the Indians. Soon there was a steady stream of immigration from the Old World into Pennsylvania ("Penn's Woods"), into Maryland, and into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The news of great privileges in the New World reached the oppressed inhabitants of Germany and they, by the thousands, came to our shores with their wives and children, and all their worldly goods. In 1730 it was estimated there were about 30,000 Germans in this area, one half of whom were Reformed, the others Lutheran and Mennonite. Many of these immigrants were truly pious, and though not able to bring their ministers, brought with them their catechisms, hymn books, Bibles, and other devotional books. They formed congregations and schools; and where they had no ministers, sought to edify each other by singing, and listening to sermons and prayers read by their pious schoolmasters. In those early days a schoolmaster was considered closely akin to the minister. Education was fostered by the church. Many humble log or stone buildings were erected to serve the dual purpose of schoolhouse and church.

However, not having ministers to serve them these German immigrants soon became lax in their religious lives. The children grew up "as wild sheep and heathen in a heathen land." The quotation is from Michael Schlatter, who was instrumental in bringing Otterbein to America. In making his appeal to the established church in the Old World to come to the help of the Germans in the New World, he painted a very dark picture of the spiritual and moral conditions obtaining at about the middle of the 18th century. Dr. Drury's comment on the religious condition of these Germans in the New World at this time is as follows: "The German immigrants brought little in the form of religious helps with them, and they found the least in their new settlements that would guard and nourish spiritual life. In their homes in Europe religion was too often an outward form; and now in their wilderness homes, in their unwillingness to part with all religion it was to too great an extent a mere dead form that they made more or less effort to establish. Their minds were hardened by the treatment that they met, their energies were taxed in their struggle to build homes and secure subsistence, and the very atmosphere of the New World encouraged a wild and reckless life."

In 1746, Rev. Michael Schlatter, a native of Switzerland, came to America as a missionary to the German Reformed immigrants in Pennsylvania, having been sent out by the Synods of North and South Holland. At the time of his coming the Reformed Church in Germany was in poverty and distress caused by a general depression, and the Hollanders undertook to assist the spiritually destitute and financially helpless Germans in America. Mr. Schlatter returned to Europe to make his report and to seek further aid and reinforcements for the church in the New World. He secured the promise of the general church in Holland to support six young men as missionaries and was sent on to Germany and Switzerland to enlist further sympathy and much needed cooperation. Mr. Schlatter applied at Herborn Academy, a noted institution of higher education, situated about three miles south of Dillenburg, for volunteers to go as missionaries. At the time, Philip William Otterbein was a preceptor in the school, having
previously completed his training. Young Otterbein was also a minister and pastor in addition to his work on the faculty of the school. The appeal of Mr. Schlatter for recruits to go as missionaries to America found a response in Otterbein’s heart and he, along with five other young men, set sail from Holland during the latter part of March, 1752, landing in New York the night preceding the 28th of July, the voyage having taken nearly four months.

Let us now present brief character sketches of the “Big Four” of early United Brethrenism, Otterbein, Boehm, Geeting, and Newcomer. The story of their lives is the history of the early days of our denomination.

**PHILIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN**

Philip William Otterbein was born June 3, 1726, in Dillenburg, Nassau, Germany. His parents were exceptional people. His father is described in a paper issued by the faculty of the Herborn school as “the right reverend and very learned John Daniel Otterbein.” The same paper characterized the mother as “the right noble and very virtuous Wilhelmina Henrietta Otterbein.” There were seven sons of this noble couple, all becoming ministers of the Reformed Church. There were three daughters, two of whom died in infancy or early childhood, the other married a minister. The father died young, leaving the large family to be reared and educated by the mother. Although very poor, she carried on in a most heroic way, and was instrumental in giving a classical and theological education to all her sons.

To facilitate the education of her family, Frau Otterbein removed to Herborn, about three miles distant, the seat of Herborn Academy, a celebrated institution of learning. Here Philip William completed his preparation for the ministry. What his exercises of mind were we do not know; he surely did not act thoughtlessly or hastily. Advancement in the ministry was slow, and the emoluments, in most cases, meager; worldly considerations, therefore, could not have governed his mind. The venerated example of his father, the pious desires of his mother, the influence of his great and holy teachers, along with the silent promptings of the Holy Spirit, would perhaps explain the course that he took. For several years after his graduation young Otterbein served as a house-teacher. In 1748 he became preceptor in the Herborn school and in the same year he was licensed to preach. His ordination occurred in the city church of Dillenburg, June 13, 1749. From that time on he served as preacher in Herborn, a town of about two thousand five hundred inhabitants, in addition to his teaching in the school.

The condition of religion in the town and school was at a low ebb and young Otterbein didn’t hesitate to cry out against the evils and corruptions into which the church had fallen. It is said that his preaching from the first showed such zeal, devotion, and earnestness as to astonish even his intimate friends.

As a consequence of his plain preaching the authorities in the town church and school sought to silence him. This could not be done, but the pressure became so great that the mother was led to remark: “My William will have to be a missionary; he is so frank, so open, so natural, so prophet-like. This place is too narrow for him.”
In February 1752 the Rev. Michael Schlatter came to Herborn seeking recruits for his band of missionaries. It was the answer to young Otterbein's prayer and after proper arrangements he left for the New World and the great tasks to which he most certainly was called of God. In bidding her son farewell Frau Otterbein tearfully exclaimed: "Go; the Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord cause His face to shine upon thee and with much grace direct thy steps. On earth I may not see thy face again—but go."

After a four months' voyage the little band of missionaries arrived in New York during the night preceding July 28, 1752. The next day they were met by the Rev. John Melchoir Muhlenburg, the eminent pioneer missionary of the Lutheran Church, who, when the young ministers were introduced to him, said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves! be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

Following a brief rest in New York Mr. Otterbein accepted a call to the Reformed Church at Lancaster, Pa. At this time Lancaster was a town of about five hundred homes, in the center of what was yet an unsubdued country. Here Mr. Otterbein found a little log church which was soon replaced under his leadership by a substantial and attractive stone edifice. This building remained intact for ninety-nine years before it in turn was replaced by a larger one. During his pastorate at Lancaster, probably in 1754, Mr. Otterbein had a blessed religious experience that marked an epoch in his life. After preaching a stirring sermon on the need of repentance and faith, a man smitten with conviction came to him for advice. All the preacher could say was, "My friend, advice is scarce with me today." Otterbein then went to his prayer-closet and like Jacob of old, wrestled in prayer until a strange, satisfying peace came into his soul. Although he had been a man of
exemplary piety and a learned theologian, he felt the lack of something in his soul. And God heard the cry of his distressed soul, sending into it the peace and joy of a conscious salvation. Otterbein went from that experience back to his pulpit and his parish a veritable fire-brand for God. He had a new note to sound in his preaching.

Mr. Otterbein resigned his Lancaster pastorate in 1758, intending to visit his Fatherland. The French and Indian War was in progress at the time and conditions became so hazardous that the proposed voyage was postponed. In the meanwhile, Mr. Otterbein accepted the pastorate, temporarily, of the Reformed Church at Tulpehocken, Pa. Here he remained two years, during which time he instituted mid-week prayer meetings. These prayer meetings were probably the first such meetings to be held in America.

From 1760 to 1765 Mr. Otterbein served as pastor of the Reformed Church in Frederick City, Maryland. While here he led his people in the erection of a large stone edifice, in 1764. The spire was added later, in 1807. In 1882 the entire church was torn down, with the exception of the tower, including the spire, and the present Trinity Chapel was erected as a Sunday School building. Only the central tower remains of the church of Otterbein's time. Stone from the walls was used to build the front buttresses, through which there are two entrances, to either side of the main entrance. A stone parsonage was built during this pastorate in 1762 on the southeast corner of Church and Market streets. This building later gave way to the present brick structure known as Kemp Hall. While pastor in Frederick, Mr. Otterbein was married to Miss Susan Leroy, a Lancaster lady of French Huguenot descent. The marriage took place in Lancaster, April 19, 1762. Mrs. Otterbein lived only six years after her marriage. She died April 27, 1768. There were no children born of the union and Mr. Otterbein never remarried. Nearly fifty years later, just two days before his death, he asked that a pocket-book be brought to him. It had been made by the hands of his youthful bride. Lying upon his death-bed, he kissed the carefully preserved keepsake “with all the fondness of a youthful lover.”

During his Frederick pastorate Mr. Otterbein made many visits on horseback into various western Maryland settlements where since have sprung up churches. More will be said of these churches elsewhere.

In September, 1765 Mr. Otterbein transferred his labors to York, Pa. While pastor there he attended a revival meeting held in the barn of Isaac Long, near Lancaster, Pa. Following the sermon which was preached by Rev. Martin Boehm, a Mennonite, Otterbein embraced Boehm, exclaiming in German, “We are brethren.” The sermon was so much in line with Otterbein's thinking, so evangelical, demanding a change of heart and a vital experience of sins forgiven, that the words expressing his brotherly love came spontaneously to his lips. This meeting of Otterbein and Boehm, which occurred on Whitsuntide, 1767 (?), marked the beginning of a beautiful friendship that had much to do with the establishment of the United Brethren Church. Indeed, the influence of Otterbein's exclamation, “We are brethren,” is seen in the name of the denomination.

In 1774 Mr. Otterbein accepted an invitation, repeatedly given, to become pastor of a Reformed Church in Baltimore, Md. The history of this
church, which is now affectionately termed "The Old Otterbein Church," is to be found in detail elsewhere in this volume. Here he labored until his death, thirty-nine years later, November 17, 1813. Otterbein lies buried beside the church he loved.

It was during his Baltimore pastorate that Otterbein gave the vigorous leadership that led to the formation of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. He was the recognized leader in any group where he was found. As early as 1774 we find him presiding over meetings of pietistic ministers within the Reformed communion who were carrying on an aggressive campaign to spiritualize that church. Otterbein made many pilgrimages to Western Maryland, preaching in homes, barns, and schoolhouses. Wherever he went he left a trail of light; classes were formed and local exhorters carried on the work. Many of these exhorters developed into preachers and in 1789 Otterbein called these preachers together in his parsonage at Baltimore for a conference. This conference is looked upon as the first formal conference of United Brethren preachers, although
The Meeting of Otterbein and Boehm in Isaac Long's Barn
the denomination was not formally organized and named until 1800. In the latter year the conference in session at Peter Kemp's, near Frederick, definitely decided to take on the aspects of a denomination. The name was adopted and Philip William Otterbein and Martin Boehm were elected the first bishops. More about Otterbein will be brought to the reader's attention in the sketches of his comrades and the story of the early days of the denomination.

Francis Asbury, who later became the first Methodist bishop in America, was a devoted friend of Otterbein. Asbury requested Otterbein to assist at his ordination which took place in the old Lovely Lane Meeting House, Baltimore, December 27, 1784. When Asbury heard of Otterbein's death he exclaimed: "Great and good man of God! An honor to his church and country. One of the greatest scholars and divines that ever came to America, or born in it. Forty years have I known the retiring modesty of this man of God, towering majestic above his fellows in learning, wisdom, and grace, yet seeking to be known only to God and the people of God."

MARTIN BOEHM

Jacob Boehm, grandfather of Martin, was a native of Switzerland, and a member of the Reformed Church. It was the custom in Switzerland in ancient days for a young man, upon completing his trade, to travel three years as an itinerant journeyman before settling down. While Jacob was on a trip of this kind he came under the influence of the Mennonites and was converted. When he returned home he was considered a heretic and was sentenced to prison for it. Until 1533 these heretics were often punished by death, the favorite form being drowning. This manner of death was deemed appropriate because the Mennonites baptized by immersion. After 1533 these so-called heretics were tolerated on condition that they kept silent. Those who preached their views were imprisoned. Jacob Boehm could not keep silent and was sentenced to prison. On the way to prison he escaped and fled to Holland, a land of liberty of worship. He settled in Holland, became a lay elder among the Mennonites, married and had several children, the third of whom was Jacob, the father of Martin, the subject of our sketch. This Jacob came to America in 1715, settling first at Germantown, Pa., then in Conestoga township, Lancaster county. Jacob's wife was a Miss Kendig. Martin Boehm was born of these parents November 30, 1725, in Lancaster county, Pa. He was married in 1753 to Miss Eve Steiner, whose ancestors likewise came from Switzerland. Eight children were born to Martin Boehm and wife, one of whom, Henry, became a prominent Methodist minister. In 1756 the local Mennonite church chose Martin to become a minister. At first he sought to evade such a responsibility, but became reconciled to it and became a profound student of the Scriptures. When he made his first effort to exhort his mind went blank and he sat down in confusion. Nor did he improve as the months passed. Finally, he came to the conclusion that his weakness and ineffectiveness were due to a lack of real religion in his own life. The feeling that he was a lost sinner, despite the fact he was looked upon as a minister, grew to such proportions that one day, as he was ploughing in the field, he knelt at the end of each furrow to pray for his lost soul. Here he had
a marvelous conversion which, like the experience of Otterbein, completely transformed his life. The seal of his lips was broken and the following Sunday, in the meeting house, he amazed the congregation with the eloquent description of his spiritual experience of the previous week. This occurred in 1758. Shortly after this experience Martin Boehm made a significant itinerary into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Many Germans of the Lancaster county section had been moving into what was then called New Virginia, among them many Mennonites. Some of Boehm’s own relatives were among the number. In the Shenandoah Valley were many converts of the famous English evangelist, George Whitfield. They were known as the “New Light People.” When Martin Boehm visited in the Shenandoah Valley, preaching wherever the opportunity afforded, he met with many of these devout Christians who were insisting upon a vital religious experience. Upon returning to Lancaster county Boehm was visited from time to time by preachers of the “New Light People” from Virginia. They came to his hospitable home in Lancaster county and assisted in many of the great grove and barn meetings in which Boehm was a leader.

“Big Meetings” were the vogue in the times of Otterbein and Boehm. It was no uncommon thing for a devout farmer to turn over all the facilities of his farm for such an event. Meetings were held in the groves, or barns, as was found expedient. The owner of the farm felt highly honored to have such meetings held on his premises and would slaughter several hogs, sheep or calves, and even a beef, while the women would bake great quantities of bread, pies and cakes, with which to feed all who came. Great crowds came to the meetings on foot, in carriages, wagons, or on horseback. It was popular for young lovers to ride horse-back, the lady behind the gentleman, usually without a saddle for either. At one of these great meetings a farmer fed four hundred guests at dinner, in addition to the horses.

One of these great meetings was held on the farm of Isaac Long, six miles northeast of Lancaster. The barn in which the meeting was held was built in 1754 and still stands, as does also the dwelling house. The meeting was held on Whit-sunday, most likely in the year 1766. Martin Boehm was the preacher in charge. The great barn, which is 108 feet long, and proportionately wide, could not contain the immense throng and an overflow meeting was held in the orchard, which was addressed by one of the Virginia preachers. It is altogether probable there were several of these New Virginia preachers at the meeting.

Otterbein, then a Reformed pastor in York, attended the meeting. It is not known if he attended by invitation, or whether he sought out just such a meeting because of his own personal experience. It is improbable that Boehm knew Otterbein, or knew he was in the audience. Boehm preached a powerful sermon, touching on the necessity of the new birth. He spoke with “exulting freedom and resistless force of the truths his own mind and soul, through deep pangs and struggles, had apprehended.” As he concluded, before he could sit down, Otterbein, moved by an overpowering conviction of new-found fellowship in the truth, clasped Boehm in his arms and exclaimed, “We are brethren!” Here was a most unusual spectacle: Otterbein, of large and commanding appearance, clean shaven, ecclesiastically garbed, highly educated, pastor of an important city church,
embracing Martin Boehm, a man of diminutive stature, with a long beard, uneducated from the standpoint of the schools, and dressed in the simple garb of the old-fashioned Mennonite. Truly, from the external viewpoint they had little in common; spiritually, they were one. Thus was formed a great fellowship that was destined to ripen and continue to their deaths, a fellowship out of which has grown our beloved denomination.

One would suppose that Martin Boehm, with his emphasis upon vital religion, would have been greatly appreciated by his Mennonite brethren, but such was not the case. They found fault with him for his new emphasis and he was bitterly opposed by his former associates, and was finally dismissed from their denomination. Being free from the responsibilities of a local parish he traveled extensively, even more than did Otterbein. For many years he was much in the saddle, riding over mountains, through rivers, in summer's heat and winter's snows, blazing trails which were destined to become circuits in the following generation. His preaching appointments are now among our leading churches in the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia area.

Boehm kept close touch with Otterbein, meeting him from time to time at his parsonage in Baltimore and at the great meetings where they and their associates made a point of coming together. One of these great meetings was held annually during Pentecost at Antietam, Keedysville, Md. The preachers present, led by Otterbein and Boehm, would find time for informal conferences. In 1789 Otterbein called the preachers together for a conference in his parsonage at Baltimore and Boehm was there. This is the first recorded gathering of Otterbein and his associates that took on the nature of a distinctive and formal conference. Another such conference was held at John Spangler's, near York, in 1791, and no more are recorded until 1800. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence that informal conferences were held in connection with the Whitsuntide "Big Meetings" at Antietam. It is easily possible that conferences were held elsewhere and no minutes were kept. It should be pointed out here that the minutes of the first twelve conferences are merely re-written notes from George Adam Geeting's private note-book. The pioneers were not planning a new denomination, at least not prior to 1800. Therefore they were careless about taking minutes.

When the denomination was definitely organized in 1800, the name adopted, and the first bishops chosen, Otterbein and Boehm were the logical men for the positions. They jointly presided over the conferences of 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1805. Boehm alone presided over the conferences of 1804, 1807, 1809. The minutes do not indicate who presided the years not mentioned.

Martin Boehm, along with Otterbein, Newcomer and Geeting, was on very friendly terms with the Methodists whose denominational history in America practically parallels that of the United Brethren in Christ. The Methodists were English and the United Brethren were German, but their spiritual aims were the same. Boehm's wife united with the Methodists, as did also his son Henry. Henry attended the U. B. Conference of 1800, probably as a visitor, but cast his lot with the Methodists because he felt the English speaking denomination afforded him larger opportunities for service. In his old age Martin Boehm attended a Methodist
church which was built on his land. In order to be privileged to commune it was required that one must have his name on the roll book of the church and Boehm allowed his name to be thus enrolled, without any formality, but he always disclaimed being a Methodist.

At the age of eighty-six years, three months and eleven days, Martin Boehm fell asleep in the Lord, March 23, 1812. By a strange coincidence his intimate friend, Bishop Francis Asbury, was on his way to pay him a visit, arriving soon after Bishop Boehm’s death, and was constrained to remain and preach the funeral discourse. His remains were laid away in the cemetery near his meeting house, over-looking the old homestead.

GEORGE ADAM GEETING

As the names Peter, James and John are usually associated with each other in Scripture, so the names Otterbein, Boehm and Greeting constitute the great triumvirate of the early United Brethren Church. Newcomer is classed as among the “Big Four,” but he was just beginning to assume leadership at about the time the other three were slowing up because of advancing age.

George Adam Geeting was born in Nassau, Prussia, February 6, 1741. He was brought up in the Reformed Church, and had some scholarly attainments. Along with his knowledge of the German language he had studied Latin. He had labored as a miner before coming to America in 1759, at the age of eighteen years. Upon arriving in America he settled near the Little Antietam creek, not far from what is now Keedysville, Md. He spent
his summers digging wells and quarrying stone, and his winters in teaching school.

The Reformed pastors from Frederick, about twenty miles distant, came infrequently to this neighborhood to visit parishioners, perhaps, and to establish preaching places. Otterbein became pastor in Frederick in 1760, shortly after young Geeting arrived from Prussia, and soon thereafter began visiting the neighborhood where young Geeting was rapidly becoming prominent. His preaching place was in the school-house where young Geeting was school-master. A beautiful friendship sprang up between the two and it is a tradition that Geeting was one of Otterbein's first converts in this old school-house. What Timothy was to Paul, Geeting became to Otterbein. Between the visits of Otterbein and his successors to the Antietam, the people desired to have services of worship. Young Geeting was put in charge and conducted services for the worshippers, reading a sermon from a book. So well did he do this that his friends urged him to become a preacher. Hearing of his success, Otterbein suggested to a Jacob Hess that at one of the services he should quietly take the book of sermons from Geeting, just as he was about to read, thus leaving him to his own resources. To young Geeting's surprise this was done. Quickly recovering his composure he proceeded to preach a sermon that greatly impressed the audience. From that moment it was obvious to him and to others that he should be a minister. This was about 1772. Geeting was not ordained until 1783. This ordination was rather irregular and in 1788 he was formally ordained as a minister of the Reformed Church, the United Brethren not as yet being organized. Geeting traveled extensively in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania in typical circuit-rider fashion. However, he served as pastor of the Geeting Meeting House, of which more will be written, and of the society in Hagerstown which developed into St. Paul's Church. Dr. Brane states Geeting organized St. Paul's Church in 1790 and continued as pastor until 1807. And all the while he was shepherding the flock on the Antietam and finding time for extensive itinerating.

The school-house in which Geeting taught school after arrival from the Fatherland soon gave way to the more pretentious Geeting Meeting House. This latter structure, built of logs, was without doubt the first building ever erected for and by the followers of Otterbein. The date of its erection is not known, but it was built prior to 1774. At a meeting of the "United Ministers," presided over by Mr. Otterbein, held at Pipe Creek, Md., May 29, 1774, a report
The members at Antietam are to meet every Sunday, in two classes. George Adam Geeting and Samuel Becker are appointed leaders. They are to meet alternately at the church and at Conrad Schnaebeli’s, or wherever else the leaders may direct.” Thus it is evident the church, or meeting house, was already in existence in 1774. For further history of the Geeting Meeting House see the history of Keedysville Church.

George Adam Geeting is listed by Dr. H. A. Thompson, in the book, “Our Bishops,” as being the third bishop of the United Brethren in Christ. There is nothing in the old minutes to substantiate his occupancy of that office. This may be because the minutes of the first conferences are very fragmentary, and were written by Geeting himself. It was characteristic of him to keep himself in the background. There is good reason to believe he presided over the conference of 1812. Dr. Caleb Wyand Geeting Rohrer, eminent Baltimore physician and surgeon, a direct descendant of Rev. George Adam Geeting, states it is a matter of family history and tradition that the latter was duly elected bishop in 1812.

Rev. George Adam Geeting was the father of ten children, one of whom was a minister in our conference, Rev. George Adam Geeting, Jr. Another son was Rev. Simon Geeting, who moved to Ohio in 1817.

Most of the children emigrated to the West. Quite a few of the direct descendents are living in the neighborhood of Keedysville, and are active in the work of the church.

Rev. H. G. Spayth, who became a member of the conference in 1812, the year Geeting presided as bishop, just preceding his death, describes the preaching of this mighty man of God: “Geeting was like an early spring sun, rising on a frost-silvered forest, which gradually affords more light and heat, until you begin to hear the crackling of the ice-covered branches, the dripping of the melted snow, as it were a shower of rain, and until a smiling and joyous day appears; so did Geeting enlighten and melt the hearts of his congregation by the Word of Truth, and so did the shouts of praise for redeeming grace follow floods of penitential tears.”
Soon after the conference of 1812, in company with his wife, Father Geeting journeyed to Baltimore to visit his old friend Otterbein, then eighty-six years of age. Enroute home, while stopping with a Mr. Snyder, about thirty miles west of Baltimore, he became ill and went to his eternal home, June 28, 1812. Father Geeting was in his seventy-second year at the time of his death. His remains repose alongside those of his faithful wife in the cemetery, now known as Mt. Hebron, which adjoined the old Geeting Meeting House.

CHRISTIAN NEWCOMER

Otterbein, Boehm and Geeting were true itinerants. They traveled extensively in their efforts to extend the borders of the Kingdom of God. But Newcomer was our first circuit rider in the best sense of the term. The other three had parishes or responsibilities close at home; Newcomer took to the open road and blazed countless trails through the primeval wilderness. It is said he was on horse-back most of the time for fifty-three years, and he was not very young when he started.

Christian Newcomer was born in Lancaster county, Penna., February 1, 1749, of Mennonite parents. His father was Wolfgang Newcomer and had emigrated from Switzerland. His mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Weller. Christian was one of eight children. As a youth he was a sincere seeker after true religion. So great was his distress and anxiety that he was robbed of all joy and peace of mind. But God heard his prayers and saved him and, said he: "My ecstasy was so great that I was, in some
measure, as one beside himself . . . I gave glory and hallelujahs to my Redeemer with a loud voice. My whole heart was filled with gratitude to God and to the Lamb. "Unto Him be all the praise and glory forever." Following this experience he felt the call to share his experience with others. Feeling his ignorance and weakness he was reluctant about becoming a preacher and, "like Jonah, I sought safety in flight by selling my plantation and removing from my neighborhood to the State of Maryland." This he did in the spring of 1775. The farm to which he moved is located at Beaver Creek, about seven miles from Hagerstown. The stone dwelling and barn still stand. A marvelous spring flows from under the house. It was the custom in this section to build houses over springs so the women would not have to risk the hazards of Indian arrows. These buildings may be seen from the new highway between Hagerstown and Frederick, now under construction. They lie to the right of the highway as you go toward Frederick. Through the courtesy of Mr. Harry Newcomer, a descendent of Christian Newcomer's brother Peter, the writer has been furnished a copy of Christian Newcomer's will, made in 1830. He bequeathed the farm to his son Andrew. Andrew in turn passed the farm on to his son, Christian, Jr. (Note: Christian Newcomer, Jr., was a grandson of Christian Newcomer, Sr.) Christian, Jr., turned the farm over to his son, Solomon, a great-grandson of Bishop Newcomer. Some years ago the farm passed out of the Newcomer family and is now owned by the estate of the late A. William Lakin.

Soon after moving to Maryland, Christian Newcomer became ill with a fever. For a time his life was despaired of, and as he lay desperately ill he concluded it was God's way of compelling him to preach the Gospel. He then and there made the surrender and immediately began to get well. After recovering his health he spent a whole night in prayer and emerged with a joy and peace that surpassed his first profound experience. No longer was he disobedient to the heavenly vision and, at the age of twenty-eight, he started out on his extraordinary career as a circuit-rider, superintendent and bishop. It should be said that Newcomer had come under the influence of both Otterbein and George Adam Geeting. He himself testified to the influence they exerted in his salvation and call to the ministry.

Beginning his circuit-riding at about the time of the Revolutionary War, Newcomer traveled thousands upon thousands of miles on horse-back. He always kept a good horse and gave it the best of care. Wherever he went he left a trail of light, up and down the Cumberland and Shenandoah Valleys, out into Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and even on one occasion visiting Canada. He preached somewhere every night, and often, as opportunity afforded, through the day. After the deaths of Otterbein, Boehm and Geeting, the infant church turned instinctively to him as its leader. He was elected bishop in 1813 and continued in that office until his death in 1830. Under his leadership the infant church, which was apparently at a stand-still, took on new life. There had been little disposition on the part of Otterbein especially to start a new denomination, and his colleagues were making haste slowly. Newcomer was an organizer. Unlike some of his predecessors and colleagues, he was not satisfied merely to have conversions. He insisted on organizing classes and keeping records. With
his own hands he would stitch leaves of paper together to make record books for the groups he organized. He was the first of the early fathers to gather missionary money in order to do more aggressive work. Had it not been for the good sense and tact of Newcomer it is probable the denomination would have gone out of existence. Although not physically strong, he had great physical courage and proved it by frequently facing and subduing ignorant and brutal mobs bent on breaking up his meetings. He was a hero of the strongest fiber. He was born to do and to dare. Thirty-eight times he crossed the Allegheny mountains, passing through a thousand perils. Nothing could relax his energy or extinguish his zeal. During the last thirty-five years of his ministry he kept a diary which has since become famous. Without once attracting attention to himself he tells the story of his adventures in spreading the gospel. Nothing mattered to him but the will of Christ. Many of the places he visited became strong United Brethren centers. Bishop Newcomer made his last trip west in his eighty-first year, riding horse-back.

At the age of eighty-one he died a triumphant death and was buried in the old Dunker Church Cemetery, near his Beaver Creek home. There is a tradition that he wanted no stone to mark his resting place. However, the Conference Historical Society has erected an imposing granite monument at the place where the best information available states his body lies.

A number of lineal descendents of Bishop Newcomer are living in Hagerstown and vicinity. Peter Newcomer, a great-great-nephew, was widely known for his benefactions to our Orphanage and Home at Quincy. Harry Newcomer, a fourth generation nephew, who is at this time the register of wills for Washington County, Md., is serving the church as treasurer of the Orphanage and Home.

THE PIPE CREEK CONFERENCES

The Conference of 1789 in Otterbein's parsonage, Baltimore, was by no means the first gathering of its kind. As early as 1774 we find Otterbein presiding over a group of Reformed Church ministers who were banded together to promote a deeper spirituality among themselves and to seek ways and means to spiritualize the cold and formal churches over which they presided. The minutes of at least five such conferences are preserved to us and may be found in Dr. Drury's history, pages 137-141. Just as Martin Luther, and the Wesleys, and others who are credited with founding religious denominations never intended to do anything except correct wrong conditions in their respective communions, so it was with Otterbein. It was never his plan to start a new church; what he wanted to do was to spiritualize the one with which he and his forefathers had been connected for many generations. Gradually it became apparent that the purposes and ideals for which he strove could not be realized except the new denomination be launched, and he acquiesced.

In an effort to locate the place where the so-called Pipe Creek conferences were held we solicited the help of the Rev. Guy P. Bready, for the past twenty-five years a Reformed Church pastor at Taneytown, Md., and for a like term stated clerk of the Maryland Classis of the Reformed Church. His reply is partially given here: "I am not sure where the village of Pipe Creek was located. It is not now in existence. I believe,
however, that it was somewhere along Little Pipe Creek, close to the state road between Westminster and Union Bridge, about where Linwood village is now, and not far from New Windsor." Mr. Bready gives good reasons for coming to this conclusion, and also gives definite information that David and Andrew Schrieber, brothers, conducted a store here between 1767 and 1791. The minutes reveal that the Oct. 2, 1774 conference was held "At David Schreiber's, at Pipe Creek." It is probable that the first conference, dated May 29, 1774, was also held at David Schreiber's. The third of these conferences was held in Frederick, June 12, 1775; the fourth at Baltimore, Oct. 15, 1775, and the fifth at John Ranger's (place not known), June 2, 1776. Although these meetings were in the nature of spiritual conferences they took on some of the aspects of a definite organization. Otterbein presided; Benedict Schwope was the secretary; and references were made to the various societies, or groups, that were cooperating. We feel it will be of interest to reprint here the minutes of the last of these five conferences:

In Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We, William Otterbein, William Hendel, Daniel Wagner, Jacob Weimer, and Benedict Schwope, have held another meeting, according to the resolution adopted at our last meeting, held at Baltimore, on the 15th of October last.

1. The friends in Baltimore are prosperous, and meet as formerly. The congregation has, however, been considerably weakened by disturbances caused by the war.

2. The friends in Fredericktown are prosperous and at peace, and have increased in numbers. The class at P. Kemp's is not so prosperous. Steiner and Studel leaders.

3. The friends at Sam's Creek (Frederick county, Md.) are prosperous.

4. The friends at the Antietam (Geeting's Meeting House) continue at peace, and are prosperous. (Note: In the minutes of June 12, 1775, reference is made to 300 members at Antietam).

5. The friends in Sharpsburg were for some time careless, but have now become more active.

6. Those at Funkstown and Hagerstown have united. George Arnold, leader.

7. Those at Canawaken (Conewago) are prosperous and serious.

8. Those at Great Pipe Creek are prosperous and at peace. Leaders, Jost Maurer and Jacob Cassel.

9. Beaver Dam. The friends are united and meet every Sunday.

10. At Peter Reitenauer's the friends meet every Sunday. Peter Reitenauer, leader.

11. Germantown (Manchester, Md.) is to be further supplied.

12. On Sunday, October 20, we will meet again in Canawaken, at Jacob Wilt's.

Benedict Schwope, Scriba.

The Wm. Hendel referred to was Mr. Otterbein's brother-in-law. He served pastorates at Lancaster, Tulpehocken, and Philadelphia. The others named were also ministers of the Reformed Church, some of whom Otter-
bein knew in the old country. In addition to the ministers who attended there were many laymen, some of whom became lay-preachers in the pietistic movement, and afterward developed into active, full-time ministers. Among these were Henry Weidner, Adam Lehman, Leonard Harbaugh, Peter Kemp, and George A. Geeting. The meeting scheduled for October 20th was probably never held. The Revolutionary War impeded the work. The group of ministers, known as "The United Ministers," disbanded. Otterbein and Schweppe were the only ones to carry on with the work, supported by their lay-preachers.

At the last meeting of the group a license to preach was given Henry Weidner, signed by Otterbein, Hendel, Weimer, and Schweppe. This was a rather unusual procedure and indicated that the group had some plans independent of the Reformed Church.

That the Reformed Church did not react favorably to the pietistic movement Otterbein was sponsoring is shown by many criticisms and censurings he received from the coetus. Geeting, a member of the Reformed Church, was expelled because of his pietistic fervor. Boehm had been expelled from the Mennonite Church for his zeal in the new movement. Doubtless, this happened to many of these early founders of our church.

Although there are no records of conferences from 1776 to 1789, it is certain that informal conferences were being held, probably at the great Whitsuntide meeting at Antietam and like gatherings. The U. B. Discipline of 1815 contains the following historical statement: "Several great meetings were appointed and held annually. On such occasions Mr. Otterbein would hold particular conversations with the preachers then present, and represent to them the importance of the ministry, and the necessity of their utmost endeavor to save souls. At one of these meetings it was resolved to hold a conference with all the preachers, in order to take into consideration in what manner they might be most useful." This conference was held in 1789 in Mr. Otterbein's parsonage, Baltimore.

Those present were William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, George A. Geeting, Christian Newcomer, Henry Weidner, Adam Lehman, and John Ernst. The absent members are listed as—Benedict Schweppe (probably in Kentucky at the time), Henry Baker, Simon Herre, Frederick Schaffer, Martin Kreider, Christopher Grosh, and Abraham Draksel. Fourteen members constituted the conference roster in 1789. Prior to 1789 there had been a rather loose procedure in licensing preachers. There are no minutes of the conferences of 1789 or of 1791. All we have is the record that they were held, the date and place, and the names of those present. It is from the 1789 conference that Pennsylvania Conference begins dating its history. It would be improper to go back to the 1774 informal conference of the "United Ministers" because that was largely a group of ministers and laymen of the Reformed Church seeking to spiritualize their own group. The group disbanded and only two of the number are listed as cooperating with the conference of 1789, Otterbein and Schweppe. Schweppe, although still recognized as a member of the fellowship, had probably moved to Kentucky prior to 1789. The members of the conference of 1789 were distinctly United Brethren, although that name had not as yet been adopted. Since the statement in the 1815 Discipline points unmistakably to the fact that the 1789 conference was regarded by the
Church fathers as the first formal conference, we accept that as the official date. We have no record of the conference of 1790, but it was most certainly held, probably in connection with one of the great barn or grove meetings which were the vogue. The conference of 1791 was held at the home of John Spangler, about eight miles from York. The members recognized by the conference of 1791 were as follows:

**Present**—Wm. Otterbein, Martin Boehm, George A. Geeting, Christian Newcomer, Adam Lehman, John Ernst, J. G. Pfrimmer, John Neidig, and Benedict Sanders.


The fact that among the absentees are quite a few names not appearing on the roster of 1789 would seem to prove there had been a conference in 1790. How else could they have joined the conference?

Although we do not have the minutes of the conferences of 1792-1799, we have every justification for believing they were held regularly. The church fathers were not interested in keeping records. Indeed, the minutes of 1800 to 1812 would be lost to us were it not for the private note-book of George Adam Geeting.

Newcomer's Journal indicates how conferences could easily be held in connection with the "big meetings." Here is a typical entry: "1799, June 1. Today a sacramental meeting commenced at Brother Isaac Long's.
On our arrival at the place appointed we found Brothers Boehm, Pfrimmer, Neidig, Grosh, Crider, and Shuey ... Newcomer's Journal, which he began to keep in October, 1795, contains many references to the work being aggressively carried on by these early preachers under the leadership of Otterbein. By the time of the 1800 conference they were traveling circuits and establishing preaching appointments over an area extending from Berks County in Pennsylvania to Augusta County in Virginia, and from Baltimore, Maryland, to Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and out into Ohio.

THE UNITED BRETHREN AND PENTECOST

The church fathers made much of Pentecost. It was a celebration of Pentecost in Isaac Long's barn that brought Otterbein, Boehm, and "the Virginia preachers" together; Otterbein made much of the day in his local churches; it was the big event of the year in the Antietam (Keedysville) neighborhood for at least a century, and to this day an annual pilgrimage is made at Pentecost to the site of the old Geeting Meeting House; and Newcomer, in his journal, unfailingly records the big event of each year as being the celebration of Pentecost. Surely we need to carry on these traditions; we must keep the fires of Pentecost burning upon our altars and within our souls. This is the genius of our church. When these fires burn out we have lost our right to exist.

At a meeting of a Reformed Synod held just a few years ago, a minister of that denomination made an eloquent plea for Pentecostal power and evangelistic endeavor on the part of his denomination. In his address he said, in part: "A century and a half ago the United Brethren walked out of the Reformed Church . . . and when they went out, they took the stove along."

While it is true many of our denominational founders were connected with the Reformed Church, yet we are by no means a split-off from that or any other communion. We appreciate the brother's compliment that ours was a warm-hearted religion in those early years, and we must needs be true to the faith of our fathers.

And we might do well to point out the fact that our church fathers came from other communions than the Reformed. Indeed, it is probable that more of them were Mennonites than Reformed. Although many of our pioneer leaders withdrew from the established communions in protest to their coldness, formality, and lack of emphasis upon a vital experience of salvation, yet the Church of the United Brethren in Christ did not get its start by splitting another denomination, or even a local synod, classis, or other sectional body of a denomination. It might also be pointed out that the Church of the United Brethren in Christ is the first American-born denomination.