REMEMBERING THREE
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA MINISTERS

The following recommendation was passed at the 1992 annual meeting of the Central Pennsylvania Conference Historical Society:

The Commission on Archives and History has agreed to fund the annual purchase of three clergy gravemarkers for persons (one from each of our predecessor traditions: Evangelical, Methodist and United Brethren) selected by the Historical Society. The markers are formally presented by the Historical Society to the appropriate local church at a mutually convenient occasion. In return, the Historical Society asks that the local church (1) make the necessary arrangements for attaching the marker on the tombstone and (2) encourage local United Methodists to be aware of the life and ministry of the person so honored. It is recommended that the 1992 recipients be

1. Bishop Jacob Erb, 1804-1883, United Brethren:
Born into a strong United Brethren family and destined to be one of the denomination's most respected early leaders, Jacob Erb was converted in his home at the age of 16. In 1823, at the age of 19, he was licensed to preach and assigned a circuit of 30 appointments -- which he had enlarged to 40 within the year. As a missionary to New York state and Canada, he journeyed alone, on foot, carried his knapsack on his back and was present in Rochester in 1825 when the first water was let into the Erie canal. Erb attended 60 successive annual sessions of the Pennsylvania Conference, was elected presiding elder in 1833 and bishop in 1837, 1841 and 1849. He also served as editor of "The Busy Martha," the denomination's German periodical. On July 4, 1830, Jacob Erb administered adult baptism to his friend John Winebrenner when the latter broke from the Reformed Church to found the Churches of God denomination. Finally, Bishop Erb was instrumental in establishing a pension program within the United Brethren Church. He is buried in Shopp's Cemetery near Shiremanstown.
2. Jesse M. Ettinger, 1846-1895, Evangelical:
Converted at the age of eleven and made a class exhorter while a youth of sixteen, Rev. Ettinger was licensed to preach in 1866 and received into the itinerancy in 1867. Evangelical historian Ammon Stapleton says that "he was undoubtedly one of the finest and most eloquent ministers of the church" and that "his sermons were clear and logical, profound and prophetic, potent and purposeful, always delivered... with power." A delegate to the General Conferences of 1887, 1891 and 1894, he was elected presiding elder in 1884 and re-elected in 1888. Forced to resign as presiding elder in 1891 because of failing health, he accepted the call of his denomination later that fall to serve as editor of The Evangel, which post he held until his death. His last words were, "Tell my brethren that I died at my post." He is buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery in York, the city of his birth.

3. Jacob Gruber, 1778-1850, Methodist Episcopal:
Jacob Gruber ranks with Francis Asbury and Freeborn Garrettson as one of the most significant early preachers of the American Methodist Church. Born in eastern Pennsylvania and received into the itinerancy in 1800, he spent virtually all of his ministry in central Pennsylvania. In 1802, he began the first regular preaching in Harrisburg and, one of the very few Methodist preachers able to preach both in English and German, he is considered the founding circuit rider of several congregations across the conference. A colorful, witty and powerful speaker, Gruber was frequently called upon to address missionary meetings, conduct special services and -- despite his lack of formal education -- speak at Dickinson College. He also served as presiding elder of the Carlisle District. In 1818, Gruber was arrested for preaching a campmeeting sermon that included a strong indictment of slavery. He was successfully defended by future U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney in a landmark court decision that helped establish religious freedom of speech in America. Rev. Gruber died while serving the Lewistown Circuit and is buried in Lewistown's Methodist Cemetery.