

History of the United Brethren Church in Dauphin County

by I.H. Albright, 1917

[Editor's note: This paper was prepared for the September 17, 1917, monthly meeting of the Harrisburg United Brethren Ministerium held at the Harrisburg YMCA. According to the minutes for that date, the program was "the reading of an exhaustive paper by Dr. I.H. Albright on the subject 'History of the United Brethren Church in Dauphin County.' General discussion followed the reading of the paper." While the author prepared typewritten copies of the document, this is the first time this valuable paper has been printed.]

Earliest preaching Places

Dauphin County was formed out of Lancaster County June 4, 1785, and was named after the oldest son of the King of France. Lebanon County was formed out of Dauphin County February 16, 1813, thus leaving Dauphin County with its boundaries as they are now.

The earliest United Brethren sermons within the county recorded in the journal of Christian Newcomer occur June 11, 1798, and November 11, 1799, when he and George Geeting are passing through Harrisburg and the latter preaches in the German Reformed Church there. The first real groundwork so recorded occurs the following two years as Newcomer passes through the area while traveling from Union County to Lancaster County.

May 18, 1800. Sunday. ...I rode to Daniel Miller's (Millersburg), where I lodged for the night.

May 19, 1800. This day I preached in Armstrong's Valley, in a church, from Hebrews 12; in the afternoon at Powell's Creek, from Luke 17. The people were attentive, may they all be converted to the Lord Jesus. I stayed all night with a Mr. Kremen, two of whose children were converted. We had a happy season in family worship -- the children prayed so earnestly for the conversion of their parents and the salvation of their souls. When the whole family had retired to rest, some time after midnight, I was awaked out of my slumbers by a loud noise, and presently heard some one crying for mercy. I arose and found it was the mother, who was pouring forth such lamentations with the children all around her. We all joined in prayer, and before day she found peace to her troubled soul.

May 20, 1800. This day I preached at Brother A. Ream's in Beckstone [sic]. Had such a severe pain in the breast that I spoke with great difficulty; yet, notwithstanding, the word made considerable impression.

May 21, 1800. Today I came to Brother Pfrimmer's (Harrisburg). About thirty children had assembled at his house, to whom he was giving religious instruction. Some were under conviction. I spoke to them; their hearts were sensibly touched. May the Lord convert them truly. Brother Martin Boehm also arrived. We held a meeting and rode in the afternoon to Brother Neidig's (Oberlin).

October 7, 1801. This day I preached at Daniel Miller's and stayed during the night.

October 8, 1801. Today I preached in a church, in Armstrong's Valley, to an attentive people from Matthew 5:3,4; at night at Powell's Creek.

October 9, 1801. This day I road across Peter's Hill and preached to a small assembly at Mr. German's. Came to Harrisburg and stayed the night with Mr. Hielman.

October 10, 1801. Today a meeting commenced in Dauphin County at Daniel Fleisher's. On our arrival we found a great many people collected. I commenced and spoke from Luke 19:1-5.

October 11, 1801. Sunday. The congregation this forenoon was still more numerous than yesterday. Brother Daniel Strickler delivered the first discourse. I followed him, administered the Lord's Supper, and went home with a Mr. Huber.

There are a few later references to Dauphin County, as these from 1808.

August 24, 1808. Sunday. This forenoon we held a meeting at Huber's, on Spring Creek (which is Hershey of today); by candlelight at Riegel's (in Lykens Valley, I think)¹, where we lodged for the night.

August 25, 1808. This forenoon I spoke at John Neidig's (Oberlin) from Psalm 39:5-7; at night brother Geeting preached in Harrisburg. We lodged at Mr. Gloss'.

August 26, 1808. Today I preached in Halifax from John 3:16-17 and lodged with Daniel Miller.

But this is generally the extent of Newcomer's preaching in this county. The matter of establishing the work of our church has devolved upon others who succeeded him. Among the most prominent of these early preachers were the following: Revs. G.A. Geeting, John Neidig, Daniel Strickler, John G. Pfrimmer, John Snyder, Jacob Snyder, William Brown, Daniel Funkhouser, Christopher Grosh, Simon Dresbach, James Neiman, Gideon Smith, Adam Noon, Jacob Roop, John Moyer, David Gingrich, Samuel Enterline, David Runk, Henry Staub, Simon Noll, Jacob Scholler, George Gilbert, Jacob Kessler, etc.

Spiritual Condition

These early preachers preached at many places within the county long before they commenced to organize their converts into congregations and to erect houses of worship for them. They were satisfied to lead souls to Christ, and in this they were eminently successful. Their converts either remained members of the churches to which they already belonged or joined such churches as were convenient to them. They did not desire to form another denomination.

They saw the dearth of spirituality in the churches around them and earnestly sought for the salvation of souls by praying, preaching and working. They did this often in the face of much opposition until they were practically driven out as undesirable products of the pietism and revival movements of the day. Dr. J.M. Nevin of the Reformed Church gave some strong testimony as to the spiritual condition of the church in this early period as follows:

To be confirmed, and then take the sacrament occasionally, was counted by the multitude all that was necessary to make a good Christian, if only a tolerable decency of out-

ward life were maintained beside, without any regard at all to the religion of the heart. True, serious piety was indeed often treated with marked scorn. In the bosom of the church itself it was still stigmatized as Schwaermerie Kopphaengerei -- or miserable, driveling Methodism. The idea of a new birth was treated as a pietistic whimery. Experimental religion in all its forms was eschewed as a new-fangled invention of cunning imposters, brought in to turn the heads of the weak and lead captive silly women. Prayer meetings were held to be a spiritual abomination. Family worship was a species of saintly affectation -- barely tolerable in the case of ministers (though many of them gloried in having no altar in their home), but absolutely disgraceful for common Christians. To show an awakened concern on the subject of religion or a disposition to call on God in daily prayer was to incur reproach.

This is a rather dark picture of the existing conditions. Coming from the source it does, it is hardly overdrawn. Revivals in the churches were then of rare occurrence, and were looked upon with great disfavor. Such divine visitations were met with all the bitterness and malevolence that could characterize the adversaries of such means of grace. So widespread was this state of lifeless formality that even "a converted minister is as great a phenomenon as a comet in the heavens."

First Classes Organized

Such were the conditions our church fathers had to meet, and they faced them nobly with earnest prayers and the preaching of the Gospel with warm hearts and streaming eyes -- amid much opposition and persecution. Boehm was expelled from the Mennonite Church for his evangelistic spirit, and Otterbein was threatened with exclusion from the Reformed Church for the same reason.

Nothing daunted the efforts of these brethren in their work, and success crowned their labors in the Lord. But they were slow in the work of organization and in the erection of church buildings. The first classes, all west of the Susquehanna, were organized by Christian Newcomer. He was the first preacher to see the necessity of organization, discipline and order. According to his journal:

April 5, 1812. Sunday. I preached in the afternoon at Valentine Doub's, where I organized a class of 10 members.

May 16, 1813. Sunday. I had a quarterly conference at Peter Brown's, where I formed a class of 22 members.

July 24, 1813. I preached at Widow Winter's and formed a class of 15 members.

In August of 1818 he proposed organizing classes at Antietam, Maryland, and was admonished by the Muskingum Conference for so doing. About this time he formed a class at Greencastle, Pennsylvania. The Methodist Episcopal Church there was about to get some of his converts, so he took some loose leaves, joined them together, and enrolled the names of the members. That was said to be the first class book in the denomination. In 1827, Rev. Jacob Erb organized the first class east of the Susquehanna River -- at Shirk's old meeting house near Grantville.

First Churches Built

The United Brethren were also slow in the erection of churches. Prior to 1800 there were only three church buildings in the entire connection: Geeting's meeting house near Keedysville, Maryland, built in 1780; Otterbein Church in Baltimore, built in 1785; and Neidig's meeting house in Oberlin, Pennsylvania, built in 1793 and the first church erected by the denomination in Dauphin County.

Oberlin Church

The lot upon which this church was built was bought from John and Mary Roop for 55 shillings. The deed is recorded in the Deed Book U, Volume 2, page 536, in the Recorder's office at Harrisburg. It mentions John Neidig, Felix Landis and John Light as the three trustees of the German Society of United Brethren. The lot was 66 feet by 330 feet -- exactly one-half acre. On this was erected a limestone church 30 by 40 feet in size. The roof was very steep. The interior of the building was plain, and the seats were rudely constructed benches without backs. Instead of a pulpit there was a large table, on three sides of which sat the leaders in singing -- all men. In back of the table, facing the congregation, was the preacher's bench or chair. In later years a desk, still preserved as a precious relic, was used instead of the table. In one corner was a large chimney and fire-place. There is also a preserved subscription paper used to raise funds to defray the expenses of the building operation, and a bill of expenditures itemizing the various purchases and wages for labor. Among the bills submitted by the contractor appear the following three items:

<i>paid bill for whiskey for carpenters</i>	<i>14s...0d</i>
<i>one gallon of whiskey for carpenters</i>	<i>3s...9d</i>
<i>gave one gallon of whiskey</i>	<i>3s...9d</i>

What the carpenters did with the whiskey is not stated.

When Father Neidig and his co-laborers projected this church enterprise, they met with some opposition. One person said derisively of the small flock that "a house about the size of a corn-crib would accommodate them for all time to come." But the building was erected as was contemplated, and it stood for 57 years. In 1850 it was torn down and a second building was erected on the same site -- this time a frame structure. This served the congregation until 1887, when the present church was built. In 1908 it was enlarged to its present dimensions.

Previous to 1840 there is no definite record of the pastors who served the church, but we have the names of John Neidig, Jacob Erb, Francis C. Wilson, Jacob Roop and John Smith. In 1840 J.C. Kessler was the pastor and he succeeded in organizing a class of 60 members. Previous to that no such organization existed here -- it was simply a community of believers maintaining a place of worship under the name *Vereinigten Bruder* (United Brethren). From 1845 on, a complete list of the pastors (numbering 43 in all) of this historic church can be found in the conference minutes.

Spring Creek Meeting House

The Spring Creek meeting house, located in the town of Hershey, was the next church built within the county. Rev. N.L. Linebaugh, who spent more than three years gathering data for his recent "Historical Sketch" of this church, deserves much praise for patient research. He notes the following:

Who built the church and when it was built is an open question. There are those who hold that the people of the community came together and built it as a Union Church. It was controlled largely by the old order Mennonites, but the most authentic account states that it was built by Henry Landis between 1825 and 1830. He seems to have built it so that all denominations might have a place to worship. Mrs. Harriet Fox, who was born September 25, 1830, and with whom the writer often conversed, said that she came into this section when she was 12 years old and that the church was here at that time. Mr. Aaron Zuver, who was born in 1839, says that his earliest recollection is of a church being here. The church was built of brick 30 by 40 feet in size with a ten-foot ceiling. The entrances were three in number: two on the south side, one for the women and the other for the men; and one on the north side for the admittance of the minister. There was a little closet between the two doors on the south side of the room, where the wood was cut and kept for the two old tin-plate stoves. To light the church, at first the old fat lamps were used, which not only made a bad odor but also shrouded the preacher with black smoke. The seating was in the form of rough benches, unplanned and unpainted, with no backs to them. Here people would sit from two to three hours and listen to the cold and formal discourses of those olden days.



Spring Creek (Hershey Salem) Church and Parsonage
showing the octagonal annex of 1913

When Rev. Simon Noll began holding services here in 1843, he and others desired to make certain changes and improvements which would be to the comfort of the worshipers. These changes the Old Mennonites would not consent to make. When it was decided to go ahead with the improvements, this sect quit worshipping in the church. The United Brethren and the New Mennonites made the repairs and worshiped in it together until 1880.

The Dunkards also worshiped in this church for some time, but then a borrowed or purchased organ was placed it for use by the Sunday School. When the bishop of this sect saw it at their next service, he arose at his place behind the table, looked at it with a suspicious eye, and said, "When the devil gets into a church, we go out." And out they went, never to return to use it as a regular place of worship.

The church was rebuilt in 1880, under the pastorate of Rev. D.S. Longenecker, at a cost of \$1200. An octagonal wing was added to the south side of the church, under the pastorate of Rev. N.L. Linebaugh, in 1912-13 at a cost of \$3300.

Hoffman Schism²

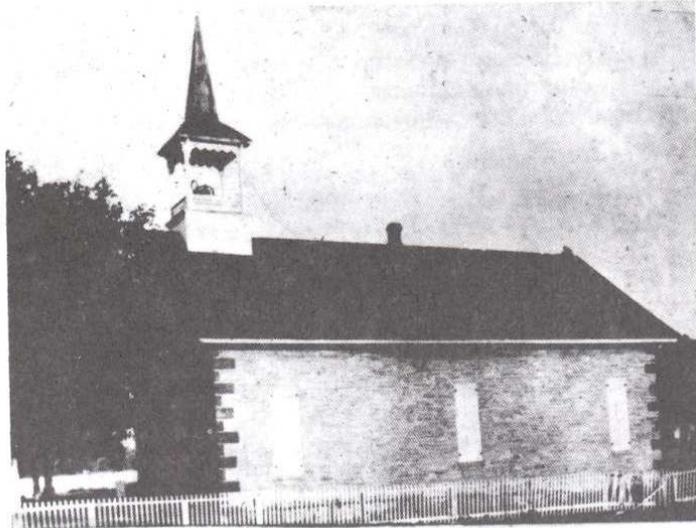
The Hoffman schism greatly affected the Hershey church and others in the conference as well. This controversy had its origin largely in 1860, when steps were taken to establish a college somewhere in the east. This action prepared the way for the founding of Lebanon Valley College in 1867, the year it received its charter. During the years prior to the founding of the college there was very strong sentiment, especially among the rural charges, against the establishment of "preacher factories." The contest waged bitterly, and each side had its able champions. The college forces were led by Revs. L.M. Craumer, E. Light, G.A. Mark, D.S. Early, G.W.M. Rigor, and others. The anti-college forces were led by Revs. George Hoffman, Christian Peffley, George Rider, David Gingrich, John Stamm, and others.

During the heat of this contest the question of leadership in the conference became a vital one. (The college was only a scapegoat for the real question at issue, which was simply a question of leadership.) L.M. Craumer and George Hoffman were put up as the rival candidates. When L.M. Craumer won the election by a very small margin, George Hoffman is reported to have said, "If the conference wants that kind of a leader, then I am no more a member of it." He and the following ministers withdrew from the conference and the church to form the United Christian denomination: Revs. John Stamm, Solomon Weidman, John Moyer, Joseph and Jacob Snavely, B.W. Shade, Christian Peffley, David Gingrich, George Rider, Thomas Leshner, and a few others. These ministers took with them quite a large number of our members.

In the course of a few years, Brightbill's (Lebanon County) and the church at Hoernerstown³ were abandoned by us. The following churches also suffered greatly by this schism: Hershey, Fishburn's, Union Deposit, Hummelstown, Oberlin, High-spire, Middletown, and Sinking Spring (Berks County). The congregations at Geyer's

and Shope's were also crippled in their usefulness for a time, as were the Lebanon County congregations at Palmyra, Annville, Lebanon, Myerstown, and a few other places. This trouble was an unfortunate affair and had a great influence in shaping the destiny of our church life and work as it is today in this section of the state.

Two Congregations Affected By the Hoffman Schism



Fishburn Church, circa 1917



Union Deposit Church, circa 1917

Now, after the flight of fifty years of time, and after the deaths of all the active participants in that memorable contest, we ought to be able to look at it calmly and to pass an impartial judgment concerning it. We had unusual facilities to hear the whole question discussed and ventilated years ago, and we then formed some decided opinions on the question. During our pastorate in Lebanon, we obtained many facts to confirm our previous judgment in the controversy. Rev. L.M. Craumer and Rev. George Hoffman were great preachers in both the English and German languages. They were both great leaders and exercised a wide influence in their day. This was the universal verdict of the people. It was also generally conceded by both parties that Hoffman was the better man of the two morally and spiritually -- but that he was a little jealous. Craumer was the better in argument, an abler man, and excelled in political strategy. His life and character, however, were questionable. Hoffman knew this. Others who stood with Craumer knew it also, but were slow to believe.

What the result would have been to the church and the college had Hoffman been elected to leadership fifty years ago instead of Craumer are matters of mere conjecture. We have no defense to make from either of these men, nor from their contemporaries in dealings with them. Their actions are a matter of history, and a righteous Judge will some day render a just verdict. But it is of interest for us to learn by how small a margin events may lead us into one direction or another, effecting the weal or woe of the church, the state, or the nation.

Highspire Church

The history of the United Brethren Church at Highspire begins about the year 1791, when John Neidig commenced to preach in his own house. He preached the Gospel of Christ Jesus in great simplicity, with much zeal and power. Many souls were converted to God under his ministry. Among them was Jacob Roop, who also became a minister of great usefulness. Neidig and Roop preached and labored together for years at and around Highspire with great success. They preached in private houses, barns, groves, and an old school house which stood near where the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot now stands. In 1842 a good two-story brick church was built here. This building was later extensively remodeled. In 1896 the present beautiful church was erected on the same site under the pastorate of Rev. J.R. Meredith.

Middletown Church

Before our people commenced to hold services in Middletown, the early preachers began to labor about the year 1840 in the neighborhood of Geyer's Church in private houses, barns, groves, and what was known as Detweiler's school house. The latter was named for David C. Detweiler, who lived near this school house. He was the grandfather of H.R. Detweiler, Mrs. Frances Sherrick and David A. Detweiler, the deceased husband of Mrs. Jennie Detweiler. The building was erected by the people of the community before the common school system had been

organized within the state, and was used many years for school and church purposes. After being abandoned for school purposes, it came into the possession of David Mumma, a prominent attorney in Harrisburg, upon whose land it had stood and who was married to David C. Detweiler's sister. David Mumma then donated the old school house to the brethren on condition that they remove it as soon as they could see their way clear to build a new church. Several years after this the house was removed to a lot located a short distance south of the one on which Geyer's church now stands, which had been bought of John Gingrich for \$12.00, and the group continued to worship there. The following persons served as the first trustees for this property: Jacob Like, Christian Gingrich and David Detweiler, a nephew of the elder Detweiler.

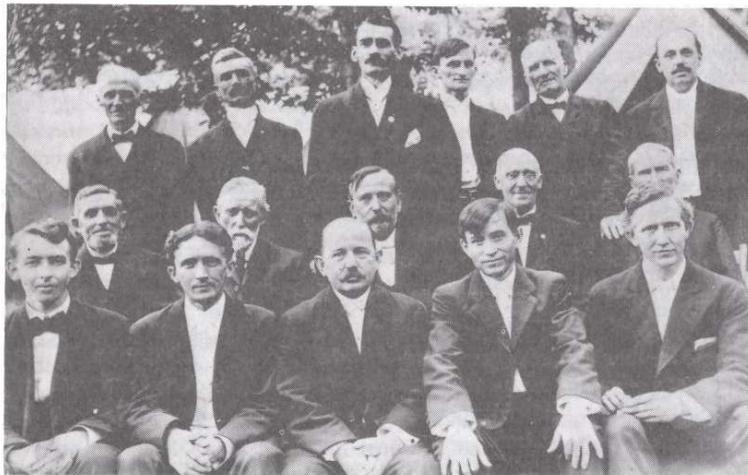
The early preachers who preached in the school house and the relocated building were Revs. Jacob Roop, David Gingrich, John Neidig, Reist -- and others who preached only occasionally as local preachers without annual conference supervision. The annual conference of 1843 sent Rev. Simon Noll, who spent many years in a most fruitful ministry, to the circuit which included this appointment. He organized the congregation at this point, during his first year's pastorate and after a gracious revival.

In course of time the congregation outgrew the capacity of the church and a new and larger one was needed. In 1860 Jacob Geyer moved from Mount Joy into this neighborhood, to the farm most recently owned by his son Abram Geyer (now deceased), and became the leading factor in the erection of a new church. He donated the lot of ground on which Geyer's church now stands and donated \$300.00 towards its erection. Before it was completed he had paid toward it about one half the cost of the building, which was erected in 1868 at a cost of \$1440. It was dedicated to the service of God December 6, 1868, by Rev. John Stamm. Later the building was enlarged, a bell placed upon it, and other improvements added. The cemetery was later enlarged, and the property is now valued at \$2500. Samuel Kinsey, who is ninety-six years of age, is the only charter member of Geyer's church who is still living. A camp meeting was held in Jacob Geyer's grove in 1873, which has been held in the same grove every year since then except for two years during which no meetings were held.

In the mean time John Shoop, a member of the church who lived in Middletown on the southwest corner of Water and Duck (Spruce) Streets, where Benjamin Ulmer now lives, opened his house for services. Here the brethren preached occasionally, and in 1852 they erected a small frame church on the rear of his lot. It was about 30 by 40 feet in size, weather-boarded up and down, stripped, and known as the "Little Brown Church." This old church is still remembered by some of the older people of town for the great revivals that were held in it, and for



Interior of Geyer's UB Church, circa 1917



Preachers at Hillsdale (Geyer's) Campmeeting, 1909

row 1 - O.L. Mease, C.W. Shoop, I.N. Seldomridge, I. Moyer Hershey, W.E. Shoop
row 2 - D.S. Longenecker, S.M. Hummel, D.D. Lowery, P.A. Bowman, C.W. Miller
row 3 - J.P. Landis, H.M. Miller, U.S.G. Renn, N.L. Linebaugh, Joseph Weirich, S.C. Enck

the frequent bad conduct of some of the people who gathered there. One of the greatest revivals ever held in town up to that time was held in this church in 1865 or 1866 by Rev. George W. Hoffman. He was serving a circuit at that time composed of nine appointments as follows: Middletown, Geyer's, Highspire, Oberlin, Ebenezer, Union Deposit, Swatara Hill⁴, Derry Church⁵ and Shope's. The great meeting held there at that time resulted in more than 100 conversions, some of whom are still members of this congregation. Among these are Mrs. Frances Sherrick and Mrs. Mary L. Baker. The church was greatly strengthened at this time in its membership, and negotiations were then entered upon to purchase the old church property of Lutheran dissenters that stood where the present First United Brethren church now stands. This property was purchased in 1867 under Rev. Hoffman's pastorate. This brother died many years ago, but his widow who is ninety-four years of age is still living and is tenderly cared for by her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. I.P. Henderson, at 260 E. Main Street.

An interesting story, commencing with the year 1825, is connected with this church property. During that year a schism occurred in the St. Peter's Lutheran church under the pastorate of Rev. Peter Sahm. A great religious awakening was in progress in the town, and meetings were held each evening in the basement of that church. The meetings were largely attended, and many members of the church professed a change of heart. But this was considered an innovation, and some of the more conservative members looked upon the movement as heretical. Finally the opposition to the meeting became so great that many members left the church and started a new congregation called Christ Church. In 1838 Philip Eittle, Adam Hemperly, Henry Breneman and John Wolf, trustees of Christ Church, bought from John Bomberger, Jacob Bomberger, Jonas Metzgar, John Snyder, Christian Lehman and Benjamin Kunkle a lot of ground on the northwest corner of Water and Duck (Spruce) Streets for \$150.00. They built on it a brick church in which they worshiped for many years. The membership gradually declined owing to deaths and removals, until it was no longer able to support a pastor. Finally, those who remained connected themselves with other churches.

On December 13, 1861, the trustees of Christ Church sold the property to Rev. C.J. Ehrhart, who conducted in it a flourishing private school known as the Middletown Academy. On January 17, 1866, Ehrhart sold the property to James Young, M.B. Rambler, Jacob L. Nissley, W.R. Alleman, John E. Carmany and G.W. Etter for \$906.00. On April 5, 1867, these gentlemen sold it to Valentine Balsbach, David Peters and John Snyder, trustees for the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, for \$1200. After its purchase, the building was entirely renovated and remodeled. The old frame church across the street was sold to the reformed Mennonites, who worshiped in it for some years until the membership dwindled down to only a few families -- among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Creep, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Hemperly, and Mr. and Mrs. Christian Yost. When the Mennonites

abandoned it, the building was sold and removed and the lot came into the possession of the heirs of the original owner.

On August 23, 1872, the surviving trustees of Christ Church, Benjamin Kunkle and Adam Hemperly, conveyed to Rev. Solomon Swartz, Rev. Joseph Weirich and David A. Detweiler, trustees of the United Brethren church, the cemetery located north of the church and adjoining it for \$18.00.

After the congregation had taken possession of the property, it prospered very nicely for several years. But it suffered a great loss in members in its early history because of the Hoffman schism. This congregation suffered more than most others because Rev. Hoffman had made many warm friends during his pastorate here. The dissatisfaction became so great that the very existence of the church depended upon the steadfastness and faithfulness of only a few members who remained, among whom the following deserve special commendation: Mr. Charles Orth, Mr. and Mrs. D.A. Detweiler, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Baker, and Mrs. Peter Brestle (now Mrs. Harry Stager, who is a member of our church in Mount Joy). D.A. Detweiler and John H. Baker have died, but the others named are still living and active in the work, and greatly rejoice in the activities and prosperity of the church during the more recent years. Many inducements from the other churches of town were presented to these faithful few to unite with them, but they remained true and loyal to their church amid many discouragements and under heavy financial burdens. The debt on the church, amounting to \$600.00, had to be provided for, and the interest paid. Additional expenses for repairs, light, fuel, insurance and the pastor's support all had to be paid. But Orth and Detweiler, like twin brothers, worked and prayed and paid together. They paid the bills as they became due, often out of their own scanty means, and for years they were the heroic leaders toward victory and prosperity. They ventured to prophesy in that strenuous period that "a bright day was awaiting our church in Middletown," and it came.

The church was connected with a large circuit up to the year 1874. At the annual conference of that year it was constituted a station, and Rev. H.C. Philips was sent as the pastor. The first quarterly conference of the station was held May 24, 1874. The following names were enrolled as members of this body: Rev. Isaiah Baltzell as the presiding elder, Rev. H.C. Philips, Rev. Jacob Focht, Rev. S.L. Swartz, Augustus Parthemore, A.H. Rider, John Mathias, John H. Baker, Howard P. Focht, Benjamin Bletz, John Maginnis, David A. Detweiler and Harry Roop. A.H. Rider was elected secretary.

Since 1874 the following ministers have served as pastors of the church: Rev. H.C. Philips, J.R. Reitzel, I.M. Groff, H.W. Zimmerman, J.M. Leshner, J.G. Fritz, T. Wagner, Z.C. Mower, T. Garland, J.G. Smoker, E. Ludwig, D.S. Eshelman, U.S.G. Renn and the present incumbent I.H. Albright.

In 1892, under the pastorate of Rev. J.G. Smoker, the old church building was torn down, and the present two-storied brick church was built on the site of the old

one at a cost of \$14,000. It is a handsome structure, 45 by 75 feet in size, has steam heat, electric lights, stained glass windows, tower and bell, frescoed walls, and fine opera chairs. The new church was dedicated to God on Sunday, February 19, 1893, by Bishop W. Castle, D.D. He was assisted by Rev. J.G. Smoker and Rev. I.L. Kephart, D.D. For nearly twenty years after the dedication the church was burdened with a debt, but through the heroic efforts of Rev. U.S.G. Renn and the co-operation of the members and friends, the last dollar of it was paid five years ago. Within the last three years a \$2500 Mohler pipe organ was placed in the church. Lately the cellar has been excavated, concreted and furnished for Sunday School and social purposes, and a new boiler was placed in it, at a cost of \$2400 -- nearly all of which has been paid for.

Harrisburg

Our preachers commenced to preach in Harrisburg before the year 1800. Newcomer, Geeting, Neidig and Pfrimmer were the first of these. John Neidig often preached in the German Reformed church now called Zion Lutheran church, near the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot on Fourth Street. The people there were glad to hear him. The pastor said, "He will do our people good instead of harm, and he will not try to steal our sheep."

Rev. John G. Pfrimmer taught school in this city and preached each Sunday somewhere in the community. On a certain occasion he had an appointment up the Susquehanna River. Starting on a Saturday, he failed to reach the neighborhood in consequence of a storm. He was compelled to stop over night with a strange family, and the conversation turned during the evening to preaching, etc. The man of the house told him that some distance away, on the following morning, one of the "Schwaramerites" was to preach and they intended to go to see and hear. The family had no idea that they were entertaining the very man who was to preach; consequently, they were very free in their conversation concerning the (to them) wonderful exercises of these meetings. "These Schwaramer preachers," said the man, "have blue beans. These they dry and beat into a powder. This they sprinkle over the floor, and whenever a person would tramp on this powder he would get a spell on him that would make him cry for mercy." Mr. Pfrimmer said he thought he would go along. So in the morning, in company with the family, he went to the place. Going into the house, he looked around to see his previous night's host and his family away back in the corner, standing against the wall, for fear of getting on the powder that they supposed was scattered over the floor. What was their surprise when, looking toward the stand, they found the very man they had kept all night making ready to preach! Mr. Pfrimmer enjoyed the joke, and no doubt made a good impression on their minds, as he always did upon the minds of his hearers.

We once owned a valuable church in this city on Front Street, built in 1850 and almost clear of debt. But it did not grow because of dissensions in the matter of garb and the secret society question. According to the writer's recollection, we also

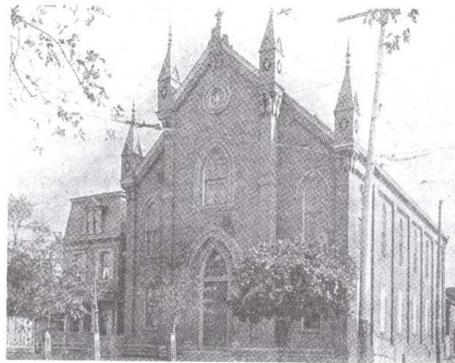
built a good church on Allison's Hill . This, too, was sold to pay the debt.

First United Brethren Church

Good, old ex-bishop Erb was endued with an unusual amount of hard, practical "Pennsylvania Dutch" common sense. He said, "I am going to Harrisburg to try once more to establish our church there. I will preach Christ, hold meetings, and whomsoever God will convert I will receive into the church -- asking no questions about secret societies." He came to this city in 1869, bought a lot on Boas Street, and built the First United Brethren Church. The work was destined to live, and still lives -- notwithstanding the rumors of its early death only a few years ago. Rev. G.W.M. Rigor served as its first regular pastor.

Reily Street

In 1879, Reily Street church was organized with 40 members by Rev. D.S. Longenecker of the Union Circuit. A board of trustees was elected. They purchased the lot where the church and parsonage now stand on the corner of Fourth and Reily Streets for \$1000. On November 10, 1879, the corner stone was laid. The first building, 40 by 80 feet, one story brick, was dedicated February 14, 1880, by Bishop J.J. Glossbrenner. This church since that time has at different times been enlarged and remodeled.⁶



Reily Street (Otterbein) Church and Parsonage, circa 1917

Derry Street

The Derry Street church, on the corner of Fifteenth and Derry Streets, was founded in 1889. The first board of trustees was appointed by the Penbrook quarterly conference at the instigation of Rev. M.J. Mumma and B.H. Engle. A chapel was

erected here in 1890, which was dedicated on Sunday, October 5th, of that year. Rev. W.H. Washinger, then a student at Lebanon Valley College, was the first pastor. He was followed by D.D. Lowery. In October 1899 Dr. J.A. Lyter was appointed pastor, and he has been serving as such very efficiently since that time until now.

After acquiring additional ground, the congregation began work on a new and enlarged building in the spring of 1909. The work went rapidly forward until May 21, 1909, when a disastrous fire swept through the nearly completed structure. The church building was almost entirely destroyed, and there was great damage to the parsonage as well. With a heroism born of faith and love, the members at once set to work to rebuild the destroyed edifice and on July 12, 1909, the new church was dedicated by Bishop J.S. Mills, D.D. We have a property here valued at \$91,000.

State Street

State Street congregation was organized April 12, 1902, by Dr. J.A. Lyter with a membership of 40. On April 26, 1903, the corner stone of the church, on the corner of Eighteenth and State Streets, was laid. On January 17, 1904, the Sunday School building was dedicated by Dr. W.R. Funk. The cost of the building was \$1200. During the summer of 1909 improvements were made on the building at a cost of \$1750. In 1913 the basement was equipped for Sunday School work at a cost of \$15,000. Rev. I.N. Seldomridge deserves the credit of developing this congregation from almost nothing to its present standing.

Sixth Street

On the first Sunday of July, 1906, a Sunday School was organized in two upper rooms of the Susquehanna School building, with 67 persons in attendance. Robert A. Enders was the first superintendent. This school was the humble beginning of another church. Rev. P.A. Bowman was asked to serve as pastor, and 30 persons were converted to God at a meeting he conducted. A valuable plot of ground on the corner of Sixth and Seneca Streets was bought for church purposes. Ground was broken for it in October 1907. About this time Rev. P.H. Balsbaugh was appointed as the pastor. The corner stone of the chapel was laid by Rev. P.A. Bowman, the first pastor, on December 15, 1907. The building was dedicated to God by Rev. D.D. Lowery on May 31, 1908. The total cost of the lot, building, fixtures and furnishings was \$23,000. Since that time several important additions were made to it, thus increasing its valuation to over \$50,000.

Conclusion

There are 43 1/2 United Brethren churches in Dauphin County, more than any one of the other denominations within the same territory. While there are other churches within the county deserving our attention, here we stop with our task not nearly done.

Appendix: September 1917 Dauphin County United Brethren Churches
 alphabetically by charge,
 with the Harrisburg churches listed in the order of founding

Chamber Hill: M.A. Wagner	Jacksonville: H.H. Fertig
(01) Chamber's Hill	(17) Carsonville Trinity
(02) Ebenezer	(18) Ebenezer
Grantville: C.A. Sollenberger	(19) Enders Salem
(03) Grantville St. John's	(20) Fisherville Grace
(04) Manada Hill	(21) Jacob's
(05) St. Paul's ⁷	(22) St. Paul's
(xx) Shirks [Lebanon Co.]	(23) Union Trinity
Halifax: C.E. Rettew	(24) Zion (Stone)
(06) Halifax Otterbein	Linglestown: C.A. Lynch
Harrisburg First: N.L. Linebaugh	(25) Linglestown
(07) Harrisburg First	(26) Rockville ⁸
Harrisburg Otterbein: S.E. Rupp	Lykens: J.R. McDonald
(08) Harrisburg Reily Street (Otterbein)	(27) Lykens Otterbein
Harrisburg Derry Street: J.A. Lyter	Lykens Valley Circuit: S.L. Rhoads
(09) Harrisburg Derry Street	(28) Berrysburg
Harrisburg State Street: E.A.G. Bossler	(29) Elizabethville
(10) Harrisburg State Street	(30) Forney's
Harrisburg Sixth Street: Joseph Daugherty	(31) Pillow
(11) Harrisburg Sixth Street	(32) Riegle's
Hershey: R.R. Butterwick	Middletown: I.H. Albright
(12) Hershey Salem	(33) Middletown
Highspire: H.F. Rhoad	Millersburg: A.L. Haeseler
(13) Highspire	(34) Killinger's
Hillsdale: J.P. Hummel	(35) Millersburg Hebron
(xx) Falmouth [Lancaster Co.]	Oberlin: H.S. Kiefer
(14) Geyer's (Cemetery, Hillsdale)	(36) Oberlin Neidig Memorial
(15) Shope's	Penbrook: H.M. Miller
(xx) Swatara Hill [1/2 ownership] ⁴	(37) Penbrook Grace
Hummelstown: A.S. Lehman	Royalton: William Beach
(16) Hummelstown	(38) Royalton Emanuel
	Steelton: A.K. Wier
	(39) Steelton Centenary
	Union Deposit Circuit: G.W. Hallman
	(40) Fishburn's
	(41) Stoverdale: by Joseph Weirich
	(42) Union Deposit
	Williamstown: C. Mease
	(43) Williamstown

Editor's Footnotes

1. The author has confused this surname Riegel with the Riegle's Church in Lykens Valley. For Newcomer to be in Hershey in the morning, spend the night in the Lykens Valley, and be in Oberlin the next morning would be neither practical nor possible. The reference here is to John Adam Riegel, a United Brethren lay preacher who originally lived near Jacob Albright east of Ephrata and was instrumental in the conversion of Albright. About 1805 Riegel moved to Derry township, along the Swatara Creek near Hummelstown. His home was a preaching point and over night stop for traveling preachers. He died 8/2/1822 and is buried in the cemetery at Hummelstown.

2. The author's comments on the Hoffman schism here and in the later section on the Middletown church are fascinating. Since he knew personally George Hoffman's widow and many of those who were directly involved in the events in question, his unique treatment of the whole episode cannot be dismissed. The United Christian Church founded by Hoffman exists today, primarily in Lebanon County. In addition to approximately 15 congregations, the denomination maintains a camp meeting north of Cleona and a retirement home north of Annville. Throughout the years this evangelical sect has emphasized plain dress, pacifism, the absence of musical instruments in worship, and missionary work (through the Brethren in Christ Church). The standard explanation behind the formation of the United Christian Church is this: *George Hoffman was a conservative element within the United Brethren Church. He protested specifically against the growing permissiveness toward baptizing infants, serving in the military, wearing wedding rings, and tolerating secret societies. Hesitant to create another denomination, he did not formally organize his followers until May of 1877. By that time, many who had shared his conservative views had drifted back to the United Brethren or joined other plain denominations (Mennonites, Brethren, Brethren in Christ, United Zion). Had Hoffman organized in the 1860's at the height of the crisis, there would probably have been a much greater effect on the United Brethren Church and a much larger United Christian Church today.*

3. The Hoernerstown church stood on the north side of Union Deposit Road at the east end of the village. The church occupied the rear of the property, on which a home has been erected nearer the road. The property was purchased for the church in 1862, and the remaining members transferred to Union Deposit about 1893.

4. There was a Swatara Hill class off-and-on from 1860 to 1917. While the United Brethren may have been one of the denominations to have some interest in the union church erected there, to call it 1/2 ownership would be out of line with the actual practice. Because the Church of Brethren took the initiative to sponsor the Sunday School at the site, it was that denomination that eventually prevailed and that maintains a congregation there to this day.

5. The Derry appointment was the Hershey class. Their building has been called the Spring Creek meeting house, Salem UB Church, and First United Brethren Church.

6. The Otterbein Church relocated to its present location at Third and Peffer Streets in 1929.

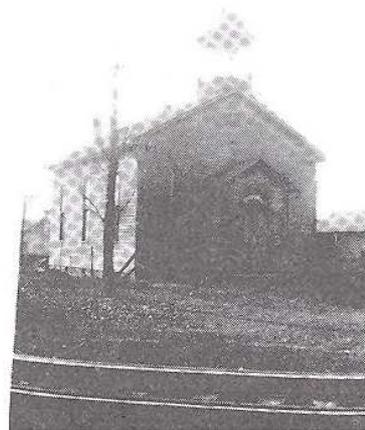
7. St. Paul's Church stood in the Fishing Creek Valley, northeast of Manada Gap. In 1932 the area was depopulated and the land taken by the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation. The building was torn down, and the cemetery is maintained by the



Interior of St. Paul's Church, 1932

military. While the site, along Ammo Road, is in a restricted area, it may be visited with permission from the base headquarters. The final service in the building was held Sunday afternoon October 16, 1932, by Pastor Russell L. Shay of the Linglestown and Colonial Park circuit. The picture on the cover of this issue was taken immediately after that service.

8. The present Rockville United Methodist Church, which dates from 1930, is not really in Rockville. At the time of Albright's 1917 paper, the congregation still worshiped in its original 1873 building just north of the Rockville Bridge between the Northern Central railroad to Dauphin and the Pennsylvania Canal.



Rockville UB Church, circa 1917