Chapter II

OUR PIONEERS

The spiritual movement which culminated in the founding of The United Brethren in Christ Church had its origin within the bounds of East Pennsylvania Annual Conference. It focused in one deeply-moving dramatic scene at a “Great Meeting” held in the barn on the farm of Isaac Long, near Lancaster City on Whitsuntide, in the year 1767. A large company of people of various denominations had gathered. So many people had come to the meeting that not all could be accommodated in the barn. An overflow meeting was held in the orchard nearby. Among the ministers present were Martin Boehm of the Mennonite Society and Philip William Otterbein of the German Reformed Church. Boehm preached the first discourse. When he had finished, and before he could take his seat, Otterbein arose, embraced him, exclaiming, “Wir sind Brüder!”— (“We are Brethren”). This demonstration of spiritual passion and expression was more than an act. It was a symbol—a symbol that characterized the genesis and genius of that united brotherhood which when it came to full fruition was called, “The Church of the United Brethren in Christ.”

Buildings on Isaac Long Farm

The causes and results of the general revival movement of the period cannot be restated in this connection. They have been given as an introductory statement, by nearly all who have written on general or sectional United Brethren Church history. Nor shall we attempt to cover in detail those causes and results which enter into the total United Brethren phase of it.

Inasmuch as the movement is embodied in and revolves about persons rather than organizations, the period of the background of
East Pennsylvania Conference will be told through the biographies of the men engaged in that movement. Carlyle, in one of his essays, writes: "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." 3 Emerson wrote: "all history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly, no history, only biography." 4 United Brethren Church History is no exception to these statements.

There is abundant reason, why we should call Otterbein and Boehm, pioneers. Luccock cites Moffatt's translation of, Acts 3:15: "You killed the pioneer of life," and comments on it thus: "A pioneer is one who enlarges the possible area of life, one who pushes back the horizons and blazes the trail into new habitations for humanity. Jesus was not merely a horizontal pioneer, pushing back the horizons of continents. He was a vertical pioneer, opening up a way into the high heavens and depths of the human heart." In a very real sense, Otterbein and Boehm were pioneers fitting this description. That which happened at the Isaac Long meeting was the result of their exploring the hitherto untouched areas of unsurrendered life.

By noting the spiritual experiences and tracing the social contacts of these pioneers we arrive at an understanding of the nature and scope of the reformation they wrought. A brief review of their careers therefore follows.

**Philip William Otterbein**

Philip William Otterbein was born June 3, 1726, in Dillenburg, Nassau, Germany. He was educated for the ministry, and served as house-teacher for a brief time. When twenty-two years of age, he was appointed teacher in the Herborn school of which he was a graduate. In the year 1749, he received an appointment as pastor; and was ordained on July 13 of that year. Due to the lack of ministers in Penn's Province and through the solicitation of the Rev. Michael Schlatter, he came to America in 1752. In August of the same year, he accepted the pastorate of the German Reformed Church in Lancaster.

"Lancaster Townstead," as the county-seat of Lancaster County5 was called when laid out in 1730, was soon to become the most important center west of Philadelphia. It was incorporated as a borough in 1742. "Mechanics of every kind flocked to the place, and built small but comfortable homes, some of which are to this day (1883) to be seen on West King Street, serving to remind one of the time these unpretentious pioneers located in the place." 6 Others of the citizens were traders, keepers of small shops, and owners of small industries. According to Governor Pownall, who visited it in 1754, it had about three hundred houses, and a population of two thousand. It is well to be impressed with the fact that Otterbein's contacts in this new parish were, for the most part, with town or city folk, as compared with the contacts Boehm had, which were entirely with rural folk. The city folk and the country folk, then, as for many years following, had little in common, except for trade.
The congregation, of which Otterbein took charge, had been organized in the year 1730. He gave all the vigor of his young manhood to the affairs of his parish. Before the first year had closed, he directed his congregation in the project of tearing down the log church, which had been erected in 1736, and in the erection of a new one. "The second church edifice, with its massive walls and large proportions, considering the time when it was built, was erected during his pastorate." A school was conducted in connection with the church.

In 1752, the Coetus met at Lancaster, in the schoolhouse. At this meeting the Reverend Otterbein asked that his schoolmaster (John Hoffman) be not passed over in the giving of donations, but that he be rewarded for his faithfulness. At a meeting of the Coetus in 1753, the Lancaster schoolmaster was given three pounds. The school received additional funds in 1758 from the sale of property bequeathed to the church by
Andrew Bersinger. A house and lot were sold and the money devoted to the parsonage and the schoolhouse.8

While Otterbein gave time to directing material enterprises, and to the supervision of the educational work of the parish, his deepest concern was for spiritual advancement.

Owing probably to the frequent vacancies which had occurred in the pastorate during some years previous, loose ideas came to prevail; and various irregularities, especially in regard to order and discipline, had gradually crept into the church. This was a source of grief to the pastor. He complained of many grievances which had rendered his ministry unhappy, and demanded as a condition of continuance, the exercise of a just ecclesiastical discipline, the abolition of all appearances of disorder, and entire liberty of conscience in the performance of his pastoral duties.9

Rev. Otterbein's labors were not confined to the Lancaster parish. He also preached at regular intervals at the Pequea Church, known also as the "Old Dutch Church," of which the present Reformed Church along the highway north of New Providence, is the successor. The old church was located in Strasburg Township, one and three-quarter miles directly south of the Borough of Strasburg. Only a neglected brush and briar covered cemetery remains to mark the location.

One outstanding incident in the life of Otterbein, while at Lancaster, remains to be added. It, more than anything else, gave direction to his subsequent course. It may be said to have been the spiritual spark which a little more than a decade later burst forth in holy zeal and love as manifested at the Isaac Long meeting. Our first church historian, Rev. Spayth, refers to, but does not cite, "one circumstance of Otterbein's life in Lancaster."10 Lawrence, first, places this incident on record, writing thus,

Not long after he came to Lancaster, and immediately after he had preached one of his most searching discourses, a member of his congregation came to him in tears, bitterly lamenting his sins, and asked advice. Looking upon him sadly, yet tenderly, he only said: "My friend, advice is scarce with me today." The seeker went on his way, and Mr. Otterbein repaired to his closet, and there wrestled, like Jacob, until he obtained the forgiveness of sins, the witness of the Holy Spirit of adoption, and was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory!11

Dr. Drury repeats Otterbein's reply to his friend, as given by Lawrence, and makes comments on the incident.12 Drury states that certain papers were left by Spayth which fixed the time of this incident to be about the year 1754.

Whatever the setting of this incident, or the conversation preceding and following it, Spayth, without doubt heard from the lips of Otterbein what had transpired, remembered the reply to the
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inquirer, and recorded it in his notes. These words, “My friend, advice is scarce with me today,” have become a classic in United Brethren tradition. The interpretation of them, as we notice by the comments thereon by the several historians, agree with Otterbein’s practices and preachings subsequent to their utterance. We can only add that it was a crisis-experience—an occasion for probing deeper into spiritual areas, both of the human soul and the mysteries of God’s redeeming grace.

The Tulpehocken Church in eastern Lebanon County next received the benefit of Otterbein’s ministry sometime during the year 1758. It is sometimes called the, “Lower Tulpehocken Church,” to distinguish it from the, “Upper Tulpehocken,” or Host Church. The church was then and is now in a strictly rural community. It derived its name from a stream which drains a rich agricultural valley. Germans from the Schoharie Valley in New York settled in the Tulpehocken Valley in 1723. Other German immigrants came northwesterly along the Schuylkill River and took up land in the same valley. Many of these warrants are for land in Tulpehocken Township, Lancaster County, thus clearly showing that before the dividing off of Berks County, certain areas of the Tulpehocken were within the bounds of Lancaster County.

Otterbein’s ministry extended eastward, well toward Reading; westward toward Lebanon; and some miles in extent both north and south of the Great Road leading from Reading to Harrisburg. The nearest contemporary parish was Christ Lutheran Church, situated about a mile eastward along the same Great Road, a few rods to the south of it. Dr. John Nicholas Kurtz was its pastor during the years, 1747-1770. Dr. Kurtz and Otterbein were again neighbors while serving pastorates at York, Pennsylvania.

The Trinity Reformed Church at Tulpehocken was organized sometime before 1745. In that year the first church building was put up of logs, on the southeast corner of the old cemetery, and near the present parsonage. The Rev. Michael Schlatter was one of the early preachers who came to the community and preached intermittently. Otterbein’s spiritual venture in this second parish issued in the holding of evening meetings for prayer. It was an innovation. Its practice, method, and achievement stamped him a genuine pioneer. As is always the case, by a departure from the established order, he aroused much opposition and was severely criticized, even despised and persecuted. We are indebted to Spayth for information on the subject. He writes:

As the effects began to appear by some manifesting a serious concern for the salvation of their souls, by weeping and mourning on account of their low estate, these special and new meetings began to be called in question. Some approved of them—others shunned them. “What,” they said! “The preacher, and men and women, kneel and pray, and weep, and call upon God and Jesus, to have mercy on them! Who ever heard of such a thing?” And yet it was heard and seen.
now in a small way, and by a small beginning. Thank God it 
was begun. It brought blessings from heaven, and reproaches
from men, including some preachers and pastors. And as
might be expected, the seed thus sown and watered, God
would sooner or later own and bless, and cause to spring up
and bear fruit. 18

Another innovation by Otterbein was to preach on weekdays. He
furthermore gave much time to visiting and counseling in the
homes of his parish.

The influence exerted by him while at Tulpehocken was later
reflected in scores of communities throughout other sections of
Pennsylvania, in the Valley of Virginia, and in Ohio, as certain
families migrated to those areas. He made such a tremendous spirit-
ual impact upon certain families so that when one traces the travels
of Newcomer and takes note of the hearts and homes open to New-
comer, one cannot but say to himself, “Here are the fruits of Otter-
bein’s ministry in the Tulpehocken Valley.” When we consider the
names: Neidig, Shuey, Brown, Zeller, Dreisbach, Berger, and others,
all of whom are first found in Berks County, we find evidence to
substantiate the claim that Otterbein did more, in those two brief
years for the future of the United Brethren in Christ Church, than
any other man in a similar span of time.

Leaving the Tulpehocken Church in 1760, his regular pastoral
services ceased in eastern Pennsylvania. While there is evidence
that he visited east of the Susquehanna, he was not again to come
into public view until the notable meeting at Isaac Long’s. 14

Martin Boehm

Jacob Boehm, father of Martin, was of Swiss Mennonite extrac-
tion. He landed at Philadelphia in the year 1715, tarried some time
in Germantown, then settled in Conestoga (now Pequa) Township,
on a three hundred and eighteen-acre tract located approximately
six miles south of Lancaster City, (about one and one-half miles
south of the present village of Willow Street). Later he purchased
an additional tract of one hundred and two acres and one hundred
and forty-four perches adjoining his original purchase on the south-
west. These plantations were removed by but one from the earliest
of the more remote inland settlements—that commonly known as
the Pequa Settlement of the year 1710. The influence upon Ameri-
can history by the coming of the good ship, “Mayflower,” to the
shores of New England on December 21, 1620, is equalled in signifi-
cance by the coming of the ship, “Maria Hope,” to Philadelphia on
September 23, 1710. The combined passenger and crew list on the
Maria Hope numbered ninety-four persons. Among them was a
small group in which our interest centers. Soon after arrival, their
representative appeared before the Penn’s property commissioners
and obtained warrants for the survey of 10,500 acres of land, to be
divided among, “Swissers lately arrived in this Province.” By July
1711, patents for 5,500 acres plus six per cent additional for roads,
etc., had been issued. This formed the Pequea Settlement. This historic event was commemorated in the year 1910 by the Lancaster County Historical Society placing a marker at the entrance to the grounds of the “Brick,” or Willow Street Mennonite Church. The tablet shows the land to be located on the Pequea Creek and crossed easterly and westerly by the old Philadelphia and Conestoga Road.

One of the most influential of the 1710 group was a man by the name of Martin Kendig, whose daughter, Barbara, Jacob Boehm subsequently married. It was he who on a return to the Palatinate induced Jacob Boehm and others to come to America. Also as a result of Kendig’s visit to the Fatherland there were numerous additional arrivals during the years 1712-1717 and following, who settled near the original purchases. Looking over the land warrant-survey drafts of Lancaster County, we find the names of Swiss, German, and Huguenots in the majority in all of the townships except about half a dozen on the eastern and southern boundaries.

Martin Boehm, one of ten children to grow to maturity, was born November 30, 1725. He married Eve Steiner (or Stoner), in the
year 1753. She was born December 25, 1734. The newly married couple began their career on a one hundred and eighty-one-acre farm. It was a part of the three hundred and eighty-one acre tract patented to his father. Martin Boehm was possessor of at least three other tracts of farming land, all totalling a little more than four hundred acres. This shows him to have been a rather extensive landowner, and a man of affairs in the community.

In due course of time, Martin Boehm formally joined the Society of Mennonites, most likely the Byerland congregation. At the age of thirty-one he was chosen by lot as a minister of said Society. He first served as assistant to Bishop Jacob Hostetter, who came to America in 1712 and settled south of Lancaster, in Lancaster Township. Bishop Hostetter was spiritual shepherd to a number of congregations, including the one at Byerland, until his death in 1761. Martin Boehm in that year was advanced to the office of bishop, succeeding Bishop Hostetter.

The Byerland Meetinghouse, so named after the Byer family, of whom, Samuel was the grantor of the parcel of ground on which the first house of worship was erected about the year 1755, was located about two miles southwesterly from the Boehm plantations. That the Boehm family had connections with this congregation is authenticated in that, Jacob Boehm, an elder in the Mennonist Society was one of the grantees named in the transfer of said church lot.

The ministry of Martin Boehm in the Mennonite Society, however, according to both past and present practices was not limited to one congregation. The Herr congregation, met in the famous “Christian Herr House,” erected in 1719. It was used as a dwelling, and, as a place of worship for one hundred and thirty years. It still stands, and is located about the same distance to the northeast from the Boehm farms as the Byerland house to the southwest. In these and in other meetinghouses, the voice of Martin Boehm was heard from 1758 to 1761, although for a time in more or less flagging and subdued tones. The inner urge—the workings of God’s grace moved him to serious Bible study and travelling prayer. His personal state of soul and his public ministry were far from satisfactory to himself. He too, like Otterbein, began probing deeper. As a result, on an occasion while following the plow, God’s answer came. That answer, according to Spayth’s recital was a voice from Holy Writ: “I am come to seek and to save that which was lost.” In a moment a stream of joy was poured over me. I praised the Lord, and left the field, and told my companion what joy I felt.”

This experience came sometime during the period, 1758-61. Precisely what year it occurred is irrelevant. The fact of it is the all important matter. Aside from the evidence of historical record, one can readily surmise the effect of Boehm’s testimony from that time forward. The results upon Boehm’s contemporaries were far-reaching, and highly contributory to the new awakening in many a family circle. It was Martin Boehm’s launching out into hitherto unbeaten paths that opened up new highways upon which resounded
the tread of migrating men, women, and children, during the latter half of the eighteenth century. They were the descendants of those Swiss and German Mennonites who came to Lancaster County during the early decades of the same century.

Martin Boehm's ministry in the Mennonite Society was to these families and their children. He was one of them. He spoke their language, knew their domestic, social, and religious doctrines and practices. Of these settlers, those whose names enter very largely into the subsequent United Brethren History are: Bear, Funk, Erb, Herr, Hershey, Kreider, Landis, Light, Long, Kauffman, and Newcomer. As they migrated to Lebanon and Dauphin Counties; to the areas west of the Susquehanna, on into Ohio and Virginia, and to Canada; the influence of Boehm went with them.

As early as 1735, certain Swiss Mennonites bought land in the Valley of Virginia. Prominent United Brethren names among them were: Herr, Funk, Kauffman, Strickler, and Long. Even as early as 1733, Jacob Stover, a land agent, had patented to him 5,000 acres, known as the "Massanutten Patent." The land was located, on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, in the present Page County. The present Lee highway crosses it, the city of Luray being on its eastern border. One historian notes the significance of this in a treatise under the title, "Massanutten Settled by the Pennsylvania Pilgrim—the first White Settlement in the Shenandoah Valley." 17

The settling of Pennsylvania German migrants in the county of Page serves merely as an example of a more general migration. Others of the same stock and kin, during the eighteenth century, established residence in other counties comprising the Shenandoah Valley; i.e., Frederick, Shenandoah, Rockingham, and Augusta. Even today the similarity of family names within our conference boundary with those of the Virginia valleys is very striking. Newcomer, in the several accounts of his visits, mentions these: Beaver, Bender, Boehm, Forrey, Funkhouser, Herr, Heistand, Hershberger, Hess, Nieswander, Rhinehart, Stouffer, Strickler, Yeager, and Zimmerman.

We reach momentarily into a later period of United Brethren history, to mention in this connection that Newcomer visited this region in the year 1800, just eight days before the first annual conference went into session. On that occasion Martin Boehm and his son Henry were Newcomer's traveling companions. This particular itinerary took them as far south as Staunton. On the return northward they turned off the main valley road, went eastward and entered the Massanutten Valley at Keiseltown, continued northward the entire length of the valley, then crossed the mountain westward and emerged at New Market. In the vicinity of Strasburg, these traveling missionaries held a meeting at the home of a certain Mr. A. Boehm. Farther south in the same valley, Brother Strickler met them and took them to his house. During this stay a meeting was held and "father Boehm baptized young Daniel Strickler and his companion." Incidentally, it may be said that
Martin Boehm’s sister, Mary, was married to Henry Strickler.

On the surface it might seem that this statement of events taking place in Virginia, is a digression from the objective of this volume. However, underneath there are several close connections of the evangelical movement in Virginia with the work in Eastern Pennsylvania. We can now clearly see the reason for Boehm being called to Virginia, in 1761, to give spiritual aid to its people. We can also now understand why a preacher from Virginia is present at the Isaac Long meeting, six years later. Furthermore, when we come to the era when organized work begins through the original conference, certain Virginians are appointed to circuits east of the Susquehanna; and others whose names appear on the conference roll are from the same State.

Having observed the background of Boehm’s work as a participant in a new spiritual movement, we return now to give a more or less detailed account of his movements and ministry following his deliverance from the shackles which had held him bound. On the occasion of his visit to Virginia in 1761 he was joyfully received, and the successes he had greatly confirmed his own spiritual experiences, so that when he returned to his home community, he launched out with increased courage in proclaiming the gospel which redeems from sin unto salvation. He now adopted new measures to gain access to the hearts of the people. Like Otterbein he began to hold meetings “on week days, and some by candle light.” He met with people in their homes and appointed meetings in houses to which people of the neighborhood were invited. He met with others of like mind in what were called, “Great Meetings.” To these, people came in large numbers, not only from among the Mennonites but from other denominations. It was at one of these that Otterbein and Boehm met as we have noted.

After the Isaac Long meeting: “He early appears as preaching regularly at three places. He preached at Pequa (to the ‘Pequa brethren’ of his own neighborhood), at Landis Valley (to the ‘Conestoga brethren’ in the Long neighborhood), and at Donegal (to the ‘River brethren’ on the Susquehanna). For the meetings at his own place he fitted up the old house that had been built and occupied by his father. The congregations were all principally made up of Mennonites.”

There are no available records to tell us of his work over a period of approximately thirty years. An estimate of the nature and extent of his spiritual ministry must be by inference, based on the knowledge of events prior to the year 1767 and following the recordings in Newcomer’s Journal beginning with May 1796. However, from the land records we learn that he sold in the year 1783, to his sons, Jacob and John, all but one of the three farms held by him. This would indicate that he relieved himself of the responsibilities connected with extensive farming and gave more time to preaching.
In the year 1796, May 1, we find him at Abraham Troxel's two miles north of Lebanon. It was the occasion of a quarterly meeting held by Newcomer. Boehm preached the first sermon, on the text, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Similar references are made by Newcomer over the period from 1796 onward to 1810. Following are some of the places where he appeared and took part in the services during the period:

1. Pennsylvania
   a. Lancaster County: at Christopher's Grosh's, near Rancks Church; at Jacob Shelley's, two miles west of Lancaster; at Christian Hershey's, a mile northeast of Lancaster; at his own home, frequently.
   b. Lebanon County: at Abraham Troxel's; at Martin Kreider's, two miles southwest of Lebanon; at Nafzinger's, two miles northeast of Palmyra.
   c. Berks County: at Sinking Spring; at John Zeller's, near Mt. Aetna.
   d. Dauphin County: at John George Pfrimmer's, in Harrisburg; at Mercer's; at John Neidig's, near Oberlin.
   e. Cumberland County: at Shopp's near Shiremanstown; at Abraham Myer's, near Carlisle; at David Snyder's near Newville.
   f. Franklin County: at Leymeister's; at Rocky Springs.

2. Maryland
   At Jacob Bowlus', near Middletown; at Otterbein's Church, Baltimore; at Bishop Asbury's, in the same city; at Hagerstown; at Christian Newcomer's, Beaver Creek.

3. Virginia
   At numerous places during the journey of September 1800.

   To Boehm came the distinction of frequently preaching the first discourse when a Sacramental, or three-day meeting was opened on a Saturday; to preach the first discourse on Sabbath morning; and to be one of two ministers to distribute the elements for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. He was held in great veneration by Newcomer, who often speaks of him as, "my worthy old brother," and who time and again comments thus: "Brother Boehm spoke with uncommon power." At a Sacramental meeting held at the Peace Church, "Friedens Kirche," near Shiremanstown, which opened on Saturday, November 9, 1799, "Brother Troxel spoke first, then brothers Boehm and Geeting, with grace and power . . . (On Sunday) a vast concourse of people were assembled; Br. Geeting delivered the first discourse, Neidig followed him; on the Sacramental occasion, Brs. Boehm and Geeting distributed the emblems of wine and bread, it was truly a blessed time."

   These and other facts recorded by Newcomer reveal Boehm's ministry was very extended in area, and very acceptable and effective. They also leave the impression that he was considered the
chief among them. While these recordings cover only about the last third of his ministry, we can be assured that they are indicative of the early and middle period of his ministerial career. His son, Rev. Henry Boehm, writing of his own work among the German people of Germantown, Pa., in his efforts to establish the Methodist Church there in the year 1803, relates that his father had preached there many years before and that the people were pleased with him. Writing in general terms about his father's preaching, Rev. Henry Boehm says: “He preached with great life, power, and success, and had many seals to his ministry.”

It is not within the scope of this volume to enter upon an extended discussion of Martin Boehm’s connection with the Methodists. That in the later years of his life his name appeared on the roll of the local class meeting at Boehm’s Chapel, is conceded. It is also a fact that he had some part in the movement to erect this Chapel.

The Chapel forty feet by thirty-two feet, built of limestone, stands about three hundred feet south of the present Boehm’s Methodist Church, which is located along the highway route no. 72. Henry Boehm writing concerning the Chapel, mentions: “My brother Jacob gave the land for the house (Chapel) and the burying ground. It was called ‘Boehm’s Chapel’ because it was built upon Boehm’s land in Boehm’s neighborhood, and because the different families of Boehm’s did much toward its erection, and were regular attendants.”

An examination of the several deeds for transfer of land of which the church lot was a parcel shows that it was a parcel of the twenty-one acres sold by Jacob Stoner to Martin Boehm on June 8, 1765. On June 21, 1783, Martin Boehm transferred the twenty-one acres, with two other tracts to his son Jacob, who in turn sold this piece of ground to Christian Herr of Manor Township on December 3, 1791, and on the day immediately following, Christian Herr sold one hundred and fifty perches of the twenty-one acre tract to the trustees for the Chapel. The language stating the purpose for use of said ground is as follows: “In trust to and for the use of the Religious Society of Protestants in and near the said Township of Conestoga called Methodists, for the purpose of erecting Churches, Meeting Houses and Houses of Religious Worship and School Houses and burying ground for the said religious society called Methodists.”

The trustees in order named were: Martin Boehm, and Jacob Boehm of Conestoga Township; Abraham Keagy, John Miller, Simon Miller and John Hart of Martic Township; Frederick Rathvone of Strasburg Township; and Joseph Buckwalter and Benjamin Souter of Lampeter Township. The sale price was five pounds.

Furthermore, he was a great friend of Bishop Asbury. The bishop was always thrilled by the presence of the elder Boehm. Finally, it can be said he was often found preaching in Methodist meetings. But on the contrary, none of these contacts, connections and interests, other than the appearance of his name on the local Methodist class roll prove him to have official Methodist connections. In that
period relations between Methodists and United Brethren were very friendly. Henry Boehm tells of these relations. The time is during the year 1803-04, when Henry Boehm and Jacob Gruber traveled the Dauphin Circuit, the language is as follows:

We held what were called union, or friendly meetings, where the Methodists and the United Brethren in Christ met in harmony, and the ministers took turns in preaching. These meetings were of great interest to the Methodists. It gave them access to many they could not otherwise have reached. We held one of these meetings in Columbia in August. Multitudes were present. James Thomas preached the first sermon, then my father preached in German, then I preached in English. Thus we had three sermons in the forenoon without intermission. In the afternoon three of the United Brethren held forth: Smith, Hershey and Shaefer.

Martin Boehm was present at the 1789 conference held at Otterbein's parsonage in Baltimore, and the 1791 conference held at Spangler's. At the organization conference of the year 1800, Otterbein and Boehm were selected overseers or bishops. He continued to serve in that capacity during all of his remaining years. He was present at the annual sessions from 1800 to 1810, excepting the years 1806 and 1808. He presided over sessions of 1804, 1807, and 1809. Naturally, in his later years physical strength was on the wane. This no doubt accounts for his absence from the sessions, 1806, 1808, and 1810. At the time of the latter he was then past four score years of age. Likewise, advanced age, most likely, prevented attendance at the conference of 1811. Before the time for the 1812 session rolled around, Father Boehm was no more. On the seventeenth of March, 1812, he became ill, and six days after, on the twenty-third, the earthly career of this worthy servant of God came to an end. His body was laid to rest on the twenty-fifth, in the Boehm's Chapel burying ground. Who performed the funeral rites none now can say. Christian Newcomer at the time was visiting a Methodist Annual Conference at Leesburg, Virginia. The word of Boehm's death did not reach him until April second. Rev. Henry Boehm and Bishop Asbury were also in attendance at the Leesburg Conference. When
the session had closed, Bishop Asbury gave direction to Henry Boehm to make preparation to go on a journey to Father Boehm's, saying he felt that not all was well with the elder Boehm. They set out on the journey and when they reached Samuel Binkley's house, about a mile from the Boehm's old homestead, "mystery was solved, there we heard my father was dead."

The mourning friends once more gathered in the Chapel on Sunday the fifth of April and Bishop Asbury preached a sermon on the text, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." The sorrowing widow lived until the year 1822. Newcomer visited her on the seventeenth of September of that year. He records in his Journal: "I visited old sister Martin Boehm, a matron of 88 years; she was greatly rejoiced to see me." A little more than two months later, on November sixteenth, she too passed on.

A suitable memorial of granite commemorating the labors of this pious couple was erected at the spot of their interment, largely through the energies of Dr. S. S. Hough. United Brethren and Methodists joined in making this monument possible and in the signal honor given. Dedicatory exercises were held on the cemetery on the afternoon of May 18, 1929, in connection with the General Conference held in the Covenant Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Bishop Fout spoke for the United Brethren and bishop Richardson for the Methodists. At the forenoon session of the conference on the same day, Major J. S. Boehm of Toronto and Mrs. Colin W. Campbell of Winnipeg, Canada, both great-great-grandchildren of Martin Boehm and wife made brief addresses, paying high tribute to their noble forbears.

The contribution of Father Boehm to the evangelical movement
in general and to the United Brethren in Christ Church in particular cannot be overstated. His breaking away from established order and precedent, his overwhelming power over the gainsayer, his evangelical passion and resolute persuasiveness, stamp him as a man of exceptional moral purpose and extraordinary spiritual gifts. The spiritual reformation he wrought was nothing short of revolutionary in character.

His physical characteristics are given by Dr. Drury: "He is described as being a short, stout man, with a vigorous constitution, an intellectual countenance, and a fine flowing beard, which gave him, in his later years, a patriarchal appearance." This impression may have been made by the portrait used in this volume. Concerning it, Rev. Henry Boehm after visiting our Publishing House in 1856, wrote the following:

When I entered their building and looked upon the wall I saw a portrait of my father. I had not seen it for fifty years, nor did I know that it had been preserved, or that there was an image of him in existence. There he was with his German visage, his gray locks and venerable beard. It was a very good likeness, painted by a German artist for my nephew, Martin Boehm, who carried it west with him when he went to Ohio. At his death, it was presented to the United Brethren in Christ, who were glad to get such a likeness to adorn the walls of their publishing house.

George Adam Geeting

The Reverend George Adam Geeting performed a unique service for the United Brethren cause in eastern Pennsylvania. Inasmuch as Otterbein's ministry no longer extended into eastern Pennsylvania, the question arises; what further influence was in operation among the Reformed element in our area? The answer is; that influence came through Geeting. He may be said to have held the position of an intermediary between the Reformed and the Mennonite elements. A recital of the manner in which he became a leader in the spiritual movement and the work he did for it will make clear why such a position is claimed for him.

Geeting was born February 6, 1741, near the birthplace of Otterbein. Having come to America in his eighteenth year, he soon thereafter permanently settled near Keedysville, Maryland. There he came under the influence of Otterbein's preaching. He was ordained a minister in the Reformed Church; first by Otterbein and William Hendel in the year 1783; and in the year 1788, more formally by direction of the Coetus. He was not present at the Synod sessions after 1797. The Synod of 1804 expelled him. "His offence was the same as Mr. Otterbein's—not greater, nor different." He was present at the conferences held in the years 1789 and 1791; and at all the annual conferences from 1800 onward to the time of his death, excepting the year 1804. He served as secretary of the conference during those years, and presided over four annual sessions in the
Congregation Assembled at Geeting Monument, Geeting Meeting-house Cemetery, Near Keedysville, Maryland, Sesqui-Centennial Celebration, 1939, Pennsylvania Annual Conference

Present at the Celebration
(Standing in the Foreground, Left to Right)
Phares B. Gibble, Charles W. Brewbaker, Paul E. Holdcraft
F. Berry Plummer, J. Balmer Showers
absence of both Otterbein and Boehm. A little more than two months after the last session he attended, he died, on June 28, 1812. The following extracts from Newcomer's Journal tell of his visits to our area.

1796, April 26th—This day I came in company with Bro. George Geeting to what is called Berner's Church, but we were not permitted to preach therein; so Bro. Geeting spoke in the graveyard adjoining the church, to a numerous congregation with remarkable power. April 27th—We had a meeting at a place called the Black Ridge Church; here we were also refused to preach in the church, and brother Geeting spoke in the School House adjoining. April 29th—was our appointment at a church called Pibob's. 

1797, Oct. 8th (Sunday)—This day the church in this place (Schaefferstown), is to be dedicated to God; may the Lord assist to perform the task in a manner acceptable in his sight. This afternoon, the Rev. Mr. Wagner delivered the first sermon; in the afternoon, brother Geeting preached with great blessing; by candle light, the Rev. Mr. Hendel delivered a handsome discourse. 9th—The Rev. Mr. Rahausen preached in the forenoon; in the afternoon, the Revs. Lochman and Williams; in the evening I preached from Hebrews 2, v. 3.

1798, June 11th—Rode to Harrisburg, Br. Geeting preached here in the German Reformed Church.

1799, Nov. 11th—Came to Harrisburg and Bro. Geeting preached in the German Church with great liberty. 13th—This day Br. Geeting preached in the German Reformed Church in Johnstown. 14th—This forenoon Br. Geeting preached in Lebanon, in the Church. 16th—This morning we rode to Schaefferstown, preached in the Church. 21st—Rode in the afternoon to Manheim, where I met with Br. Geeting; he preached in the church with a feeling and tender heart.

1800, Oct. 9th—This day Br. Geeting preached in Lebanon, in the German Reformed Church.

1808, Aug. 22nd—Preached this forenoon at Felix Lichte's, near Lebanon; at night Br. Geeting preached in the German Reformed Church in Shanzentown.

Here are listed nine churches of which seven were open to Geeting's ministry. Both Lutheran and Reformed used five of these nine churches. Such was a customary arrangement during those years and which continues in some instances to the present. Newcomer speaks of them as German Reformed Churches, the reason probably being that an arrangement to use said churches was made with the Reformed brethren. This ministry was exercised both before and after Geeting was expelled by the Synod. The resolution voted on for his expulsion carried by a vote of 20 for and 17 against. Both the vote by the clergy and the permission granted by some to
preach in their churches present evidence that there was not the complete alienation, as the opinion of some is, between members of the Reformed Church and those who came out from among them to join the United Brethren. One must ever bear in mind the prevailing attitude of the times of two distinct types of religious groups. Between the "Gemeinde" or Society groups and the "Kirche" or established church groups there was an estrangement, if not to say, in many quarters, an absolute abhorrence. The marvel therefore is not that these zealous evangelists were barred by some; it is rather, that they were admitted by any.

However, the fact to be emphasized in this connection is, that it was Geeting who opened the way for continued influence of the United Ministers among the Reformed constituency. By accompanying Geeting on these occasions, Newcomer, until then for the most part a stranger and outsider so far as the Reformed were concerned, received a kind of credential for his ministry among them. Even though Newcomer had a way of finding his way to the hearts of the people, regardless of denominational affiliation or background, nevertheless, this introduction to Reformed audiences was a tremendous advantage to him.

Christian Newcomer

The place which Christian Newcomer held in the revival movement and the service he performed for the United Brethren in Christ are more familiarly known than those of his contemporaries. We of eastern Pennsylvania as well as of all other areas are indebted to him not only for his ministry but also for the written record he left to posterity. He was beyond all doubt one of the most cosmopolitan churchmen who ever lived. Considering the time in which he lived, few could match him in the extensiveness of his travels. His public and personal ministry continued unabated for a period of more than forty years.

The record known as "Newcomer's Journal" is of such great value that some description of it is quite in order. It has been widely used as a sourcebook on early United Brethren history. It covers a period of more than thirty-four years, the first entry being under date of October 27, 1795, and the last, March 4, 1830. Rev. John Hildt tells of its origin and translation in the following words: "The Life of Christian Newcomer," (18 pages), prefixed to the Journal was written by himself, in the German language, during the last year of his existence on earth. His Journal (313 pages) was also written by himself in the same language, and embraces a period of thirty-five years. A short time before his departure, the translator paid a visit at his house; found him weak and feeble. During the short time which other avocations allowed him to spend with his old friend, he assisted CHRISTIAN NEWCOMER in collating the manuscript of his Journal; read the part denominated his life, which his old friend had lately written and on examination candidly stated to him that in his opinion it could not be put to press without first
undergoing a revision, and being transcribed into more legible characters. This opinion will appear obvious to the most impartial observer. The original manuscript was written by Christian Newcomer, almost day by day, in any or all situations in which he happened to be placed; frequently with bad ink, which in some parts of the manuscript had faded by age and was nearly illegible; frequently with a bad pen, and many other causes which contribute to an imperious necessity to revise and transcribe the manuscript in the same language in which it was originally written.

After the death of Christian Newcomer, a committee was appointed by the Conference of the United Brethren in Christ, to examine the manuscript and report thereon. After performing this duty, the committee reported unanimously in favor of a publication; accordingly the subscriber to this preface (Rev. Hildt) was appointed by his Brethren for divers reasons which need not be mentioned, to undertake the execution of transcribing and translating the manuscript into the English language. . . . He is perfectly aware, that many orthographical and even grammatical errors will be found in these pages, which his kind friends and a generous public are solicited to attribute to the want of perfect knowledge of the English language, and the difficulties of all translations, where not only the subject matter but the literal sense is aimed at.

Dr. S. S. Hough passed on to the author a small mimeographed volume, under the title, “Abstracts from the Journal of Bishop Christian Newcomer,” of biographical and historical notes by Nanie H. Betts, Belman, N. J. The author states that Newcomer mentioned over two thousand names. Dr. Hough in his book “Christian Newcomer, His Life, Journal and Achievement,” informs us that Dr. Gaius Brumbaugh, editor for the National Geographical Society, “reported that he had taken photostatic copies of the pages of Newcomer’s Journal and produced an index of the same, and that a copy of each has been placed in the Rare Book Section of the Congressional Library, Washington, D. C., for research purposes.”

Bishop Christian Newcomer was a native son of Eastern Pennsylvania. His grandfather, Peter Newcomer, came to Pennsylvania in about the year 1717. He located on a tract of land in Leacock Township (now Upper Leacock Township), about a mile and a half south of the village of Bareville, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Peter Newcomer, a few weeks before his death, in the year 1732, bequeathed the same tract to his “middle son,” Wolfgang Newcomer. He married a Miss Baer who after about a year died. The second marriage was to Elizabeth Weber (Weaver). Eight children were born to this union, of whom Christian was the second eldest of three sons.

On this plantation of three hundred acres Christian Newcomer was born, January 21 (February 1, N. S.), 1749. In one of the legal documents in Lancaster mention is made of a “small stone house,”
which stood on the premises. It was still used as a residence forty-four years after Christian's birth, and remained standing until the beginning of the present century.\textsuperscript{29} There is every reason to believe that we have before us in the accompanying cut, the house in which Newcomer was born. This hallowed spot deserves recognition as one of the sacred shrines of United Brethrenism. It was a hallowed spot to Newcomer. In after years he frequently referred to it with tender emotions. Under date of October 18, 1803, he wrote:

I visited several of my old acquaintances, was also at the house where I was naturally, as well as, spiritually born, where God in his infinite mercy for Christ's sake pardoned my sins. O! the amazing love which is in Jesus. Twenty-nine years have passed away, and still the time, the place, yea, the very spot where it happened is perfectly remembered.

The soul-experience alluded to in the quotation is but one of several spiritual crises in his life. Even as a youth, according to his own testimony, he reflected deeply upon such thoughts as more mature minds rarely grapple with. Twice he sought help from the elders of the Mennonite Society to which his parents and grandparents belonged. After the first of these occasions he was baptized and united with the same Society. But his famished soul remained without a satisfying answer to its cry. With another, he might have exclaimed: "O! for an interpreter." The second of these experiences came in the year 1774 and, as he appraised it years after, marked the time and circumstance of his spiritual birth.

By that time he was married and had set up housekeeping on the family homestead. His father became ill in the year 1771. He requested that his son Christian, who was away from home at the
time employed as a carpenter, come to his bedside. His father desired him to take over the plantation. He relates the circumstances of the interview, and his subsequent decisions as follows:

As I had no manner of intention to settle myself or commence housekeeping, this proposition of my father did not meet with my approbation; therefore, I meekly but peremptorily declined to accede to the proposal, and advised him to sell the place. But my mother and sisters entreated with tears in their eyes, that I should be obedient to the will of the father, and suffer him to act in this matter as seemed best unto him; so their tears and entreaties carried the day, and against my inclination I submitted to the will of my parents. My father grew worse every day; made his last will and testament, and in a short time thereafter expired. Henceforth I began a new career; before this time the concerns of the world or the care of sustenance had troubled my mind very little; but now I had a family to provide for. My mother and sister remained with me about a year, when the latter got married; and on account of the occupation of my mother, being a midwife, she was frequently absent from home, therefore I had to seek a housekeeper, which I found in Miss Elizabeth Bear, and entered with her in a state of matrimony on the 31st of March, 1770.

With the lifting of the burden of doubt and fear in the winter of 1773-1774, came the urge to tell to others in public meeting what God had wrought in his soul. For the time being he could not persuade himself to follow these promptings, even though encouraged by his friends and neighbors to do so. He writes: "I continued to resist solicitations and entreaties, until ultimately like Jonah, I sought safety in flight, by selling my plantation and removing from my neighbors, into the State of Maryland." Accordingly, he sold the old homestead March 16, 1775, and moved to the vicinity of Beaver Creek, about seven miles southerly from Hagerstown, Maryland.

In his new abode, God suffered him not to retain peace of mind. Again his soul was enveloped with darkness and despair. Once more he strove with all the energy of his being to be free. He found the assurance he sought, and finally gained courage and spiritual direction to declare publicly the experiences through which he had passed. It seemed providential now that he should locate in a neighborhood where Otterbein and Geeting then frequently preached. Their doctrines greatly strengthened him. He soon discovered that the tenets they preached and the personal experiences they related were in harmony with his own views and experiences. Having accepted opportunities to preach at appointments made for him, both near at home and at distant points, he took up the role of a preacher of the blessed Gospel of Christ. In that capacity he became associated with Otterbein and Geeting and others of like mind and purpose.

26
The time when this public ministry began is fixed by Dr. Drury as of the year 1777. If that be the case, then nineteen years of his ministry had passed before he began making a daily record of his labors. Excepting the first year, 1795, and the last year, 1830, in which years he appears not to have crossed the Susquehanna to our district, he missed only four years, namely: 1798, 1820, 1823, and 1826, during which he did not visit eastern Pennsylvania. Of the thirty years in which he came here, there were eighteen years in which he made one trip, ten years in which he made two trips, and one year in which he made three trips—a total of forty-two to the soil of our present conference bounds. For the year 1797 he has an item of some service rendered on each day beginning with May 1 and ending with June 12. The separate entries, do not in each case, but in the majority of cases, represent preaching appointments. For the entire period there are approximately 550 private and public contacts on record. Considering the fact that the Journal covers about three-fifths of the entire period of his public service, and that he was just as active in the earlier period of unrecorded service, he most likely made as many as seventy trips, and had as many as one thousand opportunities for spiritual service.

Notes
1. For data on the Long family, see page 58.
2. The years fixed by Dr. Drury are 1766-68, 1767 is the date now generally accepted.
5. Lancaster County as constituted in 1729, embraced all the territory, within the present limits of: Lancaster, Dauphin and Lebanon Counties, and, included also part of Berks. The first area east of the Susquehanna River to be set off was that which became a part of Berks, in 1732. Dauphin including Lebanon was erected out of Lancaster, in 1785, and, Lebanon in turn was erected out of Dauphin. Both the first and second parishes served by Otterbein were in original Lancaster County.
HISTORY OF EAST PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE

8. Frederick George Livingood—Reformed Church Schools, a publication of the Pennsylvania German Society, 1920.
10. Spayth—History of the United Brethren Church, p. 22.
11. Lawrence—History of the United Brethren Church, p. 137.
15. Concerning the life of Martin Boehm, there appear some discrepancies in the written account by the several historians. According to Drury (p. 97), Boehm was selected by lot to be minister in the Mennonite Society in 1756, while Spayth (p. 31) states that this event took place in 1758. Martin C. Weaver, in his history, Mennonites of Lancaster Conference (p. 103), gives the year 1759. Drury states that Boehm was ordained a Bishop in the year 1761, whereas Drury (p. 207) says this took place in 1760.
17. Harry M. Strickler of Luray wrote the treatise in 1924, being an attorney and historian, and at one time mayor of Luray, Virginia.
18. Drury, p. 103.
19. Henry Boehm was born June 8, 1775. He lived to the great age of one hundred years, six months, and twenty days. He was converted in the year 1798 in a great revival held in Boehm’s Chapel. Soon thereafter he was appointed leader of a class at Soudersburg. In the year 1800 he entered the itinerant ministry of the Methodist Church. In the early days of his public ministry he served circuits on the eastern shore of Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and Eastern Pennsylvania. With the assistance of Dr. Römer of Middletown, Pennsylvania, he translated the Methodist Discipline into the German language in the year 1803 for the use of the German speaking people of that denomination and with a view of union of the Methodists and United Brethren. He traveled extensively as aide to Bishop Asbury. During the early period he was frequently in company with his father in public worship. (as for example, as recited before, on the trip to Virginia in the year 1800). In his centennial year he preached in a Methodist Church in New York City, on which occasion he was highly honored by his brethren. A few months later an illustrious son of an illustrious father went to join the immortals. He had written a volume based upon a day by day account of his work which was edited by the Rev. J. B. Wakely, D.D., and published by Nelson and Phillips of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1873 under the title: “Reminiscences, Historical and Biographical, of Rev. Henry Boehm.”
20. A few facts concerning these trustees may be of some interest. Whether the Martin Boehm here mentioned was the Rev. Martin, we cannot say. The Rev. Henry Boehm mentions in his writings a Martin Boehm who was his nephew. Jacob Boehm could have been either his brother or his nephew. Abraham Keagy was the husband of Barbara Boehm, daughter of the Rev. Martin. The Millers, according to Henry Boehm, were residents of Strasburg. Simon being a local preacher among the Methodists. Benjamin Souter (Souder) was also a local Methodist preacher. He with Jacob Souter were proprietors of the land on which the village of Soudersburg along the Philadelphia road is located. In this place The Philadelphia Methodists Conference met in the year 1804 in a house of worship erected two years before.
22. Of Smith and Hershey something will be said later. The only person who could be referred to as “Shaffer” at the time was Rev. Frederick Shaffer who was originally a member of the Reformed Church, was converted during Otterbein’s labors at Lancaster, and was later a preacher for the United Brethren. He was one of three men to be ordained by Otterbein about six weeks before Otterbein’s death, and supply preacher for the Baltimore congregation, for a time, after Otterbein’s death. He died in 1814.
25. These six quotations from JN, pp. 21, 32, 41, 63-64, 75, 168.
26. The location of the Schaeferstown, Harrisburg, Lebanon, and Manheim churches is well known. Pibby’s and Shantzentown churches have not been located. A study of the full text of the Journal, and consideration of the difficulties of translation leads to the conclusion that Johnstown is meant for Jonestown, Berner’s for Bern’s, and Black Ridge for Blue Mountain. The Bern Church may have been the “Bernville Church” in the western part of Bern Township, Berks County, or the “Bernville or Northkill Church” in western Penn Township. The route of travel taken by George and Newcomer favors the church at Bernville as being the one from which they were barked. “Blue Mountain or Zion’s” is located at the eastern end of the village of Strausstown, Berks County.
27. The place-names mentioned also run into the thousands. Being fairly well acquainted with the geographical area in the eastern counties over which Newcomer traveled, by consulting county atlases, county and locally published records, county courthouse records, census of 1790, and Pennsylvania State Land Office records, the author has been able in many instances to determine locations of places, and of persons mentioned in the Journal. Numerous references to the Journal have been made in preceding pages and will continue to be made in succeeding pages. It is there apparent to what extent we are indebted to Bishop Christian Newcomer for his inestimable record.

28. See naturalization list of those persons who arrived in Lancaster County prior to 1718, in Statutes at Large, Vol. iv. p. 141. The will of Peter Newcomer (Newcomat) Book A-1 p. 10, made January 26, 1732; probated, February 23, 1732, is one of the earliest on record in the Register of Wills Office, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

29. The photograph from which the accompanying cut was made, was taken from the east. Reference to the small stone house is made in the will of Martin Bear who bought the farm from Christian Newcomer. Mr. Bear made the following provision: "I bequeath to my wife Fraeny, the small stone house I now live in, with the fence around it ... and the meadow at the foot of the hill." Mr. Bear made the will November 16, 1792.

30. Wolfgang Newcomer's will was drawn up March 4, 1771, probated March 18, 1771, Book C-1 p. 20. The property was not immediately transferred to the son Christian. The heirs of Wolfgang Newcomer signed a release transferring the property to Christian when he was about to sell it to Bear in 1775. The will mentions the following children: Henry, Christian, Barbara, Peter, Elizabeth, Magdalena, and Anna.

31. There is a conflict of dates concerning the time when Christian Newcomer married. The "Life of Christian Newcomer," prefixed to the text of Journal, page 6, recites that he was married on March 31, 1770, while the text of the Journal 153 fixes it, March 31, 1772. The latter is shown to be the correct year, for the reason that at the time, 1771, when the father, Wolfgang died, the son Christian was not yet married.