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A Brief History

of the

**Mt. Gretna Campmeeting
Association**

with

Thumbnail Sketches

of

**Bishops for Whom Streets
Were Named**

By

REV. BRUCE C. SLOUDERS

Preface

The author did not intend the material in this pamphlet to be an extensive history of the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association. However, he did plan that it should have educational value with people using the facilities of the camping program of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

The material was originally prepared while the author was still active in the junior camp program at Mt. Gretna. At first it was used privately by the author; but at the suggestion of Dr. Walter Deibler, it was mimeographed and shared with other counsellors. Now it is presented in this format, with little change in original content, in order that it might have wider use in the camping program.

The basic information was derived from three sources: Koontz and Roush, *The Bishops—Church of the United Brethren in Christ*; P. B. Gible, *History of the East Pennsylvania Conference*; and the address which was delivered on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association by S. C. Enck, Superintendent Emeritus of the East Pennsylvania Conference.

The author is deeply grateful to the photoengraving department of the *Lebanon Daily News* for preparing the cut of the map appearing on page 8; to Mrs. Joseph Keath, a member of the Bethany Evangelical United Brethren Church, Lebanon, and the typist for the original manuscript; the children who permitted the author to try this material out on them; and the Evangelical Press for guidance in planning the printing of the pamphlet.

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A Brief History of the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association

SINCE the summer of 1892, Mt. Gretna has played a vital role in the spiritual affairs of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. In August of that year, the first campmeeting was conducted in the area which is now known as the grounds of the Mt. Gretna Camp Meeting Association. On August 7 of that same year, Bishop Nicholas Castle dedicated the ground to the worship of God.¹

Dr. Enck's description of the original campmeetings is interesting reading for those of us who are so accustomed to the advantages of electricity, running water, and beautiful, sturdy tabernacle which has been standing since its dedication in August of 1899. He writes in moments of recollection:

The opening of the Mt. Gretna campmeeting was marked with deep devotions and profound spirituality and soul saving and Christian Edification.

This inner circle or temple was largely surrounded during the first and part of the second years by white canvass tents, size 12 x 12. One-half of said tent was set apart for sleeping quarters and the other half for living.

The living part consisted of a table, few chairs, a lamp, perhaps a rug or carpet and a Bible.

The other half for sleeping quarters a box-like bed was constructed covered with straw, sheets and blankets. I can assure you that we slept well on those primitive beds of straw.

In the rear of the tent as a rule you found a stove plate and chimney where meals were cooked. The aroma of the frying country ham, etc., was very pleasing to the ministers sitting on the pulpit and sharpened their appetites.

In the evening oil lamps were lit in the tents which made a beautiful showing in the white city. Large lanterns and torches illuminated the grounds.

Day before campmeeting opening, one could see a number of horse teams, no autos, bringing loads of straw for the beds, also furniture for the tents, as well as the members of the family.

The greetings of these families and worshippers as they arrived was not only happy but heavenly.

¹ The source of this information is Dr. P. B. Gible's *History of the East Pennsylvania Conference*, p. 568. Dr. S. C. Enck, Sr., in his "Historical Sketch of Mt. Gretna Campmeeting," says that the Rev. C. J. Kephart dedicated the grounds.

Surrounding the circle or temple area were large oil lanterns and torches.

Within the circle and temple were twelve-inch wide boards upright on which were two-inch planks for seating purposes, no back rests and many a worshipper suffered from a painful backache by the end of an hour sermon.

The sky was the roof. There was a small octagonal pulpit where I stand, illuminated with oil lamps and beautiful chandelier.²

How did the East Pennsylvania Conference settle upon Mt. Gretna as the site for its campmeeting association grove? It all began with misunderstandings which had developed at the Stoverdale camp site over apparent desecration of the Lord's Day. As a consequence of this misunderstanding, a committee was formed to study the possibility of relocating the camp site. This committee finally settled on Mt. Gretna, a station stop on the newly-constructed Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad.

Dr. Gible quotes from a letter written by Hugh Maxwell, a member of the Board of Directors of the Railroad who described in part the land which was to become the grounds of the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association:

"... We came to a thickly wooded and thickly overgrown area of brush, where a single track wagon-road wound down the big hill on the southside, crossed the railroad, and led on down to a distant brook, through tall, overhanging green briers—a wild garden of a forest, seemingly to a mountain solitude."³

Dr. Gible suggests that "Mr. Maxwell might have added that there were also giant pines, stately oaks, and magnificent chestnut trees in the forest."⁴ Dr. Enck reports that "This plot of ground was termed the Pine Swamp because of the numerous pine trees and springs of water." Speaking of the fruit of the chestnut trees, he exults, "In the fall numerous parties came to Mt. Gretna on a chestnut hunt, [sic] O, such fun."⁵ It was Mr. Maxwell who suggested the name *Mt. Gretna* for this area of virgin forests which was to become an important landmark of our conference.

In order to guard against the type of situation which made it necessary to leave Stoverdale, the conference established the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association. This is not a stock company, a public resort, or a club. It is an organization headed by the cottage holders and the ministers of the East Pennsylvania Conference. Its concern for the main-

tenance of these grounds for Christian service is clearly spelled out to all cottage owners in its by-laws.

As we noted earlier, the original religious activity at Mt. Gretna was after the fashion of the era—campmeetings. However, this pattern soon changed until the Bible Conference type of program was the order of the day. For a time, the announcements of activities at Mt. Gretna read "Campmeeting and Bible Conference." While the Bible Conference continues as the major activity at Mt. Gretna during August, it has become only one phase of a rapidly expanding camp program for all ages.

In 1925, the Christian Endeavor Society of the Conference, headed by the Rev. Dr. I. Moyer Hershey, began to hold its annual meetings at Mt. Gretna. In 1929, both the name and the character of the summer activity related to the conference program on Christian Education were changed and called the "Summer Assembly." The new program was spearheaded by Dr. Hershey, who became president of the first Board of Christian Education established by the East Pennsylvania Conference in the fall of 1929.

While approximately five-sevenths of the available area on the campmeeting grounds is occupied by cottages, other buildings have been erected to meet the needs of the changing program: the Hall of Christian Education, the Ministers' Dormitory, the Children's Cottage, the store and dining room, and the fire house. The latter two buildings are no longer in operation.

In 1949, a new program of camping replaced the Summer Assembly. With the acquisition of two spacious properties in Gretna Heights, which is adjacent to the grounds of the Camp Meeting Association, it became possible to conduct age-group camps. This program has grown at such a rapid rate of speed, that at this time plans are underway for the development of a new tract of land for use in these age-group camps. The new tract is located a few miles northeast of the campmeeting grounds.

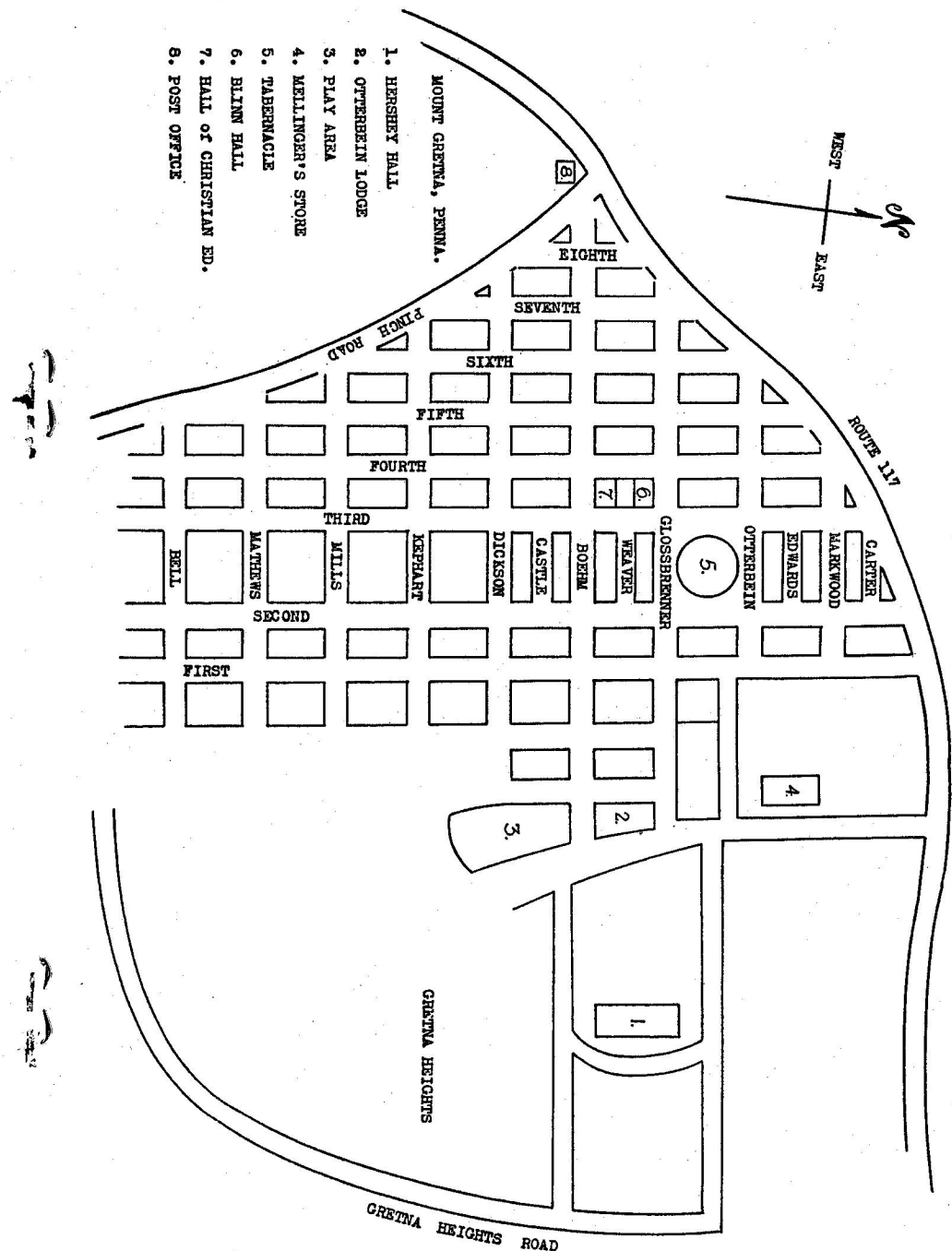
Meanwhile, however, the use of Hershey Hall and Otterbein Lodge continues. Both places serve as residences for age-group camps, family camp, and Bible Conference. Otterbein Lodge also contains the kitchen and dining room for the camp.

The organization of the camp program is entrusted to the Rev. Dr. Ezra H. Ranck, Director of Christian Education for the Conference, and the Rev. Dr. G. Edgar Hertzler, president of the Board of Christian Education. Working with them is a corps of age-group directors to supervise the activities of each camp group.

² Enck, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6
³ Gible, *op. cit.*, p. 567.
⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 567.
⁵ Enck, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 7.

Six

Seven



Thumbnail Sketches of Bishops for Whom Mt. Gretna Streets Were Named

(Reading from North to South)

1. **THOMAS COKE CARTER:** (January 1, 1851-February 27, 1916, Chattanooga, Tennessee). After a brilliant career as an educator, pastor, missionary, and religious editor in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Rev. Dr. Carter joined the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in 1892. Thirteen years later, in 1905, he was elected Bishop of the newly-created Southern District of his adopted denomination. He served in this capacity until the Southern District was dissolved in 1913. Until his death in 1916, he was Bishop Emeritus of the Church.
2. **JACOB MARKWOOD:** (December 26, 1815, Charleston, West Virginia-January 22, 1873, Luray, Virginia). Because of the blindness of Jacob's mother, the Markwood family was broken up by the father while Jacob was still quite young (1830). Jacob had begun to make his own way in life along with his twin brother, Conrad, almost ten years before the family was split and when the twins were only 13. Jacob accepted Christ in 1832 and in 1836 joined the "Old Stone Church" of our denomination in Green Spring, Virginia. In 1837, young Jacob was licensed to preach; and in 1841, he was ordained by Bishops Erb and Kumler. In 1843, he became presiding elder of his conference, a post which he held until his election to the Bishopric in 1861. Because he was anti-slavery in sympathies, Bishop Markwood had to flee the South during the Civil War. Ill health forced his retirement from the office of Bishop during the General Conference in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in 1869.
3. **DAVID EDWARDS:** (May 5, 1816, Denbigshire, North Wales-June 6, 1876, Dayton, Ohio). When David was five, his family moved to America, living first in Baltimore, Maryland, and moving later (1823) to Delaware, Ohio. At the age of 17, with 37 cents in his pocket, David went to work in the woolen mills at Lancaster, Ohio. At the age of 18, he accepted Christ as his Savior; at 19, he was licensed to preach; and at 20 (in 1836), he received his first assignment to assist Rev. John Eckert on the Brush Creek Circuit (extending over 360 miles in five counties) in the Scioto Conference. With only 12 months of formal schooling, young Rev. Edwards applied himself diligently to

study and in 1845 was elected presiding elder of the conference. Several months later he became editor of the *Religious Telescope*, which office he resigned in 1849, only to be elected Bishop that same year. In 1853, he was re-elected Bishop and also editor of two new magazines of the Church, one of which was *The Children's Friend*. He served as Bishop until his death in 1876.

4. **PHILLIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN:** (June 3, 1726, Dillenburg, Germany-November 17, 1813, Baltimore, Maryland). The career of Bishop Otterbein is too varied and long to be treated adequately in this thumbnail sketch; consequently much will remain unsaid. The Rev. Phillip William Otterbein came to America July 17, 1752, in answer to a Macedonian Call from this wilderness country for a pastor to minister to the German settlers in the "Penn's Woods" area. As a pastor in the German Reformed Church, he served pastorates in Lancaster, Tulpehocken, and York in Pennsylvania and Frederick and Baltimore in Maryland. His personal religious experience and his pietistic training made him deeply sensitive to the spiritual needs of his people. His meeting with Martin Boehm at Isaac Long's barn in Lancaster County in 1767, when the familiar greeting "We Are Brethren" presaged the name of the new denomination which was about to evolve among the German settlers, was the high point of his career for our Church. Through Otterbein's initiative, ministers were brought together in 1789 and 1791 in sessions which were the immediate fore-runners of the formal organization of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.
5. **JACOB JOHN GLOSSBRENNER:** (July 24, 1812, Hagerstown Maryland-January 7, 1887, Churchville, Virginia). Bishop Glossbrenner had the distinction of serving as Bishop for forty years (1845-85). After his conversion at the age of 17, Jacob Glossbrenner acquired such a reputation as a Christian leader among young people that he was granted a license as an exhorter in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ *without making application for it*; and at 19, he was licensed to preach. He performed his duties so conscientiously that a group of older Christians bought him a horse, saddle, bridle, and saddlebags for his work as an itinerant preacher. In 1833, he was ordained by the Virginia Conference; and one year later he was elected presiding elder. In an unusual move, John Jacob Glossbrenner was elected to membership on a completely new Board of Bishops at the General Conference of 1845 and was assigned to the Eastern District. The highwater mark of his influence was reached at the General Conference of 1853 when he spoke out on such issues as slavery, secret societies, depravity, and a prescribed course of study for young ministers. His most difficult years

were those of the Civil War period, when he was restricted in his movement to the southern area of Virginia. In the crucial years of our denomination, no one gave more devoted and sound leadership than did Bishop Glossbrenner.

6. **JONATHAN WEAVER:** (February 23, 1824, Carroll County, Ohio-February 6, 1901, Dayton, Ohio). Even before he himself was satisfied with his own religious experience, Jonathan Weaver was instrumental in the conversion of his parents and brothers and sisters when he was about 17 years old. In 1843, at the age of 19, he was elected class leader of his local congregation. One year later he was granted an exhorter's license; and in 1845, he received his quarterly conference license. Three years later Jonathan Weaver was ordained by Bishop Glossbrenner. After serving as presiding elder of the Muskingum Conference and soliciting agent for Otterbein University, Jonathan Weaver was elected Bishop in 1865, shortly after failing to be elected editor of *The Religious Telescope* by five votes. He served as Bishop by re-election until 1893. From 1893 to 1901, he was Bishop Emeritus.
7. **MARTIN BOEHM:** (November 30, 1725, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania-March 23, 1812, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania). Like the name of Bishop Otterbein, the name of Bishop Boehm is synonymous with early United Brethren history and any thumbnail sketch of his life is bound to be inadequate. Martin Boehm is best remembered for preaching the sermon at Isaac Long's barn which prompted the lavish greeting he received from Bishop Otterbein. Much of Martin Boehm's contribution for our Church and its history belongs to the period before formal organization of the denomination in 1800. During his tenure as Bishop (1800-1812), Martin Boehm was intensely interested in the prospects of union between the Methodist Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.
8. **NICHOLAS CASTLE:** (October 4, 1837, Bristol, Indiana-April 18, 1922, Philomath, Oregon). Bishop Castle gave a total of forty-five years service as Bishop in our denomination (active Bishop, 1877-1905, and Bishop Emeritus, 1905-1922). At the age of 14, Nicholas Castle was completely alone in the world because death took away his family. Thanks to a man by the name of John Frizzell, the young orphan boy found a home; but thanks to the preaching of S. W. Chapman, who had stopped at the Frizzell home to announce a revival meeting, young Castle found peace with his Lord. Thus began a career of humble, devoted service which, though it was never "flashy" or world-shaking, was consistent and stabilizing in its influence upon the Church.

9. **JOHN DICKSON:** (June 15, 1820, near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania-February 22, 1907, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania). His ministerial service prior to election as Bishop was rendered in the Pennsylvania Conference from 1846 to 1870. Before his election to the office of Bishop, Rev. John Dickson had refused to have his name presented for positions in the general work of the church: editor of *The Religious Telescope*, President of Mt. Pleasant College, and the editor of *Unity Magazine*. When the call came to the Bishopric through the vote of the General Conference in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in 1869, he accepted the office, serving with distinction until his retirement in 1893.
10. **EZEKIEL BORING KEPHART:** (November 6, 1834, Clearfield, Pennsylvania-January 24, 1906, Annville, Pennsylvania). Bishop Kephart is one of two Bishops given to our church by the Kephart family. Another brother served as editor of *The Religious Telescope* from 1889-1908. Ezekiel Kephart was ordained by the Pennsylvania Conference in 1861. In 1868, he became President of Western College in Linn County, Iowa. It was while serving here that he was also a member of the Iowa State Senate, beginning in 1871. His service in this latter capacity so impressed the Republican Party in Iowa that they urged him to run for governor. He refused. In 1881, the General Conference meeting in Lisbon, Iowa, elected Ezekiel Boring Kephart, who was then 46, to the Bishopric. He served this office well, concentrating on the educational and missionary enterprise of the denomination until his health forced his retirement in 1905. While serving as Bishop Emeritus, Ezekiel Kephart continued his interest and activity in the work of the Lord. It was while he was engaged in the service of strengthening the newly-established Indiana Central College that he passed to his eternal reward.
11. **JOB SMITH MILLS:** (February 28, 1848, Washington County, Ohio-September 16, 1909, Scottdale, Pennsylvania). The name of Bishop Mills is closely associated with the educational enterprises of our denomination. Himself an earnest scholar, he served as pastor of the College Church in Westerville, Ohio, Professor of English Literature and later President and Professor of Philosophy at Western College in Toledo, Ohio. After three years as President, Job Mills resigned to devote full time to teaching. In 1893, he was elected Bishop, an office he held until his death in 1909. While serving the Eastern Area from 1901 onward, he made his home in Annville and took an active interest in the development of Lebanon Valley College.
12. **GEORGE MARTIN MATTHEWS:** (August 22, 1848, Cincinnati, Ohio-April 3, 1921, Dayton, Ohio). George Martin Matthews had

intended to enter the legal profession; but when this door was closed to him, he became a public school teacher. After the introduction of lay delegates in the government of Miami Conference of Ohio, George Matthews was elected as the first lay delegate from Cherry Grove Church. His service in this capacity was so notable that he was called upon frequently to speak in churches and finally his home church recommended him for a license to preach the Gospel. As in the case of Bishop Glossbrenner, this was done without his consent. After training at Lane Theological Seminary and Union Biblical Seminary (now United Seminary) he was ordained August 27, 1882. Two years later he became pastor of the Seminary Church (Summit Street) in Dayton. In 1889 he became presiding elder of his Conference. In 1894 he returned to the pastorate at First Church, Dayton, for four years. In 1898 he became associate editor of *The Religious Telescope* and in 1902 the editor. In 1905 he was elected Bishop, an office he held until his death in 1921.

13. **WILLIAM MELVIN BELL:** (November 12, 1860, Whitley County, Indiana-October 6, 1933, Pomono, California). Before becoming a Bishop, the Rev. William Bell was active in the Indiana State Sunday School Association and other leadership training enterprises. He also served as office secretary of the Home, Frontier, and Foreign Missionary Society of the denomination, a post to which he was elected in 1893 and which he served with distinction for 12 years. In 1905, in Topeka, Kansas, he was elected to the office of Bishop and served actively for 24 years. In 1929, he was granted emeritus relationship in this office. During his years as Bishop, he gave a great deal of time to interdenominational causes and was known to have supplied the lecture platform for his personal friend, William Jennings Bryan.