A Genealogical Index to:

*History of the Illinois Conference of the Evangelical Church 1837-1937*

This index names persons who were associated with the development of this German-speaking church denomination within the northern part of Illinois from the 1840s to 1937 and the capacity in which they were associated. Those persons were primarily clergymen, but early church founding members and others are often named. The overall structure of the book was based partly on annual conference records – yearly summaries of the activities of its churches and their members – and partly on the history of the circuits or fields where churches were founded.

It is possible with this database to flesh out the entire career of a man who served this church, including date of ordination, when he became a deacon or an elder, and dates and locations where he was stationed. Other personal information may also be found, such as family relationships and dates and places of birth, death, and burial.

- There is a separate entry in the database for each time a person is mentioned in the written text, including the event that prompted the record.
- Surname entries for the same individual were not always spelled consistently.
- Often only last names were noted in the book, with no initials or given names provided.
- Use of only first initial for names of ministers was frequent, but there were instances of the complete name.
- In most cases there is no additional information on the page from which the information was extracted. However, it may be helpful to see what other names and activities appear in the same frame of reference on the same page.
- Place names were not indexed.
- Conf. = Conference.
- Phrases within quotation marks are direct quotes from the text.
- Brackets [ ] within a comment indicate that an explanatory word or words were inserted for clarity.
- Varying phrases were used for the same agenda items from conference to conference, depending on who took the minutes and who compiled the report contained in the book. Meeting reports usually contained date, place, and name of the presiding bishop of the conference; the names of both the German and English language secretary(ies); recent deaths; names of those newly licensed to preach; names of those ordained as deacons or elders; recognition of newcomers to the conference and the departure of others; and the annual assignments of presiding elders over the conference districts.
- Serious students of this denomination may wish to obtain the book for closer examination. There is a copy at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.
The first half of the book is organized chronologically according to the events that surrounded annual meetings of the Illinois Conference from 1838 to 1937. The second half provides the history that survives for each of the “fields” (churches or circuits) served by the persons named in the first half.

The format of conference reports varied, based on information available to the authors. This resulted in a lack of consistency in the “comments” section of the database. Items noted at a conference may have occurred during the calendar year and not at the meeting itself.

Minutes of annual meetings were originally taken in German, the native language of the founders of the denomination. The 1874 annual meeting specifically stated that there was an “English secretary” in addition to the usual German secretary. At its 8 Apr 1897 annual meeting, the United Conference “voted to close the German record of conference minutes with this year.”

Indexing of the book resulted in a great number of entries for many individuals. Although each entry is free-standing with no context in which to place it, a careful researcher can build a time line of denominational involvement for his person-of-interest, resulting in a more detailed and complete chronology of that person’s clerical life. Since the book is written in chronological order, simply arrange that individual’s entries in page number order to build a time line from earliest to most recent activity.

On page 35 of the book regarding details of the 1854 conference meeting, there is an explanatory note:

In those days men were not regarded as in “the itinerancy” unless they accepted appointment. Frequently men stepped aside on account of their private interests or family circumstances for a year or more. They were entered as having “located.” When they again took up active work they were again “received into the itinerancy.” By this same token licentiates often were reported as being received into the itinerancy.

A minister’s years of “service on field” refer to the years he has been stationed at a particular location and not to the length of his total years in the ministry.

The individual preachers listed on page 57–60 were still living in Apr 1889. “It gives a cross section of the conference personnel of that year . . . It is the list of members in the year immediately preceding the division [of the denomination].” [p. 57]

**The Period of Separate Conferences in Illinois – 1890-1927**

In 1890, there was a division in the Evangelical Association which resulted in holding separate conference sessions in 1890 and two General Conferences in 1891. The records of the two separate conferences continued until the reunification of the denomination in 1927. In the denomination history by Schwab, the two groups are referred to as The Association Conference and The United Conference.
At its 4 Apr 1894 annual meeting at Barrington, the United Conference adopted a new denomination name, United Evangelical Church, by formal resolution.

In 1922 negotiations to reunite began. In that year, both conferences specifically itemized their organizational structure and personnel for the record, so as to preserve that moment in the church’s history. Everyone who held a post was named. Members of the clergy were categorized by their sub-groups, with their orders and some personal information included.

In 1923 the former “Evangelical Association” met as “The Illinois Conference of the Evangelical Church,” noted in the book as “The Illinois Conference” after 1922.

In 1923 the former “United Conference” met as “The Illinois United Conference of the Evangelical Church,” noted in the book as “The United Conference” after 1922.

In August 1925 a Joint Commission on Merger was created to take the formal steps necessary to achieve the goal of merging the two conferences into one. Seven representatives from each conference were selected to be on the Commission.

In 1926 both conferences made a specific record of the stationing of all active preachers for historic purposes. Those records are found on pages 117-119.

On 31 Mar 1927 the United Conference and the Illinois United Conference (referred to as The Association Conference) of the Evangelical Church both adopted “The Enabling Act” merging them back into one conference.

The first merged conference was held 18 Apr 1928 in Aurora.

At the 22 April 1930 annual meeting of the merged Illinois Conference, “the historic designation Presiding Elder was changed to District Superintendent” (p. 140). With the resignation of Arthur J. Byas from his position as District Superintendent of Naperville District in April 1934, it “was then voted to rearrange the fields of conference into three districts.” (p. 143) The remaining districts were Chicago, Freeport, and Peoria, which were arranged to encompass all the locations where the Illinois Conference had active churches.

As the Illinois Conference developed between the 1840s and 1937, circuits, missions, stations, and jurisdictional boundaries changed often and were frequently renamed. Details about the changes were entered in the reports of the annual meetings of the Illinois Conference. Those who were assigned, in the annual meeting minutes, to the various districts were presiding elders who had oversight over those districts. A presiding elder might remain in a position for years, but was always reassigned at the annual meeting.
Deacons and elders were ordained at the annual meeting. However, the terminology for standard conference procedures changed, depending on the linguistic whim of the secretary for any given meeting, so that, for example, ordination as a deacon or elder may be described differently from year to year.

The denomination later evolved into the Evangelical United Brethren Church with a seminary at North Central College in Naperville, DuPage County, Illinois. The E.U.B. church later merged with the Methodist Church to become part of the United Methodist Church. Further information may be sought through the United Methodist library resource system.