ECHOES OF THE PAST
IN CONVERSATIONS OF THE PRESENT

Booklet #1

United Brethren Memories
in the University Heights Neighborhood

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University Heights map from William Elder's advertisement
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The terrain of a university is saturated with memories of various kinds. Different generations of students and faculty may hear the echoes of the past with different sensitivities. Buildings new and old will evoke different strata of institutional history as well as different patterns of association. Those who played football and basketball for Angus Nicoson naturally have a different regard for the building that was christened in honor of the star athlete and former head coach than those of us who do not have those associations. Although the topography of a college campus offers multiple clues about the history of the institution in question, some of these clues are more visible than others. Sometimes it is helpful to have a guidebook to help pick out those features that are significant for particular communities associated with the University. That is how I have envisioned the series of “Echoes of the Past in Conversations of the Present” booklets that are being prepared through The Crossings Project.

This first booklet explores one of the earliest strata of memory associated with the group of United Brethren in Christ leaders who founded the University in 1902. Future booklets in this series will explore other sets of memory associated with constituencies of the University. For example, Booklet #2 on “United Methodist Connections” will provide information that will help students, faculty, and staff of the University to grasp the significance of names, persons, and terminology associated with the University's ongoing denominational affiliation. In both of these cases, the purpose is to help newcomers to the University to be able to navigate their way through a community in which echoes of the past often resound but where it is not always obvious what the origin or significance of these references might be.

The summaries of the lives of the United Brethren leaders offered in this booklet have been composed from the biographical accounts provided in the two-volume work The Bishops of the United Brethren in Christ by Paul Rodes Koontz and Walter Edwin Roush (Dayton, OH: The Otterbein Press, 1950). The photographs of these “saints” of the church are from the same set of volumes (© 1977, used by permission of the proprietor, Abingdon Press).

I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of several persons who made it possible for me to complete this project. As he has done on many other occasions, Emeritus Professor of History Frederick D. Hill clarified matters where the historical record made it difficult to know how to proceed and corrected me where I have made factual mistakes. In the fall of 2002, Mr. Omar Abu Salha ‘03 located the materials for me to use in writing the biographical summaries that comprise this booklet. I am grateful for the feedback of a group of new faculty who participated in a retreat that I offered in November 2002 at which I presented some of this material for the first time. Members of the 2003 “EduServ Faculty Seminar” also offered helpful observations about how to shape this resource.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank friends and colleagues at the University of Indianapolis who offered their assistance with the production of this booklet. Ms. Christine Guyonneau, University Archivist, and Ms. Laura Davies ’07 made arrangements for reproduction of the photographs and obtaining additional biographical information about the bishops as well as in proofreading the document when it took shape as a full draft for review. Once again, Peter Noot, Jeannine Allen, and Jen Huber in the University of Indianapolis Office of Publications have provided great assistance in making it possible to move this project from the clutter of my desk to a nicely produced booklet that can be used by others to investigate memorable clues. —All Saints Day, November 1, 2003
I. FOUNDING MEMORIES AT THE CORNER OF HANNA AND OTTERBEIN AVENUES

At the Founders Day Celebration on October 6, 2002, several speakers called attention to the heritage of the United Brethren (UB) tradition as the University of Indianapolis marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the formal decision to found Indiana Central University as well as the date of the state charter establishing the University. At the dedication of the “Founders’ Rock” in front of Good Hall near the corner of Hanna and Otterbein avenues, Bishop Paul Milhouse ’32 offered a simple but moving prayer that captured the humility and determination of those who dared to begin the venture. No doubt, had he chosen to do so, Bishop Milhouse could have named many of the founders of the University, just as he would have been able to identify the names of the United Brethren bishops for whom the streets in the University Heights neighborhood were named.

Bishop Milhouse is not the only alumnus of Indiana Central/University of Indianapolis who has such a reservoir of United Brethren memory, but he is one of a shrinking number of persons associated with the University who can readily recall such information. In part, this is because of social changes external to the University: the Church of the United Brethren in Christ merged with the Evangelical Church (EC) to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB) in 1946. Two decades later, the EUB denomination merged with the Methodist Church to form the United Methodist Church. Changes at the University over the past three decades have also contributed to this circumstance.

Earlier that same day, President Emeritus Gene Sease briefly addressed those gathered at the “Traditional Worship” service across the street from Good Hall at University Heights United Methodist Church (UHUMC). Many of those assembled were Sease’s old friends, because UHUMC was the church where he worshiped during the years he served as president of the University (1970–1988). After reminiscing about his fond memories of the congregation and the University, Sease stated that there were several decisions that he made during his tenure that earned him the ire of the alumni of the University, including changing the name from “Indiana Central” to “University of Indianapolis,” but he noted the action that evoked the angriest response was his decision (1986) to change the address of the University from “4001 Otterbein Street” to “1400 East Hanna Avenue.”

In keeping with the decision to change the name of the University, the change of address that Sease brought about had a pragmatic intent: to help the University gain greater visibility in the Indianapolis metropolitan area, which by the mid-twentieth century had already grown to encompass the University and the neighborhood in which it was located. For many of those alumni whose memory of the University was oriented within the saga of the United Brethren tradition, however, the erasure of Otterbein’s name from the University’s primary address came on the heels of the earlier mergers of the UB Church with the Evangelical Church and the Methodist Church. For many, the cumulative effect of these changes had been to obscure if not completely erased the memory of the UB founders of the University.

President Sease, of course, was by no means oblivious to the UB heritage. He had been raised in Western Pennsylvania and had been ordained as an Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) pastor. At the time that he was hired by Indiana Central University, Sease had just been appointed as a district superintendent at almost the same time that the EUB Church was
beginning the process of merging with the Methodist Church. Just as the merger of the denominations brought about change in the fabric of memory of church leaders, the changes in the name and address of the University created the prospects for new experiences and memories even as it obscured or rendered invisible others. The “I-C-U” remained embedded in the brick façade of Krannert Memorial Library, but with the change in the University’s name, the significance of the image began to fade from consciousness. Similarly, while the change in the street address did not alter the terrain of the University as such, the cumulative effect of the changes in name and address did make it less likely that the original significance of the street names in the University Heights neighborhood would be appreciated or even recognized.

The boundaries of any campus community will be more or less permeable depending on the interactions that take place with the neighborhood in which it is located. The “campus” of the earliest generation of students and faculty associated with Indiana Central University was located entirely on the south side of Hanna Avenue between Mathews and Weaver avenues. Although the campus boundaries were at the northeastern quadrant of the neighborhood limited on the west by Otterbein Street and the south by Russel Avenue (now known as “Windermire”), the social life of faculty and students extended to various parts of the neighborhood. The first dormitory would not be built until 1921, but most students lived in the neighborhood either with the families of faculty or in houses rented by the University for the purpose of housing limited numbers of students. In some instances, faculty homes were the sites of social gatherings and other extracurricular activities. The 1923 edition of the Oracle actually includes a two-page spread of photographs of faculty homes in the University Heights neighborhood. In retrospect, this depiction of private homes is remarkable. These were spaces that students knew as the hearths where the faculty and their families offered hospitality to students from Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and beyond.

That same generation of students would likely have recognized at least some of the names of the streets in the University Heights neighborhood. They may even have known some of the details of the lives of the persons depicted. For example, they probably would have known that Ezekiel B. Kephart was the name of the retired UB bishop who died in 1906 while trying to raise funds to secure the foundation of Indiana Central University, and they would have known that Otterbein was the name of the cofounder of the United Brethren in Christ. No doubt, most of them would have recognized the significance of the fact that Mathews Avenue was named for the bishop who had succeeded Kephart. Bishop Mathews addressed the 1907 celebration at the conclusion of the academic year and served on the Board of Trustees of the University for a time. Other street names may have had less significance for students, either because no houses had yet been erected on those roads or because the students were not as familiar with the persons for whom they were named.

It is not possible to recapture all of the loving respect and memories that founders of Indiana Central associated with the names of these United Brethren bishops, any more than it is possible to recover all the mischievous and lighthearted student memories associated with these same precincts. However, thanks to the Frederick D. Hill Archives at the University of Indianapolis and published sources about the lives of the United Brethren bishops, we are able to locate the most basic information that constitutes the memories behind the echoes of the past that can still be heard in the conversations of the present.
II. NORTH-SOUTH STREETS IN THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD

Other than the prominence given to the name of Otterbein Avenue, which became the official address of Indiana Central beginning in 1902, there is no evidence that there is any particular order of priority in the names given to the streets in the University Heights neighborhood. Therefore, I have chosen to group the information in this booklet according to the compass orientation, beginning with the streets that run from north to south and concluding with the six streets that run from east to west.

OTTERBEIN AVENUE

William L. Elder and the group of United Brethren who founded the University elected to name the street where the College Building was to be erected after one of the two persons who were regarded as founders of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Without a doubt, the name that designated the original street address of the University evoked formative memories for United Brethren students and faculty alike.

The remembered incident that lies at the heart of United Brethren memory is the moment when PHILIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN (1726–1813) and MARTIN BOEHM (1725–1812) recognized that they were “united” as brothers in Christ.

A great meeting had been appointed to be held at Bro. Isaac Long’s, Lancaster County, Pa. Here, perhaps for the first time on a like occasion, an assembly of Christians met together from far and near—Lutherans, German Reformed, Mennonites, Dunkers, and others—coming as with one accord and with one mind. Many were thus for the first time happily brought together. Bro. Boehm was of small stature, wearing his beard long, and was dressed in the true costume of a Mennonite. Wm. Otterbein was a large man, showing a prominent forehead, on which one might see the seal of the Lord impressed. Boehm preached the first sermon, at the close of which, and before he had time to take his seat, Otterbein rose, and folding Boehm in his arms, said with a loud voice, “We are brethren” [Wir sind Brüder]. At this sight some praised God aloud, but most of the congregation gave place to their feelings—weeping for joy. 4

Despite the fact that the lifetimes of Otterbein and Boehm largely coincided and they both spoke German, the circumstances of their lives were strikingly different. They had remarkably different educational backgrounds, they came from religious traditions that had a history of mutual disregard, and they occupied different places in the social order of colonial America. All the more reason that these two founders of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ should be remembered for their hospitality to one another in the midst of such notable differences.

It would be a mistake to attempt to tell the story of these men and the contribution that they made to the church they founded without recalling the historical context. These men were part of emigrant communities that came to the American colonies seeking religious freedom as well as economic opportunity. German-speaking Mennonites, Reformed, and Lutheran Christians, as well as various groups of English-speaking Protestant Christians, were welcomed in the colony founded by the Quaker William Penn, the colony that offered the most extensive freedom to practice religion. Neither Boehm nor Otterbein would have had the
opportunity to encounter one another had it not been for the unique circumstances that enabled Christians from various European traditions to live side-by-side in the context of the Quaker “Holy Experiment” in Pennsylvania.

PHILIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN (1726–1813) is regarded along with Martin Boehm as one of the first two bishops of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. He served in this capacity from 1800 (the date when the Church of the United Brethren in Christ was officially formed) until his death in 1813. Of all the spiritual leaders in the United Brethren tradition, Philip William Otterbein is the one most revered. It should not be a surprise, then, that William Otterbein’s life is surrounded by more hagiography than is true of other United Brethren bishops. Nor should we be shocked to discover that more than any other United Brethren leader, Otterbein’s life came to be vested with the positive aspirations of the denomination he founded, including the church’s efforts to found church-related institutions of higher education.

Born in the Prussian village of Dillenberg, William and his family moved to the town of Herborn following the untimely death of his father, who was a pastor in the German Reformed Church. William’s mother apparently made the decision to move the family to Herborn in order to make sure that her children would receive a good education at the Reformed school that had been founded there more than 140 years before. As it turned out, this decision also opened up economic opportunity for the family of ten children. As each son finished his training, he obtained a position as a teacher or a pastor, thereby generating enough income to make it possible for one of his younger siblings to go to the school. William would become the third generation in his family to seek ordination as a pastor. Five of his brothers would become German Reformed Church pastors, and his sister would marry a minister in that same Protestant tradition.

Although founded by one of the authors of the Heidelberg Confession, by the last quarter of the seventeenth century the theological focus of the Herborn school had shifted as the influence of Pietism began to have its effects in the Protestant congregations as well as schools in Prussia. Associated with Philip Spener’s program for congregational renewal as laid out in his book *Pia Desideria* (1675), this movement emphasized purity of heart, and used small lay shepherding groups to nurture those that had attained such purity.

Although the Pietists’ program of church reformation clearly posed a threat to the Protestant establishment of the *landeskirche* or “state churches” of the various regions of Germany, Spener and his followers deliberately downplayed doctrinal differences and other “externals” and instead emphasized the internal state of the soul. As a result, they tended to be apolitical. While they wanted to reform the state church, they chose to do so at the local level in the context of small groups, thereby thinking of themselves as a “leavening influence” in the church rather than as an attempt to undertake a wholesale change in the church’s relationship with the German state.
William’s first job was to teach in a house school of a private family in the duchy of Berg. In 1748, he was hired to teach at Herborn. At that point, he declared his intent to seek ordination. After he passed his examinations at Herborn, he was ordained in 1749 and the following year took on the responsibilities of serving as the vicar of Ockersdorf. During the next three years, Otterbein served as pastor and teacher (as per the Reformed tradition of ministry). Not everyone agreed with the Pietist teachings that Otterbein espoused, particularly his forthright critique of “cold formality” in the congregations of the German Reformed Church, which appears to have alienated some of the citizens of Herborn. In fact, some members of his family encouraged him not to preach in a way that was “so frank, so open, so natural, so prophet-like.”

Apparently, William continued to preach with a sense of conviction despite the opposition that he engendered from German Reformed leaders who did not share his Pietist sensibilities. At the same time, he and others gradually came to recognize that God was preparing him for a bigger responsibility than that of serving as a pastor-teacher in the town of Herborn and adjacent villages. One of the stories about Otterbein that has been passed down across the generations is that his mother felt strongly that he was being called to be a missionary. When William began to share her sense about how he would live out his vocation as a Christian, he asked her where she thought he might be called to serve. Her response was that he should be patient and “wait until the Lord’s time.” In the meantime, “Mother Otterbein” thought that her son should continue preaching until God directed him which way to go.

As it turned out, the call would come from the leadership of the German Reformed Church, which was cooperating with the Dutch Reformed Church to provide pastoral leadership for the fledgling Reformed congregations in the American colonies. Michael Schlatter had spent the first five years of that mission attempting to lay the groundwork for ministry among the estimated 30,000 men, women, and children from German Reformed backgrounds. Many of these people were living in the colony of Pennsylvania. Schlatter returned to Germany in 1751 for the purpose of recruiting men to serve as missionary-pastor-teachers in America. William Otterbein was one of six young men who volunteered to be sent as missionaries. One of the beloved stories of the United Brethren about “Mother Otterbein” is that when it came time for William to depart, she blessed him with these words. “Go, the Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord cause his face to shine upon thee and with much grace direct thy steps. On earth I may not see thy face again—but go.” In fact, her prognostication turned out to be wrong. Wilhelmetta Otterbein actually lived to see her son again twenty years later when he visited Germany for ten months in 1770–1771.

After a period of further study in Holland, and a voyage of nearly four months across the Atlantic Ocean, William Otterbein arrived in New York in July 1752. One of the first Christian leaders that Otterbein met was John M. Muhlenberg, a well-known Lutheran missionary to America. When introduced to the young missionary recruits, Muhlenberg is reported to have quoted the words of Jesus: “Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

While the words may have been too melodramatic, in fact Otterbein and his fellow missionaries did face a remarkably different situation from what they had left behind in the Old World. As one of his biographers aptly summarized the situation, “One did not travel far from the Atlantic Ocean until he came to the raw wilderness. . . . Schools were woefully
lacking, there were few roads. The country was so sparsely populated that many communities were struggling for their existence. Religion, under such circumstances, could easily reach a low ebb, and did.” 10

From 1752-1757, Otterbein served as pastor of the German Reformed Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the largest town west of Philadelphia. Otterbein encountered a congregation that reflected the religious disorder of the times. His attempts to instill a sense of discipline met with some resistance, but despite the local opposition that he faced, Otterbein eventually succeeded in his pastoral responsibilities.

During this same period, Otterbein experienced “assurance of salvation,” which gave a new dimension to his Pietistic convictions. He had always preached a message of repentance and faith, but in 1754 he preached a sermon that led an inquirer to come to him for further guidance. Otterbein found himself unable to give this man guidance. Distressed at not being able to give counsel to the person inquiring about salvation, Otterbein immediately went aside to pray, where he “poured out his heart to God until he experienced the peace and joy and assurance of a conscious personal salvation.” 11 Thereafter, like John Wesley, Otterbein began to preach faith from the perspective of someone who knew that he was a child of God. Both William and the congregation experienced spiritual depths during this time that neither had known prior to his pastorate.

Almost from the beginning of his ministry in Lancaster, Otterbein had been an advocate for creating educational opportunities. He was involved in setting up several parochial schools, evidence that he remained committed to the importance of making it possible for each generation of Christians to receive a formal education—particularly for clergy. During this time, he also served as the head of the “Coetus,” the Reformed synod of pastors who exercised authority over churches in the region.

Otterbein had hoped to visit his family in Germany when the end of his pastorate in Lancaster came in 1758, but because of wars and winter weather he was unable to do so. After a two-year pastorate in Tulpehocken (Lebanon County), Pennsylvania, Otterbein went to Frederick, Maryland, where he would serve from 1760 to 1765. Here again, Otterbein’s ministry was rejected by some laypeople and Reformed clergy. Apparently, one of the concerns that his opponents raised about Otterbein’s conduct was his “friendliness and encouragement of ‘unlearned’ and ‘irregular’ preachers who, after their conversion, began to preach without ordination.” 12 This accusation is noteworthy given Otterbein’s subsequent embrace of Martin Boehm, who would have been accurately described as uneducated in the formal senses of the word.

From 1765 to 1774, Otterbein served as pastor of the Reformed congregation in York, Pennsylvania. Otterbein’s ministry with this congregation also appears to have been successful, but from the perspective of United Brethren history, the most notable feature of this time period was his encounter with Martin Boehm at Long’s Barn. This storied event brought together “two streams of thought from widely divergent theological sources” 13

The significance of this event can start to be seen when placed against the backdrop of conflicts between the various European Protestant groups. Boehm’s Mennonite ancestors had been persecuted by both the German Lutheran and German Reformed churches as well as by German Catholic Christians. For someone from the German Reformed tradition to embrace an “Anabaptist” like Boehm, therefore, was tantamount to conceding the legitimacy of the Mennonite witness. At the same time, Otterbein’s willingness to ignore
Boehm’s lack of credentials for ministry (ordination and theological education) displayed a hospitality that was virtually unheard of at that time. This storied event would come to have greater significance many years later when the company of “United Brethren” preachers would see it as a notable instance in the broader story of Protestant Christians coming together amid differences that were diffused in the context of their discovery of a “brotherly” unity based on their mutual trust in Jesus Christ.

Characterizing Boehm’s hospitality to Otterbein is more difficult. As one biographer states: “Whether Boehm invited Otterbein to the great meeting in Isaac Long’s barn, or whether Otterbein attended because of his own interest, will never be known.” What is known is that Boehm was perceived by members of his local Mennonite assembly as “consorting with worldly people,” meaning that the Methodists and the German-speaking Pietists like Otterbein, with whom Boehm had fellowship, were judged not to be living a life ordered by the gospel. In particular, the fact that Boehm deliberately chose to have fellowship with people who were not committed to Christian pacifism was found to cause scandal. Eventually, Boehm was excommunicated from the local Mennonite assembly where he had served.

Otterbein’s journey took a different course. A few years after his wife’s sudden death, Otterbein was finally able to return to Europe to visit his family. When he returned, his ministry began to be exercised in a wider sphere. In 1774, Otterbein accepted a call to serve as the pastor of a Reformed congregation in Baltimore, Maryland. Otterbein initially requested the approval of the Reformed Coetus or presbytery, but when his call was not approved, Otterbein chose to accept the call to serve as pastor. With this action, tensions began to grow between the congregation and the German Reformed synod, a conflict that would continue well into the nineteenth century. In addition to objecting to his revivalistic practices, Otterbein was perceived by other Reformed leaders as advocating teachings contrary to the Reformed doctrine of the atonement.

One of the factors that led Otterbein to act in such an “irregular” manner was the fact that Francis Asbury, the “bishop” of the Methodist movement in America, strongly encouraged him to do so. The two leaders actually met on the day that Otterbein arrived in Baltimore, and for the next four decades they remained close friends, supporting one another in their respective missionary endeavors in the early years of the American republic. Not surprisingly, from time to time conversations took place about the prospect of merging the efforts of the Methodists and the United Brethren, but this form of “union” would not take place until 1968, when the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church merged to form the United Methodist Church.

“The Evangelical Reformed Church” in Baltimore came to be seen as an “independent” church, a perception that was reinforced in 1785 when Otterbein and the “elders” of the congregation formulated their own set of rules (which appear to have been influenced by the “general rules” of the Methodist societies overseen by Francis Asbury). Baltimore, then, would turn out to be “home base” for Otterbein for the next thirty-nine years amid his various travels, which he undertook to oversee the developing ministries of the United Brethren in Christ that grew from a loose movement of Christians in southern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia into a more cohesive group that thought of themselves as “Otterbein’s people.” Without question, Otterbein began to serve informally as the superintendent of this loose confederation of preachers, but it would take several
decades for the skeleton of organization to be formed in a way that his authoritative role was visible outside the movement.

Fragmentary records show that Otterbein gathered “United Ministers,” who were sympathetic to his movement as early as the mid-1770s, but the first step toward something greater than an informal association did not take place until 1789. At that first “Conference” gathering, a small company of Reformed, Mennonite, and Moravian preachers came together in Baltimore. By the conference of 1791, the group of cooperating preachers had grown to twenty-two in number. The next formal conference did not take place until 1800, when fourteen ministers gathered in Frederick, Maryland. This was the occasion at which the group formally adopted the name that they had been using to describe themselves. At this gathering, this company of “United Ministers” elected Otterbein and Boehm to serve as bishops.

While Otterbein would continue to have an honored status as leader of the movement, because of health problems he was unable to attend any of the United Brethren conferences after 1805. Following his death in 1813, the group formed a Discipline and began to organize for ministry under the leadership of George A. Geeting, Christian Newcomer, and other preachers. In the years following Otterbein’s death, his associates came to recognize that the significance of his leadership had been greater than they had recognized during his lifetime.

MARTIN BOEHM (1725–1812) is regarded, along with Otterbein, as one of the first two bishops of the United Brethren Church. According to church records, he served from 1800 until his death in 1812. Boehm’s father, Jacob, emigrated from the Palatinate to the American colony of Pennsylvania in 1715, joining a company of other Mennonites who had begun settling in the Quaker colony six years before. Martin was the youngest son born to Jacob and Eve. Jacob owned a blacksmith business in Lancaster. Very little is known about Martin’s childhood, but he appears not to have had any formal education. 17

Martin Boehm was selected by lot to be a preacher in the local Mennonite congregation in 1756. According to his own account of this event, when Boehm was nominated to serve as preacher for the congregation, he “had no desire or wish that the lot would take him.” In fact he urged the brethren to nominate someone better prepared (in his view) to undertake these responsibilities.

This however was not done, and the moment came when each nominee was to step forth and take a book. ‘I stepped out with trembling, saying inwardly, Lord not me. I am too poor.’ The books were opened and the lot or token was his. Believing as he did, that this lot falls by divine appointment, he did not feel himself at liberty to dissent or refuse, but felt constrained to take upon himself the office of the ministry as best he could. (Acts 1:26.) 18

In the weeks thereafter, Boehm struggled rather ineffectually to fulfill his new responsibilities. Despite making a concerted effort to prepare himself to offer a sermon at each Sabbath gathering of the Mennonite gemeinde (congregation), he found that he could say little or nothing.
“I prayed to the Lord to assist me in retaining his word, and strengthen me in my great weakness, that to some extent at least I might answer ‘his call.’”

Some months passed in this way, but it came not. This state began to deeply distress me. To be a preacher, and yet have nothing to preach nor to say, but to stammer out a few words and then be obliged to take my seat in shame and remorse! 19

After he experienced his religious awakening (that took place sometime between 1758 and 1761), which he attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit given to him as an assurance of the forgiveness of his sins, Martin Boehm’s preaching began to attract wider attention. The response to the testimony that he offered to his religious experience appears to have disconcerted him as much as anyone else.

This caused considerable commotion in our church, as well as among the people generally. It was all new; none of us had heard or seen it before. A new creation appeared to rise up before me and around me. Now scripture, before mysterious, and like a dead letter to me, was plain of interpretation, ‘was all spirit, all life,’ (alles geist und leben).

“No now I am,” he would say, “a servant and a child of God.” 20

This testimony closely mirrors the language used by John Wesley and other early Methodists who discovered “assurance of salvation” in the context of realizing that by the power of the Holy Spirit, they had been adopted as “children of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:12–15).

Subsequently, Martin was selected to be bishop (overseer) of the local Mennonite congregation in 1759. In the years that followed, Boehm continued to preach at the various meetings that took place in and around Lancaster. In addition to his spirit-inspired preaching, Martin Boehm was widely known for being “given to hospitality,” on occasion hosting between fifty and one hundred persons at his house for these great meetings. The historical record is not clear about whether Boehm had invited Otterbein to attend the gathering at Isaac Long’s barn in 1767 or whether Otterbein attended out of personal interest. What we do know is that the United Brethren movement remembered this occasion as the defining moment in its own history, a time when “God was drawing together those with kindred experience of the new birth in order that with them as the leaders many might enjoy a new fellowship of faith and spiritual freedom.” 21

The “union” that resulted from this gathering was defined by the resolve to not let the divisions of their respective religious heritages stand in the way of their being hospitable to one another. For example, some of these newly “united brethren” believed that baptism was to be administered by pouring (Boehm), others (like Otterbein) practiced sprinkling, and still others (from the state of Virginia) baptized by total immersion. The set of disciplinary rules that the United Brethren movement ultimately adopted was based on the “general rules” of the Methodist movement led by Francis Asbury. Asbury had known Boehm for many years and regarded him to be a holy person. Efforts to bring these two streams of the broader “Wesleyan” family together began in the early nineteenth century, but the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren with the Methodist Church was not actually consummated until 1968.

The founders of Indiana Central did not elect to name any of the streets of the University for this cofounder of the United Brethren tradition, and in doing so they reflected a wider
pattern of remembrance in the German-American Pietist movement. Otterbein’s ministry had a wider orbit than that of Boehm. Boehm’s own humility may have contributed to the sense that he played a lesser role. Boehm’s life story also has more complexity. Following the “Wir sind Brüder” episode, Martin Boehm continued his association with the local Mennonite fellowship as well as evangelicals in Southern Pennsylvania and Northern Virginia. Although regarded as a founding bishop, Boehm would later join a Methodist class meeting in the Lancaster area, and his son, Henry, would come to be very well known as a Methodist preacher and traveling companion of Bishop Francis Asbury.

Revered by those who knew him, Boehm’s name would be forever linked with Otterbein, and the latter’s name would be the principal way that the founding moment in the United Brethren saga would be evoked in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because Boehm was neither formally educated nor an advocate of educated clergy, he was never linked with efforts to found institutions of higher education founded by United Brethren. In this respect, as Prof. Fred Hill has rightly observed, Otterbein and Boehm represented “radically different paths” into Christian ministry. “Because some older denominations that insisted on educated clergy had become cold and formal in their practice of religion, many United Brethren equated education with formalism and shunned the former as well as the latter . . . . In the context of frontier revivalism, the Mennonite tradition of untrained ministers had been dominant during the early decades of the United Brethren ministry.”

For this very reason, it would not have made sense to the founders of Indiana Central University to name one of the streets in the University Heights Neighborhood after Martin Boehm. At the same time, remembering Boehm helps to call attention to one of the common features of most of the American-born UB leaders who were memorialized in the names given to these streets. With one notable exception, they all regarded higher education as crucial to the future of the UB Church, and they worked diligently to support church-related higher education despite the fact that some of them had very little opportunity to receive a formal education.

MATHEWS AVENUE
One block east of Otterbein, Mathews Avenue runs from Hanna Avenue to Lawrence Avenue. This street was named after a United Brethren leader whose service as a bishop of the church would begin the same year that the University was founded.

GEORGE MARTIN MATHEWS (1848-1921) served as a UB bishop for nineteen years beginning in 1902, the year Indiana Central University was founded. George was born near Cincinnati, Ohio, where his father and mother had moved as part of the westward expansion of the frontier. George’s father, John, had been left an orphan when all but two members of the Mathews family were killed during an epidemic in the Ohio Valley. Eventually, John and his sister Catherine were adopted by separate families. In spite of being an orphan, George appears to have received good care from his adopted family. In fact, his stepfather was well-known to be a man of “generous hospitality. Travelers
going from one place to another over heavy roads” were welcomed into the Mathews’ home, which came to be known as the “Buckeye Tavern,” despite the fact that John Mathews did not charge for lodging.  

George’s interest in Christianity began to take shape in the context of the conversations with the pioneer preachers who frequently visited the Mathews family as well as the “Old Stone” United Brethren Church to which the Mathews family belonged. At nine years of age, George decided that he wanted to become a Christian and join the “Old Stone” congregation, but no one thought that young George knew what he was doing. Church leaders were not sure what to do with George, but they recognized that he had a gift for learning and encouraged him to attend one of the denominational colleges. In 1865, George Mathews enrolled at Otterbein University. After attending a revival at the college led by Bishop Jonathan Weaver, George professed his faith in Christ and was baptized by immersion in the Ohio River.

After graduation from college in 1870, Mathews worked in his brother-in-law’s store and began to read law, thinking that he might become an attorney like his brother, who had recently graduated from the UB college in Hartsville, Indiana. At the same time, he began to take on leadership responsibilities in the UB Church, including serving as one of the first “lay delegates” in the Miami Conference. By 1879, he had received a license to preach, and shortly thereafter he enrolled at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati. From 1881 to 1882, George studied at Union Biblical Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, before being ordained in August 1882. Two years later, he was appointed to serve at Summit Street church in Dayton, Ohio, which was associated with the seminary of the UB Church.

Mathews had a very successful ministry with that congregation over the next five years as it grew to be one of the largest congregations of the denomination. Within a few years, he was asked to take on editorial responsibilities at the Quarterly Review and the Religious Telescope, roles that he fulfilled with distinction. After his election as bishop in 1901, Mathews continued to serve the UB Church as a distinguished leader in many ways. He also served as a member of the Executive Council of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ of America, served in national roles with the National Anti-Saloon League, and wrote the books Justification (1902) and Christ in the Life of Today (1916).

At the time that the street in the University Heights neighborhood was named after him, George Mathews had just been elected to serve as a UB bishop and was in the prime years of his ministry. While Otterbein signified the late eighteenth-century beginnings of the UB tradition, Mathews symbolized the prospect of the UB Church moving into the twentieth century at a time when the church’s leaders were beginning to participate in the modern ecumenical movement. In addition to the fact that he was a strong supporter of President Good, Mathews also appears to have been the UB bishop that would have been best known to students and faculty at Indiana Central. He was one of the principal speakers at the first University celebration in 1907, and he served for several years as a member of the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees.

BOWMAN AVENUE
We simply do not know how the founders thought about the name given to the street located one block west of Otterbein Avenue, running from Hanna to Lawrence avenues. There is no record of anyone named Bowman serving as a bishop of the UB Church. Given that we know that the intent was to name the streets of the neighborhood after bishops, this creates a bit of
a puzzle. I have identified two possible solutions to this puzzle. (1) It is possible that Bowman was the name of another United Brethren leader who was not a bishop, but who was well-regarded by the founders of the University. (2) Bowman may have been the name of a person who *was* a bishop but not, strictly speaking, a member of the United Brethren in Christ denomination, however much he was a noteworthy leader in the broader movement among German-American Pietists on the American frontier. 25

WEAVER AVENUE
The street that marks the western perimeter of the University Heights neighborhood between Hanna and Lawrence avenues was named for an influential United Brethren leader who did not have the privilege of attending college but nevertheless came to be a forceful advocate for church-related higher education during the second half of the nineteenth century.

**JONATHAN WEAVER** (1824–1901) served as a UB bishop from 1865 until 1893. He was elected bishop emeritus in 1893, a role that he continued to play for the last eight years of his life. Jonathan was born in Carroll County, Ohio, where his German-speaking family were pioneers. He was the youngest of twelve children. As one biographer put it, Jonathan “had the opportunity to attend only the most inferior type of schools, and these for not more than three months a year.” 26 Known for his commanding presence, an impression reinforced by his tall stature (6 feet, 4 inches), it was said that “few men were more conspicuous and princely in bearing” than Bishop Weaver. 27

Converted in a camp meeting at the age of seventeen, Jonathan was elected to serve as a “class leader” less than two years later. Weaver’s call to ministry was far from stereotypical. As he put it,

> There was no hidden impulse to enter the ministry, nor was there anything in my surroundings that suggested it. The impression came gradually, growing stronger as time passed by. I felt my unfitness for such a work, but, in some way, everything else seemed to close up. I felt a deep interest in the cause of Christ in general, and the salvation of souls in particular, and often found myself exhorting the unsaved, when in the field alone. Thus, step by step, I was led along, until there seemed to be no other road open.28

Having accepted his “call” to ministry, Weaver took seriously the fact that he would need to receive an education. With few financial resources available, he struggled to find a way forward. Ultimately, he was able to attend a Presbyterian academy near Hagerstown, Maryland, for a total of five months in 1845–46, which would constitute his only formal education. He received a license to preach in 1845, after which he would serve congregations on various circuits in Ohio.

In 1857, Weaver was appointed to serve as soliciting agent for Otterbein College, a position that he held for seven years. During this time, he became even more aware than before of his lack of a formal education. From this point on, Jonathan Weaver became “an active advocate of the promotion of higher education by the Church.” Weaver poured him-
self into the task of stabilizing the finances of Otterbein. At the same time, he continued to take on significant responsibilities as a leader of the Muskingum Conference of the UB Church.

In 1865, Jonathan Weaver was elected bishop. He was also one of the persons who led the effort to change the church's position of opposition to "secret societies" (Masonic groups) and subsequently led in the legal battle that followed over the proper constitution of the church. For this reason as well as others, Weaver was remembered as having "put the stamp of his personality" on the United Brethren in Christ. 29

Well-known for his ability to debate as well as his "genial disposition and a live sense of humor," Weaver engaged in disputations on topics ranging from slavery to baptism to the question of whether salvation is limited or universal in scope. Weaver's views on these controversial topics were published in a number of pamphlets as well as in several books, including a volume on Christian Doctrine (1889) and another on Christian Theology (1900). Given his lack of formal education, his intellectual abilities were rightly regarded as quite remarkable. In recognition of his scholarly achievements, Otterbein College conferred the doctor of divinity degree on Weaver in 1874.

III. EAST-WEST STREETS IN THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD

RUSSEL AVENUE

Today, the name of the avenue that runs from west to east between Bowman and Mathews, one block south of Hanna Avenue, is called "Windermire," but the original name of that street was chosen to honor a United Brethren leader whose lifetime overlapped with that of William Otterbein. In his own way, John Russel contributed to the debate about UB involvement in higher education. He is remembered for his opposition to most of the initial efforts out of concern that the opportunity for higher education might lead people to distance themselves from the humble labors of everyday existence. The name of the street was changed at the time that the University Heights neighborhood was annexed by the city of Indianapolis. 30 Since a street named Russel already existed elsewhere in the city, the residents of University Heights were asked to choose a different name.

JOHN RUSSEL (1799-1870) served as a UB bishop from 1845 to 1849 and was later elected to serve a second term from 1857 to 1861. Born in Western Maryland near Frederick, where Otterbein once served as a pastor, Russel met the first UB bishop when he was a child. In fact, Otterbein presided at John’s grandfather’s funeral. Russel’s religious awakening took place in the context of his own family, and shortly thereafter he began offering testimony to his experience of salvation in the context of revival meetings. 31

Over time, John began to take on other leadership roles. As one biographer observed, “Without actually realizing it, Russel’s life was gradually turning toward ministry.” 32

After he and his father attempted to set up a blacksmithing business, John decided to devote all of his time to Christian ministry. Interestingly enough, the decision to stop black-
smithing coincided with the family’s decision to free the slave that they had purchased. By 1819, Russel had been assigned a circuit in the area where the state borders of northwestern Maryland and southwestern Pennsylvania now converge. The circumstances of his travel on the American frontier were quite difficult, but Russel’s biographer indicates that he enjoyed the hospitality of the homes of the United Brethren families that he served. Even so, he contracted a painful eye disease that would hinder his vision for the rest of his life.

Because of this health concern, Russel was not able to itinerate for a period of time. While he recuperated, he built a school, where he then taught. Gradually he resumed service as a preacher. For most of the next two decades, John Russel served congregations in the Scioto Conference. At times during that period, he and his family engaged in various kinds of manual labor in order to supplement the meager income that he received from the congregations on the circuit that he traveled. Russel was proud of the fact that he made his own shoes and repaired his neighbors’ clocks.

Russel was one of the first UB leaders to recognize the need for a denominational newspaper that could serve as a medium of exchange of religious convictions, a source for inspiration, and a means of reporting on developments in various parts of the church. John was so convinced of the importance of this venture that he sold his property and invested it in the venture that came to be known as the Religious Telescope. Elected as one of the trustees of this venture by the General Conference of 1833, Russel threw himself into the preparations necessary to begin publication. The newspaper was founded at the end of 1834. Russel spent the next year gathering subscriptions to the new paper, which was published in Circleville, Ohio. At times, Russel provided the funds necessary to keep the Religious Telescope in publication when revenue from subscriptions proved inadequate. He also made several long-term loans to keep the venture in existence.

After eighteen years of serving on the frontier in challenging conditions, Russel and his family moved back to Maryland, where he assumed the role of pastor of the congregation that Otterbein himself had served. Russel arrived in Baltimore at a time when the UB church was torn by differences over matters of Christian doctrine. Part of that tension surrounded the question of whether the congregation was to be related to the German Reformed Church or not. Russel chose to publish the characteristically blunt reasons that he gave for not permitting the “classis” of the German Reformed Church to exercise jurisdiction over the congregation that he served. The first of these statements was, “I want none of their dead formality; I want to be alive in Christ.”

The contest over the “Otterbein Church” property eventually made its way to court, and even after he was no longer serving as the pastor of that congregation, Russel remained involved in the lawsuit that would drag on for more than four years before the matter was finally resolved. Despite his resistance to the control of a religious group that he and others perceived to be stuck in the rut of European custom, Russel remained very much involved with efforts to minister to German-speaking Christians on the American frontier. In fact, beginning in 1841 when he was appointed to serve as a trustee of the effort to establish a German paper in Baltimore, Russel was involved in several efforts to publish United Brethren views and resources. About this same time, General Conference appointed Russel to serve as the general agent for the publishing house. He also would serve as a presiding elder in the church.

Russel steered away from the church controversy over holiness, but he did have strong convictions on the questions of slavery and the matter of membership in secret societies.
He was also very active in the debate that began to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century over the question of whether the United Brethren should attempt to found colleges and seminaries. Initially, Russel was strongly opposed to these efforts because he “feared that the proposed institutions would be ‘preacher factories,’ and that because of them preachers would lose their sense of the urgency of their call to preach and evangelize in the pursuit of knowledge.” In one notable incident in 1868 at Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania, Russel preached a vehement sermon against colleges, using for his text the words “Knowledge puffeth up.” As a result of this sermon, one-quarter of the students at the college supposedly stopped attending and a deep division emerged in the United Brethren congregations of south-central Pennsylvania.

Later in his life, when it became clear that the effort to establish a United Brethren seminary was going to succeed, Russel changed his tack. He produced a plan to found a school on a 300-acre farm where students could engage in manual labor while studying for the ministry. In addition to providing income to help run the school, Russel proposed that facilities should be built on the farm to house the denominational newspaper as well as to hold the General Conference meetings that occurred every four years. He regarded the student labor feature of the proposal as critical because he believed that “Should learning prevail without labor, it will tend to make men proud . . . men will persuade each other to go to college rather than to become converted.”

Russel would continue to attempt to influence the shape of United Brethren involvements in higher education in ways that validated his own self-reliant methods of learning. In 1869, Russel gave $10,000 to the Pennsylvania Conference of the UB Church (not to Lebanon Valley College) to establish a “Biblical Chair” for the training of ministers. Russel wanted younger pastors to study under the direction of a senior pastor in the context of a kind of apprenticeship. However, Russel attached such strict conditions to the gift that it was rendered impractical for use. Only two ministers appear to have attempted to engage in the “course of study” that Russel prescribed. Both were taught by Russel himself, which indicates something of the way Russel’s view appears to have been an attempt to justify his own self-education.

After serving his first term as bishop, Russel returned to Otterbein Church to serve as pastor for four more years. In 1857, he was called by the UB Church to serve as bishop of the German-speaking portion of the denomination, a diminishing but important company of people who represented the immigrant community where Otterbein and Boehm had encountered one another. At his death in 1870, Russel was remembered not only for his strong preaching and administrative abilities. The lifetime of this “unique, resourceful, and witty” United Brethren leader overlapped with that of Bishop Otterbein and therefore extended from the frontier period into the last half of the nineteenth century, when the church was founding the institutions that would guide it into the future. He helped to found some of these institutions and he opposed the development of others.

Bishop Russel’s resistance to founding institutions of higher education represents one side in a debate that would continue well into the twentieth century, as United Brethren in Christ leaders would struggle with one another to determine what the best course of action would be to serve a changing church in the midst of a growing nation. In a sense, Russel served as a spokesperson for that wing of the UB Church that had remained closely associated with the simplicity, humility, and hospitality of Martin Boehm. At the same time,
Russel also helped to found some of the very institutions that prepared the way for institutional developments in a church that would soon begin to outgrow its frontier past. By naming a street in the University Heights neighborhood after Bishop Russel, the founders of Indiana Central not only paid tribute to one of the leaders whose ministry stretched back to the frontier days of Otterbein and Boehm, but they also acknowledged the conflicted feelings that many United Brethren felt about the prospect of educated leadership. Nevertheless, they were firm in their resolve to seek a future for the church that was anchored by intellectual development.

CASTLE AVENUE
The street that runs between Bowman and Mathews Avenue, two blocks south of Hanna Avenue, was named for the United Brethren leader who has the distinction of having served the longest tenure of any bishop in the history of the church.

NICHOLAS CASTLE (1837–1922) served as an active UB bishop from 1877 to 1905 and then served for another seventeen years in retirement (for a total of almost forty-five years, the longest of any bishop in the history of the United Brethren Church). Most of that service was in the Pacific Northwest in challenging circumstances.  

Nicholas was born in northeastern Indiana, where his family had a farm in the town of Elkhart. Following the deaths of both parents during his childhood, he found himself orphaned at the age of thirteen. For a few months he was homeless, until a family in a nearby town offered him hospitality in their home. Nicholas seized every opportunity that he could to go to school, but his formal education would be limited to the courses that he took in a one-room school in northern Indiana.

Castle’s call to ministry appears to have been fairly simple. As Castle’s biographer reports, the bishop was known to tell his friends “he could not remember a time when he had not been impressed that it was his duty to preach the Gospel.” He was licensed in 1856 to preach on Elkhart Circuit, admitted to conference membership in 1858, and ordained in 1861.

Throughout his life, Castle was aware of the serious educational deficiencies that he and many other UB clergy had. At the same time, he became renowned for his mastery of the English language, a fact that made many people wonder, given his lack of education. After his death, papers were discovered that made it clear that Castle had “copied page after page of words from the dictionary with their Latin and Greek derivation listed and the definitions noted.” As a bishop, he argued that every UB minister should be required to seek education at a college or seminary.

Castle also knew firsthand how difficult it could be to found an educational venture. Earlier in his ministry, Castle had raised money for Bourbon Seminary, a preparatory school in northern Indiana that failed as a result of poor planning. He came away from this experience convinced that the UB Church should found fewer schools and offer significant support to the ones that it did found.
A genuinely humble man, Nicholas Castle was greatly surprised that the church would elect him as bishop when he was only thirty-nine years old. Castle was one of the UB leaders who advocated an emphasis on Christian holiness. The teachings recounted in Castle’s book *The Exalted Life* (1913) were believed by many UB leaders to provide a good distillation of the truths that he embodied in his own life.

**EDWARDS AVENUE**

The street that runs between Bowman and Weaver four blocks south of Hanna Avenue was named for a United Brethren leader whose name was widely recognized for his participation in the Holiness movement that swept American Protestant denominations in the mid-nineteenth century.

**DAVID EDWARDS** (1816-1876) served as a UB bishop from 1849 until his death more than a quarter of a century later. During that time, Edwards led a church that one writer described as having its “growing pains.” Conversations and controversies about doctrine, discipline, and missionary expansion swirled around the leadership of the church during the second half of the nineteenth century at the same time that they attempted to found publishing houses, colleges, and newspapers. The fledgling institutions that they did create would provide the institutional stability for the UB Church to make the transition from a loose movement of German-American Pietist Christians on the frontier to an American Protestant denomination alongside other more established church bodies.

Like William Otterbein, Edwards was an immigrant. Born in North Wales to a family of Welsh Congregationalists, David’s prospects for the future changed dramatically when his parents moved to the United States in 1821. Initially, they settled in Baltimore. Two years later they moved to Delaware, Ohio. Like other pioneers, the Edwards family struggled to establish a livelihood. These circumstances left little or no opportunities for education. David was able to attend school for a total of twelve months between the ages of nine and twelve. One of his biographers recalls that as a young man, Edwards would study his Greek grammar book while traveling his circuit of churches on horseback.

At the age of seventeen, Edwards went to work at a woolen mill near Lancaster, Ohio. Within a year, David had been converted in a United Brethren camp meeting. He was licensed to preach in 1835, was accepted as a member of the Scioto Conference the following year, and was ordained four years later. During the following year, the effects of constant travel in all kinds of weather took its toll on Edwards’ health, and by 1840 he had lost his voice. For the next three years, Edwards resumed working in the wool mills, and when able to do so taught school and continued his own education. By 1843, Edwards had recovered his strength and his voice and resumed his itinerant ministry in Ohio despite the reservations of his wife.

Early in his ministry as a circuit-riding preacher in southern Ohio, David learned the hard way that the way one preaches matters. After taking into account the effects of his words on congregations, he changed the way he approached proclaiming the gospel. Instead of...
frightening or threatening his listeners, Edwards began to preach “a warm-hearted and sympathetic gospel of love.” Whether this accounts for his success as a pastor is not known. In any event, Edwards ultimately was better known for his work as a religious journalist and publisher than he was as a preacher and evangelist.

In 1844, Edwards was assigned to a church in Circleville, Ohio, which was the location of the Printing Establishment for the United Brethren in Christ Church. A little more than a year later, Edwards was named the editor of the denominational newspaper, the Religious Telescope. Because of his lack of formal education, Edwards felt ill-prepared to take on this role, but he embraced it with zest as well as humility and worked diligently to educate himself for his task. During the four years that he served as editor, the newspaper evolved from a rather shakily constructed venture to a well-ordered operation with policies and procedures and sound fiscal management.

At the same time, Edwards brought new standards of quality for the content of articles to be published in the Religious Telescope, demanding that submissions display “soul, point, and practical utility.” He also wrote editorials that called upon United Brethren leaders to engage the challenges of the day, including calling for the UB Church to take responsibility to start institutions of higher education that could train leaders for the church to embrace the challenges of the future. In doing so, he warned that United Brethren leaders must always keep “a close connection between education and vital godliness.”

Edwards also advocated “holiness of heart and life” in his editorials, giving more space to the topic of sanctification than to any other theme. As was true of Martin Boehm (see above), the concern for holiness intersected with the practice of offering hospitality to those in need. In fact, Edwards’ own experience of sanctification occurred in the context of offering hospitality to Jesse Wilson, a fellow pastor who was dying. Both men testified that God directed them to enter into this arrangement while they were lying awake in their own homes. Shortly thereafter, in late 1844, the Wilson family moved into the home of the Edwards family, where Jesse was cared for until his death in February 1845.

During these months, Jesse and David discussed their mutual quest for “holiness of heart and life” in the context of Edwards’ reading of the writings of John Wesley. On Christmas Day 1844, Wilson professed to have experienced “entire sanctification.” A week later, on January 2, 1845, David Edwards received “the second blessing” by the Holy Spirit. Thereafter, he was a strong advocate of “entire sanctification” as well as the healing power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, after suffering from neuralgia for several years, Edwards was healed one day while praying. This experience also became part of his testimony to the power of God to make people whole and holy. Edwards’ book The Perfect Christian (1846), which gathered his teachings on the topic of Christian sanctification, proved to be very influential in the UB Church.

Having already accomplished a great deal by his early thirties, Edwards was elected to the office of bishop in 1849. He was reelected to this position of responsibility six times. In the midst of carrying out his episcopal responsibilities, Edwards managed to serve as the editor of several publications while also serving as a contributing editor to the Religious Telescope. Throughout his tenure as bishop, Edwards continued to be a strong advocate for higher education initiatives in the UB Church.
MILLS AVENUE
The street that runs between Bowman and Matthews four blocks south of Hanna Avenue was named for a man who was regarded as one of the most distinguished intellectual leaders of the United Brethren Church in the latter part of the nineteenth century. After a very successful career as a college pastor, college professor, and college president, Job S. Mills was elected to serve as a bishop at a time when he had hoped that he could spend his days teaching and studying philosophy.

JOB S. MILLS (1848–1909) served as a UB bishop from 1893 to 1909. Born to a family of Quaker ancestry in Ohio, Job grew up in a home where Methodist and United Brethren pastors were frequent guests. Job’s father was well-regarded by his neighbors, some of whom thought of him as an outstanding embodiment of Quaker piety, despite the fact that his name had been dropped from membership in the Society of Friends because he had married outside their membership. Job struggled with poor health for most of his childhood. At the age of fourteen, Job experienced an “intellectual awakening” after which he was said to have an “insatiable hunger for knowledge.” After completing all the courses offered in the one-room rural school near his home, Mills studied for two years at Bartlett Academy near Plymouth, Ohio.

Thereafter, his education was obtained largely with the assistance of private teachers, non-resident schools, and colleges in addition to spending a year in New York City, where he studied personality development with scholars of a scientific bent. He enrolled for three years of study at Otterbein University. He also graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University, from which he received the Ph.B., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees over a period of years. Mills was said to have “mastered” several foreign languages and made visits to some of the leading universities of England and Germany during his successful career as college pastor, college professor, and college president.

The story of Mills’s call to ministry displays the way in which spirituality and study coincided in this man’s life. After being converted at the age of seventeen, Mills began to sense that God was calling him to ministry. While working in the field one morning, he opened the New Testament that he had brought with him to read when resting. He read the last chapter of Mark’s Gospel, where Jesus commands the disciples to “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” While reflecting on this passage, Mills found himself overwhelmed by the sense that these words were a personal message from God to him. Speaking in an idiom that his Quaker ancestors would have appreciated, Mills responded with these words: “Open the way, and I will go.”

The disposition reflected in Mills’s statement of resolve would mark his entire ministry, despite the obstacles that he encountered because of health problems. He had initially hoped to serve as a missionary in Africa, but church officials judged him to be too weak to survive the rigors of the mission field. In due course, Mills found that a way had opened for him to serve as a pastor while also continuing to learn. At the age of twenty-six, Mills became pastor of the UB church at Westerville, Ohio, the town where Otterbein University was located.
After a health crisis in 1883, when Mills experienced a severe case of typhoid fever, he recovered fully and for the remainder of his life displayed the appearance of robust health.

In 1887, he was selected to serve as professor of English literature and Rhetoric at Western College, founded by the UB Church in Toledo, Ohio. Two years later, he was elected president of that same college and professor of philosophy. Despite adverse circumstances (the main building of the college burned and had to be replaced), Mills served as an able administrator. Saying that he preferred to pursue the life of a scholar and teacher, Mills resigned the presidency in 1892 to give full time to the development of the Department of Philosophy at Western College. United Brethren leaders had other ideas, however, about how Mills could best serve the church.

The next year, Mills was elected to serve as the UB bishop for the Pacific Coast District, where he served from 1893 to 1897. Thereafter, he served in Colorado and Pennsylvania. While serving as bishop, Mills continued to have an active interest in church-related higher education and the UB Church’s missionary endeavors. His first visit to one of the mission fields took place in 1896–1897, when he made an extended visit to Sierra Leone, West Africa, a mission site that he would revisit five years later.

Also deeply concerned about the meager state of denominational literature, Bishop Mills and Bishop E. B. Kephart had planned to edit a series of books to be called “The New Century Library of Theology,” a venture that never materialized as a result of the loss of financial support. On his own, Mills wrote several books on the topics of “Holiness,” “Africa,” and “Missionary Enterprise.” Although he had hoped to write many more books in retirement, Bishop Mills died shortly after his return to the United States following an extended visit to overseas UB missions in China, the Philippines, and Japan.

MARKWOOD AVENUE
The street that runs between Bowman and Mathews five blocks south of Hanna Avenue was named for an intense United Brethren leader whose brilliance seems to have been matched by his idiosyncrasies.

JACOB MARKWOOD (1815–1873) served as a United Brethren bishop from 1861 to 1873, a period during which the church was caught up in the strife of the nation’s civil war and its aftermath. Born in Charleston, West Virginia, to the family of a stonemason who moved frequently in order to earn a living, Jacob’s childhood years were marked by almost continual change of residence. During Jacob’s entire childhood, he attended school for ten or twelve months at the most. Although he had few opportunities for formal education, they were sufficient to propel Jacob into his own disciplined pursuit of lifelong learning. Despite his lack of education, he was thought to be one of the best-informed men of the United Brethren Church, but he never had the privilege of attending college.

As a young adult, Markwood learned the skill of weaving while working with his brothers in Frederick County, Virginia. During this same period of his life, Jacob found “inexpressible peace in Christ” as he experienced conversion through Jesus Christ at a United Brethren camp.
During the months that followed, he joined others for “regular and careful study of the Bible.” Soon thereafter, United Brethren leaders encouraged Jacob to take on leadership roles. By June 1837, Markwood had been licensed to preach and joined the Virginia Conference of the United Brethren in Christ. Four years later, in 1841, he was ordained. For the next five years, Jacob served as an itinerant preacher. In 1843, Markwood was elected to serve as a presiding elder. Over the next eighteen years, he gained a reputation as being “resourceful and quick-witted” in dealing with the preachers that he was charged with supervising.

Elected bishop in 1861, Markwood threw himself into the struggles of the church and the nation. Known as one of the “most dynamic preachers” of his era, Jacob Markwood was an intense man of religious passion who regarded slavery and the sale and consumption of “spirituous liquors” to be monstrous evils. In his preaching, Bishop Markwood was famous because he used few notes and “never preached the same sermon twice in the same way.” Small in stature, Bishop Markwood used dramatic language and facial expression along with theatrical oratory to capture the attention of the congregations that he addressed.

During the Civil War, Markwood was very outspoken in his support of the Union cause, and he received many opportunities to speak on the state of the Union, partially as a result of the fact that the territory of the annual conference that he supervised stretched from Maryland into Virginia. Apparently, he was fairly effective, because at one point in the conflict, the Confederacy offered a reward of $1,000 for his arrest. By the end of his first term in office, Markwood’s health was very poor because of “nervous exhaustion” resulting from his efforts during the Civil War. Nevertheless, the General Conference reelected him to serve as bishop for another four years. From 1869 to 1873, Markwood was unable to itinerate because of the severe pain that he experienced. To make matter worse, like his parents, both of whom became blind late in life, Markwood suffered from poor vision near the end of his own life.

Despite his many struggles with health, Markwood was remembered for having a continual interest in higher education and a keen analytic mind that he used in everything from managing the church’s publishing ventures to his own studies as an independent scholar in logic, metaphysics, and medicine. As one of Bishop Markwood’s biographers noted, “to the end of his life Bishop Markwood continued to be a student. His desire for learning was never satisfied. His interests covered a wide field, and he became one of the best informed men of his day.” In addition to these characteristics and contributions, Bishop Markwood’s service as a trustee of both Mt. Pleasant College and Otterbein likely informed the decision to name one of the streets in University Heights after Jacob Markwood nearly three decades after his death.

IV. AT THE CORNER OF KEPHART AND OTTERBEIN: ANOTHER HANNA AVENUE EPISODE
Although the original advertisement for the University Heights neighborhood listed only nine streets to be named for UB bishops, four years after Indiana Central was founded, it appears that University leaders also wanted to rename Hanna Avenue after another significant UB leader who was associated with the effort to found the University. Ultimately that effort failed, but the aspiration to envision the University as located at the corner of Kephart Avenue and Otterbein Avenue stemmed from the desire to honor a man who died while working to establish the fledging institution the United Brethren had founded in 1902.
EZEKIEL B. KEPHART (1834–1905) served as a UB bishop from 1881 to 1905. Born near Osceola, Pennsylvania, Ezekiel is remembered as one of “the three famous brothers” of the Kephart family, all of whom provided outstanding leadership to the UB Church. (Ezekiel’s two siblings were Isaiah, who served as the editor of the Religious Telescope newspaper of the UB Church from 1889 to 1908, and Cyrus, who served as a UB bishop from 1913 to 1925.) Ezekiel was one of seven sons and six daughters born to Henry Kephart, Jr. and his wife, Sarah. Henry served as a circuit-riding preacher for the UB Church as early as 1834.

Much of Ezekiel’s father’s knowledge of the Bible was limited to memorization of long passages of scripture, since Henry had little or no formal education, a circumstance that he greatly regretted. Sarah Kephart taught her children to read and gave them as much education as she was able to provide. The two textbooks used in the family school that she led were a spelling book and the New Testament. From time to time, the children had an opportunity to learn arithmetic. At the age of 14, Kephart took a job rafting lumber down the Susquehanna River. Over the next few years, his life would be defined by the rhythms of the logging business. Initially, Ezekiel and his brothers thought they would establish a business in the lumber industry. After a few years of success, though, they gave up that aspiration, and shortly thereafter, his educational aspirations resurfaced.

When he was seventeen years old, Ezekiel attended the Bigler Camp Meeting in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania, where he had a deeply emotional experience of conversion and professed his faith in Christ. Four years later, Kephart had an “intellectual awakening” when he and his brother Cyrus were able to study with a traveling schoolteacher for a few months during the winter of 1855–1856. The next spring, he enrolled in Dickinson Seminary in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. For the next few years, Ezekiel’s life alternated between studies at various schools and rafting lumber as weather permitted. In 1857, the Kephart brothers enrolled in Mt. Pleasant College, a short-lived institution founded by the UB Church that remained open fewer than six months. In 1857–1858, Ezekiel enrolled at Otterbein University in Ohio. While studying at Otterbein, Kephart was licensed to preach and began serving a United Brethren Circuit.

Throughout Ezekiel Kephart’s life, he displayed the kind of leadership that engaged challenges and obstacles “head on” with pragmatic determination and strong administrative skills. Shortly after his marriage to Susan J. Trefts, Kephart was supposed to have taken an appointment as missionary in the Pacific Northwest. Because of the circumstances of the Civil War, he was unable to make travel arrangements. Later that year, he was ordained and appointed to serve as pastor of the First UB Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Within a few years, Kephart was given additional responsibilities. Although early on it became clear that he was regarded as an effective pastor and church leader, Ezekiel felt that he needed to complete his education. Against the advice of trusted friends, Ezekiel reentered Otterbein University at the beginning of 1864. Over the next year, he completed all requirements for the bachelor’s degree and graduated in the summer of 1865. A mere three years later, he was elected president of Western College in Iowa. This institution had been founded a decade before by the UB Church, but it was poorly organized and badly in
debt. Kephart embraced his responsibilities with zeal and determination. Ultimately, he succeeded in paying the college’s debts and secured its financial stability, at least for a time. During much of that same time, he also carried a full teaching load.

In 1871, Kephart was elected to serve in the Iowa Senate, a position that he held for four years. One of Ezekiel’s principal legislative contributions in Iowa was to improve the methods of training teachers for the purpose of improving the public schools of that state. A few years later, Kephart successfully led Western College to relocate to the town of Toledo, Iowa, a move that was accomplished in 1881 despite various kinds of financial and political obstacles, all of which Kephart managed to overcome. That same year, as it happened, Kephart was chosen to serve as a bishop of the UB Church.

Ezekiel Kephart was elected to serve as bishop at a time when the UB leadership was sharply divided over the issue of whether a member of a “secret society” (Masonic orders) could be a Christian. The church was looking for leaders who could help to moderate the conflict, and it was widely believed that Kephart’s administrative gifts could be helpful. Initially, he was assigned to the “Southwest District” of the church, but within a few years, he came to be recognized as offering leadership to the whole church. In his later years, he was assigned to serve as bishop, first of the Eastern district and later the Ohio District. Four years later, Kephart was selected to prepare and present an important paper on this controversy at the General Conference of 1885. When the division of the UB Church took place in 1889, Kephart led the side that adopted a new constitution, in opposition to those who would regard themselves as the “Old Constitution” United Brethren.

As bishop, Kephart traveled widely on behalf of the church visiting UB missions in Africa and Germany on three different occasions. Kephart was driven by a strong sense of mission, a perspective that he expressed in these words: “My plan of life has been to work where God puts me and to do his will.” In addition to the appointments that he served in the UB church, Kephart offered leadership on the interdenominational International Lesson Committee that was charged with planning lessons for Sunday Schools.

For these and other reasons, he was reelected to serve as bishop for the next two decades. During that time he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree and a Doctor of Laws degree from Lebanon Valley College in recognition of his contributions as an educator, minister, and legislator. In addition to writing numerous articles that were published in the Religious Telescope, Bishop Kephart was the author of three books that were used by United Brethren pastors: Apologetics, or A Treatise on Church Evidences (1897), Manual of Church Discipline (1900), and A Brief Treatment on the Atonement (1902).

At the 1905 General Conference of the UB Church, Ezekiel Kephart asked to be relieved of his administrative responsibilities. In recognition of his service to the church, Bishop Kephart was named “bishop emeritus.” Within a year, however, Kephart had taken on a new challenge: “to aid the newly established Indiana Central College in a financial campaign.” When he left home in mid-January, he appeared to be in good health, but nine days later he died of a heart attack while working in an office building in Indianapolis.

The fact that Bishop Kephart died while trying to assure the future of one of the church’s latest efforts to found institutions of higher education appears to have made a big impression on the founders of Indiana Central. Local opposition by landowners in the area who had their own memories associated with “Hanna Road” had already thwarted William L. Elder’s attempt to honor Kephart. To commemorate Bishop Kephart’s life and his
determination to help raise money for Indiana Central, the trustees of the University considered the prospect of naming a science building to be erect on campus after Bishop Kephart, but that effort also failed.\(^5\)

Ultimately, the college assembly room or auditorium on the second floor of the new college building was named “Kephart Memorial Chapel”\(^6\) in honor of this beloved bishop, who was remembered not only for his unstinting commitment to making it possible for others to have the kind of formal education that he struggled to obtain throughout his life but also for the wisdom and administrative skill that he displayed in guiding the church through a period of change that had disconcerted many and challenged all as the church entered its second century. This was the first time in the history of the University that a portion of a building was named in honor of a person.

From 1910 to 1913, Kephart Chapel would be the site of the gathering of the White River Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ,\(^6\) an indication of the close relationship that existed between the college and the free UB Church. In 1936, records show that stained glass windows purchased by friends of the college were installed in “Kephart Auditorium.”\(^6\) As part of the renovations to Good Hall that took place in the 1960s, the space known as Kephart Chapel/Auditorium ceased to exist. Shortly thereafter, a smaller (unnamed) chapel was built in the new Schwitzer Student Center, and the memory of Bishop Ezekiel Kephart receded into history.

V. REMEMBERING THE “CLOUD OF WITNESSES” IN UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

Memories are located in time as well as space. There is a difference between the University Heights neighborhood in 1902, when the streets were first laid out with virtually no buildings in view, and today, when virtually every lot in the neighborhood is inhabited. At one time, most faculty members who taught at Indiana Central lived in that neighborhood. Today, members of the faculty of the University of Indianapolis live all over central Indiana. More students live on campus today than ever before, but it is also true that many students at the University of Indianapolis commute from homes in the greater Indianapolis metropolitan area. While the neighborhood of University Heights remains the same size as it was originally laid out, the campus of the University of Indianapolis is much larger than in was in 1902.

The earliest group of faculty, staff, and students at Indiana Central University were members of the same denomination. Most if not all of them would have heard the names of Mathews, Kephart, and Otterbein in the context of the saga of the origins, growth, and conflicted history of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. For them, the intention to locate the University in the context of the sacred memories of the patriarchs of the church as well as those (male) leaders\(^6\) who had shepherded the church through the changes of the nineteenth century would have been meaningful. This first generation of University residents would have readily grasped the significance of these names in the context of the United Brethren Church’s emphasis on the virtues of unity, humility, hospitality, and reconciliation, as well as a strong sense of Christian vocation. In these respects, the street names would have registered the living memory of a notable company of exemplars of moral and spiritual excellence.

But as early editions of the *Oracle* yearbook also suggest, there are other, more secular reasons for remembering the University Heights. For some students and faculty, during the
University's first fifty years, the neighborhood south and west of the University was a place of residence. As faculty and students began to live in a wider orbit in the greater Indianapolis metropolitan area, memories of University Heights would shift as patterns of associations changed. Even so, there are those associated with the University of Indianapolis today who may associate University Heights with the memorable dinner party with international guests at the president’s home on Otterbein, the alumni gathering in Stierwalt Alumni Building (built on the site where Buxton Hall once stood), or the storied poker game at Dr. Robert Brooker’s house on Windermire Avenue.

While recognizing the variety of memories associated with the founding of Indiana Central and its subsequent history and development, we should not forget that University of Indianapolis is not the only institution with strong ties to the neighborhood. Three Protestant churches in or near the neighborhood use the name “University Heights,” including the United Methodist congregation located on the southwest corner of Hanna Avenue and Otterbein Avenue. While the University’s street address has changed, the address of UHUMC remains “4002 Otterbein.” This congregation has its own set of “United Brethren memories,” many of which overlap with the University’s memory.

Most of the founding members of the UHUMC congregation, founded in 1905, were affiliated with Indiana Central University as students, faculty, or staff. The small congregation initially worshiped in the assembly room beneath Kephart Memorial Chapel of the College Building, now known as Good Hall, where the student body also gathered for daily chapel services. A few years later, when the University library occupied the assembly room, both the congregation and the students moved upstairs to Kephart Memorial Chapel. The congregation continued to worship there until 1931, when their own church, located across the avenue from the college building, was completed. Later in the twentieth century, University Heights Evangelical United Brethren Church would make its building available to the University for special observances.

The congregation of UHUMC has persisted through two denominational mergers, significant changes in the Indianapolis metropolitan area, and significant growth and change in the University located “across the street.” Members of this congregation continue to embody some of the traditions and folkways of the United Brethren in Christ even as they approach the beginning of their congregation’s centennial celebration in 2005. With the publication of this booklet, the University of Indianapolis celebrates the United Brethren heritage of the University as well as the existence of a United Methodist congregation whose ministry continues to include offering hospitality to the students, faculty, and staff who live, learn, and work across the street.

Over the past century, the appearance of the University Heights neighborhood has changed in a variety of ways of both greater and lesser significance. Amid the changes that have taken place, both the church and the University can look back with fond gratitude on that earliest company of faculty and students that moved into the neighborhood, staffed the fledging university, and struggled to make their way forward. We dare not think that we can remember the United Brethren bishops for whom the streets were named in the same way that the University’s founders may have thought of them. I believe, however, that we can and should acknowledge that the memories of these “saints” informed the University’s founders’ own vocational aspirations and dogged efforts to keep the love of learning and the desire for God united amid the challenges they faced.
The founders of Indiana Central University and the University Heights community were all too conscious of the meager results of their own efforts as well as the mixed character of the history of the United Brethren in Christ. I strongly suspect, however, that they understood that it was because of the dogged efforts of previous generations of leaders that they were in a position to attempt to do what they were trying to accomplish. In that respect, whether we recognize it or not, those of us who have entered into the second century of the University’s history stand in much the same position as the founders did—hearing the echoes of the past in the conversations of the present.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Senior Vice President and Provost Emeritus Lynn Youngblood, who initially helped me think carefully about how the series of “Echoes of the Past in Conversations of the Present” booklets needed to be arranged and what kinds of information did and did not need to be explicated. I am also grateful to members of the first “EduServ Faculty Seminar,” who responded to a questionnaire that I distributed to them for this same purpose.

2. Those readers who would like to learn more about these men are invited to consult the University Archives to gain access to the longer narratives from which this material has been extracted.

3. Advertisement for University Heights Neighborhood placed by William L. Elder (ca. 1902–1903); document available in the Frederick D. Hill Archives of the University of Indianapolis.


6. This is clearly evident in the chapter on Otterbein’s life included in Vol. I of *The Bishops of the United Brethren in Christ*, edited by Koontz, 36-62. This chapter is the principal source for the sketch of Otterbein’s life that I have put together in this booklet.

7. This story was well-known enough among the first two generations of students at Indiana Central that it is given prominent display in the 1929 edition of the *Oracle*, the University yearbook. The title page of that yearbook depicts “Mother Otterbein bidding her son farewell.”


9. Ibid., 50.

10. Ibid., 51.

11. Ibid., 54.
12. Ibid., 63-64.
13. Ibid., 67.
14. Ibid., 105.
15. There is no evidence to suggest that Martin Boehm altered his own commitment to Christian nonviolence, but his embrace of a Methodist-like “discipline” left this matter open to interpretation in a way that the local Mennonite congregation believed was inappropriate.
16. Following Otterbein’s death in 1813, the Evangelical Reformed Church in Baltimore would come to be better known as “The Old Otterbein Church.”
18. Ibid., 99.
19. Ibid., 100.
20. Ibid., 101.
21. Ibid., 105.
22. Frederick D. Hill, ‘Downright Devotion to the Cause,’ A History of the University of Indianapolis and Its Legacy of Service (Indianapolis, IN: University of Indianapolis Press, 2002), 2.
23. The information about Bishop George Mathews is taken from the chapter on his life in Vol. II of The Bishops of the United Brethren in Christ edited by Roush, 141-152.
24. Hill, ‘Downright Devotion to the Cause,’ 51, 64.
27. Ibid., 16.
28. Ibid., 20.
29. Ibid., 30.
30. Since annexation of the University Heights neighborhood took place in 1926, we can assume that the change of name occurred shortly thereafter.
32. Ibid., 275.
33. Ibid., 284.
34. Ibid., 288.
35. Ibid., 288.
36. Ibid., 288.
37. Ibid., 290.
39. Ibid., 50.
41. Ibid., 353.
42. Ibid., 359.
43. Ibid., 359.
44. Ibid., 356-357.
45. The information about Bishop Job Mills is taken from the chapter on his life in Vol. II of *The Bishops of the United Brethren in Christ*, edited by Roush, 124-140.
46. Ibid., 128.
47. Ibid., 129.
49. Ibid., 399.
50. Ibid., 397.
51. Ibid., 404.
52. Ibid., 409.
53. Ibid., 402.
54. I am grateful to Dr. Frederick D. Hill for clarifying this matter.
56. Ibid., 90.
57. Ibid., 90-91.
58. Ibid., 90-91.
60. Kephart Auditorium disappeared during the 1960s-era renovations of Good Hall, but many alumni are still alive who recall attending chapel and convocation events in this room. At one time, the congregation of University Heights Church used this space for its own gatherings until they were able to afford to build their own building in 1935.

62. Ibid., 250.

63. There is no way to deny the patriarchy of the “United Brethren” that is displayed in various ways, including the fact that the only people memorialized by the founders of the University were male. We now know that there were many women of this era who also gave themselves in leadership, but that was not commemorated. Elsewhere I have tried to tell some of the stories of the women in ministry associated with the first hundred years of the history of Indiana Central and University of Indianapolis. See Women in Ministry Associated with Indiana Central and the University of Indianapolis: A Neglected Story of ‘Education for Service,’ Crossings Project Booklet #2, available from the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Programs at the University.

64. I am grateful to Dr. Frederick D. Hill, Emeritus Professor of History and Archivist of the University of Indianapolis, for his assistance with the formulation of the sentences in these paragraphs. As on other occasions, Professor Hill has saved me from numerous embarrassing errors. I am also pleased to acknowledge the proofreading skills of Ms. Laura Davies ’07, who has called various mistakes to my attention.
ECHOES OF THE PAST
IN CONVERSATIONS OF THE PRESENT

Booklet #1

United Brethren Memories
in the University Heights Neighborhood

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