

Old Franklin United Brethren Church  
Franklin County  
24.1995.1

Prepared by the  
Indiana Historical Bureau 2010  
IN.gov/history

### **Marker Text**

United Brethren among earliest settlers in eastern Indiana during territorial period. Original structure, built 1831, one of first United Brethren churches in Indiana. Evangelical United Brethren Church joined Methodist Church to become United Methodist Church, 1968. Listed in National Register of Historic Places, 1995.

### **Report**

The first two sentences of this marker are problematic, while the last two sentences are substantiated with sources. First, it should also be noted that the United Brethren in Christ are a separate and distinct sect from the Church of the Brethren, commonly called the Dunkards or Dunker Church. Neither is the United Brethren in Christ the same as the Moravians, who were also known as the United Brethren. United Brethren (UB) as it appears in the rest of this report refers to the United Brethren in Christ. See Donald Carmony's essay "Kingdom Church" in Volume 29 of the *Indiana Magazine of History* (1933) and L. C. Rudolph's *Hoosier Faiths: A History of Indiana Churches and Religious Groups* (1995) for more information.

The first sentence of the marker is misleading. While United Brethren adherents began settling during the territorial period, there were other religious groups who settled and organized in eastern Indiana earlier than the United Brethren. The Quakers, Baptists, and Methodists were among the earliest sects in the Whitewater Valley, circa 1800. Presbyterians, a few Catholics, and Christians (Campbellites) soon followed. Moravian missionaries were also in the Whitewater Valley circa 1801. See Emma Lou Thornbrough's *Indiana in the Civil War Era* (1965), L.C. Rudolph's *Hoosier Faiths* (1995), and Adam Byron Condo's *History of the Indiana Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (1927) for more information. A group of articles from the

*Indiana Magazine of History*, Volume 43 (1947) also contain more information.

Lawrence Henry Gipson's *The Moravian Indian Mission on White River: Diaries and Letters May 5, 1799, to November 12, 1806* (1938) contains further information on Moravian missionaries.

John George Pfrimmer established the first United Brethren church in Indiana in 1812, near Corydon. According to Rudolph's *Hoosier Faiths*, Pfrimmer "organized at least fifteen churches between 1812-1821." The earliest United Brethren assemblies in Indiana appeared in Harrison and Clark counties, both in southern Indiana. In 1815, Bonnell's became the first congregation in eastern Indiana (Dearborn County). The United Brethren in Franklin, where the marker is located, organized in 1824. However, the majority of early congregations were in southern Indiana. Therefore, it is difficult to substantiate the first sentence of the marker, because the United Brethren in Christ were really not among the earliest settlers, and they were more concentrated in southern and not eastern Indiana. Again, see Condo's *History of the Indiana Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (1927) for further information.

The second sentence of the marker is also problematic. Sources do show that the building was built in 1831. According to August J. Reifel's *History of Franklin County Indiana* (1915), the church was dedicated on May 31, 1831. The building also has a stone slab set into the vestibule gable inscribed "Franklin U.B. Church 1831" (see Old Franklin United Brethren Church National register of Historic Places Application). However, it is unclear whether it was truly one of the first United Brethren churches in Indiana. According to Rudolph's *Hoosier Faiths* there were at least forty-eight United Brethren congregations organized between 1812 and 1830. All forty-eight of these congregations did not build churches right away. For instance, the Franklin United Brethren organized seven years before they built their church. However, no reliable secondary sources have been located to prove or disprove that this was one of the first United Brethren churches. If the text is understood to mean that the Franklin church was among the earliest United Brethren congregations in Indiana, that also cannot be substantiated. Condo's *History of the Indiana Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (1927) gives a list of the earliest congregations.

The *Minutes of Indiana Conference South the United Methodist Church* (1968) show that the “Evangelical United Brethren Church joined Methodist Church to become United Methodist Church, 1968.” More information and the church application for the National Register of Historic Places can be accessed at:

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/in/Franklin/state.html>.