

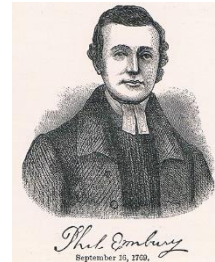
Chronology of Events in Upper New York Conference with the various predecessor conferences in its area

Conferences are Methodist (Episcopal) unless otherwise stated. [Brackets refer to the general church.]



(Fall 1765 – by) **early 1766 “Captain” Thomas Webb preaches in Albany, NY** where he was barracks master at the Albany fort. Webb was converted to Methodism in 1765 in England (where he had returned after the death of his young American wife) and was authorized by John Wesley to be a local preacher.

1770 The first Methodist society north of New York City was organized at Ash Grove by Philip Embury and Thomas Ashton in the Camden Valley in Washington County, NY (now in Adirondack District).



Philip Embury, an Irish local preacher to German Palantines, had emigrated in 1760 to the colony of New York where he started preaching in 1766 & helped establish first a society and then Wesley Chapel in 1768 on John Street in New York City.

Mid November 1774 – James Dempster arrives in New York, one of the last two missionaries sent by John Wesley to America. Along with Frances Asbury, Dempster stays during the revolutionary hostilities though “retreats.” Dempster in January 1776 relocated from Philadelphia to the Mohawk Valley in NYS.

[1784 Methodist Episcopal Church is established at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore.]

[1787 The (Free) African Methodist Episcopal Church started when Richard Allen led protesting black members out of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia when they were asked to take segregated gallery seating. The AME church officially formed in 1816.]



1788 Ashgrove Meeting House was the first one erected north of New York City. New York Conference was held here in 1803 & 1805. In 1803 Albany District had the largest membership (927 members) in the Conference, including New York City.

[1796 The **African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church** was organized formally by James Varick & others in New York City after the M. E. John Street Church started serving the sacrament to black members only after the white families were served and were also denied other church privileges.]

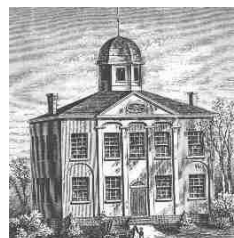
[1800 Philip Otterbein and Martin Boehm founded the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.]

[1807 The Evangelical Association is organized. Jacob Albright is elected bishop.]

July 1810 - Genesee Conference (eighth conference in American Methodism) **was organized** by Bishop Asbury and Bishop McKendree at Captain Dorsey’s granary in Lyon’s Town (Lyons in present day Finger Lakes District) with sixty-three preachers. Three districts (with thirty appointments) were set up in the new conference: *Susquehanna District* from the Philadelphia Conference along with *Cayuga District* and *Upper Canada District* from the New York Conference.

1818 Glezen Fillmore upon admission to Genesee Conference was appointed to Buffalo where he built Buffalo’s first church building and organized its first Sunday school. Rev. Dr. Fillmore is known as the

“founder of Methodism” in Western New York and was assisted by his wife Lovina. He was appointed to the Erie District which went from Lake Ontario to Meadville in Pennsylvania. Lovina tried to follow John Wesley’s example by rising at 4 a.m.; in old age she slept to 5 a.m. in winter. The Clarence Fillmore Cemetery (in Clarence, NY in Erie County) in which Glezen was buried 1875 was organized in 1864 on land donated by him. For more on Glezen Fillmore, see <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/22291683/glezen-fillmore>.

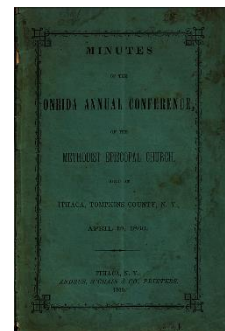


1824 - 1942 **Cazenovia Seminary** was originally formed as the *Seminary of the Genesee Conference*. This was the first Methodist seminary established in NYS after the 1820 General Conference call for each conference to have a seminary or church school. It later was the seminary for Oneida Conference (1829 joint, 1835 sole) and Central New York Conference (1870). Church sponsorship was withdrawn in 1942 when a junior college was formed.

1828 Onondaga Conference (MP) was formed by Methodist Reformers who in November 1828 became The Associated Methodist Churches. (See 1830.) In 1890 this Methodist Protestant conference included 44 edifices (churches) in the New York counties of Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Onondaga, Oswego, Otsego, Seneca, and Wayne. In 1908 the *MP Genesee Conference* with “about a dozen churches in Western New York” was combined with Onondaga Conference.

1829 Oneida Conference east of Cayuga Lake, after authorization in 1828, held its first session. **In 1869 it became Central New York Conference.**

[1830 A group from the Methodist Episcopal Church organizes the **Methodist Protestant Church** as the result of differences about the role of bishops, the desire to elect presiding elders (district superintendents) and the desire for voting lay members of the annual conference. It held its first General Conference in 1834.]



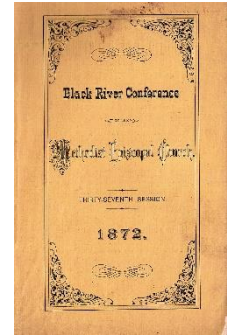
May 1832 Troy Conference in New York State & Vermont was set apart at General



Conference from New York Conference (MEC) with 98 preachers in its Saratoga, Middlebury [formerly Champlain in western Vermont], and Plattsburg Districts, and that part of the Troy District not included in the New York Conference. Troy Conference – unlike the other UNY conferences – did not have a connection to MEC Genesee Conference.

August 1833 Troy Annual Conference first met officially within its bounds at Troy, New York. A resolution was passed to start providing parsonages. Its last session was held in June 2010.

1835/6 Black River Conference split off from Oneida with the Herkimer, Oswego, Black River and Potsdam Districts. After some territory switches, **it became Northern New York Conference in 1872/73.**

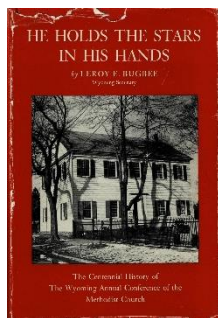


1836 Erie Conference (MEC) formed from the northern part of Pittsburgh Conference and bordered the south shore of Lake Erie. While a large part was in Pennsylvania, it then included some churches from the southwestern tip of New York as well as the Western Reserve in northeastern Ohio. Erie Conference in **1853** had eight **districts** which included **Jamestown District and Fredonia District** (the latter formed from Jamestown District in 1852). A 1962 boundary change brought some Erie Conference Methodist churches into Genesee Conference and Central New York Conference. [East Ohio Conference split off from Erie in 1876. After merger of its MEC and Methodist Protestant conferences, Erie (Methodist) merged back in 1962 with Pittsburgh Conference to form the Western Pennsylvania Conference.]

[**1844 Methodist Episcopal Church, South** separates from The Methodist Episcopal Church over the issues of slavery and episcopacy.]

1848 East Genesee Conference split off from Genesee Conference. It merged in 1876 with Western New York Conference to become Genesee Conference again.

1849 The New York Conference of the Evangelical Association held its 1st session April 1849 in Buffalo, where Bishop Joseph Long and thirteen itinerant preachers drafted rules of order and convened a missionary society. The 2nd session was held in Syracuse in 1850, its 3rd in Lyons in 1851, and its 4th in Berlin, Canada in 1852. (Canada dropped in 1864.) Among the EA churches, **Trinity (Grand Island)** and **Webster** – both founded in the early 1860s, were in 1999 the fifth and eighth largest churches in Western New York Conference (UM).



1852 Wyoming Conference split off from Oneida Conference with Newark, Susquehanna, and Wyoming Districts covering land in New York State and Pennsylvania. Most of the conference laid in the basin of the east branch of the Susquehanna River - which included Wyoming Valley in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. In 1868 General Conference gave Wyoming Conference two more districts, Otsego and Chenango from Oneida Conference. In 1909 Wyoming's six districts were redone as four districts, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Binghamton and Oneonta. Its last session was in 2010.

1853 United Brethren moved from the west into New York State. The "**old**" **Erie Conference (UB)** was formed from part of Ohio, three counties of Pennsylvania and all of New York State. See 1861.

1854 Rev. George Taylor, a member of the old Genesee Conference, made the **Genesee Conference Cane** with timber from the first Methodist Episcopal (and first Protestant) church in Michigan which when it was built in 1818 was part of the Genesee Conference. Taylor passed the cane to the Rev. Glezen Fillmore, "founder of Methodism" in western New York, with the request that it should "*descend after Brother Fillmore's decease to the oldest member of the conference, (that is, the longest serving) and so on successively.*" So it has been done through later the Western New York Conference and then Upper New York Conference.

1860 The **Free Methodist Church** was organized in Pekin, NY (near Niagara Falls) by sixty laity and fifteen clergy advocating “free from slavery, free from secret societies, free seats in all churches, free from outward ornaments of pride, and free in Christ.” Bishop Rev. **B. T. (Benjamin Titus) Roberts**, one of the so-called “Nazarites” (a minority reform movement in dispute with the Methodist Episcopal Church), had been convicted of ecclesiastic charges at the 1857 Genesee Annual Conference and stripped of his ordination at Genesee’s 1858 conference.



1861 A (new) **Erie Conference, United Brethren** is re-organized with some western New York territory and northwestern counties in Pennsylvania east of the Allegheny River and north of Allegheny Conference. Erie Conference (UB) continued to have some overlapping territory with the New York Conference of the Evangelical Church even after their denominations merged in 1946. Among the UB churches, **Kidder Memorial** – founded 1906 as a Sunday school in south side Jamestown – was the fourth largest UM church in Cornerstone District (previously Jamestown District) in 1999.

1864 **General Conference establishes four German speaking Conferences.** One was the East German Conference which in upstate New York included churches in Akron and Oakfield, Buffalo, Dunkirk, Lancaster and Clarence, Rochester, Sweet Home, Syracuse, Wellsville, and in Troy Conference Albany, Amsterdam, Troy, Ft. Hunter, and Schenectady. (The latter church started in 1848 and had 375 members in 1939). **The East German Conference dissolved in 1943.**

1865 **Spencer** (was in Wyoming Conference, Tioga County) - The first Owego District **camp meeting** was held here in August. “John A. Nichols, an enterprising business man of Spencer, erected tents, built a large boarding and lodging house, and leased the ground to the newly formed association for five years. The lease was subsequently extended and a covered auditorium built, and the grounds fenced and improved. On August 13, 1881, when cottagers were moving in preparatory to the camp meeting, fire broke out in the cottage of the Presiding Elder, Y. C. Smith. The preachers’ stand, auditorium, chapels, and sixty-five cottages were all destroyed and never rebuilt. Since the burning of the buildings a number of parties who used to attend camp meeting there now go to Carmel Grove and Dimock.” (1952 He Holds the Stars in His Hands: The Centennial History of The Wyoming Annual Conference of the Methodist Church)

1868 The **Trenton Camp Ground** was originally incorporated as Rome District Camp Ground. In 1911 the name was changed again to Trenton Assembly Park Association of the Mohawk District of the Methodist Episcopal Church (in Northern New York Conference). In 1948 when Camp Aldersgate opened, the Institute programs shifted there. The Association was dissolved in 1952 with fifty-two cottages owned by individuals and families and responsibility reverting to Mohawk District.



1868 Land is purchased in **Round Lake** (Adirondack District) to hold **camp meetings** and the first camp meeting starts Sept. 1 for 10 days. Later, with railroad service to the grounds, there were over twenty thousand in attendance one Sunday.

1869 **Central New York Conference** became the new name for Oneida Conference.

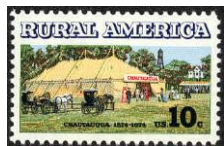
[1870 Colored Methodist Episcopal Church is organized in Jackson, Tenn. by ex-slave members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The name changed 1956 to **Christian Methodist Episcopal Church**.]

1872 Carmel Grove (Binghamton District of Wyoming Conference) “The White City of the Woods” - A grove at Hooper, New York (now Endwell on the highway between Binghamton and Endicott) was leased for one year, to be purchased after it was incorporated. “The ground was cleared, fence built, a preachers’ stand put up, a spring of water bought, a temporary boarding hall erected, auditorium furnished with seats ... One the evening of September 10, 1872 the first camp meeting opened. On September 16, the name ‘Carmel Grove’ was adopted. On Tuesday, the 17th, the first sale of lots occurred when about one hundred were sold.” The charter of incorporation by the New York State Legislature was granted May 9, 1873. In 1896 a covered auditorium was erected in the Grove and gates and tickets were introduced. In 1899 the Chautauqua idea was introduced to Carmel Grove while Dimock Grove in Pennsylvania continued “the plain gospel” approach. The first Epworth League summer camp institute started here in the summer of 1912 but in June 1914 a cyclone destroyed the auditorium and Carmel Grove ceased to be a camp ground. The Epworth Leaguers went to Cazenovia where the Central New York Conference held their Institute in the Seminary buildings.



1872/3 Northern New York Conference was formed from Black River Conference after some territory switches with Oneida/Central New York Conference.

1873 Silver Lake Institute was a Methodist affiliated camp facility established in 1873 in the east side of Silver Lake in Wyoming County, New York. The institute evolved from a Methodist Revivalist summer camp in the 1870s and 1880s to a cultural, educational, and religious summer institute in the Chautauqua tradition during the 1880s and 1890s, and finally to a secular summer cottage community in the early 20th century. See also the 1944 entry. Thirteen acres were designed a national historic district in 1985. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Lake_Institute_Historic_District.



1874 Chautauqua Institution was begun on the western shore of Chautauqua Lake by inventor Lewis Miller and Methodist Bishop John Heyl Vincent in August as a summer teaching camp for Sunday School teachers. It became Chautauqua Institution in 1902 pioneering life-long learning.

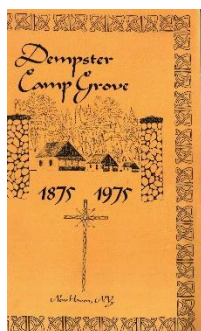
1874 The first Oswego District Camp Meeting was in 1874 at a Pleasant Point grove nearer Lake Ontario and had several tents put up. A committee was established to find a better place for the next year.

1874 – 1949 Sidney Grove Camp Ground in Sidney (Delaware County, NY in Wyoming Conference)

“Camp meetings had been held frequently on both the Chenango and Oneonta Districts [in Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church] from the late 1840's on. Finally in 1873 the two Districts decided to secure a permanent camp meeting site. About ten acres of land [and more later] were leased and then purchased in 1874 by the Sidney Grove Camp Meeting Association which was organized and chartered by the State of New York in 1874.” Starting in 1919 Sidney Grove was also used for a quarter of a century for Epworth League Summer Institutes. The properties of Sidney Grove were transferred to the Epworth League Institute Commission on November 2, 1925. This Corporation was dissolved November 28, 1949. – from the



chapter "Tabernacles in the Groves" in *He Holds the Stars in His Hands: The Centennial History of the Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Church, 1952*



1875 First Oswego County camp meeting at what is now **Dempster Grove Campground**, New Haven (Crossroads District) near Lake Ontario. Over 100 tents were erected and there were two gates, one for horses and buggies and another for buses from the trains. The first Sunday 3,500 attended. The campground was named "Dempster Grove" for John Dempster, a well-known Methodist minister. Cottages were erected the following year.

[**1880** **Women's Home Missionary Society** of the Methodist Episcopal Church is established.]

[**1888** The Methodist Episcopal Church added the office of **Deaconess** for lay women to the chapter on local preachers and lay workers. In the U.S., deaconesses originally lived in community and pledged not to marry but that changed in the 1950s. The associated Home Missionary office was closed in 1988 but in 2004 the office of Home Missioner was opened to laymen. In 2016 General Conferences recognized deaconesses and home missionaries (laymen) as an order under United Methodist Women.]

[**1889** The **Epworth League** is formed in the Methodist Episcopal church as a young adult association "to promote intelligent and vital piety in the young members and friends of the Church, to aid them in the attainment of purity of heart and constant growth in grace, and to train them in works of mercy and help." Unlike the Sunday schools during this era, where boys and girls were taught separately, Epworth League organizations were co-ed. Epworth League members started as young as ages 10-12 in the Junior Division and could belong to the Senior League until they were adults aged 18-34. With the 1939 church unification, the Epworth League evolved into the **Methodist Youth Fellowship** for youth aged 12-24.]

1893 **Folts Mansion** in Herkimer, NY was transferred to the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and dedicated as Folts Mission Institute. The Mission Institute closed in 1927. See 1943.



[**1904** **Ladies Aid Societies**, part of American Methodism, are officially recognized in the 1904 M.E. *Book of Discipline*, although there was never an official denominational agency. Official women's mission societies were formed from 1869 on in the various churches that merged to become the UMC.]

1912 The Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church began a home for women and children in Binghamton, New York. The home moved more than once within Broome County and expanded to be the **Children's Home** of Wyoming Conference. In 1920 the by-laws changed so the Home



was no longer run by deaconesses.

[**1921** **Wesleyan Service Guild** is organized for Methodist Episcopal women employed outside the home.]

1922 Georgia Harkness – from Adirondack District - **receives license to preach.**

In 1926 she became a Local Deacon. From 1926 Harkness becomes the primary spiritual leader in the struggle for full clergy rights for women until such were granted in 1956 by General Conference. In 1936 she became a Local Elder and a professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute, the first woman to hold such a position at a major seminary.



[**1922 Evangelical Church** is formed, reuniting the Evangelical Association and a splinter group, the United Evangelical Church.]

[**1924 Wesley Brotherhods** were authorized by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.]

1936 Findley Lake Campground in Clymer, Chautauqua County was a 100 acre farm on the shores of Lake Findley in Chautauqua County “at the far western edge of New York State” purchased by the United



Brethren Church (UB) “which they intended as a permanent location for a summer Bible and Training School, although the first had been the summer of 1915 at Sugar Grove in the old seminary building. The Erie Conference U. B. also conducted Annual Conference at **Camp Findley** between 1941 and 1971” (Duane W. Priset). Findley Camp & Retreat Center became one of six camps of the Upper New York

Conference of the United Methodist Church through 2015 after which its use was studied. The Camp Findley property was transferred to new ownership (Fit for Life) as of March 2018 and continues its Christian ministry in Western New York as The Camp at Findley.

[**1939 The Methodist Church** is formed through the union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church.]

1939 The former **Onondaga Conference Methodist Protestant** churches joined the M.E. Genesee Conference.

[**1939** The various women’s home and foreign missionary societies of the uniting churches become the **Woman’s Society of Christian Service**. The Wesleyan Service Guild remains a separate organization.]

[**1942** The name **Methodist Men** was adopted and its chartering system was implemented.]

1942 The land for **Skye Farm** Camp & Retreat Center on what over time has been called Long Pond, Daisy Pond, Sherman Pond, and now officially Sherman Lake near Warrensburg in Adirondack District (of what then was Troy Conference) was given by Dr. and Mrs. Luther Brown for the Christian education of young people provided his younger comrades would see the project through. The camp layout was designed and built and by 1955 the camping program was burgeoning. Programs and buildings grew. See more at <http://skye farmcamp.org/camp-and-retreat-center/site-history>.

1943 Renovation of Folts Mansion and adjacent Mission Institute buildings (see 1893) was completed for use as the **Folts Methodist Home for the Aged**. Clear title was obtained by the Northern New York Conference of the Methodist Church.



1944 The Silver Lake Institute Trustees purchased the adjacent Sutton estate and changed the name to The Methodist Manor where summer programs were held. In 1957 this and additional acreage were deeded to the Genesee Annual Conference for "**Camp Asbury**" and was further developed. For more, see the 1873 entry and <http://asburyun.org/camp-and-retreat-center/site-history>.

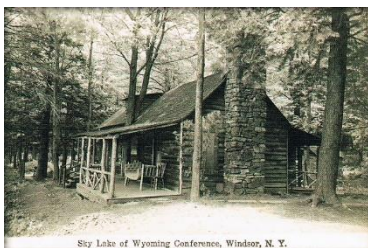
[**1946** The **Evangelical United Brethren Church** (EUB) is created by merger of the Evangelical Church and the United Brethren Church.]

1946 The King Farm property at Brantingham, NY located on a small Adirondacks lake with a cement block farm house was purchased for **Camp Aldersgate** (now Aldersgate Camp & Retreat Center) by the Board of Education of the **Northern New York Conference**. Between 1947 and 1948 the first camp building were erected. The 1880 Brantingham Four Corners Methodist Protestant Church was moved here as a chapel 1958/59. See more at <http://aldersgateny.org/camp-and-retreat-center/site-history>.

1946 Casowasco is the former summer estate of the Theodore Case family on Owasco Lake which was purchased in 1946 by the Central New York Annual Conference at a big discount to the asking price provided the site carry on the Case name (Case/Owasco = Casowasco) and the land be used in ministering to youth and children. It is now Casowasco Camp and Retreat Center. For more, see <http://casowasco.org/camp-and-retreat-center/site-history>.



1947 Sky Lake (near Windsor, NY in the Binghamton District) was purchased by Wyoming Conference to take the place of the defunct Sidney Grove Camp Meeting grounds. Over the next few years, ten additional acres were purchased. The Sky Lake property was dedicated and the mortgage burned in 1950. A winterized facility was built later. For more on the early days of Sky Lake Camp and Retreat Center, see <http://skylakecenter.org/camp-and-retreat-center/site-history?fbclid=IwAR3uXSC-kLLkhz43UsQJVRVQgGclF2HouAt7B8OP8pi8rQgtFUWXC0ewypp>.



1955 Watson Homestead in Painted Post was transferred by Thomas J. Watson, founder of IBM, and his wife to the Genesee Conference of the Methodist church along with monies for buildings. In 2006 Watson Homestead Conference and Retreat Center became independent of the United Methodist Church.

1964 Western New York Conference became the new name (again) for Genesee Conference.

[**1968** The **United Methodist Church** is formed by the union of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church.]

1971 The former **United Brethren Erie Conference churches** joined with the Methodist Western New York Conference. The former Evangelical Association New York Conference churches had done so in 1968 after the 1968 union of EUB and the Methodist Church.

[**1972** The Women's Society of Christian Service (a merger under that name in 1968) and the Wesleyan Service Guild are united to form **United Methodist Women.**]

1986 North Central New York Conference was formed from a merger of Central New York and Northern New York Conferences.

2010 Western New York Conference merged with North Central New York Conference and the NYS portions of Troy Conference and Wyoming Conference to become **Upper New York Conference**. Only Troy Conference had not been part of the original 1810 Genesee Conference. However, all these conferences had roots in the original 1800 New York Conference.

-- Upper New York United Methodist Historical Society

[For more on the formation of the United Methodist Church and its roots, see <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/the-roots-of-the-united-methodist-family-tree-digging-deeper> and <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/formation-of-the-united-methodist-church>.]