



## Champaign County Historical Archives

**Compiled by:** Leslie Straus, Evan Kelly, and Sherrie Bowser

**Creator/Corporate name:** Countryside United Methodist Church

**Inclusive Dates:** 1914-1990

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes, (2.0 linear feet).

**Provenance:**

Countryside United Methodist Church Records were donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives in September 2004.

**Access:**

The records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

**Historical Note:**

The roots of Countryside United Methodist Church trace back to Philo United Methodist Church, Sidney United Methodist Church, and several smaller worship communities including Alice Chapel (built late 1870s in Raymond Township, abandoned September 1905), Lost Grove (built early 1900s, closed 1926), Pleasant Hill (established 1893 in a local schoolhouse, church constructed in 1900, closed in 1962), and Morris Chapel (built 1893 in Crittenden Township, destroyed by wind storm on July 6, 1904).

Sidney United Methodist Church grew from ministry conducted by Rev. Arthur Bradshaw beginning in 1839. Congregations met in personal homes and the local school house before building a formal church. After a boom in membership, a larger church was commissioned and construction was completed in January of 1864. The congregation moved once more in 1899 to the building they would occupy for the rest of their existence.

Philo United Methodist Church originated in 1865 with the work of a Brother Reed from Champaign and Rev. Anderson Orr. At the September 19, 1866 Illinois conference in Bloomington, the Philo Mission was established in the Danville District with Rev. B.F. Hyde to serve the community. The initial church building was burned down in 1897. Another was built quickly, but it too burned down in 1938.

Population growth in the late 1800s combined with the relative difficulty of transportation contributed to the numerous small, rural chapels and churches. However, as automobiles made transit easier in the new century, a growing number of families began attending church in the growing Champaign-Urbana, causing smaller churches to merge with Philo United Methodist. These churches included Bondville in 1935, Carley Chapel from 1937-1941, and Savoy from 1952-1965. Beginning in the 1950s, a dearth of lucrative job prospects drove young people away from Philo and Sidney, straining even the larger congregations of the rural communities including Philo United Methodist and Sidney United Methodist.



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In June 1965, the Philo-Sidney charge was created. Each church functioned separately, but they shared a single pastor who lived at the Sidney parsonage. However, faced with declining attendance, the two churches met under the leadership of Dr. Dale Pitcher to discuss a merger. On October 22, 1974 both congregations held a vote to ratify the plan. While Sidney approved the measure, Philo rejected it. However, on January 5, 1975, the people of Philo held a second vote, and this time approved joining the congregations under the moniker Countryside United Methodist Church. Initially, church services for the newly formed Countryside were divided between the two original churches on a six-month basis. Soon, an 8-acre plot of land was purchased at nearly the exact midpoint between the two old churches. By Christmas 1976, the first service was held in the new church building and on May 1, 1977 the church was officially consecrated by Bishop Leroy Hodapp.

**Scope and Content Note:**

The collection contains various materials and records that document the activities and history of four different churches: Sidney United Methodist Church, Philo United Methodist Church, Pleasant Hill United Methodist Church, and Countryside United Methodist Church. The bulk of the material is from Sidney United Methodist Church and Philo United Methodist Church. The records include treasurer account books, quarterly conference reports, class programs, meeting minutes for the Church's board, and various groups and classes including Golden Rule class, Ladies Aid, Sunday school board, United Methodist Men, and Women's Society of Christian Service. The collection dates from 1914-1990.

**Arrangement:**

The collection is arranged into four series, one for each church represented, and then organized alphabetically at the folder level.

**Subject Terms:**

Countryside United Methodist Church (Sidney, Ill.) – History.  
Methodist Church--Sidney--History.  
Philo (Ill.) – Church history.  
Philo United Methodist Church (Philo, Ill.) – History.  
Pleasant Hill Methodist Church (Raymond Township, Ill.)  
Sidney (Ill.) -- Church history.  
Sidney United Methodist Church (Sidney, Ill.) – History.

**Container List:**

**Box 1**

**Series 1: Countryside United Methodist Church (Sidney, Ill.)**

Folder 1: Dedication, May 1, 1977

Folder 2: Mary Circle, account book, 1979-1985

**Series 2: Philo United Methodist Church (Philo, Ill.)**

Folder 3: Anniversary programs, 1943; 1968

Folders 4-7: Church account books, 1934-1968 (4 folders)

Folder 8: Correspondence and receipts, 1930-1977

Folder 9: Ladies Aid/Ladies Union minutes, 1934-1939



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Folder 10: Ladies Aid/Women's Society of Christian Service minutes, 1940-1945

Folder 11: List of members and friends, 1958-1965

Folder 12: Official board minutes, 1952-1960; 1960-1966

Folder 13: Philo Council of Ministries, 1973-1974

Folder 14: Program plan, 1960-1961

Folders 15-16: Quarterly conference reports, 1926-1951; 1961; 1965 (2 folders)

Folder 17: William Atkinson Ennis

Folders 18-19: Women's Society of Christian Service, 1945-1965 (2 folders)

Folder 20: Women's Society of Christian Service, account book, 1952-1978

**Series 3: Pleasant Hill Methodist Church (Raymond Township, Ill.)**

Folder 21: Quarterly Conference Reports, 1953-1960

**Box 2**

**Series 4: Sidney United Methodist Church (Sidney, Ill.)**

Folders 1-2: Church Treasurer account books, 1929-1949, 1964-1965 (2 folders)

Folder 3: Golden Rule class programs, 1959-1960, 1962-1963, 1986

Folders 4-5: Golden Rule class, meeting minutes, 1940-1942; 1954-1969; 1969-1990 (2 folders)

Folder 6: Ladies Aid Society, meeting minutes, 1930-1940

Folder 7: Last Service program, 1976

Folders 8-9: Official Board Minutes, 1914-1921; 1948; 1952-1974 (2 folders)

Folder 10: Sunday School Board, meeting minutes, 1929-1943

Folder 11: United Methodist Men, Secretary's record book, 1972-1976

Folder 12: United Methodist Men, Sidney/Philo, meeting minutes, 1963-1977

Folder 13: Women's Society of Christian Service, Evening Circle, meeting minutes, 1960-1973

Folders 14-17: Women's Society of Christian Service, meeting minutes, 1944-1982 (4 folders)