

# Inter-mountain Conference (1916–1932)

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The Inter-Mountain Conference was created in 1916 when the Utah Conference, part of the Pacific Union Conference, merged with the Western Colorado Conference, which had been part of the Central Union Conference. During its first four years of operation, the new conference, its territory comprised of the state of Utah, Colorado west of the Continental Divide, and San Juan County, New Mexico, was part of the Pacific Union. E. A. Curtis was appointed president by the Pacific Union Conference committee. The conference office was located in Grand Junction, Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

At its formation, the conference had 756 members in 24 churches.<sup>2</sup> A slight decrease to 750 members reported at the outset of 1918 was attributable to “a general campaign throughout most of our churches last winter in clearing their records of non-resident, apostate and missing members,” explained H. E. Lysinger, elected president in 1917. Church growth was picking up, with 79 new members added during the first half of 1918, compared with 38 in all of 1917. Also in 1918, the conference opened Inter-Mountain Academy, located at Rulison, near Grand Valley, Colorado on the main line of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, with an enrollment of 40 students in grades 1-8 and another 40 in grades 9-12.<sup>3</sup>

In 1919 the General Conference Committee recommended that the Inter-Mountain Conference transfer to the Central Union Conference. In what Central Union president R.A. Underwood called “a very interesting meeting,” the conference delegates ended up voting unanimously in favor of the change, effective January 1, 1920.<sup>4</sup> The move entailed a loss of territory. The conference retained, along with San Juan County, New Mexico and western Colorado, the Utah counties of Daggett, Uinta, Duchesne, Carbon, Emery, Grand, and San Juan.<sup>5</sup> The churches in the other counties of Utah remained in the Pacific Union, organized as the Utah Mission until uniting with the Nevada Conference in 1931 to form the Nevada-Utah Conference.<sup>6</sup>

The Inter-Mountain Conference membership, which had grown to 793 by the end of 1919, now dropped to 590. The reduction notwithstanding, Lysinger believed the conference brought with it a strong asset that pointed toward a promising future, stating, “We feel that the Inter-Mountain Academy is the one thing that will hold our constituency and build up our work in a substantial way.”<sup>7</sup>

A "building bee" in November 1921 resulted, in just a little more than one week, in a new administration and class room building for the academy.<sup>8</sup> Despite limited accommodations, the school remained vital through the 1920s, with an enrollment of 59 in grades 9-12 and 38 in grades 1-8 reported in 1929.<sup>9</sup> Modest growth in church membership brought the conference total to 684 in 1931.<sup>10</sup>

The Great Depression, however, brought an end to the Inter-Mountain Conference as an administrative unit. As part of consolidation measures throughout the North American Division in 1932, western Colorado and San Juan County, New Mexico were transferred to the Colorado Conference in the Central Union, while the Utah counties joined the Nevada-Utah Conference in the Pacific Union.<sup>11</sup>

The academy by then had dropped its primary school program, and had only 38 students in the secondary grades. It had been built up into "a very nice institution," but due to the "small attendance" and "limited constituency" it had become "quite impossible to continue the school without incurring indebtedness," said Central Union president J. F. Piper. It was hoped that, along with the enlargement of the Colorado Conference membership, the consolidation would also build up its school, Campion Academy.<sup>12</sup>

Presidents: E. A. Curtis, 1916; H. E. Lysinger, 1917-1920; N. T. Sutton, 1920-1922; B. H. Shaw, 1922-1924; J. W. Turner, 1924-1930; B. M. Grandy, 1930-1932.

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## NOTES

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