

## Elisha Butler

*from the East Baltimore Conference records, 1859*

Elisha Butler (1798-1883) was an active and distinguished preacher in the Central Pennsylvania Conference (and its two predecessors, the Baltimore Conference and the East Baltimore Conference) of the Methodist Episcopal Church for over 40 years. He is the father of Miss Electa M. Butler (1848-1938), Presbyterian missionary to China. Accounts of his life and ministry may be found, in addition to the usual conference obituary, in *The Conference News* for April 16, 1883, page 4, and in Armstrong's definitive history *The Old Baltimore Conference*, page 344.

While serving Bloomingdale circuit 1857-1859, charges were preferred against him. There was a formal church trial held by a special committee during the 1859 annual sessions of the East Baltimore Conference meeting in Williamsport PA. Most of the testimony from residents of the area covered by Bloomingdale circuit was received in the form of written depositions gathered locally on two previous occasions. This article presents the transcript of the March 1859 trial, along with the written depositions made earlier and reviewed at the trial, and the final verdict. An appendix gives information for each person giving testimony and other persons of relevance to the trial.

Unfortunately, not all of the documents and information of the case have been preserved. The account that follows is a seamless presentation of what has survived, and it appears to include all the essentials.

Williamsport PA – March 4, 1859

The court in the case of Elisha Butler met according to appointment on Friday evening, March 4, 1859. Present – all the members<sup>1</sup> as follows: John Bowen, chairman; R.D. Chambers, secretary; James H. Brown; George Stevenson; Henry G. Dill; A.A. Eskridge; James Ewing; Joseph G.M. McKeegan; William R. Mills; L.B. Dunlap; Amos Smith; Jonathan Monroe; Joseph A. Ross. Rev. I.H. Torrence appeared for the prosecution, and Rev. John Guyer for the defense.

- A. The charges and specifications as brought by member of the Bloomingdale circuit Nathan Fitzgerald against Elisha Butler were presented as follows.

Charge #1: insolent and abusive language

Specification #1 – At Town Hill church on June 20, 1858, Elisha Butler referred to part of the Town Hill membership as dandified<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The members of the committee appointed to try the case were all ministerial members of the East Baltimore Conference. These persons are not included for further identification in the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Dandified refers to overly fine dress.

and as codfish aristocracy<sup>3</sup>.

Specification #2 – At Town Hill church on June 20, 1858, Elisha Butler declared that the Town Hill school house, meeting place of one of the classes, resembled a common privy.

Specification #3 – In the McKendree pulpit, on June 6, 1858, Elisha Butler stated that the local preachers on Bloomingdale circuit are soft-headed.<sup>4</sup>

Specification #4 – At Quarterly Conference, Elisha Butler accused the Bloomingdale circuit of robbery by not paying adequate provisions, and of being responsible for the death of his wife, should she pass before his reassignment at annual conference.

Charge #2: falsehood

Specification #1 – Elisha Butler denied stating that the local preachers on Bloomingdale are soft-headed.

Specification #2 – Elisha Butler denied saying that in the Edson-Fitzgerald church trial<sup>5</sup> he would not hear matters that occurred before his arrival on Bloomingdale circuit.

Specification #3 – Elisha Butler denied dictating word by word the charges brought by Noah Fitzgerald in the Edson-Fitzgerald church trial.

Specification #4 – Elisha Butler conducted the September 12, 1858, class meeting of White's class of Town Hill church in an unorthodox manner.<sup>6</sup> At the January 1, 1859, Quarterly Meeting of the Bloomingdale Circuit at Columbus, he claimed to have spoken with each class member, to have had the class book in his possession, and to have marked the class book accordingly.

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<sup>3</sup> Codfish aristocracy was a contemptuous term in common usage in the mid-1800's for people who had made money in business. The usage originated from New England fishermen whose profits from cod made them think they were better than others.

<sup>4</sup> That remark was occasioned by the fact that some of the local preachers had allowed a guest speaker to be scheduled at a nearby location at a time that conflicted with a previously announced preaching appointment by the itinerant for the charge.

<sup>5</sup> The details of the Edson-Fitzgerald controversy are not given, but apparently there had been previous difficulties involving Mr. Edson – and Elisha Butler said he would not permit previous incidents to be brought up as evidence at this trial. When this was perceived by Mr. Fitzgerald and others as obvious favoritism toward Mr. Edson, Rev. Butler's attempt to interpret what he meant was seen as double-talk.

<sup>6</sup> By Discipline, each congregation was divided into classes for the purpose of mutual support and accountability, and each class had a class leader. Specifically, the Discipline stated it was the duty of the class leader "to see each person in his class once a week at least; in order (1) to inquire how their souls prosper (2) to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require and (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor." If the itinerant led the class meeting, then he was expected to be as diligent.

- B. The case for the prosecution. The following depositions presenting the charges were taken at Town Hill Church on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1859, at which at Rev. S.B. Laycock appeared with N. Fitzgerald and Rev. E. Butler, who protested against proceeding with the matter, represented himself.

First Charge

**John Traxler** called.

Question: What did Brother Butler say at the Town Hill church in reference to this specification?

Answer: Brother Butler said that the dandified part and codfish aristocracy of his congregation were not here.

Question by Rev. Butler: Were these the precise words?

Answer: As near as I can recollect.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not read Mr. Wesley's sermon on dress?

Answer: Yes.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not make this remark – that I had once thought of not reading this sermon on account of the smallness of the congregation, but nevertheless would do it, though the dandified part and codfish aristocracy were not present?

Answer: I do not remember.

Question by Rev. Butler: To whom were these words applied?

Answer: I do not know.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) John Traxler

**T.D. Newton** called.

Question: What did Brother Butler say at the Town Hill church in reference to this specification?

Answer: Butler said the dandified part and codfish aristocracy were not present on the day that Mr. Nelson preached at Harveyville.

Question: To whom do you suppose Brother Butler meant to apply this?

Answer: I do not know.

Question by Rev. Butler: Have I not always disclaimed ever making any application to Brother Wadsworth and family?

Answer: He did not mean Wadsworth or any other part of his congregation.

Question: What did Brother Butler say in regard to the school house where one of the classes meets?

Answer: He compared it to a common privy or necessary, or something meaning the same thing.

Question by Rev. Butler: When was this said?

Answer: After the sermon, in the pulpit.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you meet with the class at that school house?

Answer: Yes.

Question by Rev. Butler: Was it not generally unfit for worship?

Answer: I generally found it swept. I once saw a stone or two in it, which being removed rendered it as clean as school houses are generally kept.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you ever observe any person sweep a place to kneel?

Answer: I did not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I cast any stigma upon any persons?

Answer. No particular person.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) T.D. Newton

**Edward Traxler** called.

Question: What did you hear Brother Butler say at the Town Hill church?

Answer: He said that he had thought from the smallness of his congregation he would not read that sermon at that time, but had concluded to do so notwithstanding some of the dandified part of the congregation and the codfish aristocracy were not here.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I cast any stigma upon any persons, or reflections, in my way or manner?

Answer: I did not think so at the time.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you ever hear me say that I meant Brother Wadsworth's family?

Answer: [directed at the court] I never conversed with Brother Butler on the subject

Question: What did Brother Butler say about the Town Hill school house?

Answer: He said that it was more fit for a common privy than a place of worship.

Question by Rev. Butler: Was I not urging at that time cleanliness of person and place of worship?

Answer: [directed at the court] He was.

Question: Did Brother Butler make these remarks from the pulpit?

Answer: He did.

Question by Rev. Butler: Were all these remarks made after the sermon?

Answer: They were.

This is correct. (signed) Edward Traxler

**E.A. Wadsworth** called.

Question: State what Brother Butler said at the Town Hill church June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1858.

Answer: His language was this. He announced four weeks previously that he would read Mr. Wesley's sermon on evil speaking, but he had taken up the wrong volume – which, however, contained a sermon on dress and would read it as the dandified portion of the congregation and codfish aristocracy were not present.

Question: What did Brother Butler say about the Town Hill school house where one of the classes meets?

Answer: He said it resembled a common privy. He said these things from the pulpit.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I use the word filthy?

Answer: I do not recollect.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) E.A. Wadsworth

**Peter Austin** called.

Question: Did you or did you not hear Brother Butler in the pulpit at McKendree church call the local preachers soft-headed?

Answer: I did.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you understand me to say the local preachers of Bloomingdale circuit?

Answer: He did not mention names, but I understood him to mean those that went to hear Mr. Nelson preach, as he had whipped the members through the sermon – and that Mr. Nelson was more of a gentleman than to send an appointment without consulting him, if it had not been for the soft-headed local preachers.

Question by Rev. Butler: In reference to the local preachers, did I not plainly so speak and designate two local preachers?

Answer: He made no distinction at that time.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not afterwards plainly say and designate who I meant?

Answer: He did, sometime afterwards.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Peter Austin

**E.A. Wadsworth** recalled.

Question: What did Brother Butler say in Quarterly Conference of this year that was insolent and abusive?

Answer: He moved that the report of the provisional committee be thrown under the table. He had been treated badly or meanly by the circuit in not providing for his family. He had not been able to keep a hired girl. Consequently, his wife was a broken down woman, and if she died before he left the circuit he would charge her death to the circuit – or to the people of the circuit. I further understood him to say that he would as soon a man would put his hand in his pocket and take his money as to withhold his dues from him.

Question: In what view did you receive his statements and remarks in reference to the members of the Quarterly Conference?

Answer: I felt it to be abusive. I was a member of the Quarterly Conference. Brother Butler further said that he could not get a hired girl as his family lived too poorly, or words to that effect.

Question by Rev. Butler: After that report was brought in, was the question not asked two or three times by the Presiding Elder, “What shall we do with that report?”

Answer: The question was asked by the Elder, I believe.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you hear me say that my family was in a starving condition?

Answer: I understood him to say that his family was suffering for the necessities of life.

The above is correct. (signed) E.A. Wadsworth

**A.C. Laycock** called.

Question: What did Brother Butler say in Quarterly Conference of this year that was insolent and abusive?

Answer: Brother Butler said he was not able to hire a girl – and if he could, no girl would be willing to live as poor as they did. In consequence of that, his wife was a broken down woman and he thought it doubtful whether she would live to get off the circuit – and if she died on the circuit, he should charge her death to Bloomingdale circuit. He considered the treatment he had received from the circuit very mean in not paying him what he thought his just dues. He added, “I would as leave a man would put his hand in my pocket and take out my money as to withhold my just due.”

Question: Did you hear any thing said about robbery?

Answer: I don’t recall it distinctly, but I think there was.

I do testify that the above statement is correct. (signed) A.C. Laycock

**Isaac Austin** called.

Statement: I understood him to say that the official body was chargeable with his wife’s death if she died before she left the circuit. He further said that to withhold his dues was as bad or nearly as bad as robbery, or words to that effect. I fully concur with the statement made by E.A. Wadsworth, save in regard to his wife’s death, as above.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you ever hear me say that I believed the circuit was willing to do all that was right, and would do so if it were not for a portion of the official body?

Answer: I have. I was one of the provisional committee. Brother Butler said that two hundred dollars was not enough.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Isaac Austin

**Rev. E. Wadsworth** called.

Statement: Brother Butler said that he would be ashamed to have a neighbor see his table. Further, withholding his just dues he considered no better than robbery, or words to that effect. I felt the remarks of Brother Butler to be abusive. I concur fully in the testimony of E.A. Wadsworth. (signed) E. Wadsworth.

Second Charge

**Isaac Austin** called.

Statement: At a Quarterly Meeting conference at Harveryville, Brother Butler said he had not said that local preachers were soft-headed.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not say as soon as I heard that this was intended for the local preachers on this circuit generally, so as to make an explanation to Brother [Peter] Austin that I only intended two preachers – naming one of them, at least. Have I not subsequently on every occasion referred to those two only.

Answer: Yes. I was satisfied at first, but afterward entertained some doubts.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Isaac Austin

**Henry Traxler** called.

Statement: Brother Butler came to my house some time before a trial between Edson and Fitzgerald. He said that he would not hear any thing that occurred before his administration relating to that matter. He repeated what he had said before and added that he would not act upon what had happened before he came here.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did not you bring up your grievances with Edson and mention his difficulty with his brother-in-law, Brother Chapin, and Wadsworth?

Answer: All these things were talked of.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Henry Traxler

**John Traxler** called.

Statement: I was present all the time of the interview between my father and Brother Butler. I heard Brother Butler say that the matter between Edson and Fitzgerald was settled. Father remarked that there ought to be a trial because Edson was in the habit of making disturbances and named a number of instances which had occurred before Mr. Butler came. Mr. Butler said that he would have nothing to do with any thing that happened before his administration. Father replied that he would probably hear all these things but would not be obligated to act upon them. Butler replied that if he did have to hear them, he would not act upon them.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did not these answers occur immediately after, and in connection with, the statement of those quarrels made?

Answer: They were all in connection.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) John Traxler

**Peter Traxler** called.

Statement: I was present all the time during the interview between my father and Brother Butler. The first conversation I heard between them was in relation to the trial pending between Mr. Edson and Mr. Fitzgerald. Mr. Butler said that he would hear nothing at that trial which happened before his administration.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Peter Traxler

**Edward Traxler** recalled.

Statement: Coming home I found Brother Butler at my father's. He and father were talking in relation to a difficulty between Edson and Fitzgerald. Father thought that there should be a trial, as Edson had had several difficulties with members of the class before. Father stated some of the difficulties – and said that if the thing went to trial, things that had transpired before Butler came here would be brought up. Brother Butler replied that he could not or would not hear them. No other subject was introduced.

This is correct. (signed) Edward Traxler

**Jacob Fitzgerald** called.

Statement: In my home I heard Brother Butler deny having said that he would not admit or hear anything that took place before he came here, on the trial between

E. Edson and myself. He repeated this twice during the evening. He said this the first time to me. Fifteen or twenty minutes after, he repeated to N. Fitzgerald the same. Half an hour later he repeated it again and said to N. Fitzgerald that he had no right to talk to him in that way. "I won't hear it."

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Jacob Fitzgerald

**John Traxler** recalled

Statement: I was at Fitzgerald's store and heard the following. I heard J. Fitzgerald ask Mr. Butler if he had told a certain person that he would not hear any thing that happened before his administration. They were talking about the trial between Edson and Fitzgerald and their troubles. Nathan Fitzgerald then repeated the question, and Mr. Butler denied having said so. He also denied having said so to Mr. J. Fitzgerald when asked the question by him. I did not hear all the conversation. I heard Brother Butler deny having said that he would not hear any thing that happened before his administration, three times.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) John Traxler

**Jacob Fitzgerald** recalled.

Statement: I asked Brother Butler for a charge against E. Edson to cover the whole ground of difficulty, as I was inexperienced in the matter. Brother Butler said he did not like to write it for me, but would word it for me and I could write it myself. He produced light and paper, and I sat down by the table. I remarked that I was nervous and did not think that I could write. Brother Kester being present requested Brother Butler to write it for me. Brother Butler declined, but said he would word it for me. Brother Butler then gave me the language of the charge word by word, and I wrote it accordingly. He began by saying, "I charge Eliphalet Edson, etc." He dictated the whole thing except my signature.

I certify this is correct. (signed) Jacob Fitzgerald

**A. Kester** called.

Statement: I was present when Brother Fitzgerald called at Brother Butler's to prefer charges against Brother Edson. Brother Fitzgerald stated the grievances, remarking that he was ignorant in this business, and wished Brother Butler to give the charge in such a form as would carry the thing through straight. Brother Butler refused to do so. Paper, pen and ink being furnished, Brother Fitzgerald still insisted that he did not know how to write it. Then Brother Butler gave him the form of commencement verbally. He dictated the form and told him how to commence it thus: "I charge Eliphalet Edson" and then the specifications follows. After Brother Fitzgerald had written this far, I noticed that his hand trembled, and he requested Brother Butler to write it for him. He still refused to do it. I then left the table and did not observe what took place between Brother Butler and Brother Fitzgerald after that. I did not mean to be understood to say that Brother Butler gave Brother Fitzgerald the whole form of the charge – only the commencement. I do not recollect whether I was out of sight of Brother Fitzgerald and Brother Butler while Brother Fitzgerald was writing or not. Some one called my attention and I left the table. I do not recollect whether E. Butler Jr.

was present or not. I was there until Brother Fitzgerald left. I do not recollect seeing his oldest daughter at that time. I was at Brother Butler's when Brother Fitzgerald called. We were sitting in the kitchen.

Question by Rev. Butler: When Brother Fitzgerald asked for a charge against Brother Edson, did I not try to persuade him not to bring a charge?

Answer: Some conversation of that kind took place, but I am not certain precisely what.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did he still insist upon a charge?

Answer: He did.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did he not ask me to write one for him?

Answer: He did.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not refuse to write one for him and give as a reason that I had refused to write one for Edson?

Answer: I do not recollect his giving for a reason that he refused to write one for Edson.

Question by Rev. Butler: What reason did I give?

Answer: That is was not properly his business to do so, and that it might cause the other party to think he was taking sides.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did he immediately after say that he was nervous and his hand trembled, and that he wished me to write it on that account?

Answer: He did say that he was nervous and his hand trembled. I don't recollect at what period of the conversation this was said. Pen, ink and paper were furnished.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did he ask me to dictate that whole charge word for word?

Answer: He asked Brother Butler to write it. I do not recollect that he asked Brother Butler to dictate – but to write the charge for him that would carry the whole matter through straight.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not say that I would not do it?

Answer: He still refused to do it.

The above is a correct copy. (signed) A.M. Kester

**E.A. Wadsworth** recalled.

Question: What did you hear Brother Butler say with regard to leading the class at Town Hill on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1858?

Answer: He said that he spoke to the members of the class individually, had the class book in his hand – brother White's class book – and marked it. Some one at the Quarterly Conference, when this statement was made, remarked that he gave the members the privilege of speaking voluntarily. He replied that he spoke to them individually. I was not at church on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September. My class book was at home that day, I think.

Question: Who asked the question at Quarterly Meeting conference at Columbus above stated?

Answer: My father or myself.

I certify that the above statement is correct. (signed) E.A. Wadsworth

**Ezra Chapin** called.

Question: Were you at the Quarterly Meeting conference at Columbus?

Answer: I was.

Question: Did you or did you not hear Brother Butler say that he had the class at Town Hill personally on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, 1858, calling the names personally and individually and marking the class book at the time?

Answer: I heard him say so.

Question: Do you recollect some one saying that he supposed he led the class by giving them opportunity to speak voluntarily as in love feast?

Answer: Something of that kind was said, but I do not recollect by whom.

Question by Rev. Butler: Were you at the church at Town Hill on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

Answer: I was.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you observe me have a class book?

Answer: I did not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you not hear me speak personally to some of the members?

Answer: He spoke to Brother Geddis only, so far as I recollect.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I speak personally to the leader, Brother White?

Answer: Not to my recollection.

Question by Rev. Butler: Can you tell me how many members of Brother White's class were present?

Answer: I cannot.

I certify the above is correct. (signed) Ezra Chapin

**T.D. Newton** recalled

Question: Were you at the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September last at Town Hill church?

Answer: I was.

Question: Did you stay during the class meeting?

Answer: I did.

Question: In what way or manner did Brother Butler lead the class?

Answer: He requested the class to speak without being spoken to separately. I do not know whether Brother Butler spoke to Brother White or not. He was the first member of the class that spoke, being the leader. I spoke myself without being personally spoken to. Some others spoke without being spoken to personally – after which Brother Butler observed that a lady was present who wished to speak. The lady then spoke. He did not call her by name.

Question: Did Brother Butler have a class book in his hand?

Answer: I do not remember.

Question: Could you have seen a class book in Brother Butler's hand?

Answer: I could.

Question: Did you ever know of Brother Butler leading a class at Town Hill before or after this?

Answer: I am not prepared to say.

Question by Rev. Butler: What class did you belong to at that time?

Answer: I belong to the Brother Wadsworth class.

Question by Rev. Butler: Who spoke first?

Answer: I think Brother White spoke first.

Question by Rev. Butler: Who spoke second?

Answer: I do not know.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did not Sister White speak?

Answer: I cannot say.

Question by Rev. Butler: Are you positive that I did not speak personally to Brother White?

Answer: I am not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Do you recollect whether a number were not spoken to?

Answer: I do not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Are you certain that a number were not spoken to?

Answer: I could not say indeed.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you not tell me that a lady in the congregation desired to speak?

Answer: I do not think I did. After that lady had spoken, I told Brother Butler that she desired to repeat the Lord's Prayer and the two first commandments at the close of the class meeting.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) T.D. Newton

**J.W. Stevens** called.

Question: Were you at the class meeting at Town Hill on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, 1858.

Answer: I was.

Question: In what way was the class led?

Answer: I do not remember of his speaking but to one person except Miss Dodson. He did not call her by name.

Question: Do you or do you not recollect Brother Butler requesting the members to speak voluntarily.

Answer: I do not remember.

Question: Did you or did you not see him have a class book in his hand and mark it?

Answer: Not to my recollection.

Question: If Brother Butler had had a class book in his hands, would you have not seen it?

Answer: I think I would.

Question: How many spoke that day?

Answer: Eight or ten, and there might have been twelve.

Question by Rev. Butler: Can you or can you not name all that spoke that day?

Answer: I can not name them all.

Question by Rev. Butler: What class do you belong to?

Answer: To Brother Wadsworth's class.

Question by Rev. Butler: Was not the leader of that class in the habit of giving the liberty of speaking voluntarily?

Answer: He has given them that privilege some times.

Question by Rev. Butler: Are you certain that I did not speak to more than one?

Answer: I am not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Do you know how many members of Brother White's class were present at that time?

Answer: I do not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Where did that lady sit in the church?

Answer: I think on the third or fourth seat back from the stove.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you see her come and speak to me, or me to her?

Answer: I did not.

The above is correct. (signed) J.W. Stevens

**Brother A.M. Kester** recalled

Question: Were you or were you not at the Quarterly Meeting at Columbus January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1859?

Answer: I was.

Question: What was said to Brother Butler about leading class?

Answer: He said he had led the class at Town Hill.

Question: How did he say it led it, by personally and by name, or voluntarily as in love feast?

Answer: He said he called on every person present to speak. He was then requested to consider carefully whether he had or had not called upon them individually. He said, "I called on Brother Geddis and he spoke."

Question: Did you or did you not hear Brother Butler say he called the members by name and marked the class book?

Answer: I did hear him say that – that is, of Brother White's class.

The above is a correct copy. (signed) A.M. Kester

**J.C. Emory** called.

Question: Were you at the class meeting last fall the time Brother Butler led the class?

Answer: I was.

Question: Did he lead it by calling over the names and marking the class book, or otherwise?

Answer: To the best of my recollection, he called over one or two of the names. One of the names, I think, was Brother Geddis. A number of others spoke without being called on by name.

Question: Did you see Brother Butler have the class book and mark it?

Answer: Not to my recollection.

Question: Was he plainly in your sight?

Answer: He was.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you speak that day?

Answer: I did not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Are you sure that I had no class book that day?

Answer: I am not certain.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not come down out of the pulpit and ask all to speak?

Answer: A general invitation was given for all to speak.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I or did I not at intervals ask persons to speak?

Answer: I do not remember that you did.

Question by Rev. Butler: Are you positive that I did not?

Answer: I would not be positive, but to the best of my recollection you did not.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I not after preaching invite the members to stay for a class meeting?

Answer: I think you did.

Question by Rev. Butler: Were you at church four weeks before that time?

Answer: I do not recollect.

The above is correct. (signed) J.C. Emory

Supplement: Deposition taken February 25, 1858, at Union Church

**Caroline Wadsworth** called.

Question: Were you at McKendree church the day that Brother Nelson preached on baptism in the grove near VanHorn's school house?

Answer: I was.

Question: Did you or did you not hear Butler call the local preachers soft-headed?

Answer: I did – that is the way I understood him.

Question: Did he name any local preacher by name?

Answer: I did not hear him name any one.

Question by Rev. Butler: Were those remarks made in sermon, or afterwards?

Answer; I do not distinctly recollect.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did I say the local preachers, or some?

Answer: As near as I can recollect, a few.

Question by Rev. Butler: Did you hear me whip the members during the sermon, or find fault with them for going to hear Nelson on baptism?

Answer: Not that I can recollect.

I certify that the above is correct. (signed) Caroline Wadsworth.

Thus endeth the depositions for the prosecution.

**Shadrach B. Laycock** called.

The defense objected to the admission of S.B. Laycock as a witness, on the grounds that he is an interested party.

Question by the chairman: Are you a party to this prosecution, in the origination or conducting of it?

Answer: The first that I saw of these charges, the charges and specifications were written out and shown to me. I was not in the origination, and I think I can say that I have no other interest than the interest of the Church.

Question by the defense: Did you at any time inform Brother Fitzgerald where he could get testimony and go with him to get testimony?

Objected to by the prosecution.

The chair ruled out the objection.

Answer: Brother Nathan Fitzgerald came to my house and requested me to go with him. I should have stated first, he requested me at the Town Hill Church to go with him to Union township, Luzerne County. He then came to my house a few days afterward, I do not recollect how many days, and I went with him. I assisted him as I had done by request, as I had done in taking these other depositions. I would just state that I done so from the direction the Presiding Elder had given in his letter to Brother Fitzgerald.

The defense appealed from the decision of the chair.

Appeal not sustained.

C. The case for the defense. The following depositions were taken at the request of Brother Butler as a defense to the charges preferred.

**Mrs. Martha G. Butler** called.

Mrs. Butler's testimony was objected to.

Question: Were you with me at the McKendree Church on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1858, the same Sabbath the Rev. Mr. Nelson preached at the school house near Nathaniel Dodson's.

Answer: I was, and I heard Mr. Butler preach. I did not hear anything like whipping the congregation or hear much said about the local preachers.

Question: After the sermon did you not hear me say that the congregation is small and I suppose they have gone to hear Mr. Nelson preach and I am sorry his hour came the same as mine for preaching – but I suppose he did not know, for he is too much of a gentleman to make an appointment on the same day and hour of mine if he knew it – and if he consulted me instead of some soft-headed local preachers I would have given him the church to preach in?

Answer: I did hear those words.

Question: Did the congregation seem displeased, or did they smile?

Answer: They smiled through the congregation.

Question: Did I speak so as to include all the local preachers?

Answer: No, Sir.

Question: Did you think I was angry or displeased?

Answer: I did not.

I certify the above to be correct. (signed) Martha G. Butler

**John Santee** called.

Question: Were you at the preaching at McKendree Church June 6, 1858, and did you hear Brother Butler preach?

Answer: I did.

Question: Do you recollect of my going home with you to dinner and what was said concerning the local preachers on that day?

Answer: To the best of my recollection, the statement of Mrs. Butler is correct to the question, and during the sermon I do not recollect of hearing Brother Butler say any thing respecting the local preachers. But after the sermon there was something said about soft-headed preachers, or some of the soft-headed local preachers. I do not know which term he used. Since that day I heard Brother Butler say that he did not have reference to all the local preachers, but specified who he did refer to and name Aylesworth and Case. I did not hear Brother Butler during the sermon whip any member of the congregation that was present or absent, nor did I hear him cast any reflections on anyone except Aylesworth and Case. They were the persons he had reference to. I do not say this conversation was on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, but some time after. Brother Butler said that he was [illegible] about the two appointments he had dropped, for they had not filled them – meaning Aylesworth and Case. I heard Brother Butler say that Aylesworth had said that if we had the Wyoming preachers to preach for us we would have the pure gospel preached to us.

Question: Have you ever heard me deny anything I said that day?

Answer: I have not. I think the conversation referenced to took place the first time we met after the day he preached.

Cross Examination: Were you in the Quarterly Conference at Harveyville?

Answer: I was not. I do not recollect Brother Butler say he would change the morning appointment at McKendree Church.

(signed) John Santee

**Ann Bare** called.

Question: Did you hear me make the remarks about the local preachers at McKendree on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June – and if so, what were they?

Answer: Brother Butler after the sermon made some remarks about the smallness of the congregation and said that some of the soft-headed local preachers had got the appointment of Mr. Nelson the same hour. The statement of Mrs. Butler is correct and nearer than I can excerpt it myself. I did not hear Brother Butler abuse the congregation or say aught against any of them. I did not think there were any remarks made that offended the congregation.

Cross Examination: Did you hear Brother Butler say that if an appointment was got up for one of the soft-headed local preachers the people would all run to hear them?

Answer: I did not. I did not hear Brother Butler say on that day if there was not a better turn out in four weeks he would change the morning appointment to the afternoon. I heard him say it in four weeks from that time.

(signed) Anna Bare

**Daniel Bare** called.

Statement: I was at the preaching of Brother Butler on June 6<sup>th</sup> at McKendree, and the statement made by Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Bare is correct.

(signed) Daniel Bare

**Henderson Harrison** called.

Question: Were you at the last Quarterly Conference at Harveyville.

Answer: I was.

Question: Did you or did you not hear when Brother Laycock stated as a grievance that Brother Butler had called the local preachers the soft-headed local preachers, that I made an exception when you heard me speak of the matter.

Answer: I have. I have heard you speak of the matter often times.

(signed) Joseph H. Harrison

**Nelson Bonham** called.

Statement: I have heard Brother Butler speak concerning the remarks he had made about the soft-headed preachers, and he always gave me to understand that he referred to Aylesworth and Case.

Cross Examination: Did Brother Butler or did he not tell you there were some objections to your nomination as steward and that Brother Austin was the only one who objected?

Answer: I asked who started the objections, and Brother Butler said Brother Austin and mentioned no other names to me that time.

Question by Brother Butler: When the above conversation took place, did not I say I will give you the book to be leader and that I intended you should be the steward, but there were some objections?

Answer: You had been talking previously about my being leader. I had objections, and this gave rise to the above conversation. In a conversation since then, shortly after the above, I asked Brother Butler whether any other person had made objections and he said that some other one had spoke – and I think Brother Wadsworth's name was mentioned, but the weight of the objection lay in Brother Austin.

Question: Did I not say to you that any one had a right to ask questions and any one a right to make objections?

Answer: You did.

(signed) Nelson Bonham

**A.M. Kester** called.

Statement: I have frequently heard Brother Butler say that he referred to the two local preachers before spoken of as soft-headed when he made the remarks.

(signed) A.M. Kester

**T.D. Newton** called.

Question: Were you in the store of J. Fitzgerald the evening the conversation took place between Jacob Fitzgerald and Brother Butler?

Answer: I was. I think J. Fitzgerald asked Brother Butler whether he had not said that he would have nothing to do with any thing before his administration, and Brother Butler said that he did not say that.

Question: Did I not emphasize the word *that*?

Answer: I think so. I did not hear the name of Henry Traxler mentioned up to this time. Nathan Fitzgerald then asked Brother Butler if he had not said that he

would have anything to do with any thing that had occurred before his administration. Brother Butler replied that he had already answered that question and that he did not wish to be interrogated. Immediately after that I went out and heard no more at that time. After I returned, Brother Butler and Brother J. Fitzgerald came out of the back room, and Nathan Fitzgerald put the same question in a rather more direct way like this: "You say then, Brother Butler, that you did not say that you would not have anything to do with any thing that occurred before your administration?" Brother Butler replied that he had been misapprehended on the matter and did not wish to be questioned any more about it. Nathan Fitzgerald said, "I should like to have you explain yourself." Brother Butler replied, "You ought not to talk in that way and you had better take care how you talk." I cannot be positive whether the name of Traxler was mentioned between the parties or not.

Question: Did you not think that my actions showed that I felt mortified and injured.

Answer: I did.

Cross Examination: What subject did you understand the parties to be talking about, or what did it refer to – a church trial or some other matter?

Answer: A church trial between Brother J. Fitzgerald and Brother E. Edson.

Question by Brother Butler: Had you ever heard up to the time of the above conversation that I and Brother Traxler had had a conversation about the matter?

Answer: No, Sir.

Question: Do you know whether Nathan Fitzgerald was in the store when his father asked Brother Butler the question referred to.

Answer: I do not recollect.

(signed) T.D. Newton

**Mrs. Butler** recalled.

This was objected to by the complainants.

Question: Where were we, that is the whole family, when brother Fitzgerald came to prefer a charge against Brother Edson?

Answer: We were sitting in the kitchen.

Question: Who else was there?

Answer: Brother Kester.

Question: When Brother Fitzgerald asked for a charge, did I not try to persuade him not to bring one?

Answer: You did. Brother Fitzgerald insisted on Brother Butler writing the charge. Mr. Butler refused. Mr. Fitzgerald asked for paper, pen and ink – and Mr. Butler got paper, etc. and walked in the dining room with Mr. Fitzgerald and lit the candle on the table. Then he left the room and came into the kitchen to me and commenced talking. Mr. Fitzgerald came out after he had wrote the charge. Brother Kester also went in the room with Mr. Butler and Mr. Fitzgerald and remained a short time.

Question: Do you recollect the reason I gave why I would not write that charge?

Answer: Because you had refused to write one for Mr. Edson.

Question: Did I say or dictate one word of that charge?

Answer: You did not.

Question: Are you certain that our son Elisha was at home that evening?

Answer: I am certain.

Question: Are you certain that Emma was at home?

Answer: I am.

(signed) Martha G. Butler

**Emma M. Butler** called

Question: Do you recollect any thing about Mr. Fitzgerald coming to our house to prefer a charge against Mr. Edson?

Answer: I do.

Question: Who was there at the time?

Answer: Brother Kester and Mother and Elisha. I recollect you taking Mr. Fitzgerald in the room and getting him pen and ink and paper.

Question: Did you hear Mr. Fitzgerald ask me to write the charge for him?

Answer: I did not, as I was not in the room at the time. Father came out of the room into the kitchen after he had given Mr. Fitzgerald pen, paper and ink.

Question: Did I tell Mr. Fitzgerald one word about how he should write that charge?

Answer: You did not.

Question: Do you recollect whether Elisha went to school at that time or not?

Answer: He did go to school, but he was at home that evening.

Cross Examination: Do you know that your father did not tell Fitzgerald how to write the charges when they were in the room and you were not there?

Answer: I don't know what happened when I was not in the room.

Question by Brother Butler: Was not Mr. Fitzgerald in the room a long time?

Answer: He was. Mr. Kester was in the room a little while, but not long, and then he came in the kitchen and left Fitzgerald there alone.

Question: Were you in the kitchen all the time while Fitzgerald was writing?

Answer: I passed through the room into the next room and went back again during that time. I was where I could see Mr. Fitzgerald and Father all the time. When Father took Fitzgerald in the room, he came back.

Question: Did you ever hear me tell your Mother that I would not write the charge for Mr. Fitzgerald.

Answer: I have.

(signed) Emmie M. Butler

**Abraham Eveland** called.

Question: Were you at the meeting at Town Hill the 12<sup>th</sup> of September last when Brother Butler led the class.

Answer: I was, and remained during the class. I recollect that when Brother Butler came down out of the pulpit he had a class book in his hand. I belonged to Mr. White's class. I recollect that Brother Butler said that he had but one class

book. Brother Butler requested the members to stay in class. I think he spoke to Brother White, and then there were others who spoke voluntarily. I don't recollect whether he marked the book or not.

Question: Is it customary or often the case to lead the class in that way?

Answer: It is not often the case. Brother Dyson sometimes led the class in that way.

Question: If any one should have asked whether the class was led that way, what would you have said?

Answer: That class was led.

(signed) Abraham Eveland

**E. Edson** called.

Question: Were you at meeting the 12<sup>th</sup> of September at Town Hill.

Answer: I was. I also saw Brother Butler have the class book. I heard Brother Butler speak to some personally.

Question: Can you name some of them?

Answer: You spoke to Mr. White and to Mr. Geddis – and it seems in my mind that he spoke to some others, but I am not positive.

Question: Do you recollect any who spoke voluntarily?

Answer: I do.

Question: Name some of them.

Answer: I think my wife spoke. I think there were five or six, maybe eight or ten. The class was led that day.

(signed) E. Edson

**Mrs. Elizabeth Edson** called.

Question: Were you at the meeting at Town Hill on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September when Brother Butler led the class?

Answer: I was.

Question: Do you concur in the testimony of your husband?

Answer: I do, but can recollect that you called on three persons by name. They were Brother White, Brother Geddis, and Sister Geddis. Brother Butler requested all to speak. I spoke myself voluntarily.

Cross Examination: Were Brother Geddis and Sister Geddis members of Brother White's class?

Answer: They were not.

(signed) Elizabeth Edson

Thus endeth the depositions for the defense.

The court then adjourned to meet tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. The court met Saturday morning at 9 o'clock pursuant to adjournment, all members being present.

**Thompson Mitchell** called by the defense.

Statement: I understand all these difficulties to originate out of the reports of the provisional committees. When the committee of year before last brought in their

report, it was two hundred dollars for table expenses. To this I demurred. Two of this committee said they would like to give more, but they were unable. The third committee man said he acted on different grounds, believing that the preachers received too much – that the high salaries of the preachers had been the cause of the downfall of all the other churches, and he feared the same cause was going to destroy our own. There was a good deal said pro and con, through all of which Brother Butler preserved a profound silence. At the close, he adverted to the amount allowed him, in a kind spirit, and said he could not live on the amount – that he was a plain man, had a plain family, had no luxuries at his table, but would pledge himself to give any brother an hundred dollars more than they allowed him if he would supply his table with the mere necessities of life for the year.

When the provisional committee of the second year returned after a deliberation of perhaps half an hour outside of the church, during all of which time we were waiting, and becoming a little restless, they reported two hundred and thirty dollars. I asked what will you do with the report. There was a dead silence for some time. Brother Butler at length spoke and said, “I move that the report be thrown under the table.” One of the committee moved that there be a new committee appointed. I said, “The first motion was not according to order, and the second was not according to law.” Then commenced a general talk, during which a good many things were said, all being more or less excited. Brother Butler remarked that what he had received the preceding year had not met his expenses – that he had been obliged to draw largely on his own resources, and that his table had been so barely spread that he could not ask any domestic to put up with their fare, and his wife was obliged to get along without help, that she consequently had to labor more than a Virginia negro, that she was ruining her health, and should she die whilst on the circuit they would be involved in the responsibility. The Scripture said the laborer was worthy of his hire, and therefore such treatment was little if any better than highway robbery.

Question by Jonathan Monroe: Were the members of the Quarterly Meeting Conference excited, and did they speak harshly to Brother Butler?

Answer: They were excited, and some of them used language which I considered harsh.

Question by Elisha Butler: In the first Quarterly Conference did not some member, a local preacher named Bacon, say that the people of this circuit had labored hard to get what little they had, and lived on mush and milk, and now these preachers have come to take away what little they have from them?

Answer: I am not clear in my mind that Brother Bacon used the mush and milk expression. Brother Bacon did represent their poverty condition, and that in his opinion the preachers got too much – that many of them were idle, and lay about their homes instead of being out preaching and visiting the people. I called him to order, telling him that such wholesale denunciation of preachers could not be allowed there – that if he had any complaints to bring, preachers had their court of trial to which he could go.

Question by John Guyer: What is the size of Brother Butler’s family?

Answer: He has a wife and, I think, nine children.

Question by John Guyer: Do you remember the number of members on that circuit?

Answer: The members and probationers are in the neighborhood of 700.

Question by John Guyer: As that circuit embraces a purely agricultural portion of country, are not a large proportion of those members farmers?

Answer: I think they are.

Question by I.H. Torrence: At the first Quarterly Meeting, you stated there was a good deal said pro and con, and that Brother Butler preserved profound silence. Who were in favor and who were against?

Answer: I myself was in my place in the chair, the chief speaker in favor of an increased allowance. Brothers Bacon, Wadsworth, and Laycock were the chief speakers against it.

Question by I.H. Torrence: Was the report of the committee adopted?

Answer: It was.

Question by I.H. Torrence: Are you sure that Brother Laycock participated in the discussion on the subject of the apportionment in the first Quarterly Meeting Conference?

Answer: That is my distinct judgment.

Question by I.H. Torrence: Do you know what amount Brother Butler received the first year?

Answer: I have no knowledge, I believe, except what the recording steward said – who I think represented that Brother Butler had gotten about five hundred dollars, he adding that that was a great deal more than most of their people got. I told him that Brother Butler's moving and traveling expenses would take nearly one hundred and fifty dollars of that.

Finding of the court.

The first charge was read, and the vote taken on the first specification, which was not sustained. The second specification was voted upon, and sustained. The third specification was voted upon, and not sustained. The fourth specification was voted upon, and not sustained.

The second charge was read, and the first specification was voted upon. It was not sustained. The second specification was voted upon, and not sustained. The third specification was voted upon, and not sustained. The fourth specification was voted upon, and not sustained.

It was moved and seconded that the first charge be not sustained.

Carried.

It was moved and seconded that the second charge be not sustained.

Carried.

The Committee present the following as their finding in the case of Rev. Elisha Butler.

The Committee to whom was referred the case of Elisha Butler, having examined the charges preferred against him, find they are not sustained, but that

from the evidence adduced, think Brother Butler has used, under circumstances of considerable provocation, exceptionable and indiscreet language.

Signed by

John Bowen, chairman

Joseph A. Ross

George Stevenson

L.B. Dunlap

Henry G. Dill

James Ewing

J.G. McKeehan

A.A. Eskridge

Amos Smith

Jonathan Monroe

William R. Mills

R.D. Chambers, secretary

Appendix: Cast of Characters

**Austin, Isaac** (1828-1883): local preacher who went on to become an ordained pastor in the Wyoming (PA/NY) Conference. He was the son of Peter Austin (c1807-). He and his wife, the former Barbara Benscoter, named one of their sons Wadsworth Austin (b. 1862, a few years after the Butler trial), apparently after local preacher Epaphras S. Wadsworth.

**Austin, Peter** (c1807-): father of local preacher Isaac Austin (1828-1883).

**Aylesworth, Robert Hicks**: a local preacher on the Bloomingdale circuit. He was born April 16, 1807, in Hoosick NY and married Elizabeth Arnold, daughter of Stephen and Martha (Williams) Arnold, on May 8, 1836, at Hunlock Creek. They dwelt in Bainbridge NY until they moved to Hunlock Creek in 1845. He was a wagon maker and local preacher. Bainbridge NY was in the Wyoming Conference and Hunlock Creek bordered the Wyoming Conference, explaining his familiarity with and reference to their preachers.

**Bacon, Septimus** (1794-1861): a local preacher living in Huntington Mills. He was married to Margaret LaBar (1803-1895).

**Bare, Anna**: member of Bloomingdale circuit and witness for the defense. She is the wife of Daniel Bare.

**Bare, Daniel**: member of Bloomingdale circuit and witness for the defense. He was a resident of Union township, Luzerne County, the location of McKendree Church. There is documentation of a Bare family at McKendree Church about 1860, but not specifically of a Daniel Bare.

**Bonham, Nelson** (1821-1882): member of Bloomingdale circuit. He is an uncle of fellow witness for the defense Henderson Harrison, son of his older sister Elizabeth Bonham Harrison (1806-1881).

**Butler, Emma Melissa** (1845-1863): daughter of Elisha Butler and witness for the defense. Emma was two years younger than her brother Elisha and would have been almost 14 when she testified at the trial. She died at age 18 while her father was serving Castle Fin circuit. That may have been especially stressful for the family, for following her death Rev. Butler took a two year break from pastoral ministry to serve as an agent for Sunday School literature.

**Butler, Martha Green Ganoe** (1817-1912): wife of Elisha Butler and witness for the defense. She married Elisha in 1841, several years the death of his first wife, the former Sarah Cousert. Having already experienced the death of one spouse may partially explain Elisha's quarterly conference comments about Martha's health. She spent her last years living with her son Elisha in Newark NJ and is buried in his family's plot in Evergreen Cemetery near Elizabeth NJ. She is a sister to Central Pennsylvania Conference preachers Martin L. Ganoe (1843-1917) and William V. Ganoe (1847-1932).

**Case**: this local preacher could not be further identified.

**Chapin, Ezra** (1799-1873): buried in the Dodson cemetery. Ezra Chapin is called a brother-in-law of Eliphalet Edson, but the exact connection unclear –

Edson was married to a Miss Thomas and a Miss Kramer, and Chapin was married to a Miss Wilson.

**Edson, Eliphalet** (1793-1866): member of Bloomingdale circuit. He was born in Vermont, served in the War of 1812, and came to Luzerne County about 1816 while still single. He farmed and helped build the bridge across the Susquehanna at Berwick. He married twice, both local women, and is buried in the Dodson cemetery. Despite the implications in the testimonies that he was a difficult person, he was respected enough to be the namesake of Eliphalet Edson Dodson (born 5/5/1835). It is not difficult to tell where his sympathies lie during Rev. Butler's trial, for his son born later that year (10/3/1859) was named Elisha Butler Edson.

**Edson, Elizabeth Kramer** (1817-1888): member of Bloomingdale circuit and witness for the defense. She and Eliphalet Edson were married in 1841, following the death of his first wife. She is buried in the Dodson cemetery.

**Emory, Joseph C.** (c1826-): Nothing more is known about Mr. Emory, except that he appears as a resident of Huntington township in the 1850 census.

**Eveland, Abraham** (1816-1894): member of Bloomingdale circuit and witness for the defense. He is buried in the Dodson cemetery.

**Fitzgerald, Jacob** (1810-): local store keeper and member of the Bloomingdale circuit. The supposed mis-handling of his dispute with Eliphalet Edson was one of the relevant matters in the trial of Elisha Butler. He was a respected member of the community – for during the same annual conference as Butler's trial, sufficient donations were reported from the circuit to make him a life member of the conference's Missionary Society.

**Fitzgerald, Nathan** (1834-): son of Jacob Fitzgerald. Nathan was the one who filed the charges against Elisha Butler, motivated in part by his perceived failure of Butler to support his father in the dispute with Eliphalet Edson.

**Harrison, Joseph Henderson** (1825-1905): member of Bloomingdale circuit. His mother being Elizabeth Bonham (1806-1881), he is nephew of fellow witness for the defense Nelson Bonham.

**Kester, Aaron M.** (1827-1892): the other pastor assigned with Elisha Butler to the two-man Bloomingdale circuit 1857-59.

**Laycock, A.C.:** believed to be Adam C. Laycock (b.1826) of Shickshinny. His relationship, if any, to Shadrach Laycock is not known.

**Laycock, Shadrach B.** (1795-1882): local preacher on the Bloomingdale circuit, residing in Harveyville. That he was well-respected is attested to by the fact that presiding elder Thompson Mitchell, even though sympathetic to Elisha Butler, trusted Rev. Laycock with aiding Noah Fitzgerald in filing charges against Butler. Laycock is extremely well-connected in Methodism. He married Susan Bowman (1799-1875) – daughter of Rev. Thomas Bowman (1760-1823) of Old Stone Church near Berwick, who was ordained by Francis Asbury. Among the numerous and distinguished ministerial members of the Bowman family tree are Laycock's nephews Rev. [Bishop] Thomas Bowman (1817-1914) and his name-bearer Rev. Shadrach Laycock Bowman (1829-1906), prolific author and faculty

member at Dickinson College, DePauw University [dean of the School of Theology], and Drew University. Laycock's daughter Mary Anna (1821-1898) married Central Pennsylvania Conference preacher Rev. John Haughawout (1811-1891).

**Mitchell, Thompson** (1817-1897): presiding elder of the Northumberland District 1856-60. A presiding elder (now called a district superintendent) was then responsible for holding quarterly conferences (i.e., four charge-wide business meetings a year) on each charge in his district. In 1860 he became president of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary (now Lycoming College), a position he held for ten years before returning to the pastorate and superintendency. He is buried in Wildwood Cemetery, Williamsport PA.

**Nelson, Reuben** (1818-1879): distinguished educator, speaker and clergyman of the Wyoming Conference. Dr. Nelson was a founder of Wyoming Seminary in 1844 and served for 28 years as its first president. He undoubtedly would not have allowed his lecture on baptism to be scheduled when it was had he known it directly conflicted with the nearby regularly appointed preaching time of Elisha Butler. The General Conference of 1872 elected him senior agent for the Methodist Book Concern in New York City, a position he held until his death. He is buried at Forty Fort.

**Newton, Thaddeus Demmon** (1801-1873): member at Town Hill, and a member of the class headed by E. Wadsworth. The Newton family lived outside Town Hill, just past the schoolhouse that served as the congregation's meeting place before the erection of the church building in Town Hill and that still served as a meeting place for one of the classes. T.D. Newton's movements during his lifetime reflect a common pattern of the time. His father was born in Massachusetts. He was born in Susquehanna County. His children were born, in order, in Lackawanna County, Pittston, and Town Hill. He married Martha Doty (1815-1877) in Pittston in 1839.

**Santee, John** (1814-1887): member of Bloomingdale circuit and a witness for the defense. He was a farmer in Union township, where McKendree Church is located. His father John Sr., who died in 1850, had been a prominent class leader. He is an uncle to Wyoming Conference preachers Joseph B. Santee (1842-1922) and Elijah Santee (1848-1934).

**Stevens, John Wesley** (1834-): member at Town Hill, and a member of the class headed by E. Wadsworth. A farmer who lived near Town Hill, he served at various times as a school director, town auditor, and trustee of the Town Hill church. He was married to the former Julia Ann Kile (1836-1920).

**Traxler, Edward**: son of Henry Traxler and a brother of John and Peter Traxler

**Traxler, Henry** (1800-1863) and Sarah (Dodder) Traxler: parents of seven children – including trial witnesses John, Edward, and Peter. The Traxlers attended at Town Hill.

**Traxler, John**: son of Henry Traxler and a brother of Edward and Peter Traxler.

**Traxler, Peter** (1834-): son of Henry Traxler and a brother to John and Edward Traxler. He took over the family farm upon the death of his father.

**Wadsworth, Caroline:** The relationship of Caroline Wadsworth to the other Wadsworths who gave testimony has not been determined.

**Wadsworth, Epaphras Almon** (1815-1863): son of local preacher Epaphras Wadsworth. He is buried in the Dodson Cemetery, which church was on the Town Hill charge.

**Wadsworth, Epaphras S.** (1794-1871): local preacher. He is the father of Epaphras Almon Wadsworth. His Daughter Permelia (1827-1903) married Charles R. Buckalew (1821-1899), US Senator from Pennsylvania during the Civil War. He is buried in the Dodson Cemetery, which church was on the Town Hill charge.

**A final related story.** Bloomingdale circuit was broken off from Berwick circuit in 1843. Town Hill circuit was broken off from Bloomingdale circuit in 1882. In 1971 that circuit consisted of seven churches (Cambra, Dodson Chapel, Huntington Mills, New Columbus, Register, Town Hill and Waterton) that united to erect the present Town Hill United Methodist Church. The pastor who oversaw that union was William Price (1915-2002) – who served that charge 1947-1985! The following signed statement by him is on file at the conference archives, and it includes several of the family names from the preceding article.

*Word came to me that the Town Hill Church at one time had been stolen. When I protested, the individual said, "The next time you see Abe Huff, ask him."*

*One day while waiting in the post office for the incoming mail, I said to postmaster Abram Huff, then in his eighties, "Uncle Abe, what is this I hear about stealing the Town Hill church?"*

*After a great seizure of laughter – Mr. Huff had many of the characteristics of the proverbial Santa Claus, including a tummy that shook "like a bowl full of jelly" – with tears rolling down his cheeks, he said, "Rev. Price, why would you ask me a question like that? Just because I happened to be there that night doesn't say that I know anything about it."*

*Then he began to tell the story of how when he was a young man of about 13 years of age, Mr. Putnam Wadsworth (a direct descendant of Epaphras Wadsworth), Mr. George W. Huff (father of Abram), Mr. H. Edson, and several others took teams of horses under cover of darkness, put skids under the Town Hill Church (then located about a mile outside the village) and dragged it down to where it now stands into the center of the village. This happened about 1874. Mr. George W. Huff gave a grant of land 50x40 feet upon which the church could be erected.*

*This came about because of differences with the members of the Dodson class and the Town Hill class which had used the church jointly for services. The following year, the Dodson group built Dodson Chapel in their village and dedicated it the same year as the relocated Town Hill building – 1875.*

(signed) *Bill Price*