

The Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church viewed through the lens of J.K. Helmbold

According to the *Table of United Methodist Church Annual Conferences* on the website of the General Commission on Archives and History, the Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church existed from 1829 until 1911 – but that is misleading, and it illustrates the problem encountered in trying to document this former conference.

While conference boundaries in the Methodist Protestant Church self-adjusted over the years to meet practical considerations, for most of its existence the Pennsylvania Conference covered only the northeast part of the state – roughly north of the present route I-80 and east of US-15.¹ In general, the southern tier of the state was covered by the Maryland Conference, the western part by the Pittsburgh Conference, and the southeastern part by the New Jersey Conference.²

The Formative Years (1829-1854)

The Methodist Protestant denomination was formally organized under that name in Baltimore MD in 1830. But the underlying reform movement, which sought to limit the power of the episcopacy and introduce lay representation at annual conferences, had been growing for two quadrennia. The breaking point came at the 1828 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, when the reformers split with the denomination and began organizing themselves into conferences. A call to organize a “Philadelphia Conference” of the reformers resulted in an October 8-10, 1829, meeting at which sympathizers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware gathered to organize and arrange a plan of appointments.³ The participants came from the area covered by the existing Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church – hence the choice of the name.

While this may be considered the beginning of the Pennsylvania Conference, the only appointment made by this body within the Pennsylvania Conference’s eventual boundaries was at Salem, in Wayne County, where Joseph Barlow⁴ was assigned. Salem township included Hollisterville, which would

¹ Pennsylvania Conference appointments to the south and west of those bounds did not endure.

² Lying in an area between the conferences, the Cassville charge in Huntingdon County was part of the Maryland Conference 1833-1865, the Pittsburgh Conference 1865-1901, and the Pennsylvania Conference 1901-1911.

³ Drinkhouse, Edward J., *History of Methodist Reform*, 1899, vol. II, page 239. This book will subsequently be identified as Drinkhouse II.

⁴ Joseph Barlow (1787-1858) was born in England and entered the ministry in the Methodist Connection there. He came to America in 1819 and appears to have made his home in Salem township. In 1835 he transferred to the Presbyterian Church, where he became prominent in the area. Stocker’s 1904 *History of the Honesdale Presbyterian Church*, page 263, states: “Among the

become the *de facto* headquarters of the Pennsylvania Conference. John Smith⁵ from Delaware was elected president of this 1829 conference, and denomination historian Drinkhouse names him as the “first President of the Pennsylvania Conference”⁶ – and he is consistently listed in the memorial roll of the Conference.

The early “Pennsylvania Conference” continued to embrace the tri-state area covered by its Philadelphia Conference ME predecessor, and the April 1831 annual meeting in Philadelphia reported 111 preaching places, 983 members, and 6 church buildings.⁷ This arrangement continued through the first few General Conferences of the Methodist Protestant Church until it was determined that the area being served was too large, too diverse, and too thinly populated by the denomination to maintain effective ministry. Eventually, the much stronger Maryland Conference took over the work in Delaware and southeast Pennsylvania⁸ – leaving the Pennsylvania Conference controlling only the area described at the beginning of this article.

The statistics for the 1854 General Conference show the Pennsylvania Conference much as it existed for the remainder of its years: 0 station appointments, 7 circuits, 8 itinerant ministers (the smallest number for any of the denomination’s 33 regular conferences), 14 unstationed ministers, and 5 church buildings. For all practical purposes, then, we count 1854 as the true beginning of the Pennsylvania Conference. Appendix I lists the sites of the annual conferences from 1854 to 1911, when it merged into the Eastern Conference. There are many holes in this list, as minutes from a number of the conferences are not known to have survived.⁹

old-time ministers in Wayne County Rev. Joseph Barlow deserves more mention than we have data to give. Rev. Barlow came to the Presbyterian Church from the Protestant Methodists. He was an aggressive Englishman.”

⁵ John R. Smith (c1784-1843) was the most senior member at the gathering, having been admitted to the Philadelphia Conference ME in 1809 and having served appointments in the Delmarva Peninsula for 20 years.

⁶ Drinkhouse II, page 335.

⁷ Drinkhouse II, page 283.

⁸ The Maryland Conference began supplying the Philadelphia First MP Church in 1839 and held their 1841 annual conference in that building. For one quadrennium, from 1846 to 1850, there was a separate Philadelphia Conference, but then those appointments were returned to the Maryland Conference.

⁹ The list represents all the known information available from the Methodist Protestant archives (originally at the denomination’s seminary in Westminster MD and now at Wesley Seminary in Washington DC), the United Methodist archives (at Drew University), the Susquehanna Conference archives (at Lycoming College), and other possible sites.

The Pennsylvania Conference MP began publishing its minutes as early as 1873, but even the combined holdings of all the known repositories do not create a complete 1873-1911 set of journals. This means that for many years we do not know the place of the annual conference, those given license or ordination, the list of appointments, etc. The repository at Drew includes manuscript minutes from 1860 to 1879, and the Susquehanna Conference is in the process of having those minutes transcribed and made available on line.

It was two years later, in 1856, that Rev. J.K. Helmbold transferred from the Maryland Conference to the Pennsylvania Conference. Since his long service in the Pennsylvania Conference includes multiple terms as President and direct involvement with major controversies and events in the life of that Conference, and since his descendants¹⁰ have made available some of his private papers that provide insights beyond those appearing in the standard histories, we choose to present the story of the Pennsylvania Conference through the lens of J.K. Helmbold.

Rev. Joseph Kemmerer Helmbold Jr. (1820 – 1891)

J.K. Helmbold was born in Philadelphia to Joseph K. and Mary Elizabeth (Ryan) Helmbold, his father being the son of a German immigrant engaged in the printing business¹¹ and his mother was of Irish ancestry.

When the Maryland Conference held its annual sessions at the Philadelphia First Church in 1844, Helmbold was admitted on trial and assigned to the Trough Creek circuit in Huntingdon County PA – that assignment showing just how far into Pennsylvania the Maryland Conference extended. From 1844 to 1850 his ministry in the Maryland Conference brought him to appointments in Huntingdon, Clearfield and Franklin counties. In fact it was while serving in Huntingdon County that he met and married Miss Sarah Emeline Black. After serving three years in Maryland, Helmbold was sent back to Pennsylvania in 1853 – this time to Reading¹² in Berks County, in territory once part of the original 1829 Pennsylvania Conference but served by the Maryland Conference since 1851.

¹⁰ In addition to supplying Helmbold family material, providing access to her own research, and offering suggestions and corrections to this article, Janet Sickler Rupert of Columbia County PA – , a great-great-granddaughter of J.K. Helmbold – is the person transcribing the previously mentioned manuscript Pennsylvania Conference MP minutes housed at Drew.

¹¹ George Christophel Helmbold came to America in 1771 and was a noted printer in colonial Philadelphia.

¹² This appointment has an interesting story. Reading was discontinued by the Maryland Conference in the spring of 1860 and, perhaps because of Helmbold’s connections there, brought back into the Pennsylvania Conference in the fall of 1860 (but left “to be supplied”) with a reported membership of 37 and a building whose value of \$4000 was by far the largest in the conference. Reading was, in fact, chosen to be the site of the 1861 conference – but that didn’t happen, as the appointment had serious financial problems.

Instructions to delegates to the 1860 convention in Pittsburgh included a resolution to “solicit contributions ... to assist the church at Reading in liquidating their church debt of some \$700” and that “each superintendent taking an appointment from this Conference be requested to use his influence with the members of his charge to raise at least 10 dollars to aid in paying the Reading church debt.” The 1861 minutes reference a communication from Mt. Zion in Reading and the appointment of Helmbold to “visit” Reading and other missions that were not self-supporting. The 1862 minutes record that no report was received on the requested visit, and a committee was appointed “to examine into the legality of the Reading Church.” That report was received in 1863 and the committee discharged – with no indication of the report’s content – and that was the last mention of Reading in the minutes.

Apparently while serving Reading in the Maryland Conference, Helmbold was elected President of the Pennsylvania Conference at their fall 1855 annual conference – for the spring 1856 minutes of the Maryland Conference state that he “was removed, by certificate, to the Pennsylvania Conference, he being now the president of that body.”¹³ And so Helmbold was now faced with the daunting task of overseeing one of the smallest and most rural conferences in the denomination. Although the custom had been for each itinerant to take his turn as President, Helmbold was re-elected five more times and served from 1855 to 1861.

In 1861, Helmbold did not take a regular appointment¹⁴ – but rather he was assigned to visit and report on the conference missions (i.e., appointments that were not able to support a pastor) at Danville, Wadesville, St. Clair and Reading.¹⁵ In 1862, Helmbold temporarily put aside the ministry to serve his country on the battlefield. He served as a captain with Company G of the 56th Pennsylvania Volunteers, enlisting on June 5, 1862, and mustering in on September 8, 1862, for a 3-year term. He resigned on March 15, 1863, citing “private business of an important character” as the reason. Following the Battle of Gettysburg, Capt. Helmbold again proffered his services and organized an independent company of 58 men who mustered in on July 18, 1863, and served until September 7 that year. Among that company were several other ministers from the PA Conference, including Samuel Homan, Henry F. Wardell, James H. Paddock, and Samuel V. McVey. Pride in service to his country was such that his grave marker reads “Capt. Joseph K. Helmbold” instead of the expected “Rev. Joseph K. Helmbold.”

Mrs. Sarah Black Helmbold died September 1, 1865, leaving behind two sons and two daughters aged 8 to 17 and is buried in the Old Daleville MP Cemetery. On December 9, 1869, Rev. J.K. Helmbold of Daleville married Henrietta E. Miller¹⁶ of Laddsburg. That marriage would be blessed with six children – five girls and one boy. They made their residence in Daleville, where their only son was born on December 24, 1871, and named William Christmas Helmbold.¹⁷ After Joseph’s death in 1891, Henrietta continued to live in Daleville

¹³ “Proceedings of the Maryland Conference Methodist Protestant Church,” *The Baltimore Sun*, March 17, 1856, p. 4, col. 3.

¹⁴ Family sources state that Helmbold had applied for a chaplain’s appointment (which never materialized) sometime before 1861, and that pending possibility may be the reason he chose not to continue as the conference president and was not given a regular appointment.

¹⁵ Other than brief mentions of these appointments in the conference minutes, we have no other documentation of MP work in Danville (Montour County), Wadesville and St. Clair (Schuylkill County) or Reading (Berks County).

¹⁶ Henrietta and the Miller family had strong ties to the MP Church. She lived across from the Laddsburg (a.k.a. Albany) church, and her grandfather Daniel had donated the land where it stood. Her father Daniel F. was a lay delegate to the 1862 annual conference, and she reportedly had two uncles who were licensed MP preachers.

¹⁷ Rev. William C. Helmbold (1871-1927) continued his family’s Methodist Protestant tradition. He was admitted to the Pennsylvania Conference in 1897 and finished his ministerial career in the Michigan Conference.

and be active in the church there for over 50 more years. She passed away on September 30, 1947, within weeks of two events that she had been eagerly anticipating – the centennial of her beloved Daleville church on October 19, and her own 100th birthday on December 5. Joseph K. and Henrietta E. Helmbold are buried in the Old Daleville MP Cemetery.

J.K. Helmbold’s Importance to the Pennsylvania Conference

Helmbold’s service as President of the Pennsylvania Conference for an unprecedented six consecutive years gave the Conference, which had the smallest number of itinerants of any regular conference¹⁸, the stability and leadership it needed to prepare for the upcoming instability in the Methodist Protestant denomination. While he supported the early efforts and meetings of the northern and western conferences as they confronted the denomination over the issue of slavery and the possibility of an ecclesiastical separation,¹⁹ Helmbold could not have predicted that that would mean for the Pennsylvania Conference.

When the regular General Conference of the Methodist Protestant denomination that was scheduled for Georgetown DC in 1862 could not meet because of the War, the northern and western conferences – which had been becoming more and more dissatisfied with the denomination – held their own “General Conference” in Cincinnati OH. This was followed by another conference in 1866 that involved overtures to Wesleyan and other non-Episcopal Methodists. Finally, in 1867, the northern and western conferences formed themselves into a new denomination called the Methodist Church. As noted later in this article, that body assumed the Pennsylvania Conference would be joining them and even included them in their Discipline.

Although he and the congregations of the conference supported the anti-slavery sentiments of the other northern and western conferences, Helmbold opposed cutting off all ties with the parent denomination. When a majority vote favored leaving the Methodist Protestant Church to join the new Methodist Church, Helmbold stood firm and led the effort to maintain a Pennsylvania Conference in the Methodist Protestant denomination. This action caused legal problems that continued even after the 1877 re-union of the denominations, and that were not resolved until the Pennsylvania and New York Conferences joined in 1911 to create the Eastern Conference.²⁰

At issue were funds and properties of the Pennsylvania Conference that went with the dissenters into the Methodist Church and did not remain with the continuing Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. After the

¹⁸ Only the Oregon Missionary Conference had fewer itinerants.

¹⁹ See the preceding article on the split in the Methodist Protestant denomination and the formation of the Methodist Church as a separate denomination.

²⁰ See “Aid Fund Claims of the Pennsylvania Conference: Resume and Decision” in the 2011 issue of *The Chronicle*, pages 20-23, for a detailed statement of the issue its 1910 resolution.

1877 re-union, those former Pennsylvania Conference churches that had joined with Methodist Church remained (with assets of the former Pennsylvania Conference) in the New York Conference – and so from 1877 until 1912, the Methodist Protestant churches in northeast Pennsylvania were served by two overlapping conferences.

The final section of this article gives an overview of the issues, positions and decisions of the Pennsylvania Conference during the critical years from 1860 to 1880.²¹ This overview is based on two primary source repositories of information being examined and made public for the first time: (1) the manuscript minutes of the Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church preserved in the United Methodist denominational archives at Madison NJ and (2) the personal papers of J.K. Helmbold preserved by his descendants. *The Chronicle* thanks both of these sources for their cooperation in the preparation of this article.

The Pennsylvania Conference 1860-1880

The earliest known surviving records of the Pennsylvania Conference MP are the 1860 manuscript minutes at the United Methodist Archives at Drew. At the Annual Conference that September the body elected Helmbold to represent it at the upcoming November 1860 conference of the northern and western conferences.

On motion, Conference then proceeded to elect delegates to the Convention at Pittsburgh Pa. The following delegates were elected: J.K. Helmbold, minister; Samuel Whittaker, layman. G.W. Sterigere and James VanCamp were elected alternates. Resolved that a committee of three be appointed to give instructions to the delegates to the Pittsburgh convention and that Joseph Watrous, William Lutz and C. Blackman constitute said committee.

The next convention of the northern and western conferences was scheduled for November 1862 in Cincinnati OH. The Annual Conference minutes for the morning of September 1 of that year read as follows.

Moved that we elect delegates to the next general convention. – Affirmed. The election resulted in the election of S. Homan, minister; C. Blackman, layman. Pending the resolution to give certain instructions to the above delegates, conference adjourned.

When the Conference reconvened for the afternoon, it was

Resolved that the Delegates to the General convention be and are hereby instructed to advocate and vote in favor

1st of establishing a general Conference embracing the anti-slavery position of the Church

2nd of abolishing the Order of Deacon

²¹ This article examines the business of the conference and not the individual churches. For articles on the individual churches see “The Final Fifteen: The Methodist Protestant Churches in Northeast Pennsylvania When the Denomination Ceased to Exist in 1939” in the 2011 issue of *The Chronicle*, pages 13-19, and “Daleville Circuit of the Methodist Protestant Church” in the 2017 issue of *The Chronicle*, pages 25-41.

3rd that they oppose any modification of the restrictive rule²² and any change in the rule requiring a traveling President.²³

Meanwhile, the mainstream Methodist Protestant Church was well aware of the dissatisfaction of its northern and western conferences. Because of the Civil War, it had to cancel its 1862 quadrennial General Conference scheduled for Georgetown DC. Now it planned two separate General Conferences for 1866 – one in May in Georgetown DC for the southern conferences, and one in November in Allegheny City PA for the northern and western conferences. To counter the May meeting for the southern conferences, the dissatisfied northern and western conferences scheduled a competing “Non-Episcopal Methodist Convention” for May 1866 in Cincinnati to which the Wesleyan Methodists and others were invited. This interested the Pennsylvania Conference, and the minutes of their September 1865 Annual Conference report the following actions.

Resolved that the Chair appoint a special committee, to consist of three, upon the subject of the contemplated union of all non-Episcopal Methodist churches and that said committee be instructed to report to this Conference at as early as practicable.

The following special Committee was then appointed by the President:
Committee on Church Union of non-Episcopal branches of the Methodist Church – H.F. Wardell, J.K. Helmbold and Wm. Lancaster to be said committee.

The Committee on Church Union presented the following report which on motion was received and adopted:

Whereas a movement is on foot proposing a union of all non-Episcopal Methodist Churches therefore

- I. *Resolved* that we are in favor of such a union if it will not lessen the authority of the General and Annual Conferences or change the general plan of church government as now established by the Methodist Protestant Church.
- II. *Resolved* that we select one ministerial and one lay delegate to the convention to be held in Cincinnati in May next.
- III. *Resolved* that each superintendent be required to take up collections at each appointment on his circuit in January next in favor of the delegates elected for the amount of their travelling expenses.

By ballot J. Watrous and W. Lancaster were elected to be said delegates.

At the September 1866 Annual Conference, it was

Resolved that we proceed to the election of Delegates to General Conference and that the Conference rise to give the Electoral College time to meet. By ballot, the Electoral College elected S. Homan & C.H. Lowe delegates to the General Conference.

Resolved that the Delegates to the General Conference go uninstructed.

²² This may refer to Article X section VII of the then current Discipline that stated, “No rule shall be passed... to authorize the annual conferences to station their ministers and preachers longer than three years successively in the same circuit, and two years successively in the same station.”

²³ This may refer to Article XI of the then current Discipline that stated, “It shall be the duty of the president of an annual conference... to visit all the circuits and stations, and to be present as far as practicable at all the quarterly meetings and camp meetings.”

At this point, however, there were two competing “General Conferences” on the horizon – and it is unclear for which General Conference the body was electing delegates. The regular quadrennial General Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church was scheduled for November 1866 in Allegheny City PA,²⁴ and the first/organizing General Conference of the new Methodist Church was scheduled for May 1867 in Cleveland OH. As it turned out, the elected delegates Homan and Lowe did not attend either gathering.

The Pennsylvania Conference minutes for the September 1867 open with the surprising statement that it is “the 38th Session of the Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church.” Despite the formal creation of the Methodist Church in May 1867 and the establishment of its annual conferences – not to mention the apparent previous support of the Pennsylvania Conference for the dissenting northern and western conferences – the Pennsylvania Conference remained in the Methodist Protestant denomination and did not join the new Methodist denomination. The Conference elected Helmbold as president and proceeded with no mention of the dissenting denomination except possibly for the reference that Rev. A.H. Spear²⁵ “was connected with a movement on foot to carry Albany out of the Pennsylvania Conference, and with another denomination.” The minutes indicate a positive resolution of the situation by the following motion.

Whereas Br. Spear now acknowledges that he has done wrong in taking the above stated course and has agreed to acknowledge that he has done wrong and is sorry for it,

Resolved, that upon Br. Spear’s making this acknowledgement to Conference, and pledging himself to make a similar acknowledgement on the circuit, we recommend the passage of his official character.

The minutes for the September 1868 Annual Conference, however, with Helmbold in the chair, indicate that the body could no longer ignore “the elephant in the room.” There were clearly sentiments on both sides of the issue. Three prominent visiting members of the new Methodist Church were welcomed and given honorary seats at the Conference – Rev. Timothy T. Heiss (president of the New Jersey Conference) Rev. J. Gregory (of the Pittsburgh Conference) and Rev. Dr. Jonathan M. Flood (of the Ohio Conference). At the same time, Reverends J.K. Helmbold and J.L. Kilgore “were unanimously elected Fraternal Messengers to the Maryland Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church [meeting in March 1869], to bear that body the fraternal greetings of this Conference.”

The matter came to a head when Samuel Homan moved the following.

²⁴ Still recovering from the logistical difficulties posed by the Civil War, the Methodist Protestant Church scheduled two General Conferences in 1866. The one in Allegheny City PA was for the northern and western conferences, and an earlier one was scheduled in Georgetown DC for the southern conferences.

²⁵ The following year, Rev. Anson Hastings Spear would be one of the clergy who left the Pennsylvania Conference MP to join the Methodist Church.

Whereas, It appears from the official published proceedings of “The Methodist Church” and the Discipline issued under the direction of said General Conference, that the Pennsylvania Conference and the Pennsylvania District are duly recognized by them.

Resolved, That we the members of the Pennsylvania Annual Conference do cheerfully accept and heartily concur in the relation to “The Methodist Church” in which we are thus recognized.

President Helmbold ruled Homan’s motion out of order “inasmuch as it proposed to carry this Conference into a foreign organization.” When Homan appealed the decision from the chair, the decision was not sustained and discussion ensued. On motion of Rev. George Harris, the Conference spent ten minutes in prayer. Finally, Helmbold offered the following substitute motion.

Whereas, This Annual Conference, in common with its sister Conferences in the Northern and Western States did in 1858 suspend official intercourse with the residue of the Conferences of our Church; and

Whereas, most of the Conferences with which we thus acted have since united with the organization known as “The Methodist Church,” and

Whereas, we are in favor of the Union of all non-Episcopal Methodist Churches –

Resolved, That should said organization adopt the addition of “Protestant” or “Associated” to its name, or some similar addition as would more clearly identify us as a distinct branch of the Church of Christ and so modify the provision relative to ministerial supplies, as to restore to each Annual Conference the full power over the stationing of its preachers, then this Conference will attach itself to said body.

Resolved, that we pledge ourselves individually to abstain from all agitation of our Church Relations, until six months before the meeting of the second General Conference of said Methodist Church, and should there be good reasons for believing that said body will make the above changes, then we will, at our Conference in 1870 elect Representatives or Fraternal Messengers to said General Conference.

B.R. Smith then offered the following amendment.

Resolved, That we hereby sever all connection with the Methodist Protestant Church South, and that we now as an Annual Conference unite with The Methodist Church. At this point, Helmbold withdrew his substitute motion and the original Homan motion returned to the floor. Helmbold then made the following decision – to which there was dissent, but no formal appeal – and a call was made to have the yeas and nays taken separately from the ministerial and lay delegates. This was the decision from the chair that therefore applied to the vote on Homan’s motion.

Those voting favorably to the passage of said Preamble and Resolution thereby disconnect themselves from the Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, and connect themselves with another and separate organization.

The result of the vote was as follows.

Ministers

7 yea: Samuel Homan, A.H. Spear, John C. Jones, Benjamin R. Smith, J.N. Timberman, C. W. Blake, Mark Berriman

8 nay: Joseph Watrous, Joseph K. Helmbold, Jacob Miller, Samuel V. McVey, James H. Paddock, Dr. James L. Killgore, Moses Harvey, George S. Battersby.

Lay Delegates

10 yea: David Dale, Nathan Turner, Matthias Henderson, Louis Maurer, D.R. Brittain, George Williams, Paul Quick, Peter Brous, James P. Benninger, John D. Kizer

4 nay: Thomas L. Dodson, Elijah Montross, James Van Camp, John Kitson

When Homan rose to make a motion, Helmbold ruled that by his vote he had dissolved his connection with the body and could not be recognized. The unintended consequence of the above vote was that by a majority total vote of 17-12²⁶ the Pennsylvania Conference as a legal body had now left the Methodist Protestant Church – taking with it all the assets of that body. That was the interpretation in subsequent civil and ecclesiastical decisions.

All this had taken place at the Daleville church, which was now no longer part of the Pennsylvania Conference MP, as their pastor and lay delegate had voted in the affirmative. On motion of Rev. Joseph Watrous it was

Resolved, That the Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church adjourn to meet at Hollisterville, Wayne County, tomorrow (Saturday) afternoon at one o'clock.

And so Helmbold and others re-convened at Watrous' church to continue the Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. When the dust eventually settled, most of the appointments remained in the Conference and the few churches and pastors that dissolved their connection were joined to the New York Conference of the Methodist Church.

In 1870, Helmbold's oldest daughter Sarah Emeline was living in Philadelphia with one of his brothers, and she wrote him a letter²⁷ that includes several interesting questions. The relevant portions of the letter read as follows.

I got your last letter and answered it. Is the lawsuit finished at Williamsport yet, and which side gained it? Do you think you will get a circuit next year? I so hope you will – and one that will support you without you having to work so hard.

Any reply by Helmbold has not been preserved, and the stories behind these questions remained Helmbold family mysteries until the transcription of the 1869 minutes. In 1868, Helmbold had been assigned to Williamsport, Lycoming County. As noted in the following motion from the 1869 minutes, Williamsport was one of the properties claimed by the "other side."

Whereas, the Pennsylvania Conference of the so-called Methodist Church; the members of which seceded from the Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, have in their possession money, deeds, bonds, and notes, the property

²⁶ For some reason this has been reported in later histories as 17-11.

²⁷ The letter is dated March 26, 1870, from 937 Lombard Street. The original is in the possession of Janet Rupert, who has shared a photocopy with the conference archives.

of the Pennsylvania Conference of the M.P. Church: meeting house and parsonage at Canaan, Daleville; church at Albany, Loyalsock; church & parsonage at Williamsport;

Whereas, the ex-treasurer of this Conference, now treasurer of the Pennsylvania Conference of the so-called Methodist Church, refuses to restore to this Conference the Deeds, Notes, and Bonds in his possession;

And Whereas, the so-called Methodist Church refuses to restore the meeting houses and parsonages in their possession. Therefore,

Resolved, that the Conference Treasurer James VanCamp is hereby authorized to employ Counsel [and] proceed [with] the recovery of said property.

Resolved, that the Rev. J. Watrous is hereby authorized to attend to suits which have been or may be brought against the so called Methodist Church for the recovery of said property.

The second question regarding whether Helmbold would receive an appointment at the next Conference is explained by this motion in the 1869 minutes.

Whereas, Rev. J.K. Helmbold has appropriated money placed in his hands for the publication of the minutes of the Annual Conference;

And Whereas, a committee upon a charge against him for the same decided that he refund the money, Therefore

Resolved, that J.K. Helmbold be left in the hands of the President, and not to be employed till he comply with the report of said Committee.

As indicated by the service record of J.K. Helmbold in Appendix II, several years passed before he returned to serve under appointment. But it may be said that he had earned such a break – having stabilized the region’s scattered appointments into a small but viable Conference, and having successfully kept that Conference (at least most of it) within the Methodist Protestant Church. In 1880, Helmbold “located” – i.e, took a permanent residence (in Daleville) and no longer participated in the Conference as a traveling minister or as one having a vote or other official standing. Unfortunately, no copies of the 1880 minutes of the Pennsylvania MP Conference exist in the denominational or conference archives, and so any details or rationale concerning the move remain unknown. In 1888, however, Helmbold was readmitted to the Conference and the minutes read as follows:²⁸

On motion, the resolution of the Annual Conference of 1887, affecting the case of J.K. Helmbold, be taken from the table. There was considerable discussion over the matter, all of which the chair decided out of order, when Brother James Cairns introduced the following resolution, which was adopted.

Resolved that the action of the Annual Conference of 1880 held at Hollisterville, placing Bro. K.J. Helmbold on the unstationed list be rescinded, and he be restored to his former relation among us, and his name appear of the Conference roll.

Although Helmbold spent his final three years as a full member of the Conference, he remained – at his own request – without an appointment.

²⁸ 1888 Minutes of the Pennsylvania Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church – second day, morning session.

Appendix I – Annual Sessions 1854-1910, Pennsylvania Conference MP

<u>year</u>	<u>location</u>	<u>county</u>
1854-59	(unknown)	
1860	Danville	Montour
1861	Daleville	Luzerne ^a (since 1878, Lackawanna)
1862	Auburn Center	Susquehanna
1863	East Sterling MP Church	Wayne
1864	South Canaan	Wayne
1865	Moyer School House, Duboistown	Lycoming
1866	Union Chapel	Wyoming
1867	Shickshinny MP Church	Luzerne
1868	Daleville, reconvened to Hollisterville	Luzerne (Lackawanna), Wayne
1869	New Columbus	Luzerne
1870	Auburn Centre	Susquehanna
1871	Webster Chapel, Register	Luzerne
1872	Warburton Church	Sullivan
1873	MP Chapel, Shickshinny	Luzerne
1874	Park Hill MP Chapel, Scranton	Luzerne
1875	Webster Chapel, Register	Luzerne
1876	Warburton Church	Sullivan
1877	East Sterling MP Church	Wayne
1878	Webster MP Chapel, Register	Luzerne
1879	Jersey Hill MP Church	Susquehanna
1880	Hollisterville	Wayne
1881	(unknown)	
1882	Warburton Hill MP Church	Sullivan
1883	Monroe	Wyoming
1884	East Sterling MP Church	Wayne
1885	(unknown)	
1886	Laddsburg MP Church	Bradford
1887	Register	Luzerne
1888	Silvara	Bradford
1889	Shickshinny	Luzerne
1890-97	(unknown)	
1898	East Sterling	Wayne
1899	(unknown)	
1900	Shickshinny	Luzerne
1901	Lopez	Sullivan
1902	Laddsburg	Bradford
1903	Reyburm	Luzerne
1904	Hollisterville	Wayne
1905	(unknown)	
1906	Shickshinny	Luzerne
1907-08	(unknown)	
1909	Hess Memorial MP, Central	Columbia
1910	Shickshinny	Luzerne
1911	Pittston (uniting session)	Luzerne

Appendix II – Service record of J.K. Helmbold
 from the MP ministerial files on the conference website

HELMBOLD, JOSEPH KEMMERER JR.

Born: 6-2-1820 Philadelphia PA	married: Sarah Emeline Black
Died: 4-17-1891	obit: [4/9/1820 – 9/1/1865]
	married2: Henrietta Elizabeth Miller
1844 admitted on trial, Maryland Conf MP	obit2: Wyoming Conference 1948, 1021
1846 ordained deacon	

Interment: Old Daleville Cemetery, Daleville PA
 Obit: Pennsylvania Conference MP 1898, 9

1844-45	Trough Creek
1845-46	Newport DE (detached from Wilmington in 1845)
1846-47	Juniata
1847-48	Huntingdon [Juniata]
1848-49	Concord
1849-50	Clearfield
1850-53	Cecil MD
1853-56	Reading
1856	transfer to Pennsylvania Conference
1856-61	president, Pennsylvania Conference MP (beginning fall 1855)
1861-62	“visit” Danville, Wadesville, St Clair, and Reading missions Covington (part year)
1862-63	captain, Union Army
1863-64	Auburn
1864-66	Salem and Sterling
1866-68	president, Pennsylvania Conference MP
1868-69	Williamsport
1869-76	no appointment
1877-78	Wilkes-Barre (ending 1/24/1878)
1878-79	Taylorsville and Briggs Shaft (ending 4/10/1879)
1879-80	Monroe
1880-88	located
1888	re-instated
1888-91	no appointment at his own request

Note: J.K. Helmbold is the father of William Christmas Helmbold (1871–1927) of the Michigan Conference MP – who was born 12/24/1871 in Daleville PA. He was the Pennsylvania Conference ministerial delegate to the 1858 General Conference and the 1860 special conference.