

History of Daniel and Hannah Disher and the Story of Their Part in Organizing a Universalist Church in Monroe Township

**Written for the Centennial in 1949
by Clara Disher Kimmel**

Back in the 1700s, our great grandfather—Peter Disher—lived in Virginia. He was the father of three sons: John, Chrisley [sic] and Daniel. Peter Disher was drowned in the James River when the water was at high mark.

Daniel Disher was born in Botetot County, Virginia near Eagle Rock in 1787. [NOTE: Monroe Township Federal Census for 1860 shows Daniel Disher born in Maryland.] He died January 6, 1864 in Preble County, Ohio. He was married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Sheets. They were married in Virginia. To this union were born six children. They came to Ohio and located near Euphemia, now a part of Lewisburg.

Grandmother Hannah Baker Disher was born in Rockingham County, Virginia in 1802. She was twelve years old when her parents and their family moved to Ohio, and located near the Disher family. The two families had lived in adjoining counties in Virginia, but had not known each other until they were neighbors in Ohio. Mrs. Disher became ill and the Baker sisters took turns taking care of her and the children. On her death bed, she asked Hannah to stay and help care for her children. Hannah promised. The sisters took turns caring for the family. But later Daniel decided he'd be glad to have Hannah stay all the time. He gained her consent and they were married on November 7, 1821. A few years later they moved to Monroe Township on what was known later as the John Banfill farm (now—1969—owned by Floyd Lee).

Universalism had quite a struggle, in early days, to establish itself and to be recognized among other denominations. The torch of Liberal Religion was carried under many difficulties. Jonathan Kidwell was one of the earliest preachers of Universalists in this section of Ohio. I have heard my Grandmother Disher tell of his coming to a little log schoolhouse east of Eldorado (later known as The Baker schoolhouse) to preach. This was

“the voice of one crying out of the wilderness.” He was clothed as simply as one of the old prophets—a red flannel roundabout and jean trousers in winter and homemade linen in summer. He spoke as one having Authority. The people heard him but only a few heard him gladly. [from *The Universalist Church in Ohio* by Elmo Arnold Robinson, published in 1923].

Among the few was my grandfather, Daniel Disher. When he arrived home after hearing his first Universalist sermon, he was so pleased and said, “That man preached as I have believed for years.” Then he gave the message to Grandmother Hannah Baker Disher.

She was very much pleased, yet doubtful. She asked, “Where did he get his text?”

Grandfather said, “From the Bible.”

Her next question: “Was his Bible like ours?”

Grandfather said, “Yes, same Bible as ours.”

Grandmother said, “I want to hear that man.”

Grandfather said, “I want you to hear him. He preaches tomorrow night about eight miles from here (now Yankeetown). We will go.”

The next afternoon Grandfather took his wife behind him on horseback through the almost unbroken forest and found the place of meeting (another log school house). Grandmother heard the message of good news which had so charmed her husband. She heard it gladly. They returned to their home with a great desire that others should share with them the blessed hope of the world’s salvation.

After that the ministers who came on their missionary tours always found a hearty welcome in the Disher home. In summer they preached in the barn and in the winter services were held in the house.

This was the beginning of the movement resulting in the organization of our Eldorado Universalist Church on June 14, 1849. The church was organized in the Disher home by Rev. Elihu Moore with thirteen original members.

Grandfather donated one acre of ground off their farm for a meetinghouse and cemetery (now Monroe Cemetery). The first building was erected in 1850 and called the "Monroe Church." Grandfather donated timber to build the church and Grandmother cooked the meals for the men who built the church (free of charge).

from Helen Blackford Brown:

On October 8, 1865, John Henry Blackford, a schoolteacher, and Julia Ann Kessler were married at the Monroe Universalist Church on a day when there was an all-day service at the church. He later became the minister of the church and served for 25 years.

In 1868 a new brick church was erected in Eldorado south of the railroad on East & West Street (now Ohio Street). This building was condemned in June 1908.