“The Fisher Family, Ashland, Ohio”

RIVER ON FIRE

Volume 1, Issue 2

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It was the early 1800’s, Daniel Fisher and his lovely bride Harriett Zerby were married in 1835 somewhere in Pennsylvania. Together they moved to a small community just northeast of Mansfield Ohio called Ashland. They had a desire to experience the migration west and found the land was good for farming and building a life together. Afterall, Ohio just became a state in 1803.

The firstborn was Elizabeth Fisher in 1838; Harriett was only 19 at the time. Elizabeth later married a handsome guy by the name of Christopher Warner; together they became my Great-Great grandparents. Over the next several years Harriett continued to give Daniel a total of 13 children, their last daughter was Jane Mae. A couple weeks after giving birth, Harriett had complications and died, baby Jane Mae died a couple months later. Harriett was only 43 years old when she passed away.

As my cousin Sandy says, “Harriett, a hero, absolutely!”

The heroes that came from the Fisher family, I believe, demand consideration in so many ways, because Daniel Sr and Harriet chose to move several hundred miles away. Anyone making this kind of move during that period of time, was courageous by itself. It also tells me they were not afraid of an adventure, and moving “lock stock and barrel” as they did, speak to their hearts. A heart to travel, a heart to rely on each other, a heart to create their own community, and a heart to serve one another. To me, Daniel Sr, demonstrated true leadership, in his own world. He made sure the trip would be successful from start to finish. He cared for Harriett and their firstborn Elizabeth (not sure if she was born in PA, on the road or in Ashland) but she was cared for. My family, they were all heroes!



Elizabeth was 23 years old when Harriett died. Her surviving younger siblings included John, Amanda, Harriett, Daniel Jr., Mahala, Samuel, Issac, William, George, Ross, and Rosa. Together, this family of siblings ranging in ages from Rosa at 4 to John at 22 kept things going on the farm. I've worked on a farm when our family lived in Wadsworth, Ohio in the early 1970's. I bailed hay and harvested the corn. I helped milk the cows and fed the chickens. The only difference between my experience and about 40 miles down the road on the Fisher farm was 110 years. I ran a tractor and pulled the bailer that threw the bails on the hay wagon. Same thing while driving the tractor I pulled the combine to pick corn. Milking the cows was not that difficult, we had a milking machine that had suction cups, they pulled milk from the cows. Then we emptied the milk into a stainless-steel bucket and carried it to the milk house. Then dumped the buckets into a large cooler to cool it down. Cleaning the chicken coup was the worst, we would wait till the floor of the coup got padded down with chicken poop, 2 feet thick. Then we cleaned it by hand, pitch forks! Boy did it ever stink….

Now, let's think about life on the farm in 1862, without parents. No electric in the house, no power tools, no tractors, hay bailers or combines. There could have been steel horse drawn plows used in the fields but when the hay was ready, they used horse drawn sickle bars for cutting it. Then the hay was raked and stacked in piles out in the fields. Grain was also cut but

the threshing to separate the stalks was most certainly done by hand. I don't think they had a steam powered threshing machine, but who knows.

And what did the chores look like at the Fisher farm? The cows needed milked twice a day, by hand, into a metal milk bucket. Perhaps they had 3 or 4 cows. A small flock of chickens running around the yard and then back to the pen for laying eggs. They would need at least one noisy rooster to fertilize a few eggs now and then. And oh, by the way, roosters are mean and usually attack anyone that gets too close to the hens. Pigs would also be a farm animal that produced food, they also ate scraps from the table, nothing went to waste. The only challenge with those dirty, stinky pigs was making sure they didn't get out of the pen! They would also have at least 2 or 3 horses, big work horses. They needed to be fed and cared for, a big part of the family, I'm sure. Did they have a dog? I'd like to think so, because we all had dogs in the country.

The work on a farm started before daylight and extended after dark. Bad weather didn't mean a thing, work still needed to be done and chores taken care of. The farmer and his family needed to eat and have at least one big meal during the day to keep their strength up. So, let's think about that for a moment. Mom died, dad and a sibling left for who knows how long, to join the army. And now here are 11 children ranging in ages from 4 to 23 keeping the farm going. Farming was a way of life, for survival to eat, learn, rely on each other, grow up and become heroes in the history of America. My ancestors.

IT'S PERSONAL

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