

THE WORDS TO THE HYMN "SISTER, THOU WAST MILD AND LOVELY" WERE SUNG IN HELENOR'S MEMORY AT THE MEETING OF HER ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOLLOWING HER DEATH WHICH OCCURRED ON OCTOBER 9, 1876. TWO VERSES ARE SHOWN BELOW.

*Sister, thou wast mild and lovely, Gentle as the summer breeze,*

*Pleasant as the air of evening, When it floats among the trees.*

*Dearest sister, thou has left us; Here thy loss we deeply feel;*

*But 'tis God that hath bereft us: He can all our sorrows heal.*



Tombstone of Rev. Helenor M. Davisson at Sandridge Cemetery, Barkley Township, Jasper County, Indiana

### **Proposed Rev. Helenor M. Alter**

#### **Davisson Heritage Landmark**

1. Rev. John Alter gravesite on the Alter Farm northwest of Remington.
2. Rev. John Alter's old stone house in which Helenor was ordained
3. Helenor's gravesite at Sandridge Cemetery
4. Rosebud School House where Methodist Protestant meetings and services were held
5. Jasper County Historical Society Museum which served as a Methodist Protestant Church

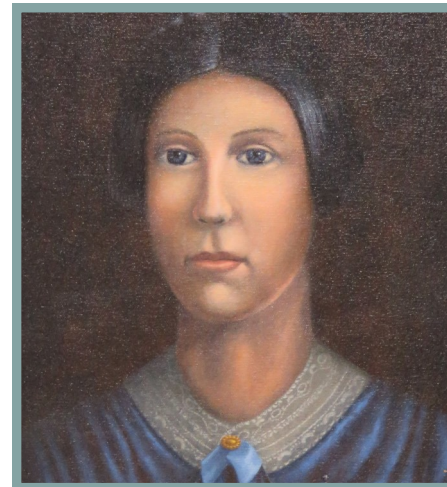
This grouping of sites will honor not only Helenor and her father, but those early settlers of our county who were members of the Methodist Protestant denomination. The Jasper County Historical Society is honored to be owners of two of the sites (the church/museum and the Rosebud School).

**Jasper County Historical Society Museum  
479 N Van Rensselaer St.  
Rensselaer, IN 47978**

**Email: [JCHSmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:JCHSmuseum@gmail.com)  
Open 1st & 3rd Saturdays of month 10-1  
and by appointment**

*Rev. Helenor M.*

*Alter Davisson*



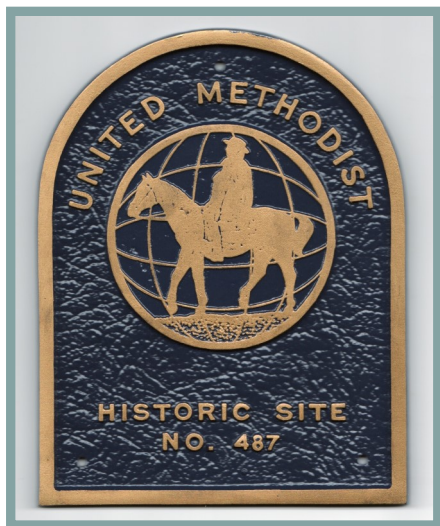
Rev. Helenor M. Alter Davisson was the first female ordained in any denomination now part of the United Methodist Church.

August 24, 1866

Painting of Helenor is by Clay Michael Powers of Columbus, Georgia

**Brochure Courtesy of the  
Jasper County Historical Society Inc.**

## Rev. Helenor M. Alter Davisson



On August 24, 2014 the Helenor M. Davisson Cluster of United Methodist Historic Sites was dedicated by Dr. Michael Coyner, the Resident Bishop of the Indiana Area. The marker shown above and a clergy medallion were placed at her Sandridge Cemetery gravesite. Helenor was ordained as a Deacon by the Methodist Protestant Church August 224 1866 at the old stone house on Rev. John Alter's homestead. This old stone house, one of the cluster of sites, was built from stones quarried on the property. Ordained at the same time was Helenor's father-in-law Rev. Moses E. Davisson. Helenor is the first ordained female in any of the denominations making up the current United Methodist Church.

### Helenor's Life

Helenor was born in Pennsylvania on January 24, 1823 to Rev. John and Charity Vanausdale Alter. In 1835 Rev. Alter moved his family to Greenfield, Indiana. Helenor's mother died two years later leaving Helenor with responsibility for her seven younger siblings. Rev. Alter would marry two more times and provide Helenor with 10 more half-brothers and sisters.

Helenor married John Draper in Henry County, Indiana on February 22, 1842. John died circa 1861. During their marriage the couple resided in both Henry and Jasper Counties. The 1862 Grand Prairie Circuit records show Helenor back in Jasper County attending Methodist Protestant meetings. Helenor married her second husband, Thomas H. Davisson, on March 4, 1864.

The Jasper County Historical Society has copies of certificates of two marriages officiated by Helenor in Jasper County during her years of service with the Grand Prairie Circuit of the Methodist Protestant Church.

Helenor was quite ill the last few years of her life and died at the age of 53 on October 9, 1876. Her father, Rev. John Alter, died a week later.

In 2016, the 150th anniversary of Helenor's ordination, the General Conference of the United Methodist church will be requested to establish the Rev. Helenor M. Alter Davisson Heritage Landmark. If approved, this would join the 46 such landmarks already recognized by the world-wide United Methodist Church.

### Methodist Protestants in Jasper County

The Methodist Protestants were one of the first religious denominations in Jasper County. Rev. John Alter and his daughter Helenor Draper first held Methodist Protestant services on the Alter property northwest of Remington in 1849 in a grove of walnut trees that became known as Alter's Grove.

The museum building shown below was built by the Free Will Baptist Church and sold to the Methodist Protestants in 1902. It remained their property until 1916. Although after Helenor's time, its significance in the history of the Methodist Protestant Church justifies its inclusion in the proposed United Methodist Heritage Landmark.



Jasper Co. Historical Society Museum