

GENEALOGICAL AND PERSONAL HISTORY

OF THE

ALLEGHENY VALLEY PENNSYLVANIA

UNDER THE EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OF

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The Hunter family are of HUNTER Scotch-Irish ancestry, a race in which the Scotch stability, shrewdness, mental vigor, physical energy and endurance blended with the geniality, the warmheartedness and the versatility of the Irish blood has given us a people whose physical, mental and moral qualities have made them leaders and powerful promoters in every industry and in every profession, and has enriched our history with an almost endless roll of distinguished men. At the time when the first Hunters came to Western Pennsylvania that part of the country was an almost unbroken wilderness, but it was a region which was attracting the attention of a large portion of the Scotch-Irish emigrants. Very many of them had settled in Pittsburgh, some of them coming there in times prior to the revolutionary war. A large number of settlements were at this time being made in the valleys of the streams that unite at Pittsburgh. For to these hardy, energetic, ambitious people the obstacles which nature presented to the pioneer and settler were but an attraction and a stimulus.

They saw the wealth hidden in the mountains and growing upon the hillsides and accepted the challenge which nature seemed to throw down to those who had the nerve, the brawn and the brain to come and take it. So these Irish emigrants, the Hunters, the Gilsens, the Broadfoots and the Hendersons,

leaving their families behind them, came out in the wilderness in search of homes.

(I) Robert and Elizabeth (Park) Hunter, who were born in county Tyrone, Ireland, in 1758 and in 1762, respectively, were the ancestors of Jahu and Livingston Legrand Hunter, of Tidioute, Pennsylvania. According to family tradition this Robert Hunter had three brothers, Samuel, who subsequently settled in the Isle of Man; William, who remained in county Tyrone, and Jared, who, in company with his brother Robert, and certain neighbors named Gilson, Broadfoot and Henderson, sailed with their families in the latter part of the eighteenth century from the port of Londonderry for Philadelphia and settled at first in Center county, Pennsylvania. Later Robert and Jared located and secured each one hundred acres of land about two miles from what is now Enterprise, Warren county, and their friends located near what is now Titusville, a few miles away. They busied themselves in making improvements upon their lands and after a time returned to their families with whom they remained for about a year, and then taking them back with them to the new settlements. Jared Hunter resided for the remainder of his life upon the farm he had originally settled and this his descendants still occupy. But in 1808 Robert Hunter removed with his family to a new farm upon the east side of the Allegheny river and built his house, a rude log cabin, about two miles below the mouth of Tidioute creek, and this farm was his home until the end of his days. He was a quiet, industrious man, devoting himself closely to the care of his family and the clearing up and cultivation of his farm. It is hard to realize in these modern days of easy communication and rapid transit some of the difficulties that beset these early settlers. The only highway was the river and the only vehicle was the canoe. Communication with the outside world was difficult, and those who were boys in those days have told of the trips made in canoes with their elders to Pittsburgh for supplies. The narrator told also of his going in the same manner to the grist mill, the mill being located near Brady's Bend upon some large rocks in the swift water near the edge of the river upon land now owned by Hunter and Cummings.

In these days one hundred miles seems a long way to a mill; what must it have seemed to the early pioneer in his canoe? But Robert

Hunter and his wife had pluck; they fought well the battle of their lives and transmitted their qualities to their descendants. With the grim resolution of their Scottish blood, the hopefulness of their Irish blood they faced all hardships and difficulties, built their rude home, cleared the forest, supplied the needs of nine children who all lived to maturity and sent them out in the world to live active, useful lives. The youngest of these children was Matthew, of whom further.

(II) Matthew, son of Robert and Elizabeth (Park) Hunter, was born on his father's farm, the Hunter homestead, in Limestone township, two miles below Tidioute. He was such a man as might be expected from his race and training. Like his father, he was a quiet, industrious, intelligent, modest man, loyal to duty and faithful to all his obligations. Brought up in the hardy school of the pioneer he was self-reliant, thorough and energetic. The scattered settlers were much dependent upon each other; out of their limited resources they gave freely, and they helped to bear each other's burdens whether in sickness and trouble, or in the exigencies of the daily pursuits. Sympathy, kindness, hospitality to others, and a spirit of mutual helpfulness grew out of their daily lives and surroundings. Matthew Hunter was especially noted for his kindness of spirit and so well were these traits known and so liberally was his hospitality exercised that his house was designated among the family as the "hotel." This generosity was a very marked inheritance of his son, Jahu. Matthew Hunter married Sarah, daughter of Arthur Magill, and they settled on the old homestead of his father where Matthew had been born. Their second child and eldest son was Jahu, of whom further.

(III) Jahu, son of Matthew and Sarah (Magill) Hunter, was born on the old Hunter homestead in Limestone township, October 3, 1830. At the time Jahu Hunter was born the population had increased and the energy of the settlers was making marks in the wilderness, but still the country was new, advantages and conveniences were limited, keeping down the manner of living to one of great simplicity. But though the people were poor in goods, they were rich in health, frugality and ambition. The families of that day were large and Matthew Hunter's family of ten children was not one of unusual size. Upon Jahu, the eldest son, fell a large share of the work and re-

sponsibility. Early in life he became a valuable helper in the work of his father and an important factor in earning for the family the daily bread. It was his father's habit to consult him as if he were of mature age, and he thus learned to plan and to execute at an age when most of the boys of the present day have not even dreamed of the responsibilities of life.

The first school that Jahu Hunter attended was in the school house located on or near the top of the hill where now stands the Hunter school house. Here taught a Mr. Jones, who afterward settled near Trunkeyville, James and Arthur Magill Jr., Oliver G. Chase from Pine Grove, and later of Jamestown, New York, and others. Some amusing stories are told of these early schools, methods of teaching not recognized in present schools of any grade, and disciplinary practices not lacking in vigor or originality. The qualifications of the teachers, judged by present standards, were often very limited but the schools were the best the times and the location afforded and it is certain they turned out many vigorous, manly men, who have made their impress on communities, and womanly women, who have made excellent helpmeets to their husbands and noble mothers to their children. Jahu Hunter made the best use of the limited opportunities for education that came to him and thus started on the way to that broader culture that he afterward acquired from reading and the contact with affairs.

In the practical affairs of the time and the region he was an advanced student, and in his seventeenth year he began jobbing in getting out and banking square timber. In his later years he would often talk of the experiences of this first enterprise which he undertook on his own account. By dint of great saving and shrewd management he had become the owner of a yoke of good oxen, and on the strength of this acquisition he had taken the contract. While skidding logs one day by some accident one of the oxen was fatally injured. It meant half of his fortune gone and the means of fulfilling his contract lost. In later life he was in the habit of putting aside other losses, though amounting to many thousands of dollars by the remark, "Oh! that is nothing; it does not compare to the loss of my ox." But other plans were made, the work went on, and the contract was finished with a satisfactory profit.

He continued at his father's home for ten years longer, assisting his father upon the farm and in the management of his affairs, but devoting the larger part of his time to outside work. Wherever in the vicinity there was a job of work to be let or a contract to be given out he was a bidder, if through good management and close attention it could profitably be handled. He did much work in getting out and banking timber, rafting it and running it to Pittsburgh and points below that city. From these trips he usually returned on foot across country, sometimes securing passage on steamboats for part of the way. In this work he acquired the knowledge of timber lands and the lumber business that made his judgment so good and afterward brought him so much success in that line of business. He built the Hunter school house complete and put in the benches and desks for eighty dollars and made money out of the job. He laid out and built public roads and did it well at prices that would little more than pay present supervisors for superintending the jobs, and managed to make a profit. He found time to serve the public and was a constable and later a justice of the peace. All this time he worked with great energy, practiced great economy and self-denial and soon accumulated a little capital with which he entered upon the successful business career which continued until he died.

About the year 1857 he bought the store of J. H. Neill and removed to Tidioute where he resided from that time on. There was comparatively little money in circulation at that time; barter was the common custom and that on a basis of credit, lumber being largely the staple of exchange which with other products was expected to be floated to Pittsburgh, sold usually on long time, and notes being received in settlement which were turned in to the Pittsburgh merchants for goods to restock the store. Though this business seemed to be paying well it involved so much giving and receiving credit that it brought with it a train of cares. His nature was so conservative, and his dread of being unable to meet his obligations was so great that whatever seemed the apparent profits of the business he could not endure the risks. He, therefore, closed out his store notwithstanding the protests of his creditors who supplied him with goods and tendered him almost unlimited credit. He collected his accounts, paid his debts and found

that he had a very handsome balance of profit as the result of the mercantile business. Satisfied, however, to have left it he returned to his lumbering and farming; he bought a tannery and made good leather; he was a postmaster; was elected a member of the first borough council of Tidioute and was then as ever active in all that concerned the interests of the public, or the well-being of his neighbors. About this time oil was discovered and oil interests became a prominent factor in the business of the region, Mr. Hunter taking his place as one of the pioneers of the new industry, and though occasionally meeting with reverses on the whole was remarkably successful.

The partnership of Mabie & Hunter, consisting of his brother-in-law, W. H. Mabie, Esq., and himself, was formed in 1868 and they conducted a large business in general merchandising, lumber, etc., until about 1882. In 1871 he joined with others in organizing the Tidioute Savings Bank, of which he gradually became the chief owner and of which he was president from the year 1883. In 1873 he formed an association with H. H. Cumings in the oil business and together they operated successfully and at times very largely. They were associated in various other enterprises, in the Tidioute Savings Bank, in wheat lands in North Dakota, as members of the Missouri Lumber & Mining Company, and in pine lands and lumbering in Missouri. The exhaustion of the oil fields about Tidioute left the borough stagnant, and in order to bring employment to the idle and prosperity to the community Mr. Hunter became largely instrumental in establishing the Tidioute Chair Company, becoming its president and continuing in that capacity until his death.

Always a lover of children and deeply interested in their education and in their intellectual and moral development, he served for fifteen years as school director and contributed often and to the extent of many thousands of dollars to provide and maintain needed department of instruction and training in the Tidioute schools, departments that lay outside the scope of what was provided for by public taxation. It would be impossible in the limits of our space even to mention his contributions and benefactions to the schools, the churches, and the other public interests of the town. His private gifts and benevolences were numberless and in most cases known only to himself

and the recipient of his bounty. He was especially delighted to encourage and assist children and young people to gain an education which would fit them for useful and suitable employment, and he was the trusted guardian of more orphan children and their estates than probably any other person who ever lived in this community. Nor were his generousities limited to his own neighborhood. Many contributions were sent by him privately to aid distant objects that had attracted his interest and sympathy.

In 1868 he became a Mason, and advanced in this order to the thirty-second degree, Scottish Rite. He was passionately devoted to music and one of his favorite recreations as a young man was to sing with his sister Elizabeth. To the end of his life he continued to take delight in listening to music and to his advice and pecuniary assistance many persons were indebted for their musical training.

In 1860 Mr. Hunter married Margaret R., daughter of Alexander and Nancy (Smith) Magee, who lived on the opposite side of the river from the present railroad station of Magee. Children: 1. Livingston Legrand, of whom further. 2. Lella Lillian, died in her early youth.

Mr. Hunter was a man of unusual ability and strong individuality. He was not brilliant, but was a strong man intellectually. He thought slowly but carefully and comprehensively. His mental survey took in a wide field, and his conclusions, when reached, were well thought out and rarely mistaken. Convictions once formed were held with tenacity, and the clearness and positiveness thus formed, united with an unusual strength of will, gave to his character great firmness and stability. True and honest himself in all his impulses, he always attributed the same qualities to others, believing them to be as good and straightforward as himself, a trait that sometimes worked to his disadvantage. His ideals of what constituted true manhood were high and his constant aim was to live up to these. When he gave his confidence and friendship he gave them unreservedly, but his confidence once forfeited was not easily regained. He was strong in his attachments and strong in his dislikes. His heart was as tender as a woman's for all suffering and his affections were deep and strong. He was strong in his loyalty, loyal to the right as he saw it, loyal to his country, loyal to his town, loyal to his friends and loyal to his fam-

ily. He was broad-minded and liberal in all things and tolerant of honest differences of opinion. Simple in his tastes, unpretentious and modest in his manner and feeling, loving his fellow-men and seeking out rather the good that was in them, helpful to the distressed, seeking always to increase the sum of human happiness and morality and to promote the general well-being; his death left a void that cannot well be filled, not only for his family but for the whole community.

(IV) Livingston Legrand, the eldest child of Jahu and Margaret R. (Magee) Hunter, was born in Tidioute, Pennsylvania, January 10, 1861. His boyhood was spent for the most part in Tidioute, and his early education was acquired at the schools of the town. At a later age he was sent to the Pennsylvania Military Academy at Chester, Pennsylvania, and from there went to Oberlin College. He was more than an average student, being disposed to be thorough in his work rather than ambitious to cover much ground. This trait was one that was characteristic of the man and throughout all his life he was unwilling to accept anything unless its basis had been established upon thorough knowledge. His Irish heredity was shown by his strong artistic bent and his fondness for both art and music, and his excellent taste in both. His sympathies with others, especially the unfortunate, and his unfailing kindness of heart were also marked traits. In this respect he greatly resembled his father, and revering as he did his father's life and character he sought to follow in his footsteps in carrying out his works of benevolence and charity.

Livingston Legrand Hunter grew to manhood and began his business career, living the life allotted to him in his home town. As a business man he was painstaking, exact, prudent, conservative, thoroughly honest and just in his dealings with others. Possessing a high sense of honor he would not stoop to an unfair advantage. In business matters he reasoned broadly, and while careful and conservative in forming his judgments he was courageous and enterprising in carrying out his well-considered conclusions. As a citizen he was public spirited, taking a deep interest in the welfare of the community in which he lived, liberal in disposition, pure-minded and upright. He loved his family, his friends, his neighbors and was always solicitous to promote the welfare of all; social and genial by nature

he was a charming companion, and his interest in others and his influence upon them was wholesome and helpful. He was deeply interested in all that concerned the welfare of the people in national, state and local affairs. He held his own views as to theories and principles of government and public policies, and in this respect recognized party affiliations, yet he recognized honesty, purity, and virtue in the administration of public affairs as the basis of national safety and successful government. He regarded his duty as a citizen as higher than his duty to party, and the ties of party sat lightly upon him, and party theories and party allegiance lost their force when he regarded the questions at issue as involving personal or public morality or the public welfare. His nature was honest to the core and he could not tolerate what seemed to him morally wrong, and this characteristic entered into all his personal, business and social life. He was quiet in his manner, but careful in deliberation, cool in judgment and persistent in policy. He always evinced the greatest interest in the education and training of the young, and in the schools and churches of the town, serving in a most efficient way as a school director and as a trustee of the church he attended. He was elected school director by the nomination of both parties at the borough election that preceded his tragic death. This nomination was followed by the unanimous vote of the borough.

In recognition of his deep interest in education his mother and wife have since his death built and presented to the school district of Tidioute a handsome school building. This structure, thoroughly built and thoroughly equipped, stands today as a tribute of wifely appreciation and devotion to the memory of two men who in their lives were first in every good work that looked to the welfare of the town, the helping of the poor and needy, the strengthening of every good cause and especially the bettering of the schools and the upbuilding of the noblest type of American manhood and womanhood. No more fitting monument could be erected to the memory of two such men as Jahu and Livingston Legrand Hunter. It is just such a memorial as the character of the two men, in the simplicity, the helpfulness, and the practicality of their natures demanded. Like theirs its influence will go and exert in ever-widening circles the ennobling and quickening example upon the

lives yet to come that theirs did on the wide circle of lives with which they came in contact.

Two years before his death Livingston Legrand Hunter spent some time in Philadelphia, receiving medical treatment. Here he made his will and after disposing of his estate he left directions which were thoroughly characteristic of the man. In them he said that he did not believe in endowing institutions but rather in individual assistance to those who needed help, either in gaining an education or of another kind. He impressed upon his children the need to individualize their gifts and exercise the greatest kindness toward the poor. In all that was working for the welfare of the community he was a leader and bore his share of the burdens. Such having been his life the news of his untimely and tragic death in the burning of the Ohio river steamboat, "The City of Pittsburg," at Cairo, Illinois, on April 20, 1902, came as a terrible shock to the town of Tidioute. For a number of days it was impossible to discover his body, but it was finally found and the remains given honorable burial. Business in his home town was practically suspended for the day, in order that due honor should be paid to a man whose life and deeds had so closely identified him with the town. The factories and mills were shut down for the day, business houses closed during the hours of the services, and the schools were dismissed.

Livingston L. Hunter married Lillian, daughter of Dr. James Lafayette Acomb (see Acomb). The children of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter were: James Livingston, born October 31, 1890; Lella May, January 14, 1894; Dorothy, born September 5, 1896; Jahu Acomb, August 5, 1901.

Mrs. Hunter is carrying on the tradition of her own and her husband's family, and is a leader in all movements that aim at the betterment of the community. She occupies a conspicuous position in the society of the region, among other things filling most graciously the position of regent of the Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. After the death of her husband she was thrice elected member of the school board of Tidioute, being endorsed by both parties, being the first and only woman to fill that position in Tidioute. She is member of the Woman's Club of Tidioute, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Art Club of Warren.