

Isaac Hunter of Chowan: A Time Line

By Hunter Cole

Isaac Hunter of Chowan is my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather. That's five Greats. Although I know already quite a number of facts about him, in person he would be an utter stranger. If I could sit knee to knee with him for a precious half hour, I would study his face, note his size, and regard his attire. I could observe his mannerisms, hear his voice, and sense his hygienic standards. More closely, I would perceive his hands and gaze into his eyes.

If I were permitted to ask him five questions, choosing which five would be a challenge, since I would want each to invite possibilities for further research that could be managed here in the twenty-first century. Also, the questions would include elusive mysteries that have been difficult for his descendant genealogists to solve, such as: In what year were you born? Where are the Hunters buried? What was the native home of your parents? On what ship did they come to Virginia? Where do I research your ancestors in England? Yorkshire? Battersby? Ingleby Greenhow? Northumberland? Alnwick?

If our encounter could be extended, I would ask him to discuss comprehensive subjects, such as the activities of his parents and his siblings and a typical day in his life. I would like a description of his home, and I would urge him to expatiate on family affairs and nudge him to chat intimately about topics exposing his inner self. I'd like to know also if Isaac Hunter was kind or harsh, tall or short, fat or lean, tidy or disheveled, but I will never know. Except for facts that can be found in paper records, he will remain virtually unrevealed.

Already we are certain that Isaac Hunter was one of four sons (William, Nicholas, Robert, and Isaac) and a daughter (Sarah) born to William Hunter, a weaver who became a magistrate, justice of the quorum, and freeholder in Nansemond County, Virginia. In our Hunter family Isaac's father is the immigrant ancestor. We regret that his wife's name is not documented in any known record, although there are two early clues to her identity: Joan Hunter and Rebekah Hunter appear as headrights along with William and his son Nicholas [*Ed. Note: Other researchers believe this Nicholas was William's brother or cousin, not his son*] in a land patent the Crown issued to Charles Rountree in Nansemond in 1685 for having paid the Hunters' transportation from England (Virginia Patent Book Seven, p. 487). We can wonder if that mysterious Joan was the children's mother, since one of Isaac's six daughters also was named Joan, but without documentation we must be cautious about drawing too firm a connection.

Isaac's brother William, born in Britain, is not documented in Virginia until 1701, when their father was awarded a headright land patent for bringing William, William's wife Ann (not identified by name in the patent), their son Nicholas [Other

researchers believe this Nicholas is our immigrant William's son, not William's grandson], and their daughter Alice into the colony (Virginia Patent Book Nine, pp. 309-310). One can only guess why young William [and his brother Nicholas] had been left and did not travel to America with his parents and brother Nicholas [Other researchers believe William's son Nicholas was left in England until William could establish himself and earn money to bring his family to America. The Nicholas in the Rountree 1685 headright is believed to be William's brother]. Possibly he was the eldest son who had been placed in an apprenticeship or in the care of kin. Many English parents apprenticed pre-teen sons to merchant seamen. In English Common Law children at the age of fourteen could apprentice themselves without parental consent. Whatever this boy's strange history may be, he would arrive in Virginia after more than fifteen years of separation. An intriguing but unsubstantiated legend claims that in his past he was a seaman captured by the French and held in a Paris prison for three years.

Isaac, Robert, and William's sister Sarah were born in Nansemond County, Sarah in 1684. She would marry William Battle, Jr. Isaac and Robert were landowners in Chowan in 1714 and thus of legal age by that time. Their birth years, therefore, can be estimated as ca. 1690 to 1693, which was during the reign of William and Mary. In 1699 the population of Nansemond County was small, estimated at 2,571 (William A. Kretzschmar et al. Handbook of the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and Atlantic States. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 327).

William the weaver's farmland in southern Virginia was located in a well populated settlement in Meherrin Swamp and along Bennett's Creek, and his native-born children grew up there in a slave-owning household. Their father transported four slaves--Alla, Shambo, Harry, and Ned--to Virginia around 1695 (Virginia Patent Book Eight, p. 432). His two adjoining tracts immediately west of the Great Dismal Swamp comprised a total of 450 acres that the Crown granted him in 1695 and 1701 (Virginia Patent Book Eight, p. 431; Virginia Patent Book Nine, pp. 309-310). However, the Nansemond quit-rent roll of 1704, which identifies William Hunter as "Captain William Hunter," and which seems by mistake to combine the acreage of both William and his son "Captain" William, states taxation on 800 acres, although the father's total never exceeded 450 acres (See Louis des Cognets, Jr. English Duplicates of Lost Virginia Records, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1981, p. 201). Since this annual land tax customarily was paid in tobacco rather than in cash, it can be assumed that William Hunter also was a planter.

William the weaver's neighbors in the vicinity of Bennett's Creek included families named Rountree, Blanchard, Spivey, Lassiter, Campbell, Stallings, Spights, Sumner, Benton, Costen, Perry, and others. During Isaac's childhood, white settlements were imperiled by incursions of hostile Indians. The native tribes, driven several miles west, occupied territory called Indian Town. Virginia law placed a four-

mile barrier between whites and Indian hunting grounds, but Indians continued to pillage white settlements, killing, burning, and looting. In 1702 the eight of the planters named above protested to the Executive Council.

In both Nansemond and Chowan, next-door counties respectively in Virginia and North Carolina, the Hunter family had prominence and standing. Late in the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth their Albemarle community was teeming with Quakers, especially in adjoining Perquimans Precinct, but the Hunters were not Quakers. Isaac, his wife, and their children resided south of Nansemond in Chowan and worshiped both at St. Paul's Church in Edenton and at Costen's Chapel near their home. In Chowan Isaac and a number of other Hunters served as vestrymen and as church wardens. The vestry of that time not only presided over local church affairs but also over many secular matters not controlled by elected officials.

After 1714, Isaac married Elizabeth Parker, a daughter of Richard Parker and Elizabeth King of Nansemond and Chowan. Her father's will left her and each of her sisters Ann Spivey and Alie Daughtry "ten shillings a piece to each of them in full for thare share of my . . . estate." Although Isaac and his wife were Anglicans, eight of their ten children were given Quaker-seeming names: Elisha, Isaac, Jesse, Jacob, Daniel, Hannah, Rachel, Sarah, (besides Joan and Alee), all of whom except Daniel married and produced large families. The complex genealogy of this line of Hunter kin is spelled out by the detailed estate papers that were generated when bachelor Daniel died in Granville County in 1797 and his many heirs came forward with their depositions to claim his property.

Isaac was both a devoted church layman and a prosperous freeholder. Land he owned in Chowan and Bertie Counties totaled some 2,642 acres that he amassed between 1714 and 1748. Since he had not received a land bequest from his father, he appears to have set a goal of eventually owning the old family tracts, and as he moved to buy these lands from his nephews and from his brother, he was successful. Except for 187 acres he gave to his son Jacob and 140 that he sold to his son Elisha, this man of property held firm to his acquisitions. His water mill, referred to as "Hunter's Mill," became a landmark mentioned in numerous deeds.

Besides landholding and milling, he appears also to have been a wealthy cloth merchant of imports that arrived on ships docking at Edenton. Although details of his trade are sparse, his aged granddaughter Sacky Hunter Voorhies (1783-1873) of Maury County, Tennessee, does mention in her recollections that he had been a merchant in Chowan County (Historic Maury, July-September, 1972, p. 99). Also, when he died and a detailed inventory of his chattels was made, a large abundance of various imported fabrics in the roster gives credence to a mercantile trade. In the list are yards upon yards of cloth, including Irish linen, English poplin, blue chambray, "country cloth," muslin, Dutch blankets, "sheeting holland," silk holland, seersucker, broadcloth, cottons, netting, silk, checks, bed ticking, 3 dozen battens, calico, and "garlix," as

well as money scales, buttons, and needles. In the posthumous distribution each of Isaac's children received a large share of this merchandise.

The following chronology of Isaac Hunter's life is comprehensive but not necessarily complete. It has been compiled mainly from public records that have become ever more accessible for genealogical research. In these dry documents of land sales and vestry minutes there is very little, if any, intimate revelation.

Researchers who make use of this chronology in search of Hunter kin should be alert to the presence of multiple Isaac Hunters in this expansive North Carolina family and not mismatch them. Isaac Hunter of Chowan is himself the earliest Isaac. His nephew, called "Isaac Hunter Jr." for clarification in land transactions, was a son of Isaac's elder brother Nicholas. This so-called "Isaac Hunter Jr." was born in Nansemond and was prominent in Chowan at the time of his uncle. Isaac Jr. migrated across the Chowan River into Bertie County, became a justice of the peace, and died before 1749. The place he settled became a part of Northampton County. Therefore, he sometimes is termed "Isaac Hunter of Northampton."

One of his [*Isaac of Northampton*] sons, also named Isaac and identified as "Tavern Isaac," migrated to Wake County and operated a tavern there [*Tavern Isaacs' father was Isaac, Jr., son of Nicholas, who was a son of William (our immigrant). Tavern Isaac's grandfather was Nicholas and his great grandfather was William, our immigrant. Tavern Isaac had brothers Dempsey, Reuben, Theophilus, and Thomas*]. It [*Isaac's Tavern*] was so popular with state legislators that when they were selecting the location for the state capitol, they stipulated that it be near [*within 10 miles*] of Isaac's tavern.

Isaac Hunter of Bute/Warren County is a son of Isaac of Chowan and is thus the actual Isaac Hunter Jr. He and his brothers Jesse and Daniel migrated to St. John's Parish of Granville County after their father's death. The part of Granville in which Isaac and Jesse lived became Bute County, thereafter, renamed Warren County.

Another is Rev. Isaac Hunter of Chowan/Gates County, a son of Jacob Hunter and a grandson of Isaac of Chowan. He resided in the community called Sunbury and operated Hunter's Mill, which he had inherited from his father. When Rev. Francis Asbury was proselytizing in North Carolina, Rev. Isaac Hunter, a Methodist, afforded the missionary hospitality in the Hunter home. Rev. Isaac Hunter's son was named Isaac Riddick Hunter.

There are even more Isaacs whose surname is Hunter. Researchers should be mindful and cautious.

1702

In Nansemond County eight neighbors of the Hunters residing on Bennett's Creek file a grievance with Virginia's Executive Council. Francis Rountree, Robert Rountree, Benjamin Blanchard, Thomas Spivey, Robert Lassiter, George Lassiter, John Campbell, and Nicholas Stallings protest that their properties in Nansemond are suffering from native Indian incursions as livestock is destroyed and homes are burned (Records of the Executive Council, 1664-1724, p. 389).

1714

The earliest known record of Isaac Hunter dates from 1714. On August 13 Isaac and his brother Robert jointly are granted a patent for 400 acres in Chowan. Evidently both brothers, natives of Nansemond, are bachelors at this time, and since they are acquiring property, both would be above twenty-one years of age. Likely this acreage was situated on Oysterlong Branch, a tributary of Bennett's Creek. (See the citation for the year 1747, below.) Either the original patent was not recorded in 1714, or it has been lost. However, it is summarized in Isaac's land purchase transacted in 1739 (Deed Book A, pp. 257-259). In 1742 Isaac will purchase Robert's portion of this property.

Isaac is living alone with one slave: "Personally appeared Mr. Isaac Hunter and made oath that his family consisted of two persons videlicet Isaac Hunter and one negro called London. Issued (Minutes of the Chowan Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1714-1719, North Carolina State Archives, CR.24.301). Again, as a land owner and a slave holder, Isaac likely is over twenty-one and thus born before 1692 in Nansemond. He will marry Elizabeth Parker after 1714.

1728

In this year the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina is redrawn. On the new map a portion of southern Virginia is ceded to North Carolina, and the Hunters' Nansemond lands in the upper parish (southern area) of Nansemond are relocated within Chowan County.

This is the supposed year that Isaac's father dies in Nansemond. His will, now lost, makes land bequests to sons Nicholas and Robert but none to Isaac or William. Allusions to the lost will can be found in the sons' land transactions, cited below.

1732

From 1732 until the year before his death in 1753 Isaac Hunter remained a vestry member of St. Paul's Parish, and in many years, he also was a church warden, and at

Costen's Chapel, adjacent to his plantation, he was a lay reader. He was the first in this Colonial Hunter family to have such roles. At times his nephew William Hunter (son of Nicholas Hunter) also was in the vestry. After Isaac's death his sons Elisha and Jacob, Elisha's son Col. Thomas Hunter, and Isaac's grandson Timothy Walton followed Isaac as vestry members.

The first mention of Isaac as a vestryman is recorded in the entry of Easter Monday 1732: "Att a meeting of the Vestry for the North East Parish of Chowan on Easter Monday 1732. The following Persons were voted and allowed to be of the Vestry viz." Isaac is included among the twelve (Raymond Parker Fouts, Vestry Minutes of St. Paul's Parish, Chowan County, North Carolina, 1701-1776, Cocoa, Fla.: GenRec Books, 1983, p. 44).

Isaac's brother William dies in Chowan. On January 4, with their brother Robert and Spencer Cole, Isaac is a witness when William, a planter "sick and weak," signs his will. The will mentions wife Ann, sons William and Ephraim (but not the immigrant son Nicholas, who may have died in boyhood), and daughters Judith, Ann, Hester, the immigrant daughter Alice ("Allise"), and Mary. On January 18, the will is proved in open court by the oaths of Isaac Hunter and Robert Hunter (Book I, Chowan County Court Minutes, p. 33).

Isaac is a petitioner for some cause that remains unknown. "The petition of Isaac Hunter and others continued at several court is now here at this day dismiss" (Weynette Parks Haun, compiler, Book I, Chowan County Court Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1730 through 1743, privately published, 1983, p. 30).

Isaac Hunter is called to serve on a grand jury (Hawn, p. 204).

"A deed of sale from William Lassetor to Isaac Hunter was acknowledged in open court in due form of law and ordered to be recorded" (Book I, Chowan County Court Minutes, p. 29. The description of the land and details of this transfer from Lassetor (Lassiter) to Hunter are not recorded in a deed book. Only this record in the minutes has been found).

The Chowan court appoints Isaac and his father-in-law Richard Parker to enumerate property in the Speight estate: "Judeth Speight admx. of Francis Speight decd. Isaac Hunter, John Benton, Junr., Richard Parker, and Wm. Parker [the four men are neighbors of Speight] or any three to divide the estate on oath of Francis Speight, decd., between the widow of the sd. Francis and his orphans . . . (Haun, loc cit.)

Isaac is reelected to the vestry of St. Paul's. Except for 1742 he will be reelected annually through 1751.

1734

Isaac witnesses the land sale of Francis Pugh's patented land: "Francis Pugh to Daniel Parker [Isaac's brother-in-law], 400 acres adjoining lands of Wm. Spites and John King, patented by said Pugh Oct. 29, 1726; Aug. 18, 1734. Test. Abraham Hill, Isaac Hunter (Book C, No. 2: "Abstract of Conveyances (from Register of Deeds' Office at Edenton, N. C., an old book not numbered or lettered," North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register, III, 131). Note: This deed involves several interrelated families of early Chowan: Isaac Hunter's son Jacob married Abraham Hill's daughter Sarah Pugh Hill. Daniel Parker is a son of Richard Parker, whose wife was Elizabeth King, daughter of John King. Francis Pugh is the father or brother Abraham Hill's wife.

At a meeting of the vestry held at the Chowan courthouse in Edenton Isaac named again to the vestry and is elected church warden at a salary of £28 17 3.

1735

For several years after the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina was changed, land tax collections became irregular. Isaac and many other subjects of the Crown residing in northern Chowan are included on the list of "Arrears of Quit Rents from 29 September 1729 to March 1732." His assessment, "computed at the difference of Seven for one pound sterling in the currency of this Province," is £6 4 shillings on 354 acres.

1736

Isaac is serving as a tithe collector for the vestry. When called to give account of collections, Isaac has not yet finished making the rounds to parishioners. In May, after an additional month to complete them, he reports a total of £520 12 0. The vestry declares him to be further indebted to the parish in the amount of £81 15 3. However, this total is reduced by a credit of £13 15 0 because for five and a half months Isaac has boarded W. Weston, an apparent ward of the vestry.

1737

Isaac is re-elected to the vestry as a replacement for Robert Forster, Esq., who had "departed from this govern[ment]."

1738

On Easter Monday, April 3, Isaac is elected yet again to the vestry, along with his father-in-law Richard Parker, Isaac's brother Robert, and nine others.

1739

On May 2, 1739, in consideration of £50 "Isaac Hunter Jr." (son of Nicholas Hunter and nephew of Isaac Hunter) sells his uncle Isaac ("Isaac Sr.") three tracts of land. The first is 384 acres that William Hunter "late of Virginia deceased" had bequeathed to his son Nicholas ca. 1728 and by Nicholas sold to his son Isaac ("Isaac Jr."). Note: Edward Moseley's New and Correct Map of the Province of North Carolina (1733) locates this Hunter property along Bennett's Creek, west of Perquimans Precinct, and adjacent to the farms of Spivey and Perry. In 1733 the two Hunter tracts, originally the property of William Hunter of Nansemond, would have belonged to Isaac Hunter Jr. and his brother William, both being sons of Nicholas Hunter. The second tract in this transaction is 174 acres of land issued by patent to Nicholas Hunter and Thomas Davis in Perquimans County in 1717. The third is one hundred acres "more or less" issued by patent in 1703 to William Lassiter and sold by Lassiter to James Spivey and by Spivey to Isaac Jr. The sale is witnessed by William Hunter (a brother of Isaac Jr.) and by Elisha Hunter (a son of Isaac Sr.). The sale is proved in Chowan Court on March 27, 1740 (Chowan County Deed Book C2, pp. 45-47).

1741

The vestry orders the construction of two new chapels: "That Mr. Richd. Parker [father of Isaac's wife Elizabeth], Mr. Isaac Hunter, Mr. Thos. Walton and John Sumner do Imploy or hire work men for to build two Chappells in Chowan prish. Viz. At James Costans or there abouts as they Shall Think fit and the other at James Baddeys [this may be Farlee's Chapel] or near there abouts and the Dementions as here Mentioned Vizt. Thirty five foot Long and Twenty two foot and a halfe wide Eleven foot in the pitch between Sill and plate and a roof workmanlike near a Squear and to be a Good fraim Gott out of good timber and covered with Good Siprus Shingles and weather boarded with feather edged plank plained Snoche broad with Good Lapp of two Inches at the best and Good Sloapers and flowers [floors] of Good plank of Inch and a qtr. Thick and Soaled with Good plank with three windows Suitable for Such a howse or howses and two Doars Suitable with a pulpit and all things Sitable according to the [illegible]ew of the sd. Richard Parker, Isaac Hunter, Thos. Walton and John Sumner." Costen's Chapel is located in the north of the county on a plot donated by James Costen and is adjacent to Isaac's land and near Bennett's Creek. The historical Mouzon Map of North and South Carolina (1775) pinpoints the location.

On Thomas Garrett's list of Chowan County's tithables (household males over the age of sixteen and slaves) Isaac is taxed on seven tithables (Chowan County, North Carolina, Taxables, 1717 to 1770, compiled and transcribed by David Barrett and

Janet Searles Barrett, Elizabeth City, N. C.: Family Research Society of Notheastern North Carolina, 2009).

1742

Isaac Hunter's apparent objective has been to own the two tracts on Bennett's Creek that his father had acquired by patent in 1695 and 1701. These were their father's bequests to Isaac's brothers Nicholas and Robert, but there was no bequest to Isaac. In 1739 Isaac bought Nicholas's inherited tract from Nicholas's son Isaac Jr., and now he is acquiring the second parcel of their late father's property as well as property he had owned jointly with Robert. Since Robert is moving or already has settled across the Chowan River into Bertie County, he is selling his lands in Chowan prior to his marriage to Mrs. Elizabeth Whitmell of Bertie.

On February 16, 1742, for £37 current silver money of Virginia Isaac buys these two tracts from him. The first parcel is "one hundred & thirty acres of land situated lying and being on the eastward side of a swamp commonly known by the name Meherin Swamp . . . land formerly in the tenour or occupation of William Hunter late of the upper parish of Nansemond County in Virginia, deceased . . . the said land being part of two patents, the first being a patent formerly granted to William Hunter late of the upper parish of Nansemond, deceased, being lawful father of the aforesaid Isaac Hunter and Robert Hunter. . . for the quantity of two hundred acres as by a patent dated the twenty first day of April which was in the year of our Lord Christ Sixteen hundred and ninety five both and may appear and by the last will & testament of the said William Hunter deceased to his son Robert Hunter. . . .The second being part of a patent formerly granted to Isaac Hunter and Robert Hunter the two parties to these presents as a patent for the quantity of four hundred acres bearing the date the thirteenth day of August which was in the year of our Lord Christ seventeen hundred & fourteen. . . ."

In April the vestry meets at the new Costen's Chapel at Meherrin. In May Isaac evidently is no longer a vestryman, since his name does not appear in the minutes of the meeting held at the Chowan courthouse that month, but his service to the parish is noted by the vestry.

1743

In April the vestry pays Isaac £15 for "reading Divine Service the Year 1742," and he and William Skinner are voted to remain as "Readers in Chowan Parish."

Among duties of the vestry is the control of vermin and dangerous wildlife. The minutes of the meeting held in Edenton in July document money awarded to Isaac's

nephew: “Ordered that Mr. William Hunter be allowed for five Woolf sculps [scalps] and two Wild Catts Sculps Which Amounts to Twenty two pounds.”

Only a few of Chowan County’s Colonial tax lists have survived. Isaac Hunter’s name appears on the existing lists from 1741 through 1751. On the Thomas Garrett’s list for 1741 Isaac is taxed on six tithables. A “tithable” was a male of sixteen or older. Slaves were also counted as tithables. Few women were listed unless they were head of a household. On the 1741 list taken by Henry Hill a second Isaac Hunter appears. This perhaps is Isaac Jr. The list shows no count of his tithables (Barrett, op. cit.).

1744

When the vestry convenes on Easter Monday, March 26, Isaac is elected again and named also as church warden, with pay of £15. The vestry adjourns, with the recommendation that its next meeting be held “at the Chapple on Mr. James Constants Plantation.” When they reconvene there in June, they vote “on the Motion of Mr. Henry Baker that as he has Given One Acre of Land Timber to Build a Chapple on Knotty Pine Swamp whereon the Chapple Now Stands, In Consideration thereof it is ordered That he Shall have Liberty to Build a Pew in any Part of the sd. Chapple he Pleases.” It is ordered that the old chapel at Sandy Pine be sold at public venue, “Giving Ten days Notice by Advertisement by Richard Bond & Isaac Hunter.”

Isaac purchases a water mill from John Rice. Although situated on one acre of Hunter’s land, the mill has been owned by Rice: “April Court . . . John Rice & Isaac Hunter for a mill, pet[ition] 23, granted & ordered that &c an acre of land &c be appraised &c (Book I, Chowan County Court Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1730 through 1745, p. 215, in Haun, p, 104). The sale is continued into April Court 1745: “John Rice & Isaac Hunter for mill, petition 17, granted & ordered that &c acre of land &c be appraised & since continued (Haun, p. 111). Rice and Hunter’s undated application states: Chowan County To the worshipfull the Justices of the County Court now sitting—The petition of John Rice and Isaac Hunter humbly sheweth That John Rice one of your petitioners is Desirous to build and Erect a Grist Mill on a fork of Meherren Swamp between the Land of the said John Rice and Isaac Hunter your petitioners. Your petitioners therefore pray a warrant may issue by order of this Court Directed to the Surveyor General or his Deputy, to lay out one acre of Land out of the Land of Isaac Hunter one of your petitioners adjoining to the aforesaid fork of Meherren Swamp as the law Directs, and that four persons may by order of this Court be appointed to appraise the same and to make return thereof to the next Court. And your petitioners as in dur bound shall pray & c. John Rice Isaac Hunter Gramted & Saml Harral John Gorden Jno Jones Abraham Hill } to value the acre of Land (Stewart E. Dunaway, Chowan County Mill and Ferry Records, 1731-1813, p. 109).

Note: In 1753 Isaac's will passed ownership of the mill to his son Jacob. It then passed Jacob's son Rev. Isaac Hunter and then to his son Isaac Riddick Hunter, who sold it to the Cross family. Originally a grist mill, later, when owned by Rev. Isaac Hunter, it was also a lumber mill. It remained in the Hunter family for at least four generations and became a local landmark for which the township called Hunters Mill in present-day Gates County is named. The mill no longer exists, and the site has returned to nature.

On January 12, 1744, Isaac pays Thomas Morris £30 in Virginia money for a tract of 300 acres in Chowan County, land adjacent to Bennett's Creek and formerly belonging to the Chowan Indians. The sale is witnessed by Thomas Acon and by Isaac's nephew William Hunter and Isaac's son Jacob (Chowan County Deed Book A1, p. 322). Note: The new year officially began in March, and at April court 1745 the deed of sale was proved in open court by the oath of William Hunter.

1745

In April court 1745 the "deed of sale of land from Thomas Morris to Isaac Hunter is duly proved in open court by the oath of William Hunter an evidence thereto and on motion is ordered to be registered, fees pd £2.0.0 (Haun, p. 114).

1746

On May 9, 1746, for £37, 10 shillings William Pugh of Edgecombe County sells Isaac Hunter of Chowan County 300 acres of riverbank land at Pitch Landing, a tract that is part of a patent originally granted to Thomas Martin, adjacent to lands of Isaac's nephew Ephraim Hunter and William Downing. Witnesses are Elizabeth Sumner, Joseph Sumner, John Sumner, N. C. Court, June 23, 1747 (Bertie County, N. C., Book G, p. 34).

At the Easter Monday meeting of the vestry, Isaac is reelected to serve as a vestryman, and he, along with two others, is named to be a reader, on each at Edenton, Costen's, and Knotty Pine.

Isaac's name appears on William Luten's tax list, showing three whites and four blacks (Barrett, op. cit.).

1747

On February 9 1747, "for and in consideration of their natural love & affection which they have & bear unto the the sd Jacob Hunter their son as also for the better maintenance & preferment of the sd Jacob Hunter, Isaac and his wife Elizabeth give Jacob a tract of 187 acres on Oysterlong Branch. The deed of gift is witnessed by son

Elisha Hunter, by nephew William Hunter, and by “John [possibly son Jesse]” Hunter (Chowan Deed Book E1, p. 336). Upon the oath of Elisha the deed is recorded at Edenton on October 17, 1748.

1748

On August 9, 1748, Isaac pays Thomas Hansford £50 for 312 acres on the Chowan River adjacent to properties of William Downing, John Cherryhorn, and “Nubys Corner” land in possession of Isaac’s nephew Ephraim Hunter. These lands originally had been granted by patent to Thomas Martin in 1704 and in 1740 to Thomas Hansford. Witnessing the sale to Isaac in May Court 1749 are Jenkins Hansford, James Leslie, Joseph Perry. (Bertie County Deed Book G, p. 186).

Isaac’s name appears on Thomas Luten’s tax list, showing eight tithables (Barrett, op. cit.). On a separate list of Luten’s is the name Isaac Hunter. This possibly is Isaac’s son Isaac Jr. of his nephew, a son of Nicolas Hunter (Barrett, op. cit.)

1749

In May 1749 Isaac and his nephew William again take the oath as vestrymen. “Mr. Isaac Hunter, one of the Readers of the said Parish laid his Account before the Vestry, as it stands here underneath stated, and vouches the Same, upon his Oath, whereby it appears, that there is due to him upon the Whole, the Sum of £51 of the late current Bills of Credit of North Carolina: Chowan, Saint Pauls Parish &c July the 2nd 1749. The claim of Isaac Hunter stands thus. Viz. To Serving as Reader three Years at £15 0 0 £45 0 0 And for finding Bread & Wine three Times for the Sacrament at forty Shillings pr. Time £45 £6 £51.”

On August 7, 1749 for £30 Isaac sells his son Elisha 140 acres of his land bought from William Pugh in 1746 on the south side of the Chowan River known as Pitch Landing in Bertie County. Adjacent tracts are those of Ephraim Hunter, John Cherryhorn, and Isaac Hunter’s remaining acreage. Wit: John Gordon, Jacob Hunter (Elisha’s brother), Jesse Hunter (Elisha’s brother). November court 1750 (Bertie County Deed Book G, p. 313).

1750

In April 1750 when Isaac comes with other vestrymen to take the oath, the minutes show he is paid £31 for services. He continues to be a reader at Constant’s Chapel. During the previous two decades his devoted membership to the St. Paul’s vestry has been continuous except for the interruption in 1742. After 1751 the minutes do not show his name. It can be supposed that he has become ill.

On the third Thursday in July 1750 when a grand jury convenes at the courthouse in Edenton, Elisha Hunter is present, but two prospective jurors, Isaac Hunter and William Felton, fail to appear. It is ordered that a summons be issued “for them to shew Cause &c” (Chowan County Court Minutes, 1749-1754, Book III, p. 43).

Isaac’s name appears on John Alston’s tax list, showing seven tithables (Barrett, op. cit.).

1751

Isaac’s name appears on Richard Bond’s tax list, showing nine tithables. A second Isaac Hunter appears on William Walton’s tax list. Likely this is Isaac’s son, who has no tithables. (Barrett, op. cit.).

1752

In 1752, his final year, Isaac Hunter of Chowan is one of the neighbors appraising the estate of the late Jethro Sumner Sr. Book III of the Chowan court minutes shows that in sessions held in April, July, and October Isaac is mentioned as follows: “ On Motion of Thomas Sumner Praying to have Men appointed to Divide the estate of Jethro Sumner Decd. Granted & Ordered that Abraham Hill, James Constant, Isaac Hunter & Lewis Bond that they or any three of them do Divide the same on Oath & make return thereof to the next Court.” This same order is entered two more times (July and October) in the record.

Evidently Isaac has become ill before or during the probating of Sumner’s estate. On April 17, 1752, he signs his will. His signature is spelled “Isaac Huntor.” Since there is no mention of his wife Elizabeth among the bequests, probably she already is deceased. If so, she has died in the past three years. (In 1749 her father Richard Parker had left her and her two sisters “ten shillings a piece to each of them in full for thare share of my . . . estate”).

Isaac’s will grants land to each of his sons except Daniel. Elisha gets the lion’s share. To son Isaac “I give . . . all my land in Bertea [the portion in Bertie not included in the previous deed of gift to Elisha] as by a patent dated the 28th day of February 1744 for one hundred and fifty acres, also a deed of sale for 150 acres dated April 20, 1745, and joining to Elisha Hunter’s lands.” To son Elisha “my plantation whereon I now live and the plantation whereon he now lives together with all the land thereunto.” To son Jesse “I give and bequeath . . . all my land and plantation purchased of Thomas Morris containing three hundred acres.” To son Jacob: “have and enjoy all my right of the water mill.” (Note: Five years earlier Jacob had received a 187-acre tract of land

on Oysterlong Branch as a deed of gift.) To son Daniel: “I give . . . seventy five pounds current money of Virginia to be raised out of my estate, it being in consideration as I have not given him any land or negro. I also give to my son Daniel Hunter one good feather bed and the furniture thereunto belonging, also three middle sized pewter dishes, one pewter basin. and one iron pot of about forty pounds weight, one frying pan and two cows and calves.” (Note: Daniel likely is not of age. If he had been left land, the will would have placed it with a guardian.) To daughters, all of whom are married: Hannah Riddick a slave Lucy, to Elizabeth Perry a slave Kate, to Alee Perry a slave Toby, to Rachel Walton a slave Hagar, to Sarah Hunter a slave Tresea, To his grandchildren Jesse, Philip, and Mary Perries and Sarah Field (children of his deceased daughter Joan) £5 each, and to Zilpha Parker, daughter of Jonathan Parker. Jonathan is the brother of Isaac’s late wife, and it seems that Zilpha may be Isaac’s ward. As the will mentions her, Isaac’s tone grows testy: With his proviso, he leaves her “one good feather bed and furniture and two pewter dishes and three pewter plates provided that if she stays and lives with me or in my family till she comes to the age of eighteen years and behaves well, or at ye day of marriage, if to my or friends’ satisfaction, then I say, to her and her heirs for ever.” The will names son Elisha as executor. Beside Isaac’s signature is his seal, the impression of a dragon.

1753

Isaac dies about a year after signing the will. He is in his sixth decade. The location of his gravesite is not known, although it may be in an unmarked family burying ground now lost in woods and thickets. It is doubtful that he lies in the churchyard at St. Paul’s in Edenton, although the grave may be close by Costen’s Chapel. In 1715 it had become the law that “every planter, owner, attorney, or overseer of every settlement in this government . . . shall set apart a burial place and fence the same, for the interring of all such Christian persons, whether bond or free, that shall die on their plantation. . .” (John Haywood, Esq., A Manual of the Laws of North Carolina, Raleigh: J. Gales, 1819, p.84). In April, the Chowan court commences probate. Isaac’s last will and testament, one folded sheet of foolscap inscribed in an attorney’s tiny, meticulous penmanship, is exemplary in appearance, organization, and command of expression (North Carolina State Archives, Estate Records, #09200, Roll 1000). The court record reports that the will “was exhibited into Court and at the same time appeared Elisha Hunter Exr. and was Duly Qualified thereto by taking the Oath by law appointed for Exrs. pd. Letters issd.”

The minutes of the July session of court report that “On motion of Elisha Hunter Praying to have dividers appointed to Divide the Estate of Isaac Hunter Deceased which was Granted and Ordered that Josiah Granbery, Timothy Walton, James Sumner & John Gordon that they or any three of them Do Divide the same according to law upon Oath and Make return thereof to the next Court issued”

(Chowan County Court Minutes, Book III, p. 197). Note that this July entry evidently is an after-the-fact report, since the completed inventory of Isaac's estate had been approved in May.

Therefore, probably in April, with Elisha guiding them, Granbury, Gordon, and Walton set to the task the court had assigned. With pen and paper they prowled through the household rooms, the stable, the barnyard, and various sheds. In the family rooms they counted tables, chairs, bedsteads, and featherbeds. In the kitchen they itemized the pewter, the silverware, the pots and pans, and the appurtenances for cooking, and in the place of business they enumerated the piles of fabrics. The inventory is detailed and extensive.

On "May ye 8th 1753" J. Halsey acknowledged in the court record that "Personally Appeared before me Elisha Hunter & made Oath on the Holy Evangelist of Almighty God that the within wrighting contains a true & perfect Inventory of all & singular the goods and chattels Rights and Credits of Isaac Hunter Deceased that hath come to his hand and knowledge Sworn to before me this 8th of May 1753."

At the next court "Ten Division of the Estate of Isaac Hunter amongst his Children was Returned" (Ibid, p. 222). "An Inventory of ye Estate of Isaac Hunter Deceased" comprises seven long columns of items. The lengthy household list includes the following curious sampling that is both intimate and utilitarian: Cash in Isaac's pocketbook is £30 13 9. Isaac evidently had placed other money with trustworthy friends: "£2 11 in the hands of Daniel Peal, £5 in ye hands of Moses Lasiter, £2 in ye hands of Wm Peal." Three pairs of spectacles (Isaac and his wife may have had poor eyesight), eight beds, two looking glasses, three chamber pots, five tables, one pair of pistols, one sword, 4800 9-penny nails, 1100 10-penny nails, 3900 4-penny nails, thirty pewter spoons, twenty-eight dishes, fifty-one plates, one punch bowl, and much more. The itemized list begins with the names of Isaac's nine slaves: Duke, Jobe (not assigned), Toney, Hager, Cate, Venus, Lace (Lucy), Tresea, and Pender (not assigned). On ten separate pages, one page for each of the children, the executor has apportioned fairly and equally Isaac's personal items, household wares, furniture, farm implements and animals, and his large inventory of cloth. The total value of each heir's portion is £25 5 6. None of the inventory is offered for public sale. All Isaac's possessions remain within his family. The settlement is made final in September 1753.

1755-1759

On August 8 for £70 Isaac's son Elisha sells his 140 acres of family land at Pitch Landing to Robert Sumner of Nansemond Co., Va. Witnesses are John Benton, David Sumner, John Kittrell, Demsey Sumner, John Freeman, William Freeman, Richard Freeman (Bertie County Book H, p. 230). Elisha remains in Chowan on the plantation that had been Isaac's home, and Jacob resides on land in the vicinity of the Hunter

Mill he inherited. After selling their bequests in Chowan and Bertie, sons Jesse and Isaac, along with landless Daniel, migrate west to Granville County and settle there. When Granville is divided, Jesse and Isaac are located in the section that is Shocco District of Bute County (later called Warren County), and Daniel remains southwest of them in Granville. In 1779 the section of Nansemond/Chowan in which three generations of the Hunter family had lived for almost a century was merged into the new North Carolina county named Gates.