

# Robert Hunter, a Time Line

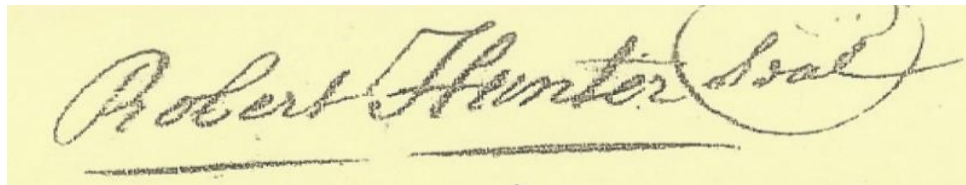
By Hunter Cole

Robert Hunter, a son of Judge William Hunter of Nansemond County, Virginia, and the brother of Nicholas, William, Isaac, and Sarah Hunter, was born before 1700. The year of his birth is uncertain, although he evidently was of age (and at least twenty-one) when records document him as a freeholder in 1714 and 1720 and as a tax payer in 1718. In Chowan he served briefly as a vestryman of St. Paul's Parish. He was married twice. His first wife's name is not known, but after her death he moved to Bertie County, and there he married Mrs. Elizabeth Bryan Whitmell. By his first marriage he had two sons (Moses and Henry) and five daughters ( Sarah, Mary, Judith, Susannah and Elizabeth). In Bertie County he was a justice (or commissioner) of the peace. He died in Bertie County in 1753. From the late 1600s the Hunters were a prominent and influential family in southern Virginia and in Albemarle County of North Carolina, which comprised the precincts of Bertie, Chowan, and Perquimans, where the Hunters maintained property and standing. When the term "precincts" became obsolete, the former precincts would be termed "counties."

- 1714 Robert Hunter and his brother Isaac jointly are granted a patent for four hundred acres in Chowan Precinct in 1714. (Robert will sell his share to Isaac in 1742. The transaction and their dual ownership of the land are documented in Chowan Deed Book A1, pp. 257-259.)
- 1718/1719 Robert Hunter also owns land nearby in Perquimans Precinct. His name appears on the surviving Perquimans tax list of 1718 and 1719. He is taxed ten shillings on two hundred acres (Colonial Court Records, Taxes & Accounts, Perquimans County, North Carolina State Archives).
- 1720 On April 5, 1720, Robert Hunter acquires 100 acres on Horse Pool Pocosin in Chowan. Witnesses: C. Eden, Thos. Pollock, Wm. Reed, Richd. Sanderson, Fras. Foster (Patent Book Three, p. 18). Note: Parts of this pocosin (swamp) lie within Perquimans. Farther east beyond Horse Pool Pocosin is the Great Dismal Swamp.
- 1728 A new survey relocates the boundary line between North Carolina and Virginia by extending parts of North Carolina into the Upper Parish of Nansemond County, Virginia. After 1728, a large number of southeastern Virginia's freeholders' lands, including those of Robert, his brothers, and his nephews, fall within the bounds of North Carolina.

Approximate time Robert's father, Judge William Hunter of Nansemond, dies. His will (now lost) bequeathed a parcel of Virginia land to Robert.

1730 “Do hereby give and grant to ~~Robert Hunter~~ ? [sic] unto James Brogden of our sd. County a tract of land containing four hundred acres lying in the Bertie Precinct on the south side of Morattuck River in the ffork of a great creek” (Albemarle County Miscellaneous Records, Book C, p. 390). This confusing citation does not clearly identify the grantor and grantee, nor does it state Robert Hunter’s place of residence.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Hunter" followed by a circled word that appears to be "Seal". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

1732 On January 4, 1732, Robert and his brother Isaac are present when their older brother William signs his will in Chowan. With one Spencer Cole they serve as witnesses. Nicholas, another brother, has migrated to Carteret County and is not present. Within a week or so, William has died, and on January 18, Robert and Isaac attest to the validity of the will when it is proved in open court.

1735 Robert Hunter is among many residents of Bertie, Chowan, Pasquotank, Perquimans, and Nansmond whose Virginia land was redefined by the new boundary line and as a segment of southeastern Virginia was reconfigured as a part of North Carolina. Robert, a freeholder of 400 acres now in Chowan, is billed £7 arrears for unpaid quit rents during the seven years of transition (Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, XXII (Jan. 12 - Sept. 19, 1735), p. 140.

1738 Robert is a member of the vestry of St. Paul’s Parish: “At a Vestrey held for the prsh. of Chowan at the Indian Town Chappell on the first Day of July 1738. Prsent Colo. John Alstone, Mr. Isaac Hunter, Mr. Robt. Hunter, Mr. Thos. Luton, Mr. Jacob Butler, Mr. Willm. Arkill, Mr. Willm. Speight, Mr. Edward Hare, Mr. Richd. Parker, Mr. John Blunt, John Sumner CW.” Robert Hunter also is present on July 22, 1738. Since his name appears only in one year, in 1739 he may have migrated to Bertie Precinct and therefore could no longer serve in Chowan (Vestry Minutes of St. Paul’s Parish, Chowan County, N. C., 1701-1776, compiled by Raymond Parker Fouts). For payment of £72 on August 8, 1738, Robert Hunter of Chowan purchases 300 acres of land in Bertie Precinct from

Joseph Wimberly. The tract is situated “at dividing line of James Williamson & Jonathan Tayler next to Roques Swamp, part of a patent granted James Williamson on April 5, 1729, and part of a patent to John Smith dated August 7, 1720 (Bertie Deed Book E, p. 305).

- 1742 Having relocated across the Chowan River to Bertie Precinct, Robert Hunter sells two tracts in Chowan to his brother Isaac: (1) his portion of 400 acres that Robert and Isaac had acquired on August 13, 1714, and (2) a portion (130 acres) of a 200-acre tract, originally in Nansemond County, patented to their father in 1695 and bequeathed to Robert in the father’s will (Chowan Deed Book A1, pp. 257-259). On May 10, 1742, for £425 Robert Hunter of Chowan County purchases 300 acres in Bertie County from Jeremiah Bentley and his wife Jean, a tract situated on Rocquis Swamp adjoining land of Col. Pollock, James Williamson, John Smithweek. Witnesses are Robert’s son Henry Hunter, John Watson, Mary Watson, and Elizabeth Clark. August Court, 1742 (Bertie Deed Book F, p. 372). On August 11, 1742, for £80 Henry Hunter sells his father Robert Hunter 100 acres at the dividing line between James Williamson and Jonathan Tayler on Rocquis Swamp, part of a grant to James Williamson dated April 5, 1720 and part of a grant to John Smithwick August 7, 1720. Witnesses: John Hill, Martha Hill, Elizabeth Whitmell, February Court, 1742 (Bertie Deed Book F, p. 389).
- 1743 Earlier, Robert, a widower, has married the widow Mrs. Elizabeth Bryan Whitmel. In November court, 1743, he makes a deed of gift (two Negro women and one Negro girl—Phyllis, Penny, and Nancy) to his step-daughters Winnifred and Mary Whitmel (Bertie Deed Book F, p. 245). It is probable that the slaves had belonged to the Widow Whitmell, and that upon her remarriage her property became Robert’s.
- 1746 On March 13, 1746, the North Carolina Governor’s Council appoints Robert Hunter as a justice of the peace for Bertie County. (Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Vol. IV, p. 800). He assumes his duties on August 12 (Benjamin B. Winborne, North Carolina State and Colonial History of Hertford County, 1906).
- 1748 On May 5, 1748, Robert and his son Moses are witnesses to Michael Hill’s sale of 424 acres on the eastern side of Rocquis Swamp to John Hill, adjacent to John Hardy at Bowers (Brewers) Quarter (Bertie Deed Book G, p. 122).

- 1750 On May 9, 1750, for £60 Michael Hill sells Robert Hunter 205 acres on the fork of Cashy at Wills [Willis?] Quarter, adjoining Col. Robert West (Bertie Deed Book G, p. 282). On October 12, 1750, Robert Hunter is a witness when his son Henry buys 200 acres of land from James Williamson for £40 Virginia money. The tract is situated adjacent to Dr. Bates “within the Indian Line,” adjoining land of Dr. Bates, William Pierce, and Henry Hunter. Witnesses to the sale are Robert Hunter, Thomas Whitmell, and John Watson (Bertie Deed Book G, p. 383.) In November court, 1750, Robert Hunter and his son Henry and John Watson are witnesses at James Williamson’s sale for £15 of 500 acres on Quitsney Swamp to Thomas Whitmell, merchant, on October 12, 1750 (Bertie Deed Book G, p. 315).
- 1751 Robert Hunter, John Field, and Joseph Barradall are witnesses when the sale of land by John Williams, planter, to John Moon, planter, is proved in August court (Bertie Deed Book G, p. 382).
- 1752 “Robert Hunter, Treasurer, to receive moneys for lots sold at Blackman’s Landing” (Bertie Book 3, pp. 92-93).
- 1753 Robert Hunter signs his will on June 3, 1753. It mentions sons Henry and Moses, his daughters Sarah Docton, Mary Gordon, Judith Perry, Susannah Benton, and Elizabeth Williams. There is no mention of a widow, for evidently Elizabeth Bryan Whitmell is deceased. His executors are “My Loving son Moses Hunter and my Loving Friend Thomas Whitmell.” Witnesses are Jno. Hill, John Slatter, Oen Slatter, Littleton Slatter, Keziah Slatter, William Apperson. His bequests include money, livestock, slaves, the plantation where he lives, land on Rocquis Swamp, land on Cashy and Willis Quarter Swamp, and land he bought from Colonel West and from Michael Hill. He no longer has land in Chowan. Robert dies between June and August. His will is probated in August court, 1753: “The last Will & testament of Robert Hunter deceased was exhibited into Court by Moses Hunter on[e] of the Executor[s] appointed by the sd. will and was proved by the Oaths of John Hill John Slatter & Keziah Slatter three of the Evidences there to and on motion it is Ordered that the same be Certified and that Letter Issue accordingly. At the same Time the sd. Executor qualified himself as an Executor by taking the Oath appointed by Law for that Purpose. Text. Samuel Ormes CC” (Bertie Book N, p. 10).
- 1759 Although Robert Hunter died in 1753, the North Carolina Governor’s Council did not remove his name officially from the colony’s Commission

of the Peace until May 1759. The council's minutes list him then with three others recognized belatedly as deceased (Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, VI, p. 80).