

Commentary on the Delamar Papers

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I recently scanned and added to the Hunter website the “Delamar Papers”, a privately researched report written by genealogist Marybelle Delamar concerning the origins of our branch of the Hunter family. These papers were given to me by Oscar Henry Hunter, Jr., about 10 years ago, shortly before his death. I am not sure who gave them to him, though it appears the report was commissioned by a descendant of Jacob Hunter, d. 1806. The papers are focused on the origins of Jacob Hunter, of Richland County, South Carolina, and by corollary, his brothers Dempsey, David, Allen, and possibly Thomas (see note ‘a’).

The report begins with a discussion of William “the Weaver” Hunter, who obtained two land grants in Upper Nansemond County, Virginia, in 1695⁽¹⁾ and 1701⁽²⁾. This land is now in Gates County, North Carolina. William had four sons, Nicholas, Robert, Isaac and William. Son Nicholas, who died in Cartaret County, North Carolina, in 1749⁽³⁾, in turn had sons Stephen, Ezekiel, Labbeus, William, and Isaac, called the “Northampton” Isaac as that is the county in which he resided. The “Northampton” Isaac in turn was the father of at least five sons: Reuben, Thomas, Dempsey, Isaac “called of the Tavern”, as he had a famous Tavern in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Theophilus. Of these five brothers, Ms. Delamar concluded that Dempsey had a high likelihood of being the father of Jacob.

This Dempsey Hunter was first noted in 1753⁽⁴⁾ when he witnessed a deed in Northampton County. He also witnessed the will of John Veale there in 1754⁽⁵⁾. In 1761, Dempsey and wife traded their land in Northampton, which was inherited from Dempsey’s father, Isaac, for money and other land in Johnston County, North Carolina ⁽⁶⁾. Dempsey witnessed a deed in Johnston County in 1763 ⁽⁷⁾, and that is the last known of him. In the 1761 deed, Dempsey’s wife is listed as Unity Hunter. But in the will of William Stevenson, dated October 16, 1761, and filed in November, 1761, in Northampton County, William states that his sister, Elizabeth Stevenson, was married to Dempsey Hunter. This may indicate that Dempsey had a first wife, Elizabeth Stevenson, before he married Unity.

There also was another Hunter, William, with wife Hannah, that Ms. Delamar thought could also be the parents of Jacob. This Hunter was of Nansemond County, Virginia, and bought land in Northampton County, North Carolina in 1745⁽⁸⁾. He sold this land in 1760, a year before Dempsey sold his in Northampton County, North Carolina ⁽⁹⁾. Ms. Delamar states in her research that “The William Hunter whom we know went to South Carolina from Northampton County ...”. There was no proof written in her essay of how she knew this to be true, but someone wrote in handwriting on the Delamar Papers “I have his land purchase and will in South Carolina”. William sold some of his land in Northampton County to the William Stevenson who claimed that Dempsey Hunter was his brother-in-law. He also sold some to Richard Veale, the son of the John Veale whose will was witnessed in 1754 by Dempsey Hunter.

Another interesting connection exists between William and Hannah and the two Henry Hunters, the son and grandson of Robert Hunter, son of William the weaver of Nansemond County. These two Hunters witnessed a deed from William Hunter to Moses Riddick for Northampton land in 1758. The younger of these Hunters left a will in the Camden District, South Carolina in 1783, and the widow of this Henry Hunter, Fanny, was on the Richland County, South Carolina census of 1790 near our Hunters.

In conclusion, I agree with Ms. Delamar’s suggestions that Dempsey Hunter or William Hunter are the best candidates to be the father of Jacob and his brothers. Dempsey is seen as the more likely because the name Dempsey is so common in our branch, and William is less common. Nevertheless, there is no proof that Dempsey Hunter, husband of Unity, or of Elizabeth Stevenson, ever sold his land in Johnston County, and moved to Richland, South Carolina. That is for future research.

I have included a few excerpts from the Delamar Papers below; the full text is available through the Hunter website, or directly at: <http://www.mindspring.com/~hunter-family/Delamar.Papers.htm>

“You will notice that Demcy Hunter exchanged his land in Northampton with his brother Thomas for land in Johnston (now Wake). The three brothers, Demcy, Reuben and Thomas came to Johnston. Thomas did not stay, and is said to have gone to Nash County, where he died in 1797.”

“I realize that I do not have the disposition of Dempsey Hunter (son of Isaac of. Northampton) other than that his wife was Unity and that he exchanged his land in Northampton for land in Johnston. He may have died in Johnston before . Wake County was formed in 1770. It would probably require search of unindexed court minutes to find if this was, true. He, probably, was old enough for the father of Jacob.”

“The William Hunter whom we know went to South Carolina from Northampton County may prove the most interesting one to you. I have found that he was living in Nansemond County, Virginia, when he purchased land in Northampton.”

“It would seem as if William and Hannah were considering moving as early as 1758, but did not finally make the break until 1760.”

“I do not know who the Northampton William was, but coming out of Nansemond County and having the two Henry Hunters around to witness that deed of October 12, 1758, he is bound to have been of the same family as the descendants of the earlier William Hunter of Nansemond.”

“If I have occasion to search the Johnston County court minutes any time soon, I will keep an eye out for Demcy (Dempsey) Hunter. He and William of Northampton look to me to be your best chances.”

References:

- (1) State of Virginia, Land Office Patents No. 8, 1689-1695, p. 431 (Reel 8).
- (2) State of Virginia, Land Office Patents No. 9, 1697-1706 (v.1 & 2 p.1-742), p. 309 (Reel 9).
- (3) Grimes, John Bryan. *Abstracts of North Carolina Wills*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of State, 1910
- (4) Northampton County, North Carolina, Deed Book 2, p. 113
- (5) Northampton County, North Carolina, Will Book 1, Page 32.
- (6) Northampton County, North Carolina, Deed Book 3, page 129
- (7) Johnston County, North Carolina, Deed Book (?), p. 71
- (8) Northampton County, North Carolina, Deed Book 1, page 220
- (9) Northampton County, North Carolina, Deed Book 3, page 60, 61

Note (a): The will of Allen Hunter, Montgomery County, Tennessee, Book C, Page 366, lists Dempsey Hunter, Jr. and Jacob Hunter, son of Emmanuel Hunter, as nephews. Allen was born before 1764, as he witnessed a will in South Carolina in 1785 (will of James Sterling, Richland County, South Carolina, Book B, Page 45) so could not have been a brother of Emmanuel. Therefore Allen was a brother of Dempsey Hunter, Jr.’s father Dempsey, and Emmanuel Hunter’s father, Jacob. The will of William David Hunter, Davidson County, Tennessee, Book 18, Page 579, lists the children of Dempsey Hunter, Sr., as nieces and nephews, which makes him another brother. Thomas Hunter of Robertson County, Tennessee, is reportedly another brother or cousin, but no direct evidence has connected him yet to the other Hunters.