

Memories of George Washington Hunter & Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter
By Faye Lillian Dial Lewis, 1967

Faye Lillian Dial Lewis was a daughter of Horatio Ransom Dial and Minnie Belle Harris Dial. Horatio Ransom Dial was a son of Laura Jane Nase (b. 15 Nov 1851, d. 6 Dec 1941) and Francis Marion Dial (b. 11 Aug 1848, d. 23 Dec 1879). They married on 31 Dec 1868 in Franklin County, IL. Laura Jane Nase was a daughter of Butler Nase (1820-1866) and Louisiana "Rose" Mississippi Haggard (1825-1881). She was born in Paradise Prairie, Perry County, IL.

Francis Marion Dial and Laura Jane Nase had three sons: 1. Elmer Eugene Dial (b. 18 Apr 1871, d. 1880?), 2. Horatio Ransom Dial (b. 15 May 1873, d. 3 May 1945), and 3. Edward Otho Dial (b. 10 Sep 1875 d. 30 Sep 1949). Francis Marion Dial died in 1879 and their son, Elmer Eugene died in 1879 or 1880.

Laura's second marriage in 1881 was to George Washington Hunter (b. 21 Nov 1846, d. 3 Jan 1937). George and Laura had three children, 1. Lucille Armetta Hunter (b. 26 Nov 1886, d. 28 Dec 1969), 2. Samuel Nase Hunter (b. 19 Mar 1888, d. 5 Aug 1958), and 3. Lloyd Palmer Hunter (b. 10 May 1891, d. 7 Dec 1976). These five children (Ransom, Edward, Lucille, Samuel, and Lloyd) were raised by George Washington Hunter and Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter in a loving and supportive home.

Horatio Ransom Dial, the second of Laura's six children, and his wife Minnie Belle Harris Dial had a daughter Faye Lillian Dial Lewis who authored these firsthand observations about her life and her memories of her family in a document titled, *Journal of Memories*. Faye gifted a signed copy to Ruby LuNase Hunter Dorr, her cousin and daughter of Samuel Nase Hunter in 1967. In later years, Michael M. Norman, grandson of Lucille Hunter Norman, added edits in bold print that will be included in this report.

This document includes excerpts from Faye Dial Lewis' *Journal* that contain her writings about George Washington Hunter, her step grandfather, and her grandmother Laura Jane Nase Dial.

Faye's mother and father (Horatio Ransom Dial and Minnie Belle Harris Dial)

Courting back in the late 1800s was quite different from the courting now in the late 1960s, according to my mother, Minnie Belle Harris Dial, who is 89 years old. She and Papa did theirs in a black shiny buckboard drawn by a beautiful black mare, combed and curried within an inch of her life.

Mama met her future husband, Horatio Ransom Dial, at the little one room Union School, where he, the handsome and dashing young teacher, taught all eight grades.

She and two of her friends, Floss and Min, sang as a trio and were so good they were often invited to sing at church functions and school socials near Frankfort, Illinois.

Papa had had his 'eye' on Mama for some time – then he invited the trio to sing at one of his school socials, and it wasn't long after that they began courting.

When I was young, I loved to hear Mama tell of a few incidents that happened during their year of courtship and the following incident was one of my favorites:

While they were driving home one cold and icy wintry night from a social, in the early days of their courtship, Papa tried to get Mama to kiss him, but she kept refusing. Not making

any headway, he sat silently for a time and then said, "Oh, Minnie, please give me just one kiss right off the ice!" She never did tell us whether she gave Papa that "first kiss right off the ice" or not, but we children, and eventually there were twelve of us – 6 boys and 6 girls in all – said we bet that she did.

They were married August 21, 1895. He was 22 years old, and she was 18. They were married at her home in Frankfort, IL, in a double ceremony, with her eldest sister Lizzie being married at the same time.

Mama was a slender, beautiful, auburn-haired girl with sparkling brown eyes, I was told. She was the daughter, one of six daughters and one son of Dr. James Thomas Harris, Jr. and Nancy Clayton Harris, whose parents were pioneers of Southern Illinois before Illinois was admitted to the union in 1818.

They lived in a small village known as Frankfort. It was so named because of its location on a hill near a fort, which was built by a man named Frank Jordan. The fort, which was called Frank's Fort, became Frankfort. The site of Frankfort was chosen as the county seat of Franklin County at that time, and the courthouse was built where the Logan School now stands. All of this land was given by my mother's great, great grandfather Moses Garrett, who registered his first land parcel in 1814, getting a patent deed from the United States. Moses Garrett was Grandmother Harris' great-grandfather.

Papa (Ransom) was the son of Francis Marion Dial, farmer, and Laura Jane Nase Dial. Papa's grandfather, William Dial, came from Virginia to Kentucky. Papa's father, Francis Marion, migrated from Kentucky and settled in Osage, Franklin County, Illinois, where he met and married Laura Jane Nase, daughter of Butler Nase.

Butler Nase was born in 1816 **[1815]** and came from Crawford County, Ohio at the age of 18. In 1860 he came to Illinois and settled in Perry County, near Du Quoin, when Laura was 9 years of age. **[Butler Nase married Louisiana Mississippi Haggard (1825 – 1861) on 4 Sep 1845. Colonel Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the WW II B-29 bomber 'Enola Gay,' which carried the first atomic bomb to Hiroshima, Japan, in August 1945, is related to Louisiana Mississippi Haggard in his mother's lineage. Tibbet's mother was named Enola Gay Haggard.]**

Papa's (Ransom's) father, Francis Marion Dial, died of tuberculosis when Papa was about 6 years old – around 1879. About two years later, Papa's mother, Laura Jane Nase Dial, married George Washington Hunter, farmer, of Marion, IL.

George Washington Hunter and Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter's home

We (Faye's family) moved to Marion, IL from Benton after Helen Louise was born. We lived a block from Papa's (Ransom's) mother (Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter) and step-father (George Washington Hunter) in Marion. Had Grandfather Hunter been an "own" father or grandfather to all of us, we could not have loved him more, for he was so good and kind and generous to all of us. **[For many years, before moving to 1400 N. State Street in Marion in 1906, George Washington Hunter, Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter, and their five children lived on a farm in Lake Creek Township, near Spillertown in Williamson County. This farm is where the Jacob Hunter Cemetery is located-RHH]**

I remember following a path across the vacant lot between our homes to go to their house, and I'd often go there and roam throughout the huge two-story house, admiring the

lovely furnishings of Brussels carpets and lace curtains at the windows that hung so gracefully, and feast my eyes on the red plush love seat, marble top tables, dressers with hand-embroidered and starched scarves that held so many “pretties” for young eyes to admire. I would stand in awe looking at the large paper weight with the snow inside and having “Mother” inscribed on top, which Papa (Ransom) had brought Grandmother Hunter from Cuba.

The parlor, which was across the hall from the living or sitting room, was practically a forbidden place to enter except on special occasions or when Aunt Lucy practiced her piano lessons on the beautiful mahogany piano. But still, I often got into that forbidden room and would drink in the beauty of its loveliness and admire its furnishings. I could hear my own heartbeat; it was so quiet in there. In the big bay window stood a golden wrought iron table, which held crystal candle sticks with crystal prisms dangling all around. When the sun shone through onto those crystal candles, the prisms were so dazzlingly brilliant I’d blink my eyes and fancy I was a princess in a castle.

Grandmother Hunter’s dining table was always laden with good food – a large canopy was spread over the table to protect it from insects when not in use. No one ever objected when any of we children raised the canopy to find us a bite of food. There were always big crusty biscuits, platters of home-killed meat and amber colored comb honey from their own beehives, on the table with plenty of churned butter.

It was such fun to stroll under the big old-fashioned grape arbor that ran from the back of their lot to the house and eat the big blue grapes – letting the juice ooze from them and trickle down my chin, or swing in the big double wooden swing that stood under a big elm tree in the yard or play in the old barn loft on the loose hay.

Aunt Lucy Hunter, Papa’s (Ransom’s) half-sister, went to Ewing College at Ewing, IL. I remember how secretly I admired the beautiful hand-made clothes she and Grandmother made that were her special college clothes. She always looked so beautiful and stately in the shirtwaists with long sleeves and high necks and the full ankle-length skirts and high button shoes.

Aunt Lucy, and Lou and Lettie Grant were best girlfriends and close neighbors. When the three of them were home from college, they were together often at one or the other’s homes, chatting about college while they plied their needles, embroidering or doing handwork on another new shirtwaist or under garment. Their long hair was done in the very latest fashion, brushed and fluffed over large “rats” that fitted their heads like halos. The bigger the “rat” they wore, the more impressive was the hair effect. To me, those three young women were the personification of elegance and an example of lovely young womanhood.

Aunt Lucy was quite a tease. She promised to take me to a circus that was coming to town, along with Lou and Lettie, if I’d be a “good girl.” I was good, and so we went. Just before we got to the big tent, she asked me if I had the money to buy my ticket. No, I don’t, I said, so she told me I’d just have to talk my way inside. I kept very quiet and pondered the question in my heart, not being able to bear the thought of not getting in to see the circus, and then decided on a way to get in.

When we arrived at the tent and the three of them were at the ticket office buying our tickets, I walked up to the man taking the tickets and began to explain that I didn’t have any money and would he please let me in free. By then, the three girls had arrived and asked what I was doing talking to the ticket man. The man told them I didn’t have the price of a ticket and

asked if I belonged to them? They laughingly told him it was all a joke they'd played on me and that I'd seriously believed them, to their chagrin! Aunt Lucy never tried a joke like that on me again.

It was on October 13, 1906, that I was sent over to spend the day at Grandmother Hunter's house. The older children were in school, and Helen was only two years old. Very late that afternoon, while I was amusing myself in Grandfather Hunter's barn loft – I can still smell the sweet aroma of the clover hay in that loft – I heard Papa's (Ransom's) voice calling gently, "Faye, Faye, come here dear child." I hurriedly climbed down the ladder and Papa said, "Come, go home with me and see what we've got at our house." I was wide-eyed with wonderment as to what the surprise would be. When we got home, he led me into the bedroom where Mama lay smiling. Papa said, "Come, look," and he pulled down the coverlet and showed me my new baby brother, John Edward Nase. I was so excited and thrilled and said, "Oh, let me see his tiny feet." I remember how doll-like and adorable he looked. Nase was Papa's mother's maiden name. John was the sixth child.

.....

Papa's brothers, Uncle Ed, Uncle Lloyd, and Uncle Sam loved to come to our house just to eat some of "Minnie's" biscuits and "frog-eye" gravy (made with ham drippings), and eat her famous vinegar pie. Many years after we children were all grown and married, some of we sisters got together at Mama's and began talking nostalgically about the food Mama used to cook for us when we were young. We asked her if she thought she could still make a vinegar pie. She replied that she wasn't sure but she thought that she could. So, she got busy and made one. We all still laugh about that vinegar pie since it turned out to be more like a mayonnaise pie. But she tried! I don't think she ever had a recipe. But the real old-timey one was made with a crisp crust and a delightfully clear filling with a very subtle flavor of vinegar, and a sprinkling of nutmeg.

It was a rainy, blustery and very cold evening, late in February, only a few weeks before Ruth Mildred, the eighth child was born, March 25, 1910. Papa (Ransom) was in Marion at his mother's (Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter's) for the night, where he had gone on business. Mama (Minnie Belle Harris Dial) was very tired from a hard day's work. It had been difficult to keep the house warm with the cold wind blowing. It blew so hard that it seeped through every little crack around the windows and doors.

During the preparation of supper and after frying ham and making a big skillet of milk gravy to help fill so many active children, she set the skillet of gravy on top of the pot-bellied stove in the bed-living room to keep it warm while she finished the remainder of the meal. We children were all playing in that room, and in our energetic play someone accidentally bumped into the handle of the skillet, dumping it and the gravy onto the floor. Hearing the commotion, Mama came to see what was going on and discovered the mess and the loss of the gravy that was so badly needed that night. She just sat down and wept very quietly. She did not reprimand or scold us. I could never bear to see anyone suffer and so I wept with her, and in my eight-year-old and I'm sure most inadequate way, cleaned up the mess as well as I could.

.....

I remember the time on the farm that Papa was clearing a wooded place, chopping down trees with an axe by hand. He swung the axe with great force, missed the tree and cut very deeply into the calf of his leg. Luckily, his youngest brother, Uncle Lloyd Hunter, was with him and saved his life by applying a tourniquet and bringing him home on the wagon bed they had with them. That accident laid him up for several weeks and he carried a huge scar the rest of his life.

.....

In retrospect, I realize I have not told you anything of your great, great Grandmother Dial-Hunter (Laura Jane Nase Dial Hunter) or Grandfather Hunter (George Washington Hunter) in this Journal of Memories, and I am sure you would be pleased to know more of them.

She was about five foot three inches tall and a little on the plump side. She had penetrating gray eyes, and it seems to me her hair was always gray – parted in the middle, smoothed down and fastened in a knot at the nape of her neck. Her happy personality was most pleasing and vibrant.

She and Grandfather Hunter, who was about six feet two and very slender, with a luxuriant set of whiskers, were very devout Primitive Baptists. Grandfather Hunter had a strong, penetrating voice and could be heard above all others when singing hymns in church. (Primitive Baptists were also known as “Hard Shelled” Baptists.) **[My father, William Hunter Norman, a grandson of Grandfather G.W. Hunter, related that his grandfather had an almost super-human hand grip and upper body strength, able to lift heavy objects with ease while other men would struggle with them.]**

I remember attending church with them many times when I was quite young. Grandmother looked like a little plump “pixie” in her long full black dress with high top button shoes and a little black shoulder cape with black poke bonnet that tied under her chin with a ribbon. I think I could compare their stature and appearance to that of Abraham Lincoln and his wife, Mary. They were both dear people, and I loved them very much.

Grandmother Hunter could quote reams of Scripture and often did to prove a point. Her favorite was Proverbs. I remember attending church with them and sitting spellbound during the ritual of foot washing, which was done in foot basins provided for that purpose. I always thought “why wash each other’s feet when their feet already looked so white and clean?” But that was a ceremony their church believed in, and its basis can be found the Scriptures.

After I was grown and married, Grandmother Hunter invited Uncle Lloyd’s wife Mae and me to come to Marion and help her get ready to entertain and feed a flock of ministers from a distance that would be coming to attend their annual church association. It was a big thing and lots of food would be required to feed them. The association lasted several days and there would be about six ministers staying with them.

I was more adept at pie baking and Mae was better at cake baking, so those were our chief jobs. The baking was done on a coal range. I made six or eight pies and Mae made four big cakes. Grandmother prepared the hams, roasts and chickens and Mae and I also helped with the vegetable preparation and serving, and the cleaning up afterwards. We enjoyed helping her out and were highly paid by her gracious thankfulness for our help.

After Grandfather Hunter passed on, Grandmother loved to visit the grandchildren. We always enjoyed having her. She marveled at our modern conveniences (bathrooms, hot and cold running water, radios, and automobiles), which were unknown in her younger days. They did have water pumped into their kitchens, but no other modern conveniences. When she was almost 90 years of age, she visited us and was very alert, did crocheting, and read the papers and her Bible. She was bothered with tremors in her hands and the cups and saucers she would handle always shook so we thought surely she would drop them, but I never remember her dropping them even once.

She dearly loved riding in our automobiles, and I remember her saying she'd just love to take a long drive every day. Bless her heart! She passed away on November 5, 1941, at the age of 90 and was buried on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941.

When Gloria, your mother, was a month old, we took her to Grandfather and Grandmother Hunter's on our very first outing after she was born. (They still lived in the big two-story house mentioned earlier in this Journal on North State Street.) They made much to do over their great granddaughter, and we had such a lovely visit with them.