

THE HUNTER FAMILY DOWN ON THE CREEK
In memory of Rupert Lee Hunter and Ruby Holder Hunter
By Toni Lynn Hunter

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The Hunters living in and about what is now Lee County were found in Chatham and Moore Counties North Carolina early in the 1800's. They became concentrated in the area of Memphis Church and Avent's Ferry. Many of my ancestors have remained in the area of Chatham and Moore that is now Lee County for more than 200 years. Almost everyone along Poplar Springs Church Road in Sanford, NC was related to us one way or another. I have always heard the area referred to as "Down on the Creek". There is a Lick creek and a Lee Creek down there; I guess it could mean either one or both.

I spent a large portion of my growing up years on the tobacco farm of my grandparents Rupert and Ruby Hunter. That land once belonged to the Berryman family, which are also my ancestors. That is another story to write one day. My fondest memory of my grandmother is helping her set out tobacco with a handheld setter. She would poke a hole into the ground with the end of the setter, and then drop what she called the tobacco slip into the gadget. My job was to pour the water into the hole and cover the base of the plant with dirt.

I remember Grandpa working with the mule to plow the rows for the fields. There was an outhouse at the old house. Grandma cooked on a wood cook stove. The Hunters Down on the Creek helped their neighbors, put in tobacco, slaughter hogs for ham and bacon, stitch together quilts and make lye soap. Many memories were made helping family and neighbors.

The Hunters living Down on the Creek are of Scottish descent. My direct line is from Samuel Hunter born in North Carolina in 1812. There was a Thomas Hunter who is said to be a relative of Samuel's living near Memphis Church early in the 1800s. There was an old Thomas Hunter house still standing about 50 years ago on the left side of the road going from Memphis Church to Broadway, NC. There is a family cemetery situated on the grounds of the old home place. Hunters married into the Yarborough family, so the property may have fallen into the Yarborough family. I have heard my grandfather refer to those Hunters as the cotton-picking Hunters, who could out pick anyone for miles around when they took to the cotton field. He believed that they were his cousins, and I also believe those Hunters and their descendants are our cousins although I have not yet made a positive connection.

The 1840 United States Census tells us that James Hunter was living in the Chatham County portion of what is now Lee County. Listed were two males between the ages of twenty to thirty, one female age fifteen to twenty, and one female fifty to sixty. There is a possibility that one of the males 20-30 could have been my 3 Great Grandfather from whom the Hunters living down on the creek are descended from. Note: Whitmill Hunter lived in Chatham County NC near Joseph Avent 1830, James Hunter lived in Chatham County NC near Joseph Avent 1840

Samuel Hunter lived in approximately the place in 1850. I believe they were all related.

Samuel Hunter born 1812 married Audrey (Audra), Bowling (Boling). The first child born to them was Stanford Hunter born 1841. He died in the Civil War on July 22, 1862. He married Edna Elizabeth Thomas. They had one child Harriet Martha Thomas who married Sion Franklin Kelly. The second child born to Samuel and Audra was John Reaves Hunter, also known as Dee Hunter, born 1842 and died 1916. He was my 2 Great Grandfather. He married Rebecca Huckabee, daughter of Richard Huckabee and Catherine Gunter Huckabee. Both John Reaves Hunter and Rebecca Jeames Huckabee Hunter are buried at Poplar Springs Church, in Lee County, NC. To their union were born children, Lula Hunter Moore, Nancy Hunter Wicker, Joseph Stanford Hunter, Everett Hunter, Whitey Hunter Thomas, Alice Hunter Harmon and Hughie Hunter.

Both Stanford Hunter and John Reaves Hunter served in the Civil War, enlisting August 15, 1861. Stanford died on July 22, 1862. He was wounded in battle, pneumonia set in, and he passed away. He is buried in Richmond Virginia. He is said to be buried in Arlington Cemetery, but I have visited the cemetery and there is not a record of him being there.

John Reaves Hunter who enlisted at the age of 18 was wounded at the Battle of Malvern Hill on July 1, 1862. Two fingers were shot from his left hand. He was captured about November 7, 1863, and confined at the Old Capitol Prison in Washington DC. He told his family of sitting inside the prison and watching the Statue of Freedom being raised at the Capitol. John Reaves served under General Jubal Anderson Early 30th Regiment, NC. When Great-Great Grandfather John Reaves returned to NC he worked at several occupations, including farming, saw milling and railroading. He, at one time, worked in Wake County. He would swim across the Cape Fear River with his clothes on his head, on Sunday evening, work all week in Raleigh and return on Friday afternoon. He would swim back across the river, saving the ferry money, on his return home.

Samuel Hunter married a second time in 1845 to Miss Margaret Knight. The marriage took place in Pittsboro, NC in Chatham County. Anne Hunter was born in 1850. She married Drake Thomas. Anne is buried at Memphis Church in what is now Lee County, NC. Samuel and Margaret also had children Alsey, Emily, Sally Jane also known as Sarah Sally, Mary, William and Rose Ella.

Samuel moved his family to Arkansas about 1874 give or take a few years. John Reaves, and Anna remained in North Carolina and Stanford had passed away by this time.

Samuel Hunter arrived via steamboat in Arkansas. He settled in Lonoke, Arkansas. The descendants and our cousins are many there. The many cousins, aunts and uncles can be traced in Arkansas, but Samuel and Margaret disappear. Many, many people have tried for years to no avail to determine what happened to Samuel and Margaret. We can only speculate their disappearance at this time.

So back to Thomas Hunter who some people believe was either a brother or a cousin of my 3 Great Grandfather, Samuel Hunter. Thomas who lived near Memphis Church about 1810 had a son named Benjamin. Benjamin was born 1842 and died in 1899. He was a 1st sergeant in Company 50th North Carolina Infantry, CSA. He was a

millwright. His siblings were Jane E., Martha, John M., and Charles A. Charles also served in the civil war, James Gaston and Abner N. In 1850 Benjamin W. Hunter was living with the Yarborough family near Memphis Church

Benjamin married on August 13, 1958, to Elizabeth Douglas, born 1844 and died 1904. They had children Thomas D. born 1860, McGregor born 1863, and Walter D. born 1866. Benjamin and Elizabeth are buried off Avent's Ferry Road on an old wagon road in the woods near the old Benjamin Hunter Home place. The old home place was still standing in 1993 and may still be there. Benjamin's brother Charles enlisted in the Civil War at Camp Wyatt at the age of 19 in 1862. He mustered in as a private and was wounded at Malvern Hill, Virginia on the same day as my Great-Great Grandfather John Reaves Hunter, who is most likely Charles's cousin. He returned to duty January 1, 1863. He was wounded again at Chancellorsville, Virginia, sometime between May 1-4, 1863. He again returned to duty July 1, 1863. He was promoted to the position of Corporal during his service in the Confederate Army. He surrendered at Appomattox Court House in Virginia on April 9, 1865.

The descendants of Samuel Hunter and Benjamin Hunter, the son of Thomas Hunter, are many. I am convinced but cannot prove that these two men were closely related. They lived near each other, they attended the same churches, and they worked together. Their sons and brothers enlisted in the Confederate army and were all wounded in the Battle of Malvern Hill.

Relatives of these men relocated to Sampson County, North Carolina. Cousin Linda Draughn remembers our Hunter relatives in Sampson County coming to visit "Down on the Creek", Lee County, NC.

Benjamin Hunter's line can be traced back to Theophilus Hunter of Wake County, North Carolina. I believe as my Grandfather Rupert Hunter believed that all of the Hunters "Down on the Creek" are related. No one can prove how.

We have plenty of information that points in the right direction, but just doesn't without a doubt provide exact proof. My grandpa Rupert Hunter once told me with a twinkle in his eye "I know, I just want to see if you can figure it out". Grandpa passed away October 20, 1984. Grandma followed him to Heaven, April 2005.

I will forever be Hunting Hunters.

If anyone would like to contact me concerning this information Please email tlynlibrarian@yahoo.com (Toni-Lynn Hunter)

Editor's Note: Thanks to Toni-Lynn Hunter and her uncle, Joseph Stanford Hunter, this line of Hunters descends from the William of Nansemond line matching on a 37 marker yDNA test.

Memphis Church
7785 Poplar Springs Church Rd
Sanford, NC 27330
35° 32' 11" north 79° 2' 7" west