

## *Grampa Bill's G. A. Pages*



# Edward Hunter

## 1793 - 1883

- *Born 1793 Newton Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania*
- *Married Ann Standly about 1833*
- *Baptized 1840*
- *Ordained High Priest and Bishop 1844*
- *Sustained as Presiding Bishop 1851*
- *Died 1883 Salt Lake City, Utah*

This biographical sketch of Bishop Hunter was penned by [Orson F. Whitney](#), Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, and was published in the *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*.

Edward Hunter, the presiding Bishop of the Church, was the second son and seventh child of Edward and Hannah Hunter, and was born June 22, 1793, in Newtown township, Delaware county, Penn. His paternal ancestors were from the north of England, and on his mother's side he was of Welsh extraction. The original of the Hunter family is supposed to have been "William the hunter," from whom came the Hunters of Medomsley Hall, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, the village of Medomsley existing as early as A. D. 1183. John Hunter, the great-grandfather of the Bishop, passed over to Ireland some time in the seventeenth century, and served as a lieutenant of cavalry under William of Orange, at the battle

of the Boyne, where he was wounded. He afterwards came to America, and settled in Delaware county, Penn., about twelve miles from Philadelphia. Edward Hunter, Esquire, the Bishop's father, was justice of the peace of Delaware county for forty years.

On his mother's side, three generations back, was Robert Owen, of North Wales, a man of wealth and character, and a firm sympathizer with Cromwell and the Protectorate. On the restoration of Charles II he refused to take the oath of allegiance and was imprisoned for five years. The Bishop was fond of referring to this incident in the life of his ancestor. He would relate the circumstance in his quaint, desultory way, and coming to the close, repeat the words: "Oath of allegiance—yes, yes—refused to take it—imprisoned for five years"—and then, lifting up his hands, throwing back his head, and half shutting his eyes in a sort of dreamy ecstasy would exclaim: "Beautiful! beautiful!" Robert Owen, after his release from prison, emigrated to America and purchased property in the neighborhood of the "City of Brotherly Love." Like its founder, William Penn, he was himself a Quaker. His son George sat in the State legislature, and held various offices of public trust. Such in brief is the lineage of the Presiding Bishop.

It was the intention of his father to give him a thorough scholastic training. He, however, expressed a preference for agricultural pursuits. His choice was humored, but he was prevailed upon to acquire a trade, and became proficient as a tanner and currier. He subsequently attended school and mastered the art of surveying, and finally went into business in Philadelphia with a merchant named Bomount. He had previously made a trip to the west as far as Louisville, Kentucky, intending to go on to St. Louis, but was diverted from his purpose and returned home via the Southern and Atlantic States. When Edward was twenty-two years of age his father died. He was offered his position as justice of the peace, but declined it on account of his youth. He was also tendered [offered] the Federal candidacy and certain election to the Pennsylvania legislature, but would not accept it as he was a Democrat and chose to remain one. He served seven years as a cavalry volunteer, and three years as county commissioner of Delaware county, receiving at the election a higher vote than any other officer on the ticket.

After farming in Delaware county for four or five years, he removed to Chester county, where he purchased a fine farm of five hundred acres, well stocked and cultivated. He there married Ann Standly, youngest daughter of Jacob and Martha Standly, an honest, capable family of that vicinity. He was then about forty years of age.

Let the Bishop's own record now speak for him: "I always had an inquiry of the Lord as to how I could worship Him acceptably. My father told me to belong to no religious sect, but to keep sacred that all men have the right to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. He said our form of government was too good for a wicked world, and that its blessings of liberty would not be appreciated and respected. I succeeded in business beyond my expectation. I attended different places of worship and sustained all sects in the right to worship God in their own way, but could not connect myself with any. I was called on to give the privilege to have erected on my land, on the site of an old school house which had burned down, a house for educational purposes and also for holding meetings. I agreed to give the land for ninety-nine years and help build the house, if they would allow all persons and persuasions to meet in it to worship God. This was particularly stated in the articles of agreement, and a good house was built called the West Nantmeai Seminary.

My sister, living in my family, was a great reader of the Scriptures and would often say, 'how is it we cannot join any of the professions of the day.' I would tell her they were hewing out cisterns that would not hold water; that the history of sectarianism was one scene of bloodshed and strife, but we would look on and see if they could make anything else out of it." Such was the state of his mind on the subject of religion, when, in the spring of 1839, he heard of a strange sect called "Mormons," some of whose preachers, traveling through that region, had learned of the West Nantmeal Seminary and taken steps to procure the hall for the purpose of holding meetings.

Immediately a tumult was raised, and it was declared by some of the leading residents that it would not do to have the "Mormons" there.

"Why?" inquired Mr. Hunter.

"Oh, they are such a terrible people," was the reply. "Why are they terrible?" he asked. "Why—why"—stammered the accusers—"Dr. Davis says they are a very dangerous people, and it will not do to let them preach here."

"Oh, that's it?" said the honest, independent farmer, his democratic blood beginning to boil. "When I gave the lease for that land and helped to build that house, it was particularly agreed and stated in the lease that

people of every religion should have the privilege of meeting there to worship God. Now, those Mormons are going to have their rights, or else the lease is out and I'll take the Seminary." This determined speech brought the bigots to their senses, and no further objection was raised.

Soon after that Mr. Hunter, hearing that a "Mormon" Elder was going to preach at a place called Locust Grove, a few miles away, and that he was liable to be badly treated, mounted his horse and rode over to the meeting for the express purpose of seeing that the stranger was not imposed upon. The Elder's name was Elijah H. Davis. "He was a humble young man," says the Bishop, "the first one that I was impressed was sent of God.

I was sitting by Dr. Griffith, our representative. Robert Johnson, one of the trustees, addressing the Elder, said: 'I wish you would say something about the Atonement.' He spoke well on the subject, but before he was through Johnson interrupted him and ordered him to quit preaching.

I sprang up and said: 'He is a stranger and shall have justice shown him and be respected; we will hear him and then hear you speak.' I was informed that there were many present opposed to the 'Mormons,' but I resolved as I lived that Mr. Davis should be protected, if I had to meet the rabble on their own ground. I kept my eye on them and determined to stand by him at the risk of person and property. I had friends, though Mr. Davis had none. Mr. J. Johnson, brother to Robert Johnson, came to me as I was going out and apologized for his brother's conduct. I walked out of the crowd, got on my horse and rode home alone."

On reaching home and retiring for the night, he lay awake for some time meditating on what had taken place. "My reflections were," says he, "why have I taken such a decided stand for those strangers, and I asked the Lord: 'Are those Mormons thy servants?' Instantly, a light came in the room at the top of the door, so great that I could not endure it. I covered my head with the bed-clothes and turned over to the wall. I had exerted my mind and body much that day and soon fell asleep."

Mr. Hunter's house, from that time forth, was a home for all "Mormon" Elders traveling in that vicinity. During the winter of 1839-40, he was honored by a personal visit from the Prophet [Joseph Smith](#), who was on his way back from Washington, after presenting to Pres. Van Buren the memorial of his people's grievances, and invoking, in

vain, governmental protection for the Latter-day Saints, recently driven out of Missouri. Joseph preached at the Seminary and spent several days with Mr. Hunter before proceeding westward.

On Oct. 8, 1840, Edward Hunter was baptized by Elder [Orson Hyde](#), then on his way to Palestine, and soon after received a visit from Elder [Hyrum Smith](#), the Prophet's brother. He attended conference at Philadelphia, and subscribed liberally to the building of the Nauvoo House and the Temple. At a subsequent visit of Brother Hyrum Smith, as they were walking along the banks of the Brandywine, the conversation turned upon the subject of the departed; and Brother Hunter was constrained to inquire about his children whom he had lost, particularly a little boy, George Washington by name, an excellent child to whom he was devotedly attached.

"It is pretty strong doctrine," said Elder Smith, "but I believe I will tell it. Your son will act as an angel to you; not your guardian angel, but an auxiliary angel, to assist you in extreme trials." The truth of this was manifested to him about a year and a half later, when, in an hour of deep depression, the little boy appeared to him in vision. Brother Hunter says: "In appearance he was more perfect than in natural life—the same blue eyes, curly hair, fair complexion, and a most beautiful appearance. I felt disposed to keep him, and offered inducements for him to remain.

He then said, in his own familiar voice: George has many friends in heaven."

In September, 1841, Edward Hunter visited Nauvoo, the headquarters of the Saints, and purchased a farm and several town lots, deciding to make it his permanent place of abode. Returning to Pennsylvania, he disposed of two of his farms, and invested considerable means in merchandise, and in June, 1842, moved with his family to the bosom of the Church. He took with him seven thousand dollars in money and four or five thousand dollars in goods of different kinds, all of which he placed in the hands of the Prophet, to be used for the general advancement of the work of God. He paid out thousands of dollars in improving his property in and about Nauvoo, and furnishing many hands with employment. According to Joseph's own words, Brother Hunter assisted him, in one year, to the extent of fifteen thousand dollars. It was given cheerfully, for his soul naturally liberal, was wrapped up in his religion, for which he felt willing to make any sacrifice. Indeed, he had given so much to the Church, that Joseph finally told him he had done

enough, and to reserve the rest of his property for his own use.

He was a patient sharer in the Persecutions to which the Church and its principal men were continually subjected. About twelve months after taking up his residence in Nauvoo, he was arrested with several others on a charge of treason and taken to Carthage for trial. How this must have incensed his patriotic soul, which had tenaciously observed the laws of his country from childhood, and regarded his native land with all the love and reverence which high and noble natures alone can feel, is left to the imagination of those who knew him. Suffice it, that no one appeared against them at the trial; and the trumped-up charge being dismissed, they were set at liberty.

He was at the trial of the Prophet, in Springfield, the capital of Illinois, when Judge Pope, after the verdict of acquittal had been rendered, ordered the clerk of the court to put it on record that the "Mormon" leader should not be tormented any longer by such vexatious prosecutions. During those troubled times the Prophet, whose life was constantly being sought, was hid up for long periods in the house of Brother Hunter, who enjoyed his confidence and had been chosen one of his life guards. Under his roof, during one of these seasons of retirement, was revealed the latter part of the revelation concerning baptism for the dead. He received from the Prophet during this period many precious blessings and promises, in recognition of his friendship and fidelity.

Edward Hunter was one of the City Council of Nauvoo which authorized the abatement of the "Expositor," a libelous sheet established by apostates, bitter enemies of the Saints, for the purpose of stirring up mob violence against them. The act of abatement, which was peaceably but thoroughly executed, was magnified by the anti-"Mormons" and invested with all the sensation of which it was capable, and the brunt of censure, as usual, fell upon the leaders of the Church. Brother Hunter, at Joseph's request, visited Springfield to interview Governor Ford and represent matters in their proper light, and ask him to use his influence to allay the excitement and hostility which had now set in like a flood in the direction of Nauvoo and the "Mormons."

Joseph's parting words to him were: "You have known me for several years; say to the governor, under oath, everything good and bad you know of me." Brother Hunter was accompanied on his errand by J. Bills and P. Lewis. They were followed for miles by officers whose intention was to arrest them, but having the promise of God's Prophet that they should accomplish their journey and return in safety, they were not

overtaken, and in due time arrived at their destination. Governor Ford had gone to Carthage, but his wife assured the messengers that His Excellency would not take any action, pro or con, until he had seen "Mr. Smith."

On their return, the whole country was in an uproar and they learned that Joseph and Hyrum had given themselves up and gone to Carthage. Threats were made on all sides that the "Mormon" leaders would never get away alive, and the bloody sequel showed that such was indeed the purpose of those who had induced them to surrender their persons, though they had done so on the pledged word of the governor of the State that they should be protected. Brother Hunter and his companions reached Nauvoo June 27, 1844, the very day and about the same hour that Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered in Carthage jail.

"Next day," says his narrative, "their bodies were brought from Carthage to Nauvoo. We formed two lines to receive them; I was placed at the extreme right, to wheel in after the bodies, and march to the Mansion. As we passed the Temple, there were crowds of mourners there, lamenting the great loss of our Prophet and Patriarch. The scene was enough to almost melt the soul of man. Mr. Brewer, myself and others took Brother Joseph's body into the Mansion House. When we went to the wagon to get the corpse, Colonel Brewer, a U. S. officer, taking up the Prophet's coat and hat, which were covered with blood and dirt, said, 'Mr. Hunter, look here; vengeance and death await the perpetrators of this deed.' At midnight Brothers Dimick B. Huntington, G. Goldsmith, William Huntington and myself carried the body of Joseph from the Mansion House to the Nauvoo House, and put him and Hyrum in one grave. Their death was hard to bear. Our hope was almost gone, not knowing then that Joseph had prepared for the Kingdom to go on, by delivering the keys to the Twelve and rolling off the burden from his shoulders on to theirs.

Great sorrow prevailed in the hearts of the people. Pres. Brigham Young and most of the Twelve were away." Nov. 23, 1844, Elder Hunter was ordained a High Priest and Bishop and set apart to preside over the Fifth Ward of Nauvoo. He was ordained by Pres. [Brigham Young](#), Apostle [Heber C. Kimball](#) and Presiding Bishop [Newel K. Whitney](#), the first named being mouth. Among the promises made to him, and one that was impressed deeply upon his mind, was that he should "have power to raise up the drooping spirit," and simultaneously with its utterance a remarkable sensation thrilled through his being,

confirming the truth of the speaker's words.

He was Bishop of the Fifth Ward for about two years, until he left Nauvoo in the spring or summer of 1846, and joined the main body of the exiled Saints at Winter Quarters. He had been delayed by sickness for several weeks in Iowa. Bishop Hunter sustained a loss in property, by the exodus, of about fifty thousand dollars. He spent the winter of 1846-7 at Winter Quarters, where he acted as Bishop of the Seventh Ward. While there, preparing and fitting out for the West, he suffered much from sickness in his family. He was appointed captain of one hundred wagons, and followed in the wake of the Pioneers six or eight weeks after their departure.

Pursuing a trackless course, but meeting with something new and interesting every day to relieve the otherwise toilsome and dreary journey, he and his company arrived in Great Salt Lake valley Sept. 29, 1847. Says the Bishop: "We were all well, but our teams were worn down. We had an open winter and our stock recruited. Our breadstuffs were very limited and we used to get roots from the Indians and dig them ourselves. The Mormon Battalion came, bringing gold, but no flour. Flour sold at fifty cents per pound."

Elder Hunter was appointed Bishop of the South Fort, and in February, 1849, he was chosen Bishop of the 13th Ward, Salt Lake City. In the fall of 1849, he was sent back by the First presidency to the Missouri river, to superintend the emigration of the poor Saints to the Valley. He took with him funds for this purpose amounting to five thousand dollars, and thus set in motion the vast emigrating enterprise which has peopled with souls from two hemispheres the mountain vales of Utah.

He returned to the Valley Oct. 10, 1850. During his absence the death of one of his dearest friends took place—Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney, who expired Sept. 23, 1850. Bishop Hunter was chosen to succeed Bishop Whitney in the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, April 7, 1851. His counselors, for a year or more, were Presidents Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball [**Note from Grampa Bill:** This is an amazing assertion that two of the very men who had ordained Bishop Hunter should be his counselors! That the President of the Melchizedek Priesthood should be a counselor in the Presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood. Further, this assertion is not corroborated by either the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* or the *Church Almanac*, both of which list Bishop Hunter's Counselors. Yet one cannot believe that Elder Orson


F. Whitney, himself an Apostle, would make an error of this magnitude. It seems likely that these two great men humbled themselves and served the Lord by counseling his newly called Presiding Bishop but were not formally set apart as his Counselors.]; afterwards Bishops [Leonard W. Hardy](#) and [Jesse C. Little](#) were appointed to fill those positions, and later on Bishop [Robert T. Burton](#) took the place vacated by Bishop Little.

April 6, 1853, during the general conference of the Church, Bishop Hunter and others laid the southwest cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple, and he delivered the oration. In closing his record the Bishop says: "I have acted in the Priesthood and the part allotted me, With the love and fear of God before my eyes, by the aid of His Spirit to the best of my ability, and I hope acceptably in the sight of God and those who preside over me in this Latter-day work."

It would require a volume to tell all that could be told, even briefly, of the life and character of this good and noble man. Honest, straightforward in his dealings, and candid even to bluntness in his speech, his heart overflowed with kindness and he enjoyed the love and confidence of all. Childlike and humble, he was nevertheless shrewd and discerning. He was charitable and open-handed to all, even to tramps and vagrants. He would sometimes quote them in his humorous way: "Hunting work, hunting work, yes, yes, but they don't want to find it very bad. Feed them, brethren, feed them—mustn't let them starve."

He was not only quick to perceive, but ready and witty at retort, and had an eccentric way of turning a conversation suddenly sprung upon him, into a channel utterly foreign to the purpose of the other party, and then, as the visitor arose to leave, thinking he had come on a fruitless errand, would suddenly revert to the original theme and give the answer which he had all along been cogitating, while his speech was pursuing a different course. He was a great exhorter to faithfulness, particularly in the payment of tithes and offerings. His familiar speech at the Bishop's meetings: "Pay your tithing and be blessed," has Passed into a proverb.

The death of Bishop Hunter occurred on Tuesday, Oct. 16, 1883. The immediate cause was internal inflammation, an ailment from which he had suffered for years, and which he anticipated would finally prove fatal. His health had been feeble for a long time, though his mind was unimpaired, and for the last month he had frequently been absent from his office. Among those who visited his bedside during his illness were President [John Taylor](#) and Apostle [Erastus Snow](#). So passed from this



stage of action, where for over ninety years he had acted well and faithfully every part assigned him, a man of God as noted for his uprightness and integrity, as for his genial nature and overflowing kindness of heart. His memory will live as long as the great work with which he was identified, and which he labored so long and faithfully to establish.—Orson F. Whitney.

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