

Hi everyone,

It's time for one of my occasional updates on what I've been doing to further the knowledge of the families and descendants of John and Barbara (Bowman) Hunter. To say I've been busy is a gross understatement. At any given moment I'm corresponding with perhaps 50 cousins.

First, I'll briefly go over the reunion in Springfield, Missouri in 2004. I think it was a very successful event. We had cousins come from Hawaii, Oregon, California, Florida, Kansas, Arizona, Texas, Illinois, Michigan, Oklahoma and a lot of other places. Those are just the ones I can recall. Accurate records were not kept of the total number of attendees, but it was probably in the order of 75. Thirty were there for the luncheon on the first morning, but people kept coming until the very end. A group came in late on Saturday afternoon. Some could only come for an hour or so, others came early and remained until the end.

One of the highlights was the raffle. We always need money for mailings. Our cousin, Joyce Hunter, of Davenport, Florida made a queen size quilt, which she donated, in the colors of the fall foliage surrounding the homestead of John Hunter in Washington County TN. The colors were derived from a 1996 photo I took of the mountains surrounding the homestead. She bought the material in a quilt shop in Jonesborough, Tennessee and actually had to make two additional trips from Florida to Tennessee to get all the material she needed. That's devotion to the family. Many thanks to you, Joyce.

Others brought a number if interesting raffle items such as macadamia nuts Lori Smith brought from Hawaii. Many thanks, Lori, for your thoughtfulness. It's really appreciated. And to all the others who contributed, your help is a necessary part of making these events possible.

The next reunion is scheduled for July 12-15, 2006 at Prineville, Oregon. We have a lot of cousins in the western part of the country and I've been asked a number of times why the reunions are always held in the east. We do listen.

Remember, four of the grandsons of John and Barbara moved to Oregon, and one granddaughter moved to California by covered wagon. They each left families that have multiplied. Additional families have moved west in the 150 years since those first five families arrived on the west coast. Those people are entitled to share the pleasure of meeting cousins they never knew they had.

So for all you easterners, and those in between, this is a good time to do those things you've always wanted to do out west, like see Yellowstone, or stick your toes into the Pacific, or as one cousin who lives in Michigan said, I've always wanted to see the redwoods in California. So he's combining the commune with nature with the trip to the reunion. I like his way of thinking. That's a lot like I do each summer. There's so much wonderful scenery if you take time to enjoy it, as I do.

The reunion will be held at the Stafford Inn, 1773 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754. Again, the dates are July 12-15, 2006. The following URL will allow a vicarious tour of the facilities "<http://www.staffordinn.com/>". Email: <mailto:staffinn@quik.com>". Their telephone numbers are: (541) 447-7100, or 1-877-744-7100. They have reserved some rooms, but to be sure you should reserve before they are all gone.

The local organizers and coordinators are our cousins, Elsie Simmons and Eloise Sweet. They are descendants of Absalom Frier, a grandson of John and Barbara, who was one of those pioneers who made the trip in a covered wagon. In fact, his trip is one of the more interesting of all those who went. It was so harrowing, so dangerous, and so interesting that a book has been published about that particular wagon train the "Terrible Trail of the Meek Cutoff, 1845," by Keith Clark and Lowell Tiller.

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Eloise and Elsie are not only wonderful people; they are fun to be around. They've even been known to tell an occasional joke. They are not afraid of work either; else they would not have volunteered to host a reunion. Thank you both.

Now a bit on what I've been up to during this interval.

Many of you have heard me talk of the log cabin Martha Hunter built in Parker County Texas about 1854 and which is still standing and which is still in the family. Parker County is west of Fort Worth and at that time was the leading edge of the frontier. It was Indian country. In the summer of 2004 I stopped for a few days and visited with cousins in Fort Worth, Texas. During that stop I started an effort to have the county preserve that historical treasure. So you can understand the historical importance of the log cabin to the history of that part of Texas I've appended to this note an article I prepared on the family of Henry and Martha (Murray) Hunter. The article was intended to encourage the county to take some action. I think you'll find it interesting. This is just one of the stories of the many families descended from John and Barbara.

During the past two years I've traveled the country, coast to coast twice and have visited with many cousins, gone to many court houses, libraries, cemeteries and every place where I'm likely to find information about any branch of the families of the ten children of John and Barbara. In fact, I've gathered so much new information I'm having trouble putting all of it into my system. There are just so many hours in a day and it turns out there really aren't enough hours or days.

I've managed to bring a number of cousins back into the family who had never known they were related. Almost all of them are very grateful. In fact, during the last reunion one of our cousins, from Polo, Illinois was surprised to learn a neighbor and friend was also a cousin. It really is a small world.

If my entire backlog was not enough I had a computer hard disk crash which set me back a fair bit. Fortunately I had most of the family history information backed up, but I did lose some of that which had recently been entered. Most of that has been recovered from cooperative cousins to whom I had sent their own family lines. I also lost my most current address book, but had an older one with some 300 addresses. I'm slowly getting that back in order.

On the search for the John Hunter family Bible I've made two trips, totaling almost 4000 miles of driving, to Bristol, Tennessee and Lynchburg, Virginia this past summer. Those were in addition to the trip to the west coast and back, another eight thousand miles. These two trips to Virginia were specifically to locate additional info that may lead to the Bible. Callie (Hunter) Bryan's daughter, Norah Bryan was the last person known to have the Bible. Norah had only one child, Bessie B. McClanahan, who married Alfred Stump. I traced them to Lynchburg, Virginia and that was the reason for my trip to Lynchburg. I was able to make contact with descendants of one son of Bessie, but they did not have the Bible, however, they knew so much detailed family information which almost certainly came from the Bible that I've gotten new hope that the Bible will surface.

One thing for certain, I won't stop until the last possible clue has been run to earth.

The moment the Bible surfaces I'll be screaming to all of you. I'll probably shout so loudly you'll hear me directly.

I've also located a number of cousins in the Pacific Northwest who don't even know they are related. I'll be contacting them by telephone in the near future. I have to space the calls out a bit because these families usually pass on so much updated family info that I need time to get it organized. What a wonderful problem!

The collected data has increased by about a thousand pages, rough guess, since the last reunion. It was some 5700 pages at that time. The family just keeps growing. Others have been provided copies of what I have so it won't be lost to posterity. I also plan to place copies, on CD, to a selected few libraries.

So you see, it really has been a busy time, but a lot of fun and I've met a lot more wonderful cousins.

Among all the pleasant things that have happened there is one sad note. We have lost one of our cousins in Iraq.

Joseph Daniel Hunt (December 8, 1977-August 22, 2005). His descent from John Hunter is: John Hunter (1), Henry Hunter (2), Joseph Hunter (3), Jordan Hunter (4), Lucinda Hunter (5), James Blaine Marsee (6), Sylvia Lavada Marsee (7), Joyce Ann Evans (8), Timothy Louis Hunt (9), Joseph Daniel Hunt(10).

He grew up in Sweetwater, Tennessee and was the great grandson of Lavada Evans whom many of you will remember from the first three reunions. She's the wonderful little lady that kept everyone smiling and the one who conceived the idea and donated the first quilt for a raffle at the reunions. Any time I'm anywhere near that part of Tennessee I stop for a visit with Lavada. Her vivacity is such a wonderful inspiration, more like a tonic.

Dan's mother wants you to all know she is not in sympathy with the Cindy Sheehans and their ilk. She says Dan was doing what he wanted to do and was proud of his service to the country. She's proud of what he did, but terribly sad that she lost a son. Our prayers go out to her and to his family.

In truth he was simply doing what every generation of the descendants of John Hunter have done since John gave up his pacifist religious persuasions during the American Revolution and marched to the sound of the guns. We've all done it.

See you all at the reunion,  
Bill Hunter