

HISTORY

OF

BISHOP EDWARD HUNTER

Pioneer of 1847 -- Third Presiding Bishop of Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Written by: Rachel Dora Hunter Floyd,
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BISHOP EDWARD HUNTER

Edward Hunter was born June 22, 1793, in Newtown Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, the second son and eleventh child of Edward and Hannah Maris Hunter. His paternal ancestors were from North of England and his mother's side was of Welch extraction. [His parents were married Jan. 16, 1775, in Carlisle, Cumberland Co., Penn. His father was born Sept. 16, 1747, in Carlisle, Cumberland Co., Penn. He died in August 1817. The original Hunter family is supposed to have been "William the Hunter" of Medomsley Hall, near Newcastle on the Tyne, the village of Medomsley existing as early as 1183 A.D.]

Bishop Edward Hunter's grandfather was William Hunter and his grandmother's name was Hannah Woodward. His great grandfather was John Hunter and he passed over to Ireland sometime in the Seventeenth Century, and served as Lieutenant 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 Bishop Hunter's mother's side, three generations back was Robert Owen of North Wales, a man of wealth and character and a firm sympathiser with Cromwell and the Protectorate.

Edward Hunter married Laura Lovina Shiner Kaufman. She was born March 27, 1827, in Charlestown, Chester Co., Penn. They were married Dec. 15, 1845, and sealed June 29, 1846 in the Nauvoo Temple by Heber C. Kimball. Brigham Young and J. Brown and Franklin D. Richards were witnesses.

Edward Hunter was trained in youth to become a tanner and currier, but he turned to surveying, in which he received a complete education. Circumstances, however, led him into the business world and he established himself at Philadelphia, where he was unusually successful.

His early religious experiences were singularly like those of Joseph Smith and Edward Partridge. He wrote in his diary—"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 conscience." He attended different places of worship and sustained all sects in the right to worship God in their own way, but he did not join any of them.

Edward Hunter tells of the good counsel that his father always gave him and that he adhered to it all his life. When he was twenty-two years old, his father passed away. He inherited an excellent farm and through his diligence and ability, he prospered. He held the confidence of the people who elected him to the office of County Commissioner of Delaware County. When he was twenty-five years old, he sold his holdings in Delaware Co. and purchased a 500 acre farm in Chester County.

At one time he had a severe sickness (Typhoid Fever), and would have died if it had not been for the faith that he had in God. When the fever left he was so weak that he could not sit up without fainting—"was fully in the knowledge and power of a superior being but did not know how to approach Him. Afterwards I was in a situation that no earthly power could assist me and by my faith in God I was greatly benefitted and blessed." These events have always been remembered and kept sacred.

Edward Hunter tells of his sister who was a great reader of the Scriptures and she would often say, "How is it we cannot join any of the professions of the day?" "I would tell her they were all 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 his state of mind on the subject of religion.

In the spring of 1839 he heard of the strange sect called "Mormons." It was at this time that Edward Hunter was asked to give permission for a seminary to be built upon his land. It was called the West Nantmeal Seminary. He agreed to give a free lease for 99 years with provision that "All persons and persuasions were to be granted the use of the building to worship God." When the Mormons heard of this building, they asked to hold meetings there. Immediately a tumult was raised. 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, "Dr. Davis says they are a very dangerous people and it will not do to let them preach here." Mr. Hunter said, "When I gave the lease for the land and helped to build that house, it was particularly agreed and stated in the lease that people of every religion should have that privilege of meeting there to worship God-- Now these '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. The unusual circumstances (surrounding the denial) caused Edward Hunter to investigate, with the result that he joined the Church.

His home was always open for the elders even before he joined the Church.

In 1833 when he was forty years of age he was married to Ann Standley.

It was after the winter of 1839-40 that Joseph Smith came to Chester County, held meetings at the seminary and also came to the Hunter home. In fact, his home was open to the Mormons to come and go when they pleased.

The following October 8th, 1840, Edward Hunter was baptised by Bro. Orson Hyde. Bro. Hyrum Smith and Dr. Gallon visited his home. They all attended conference in the seminary. He gave Bro. Hyrum \$200 for the temple and the Nauvoo House which was being built.

In September 1841 he visited Nauvoo and purchased a farm near the city. He returned to Pennsylvania, sold his holdings, and moved to Nauvoo in June 1842. It was said he took \$7,000 in money with him which he presented to the Prophet Joseph Smith for the benefit of the church. From his diary we read, "My wife and myself had made up our minds to let Joseph have all our means until he came to me and said: "Keep it"-- Bro. Joseph said to me when we were together, "I prophesy you shall bring in all your father's house to His Kingdom if you desire it." Said, "This is said by the Spirit of the Lord." Then at another time he said, "I know your genealogy, you are near a kin to me. I know what brought you into this church. It was to do good to your fellow men and you can do much good." "

His attention was again turned to farming. One year he raised or had raised on

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his farm 7,000 bushels of grain. This farm was east of Nauvoo.

Enemies were really on the trail of the Prophet Joseph around this time. Porter Rockwell and Bro. Hunter were sent to Springfield, Ill. to the governor to plead the prophet's case. Bro. Joseph gave them his promise, "You shall return safe." When they arrived at Springfield, the governor had gone to Carthage. "On our return we crossed the Thomas River all was a commotion. We met hundreds rejoice drunk. They said, "We have Joe and Hyrum in jail!" " The Prophet Joseph and Hyrum were killed June 27, 1844. The next day the bodies were brought from Carthage to Nauvoo—"We formed two lines to receive them. Crowds of mourners were there lamenting the great loss of our Prophet and Patriarch, almost to melt the soul of man. Mr. Brewer, myself and others took Bro. Joseph's and Hyrum's body into the Mansion house. When we went to the wagon for their bodies, Colonel Brewer U. S. officer said—"Bro. Hunter, look here," jerking up the coat and hat of Bro. Joseph which was mingled with blood and dirt—(vengeance and death await the perpetrators of this deed.) At midnight Bro. D. Huntington and his brother William, Gilbert Goldsmith and myself carried the bodies of Prophet Joseph and Hyrum from the Mansion House to the Nauvoo House. We put the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum in one grave. Their death was hard to bare. Our hope was almost gone not knowing that Joseph had prepared for the Kingdom to go on."

Soon after the Prophet Joseph's death Edward Hunter was ordained a high priest. Nov. 23, 1844, he was set apart as Bishop of the Nauvoo 5th Ward by President Brigham Young, H. E. Kimball and Bishop Newell K. Whitney. At this time Pres. Young spoke and among the many blessings conferred on Bishop Hunter were that he should have the power to raise the drooping spirit. He continued to be Bishop for three years. The temple was being built in Nauvoo. The Saints were driven from there.

The Twelve and some other brethren left in the winter of 1845. "I was counceiled to remain." He was appointed captain over 100 wagons. It was called the Edward Hunter Company. He left in the summer of 1846. He let part of his property go for a "fit out," for one tenth of its worth. Other property he made over to a Trustee-in-Trust and some was just left without conveying it to any person.) It was said that his home and

other property was a loss of more than \$30,000.

He crossed to Iowa with his family. Becoming ill, he remained there for one month. After recovering he went on to Winter Quarters. It was here that a son, Rodolph, was born Oct. 26, 1847. This place was called Omaha Nation. They proceeded on their journey, traveling a trailless path part way. They met with many Indians. Bishop Hunter made friends with them and were given some buffalo meat, also buffalo robes and moccasins for food and a few trinkets in exchange. It seemed an endless journey.

They arrived in Salt Lake City, October 1, 1847. Edward Hunter was chosen to preside over the west side of the Old Fort. He was made Bishop of the 13th Ward in Salt Lake City, Feb. 22, 1849.

Also in 1849, he was called by the First Presidency to go to the Missouri River and supervise the emigration of the poor saints to the Salt Lake Valley. It was said that he gave \$5,000 to assist the emigrants at this time. During his absence the death of one of his dearest friends took place--Presiding Bishop Newell K. Whitney. The business and organizational ability of Edward Hunter, his sense of justice, and his experience as a Bishop especially, qualified him to succeed his very dear friend Bishop Whitney as Presiding Bishop. He was fifty-eight years old when he became Presiding Bishop of the Church, April 7, 1851. It was just eleven years after he had joined the Church.

During his administration he placed great emphasis upon the payment of tithing and offerings. His favorite theme was: "Pay your tithes and be blessed." His counselors for a year or more were President Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. Afterwards Bishops Leonard W. Hardy and Jesse G. Little were appointed to fill these positions. "To Bishop Hunter belongs the distinction of having served as Presiding Bishop longer than any other person--a term of over thirty-two years."

The following children were born: A son, William Wallace (my father), April 8, 1851. Next came Oscar Fitzallen, May 8, 1852, and Laura Lovina was born Feb. 8, 1853. All were born in Salt Lake City, except Rodolph, whose birth is mentioned earlier.

On April 6, 1853, during a general conference of the Church, Bishop Hunter and others laid the southwest cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple and he also delivered the oration.

In closing his record the Bishop said, "I have acted in the Priesthood and in the part allotted to me, with love and fear of God before my eyes, 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.)"

May 14, 1875, he was named member of the original committee for Old Folks Day. In 1881, the following testimonial was presented:

" TESTIMONIAL.

"At the Old Folks' Excursion, June 22d, 1881, was presented, to Bishop Edward Hunter, a splendid gilt frame containing the likenesses of Presidents Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor, and Bishop Edward Hunter, also the poem of Sister E. R. Snow Smith. This was presented by Richard Ballentyne (founder of Sunday Schools in Utah), and donated by the Sunday School children of Ogden City. It being Bishop Hunter's eighty-eighth birthday, and thirtieth year of his presidency. Executed (all but the likenesses) by the pen of Professor Phelps, in the most workmanlike manner.

"TO THE PRESIDING BISHOP, EDWARD HUNTER,

"On the eighty-eighth Anniversary of his Birthday.

"Hail, our worthy, aged Bishop,
On your Anniversary!
You have won unfading laurels
Thro' your staunch integrity,
Rich in gifts of grace and wisdom--
With celestial light imbued,
By supernal beams of knowledge,
From the Eternal Source of Good.

Our first Prophet loved you dearly--
Well your sterling worth he knew;
He, in holy bonds of friendship,
Still retains his love for you.
Your large heart, with gen'rous impulse,
Unrestrained by selfish greed,
From your ample store, imparted
Freely to the Prophet's need.

When unhallowed persecution,
Waged against the Saints of God;
You, unflinching and undaunted,
Firmly as a bulwark stood,

Men of trust--of faith and courage,
When the sky was dark and drear,
Were esteemed most choice and precious,
By our noble, martyr'd Sear.

You have blessed the lonely widow--
Soothed and cheered the orphan's heart;
You, with kindness, faith and patience,
Have performed a brother's part.
As a fond and loving father,
You alleviate distress--
When officially presiding,
You decide in righteousness.

You have made a noble record,
Filled with useful service here,
Where the name of Edward Hunter,
Many "hearts and homes" hold dear.
You have reached a mark of honor,
Far above all earthly fame--
You require no sculptured marble,
To immortalize your name."

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He passed away at his home in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, October 16, 1883. He was ninety years, three months, and twenty-three days of age. The immediate cause of his death 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. Several members of his family were present at his passing, and it was thought that his final words were "O my God,"

Funeral services were held in the Tabernacle, Friday October 19, at 2 p.m. Thousands who had known and loved him in life assembled to pay their last respects to his memory. Elder Erastus Snow, one of the speakers at his funeral said that "few men of his acquaintance had so uniformly maintained their integrity, discharging their duties with fidelity and faithfulness, with credit to themselves and with honor to God as had Bishop Edward Hunter." O. F. Whitney said of him—"His name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, never to be blotted out, and his memory on earth will endure as long as the great work with which he is identified, and which he labored so long and faithfully to establish."

He was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

Andrew Jensen, assistant Church Historian, said of Bishop Hunter, "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. He was 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 openhanded to all, even to tramps and vagrants."

—Written by Rachel Dora Hunter Floyd, daughter of
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Granddaughter of Bishop Edward Hunter.—