

THE ORIGIN OF THE HUNTER FAMILY

The name Hunter comes from the Latin and French Venator, meaning to hunt, or pertaining to hunting. From books on Heraldry, Coats of Arms, etc. the coats of arms of all of the Hunter families in Scotland and England resemble each other, showing that they were all related. They show hunting dogs, horns, etc.

The earliest known of the family were Norman and William Venator of Hun tar, in Normandy living between the years 1080-1185. They appear to have been amongst those who passed over to England after the Conquest, went northward in the train of David I, who had married Maud, a grand-niece of the Conqueror.

Norman Hunter received a grant of certain lands in the barony of Arnele, on the extreme west coast of the County of Ayr, which were subsequently distinguished as Arnele Hunter, and which now form part of the estate of Hunterston. These lands are the only portion of the district which from its earliest division in the 10th century have remained unalienated. Nesbet in his "Heraldry," in treating of the antiquity of this family, makes mention of a charter of King Alexander III, 1271, in which a grant of land was conferred upon William Baddebie with the exception of such lands as had been conferred upon Norman Hunter by King Malcolm IV, and this document is likewise referred to in the Haddington Collections, the same author states that, in an ancient charter, Arnele "is bounded with 'terris Norman Venator's'", which are plainly the lands of Arnele Hunter, which lands are the lands of Hunterston. They were conferred doubtless on his appointment to the charge of the royal forests in the neighborhood. This was an office which the Exchequer rolls, and other state records prove to have been hereditary, and which the last mentioned royal charter is set forth in a grant by James IV, May 31, 1527.

Our Ancestors left Normandy after the Conquest of England by the Normans with William the Conqueror at the head, and settled in Scotland. The King of Scotland, David I appointed them to hunt for him in the royal forest, to keep the banquet tables supplied with deer, etc.

The Venators were granted a large tract of land, or barony, by the king, according to the custom of the conquering Normans, who wrested the land from the Saxons, and gave it to their favorites. This land became known as Huntersdon, or Hunterton. The family name became changed to the Saxon, "Hunter." This means the same as the Latin "Venator," to hunt. From Burke's "Landed Gentry" comes the following: Descended from a common ancestor, two ancient families of the name of Hunter, disputed for some centuries the honor of precedence viz: Hunter of Hunterston Praefectus Venatorium Regiorum," in Cunninghame Co., Ayr, the present chief of the house, and Hunter of Polmood Tweedale, now extinct. It is noteworthy that the latter House was never styled "of that ilk," a distinction accorded pre-eminence to the Ayrshire family. Crawford, the author of the "Peerage of Scotland" in writing about the commencement of the last century, states the rival houses "are both reputed ancient officers of state". The family of the south is styled Hunter of Polmood, of whom I have seen nothing," and that in the west is designated Hunter of that ilk" or of Hunterston, whose writs I have very carefully perused. This family, from charters, appears to have had at least a part of the estate they still possess in Cunninghame, while the Morvilles were lords of that country as far back as the reign of Alexander I (reigned 1214). From Burke's "Landed Gentry," Vol. 1, p. 835 Norman Venator or Hunter living between the years 1080 and 1165. William Venator, whose name appears as one of the witnesses with Hugh de Morville to an inquisition A.D. 1116, by David I, (Then Prince of Cumberland) of the lands pertaining to the Church of Glasgow, are the earliest of the family on record. They appear to have been amongst those who passing over to England after the Conquest went Northward in the train of David I, who had married a grand-niece of the Conqueror.

Nisbit in his heraldry, in treating of the antiquity of this family makes mention of a charter of King Alexander III (began his reign in 1249) "quam in capella nostra irrevocabile fecimus anno gratias 1271" in which a grant of land was conferred upon William Baddebie, with the exception of such lands as had been granted to Norman Hunter by King Malcolm IV accepta terra quondam Normani Venatoris quod Rex Malcolmus frater Reiss Wilmi avi nostri ei debet") and this document is likewise referred to in the Haddington Collections. The same author states that, in ancient charter Arnele "is bounded with 'terris Normani Venatoris,' which are plainly the lands of Arnele Hunter, which are the lands of Hunterston." They were conferred doubtless on his appointment to the charge of the royal forests in the neighborhood an office which the Exchequer rolls and other state records prove to have been hereditary, and of which the last mention in a Royal Charter is set forth in a grant of King James V dated 31 May 1527, by which the Island of Little Cumbrae is conferred upon Robert Hunter of Hunterston, and Janet Montgomerie, his spouse, and their heirs, "of which islands and lands, with pertaintments, the said Robert and his predecessor were in times past for us and our predecessors, the hereditary keepers." William Hunter in 1374 received by charter from King Robert III (beginning reign 1370) certain lands in Arnele, or Arnele Hunter now Hunterston which had belonged to Sir Andrew Campbell. These lands, granted to William Hunter "for faithful services rendered" are held nomine alii firma, a silver penny to be paid to the Sovereign if he comes to Arnele on the Feast of Pentecost. (These lands, Cambelton Farm and Cambelton Hill, have retained through the centuries the name of their former owner.) This very interesting charter, signed by King Robert III at Sterling in the 4th year of his reign, witnessed by William Landal, Bishop of St. Andrews (1340-85) by the King's two elder sons, John, Earl of Carrick and Robert, Earl of Fife and Monteith and by Douglas and Erskine of the day, has been mounted and framed by the British Museum, with silver pennies of King Robert III and of King George V also, mounted in the frame for payment to his Majesty if he comes to Hunterston at Pentecost.

Arms-vert, three dogs of the chase courant argent or collared or in a chief of the second as many hunting horns as the first, stringed gules supporters, two greyhounds sejant argent, collared or

Crest- a greyhound sejant argent, collared or Motto: "Cursum perficio."

Reference: Matthews Rue Book, p. 44

The earliest known of the Hunters of Northern England was William, who lived there in the early part of the 13th century. He may have been descended from the Scottish Hunters herein. William the Hunter, whose wife was of the Darreines of Whittonstall. The President of this archeological Society exhibited a document dated 1180, affixed to which was the seal "William the Hunter." They might very fairly assume that William the Hunter was progenitor of families who adopted the surname of Hunter. p. XLIV of Trans Durham and North^d Arch. Soc. 1 (Durham Pub. B)

The surname "Grosvenor" means "Chief Hunter" and also comes from the name "Venator," and the same place in Normandy and no doubt the two families are related.

Our first American Hunter ancestor, Captain John Hunter whose wife was Margaret Albin was born in Medomsley, Durham County, England in 1666. The village of Medomsley appears in Bolden " Book in Hadfield's Survey 1183, as Freehold held by the Bishop by 22 shillings rent. At the death of the latter, its Lords held ground called Hemerstly, rendering 4 rent showing a great increase in the value of the land between the dates of the two grants, when Bishop Hadfield was completed. These estates were held by John D. Falton, Knight, and Hemerstly is stated to have been formerly William Medomsleys. The family of Medomsley, Lords of that ilk, occurs not infrequently at an early date, and seems not improbable as

John Hunter and Anthony Wayne were vestrymen of the St. David's Episcopal church at Radnor, Delaware Co., Pa. in the year 1725. It is one of the oldest in Pa. and the East. It has been rebuilt, preserving the original pleasing lines and style of architecture and is still being used. It is constructed of stone and is beautifully landscaped with large trees, shrubs, vines, etc. It is a shrine which is visited each year by many tourists. Within the building, the family pew which was shared by the Wayne family may still be seen, marked with their names. John Hunter died in April 1734. He was buried in the graveyard of the church. Close to John's grave is that of his son James and James' wife Hannah. The burial plot is near that of the Wayne family. About two score of John's descendants are buried in this graveyard.

Anthony was the grandfather of General Anthony Wayne, one of the seven generals of the Revolutionary War. Descendants of both of them were destined to serve their country in a military capacity. John's sons, James and Peter, fought in the French and Indian War. James was a Captain in Colonel William Moore's Regiment, Chester Co. Pa. while his grandsons, John and James, sons of the above James, served in the Revolutionary War. John was a Captain of the 4th Co. sixth Battalion, Chester Co., Associators and Militia. Sarah, great granddaughter of the emigrant John Hunter married William R. Van Leer. He was a great grandson of the emigrant, Captain Anthony Wayne. Their grandson, Isaac Wayne Van Leer was mortally wounded in the Battle of Seven Pines in the Civil War.