

Hunt

John Hunt and his wife, **Latetia Gillan**, of the Parish of Mohill, County Leitrim, Ireland, were among the pioneers who settled the township of Fitzroy over a century and a half ago. They were both advanced in years to start out on the great adventure of emigrating to a new country, Canada, then almost a wilderness. They left their home in the Parish of Mohill, in Townland 16 of Currawn, with their eleven children ranging in age from twenty-eight to two years. They were accompanied by James Stewart who had married the eldest daughter, Sara, in 1826, and their son, Thomas born in 1828.

In addition to his land (10 acres) and an orchard, John Hunt had several looms and employed weavers to do custom work. Latetia was a flax spinner. With a family of eleven including eight sons, it is not surprising that John Hunt would seek a country where more land would be available. He must have been content with his Canadian land because in 1840 his brother Robert Hunt, his wife Mary Gillan (a sister of Latetia Gillan) and their family of seven children left for Canada to join him. Robert was a linen weaver and Mary, a flax spinner. Their land holdings in Ireland were only seven acres in Townland 16 of Currawn.

By contrast, the land purchased by John Hunt in Canada, Lot 16, Concession 5, Fitzroy Township, comprised 200 acres. Originally Crown Land, it was first granted to Rachael Horton in 1831 and purchased from her by John Hunt in 1832.

Arriving at Montreal after a six weeks' voyage on a sailing ship with seas so rough that some of their baggage was lost overboard, the Hunt entourage traveled via the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers to Fitzroy Harbour where they faced a trek of seven miles through the forest to the site of their new home. On the way from Fitzroy Harbour to the clearing which was to become their home, young John, aged eighteen, lingered behind finding it difficult to keep up with the others. His illness proved to be "ship's fever" and despite the anxious care of his mother, he slipped away two weeks later on July 4, 1832. It was necessary to find a last resting place, one that was "high and dry". His mother found a triangular knoll with a ravine on two sides close to the family home. He was buried beneath an elm tree and so the family cemetery was dedicated. Twenty years later, his mother died at the age of 70, and his father, John Hunt, died on Christmas Day 1864, at the age of 85 years. Owing to the fact that many of the old Irish records such as wills, deeds, transfers of property, etc, were destroyed during the troubles in Ireland in 1921 and 1922, and as all Parish church records prior to 1798 in the Parish of Mohill are also missing (presumably destroyed in the Irish rebellion of 1798), it was impossible to obtain official records of the births of the children of William Hunt, the son of Rev. Vere Hunt, who was born about 1720. Ulster King of Arms was quite willing to issue a confirmation of arms to the descendants of John Hunt of County Leitrim, based on family traditions, similarity of family names, personal family resemblances, family characteristics and religion, but he could not, however, register the pedigree giving the descent from the Limerick family as it has not been proven.

As the years went by, the Hunt family increased and flourished. By 1932, one hundred years later, the family tree extended over sixteen feet of blueprint prepared by the family historian, Major Harold Hunt (the compiler of the 1842 Census for Fitzroy Township and a son of John Hunt).

John Lewis Hunt, whose father, Charles Hunt, was a son of John Hunt, proposed the idea of a Hunt Reunion to celebrate the 100th year (1932) since the arrival of John Hunt and Latetia Gillan in Fitzroy Township. Dr. E.A. Hunt of Carp strongly supported the plan and the following officers were elected: John Lewis Hunt, Galetta, President; Fred Hunt, Galetta, Vice President; and Mrs. George Caldwell (Louise Hunt), Carp, Secretary-Treasurer.

The event was held on August 29th, 1932, in the secluded garden of the residence of Mr. and Mrs. John Lewis Hunt on the Proven Line (Lot 15, Con.4). A group picture was taken of the 144 persons present.

A flag flew at half-mast in the Hunt Cemetery a short distance away where the graves were decorated with flowers and, after lunch, a memorial service was conducted by the Rev. Sheldon Troop of Newboro, husband of Lila Needham, daughter of Alice Hunt and James Needham.

In responding to a toast to Ireland, proposed by Miss Eileen Gillan of Pakenham, Miss Kathleen Hunt of Chesterville brought greetings from the Hunts still living in the Parish of Mohill, County Leitrim, Ireland. She had visited them just two weeks before and had seen the two-storey stone house where a peat fire burned in the great kitchen fireplace. Other Canadian relatives have since visited there and still correspond with their Irish cousins.

Submitted by Edna Hunt

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