

Hunt, William ^[1]

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by Treva W. Mathis, 1988

1733–9 Sept. 1772

William Hunt, minister and religious traveler, was born at Rancocas, N.J., the son of William and Mary Woolman Hunt. After the death of his parents when he was very young he was reared by an aunt in Maryland. As a lad he was accepted by the Friends Meeting that he attended regularly in the company of this aunt.

Hunt moved to North Carolina when he was about eighteen, presenting his certificate to the Cane Creek Monthly Meeting of Friends in present [Alamance County](#) ^[2]. In 1733 he married Sarah Mills at the Cane Creek Meetinghouse and settled near New Garden ([Guilford College](#) ^[3]). When a monthly meeting was established at New Garden in 1754, he and his brother Eleazar were among the charter members. The same year he was recommended to become a minister.

It was the custom of Friends ministers to make religious visits to other meetings, whether in their immediate vicinity or in other parts of the colonies or in foreign countries. Often such visits would keep the clergymen away from home and family for years. On 18 Oct. 1770 Hunt, accompanied by his nephew Thomas Thornbrugh, left New Garden to travel through eastern North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, and Nantucket, Mass. On 4 May 1771, Hunt and Thornbrugh boarded the ship *Mary and Elizabeth* out of Philadelphia for London. They were at sea only twenty-three days, a very short journey for sailing vessels.

In England the two were received at most of the meetings and were housed in the homes of many illustrious [Quakers](#) ^[4]. Leaving England they went to Scotland, Ireland, Holland, and back to England. Hunt was called an eminent minister and was received as a "worthy zealous Friend with a good gift." He became ill with smallpox in August 1772 and died the following month; he was buried in the Friends Burial Ground at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

William Hunt's reputation in North Carolina is somewhat overshadowed by that of his son, Nathan, also a minister and a traveler in religious service, but best known as one of the founders of New Garden Boarding School (later Guilford College).

References:

Henry J. Cadbury, *Journal of William Hunt's Visit to Europe, 1771–1772, Together with William Hunt—A Memoir* ^[5] (1968).

William Hunt and Nathan Hunt, *Memoirs of William and Nathan Hunt, Taken Chiefly from Their Journals and Letters* ^[6] (1858).

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Origin - location:

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[Guilford County](#) ^[12]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).^[13]

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