

Hunter, Aaron Burtis ^[1]

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by Catherine Myers Bennington, 1988

26 Apr. 1854–12 July 1933

Aaron Burtis Hunter, Episcopal clergyman, educator, book collector, and philanthropist, was born in Philadelphia, Pa., the son of John C. and Sarah A. Clark Hunter. After graduation from public school in Philadelphia, he attended Amherst College ^[2], receiving the B.A. degree in 1876. He was elected to membership in the Amherst Club, Delta Upsilon social fraternity, and Phi Beta Kappa. Hunter was graduated from Union Theological Seminary ^[3] in 1879 and spent the next year studying at the University of Berlin, Germany. Amherst and the University of the South ^[4] awarded him doctor of divinity degrees in 1916.

Upon ordination as an Episcopal priest in 1882, Hunter was appointed successively assistant to the rector of St. Luke's in Germantown, Ohio; rector of St. Mary's Church in Hillsboro, Ohio (1882–84); and chaplain of Wolfe Hall in Denver, Colo. (1885–87).

On 9 January 1888 Hunter married Sarah Lothrop Taylor of Brooklyn, N.Y. One month later, on 6 February, he accepted an appointment to teach theology at St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute ^[5] in Raleigh—one of the first institutions established in the South to promote higher intellectual development for African Americans. Hunter believed in stimulating the individual's ability for self-help, and that "religion is for the training of . . . body, intellect, heart, and will, not just the expression of . . . emotion." In 1891 he succeeded Robert Bean Sutton ^[6] as principal, and in the late 1890s his administration spurred a period of energetic activity directed towards enhancement of the Industrial Trade School program. Mrs. Hunter founded and served as head of St. Agnes Hospital and Training School for Nurses, which adjoined the St. Augustine campus.

Many rare books and prints (including incunabula) collected by the Hunters on trips to Europe, particularly Italy, were sold to support the library at St. Augustine's. A large collection of these books is now part of the Rare Books Collection ^[7] at The University of North Carolina Library.

In 1916 Hunter resigned as principal of St. Augustine's, having worked to change its status from that of a strictly diocesan school to an institution of general higher education, although still supported by the national Episcopal church. In October 1920, he became priest-in-charge of St. James's American Episcopal Church in Florence, Italy, and remained there for more than six years. In 1928, when St. Augustine's achieved the status of college, Hunter was elected honorary president.

He died at age seventy-nine in Manchester, Vt., where he was interred temporarily. On 14 September 1933, his remains were taken to Raleigh for services at St. Augustine's and Christ Church, and he was buried in Oakwood Cemetery ^[8], Raleigh. According to his will, Hunter's estate was placed in trust for the care of his widow, and, after her death, for the support of St. Augustine's College ^[5] and St. Agnes Hospital.

Educator Resources:

Tar Heel Travelers Lesson Plan ^[9], State Archives of North Carolina

References:

Carolina Churchman, February 1923. ^[10]

Joan Davis Eaton, "A History and Evaluation of the Hanes Collection in the Louis Round Wilson Library, University of North Carolina" (M.S.L.S. thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1957).

Cecil D. Halliburton, *A History of St. Augustine's College, 1867–1937* (1937).

Robert Williams Patton, *An Inspiring Record in Negro Education* (1940).

Raleigh News and Observer, 13 July, 14, 15 Sept. 1933.

St. Augustine's College, *Gifts and Bequests* (1968) and *St. Augustine's Second Century* (1968).

Additional Resources:

Saint Augustine's College [The Class of Nineteen-Hundred Thirty-Four]. *Le Cheval*. Raleigh, NC: Saint Augustine's College, 1934. 2. <http://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/yearbooks/id/2587> ^[11] (accessed February 5, 2014).

"1891 Fourth Principal Bishop Aaron Hunter." Item #nra.acr.891_bishop_arron_hunter.jpg, Prezell R. Robinson Library, St. Augustine's University, Raleigh, NC. <http://contentdm.auctr.edu/cdm/ref/collection/stad/id/99> [12] (accessed February 5, 2014).

Aaron Burtis Hunter (1845-1933) Collection [Legacy Finding Aid], 1831,1870-1938. MARS ID #651, State Archives of North Carolina. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/aaron-burtis-hunter-1845-1933-collection-18311870-1938/378540> [13] (accessed February 5, 2014).

Subjects:

[Biographies](#) [14]

[Black and African American People](#) [15]

[Education](#) [16]

[Educators](#) [17]

[Gilded Age \(1876-1900\)](#) [18]

[N.C. Industrial Revolution \(1900-1929\)](#) [19]

[Philanthropy](#) [20]

[Public service](#) [21]

[Religious Leaders and Clergy](#) [22]

[Universities and colleges](#) [23]

Authors:

[Bennington, Catherine Myers](#) [24]

Origin - location:

[Raleigh](#) [25]

[St. Augustine's College](#) [26]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#) [27]

1 January 1988 | Bennington, Catherine Myers

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[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/hunter-aaron-burtis> [2] <https://www.amherst.edu/> [3] <http://www.utsnyc.edu/> [4] <http://www.sewanee.edu/> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/saint-augustines-college> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/sutton-robert-bean> [7] <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/rbc/collections.html> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/oakwood-cemetery> [9] <https://archives.ncdcr.gov/tar-heel-travelers-lesson-plan-0> [10] <https://archive.org/details/carolinachur192123epis> [11] <http://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/yearbooks/id/2587> [12] <http://contentdm.auctr.edu/cdm/ref/collection/stad/id/99> [13] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/aaron-burtis-hunter-1845-1933-collection-18311870-1938/378540> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/african-americans> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/education> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/educators> [18] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/gilded-age-1876-1> [19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/nc-industrial-rev> [20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/philanthropy> [21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-service> [22] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/clergy> [23] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/universities-and-> [24] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/bennington> [25] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-0> [26] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-47> [27] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>