Hunter, James [1]

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by Elmer D. Johnson and Charles D. Rodenbough, 1988; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, July 2023

8 Apr. 1740–30 Jan. 1821

James Hunter, soldier and legislator, was born six miles above Easton, Pa., in the forks of the Delaware River, the son of Alexander and Elizabeth Hunter. His father was a native of County Antrim, Ireland. In about 1754, James moved with his family to Bedford County, Va., where in 1762 he married Mary McFarland (1743–1821) who was also of Scot-Irish descent. Moving to North Carolina at the same time as the Hunters were the McFarlands and the Martins. One of James's cousins was Alexander Martin [2], later governor of North Carolina.

Hunter acquired extensive land on Wreck Island Creek near his father, and all deeds until 1772 list him as living in Bedford County, Va.; in that year, he acquired land on Beaver Island Creek in what became Rockingham County [3], N.C. In 1778 he was elected to represent Guilford County [4] in the General Assembly and he continued to serve until 1782. In January 1781, as the armies of generals Nathanael Greene and Charles Cornwallis maneuvered prior to the Battle of Guilford Court House [5], Colonel James Martin [6] was ordered to call out the Guilford militia. James Hunter was a major in the county militia, and he participated in the battle with this unit which was commanded by his cousin, James Martin. Tradition relates that Hunter was selected to carry the official news of the battle to General George Washington. He remained on active duty for the rest of the year and took part in the occupation of Wilmington after the British evacuation.

In 1782 Hunter was selected by the legislature to be auditor for the Salisbury District. He also served Guilford County as treasurer, sheriff, and presiding justice. In 1785, when the county was divided, he became justice for the new county of Rockingham. Two years later he was commissioned lieutenant colonel of the county militia. Between 1790 and 1792 he was justice of the Salisbury District and in the latter year became chairman of the Rockingham County court.

Hunter was a Presbyterian [7] and a Federalist [8], although not politically active after about 1792. About two miles south of his residence on Beaver Island Creek he erected a large meeting house for the use of any ministers whose theology did not conflict with his Presbyterian concepts. At his death he was buried on the hill above his house where his wife was also buried at her death less than a month later. Their ten children were Mary McFarland (m. William Deering), twins John and James, Alexander, Rachel (m. Nicholas Dalton), Samuel, Elizabeth, Robert, Pleasant, and Nancy.

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[1] https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/hunter-james-1 [2] https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/martin-alexander [3] https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/rockingham [4] https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/guilford [5] https://www.ncpedia.org/guilford-courthouse-battle [6] https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/martin-james [7] https://www.ncpedia.org/presbyterian-church [8] https://www.ncpedia.org/federalist-party [9] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term [10] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/soldiers [11] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials [12] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/johnson-elmer-d [13] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/rodenbough-charles [14] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-4 [15] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont/r [16] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no