

**Hunt Family
Papers, 1758-1908
MSA 682-686, MSB 91, MS Size B**

Introduction

The Hunt Family papers contain the papers of U.S. Congressman Jonathan Hunt (1787-1832) of Brattleboro, Vermont, his widow, Jane Marie Leavitt Hunt (1801-1877), and some of their children, especially the European diaries of their daughter Jane Hunt (1822-1907). The collection spans the period 1758 to 1908 and is housed in four archival flip to boxes, one flat, clamshell box, and one oversize folder. It consumes three feet of shelf space.

Provenance

The collection was purchased by the Vermont Historical Society from Michael Paxton, a great-great-great grandson of Jonathan Hunt, in May 2013. Additional materials were added to the collection by another Hunt descendant, Carley Angell, in August 2013. Guardianship correspondence created in the period 1840-1841 was purchased from The Unique Antique of Putney, Vermont, in August 2013, and incorporated into this collection. A separate listing of this acquisition is included in Folder 0. Samuel Hunt's commissions in Size C were removed from Stevens Family of Barnet papers (MSA 585).

When the collection came to the Vermont Historical Society it was housed in eleven loose leaf binders. The binders contained essays on historical figures and events, original documents taped to notebook pages, and transcriptions of many of those documents. A summary inventory of the original eleven binders is included in Folder 0. The binders have been discarded and most of the documents have been removed from their backings. The collection is now housed in archival folders and boxes with a new inventory (below). The notebooks were probably assembled by Jonathan Hunt (1893-1943) (9th generation) of Connecticut; some of the pages used in the binders were his letterhead and he sometimes signed historical summaries with his initials, "JH." There are references in the collection that suggest that Jane Hunt (1822-1907), great aunt of the collector Jonathan Hunt, was responsible for saving the original documents in the collection.

Biographical Note

The earliest figure represented in this collection is Capt. Samuel Hunt (1703-1770) (4th generation). Samuel Hunt settled in Northfield, Massachusetts, was the largest landowner in Northfield, and owned large tracts of land in New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and the New Hampshire land grants which became Vermont. He married Ann Ellsworth in 1724 and they had seven children.

Jonathan Hunt (1738-1823) (5th generation) was Samuel and Ann's third child. He married Levinah Swan (1749-1834) in 1779. Jonathan was a Vermont lieutenant

governor (1794-1796), representative to the Vermont General Assembly from Hinsdale/Vernon (1783, 1802) and a large landowner. When Jonathan Hunt was representative to the Vermont General Assembly in 1802, some voters recommended the town name of Hinsdale be changed to Huntstown. He demurred, and his wife Levinah suggested Vernon instead, making it the only town in the state to be named by a woman.

Jonathan Hunt (1787-1832) (6th generation) was the son of Jonathan Hunt (5th generation). He was a Dartmouth graduate, wealthy lawyer, banker, military man, representative to the Vermont General Assembly from Vernon (1811) and Brattleboro (1816-7, 1824), and a three term U.S. Congressman (1827-1832) until he died of cholera in 1832. He was married to Jane Maria Leavitt (1801-1877), daughter of Colonel Thaddeus Leavitt and Jemima Loomis, of Suffield, Connecticut; they had five children: Jane Hunt, William Morris Hunt, Jonathan Hunt, Richard Morris Hunt, and Leavitt Hunt.

Jonathan Hunt's (6th generation) older sister, Ellen (b. 1781), married Lewis R. Morris (1760-1825) in 1801. General Lewis R. Morris was a hero of the American Revolution and was the nephew of Gouverneur Morris of New York and Pennsylvania, a signatory to the Articles of Confederation and an author of large sections of the Constitution of the United States and one of its signers. Ellen Hunt was Lewis Morris's third wife. Ellen and Lewis Morris lived in Springfield, Vermont.

Jonathan Hunt's (6th generation) wife, Jane Maria Leavitt Hunt (1801-1877), was artistic as a child, but her father disapproved, and she was not able to pursue painting until her marriage to Jonathan in 1820. When she became a widow with five children and a very large estate in 1832, she pursued the best educational, cultural and social experiences for herself and her children. She kept careful track of the men who managed the family finances and did not hesitate to legally challenge those she thought mishandled family funds. The family lived in Brattleboro, New Haven (Conn.), New York City and Boston. In 1843, Mrs. Hunt took her five children to Europe to travel and study, with their home base in Paris. For health reasons, Mrs. Hunt took William (and Jane) to Rome. William studied sculpture under Henry Kirke Brown. In Rome, they took Italian lessons, enjoyed sight seeing, moving on to Florence, Pompeii, Milan, etc. then on to Switzerland, where all the boys were in school in Geneva for two months, before moving on to Greece, Istanbul, etc. In 1846, they were in England, Scotland, Belgium, and Holland. In 1847 they were mostly in Austria and Germany. Most of the family returned to the United States in 1855. Mrs. Hunt lived long enough to see two (William and Richard) of her sons become famous. She died in 1877.

The eldest child of Jonathan and Jane Maria Leavitt Hunt was Jane Maria Hunt (1822-1907) (7th generation), a very artistic and a prolific writer, especially about the doings of family. Although she did not have formal artistic training like her brother William, she took art classes and practiced painting in William's studio. Active as a painter in southern California from 1883-1905, she created over 100 watercolors (now owned by the Pasadena Public Library). She never married and died in New York City in 1907.

The second child was William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) (7th generation), a famous painter in the mid to late 19th century. He attended Harvard in 1840-1843, studied art in Rome, studied with Thomas Couture in Paris and with Jean Francois Millet in Barbizon. Millet had a lasting influence on Hunt's art, and he became a proponent of the French Barbizon School of painting. When he returned from Europe, he painted and established art schools in Newport, Rhode Island; Brattleboro, Vermont; and Faial Island in the Azores. In 1862 he settled in Boston, where he became particularly well-known as a portrait painter. He married Louisa Dumaresq Perkins in 1855, and they had five children. In 1879, he drowned (an apparent suicide) at the Isles of Shoals in New Hampshire.

Jonathan Hunt (1826-1874) (7th generation), was the only sibling not involved in the arts. He studied medicine at the Ecole Medecine in Paris, and established a medical practice in Paris, where he treated the poor and the working class. He apparently had a mistress for over twenty years; they had a disabled child. Hunt committed suicide in 1874.

The next child was Richard Morris Hunt (1828-1895) (7th generation), a famous architect. He was the first American to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He returned to the United States with his family in 1855, and, settling in New York City, began a private architecture practice. He founded the first American architectural school and co-founded the American Institute of Architects. New York's Tribune Building, the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, and the 5th Avenue facade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, are a few of the buildings designed by Hunt. He chaired the Board of Architects for the Columbian Exposition of 1893. He was one of the most prominent architects of his time. Hunt married Catharine Howland in 1861. After Hunt died in 1895, their son Richard Holland Hunt (8th generation) took over his father's architectural practice.

The youngest child was Leavitt (1830-1907) (7th generation). He studied Persian languages, law and theology in Germany, and returned to the United States in 1851 and passed his law exams. He, along with his friend Nathan Flint Baker, was the one of the first people to photograph the Middle East during their grand tour from 1851-1852. He received a second law degree from Harvard, and married Katherine Jarvis of Weathersfield, Vermont in 1860. Hunt served in the Civil War as a Colonel throughout the conflict. After the war, he set up a law practice in New York City. Due to a war injury, he spent the last twelve years of his life blind, dying in 1907.

Jonathan Hunt (1893-1943) (9th generation), the assembler of this collection, was born in New York City on 2 March 1893, the son of Richard Howland Hunt (1862-1931) and Pearl Carley (1867-1935); he was thus the grandson of architect Richard Morris Hunt. Jonathan Hunt moved to South Dakota with his mother, attended Pawling School for Boys in New York, and graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University in 1914, the same year that he married Gertrude Donovan, a cabaret singer. He was probably married to four additional women during his life. He served in the U.S. Army (living at Fort Ethan Allen, Colchester, Vermont, for a year), and worked as a car salesman, a sales manager for the Carrier Corporation and Air Distributors, and as an

inspector for the High Standard Manufacturing Company. He died 6 February 1943 in North Branford, Connecticut, and is buried in Island Cemetery, Newport, Rhode Island. Additional biographical information can be found in Folder 0.1.

Richard Barron Hunt (1917-1988), who assembled the family history notebook in MSB 91, was Jonathan Hunt's (1893-1943) nephew. Richard Barron was the son Richard Carley Hunt (1886-1954), who was the son of Richard Howland Hunt and Pearl Carley.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of seven series: I. Samuel Hunt; II. Jonathan Hunt (1787-1832); III. Hunt family, after Jonathan Hunt's death; IV. Jane Maria Hunt (1822-1907, daughter of Jane Maria Leavitt Hunt); V. Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895); VI. Miscellaneous; and VII. Genealogy.

Series I contains of Samuel Hunt's military commissions (2 items), 1758 & 1786.

There is a wealth of material on Jonathan Hunt (1787-1832) (6th generation) in Series II. Included in this series are materials concerning his work as a lawyer, as well as his service in the militia, correspondence to his wife (Jane Marie Leavitt Hunt, 1801-1877), and deeds. There are speeches, correspondence, and other materials relating to his time in the U.S. Congress (1827-1832). There are enough letters preserved to give a good sense of life in Washington during an interesting time in American history. His death is also documented with legal documents and letters of condolence.

Life of the Hunt family after Jonathan's death is documented in Series III. There is quite a bit of correspondence to Jane Marie Leavitt Hunt (1801-1877) from family and friends. The letters from her children show their affection for their mother and recount their European adventures. The letters in this series show Jane Maria Leavitt Hunt as a loving mother who provided her children with great educational and social experiences. The financial and guardianship correspondence concern the management of the family money and the guardianship of the children, and show Jane Maria Leavitt Hunt as a sharp businesswoman, who kept a close eye on the family finances.

Series IV consists of daughter Jane Hunt's diaries, journals, memoirs, and sketch book, which show that she was a gifted and productive writer and artist. Jane wrote about the family's European travels and where they went, what they saw, what they talked about, and the questions they had about what careers to pursue. Her writings also cover the life of her family after her return from Europe in 1855. Her papers are a good source of material about her famous brothers William Morris Hunt and Richard Morris Hunt.

Series V contains papers related to Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895), including a wonderful journal kept by Richard in 1844-1846, sometimes shifting from English into French. There is an extensive biography of Richard by his widow, written in 1908, and a

transcript of a journal by her with much good information of the travels and relationships within the family.

The Miscellaneous series (Series VI) includes biographical information on William Morris Hunt and Leavitt Hunt, a Richard Howland Hunt letter, a book of recipes, and a few letters written by unidentified Hunt family members, c. 1898-1940.

Series VII contains a wealth of genealogical information on the Hunt family, going back into the 16th century in some cases. In addition, there is substantial genealogical information on the Leavitt, Howland, Morris, and Hone families.

Related Collections

Among the printed material in the VHS library related to the Hunt family are *Exploration, Vision & Influence: The Art World of Brattleboro's Hunt Family* (Bennington, Vt.: The Bennington Museum, 2005) and *Richard Morris Hunt* by Paul R. Baker (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), which used papers in this collection before they had been acquired by the VHS. Additional items can be found in the library's main catalog.

Additional manuscript collections about the Hunt family can be found at the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration and the Library of Congress, among other repositories.

The Vermont Historical Society museum holds portraits of Lieutenant Governor Jonathan Hunt (1738-1823) and his wife Levinah Swan Hunt (1749-1834). The Pasadena Public Library has Jane Hunt's collection of watercolors. The paintings of William Morris Hunt are in major art collections throughout the United States.

Inventory

I. Samuel Hunt

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| MS Size B | Commission, lieutenant of a company commanded by Capt. Stephen Dewey for the "general invasion of Canada," Massachusetts Bay, 1758. |
| | _____, captain of an Alarm Company in Charleston, New Hampshire, 1786. |

II. Jonathan Hunt

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| MSA 682:01 | Biographical information, Dartmouth compositions |
| 02 | Account book, 1807-09, and journal, 1808 |
| 03 | Speech, July 4, 1812, about war |
| 04.1 | Early years as lawyer, officer, marriage, etc. |
| 04.2 | 4 th Section of Statute of Vermont Frauds and Parole Agreement |
| 05 | Military commission, 4 th of July toasts, etc., 1821 |

- 06 Brattleboro house, building contracts and two letters, photograph, 1821-1822
- 07 Correspondence to wife, 1827-1831
- 08 Jane Maria Leavitt Hunt (JMLH), account of 1820 trip to Niagara Falls, and two letters, 1822-1823
- 09 Notebook of expenses and actions in 19th Congress, election notification
- 10 Expenses in Washington, 1829-1831, and other accounts
- 11 Speech on reapportionment, 1830, election tally sheet, and other government business
- 12 Correspondence, 1830-1832
- MSA 686:01 Deed, 1 item, 1815
- 02 Deeds and legal documents, includes inventory, 14 items, 1812-1818
- MSA 682:14 _____, _____, 12 items
- 15 _____, _____, 13 items
- 16 Death and condolences, 1832
- 17 Estate

III. Hunt family, after Jonathan Hunt's death

- MSA 683:01.1 JMLH correspondence 1837-1843 (includes letter from Daniel Webster)
- 01.2 Photographic print of Mrs. Hunt and her five children, from a daguerreotype taken in Paris about 1848.
- 02 1845-46 mostly, family letters
- MSA 686:03 Financial and guardianship correspondence, 1836-1841
- 04 _____, 1842-1846
- MSA 683:03 1845-50s, mostly to mother Jane, many from Jonathan
- 04 1853-1885 family letters, good one of 1871 Paris Commune from RMH

IV. Jane Hunt (daughter of JMLH)

- 05 Jane Hunt diary, Nov. '43-?, no transcript
- 06 Jane Hunt journals 1844-45, original not here
- 07 Jane Hunt diary & transcript, travels of 1846-48
- 08 Transcript of Jane Hunt's Journals of 1860-1874, no original
- 09 Jane Hunt first memoir and transcript of some of it
- 10 Jane Hunt second and third memoir
- 11 Assorted Jane Hunt documents
- 12 Jane Hunt sketch book, 1845

V. Richard Morris Hunt

- MSA 684:01 Clippings and biography, reproduction of his portrait by John Singer Sargent
- 02 Journal, 1844-1846 (in French and English, partially transcribed and translated)
- 03 Pocket diary, 1861

- 04 Extracts from biography of RMH as dictated by his widow (see folders 06-08 for full biography). First page says “Extracts from Journal of Catherine (sic.) Howland Hunt dictated in 1907” but this is not a journal.
- 05 Questions and answers in preparation for writing memoirs of RMH
- 06 Biography of RMH by his widow in 1908
- 07 _____, part 2
- 08 _____, part 3

VI. Miscellaneous

- 09 Biography of William Morris Hunt
- 10 Leavitt Hunt: Biographical information
- 11 Richard Howland Hunt, letter, 1898
- 12 Book of recipes and a painting
- 13 Miscellaneous family letters, c. 1898-1940
Includes: Two undated letters in French

VII. Genealogy

- MSA 685:01 Hone family history
- 02 Descendants of Jonathan Hunt 1610-1823
- 03 Jonathan Hunts, 1610-1661, 1637-1691, 1665-1738
- 04 Samuel Hunt (1703-1770)
- 05 Jonathan Hunt (1738-1823)
- MSB 91 Notebook, “Hunt Ancestral Families,” ancestors of Richard Baron Hunt (great-grandson of Richard Morris Hunt)
- 06 Morris family genealogy
- 07 The Howland family in England
- 08 John Howland 1592-1672 Plymouth Colony
- 09 John Howland descendants
- 10 Collateral lines of the Howland family
- 11 Leavitt records from Hingham, Mass., etc
- 12 Leavitt family
- 13 Transcript from tape recording by C. H. Paxton about ancestors, including Hunts

Ethan W. Bisbee, Christie Carter & Paul Carnahan
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