

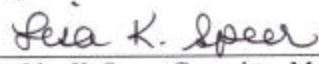
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Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin:  
A Social History Plan



By

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A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the B.S. degree  
in Historic Preservation, Graduation with Academic Distinction  
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## **Table of Contents**

Introduction.....	1
Hunter Family Biography.....	2
History of the Original Property.....	9
Cabin’s Current Location.....	13
Southeast Missouri State University’s Efforts.....	17
Suggestions.....	21
Bibliography.....	22
Appendix.....	i

## **Introduction**

The Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin was built around 1851-54 outside of Sikeston, Missouri. The cabin was constructed in a dogtrot style log house. In 1981 Mr. and Mrs. James Handy Moore, descendants of B.F. Hunter, donated the structure to Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The cabin was dismantled and then reassembled at the University farm in Cape Girardeau, Missouri where it was designated a learning lab for the Historic Preservation students. The cabin has remained in the care of the university since then. Repair and research was conducted by university students up until the mid 1990s. In 2007 a renewed interest in the log cabin developed and plans were made to once again utilize it as a learning lab and historic site.

The Social History Plan for the Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin was compiled to serve as a foundation for future research and guidance for the Historic Preservation program at Southeast Missouri State University. The plan contains information on the Hunter family, the Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin, and relevant information about its current location in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, including details about the Williams family and cabin.



## Hunter Family Biography

The Hunter family first settled in southeastern Missouri around the early 1800s. Many generations of Hunters have been born and raised in Missouri and some of them have left a lasting mark on their communities. Benjamin F. Hunter was one of them. The home he constructed, the B.F. Hunter Log Cabin, still exists over a hundred years later and serves as a doorway to the past.

The first Hunter to call Missouri home was Benjamin's grandfather Joseph Hunter. Joseph Hunter brought his family, including his son Abraham, from Kentucky to New Madrid. He originally lived in Virginia before marrying and moving to the Midwest and was the first generation American born to his Scotch-Irish family.<sup>1</sup> A few years after moving to Missouri, the Hunter family was met with a large disaster. The New Madrid Earthquake hit the area in 1812. Joseph Hunter's land was probably ruined since the majority of the town laid in shambles. Right after the earthquake Joseph's son Abraham left the family's property and bought 640 acres in Scott County which he named Pleasant Plains.<sup>2</sup>

Abraham spent his life farming the land and became a successful business man as well. He married twice; his first wife was Sarah Ogden and together they had ten children including Isaac, Joseph, and Benjamin F. Hunter who all became influential men in the area. Abraham & Sarah's happiness did not last for very long because of Sarah's death

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<sup>1</sup> *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, Index Edition. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Ramfre Press, 1964), 935

<sup>2</sup> HP 535- Problems in Site Administration. *Conceptual Plan for the Management, Preservation, Funding, & Use of the Hunter Heritage Education Farm*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Southeast Missouri State University, December 1993), 6

on December 29, 1839<sup>3</sup>. Abraham later married Catherine who was originally from Pennsylvania. They first appear together in the 1850 Scott County Census along with his children and their one year old child, James.<sup>4</sup> The Census also indicates that Catherine was twenty-six years younger than Abraham.<sup>5</sup> The couple would have a total of three children during their marriage. Abraham died on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1870.<sup>6</sup> Together brothers Benjamin F. and Isaac Hunter administrated their father's will. Abraham's property remained with his wife while several of his children received some of his items. Benjamin F. Hunter bought his father's rocking chair, carpet, saddle horse, and around 1,200 bushels of corn.<sup>7</sup>

Abraham's son Benjamin F. Hunter was born on October 17<sup>th</sup> 1831 in Scott County, Missouri.<sup>8</sup> Like his father, Benjamin grew up to be a thriving farmer and business man. He spent almost all of his childhood and adult life, except during schooling, in Sikeston, Scott County, Missouri. Benjamin was educated at Anderson's College in Albany, Indiana. The dictionary he used has "New Albany, 1848" written inside it and which is the only date that gives an approximation of when he attended the college.<sup>9</sup> The institute no longer exists and little documentation remains about

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<sup>3</sup> *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, Index Edition, 936

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau of the Census. *Ninth Census: 1850, Population Schedule: Scott County, Missouri*. NARA Microfilm, Reel 419

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau of the Census. *Ninth Census: 1850, Population Schedule: Scott County, Missouri*. NARA Microfilm, Reel 419

<sup>6</sup> Scott County. Probate Office. Probate Box 44

<sup>7</sup> Scott County. Probate Office. Probate Box 44

<sup>8</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1. (Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Hill Press Inc., 1997), 70

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 70

Anderson's College. According to a passage from *A Brief History of New Albany and Floyd County* written by the Floyd County Historical Society the college was started by John B. Anderson who opened Anderson Collegiate Institute for Boys in 1841 and it continued operation with "considerable successes for about 20 years".<sup>10</sup> Little else is known about Benjamin's early life and education.

At the age of twenty-one Benjamin moved away from his father and bought property where he first constructed a small log house and later a two story double log, dog-trot style log cabin which today is referred to as the B.F. Hunter Log Cabin.<sup>11</sup> Finding a wife was probably not hard for Benjamin because of his success. According to the Hunter family biographers Mary and Hunter, when he was around thirty-five or forty years old he "was five feet eleven inches in height, weighed one hundred sixty pounds, and must have been just about a perfect physical specimen".<sup>12</sup> In the log cabin Benjamin would bring home two brides. The first wife was Mary Eliza Bird whom he wed on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1860 in Mississippi County.<sup>13</sup> Mary was born on January 26, 1838 in Tiptonville, Tennessee and later moved with her family to southeastern Missouri.<sup>14</sup> At the age of 12 she was living in Mississippi County with her brothers and sisters.<sup>15</sup> Benjamin and Mary

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<sup>10</sup> Dennis J. Vetrovec, e-mail message to Indiana State University Special Collections, January 16, 2008

<sup>11</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

<sup>12</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 70

<sup>13</sup> Marriage Records Database. Online <http://www.ancestry.com>. Benjamin F. Hunter to Mary E. Bird. 3 Apr. 1860

<sup>14</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 75

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau of the Census. *Ninth Census: 1850, Population Schedule: Mississippi County, Missouri*. NARA Microfilm, Reel 406

had one child together, John Abraham Hunter, in February of 1862.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after his birth though, she passed away.<sup>17</sup> Benjamin's second wife was Mary's younger sister by two years, Nancy Emily Bird. The couple married on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1867 in Mississippi County.<sup>18</sup> Benjamin and Nancy had five children: Mary Bird, Clara Catherine, Stephen Ben, Lucy Nancy, and Sarah Ingabo.<sup>19</sup>

Benjamin did more than farming and business; he participated in his community in many ways. He was also a member of the Masonic fraternity and in 1861 he was elected county judge but only served for a few months.<sup>20</sup> He was also a member of the Masonic fraternity.<sup>21</sup> According to the Scott County Circuit Court records Benjamin served as captain of patrol in Richland Township and was responsible for the apportionment of land for roads in the area.<sup>22</sup> His wife Nancy Hunter also took part in the community as an active member of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>23</sup> The Hunter family was well liked and had a positive reputation around town because of their involvement and kind spirit.

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<sup>16</sup> Scott County. Probate Office. Probate Box 45

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Marriage Records Database. Online <http://www.ancestry.com>. Benjamin F. Hunter to Nannie E. Bird. 23 Apr. 1867

<sup>19</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

<sup>20</sup> *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, Index Edition, 936

<sup>21</sup> *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, Index Edition, 936

<sup>22</sup> HP 535- Problems in Site Administration. *Conceptual Plan for the Management, Preservation, Funding, & Use of the Hunter Heritage Education Farm*, 6

<sup>23</sup> *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, Index Edition, 936

Benjamin F. Hunter owned slaves, which was not unusual for southern Missourians during the 1800s. In 1861 Benjamin had nine slaves valued at \$3,500 according to the Scott County Tax Assessment Book.<sup>24</sup> When the Civil War broke out Benjamin took up arms and served in the Confederate Army.<sup>25</sup> Stories are told that he served as a Captain in the Confederate Army, but no documentation supporting this has been found. War affected the whole Hunter family. Benjamin's granddaughter, Mrs. Amanda Hunter Beckwith Medley, explained that during the war Benjamin's father Abraham was "forced to leave home and seek refuge within the Confederate lines in Claiborn County, Mississippi".<sup>26</sup> This was a hard time for all the Hunters because of the divisions. Benjamin gave his children different sections of his property because he was afraid of losing his land because of the war according to the Scott County land deeds which state as the reason of transferring the property. The events which took place during the Civil War for the Hunters reflect many other families in southern Missouri who experienced dealing with not only a torn country but a torn state.

Once the war came to an end, conflicts between families and towns would take time to heal. According to the family's biographers, Benjamin was very uneasy after the Union won because:

His home was located in the border country and when the war ended... he felt very insecure and wondered how he would be treated. He tried to dispose of his home and lands, but the prospective buyers were impressed by rumors that all

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<sup>24</sup> Shrum, Edison. *The History of Scott County, Missouri*. (Sikeston, Missouri: Standard Printing Co., 1984), 155

<sup>25</sup> Powell, Betty. *History of Mississippi County Missouri*. (Independence, Missouri: BLN Library Services, 1975), 234

<sup>26</sup> Powell, Betty. *History of Mississippi County Missouri*. 235

rebel property would be confiscated. Consequently they lost interest in the purchase and the deal was not closed.<sup>27</sup>

Hunter continued to be successful after the war even with his initial concerns. Benjamin became known as one of the largest land owners in Southeast Missouri and had the best farm in Scott County.<sup>28</sup> His wealth allowed him to own other luxuries besides a large amount of land. According to the 1876 census of Scott County Benjamin had nine horses, three mules, 25 cattle, 50 hogs, and a steam-powered mill.<sup>29</sup> Even though things were settled for Benjamin, his end was beginning to sneak up on him. During 1876 he fell ill and he decided stayed in Florida for awhile. After becoming sick he gained a large amount of weight which the family speculated to have shortened his life.<sup>30</sup> On January 10, 1895 he passed away leaving all his property, including the log cabin, to his wife Nancy.<sup>31</sup> The log cabin passed onto Mary Bird Hunter from her mother; no record exists of the transfer.

Mary Bird Hunter was born in the Hunter's log cabin in Sikeston, Missouri on January 29, 1869.<sup>32</sup> At the age of 25 she was 5 foot 8 inches tall with blue eyes and dark brown hair.<sup>33</sup> She married James Handy Moore, born 1865, from Charleston, Missouri in 1890. Mary and James had four children together: Joseph Hunter, Benjamin Bird,

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<sup>27</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

<sup>28</sup> *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, Index Edition. 936

<sup>29</sup> HP 535- Problems in Site Administration. *Conceptual Plan for the Management, Preservation, Funding, & Use of the Hunter Heritage Education Farm*. 6

<sup>30</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 70

<sup>31</sup> Scott County. Probate Office. Probate Box 151.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Passport. Online <http://www.ancestry.com>. Mary Bird Hunter Moore. Filed December 3, 1920

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Pauline, and Nadine. Mary passed away in 1949, following her husband's death in 1906.<sup>34</sup>

The third generation to own Benjamin F. Hunter's log cabin was Benjamin Bird Moore. He was born in Charleston, Missouri on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1893.<sup>35</sup> In 1920 he married Faye Dorothy Smith who was born on August 22, 1898 in Benton, Missouri.<sup>36</sup> At age 41 he stood 5 feet and 8 inches tall with blue eyes and brown hair.<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Bird and Faye had three children: Benjamin Bird Jr., Dorothy Fayette, and James Handy. It was their younger son James and his wife Dottie who would become the last owners of the log cabin. James was born in Charleston, Missouri on February 15, 1932 and now resides in Sikeston, Missouri.

The Hunter family serves as an example of a family who relocated in southeastern Missouri early on in Missouri's written history. Benjamin Hunter greatly influenced Scott County and created a place for his ancestors to live for generations. Although the family has unique individuals like Benjamin, their life stories help portray the lives of other southeastern Missourians living during the same time period.

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<sup>34</sup> HP 535- Problems in Site Administration. *Conceptual Plan for the Management, Preservation, Funding, & Use of the Hunter Heritage Education Farm.* 7

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Passport. Online <http://www.ancestry.com>. Benjamin Bird Moore. Filed December 7, 1934

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## History of the Original Property

Benjamin F. Hunter built his home about three or four miles north, of Sikeston in Scott County, Missouri off of the present day North Ridge Road. The property was used for agricultural purposes throughout its documented history. The site remains a farm today even with the removal of the log cabin.

The Hunter family came to Missouri around the same time as other families. The area of Scott County, Missouri dates back to the late 1700s when it was under the reign of the Spanish Regime. It was under the Spanish Regime that the area first acquired a written history. The first settlement in Scott County was established by William Smith when he built a place for travelers to stay in 1797 which was located in today's Commerce.<sup>38</sup> From the development and founding of Commerce came the population of other areas such as where the Hunters settled. Missouri became property of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. It was after the purchase that most of southern Missouri's immigration took place with the majority of settlers coming from Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee, including Joseph Hunter. Missouri became a state in 1820 when it was accepted to the Union as a slave state.<sup>39</sup>

During the Civil War Scott County was divided along with the rest of Missouri. This was evident from the relocation of the County Seat from Benton to Commerce because Benton fell under southern support while Commerce remained under Union control; the seat remained in Commerce until switching back to Benton in 1879.<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> *History of Scott County, Missouri: History & Families*, 9

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



boundaries of Northern and Southern supporters in Scott County became evident during the Civil War. According to a history of the county:

North of Benton Hill, the German Catholics, who fought for the Union in the Civil War, settled and stayed in northern Scott County. Below the Benton Hill, settlers immigrated from Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee with their customs of agriculture and slaves. They were supportive of the Confederacy in the War.<sup>41</sup>

After the Civil War ended many southerners went back to life on their farms as tension decreased between the areas. After the Civil War the Cairo & Fulton railroad ran through Sikeston.<sup>42</sup> Like many Missouri rural counties, Scott County was influenced by the fast pace industrialization which was ushered by the railroad. Hunter continued using his land for agricultural purposes but improved his equipment to keep up with production demands.

Sikeston rested on the edge of the swamps. The Little River Drainage District began in 1907 and is the largest drainage district in the United States. The project extended from Cape Girardeau to the Missouri- Arkansas state line and serves seven Missouri counties including Scott.<sup>43</sup> Over 1.2 million acres of land was drained making it suitable for agricultural production.<sup>44</sup> This project not only provided work for the unemployed through the Great Depression but also boosted southeastern Missouri's

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<sup>41</sup> *History of Scott County, Missouri: History & Families*, 13

<sup>42</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

<sup>43</sup> *Little River Drainage District of Southeast Missouri 1907- Present, The*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: The District, 1989), 6

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

agricultural production, providing mass amounts of land for log timbering, and overall increasing economic development.

Benjamin F. Hunter may have obtained his property from John Willford Saffant, Susannah N. Nevis, and Sarah Lafont for one hundred and six dollars around 1853.<sup>45</sup> This is the earliest land written record found of which Benjamin purchased land in Scott County. He owned multiple properties throughout his life and the *Assessor's List of Values & Owners of Town Lots in Commerce in 1870* lists Benjamin owning Lot 124, N1/2 valued at \$350.<sup>46</sup> This site may have been where he constructed “a large frame house of white pine lumber bought in Chicago and shipped by rail to Sikeston. This home burned in 1888”.<sup>47</sup> The Hunter log cabin remained the main residency for him because he never sold the place regardless of the other houses he built.

The first building to be constructed on the land in Scott County was the small log cabin built by Benjamin F. Hunter.<sup>48</sup> After gaining a large amount of money from public contract work he built the double log house out of large local hewn cypress logs. The family memoirs marveled at the size of the logs used, noting that “some of the timbers were the full length of the house; that is, about sixty feet”.<sup>49</sup> Surprisingly the original cabin was not added onto which is typical of dog trot cabins, but instead a new structure was built on the property. What happened to the original cabin is unknown. Hunter's new house was a typical dog trot with two rooms on top and two on the bottom connected by a

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<sup>45</sup> Scott County. Recorder. Deed Book 10

<sup>46</sup> Shrum, Edison. *The History of Scott County, Missouri*, 131

<sup>47</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

<sup>48</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

<sup>49</sup> Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1., 72

hallway where the stairs are located. Two chimneys sat on both ends of the house to help heat the whole home during the winter. Log cabins were popular during this time, especially in the more rural areas. Missouri was influenced by the westward log cabin construction movement and the large German immigration in the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Even though other styles of two-story log cabins existed, the dog trot was one of the most popular. Examples of the dog trot style are found throughout the country and during various time periods. In Georgia the John Ross House from 1790 is a dog trot style which looks very similar to the Hunter cabin (see Appendix Fig. 5). Ross was also part Scotch like the Hunter family.<sup>51</sup> Hunter's choice to build this style of a log cabin is not surprising because of the popularity during the 1800s in rural areas and because of the abundance of building materials available to him in the area.

The cabin's exterior remained the same until a covered porch addition to the front entrance was added sometime before 1908, which is when it first appears in photographs. Besides the porch addition little changed about the exterior of the house. For the last part of the cabin's life in Sikeston it served as a rental house for a farmer. The house was equipped with electricity, indoor plumbing, kitchen, and dry wall before being dismantled and moved to the University's property. Today in place of the cabin stands Mr. and Mrs. Moore's home which was built shortly after the relocation occurred.

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<sup>50</sup> Weslager, C.A. *The Log Cabin In America*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 34

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 76

## The Cabin's Current Location

In 1981-1982 Mr. and Mrs. James Handy Moore donated the log cabin to Southeast Missouri State University. The cabin was dismantled and moved to the Southeast Missouri State University Living History Farm in Cape Girardeau, Missouri during the summer of 1982. It was placed on the north western border of the property near Jackson, sitting a short distance from the Old McKendree Chapel. The present location has a rich historical background dating back to the Spanish Regime.

Cape Girardeau has always been a river city located along the Mississippi River. The city started out as a trading post created by Jean Baptiste de Girardot around 1733 and became a settlement in 1762 administrated by Louis Lorimier under the Spanish rule.<sup>52</sup> The city was settled by French, German, and later American settlers after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Cape Girardeau remained under the Union during the Civil War even though there were slave owners in the county.

The property that the B.F. Hunter Log Cabin currently is placed on was first documented in 1797 because of the Spanish Land Grants. The property was part of Township 31N Range 13E, number 202.<sup>53</sup> It was owned by Benjamin Laugherty who purchased the property on December 2, 1806 from Edward F. Bond for 1,000 barrel staves [wooden strips used to make barrels].<sup>54</sup> Benjamin and his wife sold their farm on

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<sup>52</sup> *Biography of Historic Cape Girardeau County*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Project of the Bicentennial Commission, 1977), 7

<sup>53</sup> Jackson, Jane, Steven Pledger, and Cathi Stoverink. *Index of Spanish Land Grants within modern boundaries of Cape Girardeau County, Missouri*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Cape Girardeau County Archive Center, 2002), 21

<sup>54</sup> Cochran, Katherine J. "Light from a Lantern". (*Southeast Missourian*. Cape Girardeau, Missouri: 26 Jan. 1970), np

November 19, 1811 for \$400 to William Williams.<sup>55</sup> The Williams family maintained ownership until the early 1900s. Just like the Hunter family, the Williams made their way to Missouri from Kentucky even though they were originally from Ohio.<sup>56</sup> William Williams and his family settled in the Cape Girardeau area in 1798.<sup>57</sup> William Williams is listed in the *Statistical Census of the District of Cape Girardeau* taken November 1, 1803 which indicates that 1 male of first class, 1 second class male, 1 second class female lived at their property along with 20 bundles of wheat, 250 bundles of corn, 150 pounds of flax and hemp, 300 pounds of cotton, 180 pounds of maple sugar, 12 horned cattle, and 1 horse.<sup>58</sup> The home was located east of where the Benjamin F. Hunter log cabin is currently situated and was built in three stages between 1804 and 1812 although the eastern half is speculated to have been constructed earlier before Benjamin Laugherty bought the property.<sup>59</sup> The house was built in an L shape out of native poplar trees.<sup>60</sup> The William's cabin remained standing for over one hundred years.

On part of Williams' property a Methodist church was constructed which was named the McKendree Chapel (see Appendix Fig. 7).<sup>61</sup> William Williams donated the

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<sup>55</sup> Cochran, Katherine J. "Light from a Lantern", n.p.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Houck, Louis. *A History of Missouri, From the Earliest Explorations & Settlements Until the Admission of the State Into the Union*. Volumes II & III. (Chicago, Illinois: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1908), 190

<sup>58</sup> Houck, Louis. *Spanish Regime in Missouri*. Volume II. (Chicago, Illinois: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1909), 404

<sup>59</sup> Cochran, Katherine J. "Light from a Lantern", n.p.

<sup>60</sup> HP 535- Problems in Site Administration. *Conceptual Plan for the Management, Preservation, Funding, & Use of the Hunter Heritage Education Farm*. 10

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 190

two acres for the church to be built on and also part of the land which makes up half of the McKendree Cemetery across the road from his property. The Chapel “stands two miles east of Jackson, and eight miles west of the Town of Cape Girardeau”.<sup>62</sup>

McKendree Chapel is known as the first Methodist church west of the Mississippi River and was organized around 1806 during outdoor religious gatherings in the area.<sup>63</sup> The actual structure was built sometime around 1818-1819 and was constructed as a hewed-log house with a shingle roof, plank floors, and windows.<sup>64</sup> William Williams and his wife were among the original members.<sup>65</sup> The Chapel served the community as more than a place to worship and gather but also as a school. In November of 1874 it was voted that McKendree Chapel would be rented as a public school and was used for many years.<sup>66</sup> The church and cemetery are still standing and are of great historical significance to the community.

The Williams’ land continued being farmed and in the early 1900s John Hobbs acquired the property which included the cabin. In 1918 white siding was added to the exterior covering the logs to update the exterior look.<sup>67</sup> By 1970 the Williams property was owned by Freddie Ristig who sold it to Southeast Missouri State University in 1977. The house was dismantled and each log was “numbered in sequence as they were taken

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<sup>62</sup> Tucker, Frank C. *Old McKendree Chapel*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Concord Publishing House, 1959. Reprint 1984), 27

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 234

<sup>64</sup> Tucker, Frank C. *Old McKendree Chapel*, 27

<sup>65</sup> Tucker, Frank C. *Old McKendree Chapel*, 27

<sup>66</sup> Tucker, Frank C. *Old McKendree Chapel*, 40

<sup>67</sup> Cochran, Katherine J. “Light from a Lantern”, n.p.

apart, hoping that someone or some group would rebuild the house in the future”.<sup>68</sup> The University said they would donate materials “if the recipients, one or more, agree to put the building in its original condition, and make it available to the public” or the logs would go to the auction house and be sold to the highest bidder.<sup>69</sup> The house was never reassembled. In 1986 some of the logs were used to construct a small, single-pen cabin on the east side of the Old McKendree Chapel (see Appendix Fig. 6).<sup>70</sup> This small cabin still exists and represents the only remnants of the William’s farmstead.

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<sup>68</sup> Cochran, Katherine J. “William Williams’s House Doomed to Auction Block”. (*Bulletin Journal*. Sikeston, Missouri: 10 Apr. 1979), n.p.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> HP 535- Problems in Site Administration. *Conceptual Plan for the Management, Preservation, Funding, & Use of the Hunter Heritage Education Farm*, 11

## **Southeast Missouri State University's Efforts**

Southeast Missouri State University began working with the log cabin upon acquiring the building in the early 1980s as part of the Historic Preservation program on campus. The University has greatly affected the more recent history of the cabin and continues to direct its future.

The Historic Preservation program began at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri in 1980.<sup>71</sup> The program was created to teach students about archives, museums, historic sites, and historic restoration and offer hands-on experiences. One of the things the program wanted to offer was hands on experience for their students and set out to find a structure to adopt. Through student surveys of the surrounding areas, the B.F. Hunter log cabin was located and Mr. & Mrs. James Handy Moore were asked to donate the cabin to the program.

In July of 1982 the University adopted the B.F. Hunter log cabin to create a historical living history farm as part of the University's existing farm. Mr. & Mrs. Moore donated the cabin "so the university could preserve it and it would not be lost to the people of the region".<sup>72</sup> The cabin was intended to be used as a learning laboratory for historic preservation students. History Professor and director of the Southeast Missouri State Regional History Center Arthur Mattingly was one of the main people involved with adopting and working with the B.F. Hunter Log Cabin. His vision was to add other

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<sup>71</sup> "Saving Part of the Past For Those of Tomorrow". *Sagamore*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Southeast Missouri State University, 1983), 9

<sup>72</sup> "SEMO University Receives Gift of 'Priceless' Log Cabin". *Bulletin Journal*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri. 21 Jul. 1981), 2



buildings such as a barn, smokehouse, sheds, and live animals and crops.<sup>73</sup> This proposed plan sparked interest and the cabin became the first part of this plan.

The placement of the cabin was not decided upon until after the donation occurred. Three sites were originally proposed, the Springdale Farm, the north campus area and the University Farm.<sup>74</sup> According to Mr. White who was part of the Hunter House project at the University:

Doc [Dr. Mattingly] wanted it just off North Sprigg Street- At the time it was secluded, past the outdoor track and around turn on New Sprigg, left up hill. We looked at Old North Sprigg and visited it with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Meyers- evidently the plans for the property included the Show Me Center. Another location was at a secluded area the University owned near Springdale Farm... it was a hundred acre parcel of land donated by the Rerrell (spelling) family. We (myself and Doc Mattingly) went out to visit the site, there was no barn, but an “I” house was there, and we picked this as the site for the B.F. Hunter home. The biology department threw a fit because that land was to be a bird sanctuary. The university let the fire department burn the “I” house. Next, they went to the college farm, marked off a site just East of Old McKendree Chapel and set the stakes and flags. Someone else got upset, so they couldn’t have

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<sup>73</sup> Mattingly, Arthur. *Missouri Heritage Farm*. (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Southeast Missouri State University, n.d. ), 1

<sup>74</sup> “Log Cabin Preserved on University Farm”. *Capaha Arrow*. (Southeast Missouri State University. Cape Girardeau, Missouri: 18 Sept. 1981), 5

it there. It ended up that they could have the corner of the present site of the house.<sup>75</sup>

By mid March of 1982 the cabin had begun to be dismantled, one piece at a time. Both students and the public became involved with the huge task of relocating the cabin. The community also participated in restoring the cabin back to its 1800s identity by removing the more modern interior. One of the main examples of how the public donated their time to the log cabin effort was groups of school children who helped daub the interior and exterior of the walls to provide new mortar for the logs. Another part of acquiring the log cabin involved using University students to conduct research on the cabin and related topics. Summer field schools and lab classes were held at Southeast Missouri State University to help bring the log cabin back to its original state and become usable for the program.

Interest in developing a living history farm and interest in the cabin dwindled as time went on and the work required to maintain the vision became over whelming. In 1992 the driving force behind the effort, Dr. Arthur Mattingly, retired. Little work was done with the cabin after Mattingly left. Dr. Bonnie Stepenoff continued work on the cabin in the mid 1990s, including repairs on the roof, chinking and daubing the walls, placing a gate around the property, reglazing the windows, and conducting additional student research. With the closing of the University Farm and the creation of a technology park in conjunction with the extension of East Main Street and a new entrance to Interstate 55 concern over the future of the cabin surfaced again. The Historic Preservation program along with the University Foundation have begun working to give

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<sup>75</sup> "Interview with Mr. White". *Appendix A*. (Southeast Missouri State University Special Collections & Archives. Cape Girardeau, Missouri, 7 Sept. 1993), 15

the log cabin another chance. Finances remain the main issue with working with the house.

The future of the B.F. Hunter log cabin is uncertain, but with renewed interest and funding available the log cabin may be able to serve as a learning tool for preservation students and maybe one day for the community. The one lesson the B.F. Hunter log cabin has taught the University is the need to have long term goals which can be a reality.

## Suggestions

Although this social history plan covers the majority of information needed to interpret the B.F. Hunter log cabin, additional information may be found.

Possible future research includes:

- More information on the last two generations of Hunter family members who owned the B.F. Hunter log cabin, particularly Benjamin Moore & James Moore
- Hunter cabin's use in the 1900s
- When the Hunter cabin gained plumbing and electricity
- Who the Hunter log cabin was rented to
- Additional information on the Hobbs family who lived in the Williams cabin
- When the Hobbs sold their property to Freddie Ristig
- Native American Indians land titles in Cape Girardeau

The current site of the house holds a great amount of historical value and should be incorporated in any interpretation plan for the cabin. Although the cabin was the home of Benjamin F. Hunter since it was removed from its original context much of the context has been lost. Both the Hunter and Williams families have similarities and help interpret what life was like in the 1800s for southern Missourians. Using both the Hunter and Williams story would allow for a complete interpretation of the property and help connect the Hunter Log Cabin to Cape Girardeau.

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## Appendix

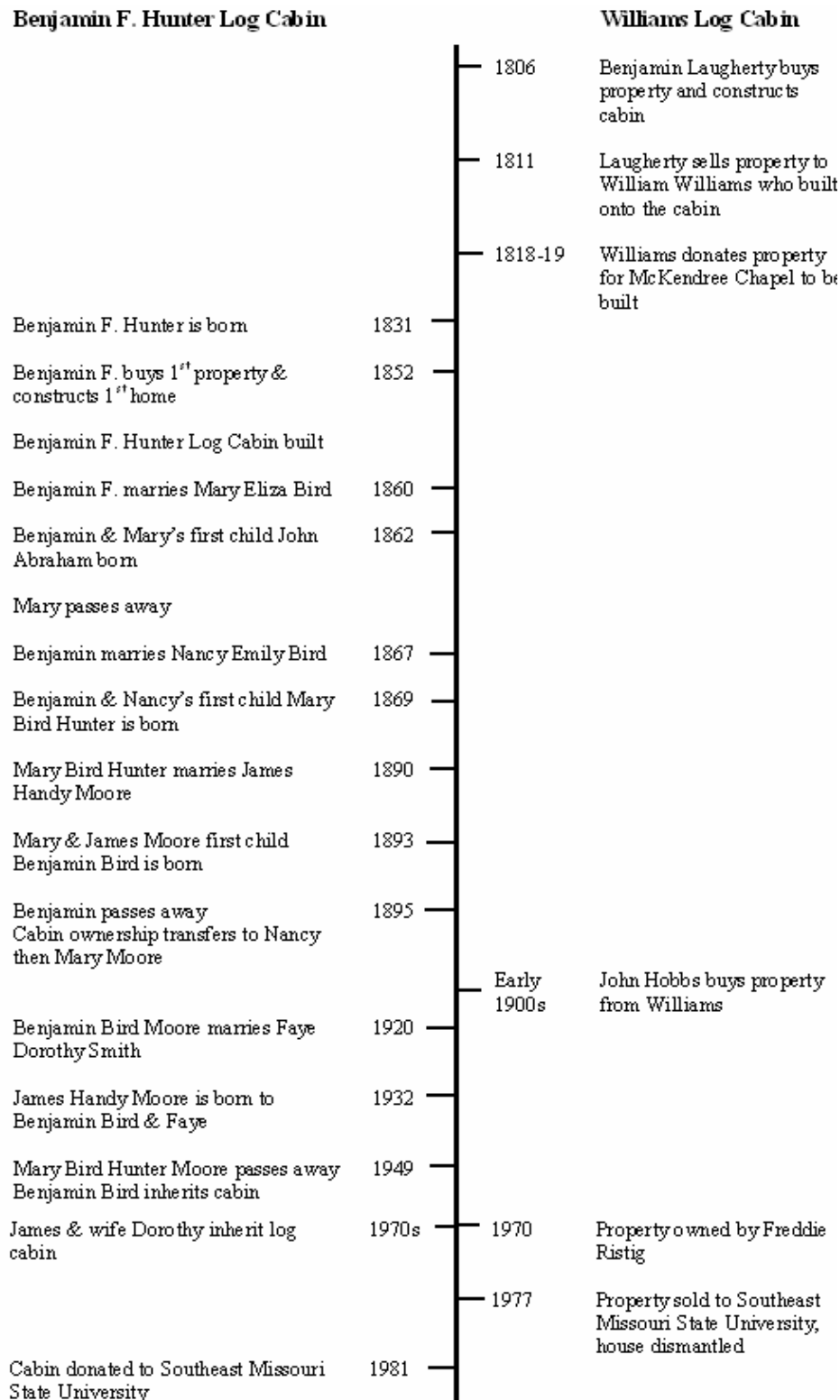


Fig.1. Cabins Time Line



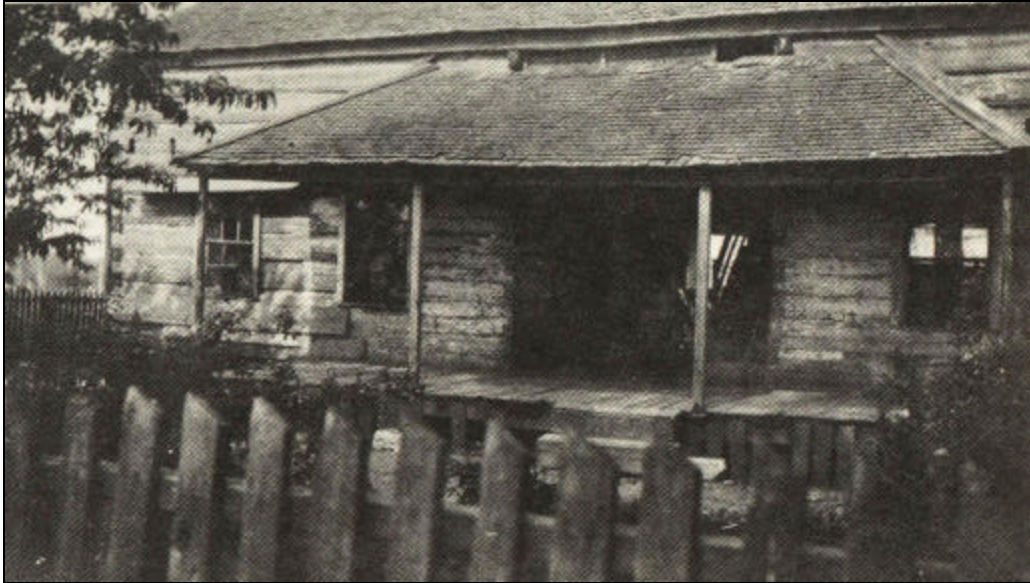


Fig. 2. Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin in 1908 (Image from Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1. Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Hill Press Inc., 1997)



Fig. 3. Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin in 1981 on original property (Image from “Log Cabin Preserved on University Farm”. *Capaha Arrow*. Southeast Missouri State University. Cape Girardeau, Missouri: 18 Sep. 1981, 5)



Fig. 4. Benjamin F. Hunter Log Cabin in Spring 2008 (Photograph taken by author)



Fig. 5. John Ross House from 1790 in Georgia built in the dogtrot style (Image from Weslager, C.A. *The Log Cabin In America*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969, 76)





Fig.6. Cabin constructed from logs of the Williams' Cabin, currently located on east side of Old McKendree Chapel (Photograph taken by author)



Fig. 7. Old McKendree Chapel in Spring 2008 (Photograph taken by author)

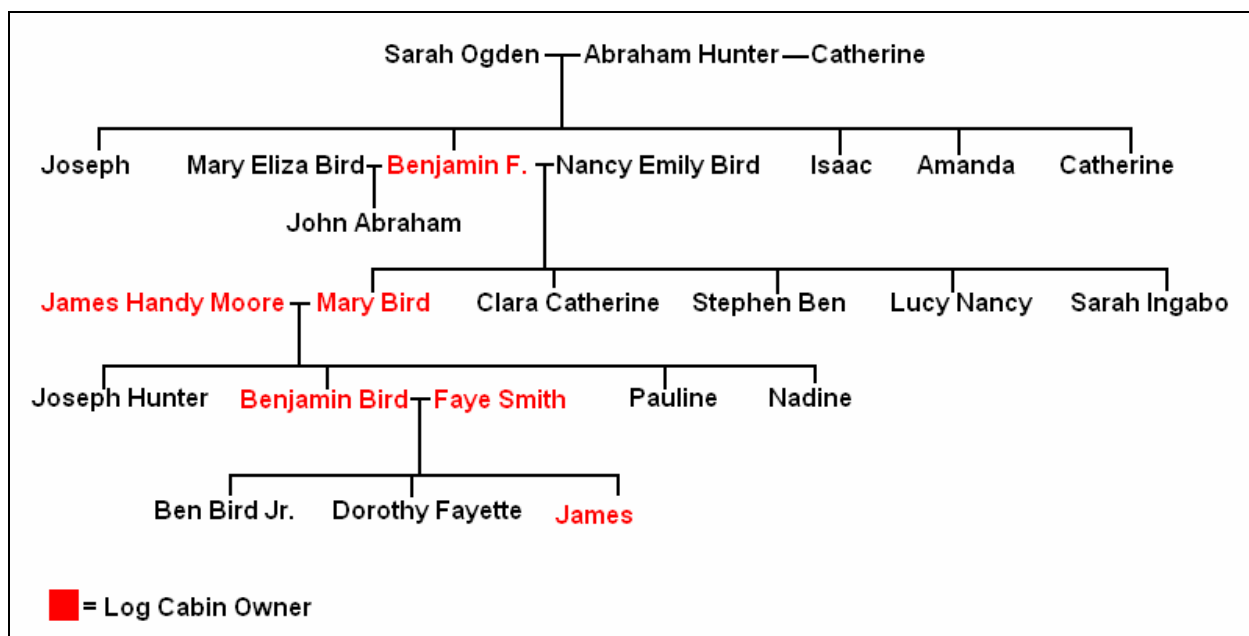


Fig. 8. Hunter Family Tree



Fig. 9. Benjamin F. Hunter (Image from Ben, Stephen and Mary Amanda Medley Hunter. *The Joseph Hunter & Related Families*, Vol. 1. Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Hill Press Inc., 1997)



Fig. 10. Mary Bird Hunter Moore in 1920 (Image from U.S. Passport. Online <http://www.ancestry.com>. Mary Bird Hunter Moore. Filed December 3, 1920)



Fig. 11. Benjamin Bird Moore in 1934 (Image from U.S. Passport. Online <http://www.ancestry.com>. Benjamin Bird Moore. Filed December 7, 1934)