

Brief History of Hunker, Pa.
Westmoreland County
By
John Marshall

The town of Hunker, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania was named after Mr. Frederick Hunker who came to this country from Germany in 1853. He travelled over the country quite a bit and finally decided to locate in this community.

He purchased 102 acres of ground from Mrs. Elizabeth Harrold in 1866 and spent three years clearing the land and building a home and moved into the house in 1869. The house was located below what is now known as Cross Roads Service Station.

He was a miller by trade and also constructed a Mill near the Sewickley Creek where he ground grain on a grinding stone which was operated by water power. There is a possibility that this stone may be buried in the ground. (Correction) - The two grinding stones were removed and taken to the foot of Laurelville Hill by a Joe Highberger. The mill stood near the Run which came through Hunker and led into the Sewickley Creek. This mill was built of cut stone which required a lot of labor.

In 1871, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company began building the Southwest branch and Mr. Hunker gave them the Right of Way through his land at no cost and the Railroad Company named the Railroad Station and Post Office in his honor. The town of Hunker was laid out on this farm.

In 1900, the town consisted of 18 homes occupied by the following families: Robert Dorner, George R. Marshall, William Stoner, James Combetto, Mathew Weh, Wilson Hays, Mrs. July Ann Kelly, Scott Hays, Ira N. Hays, M. R. Welty, Joseph Hons, Susan Waltz, John G. Hunker, Margery Beeson, Howard Minard, P. M. Highberger, John Shaffer and Ben McGuffey.

After 1900, new homes were built and lots were laid out by Mr. Hunker, Mr. Welty, Mr. Hons and Mr. Highberger. Children walked to school to a town called Painterville which today is now New Stanton Borough.

In 1899, a school was started in Mr. Joseph Hon's carpenter shop. He also kept a cow in the basement along with some pigs. Miss Mary Colestock was the first teacher. A new brick building was constructed in 1900 and later another room was added in 1902.

The Foundry known as the Penn Valve & Fittings Company was built in 1903 which gave quite a number of men employment. The plant continued until 1906 when it closed for want of orders for their products. This plant was located on the ground now occupied by the Fire Hall and Ball Field.

Sunday School and Church was held in Hon's Carpenter Shop along with dances on many Saturday nights. The Lutheran Church was built in 1912.

History - Hunker Pa. Continued:

Men worked at the Brick Yard, Sand Works and the stone quarry. Wages were about \$1.25 to \$1.50 for 10 hours. Sunday School picnics were held at a Grove at what is known now as Shady Creek.

After the Street Car Line was built about 1903, the Sunday School Picnic was held at Oakford Park near Jeannette, Pa. This was a big holiday for the entire community.

°° The town of Hunker was a part of Hempfield Township until January 1, 1929, when it was incorporated as a Boro. The present land area of the boro is 167.056 acres. There is one church in town, St. Mathews's Lutheran Church. The original building was razed and a new church was dedicated in June 1967, adjacent to the former school building. The school has been discontinued in Hunker and the two room school building was renovated by the local Lions Club and is now a Civic Center for the community.

An active Volunteer Fire Department, with a new truck and a large hose house compliment the town.

Approximately 400 is the present population of the town and 135 homes make up the community.

A new Post Office Building has been built in the town replacing the one room facility in use for many years.

°° This history dated September 25, 1974 by:

Jack E. Markle
Mayor
Hunker Boro
Hunker, Pennsylvania 15639

Footnote: The original history by John Marshall was written in the 1920's.

HUNKER HISTORY

Frederick Hunker was born in Whittenburg, Germany, June 21, 1824, the only boy in a family of fifteen children. He married Anna Barbra Dannecker in 1849. Anna Barbra Dannecker was born in Whittenburg, Germany on March 4, 1828. There were two children born in Germany, Martin and John. Martin was two years old and John was six months old when they came to this country.

They came to the United States in a sail boat. They were on the ocean 66 days. While on the high seas, they had some very exciting experiences. The boat sprung a leak and everyone on the boat was put to work in order to prevent the boat from sinking. The mast was blown off. A large whale followed the ship for three days, causing huge waves which almost capsized the boat. Their bunks were like potato bins and about as soft to sleep on; owing to rough seas they were difficult to sleep in. The passengers became sea-sick. While on the boat their food consisted of szweibek and rice.

They landed in New York in 1853. They were very poor. Ashes were picked up and sifted and sold in order to make a living. Wood chips were gathered and sold. Mr. Hunker worked on the docks and earned 25¢ a day. They lived in a tenement with many families. They had one room and no stove on which to cook. Their neighbors shared their stoves to cook the rice.

An uncle of Mrs. Hunker's, John Neff of West Newton, sent them money to come to West Newton, which they did. They lived here in a log house. Mr. Hunker received 25¢ a day for his labor; he worked on a farm for Mr. Funk. He next moved to the lower salt works owned by Mr. Painter, near the present Hunker Station, where Frederick Hunker was born on November 24, 1854. Next, he moved to West Overton. He worked in Overholt's distillery; he worked here for four years. The next move was to Fountain Mills now known as Scottdale. He was there one year with Wade and Painter. He then purchased nine acres of land from Mr. Painter. In 1862 he went to Painterville now known as New Market. There he rented the mill for eight years and out of his earnings he sent enough money to Germany to pay the transportation of his three sisters, Christina, Catherine, and Anna, to this country. In 1866 he purchased a farm consisting of 102 acres from Mrs. Elizabeth Harrold. He farmed this land and cleared it and moved there in 1869.

In 1871 the Pennsylvania Railroad began their road known as the South West Branch. Mr. Hunker donated the ground free for the right-of-way. When completed the station and the post office were named in honor of him.

In 1875 he purchased a farm from Mr. Thompson consisting of 117 acres and this farm had a good stone quarry and much timber. He moved on the Thompson farm in 1876. From the proceeds of the timber and stone he paid for the farm. He then made sale and retired, moving to Greensburg where he died in the year 1903. Mrs. Hunker died eight months later in the year 1903. Both are interred in the St. Clair Cemetery.

To this union there were eight children born:

John Martin Hunker	May 8, 1850	Anna Catherine Hunker	March 14, 1860
John George Hunker	July 3, 1852	Christina Hunker	April 5, 1863
Frederick Hunker	Nov. 24, 1854	Henry Hunker	June 21, 1865
Anna Mary Hunker	June 29, 1857	Sarah Anna Hunker	Oct. 16, 1869