

Monroeville

Spectator

Thursday, November 20, 1879

HIEL HUNT

HIS EARLY LIFE AND HISTORY THE PERSECUTIONS HE ENDURED

An Interesting Biography

The subject of this sketch was born in Lebanon, Connecticut, on Tuesday, Jan. 29, 1782, and departed this life Nov. 11, 1879. At the age of ten years his father's family emigrated to Vermont. When he was eighteen years old he was apprenticed to Mr. Smith, a millwright. He served his time and received little or nothing with which to commence life for himself, but his work paid a debt of \$150, which his father owed to Mr. Smith. His father was poor, and Hiel never complained of injustice in this transaction. If ever the above amount was loaned to the Lord, this was, and no loan of the kind ever brought, in return, a greater interest. The amount was returned to him in good measure, when he became old. He was as well provided for as any man who ever felt the hand of Time bearing down so long. It was near the time when he completed his apprenticeship that his father was persecuted by the new order of religious societies. Being a Baptist and a hard shell, he was immovable, but stood alone. He was "sent to Coventry" - that is, his persecutors refused to have anything to do with him, and, being on the Deerfield River, the river so many grist-mills he was compelled to sell out at their price. About this time, when a fire took place, he was unfortunate enough to get hold of a few stray pages of Paine's "Age of Reason" that had been thrown into the streets. Remembering the persecutions his father received, he added the logic of Paine, and thus formed his religious opinions for life.

At the age of twenty-three he was married to Miss Anna Blanchard, daughter of Lemuel Blanchard of Brattleborough, Vermont. Like all beginners in life at that time in that country they had many trials. Poverty was common, and the Vermont people lived only by hard work. He lived a while in Cazenovia, N. Y., then at Buffalo. He bargained for nine acres of land, now situated in the heart of the city. He could have paid for his land, but he was persuaded to emigrate to Ohio. He went to Venice, O., on foot and alone, arriving in May 1816. He returned and brought his family, taking passage in a schooner.

He arrived in Venice, July 11th, the same year. He and a brother, Eli Hunt, built the first grist-mill in that part of the county, then Huron. Many of the old citizens remember going to mill while Hiel Hunt was the miller.

It was terribly sickly at that time. He buried his mother, one brother, and two boys, Ambrose and Cyrus. Their graves were near the site of Heywood's Mills. Disheartened and discouraged they left Cold Creek. Eli went to White River, Ind., and Hiel moved to Monroeville. He bought and improved the lot afterward owned by Dr. Cole, now occupied by R. G. Martin and others adjoining. From Monroeville he moved to Mt. Vernon, in 1821. After staying one year he returned to the vicinity of Monroeville, living on Morse farm, between Monroeville and Norwalk. He would have stayed at Mt. Vernon but for the persecutions of those who claimed to be Christians. In his religion he was aggressive, talking much of the "mistakes of Moses" and lending the "Age of Reason" to all who had inquiring minds. The believers "sent him to Coventry" and otherwise harassed him by vexatious lawsuits until he was, as he believed,

compelled to leave. After fifty years, Christians have learned that such acts can do their cause no good.

In character Mr. Hunt was honest, benevolent, truthful, faithful, candid, ingenuous, and extremely firm in his ingenuous, and extremely firm in his convictions of right. His extreme benevolence was a fault. He never learned that the "human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." He was very apt to trust his labor and money with the dishonest, and his continued disappointments never shook his faith in humanity; but he always spoke of each new case with surprise. He was temperate in eating, drinking, and working. He lived the life of a Christian, as far as morality was concerned, though he believe with Paine in theology. His conversation was always chaste and pure. He never uttered a word in the company of men that would not do to be repeated in company of women. This fact has been verified by careful inquiry among the oldest of his acquaintances.

Though he had not the advantages of an education of a high order, he always kept himself well-informed, and sacrificed much for the purpose of taking newspapers and schooling his children in the district schools. He took the *Reflector* from the first issue to the last, and the *Clarion* until its name was changed to the *Sandusky Register*.

In his political convictions he was always firm. He voted for Thos. Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Q. Adams, Henry Clay, William H. Harrison, and the other Whig and Republican candidates. For seventy-six years he never failed to vote, putting his name on the back of his ballot.

He was ingenious and original. In 1822 he invented the Minie ball, and tested it in the presence of Benj. Carr, Thomas Carr, William and John Lyon, and many boys; his own and his neighbor's. It was pronounced a success. This was in Mt. Vernon. He got up many other inventions, none of which were ever patented. Whenever he solved a problem he was content.

Perhaps no man ever had a stronger faith in immortality. "I believe in one God, and no more; and hope for happiness beyond this life. The world is my home; mankind are my brethren, and to do good in my religion." Such was his creed. He was anxious to leave the earth after he became helpless, though he always spoke of death with the calmness of business conversation. His last thoughts expressed were those of gratitude to the friends who took care of him in his last days. Thus died a good man. I do not speak of his creed as right or wrong; I only state facts about one of the oldest of pioneers. He was borne to his last resting-place where so many of his make of coffins are decaying. He was placed in the exact spot he had often pointed out. Many of the old pioneers were present at his funeral on the 20th. Rev. Mr. Homes, Baptist minister, delivered a very appropriate discourse from Job. xiv. 19, 20, commencing: "Thou destroyest the hope of man. Thou prevailest against him," etc.

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