



—Photo by Lovelace

MARY HUNTER DOANE

**THE ANDREW JACKSON HUNTER FAMILY—
MARY HUNTER DOANE
By Merrill G. Burlingame**

The story of a state is the story of its people. In a state as young as Montana, it is still largely a story of its pioneers. Those who settle an area have an influence and a responsibility far out of proportion to their number. Montana was fortunate in the type of people attracted to its plains and valleys in its pioneer days. The Andrew Jackson Hunter family, and Mary Hunter Doane, its last remaining pioneer descendent, the subjects for this sketch, represent many of the typical qualities for the pioneers of Montana.

Mary Hunter Doane, President of the Society of Montana Pioneers for the year 1949-1950, is the immediate subject of this biography. A resident of Bozeman, which she first saw in 1864, she observed her ninety-first birthday on July 7, 1950. No one considers Mrs. Doane as being aged, however. Alert, genial and a strikingly handsome lady she walks about the town at will to visit her friends and often journeys to distant cities to participate in movements of interest and value. She has served as president of the Gallatin County Pioneers Society for a number of years. She is an active member of the Bozeman chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and a faithful attendant of the Episcopal Church. Mrs. Doane observed her sixth birthday on the high plains enroute to Montana. The Hunter family group, which was the only one in the train they accompanied, consisted of Andrew Jackson Hunter, his wife, Susannah Murray Hunter, Mary and two younger children.¹

Andrew Jackson Hunter was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, March 18, 1816, the youngest of sixteen children. The family started the typically American westward movement in 1818 when a move to Kentucky was made, followed by another in a few years to Louisiana. Here Andrew became a physician at a rather early age. He married a Miss Philpott and two children were born of this marriage. By 1856 Dr. Hunter was serving as physician for the Illinois Central Railway. Following the death

¹ Much of the material for this paper has come from interviews with Mrs. Mary Doane in Bozeman. She has a considerable number of manuscripts of addresses which she has given over a period of many years, newspaper clippings, legal documents, and the family Bible. A number of newspaper articles have appeared which concern the Hunter family such as those in: *Silver State Post*, Feb. 7, 1937; *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, Oct. 9, 1939.

of Mrs. Hunter, Andrew moved in 1857 to Benton County, Missouri. Here on October 12, 1858, Dr. Hunter was married to Susannah C. Murray.

Susannah Murray was one of twelve children whose grandparents had both been born in County Donegal, Ireland, of staunch Scotch descent. The grandfather had come to America in June, 1776, and immediately entered into revolutionary activities. Following the war this family had also moved westward—to Harrisburg, Pa., in 1783, and to Stark County, Ohio, in 1809. By 1835 the family had moved three counties west to Richland County, where at Mansfield, Susannah was born on May 28. A later move took them to Missouri where Susannah met Dr. Hunter.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Dr. Hunter entered the Confederate Army as surgeon. As the war in the West ceased to be severe he left the service and established his home in Chester, Randolph County, Illinois, where again he became a railway physician.

Dr. Hunter's family had been large slave holders and possessed considerable wealth which had not been dissipated by the war. With his inheritance to which he added, Dr. Hunter made another move westward, to Callaway County, Missouri. Here he acquired a considerable farm, a general store and drug store, and a spacious home. In the closing days of the war the country was swept by irresponsible guerilla troops, and because of Dr. Hunter's avowed Southern sympathies and his participation in the Confederate army, his property became the mark of these marauding hands. The climax of these attacks occurred during the absence of Dr. Hunter. The home and the store were burned to the ground, and the family was in a state of panic.

Dr. Hunter saw nothing but further contention in the area. He immediately converted his remaining property into cash, fitted up a wagon, and on April 2, 1864, set out for the Far West which had appealed to his restless nature for a considerable time. In Omaha the family joined a train consisting of thirty-two men for the trip across the plains.

The original destination of the train was Boise, Idaho. Information obtained on the plains aroused interest in the new mines in Montana, and the direction was changed. When the Hunters arrived on the site of Bozeman on August 1, 1864, only a few tents marked the future town. The citizens were to meet eight days hence, mark the limits of the townsite, and name it for John Bozeman.

Dr. Hunter had acquired a severe case of gold fever, and the family continued on the metropolis of the Territory, Virginia City. Here they were able to secure a cabin on the mountain side up Alder Gulch. They found that they had arrived much too late to secure a profitable mining claim. Dr. Hunter secured considerable experience in mining, however, and was fortunate in having his medical profession for which there was an urgent need.

In March, 1865, the Hunters moved to Helena, following the rush to this new mining center. There they camped for a time on the site of the present First National Bank. Again, Dr. Hunter, together with many others, were unable to obtain a claim worth working. He was one of the first to leave, early in 1866, with the rush to the last of the rich mining gulches, Confederate Gulch, some thirty miles east of Helena. Here in the boom town, of Diamond City he took part in the vigilance movement, in the miners courts, and was named delegate to the 1866 constitutional convention. He also served as probate judge for Meagher County in which the mining gulch was located. Continuing the search for gold the family moved for a time to nearby New York Gulch, again without success.

After two years in the Confederate group of mining gulches, Dr. Hunter became convinced that quick wealth from the mines was unlikely for him. He then turned his attention back to medicine and moved again, this time to the crossroads of the region, Canyon House, now Canyon Ferry. Here he remained until November, 1869, devoting his entire time to his medical practice.

Dr. Hunter frequently recalled that enroute to the mines, while hunting antelope, in the upper Yellowstone valley, he had investigated with care a large and active hot springs. The thought of developing a medical center at the springs, similar to that in Arkansas which he knew, haunted him. Bozeman was the closest settlement to the hot springs, and since it offered an opportunity for a medical practice until the springs could be developed, he moved his family there in December, 1869. In addition to his practice, he served as probate judge, as contract surgeon at nearby Fort Ellis, and notations in the County Commissioners Journals indicate that he took a contract in 1871, which was renewed in 1873, as county physician at a salary of \$8.00 per week.²

The role of Mrs. Hunter in this pioneer period had not been an easy one. In the midst of living in difficult surroundings

² Gallatin County Commissioners Journals, Vol. I, pp. 283; 489.

where families were the exception rather than the rule, she was raising a sizeable family. The names of the Hunter children indicate the attachment of the family for the Confederate cause. Mary Lee, the oldest, had been born in 1859, and the "Lee" was only incidentally intertwined with the admirable family in her father's home state of Virginia. The other children in the order of their ages were: Davis Beauregard, Lizzie Kate Longstreet, Thomas Stonewall, Sallie, Emma Sidney Johnson, and a daughter born in New York Gulch was named Montana.³ Mrs. Hunter taught her children in the home, provided for their needs in the face of frequent moves, and found time to take an active part in the civic and cultural life of the community in which she lived.

Dr. Hunter carried on his medical practice in Bozeman and developed the hot springs project as fast as possible. He took squatters rights to the area, about 20 miles east of the present Livingston in February, 1870, since there had been no land survey. In 1873 he built a home and what were considered rather pretentious bath houses. The lumber for the buildings was purchased in Bozeman at a cost of \$80 per 1,000 feet with an additional cost of \$60 for transportation. The land was surveyed in 1878 and Dr. Hunter took a homestead claim. The Northern Pacific disputed his rights and a long legal controversy ended in 1882 in Dr. Hunter's favor. The railroad was built past the springs in 1883, and in that year more adequate facilities were provided for the larger number of people which the railroad brought.

Mrs. Doane recalls many adventures which took place at the Hot Springs. During any absence of the men of the household, the house was securely barricaded, and Mrs. Hunter and the girls became adept in the use of firearms. The government established an Indian agency for the Crows some ten miles from the hot springs, for which Dr. Hunter was physician for a considerable time. The agency was welcome because it brought a settlement within a reasonable distance, but it also brought the major portion of the Crows into the vicinity at various times during the year. The Crows were usually friendly, but on many occasions they were an outright nuisance.

³ Mary Hunter Doane, the first of the Hunter children to be born, July 7, 1859, is the only one now living. Davis was born Nov. 25, 1861. Lizzie was born January 25, 1863. She was married to Frank W. Rich and lived for many years at Dean, Montana. Thomas was born Nov. 25, 1864 in Alder Gulch. He was drowned in the Yellowstone River at the Benson's Landing Crossing in 1875. Montana, born Nov. 4, 1866 in Confederate Gulch, lived only a few weeks. Sallie was born in Confederate Gulch, Nov. 27, 1867. She was married to Harry Janes. Emma was born at the present Canyon Ferry, Oct. 24, 1869. She died at the Hot Springs in 1873, the first year the family lived in the Yellowstone Valley. Only four grandchildren were born, four in the Rich family and one in the Janes family.

The Hunters were delighted to find that the soil was well adapted to gardening. They discovered also that the several hot springs which produced some 90,000 gallons of hot water an hour moderated the temperature within a small radius which enabled them to raise some unusual fruits and vegetables, including watermelons which they had enjoyed in the south. The Crows first objected to the ground being disturbed saying it would bring the rain which would destroy their hunting. When their fears had been overcome the Crows were fascinated with the growing crops. They found themselves unable to refrain from digging and sampling at all times of the year. They were particularly fond of potatoes and insisted upon digging them as soon as they set on. Mrs. Doane tells an amusing story of a band carrying away a green watermelon. They returned some days later asking how one should be eaten. The longer they cooked theirs, they said, the tougher it became.

The Piegan tribe of the Blackfeet was the scourge of the Yellowstone for Crows and whites alike. The Crows were always humiliated when the Piegans outwitted them and made a raid in the valley. On one occasion the Piegans stole several of the Hunter horses. They rode them hard and left them almost completely ruined at a Crow camp where they stole fresh mounts. The Crows recognized the Hunter animals and sent fresh horses to the Springs apologizing for not being more alert.

On another occasion the Crow Chief, Iron Bull, and his band appeared at the Hot Springs and demanded that all of the Hunters accompany them on a buffalo hunt lasting several days. Dr. Hunter was perplexed and reluctant to go, but Iron Bull was determined and not wanting to offend the friendly Indians, the family prepared quickly for the trip. After traveling eastward for three days, Iron Bull came to the Hunter tent one morning and said, "Today you may return to your home. I will send one of my men with you." The Hunters were again surprised for no buffalo had been seen. They were greatly pleased, however, when Iron Bull explained that a large band of Piegans had invaded the valley again, and the Hunters would have risked being killed if they had remained at home.

In the early years at the Springs the Hunters were often disturbed by large numbers of game animals coming to drink the warm water. This was particularly true in winter, but on occasion damage was done to the gardens and fields. Mrs. Hunter declared that she had seen herds of not less than 5,000 elk cross

the Yellowstone and leave its colder waters to come to the springs to drink.⁴

In 1885, Dr. Hunter sold the major portion of his rights to the Montana Hot Springs Company formed by Cyrus B. Mendenhall, Heber Roberts and A. L. Love. In 1898 they were sold to James A. Murray of Butte. Murray built a large hotel and swimming pool, and the resort attracted a large number of people each year until the hotel burned in 1932.

Dr. and Mrs. Hunter returned to Bozeman in 1885 and purchased a home there. Although advanced in years, Dr. Hunter continued to be called upon to practice medicine virtually until his death on April 19, 1894, at the age of 79. Throughout his life Dr. Hunter maintained a wide range of interests, and took a responsible part in civic affairs. At one time he insisted that the Hot Springs be assessed at the very high sum of \$30,000 in order that he might be sure to carry his full share of the costs of government in the thinly populated area. The Bozeman papers made extensive note of his passing, and one editorial closed with the comment: "He was a typical southern gentleman, polite and polished; he was warm hearted, sympathetic and kind; yet withal, he was made of stern material, quick to resent an insult, and fearless often to recklessness."⁵

Mrs. Hunter continued to live in Bozeman until her death on January 17, 1929, at the age of 94, greatly beloved by a wide circle of friends. She was a charter member of the Christian Church and the story was often told among its members that the church building would never have been completed without "Grandma" Hunter's aid. Her home adjoined the building site and while the brick building was under construction, Mrs. Hunter took her turn at the pump filling the buckets with water used in mixing the mortar.

As the children grew up they were sent away to school. Lizzie attended the Gallatin Valley Female Seminary, and Mary enrolled in St. Vincent's Academy in Helena during the years 1876-78. She has many memories of these years as pleasant and profitable, and recalls particularly the visits of Father Palladino to the school, where he was revered by all of the girls.

On December 16, 1878, Mary Hunter was married to Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane. Lieutenant Doane had come to Fort Ellis in 1869, and had immediately taken a leading part in the development of Montana. He was in charge of the military escort

⁴ "Hunter's Hot Springs," *Anaconda Standard*, Sunday, Oct. 27, 1901.

⁵ *Bozeman Weekly Chronicle*, April 26, 1894.

for the first official expedition into Yellowstone National Park in 1870, and his official report of this expedition has become a classic. He led another spectacular expedition into the upper Yellowstone and Snake River region in 1876 in mid-winter, and participated in an important capacity in the aftermath of the Custer disaster and in the Nez Perce invasion in 1877.

The wedding took place in Helena since Mary was in school there and the family was living at the isolated Hot Springs. An additional reason for the ceremony being held in Helena was that the most convenient stage road" to the states" left from Helena to go to the Utah region via Virginia City. Lieutenant Doane had received orders to go to Washington immediately for a winter assignment. "It was a four day trip to the railroad," recalls Mrs. Doane, "and a day was from five o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night. And the last lap of the journey we rode all day and all night. It was quite a honeymoon."

After a pleasant winter spent in Washington and Philadelphia, the Doanes came to Bismarck on the new Northern Pacific railroad, in June, 1879. They then took the river steamer "Dakota" for a 14-day trip up the Missouri to the vicinity of Fort Benton. The Lieutenant had been ordered to the new cavalry post, Fort Assiniboine, located a few miles south of the present Havre, then in the process of construction. Here Mrs. Doane set up housekeeping in a tent with packing boxes for furniture. The completed fort was large and commodious, however, and since major outbreaks did not take place, life at the fort was largely routine and on the whole pleasant.

Mrs. Doane recalls many instances of social functions: dinner dances, plays, musicals, riding and sports and a good library made time pass rapidly. A group of wives often pooled resources to make a dinner an elegant occasion. Silver, laces, linens, cut glass, and the ingredients for delicious salads and desserts could be assembled in short order even in an isolated army post. "Think of canned oysters as a luxury," Mrs. Doane remarks, "many times I have served them scalloped and they were enjoyed. And as for salads, why potatoes with a liberal portion of bleached winter cabbage, celery seed and a flavor of onion is perfectly all right. To us it was most acceptable." The commanding officer was solicitous for the morale of his men and early in the building program constructed a large assembly hall. The rough native-sawed wood floor was covered with canvass and waxed to form an excellent dance floor. "We dressed for these balls in our very best," Mrs. Doane recalls, "although some of us had a mile to walk

through the grass, and fight mosquitoes all the way. There were millions of these pests—that may have had something to do with our very great enthusiasm for dancing.”

The Doanes went from Fort Assiniboine to Fort Maginnis for a time, and were stationed briefly at Fort Ellis. As the need for military forces declined in Montana, the 2nd Cavalry was transferred to the Presidio in San Francisco in 1884, immediately after Doane had been made a captain. The following year the 2nd Cavalry was ordered to Arizona to take part in the Apache War, one of the last severe Indian outbreaks in our history.

Mrs. Doane had gone with her husband from one bleak Montana army post to another, but she was now to be faced with other rigors, those of the hot southwest. She followed the rapidly moving troops, living in the small arid towns adjacent to the army camps, and was with them on the platform when Geronimo and his immediate band of Apache warriors were entrained for Florida.

Captain Doane's health suffered in the campaign of the Southwest and he was granted leave to return to Montana for rest. His illness increased rapidly, however, and he died in Bozeman, May 5, 1892. Mrs. Doane continued to live in Bozeman which she had watched grow from an open prairie.

Because she has participated in so much of the history of the town and state, Mrs. Doane has been interested in collecting historical materials. She is frequently called upon to speak and to assist in the preparation of historical articles. Her keen and accurate memory enables her to recall and verify almost all of the major developments in Montana's history. "I sometimes get tired of being a walking encyclopedia of the history of Bozeman and Montana," Mrs. Doane remarks after an entire stranger has appeared unexpectedly and stayed all afternoon. "But, I suppose I am the only one left who remembers Bozeman from the beginning, and I am glad to tell of what I have seen."

Mrs. Doane retains much of the vitality which assisted her in enduring the rigors of the trip across the plains as a child, the life in the mining gulches, and in the frontier military posts where as one of the most beautiful and gracious women in the fort she contributed a great deal to its social life. She recalls incidents of the many notable persons she has known. Governor and Mrs. Benjamin F. Potts attended her wedding, and through her association with the military forts, and the Pioneers' Society she has come to know almost all of the later governors. She knew General W. T. Sherman, General Nelson Miles, General Hugh

Scott, and a host of other military leaders, since many of the men who started their career in the western forts later received high rank. She knew most of the pioneer missionary clergy. Bishop Tuttle, Bishop Brewer, Father Palladino, Brother Van and many other less well known she considered as friends. She has also counted a number of Indian chieftains as friends, perhaps the most notable in recent years was Chief Plenty Coups of the Crows.

Shunning publicity, but accepting the responsibility of knowing Montana, through having participated in so much of its development, Mrs. Doane shares gladly her large store of information which she can interpret so ably. She lends her best effort to preserve the rich heritage which she has had a part in creating. A major interest has been in assisting the D.A.R. in selecting many of the historic sites and in the erecting of their distinctive markers. Through her activity in the Society of Montana Pioneers, leading to its presidency during the past year, she has been able to assist in important state-wide movements. She has an ardent desire to see more and better Montana history written, and is tireless in her search for the exact date and accurate details.