

RANSOM HUNTER FOUNDATION

HONORING HIS LEGACY OF VISION,
HARDWORK AND ACHIEVEMENT

Ransom Hunter's Official Biography (1835–1918)

Ransom Hunter was born in January 1835 in Gaston County, North Carolina, to Mike Johnson and Julia Hunter. Rising from uncertain beginnings, he became a respected land developer, entrepreneur, farmer, preacher, and community planner whose impact shaped the region's history.

Civil War and Early Enterprise:

During the Civil War, Ransom served as a contractor re-shoeing and caring for horses in Tennessee. Using his earnings, he opened a livery stable and blacksmith shop after the war, launching his business career.

Founder of Freedom Community:

Ransom established the Freedom community in Gaston County as a haven for newly freed Black families. He transformed rocky land—nicknamed “Rock Grove”—by employing residents to clear stones, which he sold for road construction. This work made the land suitable for farming and homebuilding, and much of what is now downtown Mount Holly was once his property.

Real Estate and Business Achievements:

Between 1874 and 1914, Ransom acquired 30 land deeds and over 1,900 acres in Lincoln and Gaston counties. He sold land to future mayors and business leaders, including parcels for the Craig & Wilson Carriage Company and the Mayes Manufacturing Company. Ransom co-invested in the Mount Holly Manufacturing Mill—now the county's oldest surviving mill—and held shares in the First National Savings & Loan Association. His business ventures also included a second livery stable in downtown Mount Holly.

Community Leadership: School and Churches:

Dedicated to uplifting his community, Ransom donated land for Gaston County's first public school for Black children after Emancipation—the District 12 Colored School—and served on its founding committee. He also built and helped establish two churches, providing spiritual and social support for the Freedom community.

Legacy:

Ransom Hunter died on September 24, 1918, in the community he developed. His legacy endures in the land, institutions, and families of Gaston County, where his vision and leadership continue to inspire.

